

US Nobel laureate fears US politics could undermine science

December 11 2017, by David Keyton And Jim Heintz



Michael Rosbash, laureate in Medicine 2017 delivers a speech, during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)

An American scientist who shared this year's Nobel Prize for medicine bluntly criticized political developments at home in his address at the awards' gala banquet, saying that U.S. scientists are facing funding cutbacks that will hurt research.

Michael Rosbash, who was honored for his work on circadian rhythms—commonly called the body clock—expressed concern that U.S. government funding such as that received by him and Nobel colleagues Jeffrey Hall and Michael Young is endangered.

"We benefited from an enlightened period in the postwar United States. Our National Institutes of Health have enthusiastically and generously supported basic research ... (but) the current climate in the U.S. is a warning that continued support cannot be taken for granted," Rosbash said in a short speech Sunday night at Stockholm's ornate city hall.

The 2018 federal budget proposed by President Donald Trump calls for cutting science funding by billions of dollars.

"Also in danger is the pluralistic America into which all three of us of born were born and raised after World War II," Rosbash said.

"Immigrants and foreigners have always been an indispensable part of our country, including its great record in scientific research."

Literature laureate Kazuo Ishiguro of Britain expressed concern about increasing tensions between social factions.



Jeffrey Hall, laureate in physiology or medicine, receives his Nobel Prize from King Carl Gustaf of Sweden, right, during the Nobel award ceremony at the Concert house in Stockholm, Sweden, Sunday Dec. 10, 2017. (JHenrik Montgomery/TT News Agency via AP)

"We live today in a time of growing tribal enmities of communities fracturing into bitterly opposed groups," said Ishiguro, who was born in Japan.

He said Nobel prizes can counterbalance such animosity.

"The pride we feel when someone from our nation wins a Nobel prize is different from the one we feel witnessing one of our athletes winning an Olympic medal. We don't feel the pride of our tribe demonstrating superiority over other tribes. Rather it's the pride that from knowing that one of us has made a significant contribution to our common human

endeavor," he said.

In the Norwegian capital of Oslo, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima compared her struggle to survive in 1945 to the objectives of the group awarded this year's Nobel's Peace Prize.



Kazuo Ishiguro, laureate in literature delivers a speech, during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)

Setsuko Thurlow, who was 13 when the U.S. bomb devastated her Japanese city during the final weeks of World War II, spoke as a leading activist with the Nobel-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Thurlow said the Hiroshima blast left her buried under the rubble, but she was able to see light and crawl to safety. In the same way, the campaign to which she belongs is a driving force behind an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons, she said after ICAN received the Nobel prize it won in October.

"Our light now is the ban treaty," Thurlow said. "I repeat those words that I heard called to me in the ruins of Hiroshima: 'Don't give up. Keep pushing. See the light? Crawl toward it.'"

The treaty has been signed by 56 countries—none of them nuclear powers—and ratified by only three. To become binding it requires ratification by 50 countries.



From the top: Princess Christina of Sweden, Kip S Thorne, Laureate in Physics 2017, Crown princess Victoria of Sweden, Carl-Henrik Heldin, chairman of the board of the Nobel Foundation. Queen Silvia of Sweden, Barry C Barish, Laureate in Physics 2017, Princess Sofia of Sweden, Richard Henderson, laureate in Chemistry 2017, sit at the table of honour during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)

ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn, who accepted the prize along with Thurlow, said that while the treaty is far from ratification "now, at

long last, we have an unequivocal norm against nuclear weapons."

"This is the way forward. There is only one way to prevent the use of [nuclear weapons](#)—prohibit and eliminate them," Fihn said.

The prize winners were announced in October. All except the peace [prize](#) were awarded in Sweden on Sunday.

The other laureates were American Richard Thaler for his work in behavioral economics; American physicists Kip Thorne, Rainer Weiss and Barry Barish for confirming the existence of gravity waves; and Jacques Dubochet of Switzerland, American Joachim Frank and Richard Henderson of the United Kingdom for advances in electron microscopy.



Richard Thaler, Nobel prize laureate in economics 2017, toasts, during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)



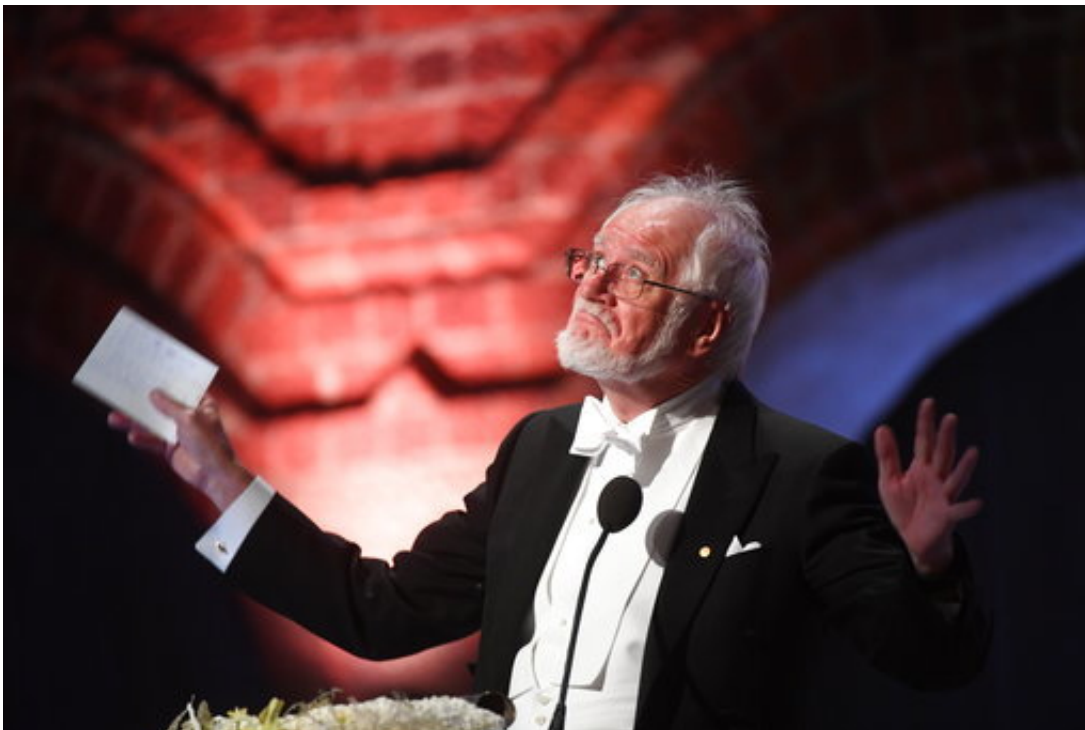
Leader of the Nobel committee Berit Reiss-Andersen, left, presents the award to Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow and Beatrice Fihn, leader of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2017, in Oslo, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Berit Roald/NTB Scanpix via AP)



Rainer Weiss, laureate in Physics 2017, delivers a speech during the Nobel banquet during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)



From left, Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine Jeffrey Hall, Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine Michael Rosbash, Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine Michael Young, Nobel Laureate in Literature Kazuo Ishiguro and Nobel Laureate in Economics Richard Thaler attend the 2017 Nobel prize award ceremony at the Concert house in Stockholm, Sunday Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency)



Jacques Dubochet, laureate in Chemistry 2017, delivers a speech, during the Nobel banquet in the City Hall, in Stockholm, Sunday, Dec. 10, 2017. (Fredrik Sandberg/TT News Agency via AP)

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