

MacArthur Foundation announces \$625K genius grant recipients

September 25 2019, by Herbert G. McCann



This Aug. 30, 2019 photo shows MacArthur Foundation fellow Emmanuel Pratt, an urban designer with the Sweet Water Foundation in Chicago. Pratt is co-founder and executive director of the foundation, a nonprofit organization based on Chicago's South Side that engages local residents in the cultivation and regeneration of social, environmental, and economic resources in their neighborhoods. The MacArthur Foundation on Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2019, named 26 people it believes have shown exceptional creativity and accomplishment and will continue to do so. (John D. and Catherine T.

MacArthur Foundation via AP)

Female academics whose expertise and influence in areas as diverse as the impact of slavery on modern America, legislating against cyber harassment, and global warming and its effect on rising sea levels were named Wednesday as three of this year's 26 MacArthur fellows and recipients of genius grants.

Every year since 1981, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has lauded academics who have shown exceptional creativity, made significant accomplishments, and have the potential for future creativity. This year's fellows will each receive \$625,000 over five years.

Potential fellows are brought to the Chicago-based foundation's attention by an anonymous pool of nominators.

University of Wisconsin-Madison geochemist and paleoclimatologist Andrea Dutton told The Associated Press that she was stunned when she learned earlier this month that she had been selected.

The fellows are allowed to tell only one person before their names are officially announced. Dutton said she chose to tell a colleague who has been supportive of her career.

"I didn't tell my parents because I thought they couldn't keep the secret," she said.

Dutton, 46, was nominated because of her studies on how [higher temperatures](#) lead to rising sea levels and polar ice shrinkage. As a field geologist, she has traveled the world to develop a picture of what

happened during past warming periods so she can better predict the future magnitude and speed of rising sea levels as temperatures increase.



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Sea levels can rise by 20 feet (6 meters) or more when the average temperature increases by just a few degrees, she said.

"The message is, what sounds like small changes in temperature has a very large impact on polar ice sheets," she said. "That is a sobering message when it comes to climate change. It means we may have already have committed ourselves to a 20-foot increase in [sea level](#) rise."

Dutton hasn't yet decided how to use her MacArthur grant, but suggested she could pay it forward, perhaps by helping other women in science or giving a platform to voices from underrepresented groups who could offer new insight into the impact of [global warming](#).

Another recipient, Columbia University literary scholar and historian Saidiya Hartman, has been tracing the effects of slavery on modern America. Her studies have brought attention to lives obscured by or excluded from historical narratives, including female captives on [slave ships](#) and the inhabitants of slums in the 20th century.



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Hartman's first book, "Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America," examines pre- and post-emancipation eras in the United States, and her second, "Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route," among other things

questions the use of historical archives as the only credible source of information about the past.

Her most recent published work, "Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments," deals with the lives of southern black women who fled to the North early in the twentieth century and their efforts to find kinship and freedom.

Hartman, 58, said the grant is a huge recognition that means she will be able to continue in her work.

"It takes a lot of work to reconstruct those lives," she said, adding that a sabbatical may be in her future. "Before I got the call, I was thinking ... 'How am I going to do the research for the next book?' It came at an opportune time."



In this Sept. 23, 2019 photo provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, MacArthur Foundation fellow Danielle Citron, a legal scholar at Boston College poses in Boston, Mass. For the past 15 years Citron, has focused her attention on cyber harassment and the toll it takes on its victims. The MacArthur Foundation on Wednesday, Sept. 25 named 26 people it believes have shown exceptional creativity and accomplishment and will continue to do so. The fellows will receive \$625,000 over five years to use as they please. (John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation via AP)

Danielle Citron, a professor of law at Boston University Law School and an expert in online harassment, initially didn't take her call from the foundation seriously.

"I thought it was one of my friends trying to punk me," Citron said, adding that she began to believe as the caller went into details about her award.

For the past 15 years, Citron, 50, has focused her attention on cyber harassment and the toll it takes on its victims. She has advised state attorneys general and legislators on how to combat the most extreme forms of cyber abuse, including cyber stalking, cyber mob attacks and revenge porn—the nonconsensual posting of intimate photos or videos. She has worked with [technology companies](#) to update safety and privacy policies.

She told the AP that attitudes have evolved; over 10 years the number of states with laws attacking the issue of cyber stalking has grown from four to 46.



This Sept. 12, 2019 photo provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation shows MacArthur Foundation fellow Saidiya Hartman, a Literary Scholar and Cultural Historian at Columbia University in New York. Hartman's work includes tracing the effects of slavery in modern American life and bringing attention to lives obscured by, or excluded from historical narratives. The MacArthur Foundation on Wednesday, Sept. 25 named 26 people it believes have shown exceptional creativity and accomplishment and will continue to do so. The fellows will receive \$625,000 over five years to use as they please. (John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation via AP)



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"When they go to police, victims are no longer being told, 'Too bad, so sad,'" she said.

Citron said some cyber abusers try to control and damage their victims by invading their privacy, secretly recording them in their bedrooms or public bathrooms then using those images to coerce their victims into sharing nude photographs and filming sex acts.

Sexual privacy is essential to human dignity and intimacy and should be protected, she said.

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Citation: MacArthur Foundation announces \$625K genius grant recipients (2019, September 25) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2019-09-macarthur-foundation-625k-genius-grant.html>

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