

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vilcek Foundation Awards Prizes Totaling \$600,000

Nine Vilcek Foundation Prizes totaling \$600,000 are being awarded to immigrant leaders in biomedical science and in filmmaking; the 2021 Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Public Service is awarded to Andrew Yang.

New York, NY, September 8, 2020 — The Vilcek Foundation has announced the recipients of the 2021 Vilcek Foundation Prizes, totaling \$600,000. This year's prizes recognize the career achievements and creative promise of foreign-born innovators in the sciences and arts; and the contributions in public service of a child of immigrants. The 2021 prizes include the Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science, the Vilcek Prize in Filmmaking, the Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Public Service, and a total of six Creative Promise Prizes—three each in biomedical science and in filmmaking.

"The 2021 awards celebrate the diversity of immigrant contributions to biomedical research, to filmmaking, and to society," says Rick Kinsel, president of the Vilcek Foundation. "In recognizing foreign-born scientists and dynamic leaders in the arts and in public service, we seek to expand the public dialogue about the intellectual value and artistic diversity that immigration provides the United States."

The 2021 Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science is being awarded to Ruth Lehmann. Director of the Whitehead Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Lehmann is a pioneer in developmental biology. Her work on the fruit fly *Drosophila* helped unravel the molecular mechanisms that confer identity on germ cells, which give rise to sperm and egg cells. More recently, Lehmann's work has suggested mechanisms through which harmful mutations in the DNA of mitochondria, are weeded out – work with implications for treating human mitochondrial disorders. Lehmann was born in Cologne, Germany. The Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science includes a cash award of \$100,000.

The 2021 Vilcek Prize in Filmmaking is bestowed upon Rodrigo Prieto. Born in Mexico City, Mexico, Prieto is an award-winning cinematographer known for his meticulous setups, unconventional camerawork, rich use of color, and ability to create moving, visceral cinematic experiences. His frequent collaborators include Martin Scorsese, Ang Lee, Oliver Stone, and Alejandro González Iñárritu. Nominated for three Academy Awards—for his work on Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) and Scorsese's *Silence* (2017) and *The Irishman* (2019)—he has also been recognized by the Independent Spirit Awards, BAFTA, and the American Society of Cinematographers. The Vilcek Prize in Filmmaking includes a cash award of \$100,000.

Inaugurated in 2019, the Vilcek Prize for Excellence is the newest honor bestowed by the Vilcek Foundation as part of the Vilcek Foundation Prizes. The Vilcek Prize for Excellence is awarded in a unique category each year; the prize may be awarded to immigrants whose professional work has had a profound impact on society and culture, or to individuals of any national origin whose career and values

are aligned with the values of the Vilcek Foundation's mission and vision. Candidates are chosen by Jan and Marica Vilcek—cofounders, chairman and vice chairman of the Vilcek Foundation, and approved by the foundation's board.

The 2021 Vilcek Prize for Excellence in Public Service is being awarded to entrepreneur and former presidential candidate Andrew Yang. Yang is being awarded in recognition of his leadership as a child of immigrants and as an entrepreneur, as well as for his development of the non-profit Humanity Forward, with the goals of empowering citizens to engage in civil discourse regarding technology, data, and economics. The recipient of the Vilcek Prize for Excellence is presented with a commemorative award and receives an unrestricted cash prize of \$100,000.

The Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise are awarded to young immigrant scientists and artists in the United States whose early-career work represents a profound advance in their respective fields. Each Creative Promise Prizewinner receives a cash prize of \$50,000. The three winners of the 2021 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science are Mohamed Abou Donia, Ibrahim Cissé, and Silvi Rouskin.

Mohamed Abou Donia is an associate professor of microbiology at Princeton University. Born in Egypt, Abou Donia receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for demonstrating the potential of the human microbiome as a source of novel drugs and uncovering the basis of microbiome-driven drug metabolism.

Ibrahim Cissé is an associate professor in the Department of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Born in Niger, Cissé receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for his use of super-resolution biological imaging to directly visualize the dynamic nature of gene expression in living cells.

Silvi Rouskin is the Andria and Paul Heafy Whitehead Fellow at the Whitehead Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Born in Bulgaria, Rouskin receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science for developing methods to unravel the shapes of RNA molecules inside cells and aiding the potential development of RNA-based therapeutics.

The recipients of the 2021 Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise in Filmmaking are Juan Pablo González, Miko Revereza, and Nanfu Wang.

Juan Pablo González is a documentary filmmaker and cinematographer. Born in Mexico, he receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Filmmaking for the artistic rigor and deep emotional engagement that he brings to his immersive and intimate explorations of his hometown in rural Mexico, Atotonilco el Alto, Jalisco.

Miko Revereza is a director and experimental filmmaker. Born in the Philippines, Revereza receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Filmmaking for the ingenuity and urgency with which he bridges the personal and the political, in works that challenge us to rethink aspects of both documentary filmmaking and the immigrant experience

Nanfu Wang is a filmmaker based in New York City. Born in China, Wang receives a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Filmmaking for the impact and courage of her riveting documentaries, which are lucid and unflinching in confronting the consequences of systemic oppression and corruption in China.

The recipients of the Vilcek Prizes in Biomedical Science, Filmmaking, and the Creative Promise Prizes are selected by panels of experts identified by the foundation's staff. For more information about all of this year's prizewinners, please read the individual profiles on our site.

In addition to the prize money that honorees receive, all recipients are awarded commemorative trophies custom designed to recognize their individual achievements. All of the prizewinners will be honored in a ceremony hosted by the Vilcek Foundation in April 2021.

The Vilcek Foundation

The Vilcek Foundation raises awareness of immigrant contributions in the United States and fosters appreciation of the arts and sciences. The foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation, to honor immigrant contributions to the United States, and more broadly, to foster appreciation of the arts and sciences, was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. Since 2000, the foundation has awarded over \$5.6 million in prizes to foreign-born individuals and supported organizations with over \$5 million in grants.

The Vilcek Foundation is a private operating foundation, a federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). To learn more, please visit vilcek.org.