

For immediate release

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## **MacArthur Foundation names 2024 Fellows, recognizing creative excellence**

22 individuals awarded grants for groundbreaking work across various disciplines

**CHICAGO, OCT. 1, 2024** – The MacArthur Foundation announced its 2024 MacArthur Fellows today. The title is given to extraordinarily creative individuals with a track record of excellence in a field of scholarship or area of practice. This year 22 individuals were selected from a variety of fields including literature, media, art, science, history, and education. Fellows are each awarded \$800,000, paid in quarterly installments over five years. For a full list of 2024 MacArthur Fellows [click here](#).

The Foundation began this award in 1981. Since then, 1,153 people have been named MacArthur Fellows. The purpose of the award is to increase the capacity of individual recipients to pursue creative ideas and projects. The money is rewarded under a “no-strings-attached” policy to provide recipients the freedom to follow their creative vision, whether it is moving forward with their current activities, expanding the scope of their work, or embarking in entirely new directions.

“The 2024 MacArthur Fellows pursue rigorous inquiry with aspiration and purpose. They expose biases built into emerging technologies and social systems and fill critical gaps in the knowledge of cycles that sustain life on Earth. Their work highlights our shared humanity, centering the agency of disabled people, the humor and histories of Indigenous communities, the emotional lives of adolescents, and perspectives of rural Americans,” said Marlies Carruth, director of MacArthur Fellows.

The Selection Committee consists of approximately 12 people who serve confidentially and are chosen for their experience, excellent judgment, and curiosity. They receive letters from nominators presenting candidates who are carefully evaluated in several steps:

- Research background information about the individual
- Discuss nominations in relation to selection criteria
- Create final list of most outstanding individuals
- Share recommendations with Board of Directors for final selection
- Save nominations that did not advance for reconsideration in future cycles

### **About The MacArthur Foundation**

The MacArthur Foundation boldly invests in creative solutions to urgent challenges, sparking hope for our future. We work on a few big bets that strive toward transformative change in areas of profound concern, including the existential threats of climate change and nuclear risk, the challenges of criminal justice reform in the U.S. and corruption in Nigeria. In addition, we maintain enduring commitments in our hometown Chicago, where we invest in people, places, and partnerships to build a more inclusive Chicago and in journalism and media, where we invest in more just and inclusive news and narratives. We also make awards to extraordinarily creative individuals through the MacArthur Fellows program and for solutions to critical problems of our time through 100&Change.

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## **Chicago writer awarded 2024 MacArthur Fellowship for innovative fiction**

Ling Ma awarded \$800,000 for her bold exploration of life

**CHICAGO, OCT. 1, 2024** – Ling Ma, Chinese American writer, and professor at the University of Chicago, was recognized as a 2024 MacArthur Fellow. The MacArthur Foundation recognizes extraordinarily creative individuals with a track record of excellence in a field of scholarship or area of practice. She is known for her speculative and realist modes of storytelling to reflect on the systems that structure our lives in a globalized, capitalist era. Her writing often occurs in familiar settings and scenarios—corporate offices, a one-night stand, a shopping mall—and then surprises readers with fantastical plot turns, commenting on the surreal aspects of our contemporary condition and our attachments to routines and consumer goods in the face of loss and disconnection. For a full list of 2024 MacArthur Fellows [click here](#).

Ma’s novel *Severance* (2018) follows protagonist Candence Chen, a Chinese American woman one of the few survivors of “Shen Fever” a sickness which induces a zombie-like state, endlessly repeating a mundane task from their daily lives until they waste away. As she escapes New York City, she reflects on her childhood in Fujian, weaving together several genres including zombie apocalypse, immigrant narrative, office satire, and critique of capitalism. Similarly, her short story book *Bliss Montage* (2022) blurs genre distinctions and explores characters’ attempts to understand and be understood by others. With her richly layered works of fiction, Ma provides readers with startling vantage points on the alienating aspects of contemporary life and the roles we play in perpetuating them.

“I see fiction as mostly a play space where anything can happen, and I can really interrogate and ask questions. In other modes, I’m simply tethered to the facts, and I’m not that interested in the facts, but I am interested in truth,” said Ma. “One reason that fiction is powerful is that it’s able

to imagine alternate realities in which our buried selves are allowed to exist. It allows for many different versions of your story to emerge.”

In addition to the MacArthur Fellowship, Ma has gained significant recognition in the literary world for her writing and advocacy work:

- Kirkus Prize
- 2023 Campbell Literature Prize
- The Story Prize
- *New York Times* Notable Book of 2018
- 2019 Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award
- National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction

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## ABOUT THE AWARD

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The MacArthur Fellowship is a five-year, “no strings attached” grant to individuals who show exceptional creativity and the promise and potential for future advances based on a track record of significant accomplishment. The fellowship is designed to provide recipients with the flexibility to pursue their creative, intellectual, and professional inclinations in the absence of specific obligations or reporting requirements.

## PROCESS

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Nomination Process:

- Nominators represent a broad range of fields
- Form a diverse pool of nominees
- Share with the Selection Committee

Evaluation Process:

- The Selection Committee assesses nominations
- The committee includes leaders from various professions
- Evaluate based on:
  - Program's selection criteria
  - Nomination letters
  - Expert evaluations
  - Examples of nominee's work

# MACARTHUR FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP

## HISTORY

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- The foundation was started by John and Catherine MacArthur in 1978
- Their son, J. Roderick MacArthur, proposed the fellowship aiming to support creative individuals with extraordinary promise
- The first fellowships were awarded in 1981. Since then, 1,153 people have been named MacArthur Fellows

## NOTABLE RECIPIENTS

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- Harold Bloom, Literary Critic, 1985
- Thomas Pynchon, Novelist, 1988
- Twyla Tharp, Dancer and Choreographer, 1992
- Octavia Butler, Writer, 1995
- Sandra Cisneros, Writer, 1995
- Colson Whitehead, Writer, 2002
- Lin-Manuel Miranda, Playwright, Composer, and Performer, 2015

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