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Carnegie Corporation of New York Honors COVID-19 Responders Among 38 Distinguished Immigrants

Philanthropic foundation established by Scottish immigrant Andrew Carnegie celebrates the essential contributions of immigrants to American life.

New York, New York, July 1, 2020 — Carnegie Corporation of New York released its annual list of Great Immigrants today, honoring 38 naturalized citizens who have enriched and strengthened our nation and our democracy through their contributions and actions. Each Fourth of July since 2006, the philanthropic foundation has invited Americans to celebrate these exemplary individuals by participating in its online tribute "[Great Immigrants, Great Americans.](#)"

This year, the Corporation is highlighting the work of millions of immigrants who are playing an essential role in the global health crisis as COVID-19 responders. A third of the honorees are helping the recovery by serving as nurses and doctors, as well as scientists who are striving to find effective treatments and a vaccine. We also honor clergy and community leaders who are providing food and vital services to those in need. Overall, the 2020 Great Immigrants represent 35 countries of origin and a wide range of contributions to American life, from human rights and computer science to art, business, education, journalism, music, politics, religion, research, and sports.

Among the COVID-19 responders:

- **Fabian Arias** Argentinian immigrant and Lutheran pastor distributed food to New Yorkers and comforted his congregation through the deaths of more than three dozen members.
- **Luciana Borio** Brazilian-born physician and former Director of Medical and Biodefense Preparedness at the National Security Council provided public health guidance and advocacy.
- **Raj Chetty** Indian native and Harvard University economist launched a real-time data tracker to measure the economic impact of the pandemic and assisted decision-makers as they implemented new public policies.
- **Marie Lafontant** Haitian-born nurse at the University of Chicago Medical Center, who was assigned to a high-risk screening unit, identified and cared for patients with the virus despite inadequate personal protective equipment for staff.



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- **Pedro Martinez** Mexican immigrant and superintendent of the San Antonio Independent School district oversaw the transition to remote learning for 49,000 students, including distribution of 30,000 computers and 4,000 WiFi hotspots.
- **Miriam Merad** French-born Algerian immigrant, oncologist, and immunologist led the development of a quick test to monitor inflammatory responses to COVID-19 and a clinical trial to test a drug that might manage those symptoms.
- **Siddhartha Mukherjee** Indian immigrant, physician, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author used his communications skills to educate the public and build awareness about COVID-19 through forums and his widely read essays.
- **Anna Podolanczuk** Polish-born researcher and pulmonologist put her health at risk to treat patients in the emergency department at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center.
- **Teresa Romero** Mexican immigrant and first female president of the United Farm Workers led advocacy efforts for the safety and well-being of frontline agricultural workers.
- **Moncef Slaoui** Moroccan-born physician and researcher has served as Chief Advisor of “Operation Warp Speed,” the Trump Administration’s effort to accelerate development of a vaccine.
- **Ramon Tallaj** Dominican immigrant, physician, and founder of the community health network SOMOS advocated for hard hit, low-income, and immigrant New Yorkers and worked with the state to expand multilingual testing sites.
- **Hwajung Yoon** South Korean immigrant and rescue paramedic with the Fire Department of New York provided high-level emergency care as the department responded to as many as 7,000 critical cases daily.
- **Eric Yuan** China-born founder and CEO of Zoom created a platform that millions of Americans relied on to stay connected to family, friends, work, and school during the pandemic.

[Read the full list of 2020 Great Immigrants](#), including musician David Byrne, novelist Yaa Gyasi, University of Connecticut women’s basketball coach Geno Auriemma, and Florida Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy.

“Millions of brave Americans responded with selflessness and urgency to COVID-19, including immigrants, who represent one out of six nurses and one out of four physicians. Their contributions to health care, biomedicine, the nation’s food system, and many other critically important sectors are immeasurable,” said Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York. “We express our admiration and gratitude to the COVID-19 responders and researchers, and to all Great Immigrants. They have come from different backgrounds, and have pursued different worthwhile goals, but collectively, they have shared a desire to become citizens and have made our democratic society stronger. For all of their efforts, we salute them.”



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President Gregorian noted that earlier Great Immigrants are also addressing the pandemic, including José Andrés, a chef whose nonprofit has helped feed millions of needy people and subsidized the reopening of hundreds of restaurants; Noubar Afeyan, a biotechnology entrepreneur who cofounded Moderna, an early front-runner in the race to develop a COVID-19 vaccine; and David Ho, a renowned AIDS researcher who is now working to limit the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Other examples of extraordinary contributions can be found in [research](#) by the nonprofit public policy organization, National Foundation for American Policy. It shows that immigrants to the United States have won more than one-third of the Nobel Prizes awarded to Americans in chemistry, medicine, and physics since 1901. A recent [report](#) by a Corporation grantee, the nonprofit research and advocacy group New American Economy, looked at companies on the 2019 Fortune 500 list — 20 percent were founded by immigrants, creating millions of new jobs.

The Great Immigrants initiative is a tribute to the legacy of Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who rose from poverty to become a leading industrialist. Carnegie founded more than 20 philanthropic organizations, including Carnegie Corporation of New York, a grantmaking foundation established in 1911 to advance the causes of democracy, education, and international peace. As part of the public awareness campaign, the Corporation has honored more than 600 outstanding immigrants whose stories can be viewed through the Corporation's online [database](#).

The 2020 honorees, who mark the 15th class of Great Immigrants, will be recognized with a full-page public service announcement in the *New York Times* on the Fourth of July and through a social media tribute. Please share via [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#) @CarnegieCorp using the hashtag #GreatImmigrants.