Vilcek prize winners note immigrant contributions to US

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Chinese natives who are recipients of a prestigious award that honors immigrants want US President Donald Trump to consider the productive contributions of immigrant professionals in the US.  
James Leng, Jing Liu and Feng Zhang were among the winners of the 2018 Vilcek prizes from the Vilcek Foundation on Feb 5. Jan Vilcek escaped from Czechoslovakia during the Cold War and later worked on the drug Remicade, which reduces the effects of substances in the body that can cause inflammation. He established the foundation in 2000 to highlight contributions of immigrants in the US.  
"I would encourage President Trump to consider the productive contributions of immigrant engineers, scientists, and artists in American History," Leng wrote in an email. "This possibility of exchange between cultures - it's a kind of privilege that only a few places in the world have. This is as much an American legacy as it should be a point of pride."  
"Let the US be inspirational as an immigrant country," Liu said in an email. She was born in Nanjing and came to the US as a college student. "I came to learn, and yes, to some extent to seek new opportunities. Overtime, my relationship with the country became more about how can I contribute to it."  
Leng, who was born in Guangzhou and joined his parents in the US as a child, is a Los Angeles-based architect. He has worked for an impressive roster of prominent architecture firms, including OMA, UNStudio and most recently, Michael Maltzan Architecture, where he was a senior designer focusing on large-scale housing and mixed-use projects.  
"I have been working on buildings to make architecture more accessible to everyone - for instance supportive housing for the formerly homeless. I also have been researching how we can better design urban areas immediately around highways other infrastructure systems," he said.  
Liu is principal of the Brooklyn, New York-based architecture studio SO-IL. Since founding the firm with her partner Florian Idenburg in 2008, she has gone on to design many high-profile and award-winning projects around the world, including the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at the University of California, Davis; the New York venue for Frieze Art Fair; and Pole Dance, an installation at MoMA PS1. She is also an associate professor of architecture at Columbia University.  
Leng and Liu won the Vilcek prizes for Creative Promise in Architecture, given to young immigrants who have demonstrated exceptional promise early in their careers. Zhang, also a Chinese native, received the Vilcek prize for Creative Promise in Biomedical Science. Each will receive $50,000.  
Zhang developed tools that have advanced both optogenetics, a method of exploring brain function by using light to control the actions of brain cells in lab animals, and gene editing, an approach to altering the genomes of virtually all living organisms. Zhang is the James and Patricia Poitras Professor in Neuroscience at McGovern Institute for Brain Research at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology and a core institute member of the Broad Institute.  
He was unavailable to comment.

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