

Two seemingly unrelated stories on the NY Times [webpage](#) reveal the strangely conflicted place of scientists in today's society. [One story](#) reveals our respect for those who, despite difficult circumstances, dedicate themselves to the pursuit of knowledge. That story is about Samantha Garvey, a homeless teenager who has found recognition for her study of the effect of invasive crabs on native mussels in Long Island Sound. She received national attention after becoming a semi-finalist in the Intel science competition, and she is now hopefully on her way to a good college. The warm public response to her story shows Americans' admiration for the individual dedication and talent of a remarkable young scientist.

The [other story](#) is a cautionary reminder of the forces attempting to squelch scientists. This story is about the creation of a legal defense fund for scientists. Those who work on climate issues are now beset by death threats and law suits. The legal defense fund seems like a great idea, given the circumstances. But what does it say about the current state of affairs that scientists need defending from threats and legal harassment?

Strangely, the same talent and passion for knowledge make Americans admire Samantha Garvey could someday subject her to legal harassment and even death threats, if her work as an environmental scientist violates political dogmas. That's a peculiar state of affairs, and a sad one.