Tressie McMillan Cottom

SOCIOLIGIST, WRITER, 2020 MACARTHUR FELLOW.
Tressie McMillan Cottom is a research professor at UNC-Chapel Hill's iSchool, a MacArthur Fellow, and New York Times contributing opinion writer. She is the author of several books, including the National Book Award finalist “Thick: And Other Essays.”

Dr. McMillan Cottom’s research spans higher ed, labor, race, class, gender and digital societies. Audiences and institutions have lauded her work for its incisive analysis and impact. Her current research examines racial capitalism in platform economies and what she calls “hustleprenuership.”

In her writing, research, and public scholarship, she illuminates the empirics of our everyday lives through beautiful storytelling in the Black oral tradition.

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Tressie’s 2019 collection Thick: and Other Essays has been described as “essential,” and the Chicago Tribune calls Tressie, “the author you need to read now.” Dorothy Roberts compares reading it to “holding a mirror to your soul and to that of America.”
Thick was the winner of the Brooklyn Public Library Literary Prize and was a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award.

The foundation for Tressie’s first book, Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy, was formed by dissertation research for her doctorate from Emory University’s Laney Graduate School. In Lower Ed, Tressie questions the fundamental narrative of American education policy. Carol Anderson calls Lower Ed, “nuanced, carefully argued, and engagingly written.”
Tressie McMillan Cottom
Sociologist, Writer, and Public Scholar
Class of 2020

Shaping discourse on highly topical issues at the confluence of race, gender, education, and digital technology for broad audiences.

**Link to Fellowship Profile:**
https://www.macfound.org/fellows/class-of-2020/tressie-mcmillan-cottom

"Public life is just a story that has been written to justify some atrocities as natural and some lives as disposable. When I say that I write stories to make problems for power, I mean that I rewrite the metaphors we use to rationalize big inequalities in the small decisions that make up our everyday lives—how we go to school, how we work, how we consume and how we love. My life’s creative challenge is wielding the tension between powerful narrative and compelling data to center Black intellectual lives as craft and method. “Radically better metaphors for a radically better public life.”

- Tressie McMillan Cottom
As of August 10, 2021, Tressie has:

- 186.9K Twitter followers
- 29.4K Instagram followers
- 6.7K Facebook followers