

# Notes

January/February Vol. 32 No. 1



***Business Matters 2022***

*Thursday, February 24*

# A message from our president

Kris Alan Mauren

The Acton Institute seeks to build a free and virtuous society by speaking old truths in new forms through a combination of careful scholarship of the past, penetrating analysis of the present, and innovative programming oriented toward the future.

This issue recaps an installment of the Acton Lecture Series featuring Rachel Ferguson of Concordia University Chicago on “Black Liberation Through the Marketplace.” The talk, drawing on material from her forthcoming book, explored the way black entrepreneurs have overcome


extraordinary obstacles to create flourishing institutions that have helped transform communities for the better. Such research into the power of markets to transform communities is essential to bring about racial reconciliation and community development today.

Also included is a feature story on our upcoming Business Matters Online conference focusing on the role of business and entrepreneurs in building up a free and virtuous society. We encourage and welcome your participation in this online event coming in February 2022.

There is a brief notice of our most recently published monograph, *A Legacy of Liberty*. This book combines two of Fr. Roberts’ most celebrated essays, with a new introduction I wrote outlining the original founding vision

of the Acton Institute and the challenges we look forward to meeting in the future.

In this issue you’ll also learn of a recent op-ed by Eric Kohn, director of communications at the Acton Institute, in *The Detroit News* about the courage and activism of Jimmy Lai on behalf of the people of Hong Kong. Kohn sees Lai’s many sacrifices in the cause of freedom as rooted in his deep Catholic faith.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors. Thank you! Your support is more important than ever as we work to spread the ideas that animate a free and virtuous society. If you’re just learning about Acton, be sure to check out our website, and please prayerfully consider supporting us in our mission. 

Acton Events <span>REGISTER AT <a href="https://acton.org/events">ACTON.ORG/EVENTS</a> • WATCH ONLINE AT <a href="https://acton.org/live">ACTON.ORG/LIVE</a></span>		
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
FEB 24	<b>Business Matters</b> <i>The Acton Institute’s premier event for business, leadership, ethics, and faith returns! Don’t miss this exciting digital conference, streamed around the globe on Feb. 24, 2022, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. EST.</i>	Online
MAR 17	<b>Lecture Series: “Are We a Nation?”</b> <i>This installment features Samuel Goldman, Ph.D., associate professor of political science at George Washington University and director of the Loeb Institute for Religious Freedom. Goldman will explore the ways the U.S. does and does not correspond to historical conceptions of the nation-state. Join us in person or online @ 12 p.m. EST.</i>	Grand Rapids, MI
MAY 19	<b>Lecture Series: “Savings and Poverty”</b> <i>This installment features the Rev. Dr. Richard Turnbull, director of the Centre for Enterprise, Markets, and Ethics and chairman of the trustees of the Christian Institute. Dr. Turnbull will address how developing a culture of saving is key to poverty prevention. Join us in person or online @ 12 p.m. EST.</i>	Grand Rapids, MI



# Black Liberation Through the Marketplace

Ben Stoner

On December 9, Acton welcomed Rachel Ferguson, professor of business and assistant dean at Concordia University Chicago, and director of its Free Enterprise Center, to deliver its last in-person lecture of 2021. Ferguson began by describing her experience visiting the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, N.C. The museum was organized to show the evolution of black Americans from slavery to taking the lead in the civil rights movement and beyond. One room was filled with displays of the inventions and entrepreneurial accomplishments made by black Americans. Ferguson then shared how the museum reflects the theme of her upcoming book. “This story, the story of a high ideal often unrealized but still inspiring, and a struggle for independence and economic power, is the story of *Black Liberation Through the Marketplace*,” said Ferguson.

Later, Ferguson shared how classical liberals have much to offer the conversation surrounding America’s racial history, explaining why certain urban communities continue to suffer in poverty. Ferguson highlighted two federally funded initiatives that destabilized many black communities. The Convict Leasing Program, Ferguson explained, allowed states to “criminalize black men for things that were invented.” Various states would then lease out these “convicts” to work on farms and in coal

mines, and countless men died because of the terrible working and living conditions.

Ferguson then addressed the various urban renewal programs (1949–79). “The federal government subsidized all-white suburbs and excluded black and mixed neighborhoods from these subsidies,” she noted. “This was intended to relieve the densities of cities and create idyllic all-white neighborhoods.” Ferguson went on to emphasize that, despite such government failings, “80% of black Americans do not live below the poverty line.”

To conclude her lecture, Ferguson dispelled some common misconceptions concerning inner-city poverty. “You’re not going to have [kids] pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and it’s not going to be solved by push-button government programs either.” Instead, Ferguson described how individuals and nonprofits can help these challenged communities truly thrive. “It’s going to take hyper-local, long-term commitment, personal presence—that is the only possible solution.” **N**



Rachel Ferguson

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FEATURED STORY

# Business Matters conference returns

Nathan Mech

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The Acton Institute's premier event for business, leadership, ethics, and faith returns Feb. 24, 2022. Join some of the country's top CEOs, entrepreneurs, and industry experts for an exploration of current challenges facing businesses, including managing remote employees, staffing, and the supply chain crisis. Business Matters 2022 presents a unique synthesis of business insight and moral grounding, and was heralded by last year's participants as "uplifting," "the standard for virtual conferences," and "the best investment of time that I have virtually made so far this year."

**Featured Panel:** "An Economist, an Ethicist, and an Entrepreneur Explore the Social Responsibility of Business"

What responsibilities do businesses have to society? Is pursuing profit enough, or must they also measure success by their promotion of certain social goals? How should businesspeople view their relationships to stakeholders, including customers, employees, and the environment? Too often, commentary on this multifaceted topic is addressed narrowly from the perspective of one discipline. Business Matters 2022 will feature a panel of experts that will explore this challenging issue from multiple angles.

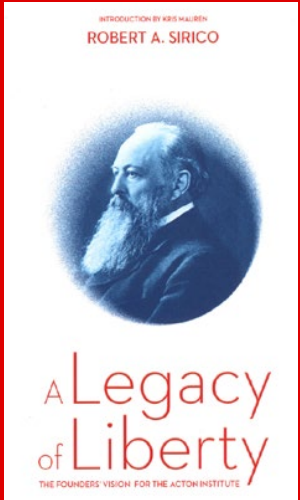
## Panelists

**Michael R. Strain** is director of Economic Policy Studies and Arthur F. Burns Scholar in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute. An economist, his research has been published in academic and policy journals, and he has edited three books on economics and public policy. His essays and op-eds have been published by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*, among other outlets. He is a columnist for *Bloomberg Opinion* and the author of *The American Dream Is Not Dead: (But Populism Could Kill It)*. He holds a Ph.D. from Cornell.

**Dr. Samuel Gregg** is research director at the Acton Institute. He has written and spoken extensively on questions of political economy, economic history, ethics in finance, and natural law theory. He holds a doctor of philosophy degree in moral philosophy and political economy from the University of Oxford. Dr. Gregg is the author of 13 books, including *Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded* (2001), *On Ordered Liberty* (2003), *For God and Profit: How Banking and Finance Can Serve the Common Good* (2016), and *Reason, Faith, and the Struggle for Western Civilization* (2019).

**Nathan Bond** is co-founder and CEO of Rifle Paper Co., an international stationery and lifestyle brand based in Winter Park, Fla. Founded in 2009 by Bond and his wife, Anna, Rifle Paper Co. is recognized as one of the fastest growing private companies in America, with more than 150 employees, whose product is carried by 5,000 retailers around the world. In 2015, Bond was named to *Forbes* magazine's "30 Under 30" list of young game changers, movers, and makers. He has also been profiled by *Inc.* magazine and regularly speaks on business and leadership, including at events with Google for Entrepreneurs.

Don't miss this exciting digital conference, streamed around the globe, on Feb. 24, 2022, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. EST. Learn more and register at [acton.org/businessmatters](https://acton.org/businessmatters). **N**



INTRODUCTION BY KRIS MAUREN  
ROBERT A. SIRICO

**A Legacy of Liberty**  
THE FOUNDERS' VISION FOR THE ACTON INSTITUTE

**\$9.95**

"I'm delighted to see my essays 'Toward a Free and Virtuous Society' and 'The Entrepreneurial Vocation' presented to a new generation. Kris Mauren's new introduction is an original and substantive contribution to the Acton Institute's legacy of liberty and a guide to its future."

- Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President Emeritus and Co-founder, Acton Institute

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1:02:49

Rachel Ferguson on Black Liberation Through the...



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**BRIEF**

## Eric Kohn article on Jimmy Lai in *The Detroit News*


Ben Stoner

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This December, as part of an ongoing publishing partnership with *The Detroit News*, Eric Kohn, Acton's director of communications, wrote a piece on the imprisonment of entrepreneur and pro-democracy advocate Jimmy Lai.

Kohn begins by sharing Lai's backstory. Lai fled communist China as a 12-year-old refugee and began working, and sleeping, in a textile factory. Nevertheless, he quickly capitalized on the many opportunities Hong Kong presented him. Lai built a wildly successful clothing company and various media businesses, and by age 59 he was a billionaire.

Later, Kohn shares the tragic news of Lai's recent arrests. "Apple Daily, the newspaper that Lai built from the ground up and that became the leading pro-democracy voice in Hong Kong, has been shuttered for violating far-reaching Chinese Communist Party rules that allow the CCP to silence dissent," writes Kohn.

On Dec. 13, Lai was sentenced to 13 months in prison for participating in a banned vigil for the victims of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. This was in addition to the 14-month sentence he received on May 28 for helping organize an unauthorized pro-democracy rally. While the details are distressing, Kohn provides hope. "Lai remains strongly rooted: first in his fervent Catholic faith, and second in his unshakable support of freedom." Kohn adds: "The Chinese government wants him silenced, but Jimmy Lai's fight in Hong Kong is far from done." 

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**BRIEF**


## New release: *A Legacy of Liberty*

Dan Hugger

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*What makes for a flourishing society?*

Many people today, both religious and secular, define freedom as merely the power to do what one wants, uninhibited by morality. Many view entrepreneurship as fundamentally acquisitive, fueled by personal greed and pursued at the expense of community. Both views are eminently mistaken. Rev. Robert A. Sirico answers these critics in *A Legacy of Liberty*, a new monograph comprising two of his most celebrated essays, "Toward a Free and Virtuous Society" and "The Entrepreneurial Vocation." In short: Freedom is the necessary precondition for all virtue, and entrepreneurs are the primary agents of economic progress and prosperity for all in our world today.

The monograph also includes an introduction by Acton's president, Kris Alan Mauren, in which he recounts the Institute's humble beginnings and impressive growth. Although the Institute started in a small apartment in Grand Rapids, Mich., Acton now has its own building in the heart of Grand Rapids' downtown. "This organic development mirrors Acton's vision of human flourishing, centered on the human person as the source and summit of both social institutions and economic life," writes Mauren. Near his introduction's conclusion, Mauren summarizes Acton's core mission: "to plant the seed of Lord Acton's vision of a 'society that is beyond the state' and to cultivate 'the individual souls that are above it.'" 





# BUSINESS MATTERS 2022

## ONLINE

Log in to this one-day virtual conference bringing together entrepreneurs and business leaders to explore the moral good that business does. Enjoy expert presentations, panel discussions, interviews, and digital networking, all focused on the intersection of work, business, morality, and faith.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

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*Register now for Business Matters 2022!*

**[acton.org/businessmatters](https://acton.org/businessmatters)**

98 E. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, MI 49503 USA

# ACTON

## LECTURE SERIES

JOIN US IN PERSON  
OR ONLINE

**March 17, 2022 • 12:00p.m.**



*Samuel Goldman, Ph.D. George Washington University  
Associate Professor of Political Science*

ACTON LECTURE SERIES: "ARE WE A NATION?"

In 1867, Sen. Charles Sumner posed the question "Are we a nation?" in the wake of the Civil War. As America confronts new extremes of polarization in the 21st century, the question is inescapable again. Samuel Goldman explores the ways the U.S. does and does not correspond to historical conceptions of the nation-state.

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