

# FREEDOM'S CHAMPION

SUPPORTER  
SPOTLIGHT

NICOLÁS  
IBÁÑEZ SCOTT

FALL 2020

Atlas Network's quarterly review of  
the worldwide freedom movement



CENTER FOR INDONESIAN POLICY STUDIES

## AFFORDABLE FOOD FOR THE POOR PROJECT

ALUMNI IN FOCUS

## A VOICE FOR CANADIAN TAXPAYERS

By Aaron Wudrick

AFRICA'S ZARA YACOB

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Cover: In this special issue of *Freedom's Champion* we feature six separate covers, each highlighting a finalist for the 2020 Templeton Freedom Award. This cover features the Center for Indonesian Policy Studies' Affordable Food for the Poor project.

## MISSION

Atlas Network increases global prosperity by strengthening a network of independent partner organizations that promote individual freedom and are committed to identifying and removing barriers to human flourishing.

## VISION

Our vision is of a free, prosperous, and peaceful world where the principles of individual liberty, property rights, limited government, and free markets are secured by the rule of law.

## STRATEGY

Atlas Network cultivates a network of partners that share this vision. To accelerate the pace of achievement by our partners in their local communities, Atlas Network's unique "Coach, Compete, Celebrate!" strategic model inspires our partners to improve performance and achieve extraordinary outcomes.

### Coach

Atlas Network provides world-class seminars, workshops, mentoring, and other learning opportunities that inspire professionalism and build community among our independent partners.

### Compete

Atlas Network offers grant and prize competitions that fuel our partners' efforts to develop, innovate, and succeed.

### Celebrate

Atlas Network fosters camaraderie and stokes ambitions among our partners by celebrating their greatest accomplishments through events and media outreach.



Atlas Network has been a four-star Charity Navigator member since 2008.



Atlas Network is a GuideStar Exchange Platinum-Level Participant.



Atlas Network's donation payment processor is certified to PCI Service Provider Level 1, the most stringent level of certification available.

# FREEDOM'S CHAMPION

**FREEDOM'S CHAMPION**  
An Atlas Network Publication  
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# KEEPING OUR FOCUS WHERE IT MATTERS

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

## KEEPING OUR FOCUS WHERE IT MATTERS



During the weeks before Presidential elections, partisan rancor seems to crowd out just about everything else. It's not surprising that it does. When few limits remain on the scope of government, there will naturally be intense—and bitter—contests to control its massive power. For non-partisan organizations like Atlas Network, it's a good time for the old Serenity Prayer. Let's have the wisdom and courage to keep our focus on long-term work that can improve lives—and improve the trajectory for our freedom movement—no matter what happens in the remaining weeks of this crazy election year.

One effort that I find particularly promising is Atlas Network's new Dignity Unbound work in the United States, which kicked off with the Poverty & Freedom Summit described inside on page 17. We have learned a lot in recent years as we have boosted our international partners' bottom-up efforts to remove barriers to prosperity. This global work continues, but we now are applying what we've learned to challenges in low-income communities in the U.S. as well.

This program is extremely timely. Too many Americans believe that poverty can be solved only through top-down government programs. Readers of *Freedom's Champion* know why that strategy is flawed, but I've been revisiting my own assumptions about how to address poverty as well. I realize I've made a mistake in often turning to that line Presidents Kennedy and Reagan used at different times about how "a rising tide lifts all boats." Yes, broad economic growth is surely an important goal, but we are being short-sighted if our answer for poverty is only to reduce business regulation and marginal tax rates. Such talk suggests that people in low-income communities lack agency to improve their own lives.

Let's have the wisdom and courage to keep our focus on long-term work that can improve lives no matter what happens in the remaining weeks of this crazy election year.



In our next issue we'll be formally unveiling our Dignity Unbound project, which focuses primarily on the healthy initiative exhibited by so many people in low-income communities. Let's listen to those who are actively devising their own paths out of poverty, and let's learn what policy changes could get obstacles out of their way. I'm excited about how groups in the freedom movement are already working on occupational licensing, the unequal access to educational choices, and policies that have created artificial scarcities in housing. There's much more to be done.

We can help those who have been most disadvantaged by bad government policy. In the process, we just might set an example that others will want to follow—so there's less partisan rancor, and more cooperation toward removing the barriers to prosperity.

Speaking of examples to follow, the six finalists for the 2020 Templeton Freedom Award are incredibly inspiring. We have done a special print-run of this issue of *Freedom's Champion* with six different versions of the cover, each featuring a different finalist. Please join us online for our virtual Liberty Forum and Freedom Dinner on November 11-12 to learn which organization will claim the \$100,000 grand prize!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brad Lips".

Brad Lips  
Chief Executive Officer  
Atlas Network

2020  
FINALISTS

# THE TEMPLETON *Freedom* AWARD

Awarded annually since 2004, Atlas Network's Templeton Freedom Award is named for the late investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton.

This prestigious prize honors Sir John's legacy by recognizing Atlas Network's partner organizations for exceptional and innovative contributions to the understanding of free enterprise and the advancement of public policies that encourage prosperity, innovation, and human fulfillment.

The award is generously supported by Templeton Religion Trust and will be presented live during Atlas Network's virtual Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner on Nov. 11-12. Tune in to see all six finalists and find out who will take home the \$100,000 prize!

You can register to attend at [AtlasNetwork.org/LFFD](https://AtlasNetwork.org/LFFD).



**CIPS**  
Center for Indonesian  
Policy Studies

JAKARTA, INDONESIA

## Center for Indonesian Policy Studies

### AFFORDABLE FOOD FOR THE POOR PROJECT

Since gaining independence in 1945, Indonesia's government has pursued a harmful policy of food self-sufficiency that imposes severe import restrictions, tariffs, price controls, monopolies by state-owned enterprises, and barriers to entry—all in the name of independence. These laws increase the cost of food, resulting in widespread malnutrition among Indonesia's low-income population. Focusing its efforts on making nutritious food widely available for the poor, Center for Indonesian Policy Studies' Hak MakMur campaign contributed to the reduction of import restrictions on beef, corn, rice, and other food products, resulting in an estimated savings of US\$1.9 billion for Indonesian households between 2016 and 2019. In a paradigm shift, government leaders now acknowledge that protectionism makes food less affordable, and they are more likely to liberalize trade in order to achieve food security. The Affordable Food for the Poor project has not only increased access to food in Indonesia, it has laid the intellectual groundwork for a drastic reduction in poverty in the coming decades.



Centre for  
Public Policy Research



KOCHI, INDIA

## Centre for Public Policy Research

### LABOR MARKET LIBERALIZATION PROJECT

For more than half a century, the Kerala Shops & Establishments Act has regulated labor standards and restrictions for commercial establishments within the state of Kerala, India. In this state of nearly 35 million people, the law controls everything from which days and for how many hours a shop can operate to when women can work. Since its implementation in 1960, women have been prevented from working night shifts, limiting their income potential and contributing to an unemployment rate nearly five times that of men. To increase Kerala's employment opportunities and correct the discrimination women face there, the Centre for Public Policy Research assembled a team to conduct research and educate the public on the costs of these restrictions. Their work persuaded the government of Kerala to implement significant changes that include allowing shops to remain open 24/7, introducing shifts for employees, establishing an online business registration platform, and permitting women to work past 7:00 p.m. This represents a dramatic shift in the Communist-led state of Kerala toward improved working conditions, simplified requirements for entrepreneurs, and increased opportunities for employment—especially for women.



VANCOUVER, CANADA

## The Fraser Institute

### ALBERTA PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

Historically, Alberta has been a leader in sound economic governance within North America. However, that standing declined in recent years due to poor public policy from across the political spectrum. To reverse this trend, the Fraser Institute launched the Alberta Prosperity Initiative in 2012, seeking to explain to residents and government officials the extent to which economic mismanagement was driving Alberta's growing challenges. In a broadly-distributed collection of 25 research papers produced in the run up to the provincial election of 2019, the Institute charted a path back toward prosperity through a series of concrete policy reforms centered on reining in government activity and unleashing the power and innovation of the market. The government that came to power immediately took up nine of Fraser's specific policy recommendations, including committing to balancing the budget, reducing taxes and regulations, and allowing for increased private competition in education and healthcare. The Alberta Prosperity Initiative's impact is ongoing as Fraser provides a responsible, nonpartisan source of policy solutions that will reestablish Alberta as one of Canada's economic powerhouses and a place of opportunity for all Canadians.



SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

## IDEAS Labs

### #TICOSCONCORONAS CAMPAIGN

More than one million Costa Ricans live in poverty, so how do its leaders justify the “luxury pensions” of a few thousand people who receive up to US\$24,000 per month? The recipients of these unfair payments—dubbed Ticos Con Coronas, or Costa Ricans with Crowns, by the Costa Rican think tank IDEAS Labs—have found themselves in the spotlight of public ire thanks to IDEAS’ national awareness campaign to eliminate these special privileges. Nearly 50,000 Costa Ricans signed on to a petition to end the luxury pensions that account for over two percent of the country’s gross domestic product. IDEAS Labs successfully leveraged the petition and media attention to demand accountability from the national government on the issue. In response to the public pressure, the Costa Rican legislative assembly unanimously passed a law in 2019 to slash payments for over 4,000 Ticos con Coronas, and Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado publicly renounced his right to a luxury pension at the conclusion of his term. In less than two years, IDEAS Labs accomplished what the World Bank had recommended for decades, simply by educating Costa Rican citizens on the injustices of rent-seeking at the highest level.



FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

## The Mercatus Center at George Mason University

### EQUITY INITIATIVE FOR AMERICAN HEALTHCARE

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed a series of avoidable flaws in the American healthcare system, shedding light on the importance of access to low-cost, high-quality care. Across the United States, 37 state governments have certificate of need laws, which burden healthcare providers with an expensive and time-consuming process to expand or establish new facilities and services. These laws protect incumbent providers from competition by requiring new providers to prove that there is a need for their service in the community. The Mercatus Center at George Mason University's state-by-state analysis shows how these laws increase healthcare costs, reduce supply of healthcare services, and decrease healthcare quality. Their work also demonstrates how practical reforms would improve outcomes for all. Over the last three years, Mercatus research has led to more than 200 policy-related citations, testimonies, and briefings with state policymakers. Guided by Mercatus research, legislatures in 11 states have taken up reform efforts, with a major reform package passed in Florida and others pending in states such as Michigan and Alaska. The COVID-19 pandemic helped expose the sickness within the American healthcare system: misguided policy, burdensome red tape, and a lack of competition together limit access to quality, timely, and affordable healthcare for all.



BOZEMAN, MONTANA

## The Property and Environment Research Center

### RECOVERING ENDANGERED SPECIES PROJECT

Protecting endangered species is a bipartisan priority. But while the Endangered Species Act of 1973 has helped to prevent 99 percent of listed species from going extinct, only 2 percent of those species have recovered their populations. To improve this sorry track record, the Property and Environment Research Center, or PERC, launched its "Recovering Endangered Species" project in 2017, aimed at enhancing outcomes for endangered species through market-based incentive structures that leverage both private and public conservation efforts. PERC led a diverse coalition and robust media campaign to contextualize the need for reform, resulting in the adoption of its top three recommendations by the U.S. Department of the Interior. This includes the restoration of the Act's original two-step approach for newly listed endangered species, equal standards for listing and delisting a species, and the revision of regulations that discourage private conservation. A second set of PERC's policy proposals were adopted by the Bureau of Land Management to tame the wild horse crisis in the western rangelands, which have nearly four times as many horses as they can healthily sustain. PERC's solution incentivized private adoptions, and in the first year of the program, adoptions increased 91 percent, saving taxpayers US\$170 million in future costs and showing how collaborative conservation improves outcomes for animals and humans alike.

## 01

## HARNESSING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT POST-PANDEMIC



Investing in greater economic opportunities for women is good business for all. However, limited information exists on how countries are progressing on the issue, which leaves an incomplete picture of the opportunities available to women in many low- and middle-income countries. On August 5, Arpita Nepal of Samriddhi Foundation, Anthea Haryoko of Center for Indonesian Policy Studies, and Tea Trumbic of the World Bank joined Devex and Atlas Network in an online event that discussed the need to support more local solutions for ensuring equal access to market participation under the law.

## COULD A RENEWED LEBANON ARISE FROM THE ASHES?

The horrific explosion in Beirut was not the cause—but the symptom—of years of mismanagement, greed, and indifference by Lebanon's ruling class. The time is now, perhaps more than ever, for holistic reforms to Lebanon's infrastructure, economy, and finance to lay the groundwork for future prosperity, freedom, and peace. The Lebanese Institute for Market Studies has made a series of policy recommendations that take on wasteful and ineffective public spending, dismantle government-backed monopolies, and establish checks and balances on future public expenditures.

## 03

## A "GREEN MARKET REVOLUTION"?

Twenty authors from 15 different environmentalist and free-market organizations from around the world have come together to offer a pro-market perspective on environmentalism. *Green Market Revolution: How Market Environmentalism Can Protect Nature and Save the Planet* looks at the environmental debate through a classical liberal lens, offering real solutions to keep our economy and planet healthy.



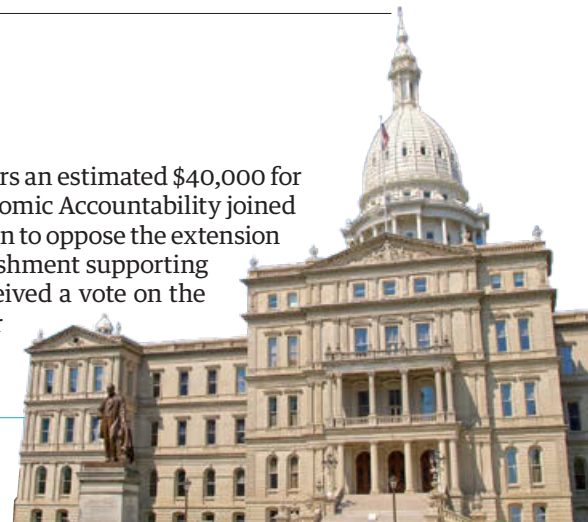
## CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES HELPS RAISE THE NATIONAL INSURANCE THRESHOLD IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The national insurance threshold, which is the point at which employees and the self-employed start paying national insurance tax, was raised from £8,632 to £9,500 thanks in part to the work of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS). The policy proposals put forward in CPS' *Make Work Pay: A New Agenda for Fairer Taxes*, coupled with their targeted outreach, helped to increase the paychecks of 31 million U.K. citizens.

## 05

## TAKING ON CORPORATE SUBSIDIES IN MICHIGAN—AND WINNING

"Good Jobs for Michigan" was a state corporate subsidy program that cost taxpayers an estimated \$40,000 for every job it claimed to have created. The Mackinac Center and the Center for Economic Accountability joined together with other free-market organizations and public-sector unions in Michigan to oppose the extension and expansion of the subsidies. Despite virtually the entire state business establishment supporting the subsidies, the legislation only barely passed out of committee and never received a vote on the Senate floor. The subsidies sunset on schedule at the end of the day on December 31, 2019, ending their drain on state resources.



06

## CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISES GREAT LAKES (CDE) WINS 2020 AFRICA LIBERTY AWARD

In Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), few free-market publications are widely available. In 2018, CDE launched the ProLibertyWriters Project, which was designed by CDE to focus media attention on issues that will help countries in the Great Lakes region boost their scores on the World Bank's *Doing Business* index. In addition to partnering with marketing and journalism experts to offer intensive training sessions to help writers raise public awareness about the good that free enterprise and the rule of law offer society, the team commissioned Burundian, Congolese, and Rwandan bloggers to cover local issues. Writers associated with the project publish between four and six articles every week and have produced more than 840 articles in 2019, reaching 87,000 people in Burundi, Rwanda, and DRC.



## COVID-19, ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AND CITIES AS THE NEW BATTLEGROUND FOR LIBERTY

07

Few things are more dangerous than an elected official eager merely to “do something.” As cities and states chart a course for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent response, the call for local leaders to do something will almost certainly lead to policies that, while meaning well, could make matters worse. Better Cities Project sees a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help hundreds of American cities quickly implement market-oriented, low-regulation policies for fast economic turnaround. And that's why they developed *Getting Back To Work: An Economic Recovery Playbook for America's Cities*.

08

## EMPATHY IS THE FUTURE OF THE LIBERTY MOVEMENT—BRAD LIPS ON KIBBE ON LIBERTY

Atlas Network CEO Brad Lips sat down with Free the People's Matt Kibbe to discuss his new monograph, *The Freedom Movement: Its Past, Present and Future*; the need to passionately speak out against injustice; and the ways the liberty movement can better communicate its message of freedom, tolerance, and human dignity to a broader audience. Visit Free the People's YouTube page to view the hour-long interview.



## POVERTY & FREEDOM NOW AVAILABLE IN SIX LANGUAGES

09

*Poverty & Freedom*, edited by Atlas Network President Matt Warner, has been translated into French, Greek, Hindi, Spanish, and Ukrainian—an exciting step in empowering local leaders to employ local solutions to solve problems in their communities. The book offers first-hand examples of the positive impact pro-market think tanks have had in reducing poverty and improving the lives of people all over the world, and its translation ensures that its message will reach communities worldwide.

10

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, LIBERTY ALUM LAUNCHES OMINIRATV TO EXAMINE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA AND GHANA

The Ominira Initiative for Economic Advancement plans to release 48 short videos and a documentary with the goal of educating and empowering people to develop solutions to shared problems in Ghana and Nigeria. The most popular of the series, “3 Things to Know Before Starting a Business in Nigeria,” featured a legal practitioner outlining the unique obstacles that impact entrepreneurs in the country.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

# NICOLÁS IBÁÑEZ SCOTT



Nicolás Ibáñez Scott is a Chilean entrepreneur and philanthropist.

In October 2019, Chile was swept by violent protests. The region's best empirical example of how economic freedom creates economic growth is being dismantled under populist attacks about economic inequality. Business leaders like Nicolás Ibáñez Scott might have been tempted to walk away. Instead, he has doubled down on the need to revive the liberal project in Latin America.

"What impresses me most about Nicolás," says Roberto Salinas León of Atlas Network's Center for Latin America, "is his determination to create a brighter future for Chile and the broader region, and his refusal to sugarcoat the situation. He begins conversations with the premise that the classical liberal movement may have the answers in theory, but it has failed in practice. What do we do now? What heroic 'out-of-the-box' effort can be undertaken so that history will acquit our generation of liberals? These are the questions he has prompted and inspired us to take on."

Nicolás Ibáñez's father established the first supermarket in Chile in the 1950s. Nicolás oversaw the expansion of this business into a publicly traded national chain. Walmart bought a controlling stake in the company in 2009 to provide a sizable footprint in the country. Since this time, Nicolás and his family have put much of their focus on real estate investment, asset management—and philanthropy.

"We at the Drake Foundation have admired the eco-system for supporting free-market ideas that exists in the United

I am excited for Drake Foundation to partner with Atlas Network so the freedom movement across the broader region can be more robust and energetic. We need to appeal to the hearts of a younger generation that has been gravitating to dead-end ideologies like socialism.

States," says Ibáñez. "While Chile has had some fine institutions conducting policy research in this vein, I believed something was missing. I helped found Fundación para el Progreso to better represent our ideas in Chile's public discussion, and now I am excited for Drake Foundation to partner with Atlas Network so the freedom movement across the broader region can be more robust and energetic. We

need to appeal to the hearts of a younger generation that has been gravitating to dead-end ideologies like socialism."

Thanks to a new \$3 million gift from Drake Foundation, made possible by Nicolás Ibáñez, Atlas Network's Center for Latin America will undertake a host of new activities—to empower the local initiatives of its 90+ regional partners, to incubate new projects, to exchange ideas and strategy, to reach new audiences directly, and to measure change in the Overton Window as a means of holding ourselves to account.

Atlas Network CEO Brad Lips commented, "This is an exciting time for Atlas Network and our Center for Latin America. Our world is at a precarious crossroads, and I am reminded of what F.A. Hayek wrote when the world was recovering from

World War II: 'we must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure, a deed of courage.' We are inspired by the clear-eyed determination of allies like Nicolás Ibáñez and will make good on the faith placed in us to revive the fortunes of classical liberalism."

## A TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT TO MOBILIZE "FREEDOM MOVEMENT 2.0" IN LATIN AMERICA

On September 28, Atlas Network announced a \$3 million three-year gift from Drake Foundation to enable its Center for Latin America to go on offense—to demonstrate that liberalism offers a policy agenda that brings dignity, economic opportunity, social mobility, and equality before the law.

Roberto Salinas León, executive director of Center for Latin America, commented: "For Latin Americans to flourish in the

decades ahead, we need to defeat certain pernicious myths. Among them: that the region needs authoritarian 'caudillos' that can help the poor via socialism, and that liberalism is reducible to 'neo-liberalism,' which is seen as an imported ideology that provides cover for cronyism. With this new gift from Drake Foundation, we will be able to be bold in showing that equality under the law is an attainable goal for Latin Americans and the ideas of liberty provide the path toward human progress and inclusive prosperity in the region."

New plans of the Center for Latin America will be publicly unveiled at a special session within Atlas Network's virtual Liberty Forum on November 11-12.

More information on the Center for Latin America can be found at [AtlasNetwork.org/center-for-latin-america](https://AtlasNetwork.org/center-for-latin-america).



← Roberto Salinas León, executive director of Center for Latin America

## 「AARON WUDRICK」

# A VOICE FOR CANADIAN TAXPAYERS

By Aaron Wudrick  
Federal Director  
Canadian Taxpayers Federation

Since 2014, I've had the great honour of serving as the chief national spokesperson for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF)—a grassroots non-profit of over 235,000 Canadians founded in 1990 and dedicated to advocating for lower taxes, less government waste, and stronger government accountability and transparency.

I came to the CTF with a background in politics, law, and government relations, and it's been the role of a lifetime for someone who believes strongly in individual freedom and limited government. Sometimes the journey is literal, like when I drove the CTF's debt clock—a giant digital scoreboard on wheels hitched to a pickup truck—across the entire country to show how fast government debt is going up in real time.

I've had the honour of appearing before parliamentary committees to spar with politicians, putting on a tuxedo to hand out golden pig Oscar-style awards, and doing thousands of media interviews to push back against relentless ill-advised plans for more spending, more debt, and more government.

But as much fun as it's been, as many in the movement will know, at times it can be a lonely fight. And while our many supporters often lift our spirits, it can still be tough in a smaller country such as Canada, which doesn't have an extensive liberty-minded network of think tanks and advocacy groups. This has made the CTF's friendship with Atlas Network invaluable in learning best practices, skills, and strategies to help spread our message.



Wudrick speaks at the launch of the CTF's "No escalator tax on alcohol" campaign.



Wudrick at the launch of a national tour to highlight the cost of red tape on Canada's national resources.

→ Right: Wudrick delivers scissors to the finance minister to help him trim government spending.

↘ Right below: With the CTF's mascot, Porky the Waste Hater, Wudrick presents the winners of the annual 'awards' for government waste.

↓ Bottom right: Wudrick announces the Municipal recipient of a CTF Teddy Waste Award during a news conference in Ottawa, Wednesday, March 13, 2019.

Photo / THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld



In 2017, I was fortunate enough to attend Atlas Network's Think Tank Leadership Training in New York. We heard from experts on areas ranging from operations management and fundraising to media relations. And it was capped off by the annual Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner.

Atlas Network has been an excellent resource to help connect with like-minded freedom advocates from around the world, and it has served as a perpetual fountainhead of best practices and advocacy ideas I've tried to apply to my own work.

Even more impactful was getting to participate in Atlas Network's week-long Executive Accelerator program in Fairfax, Virginia, in 2019. The program brought some of the liberty movement's best and brightest together in an intense, hands-on course that challenged me to think about how to improve my advocacy by developing clear strategic plans to grow the CTF's impact and strengthen my role as both a colleague and manager.

Throughout my career at the CTF, Atlas Network has been an excellent resource to help connect with like-minded freedom advocates from around the world, and it has served as a perpetual fountainhead of best practices and advocacy ideas I've tried to apply to my own work. I'm grateful to have participated in so many Atlas Network initiatives and look forward to doing so for many more years to come.



# AFRICA'S ZARA YACOB: A FATHER OF EARLY MODERN CLASSICAL LIBERAL THOUGHT?

By Ibrahim B. Anoba  
Fellow, Atlas Network's Center  
for African Prosperity

Does classical liberalism, a philosophy rooted in the belief that liberty is the most important *political* value—have intellectual roots in Africa? Was early classical liberal thought unique to European culture?

Consider the following claim.

*All men are equal in the presence of God; and all are intelligent, since they are his creatures; he did not assign one people for life, another for death, one for mercy, another for judgement.*

It sounds like it might have come from the pen of John Locke, or perhaps Voltaire, Mary Wollstonecraft, or Thomas Paine. The sentiment it expresses animates the American Declaration of Independence. What European or American wrote those lines?

That proclamation comes from the *Hatäta* ('Inquiry'), a treatise written in 1667 in the Ge'ez script by an African philosopher of Ethiopian birth, Zara Yacob.

← Left: A text written in Ge'ez, the traditional Ethiopian alphabet, in a book in the New Cathedral of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia.

Photo / Magdalena Paluchowska / Shutterstock

*Hatäta* was written during a period of high religious tensions in the Ethiopian Empire. Within that empire, the traditionally orthodox, or Coptic, Christian population mounted sustained protests against Emperor Susenyos I, who had declared Roman Catholicism the official religion of Ethiopia. His persecution of Orthodox Christians was part of his toleration of Portuguese imperialism. Externally, Ethiopia's sovereignty was under threat by neighboring Muslim sultanates. It was these conditions that led Yacob to leave his hometown of Aksum and retreat into two years of intense study and meditation. The result was the *Hatäta*.

Much as European natural law theorists such as Hugo Grotius and Locke focused on reason—in Grotius' famous phrase, his conclusions “would have a degree of validity even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness: that there is no God, or that the affairs of men are of no concern to Him”—Yacob rejected exclusive reliance on revealed truths for guidance. He argued that in Aksum, both Coptic and Catholic leaders appropriated and corrupted the words of God for their own ends and imposed their versions of truth or righteousness on others. Yacob concluded that not until an individual “scrutinizes the order and laws of creation, will [the individual] discover the truth.”

Yacob rooted his arguments in free will and concluded that “God created man to be the master of his own actions, so that he will be what he wills to be, good or bad.” As such, it would be against God's will to force one's idea of morality or righteousness on others simply because we consider their actions to be immoral or wrong. Yacob believed that no man was entitled to deprive another of his free choice, even when motivated by religious beliefs.

Yacob was also a champion of feminism and equal basic rights for all. He criticized unequal rights for women that were grounded in theological arguments about impurity during menstruation and argued that if God had so created the female sex to experience the menstrual cycle as part of His plan, it could not be a duty to punish a woman for taking part in God's plan. He condemned enslavement as an evil that “cannot come from the creator of man who made us equal, like brothers.”

The thought-provoking arguments for individual freedom of the *Hatäta* seem to predate Locke and other Enlightenment arguments for toleration. Although the *Hatäta* was not produced in its written Ge'ez form until 1667, philosopher Claude Sumner, who directed scholarly attention to Ethiopian philosophy in



The Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion is an important historical site in Ethiopia. It claims to contain the Ark of the Covenant and served as the traditional place for Ethiopian imperial coronations.

the 1970s, concluded that Yacob must have started work on *Hatäta* around 1630. Yacob wrote that he meditated on ideas that culminated in the treatise while in isolation after he had fled Aksum due to persecution from Susenyos I, some years following the emperor's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1622. The English Levellers did not write until the 1640s after Yacob had started to write, and John Locke's *Two Treatises of*

*Government* (1689) was published twenty-two years after the *Hatäta*.

I examine the contributions of Zara Yacob to the literature of freedom in greater detail in my forthcoming book on African thinking on freedom. Yacob's contribution deserves an honored place in the history of classical liberal thought. The son of a poor farmer from the Horn of Africa gave the world a masterpiece of reasoned clarity about liberty.

My colleagues across the world are reclaiming their traditions of liberty. It

is my passion to recover, not only for Africans but for the world, the African heritage of liberty. The forcible introduction of colonialism, of socialism, and of state-tyranny brutally suppressed the yearning of Africans for liberty. We will achieve our liberty when we knowingly claim it as our own heritage.

Yacob's contribution deserves an honored place in the history of classical liberal thought. The son of a poor farmer from the Horn of Africa gave the world a masterpiece of reasoned clarity about liberty.



→ Right: Ibrahim B. Anoba is editor of AfricanLiberty.org and a fellow at Atlas Network's Center for African Prosperity.

# EXECUTIVE ACCELERATOR 2020

The think tank industry has plenty of capacity-building trainings on fundraising, marketing, and activism, but few on building personal leadership skills. To address this gap in the market, last year we launched Executive Accelerator, an intensive leadership and strategic planning workshop designed to nurture rising think tank executives. Participants walk away from the week-long program with data-driven insights into their strengths and growth opportunities as individual leaders in addition to a comprehensive understanding of strategic planning and how to build and lead high-performing teams. This year's cohort was made up entirely of Americans due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, but the program provided leaders from the Mercatus Center, Tax Foundation, Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Texas Public Policy Foundation, and many other state-based and national organizations the opportunity to reflect on their approaches to strategic and leadership development.

"Atlas Network's Executive Accelerator was the perfect program for me," said Daniel Bunn, vice president of global projects at Tax Foundation. "The cost was low enough both in time and money to make it an easy opportunity to get training. The value of that training far exceeds the cost, though. I learned about myself as a leader in an environment where



The 2020 cohort of Executive Accelerator included 14 leaders representing 11 public policy organizations.

I could see my peers learning about themselves while being introduced to valuable tools for developing strategies and leading my organization. I fully expect the training will pay dividends as I share my experience with other leaders in my organization and implement some of these tools to help the organization become more efficient and effective."

## DEFINING THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. LIBERTY MOVEMENT AT THE 2020 CEO SUMMIT

In August, 20 of the top think tank CEOs in the U.S. gathered in Tyson's Corner, Virginia (with strict social distancing practices in place) to redefine the liberty agenda for 2021 and beyond. With COVID-19 and social unrest on their minds, the group, a subset of Atlas Network's Global Council of CEOs, worked intensively to identify the crucial issues, opportunities, strategies, and messaging that would optimize this moment in American history for the benefit of human freedom.

These events represent crucial opportunities for busy CEOs to connect with peers. According to Institute for Humane Studies CEO Emily Chamlee-Wright, "Connecting with peer colleagues in an atmosphere of positive challenge and collaboration is an opportunity to refuel and recommit to the important work we do. I'm grateful to the Atlas Network for creating the space organizational leaders need to learn from one another."

One of the richest discussions that took place over the Summit's two and a half days concerned education policy in the United States—both K-12 and higher education—recognizing the gap many parents are experiencing between resources

committed to education services and the quality of delivery. With public schools understandably struggling to navigate the impacts of the pandemic, parents are demanding flexibility in the marketplace.

An effect of this phenomenon is a mainstreaming of homeschooling and the emergence of creative pod-based solutions to meet local needs. How the regulatory environment adapts to support these solutions will be key and think tanks at the national and state level are launching diverse research and education projects to help policymakers and parents work together for the good of our children. In higher education, new options for accreditation, certification, and alternatives to four-year college also demand an innovative rethinking of workforce preparedness and training.

Looking ahead also included issues of race, criminal justice, and policing. This network has a long history of tackling problematic issues in those areas including the unconstitutional practices surrounding qualified immunity, civil asset forfeiture, and policing in general. With the increased focus on race in 2020, the CEOs strategized how best to work to-

gether to advance this cause effectively, joining forces with diverse coalitions on liberty-based solutions without taking for granted the threats posed by those who recognize injustices but whose solutions would make matters worse.

Lastly, the capacity of the network was also a key topic as CEOs shared with each other their latest innovative approaches to strengthening their organizations' abilities to meet the challenges of the day by rapidly adapting to virtual work, holding fewer in-person meetings, and creating new opportunities to communicate our messaging effectively and more broadly to all stakeholders.

Atlas Network began the CEO Summit cohort model several years ago, and it has proven to be a critical professional



Connor Boyack, CEO of the Utah-based Libertas Institute, talks about the future of education in the United States.

development opportunity for think tank leaders who benefit immensely from peer support and dialogue.

## CAN THE FREE-MARKET MOVEMENT LEAD ON POVERTY?

In the last several years, U.S. think tanks have expanded their work to include important liberty topics that are of particular relevance to low-income communities. Are there more frontiers for fighting big government on behalf of the disadvantaged that think tanks could be leading on?

To answer that question 20 think tank leaders and philanthropists convened in Tyson's Corner, Virginia to brainstorm and strategize a transformation in free-market advocacy on behalf of low-income communities in the U.S.

In addition to criminal justice and occupational licensing reform, the group developed a host of new ideas for tackling the limitations on property rights that have led to scarce affordable housing. Zoning and development restrictions have severely limited the market's capacity to meet demand in new and innovative ways. Those advocating for decentralization have the solution, and free-market think tanks are uniquely positioned to lead on this issue.

"I see think tanks in the U.S. as an undervalued resource when it comes to tackling poverty," explained Matt Warner, president of Atlas Network, and the working group's organizer. "There are major social challenges for which a sharpened and informed set of liberty advocates could come to the rescue."

Better Cities Project founder, Greg Brooks, has a rich background in city planning and economic development. Supported by an Atlas Network grant, his organization has released a policy handbook for think tanks, policymakers, and the public to get inspired on practical ways forward.

Amy Cooke, CEO of North Carolina's John Locke Foundation (JLF), has been leading on public health flexibility in the wake of the pandemic. This was her first Atlas Network event since taking over JLF, and she reported, "Atlas Network is the heart-

beat of the international freedom movement. It's only natural that Atlas would be front and center bringing together great minds to discuss how free markets can address poverty and contribute to global human flourishing."

Cato Institute's Michael Tanner shared with the group the latest lessons learned from leading on reform for low-income communities in California. In his analysis, the study of poverty has tended to lead us down one of two theories. Either people in poor places have made too many bad choices that have limited their economic viability, or structural issues and social challenges have prevented prosperity. Tanner suggests there is a third frontier more worthy of our focus—identifying and eliminating bad public policies that limit the freedoms and choices of those in poverty.

Free-market think tanks in the U.S. are uniquely positioned to lead on that third frontier. The group also benefitted from the participation of Stand Together Foundation's CEO Evan Feinberg, who leads investments in social entrepreneurship and direct service organizations tackling poverty across the country. His experiences have shown him that individual initiative is key to eliminating poverty and that a combination of civil society and smarter public policy (expanding choice and flexibility for low-income communities) represent the most promising combination for success.

Atlas Network will be increasing its grantmaking in the U.S. and Canada for projects specifically targeted to support the freedoms of low-income communities as part of our Dignity Unbound work with our new Center for U.S. and Canada. Visit [AtlasNetwork.org](https://AtlasNetwork.org) to learn more.

Randy Hicks, president & CEO of the Georgia Center for Opportunity, speaks about his organization's "Hiring Well, Doing Good" initiative at the Poverty & Freedom Summit.



A low-angle photograph of the Statue of Liberty against a teal background. The statue is wearing a white surgical face mask. The torch in her right hand is at the top left, and the tablet in her left hand is at the bottom right.

# FREEDOM AND CREATING A RESILIENT SOCIETY

By Dr. Lyall Swim, Chief Operating Officer  
of Atlas Network

What the COVID-19  
Pandemic Reveals about  
the Connection Between  
the Ideas of Freedom  
and Being Resilient

While this may seem like a somewhat ironic statement to make given my employer and role, I consider myself somewhat of an outsider to the freedom movement.

While I have studied our ideas and have dabbled in the policy arena (specifically in education), I do not consider myself a policy nor philosophical expert as it relates to the ideas/philosophy of our movement and their corresponding policy solutions. From a career standpoint, I have spent more of my career outside the freedom movement than inside it. Lastly, my academic training has been wholly outside the realm of the ideas of political science, economics, philosophy, international relations, and public policy. Instead, my academic journey has been filled with courses and research focused on understanding a range of theories and concepts relating to leadership and organizational development.

The downside of this outsider chair is that while I understand the underlying principles of liberty, I often struggle to articulate these principles and how they relate to current issues like populism or socialized medicine or the downsides of Keynesian economics as well as some of my colleagues at Atlas Network such as Tom Palmer and Brad Lips (and many others in the movement). The upside of having spent a significant portion of my career in the leadership and organizational development space, combined with the work I have done to read and study great thinkers in our movement, is that I am able to see how much the concepts and research in the leadership space (while using different words) make a compelling case for our ideas.

The most recent example of this merging of my two worlds relates to the global health crisis we have been wrestling with due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

On the last day of 2019, the first case of COVID-19 was reported from Wuhan, China. At that time, no one could have predicted the ensuing economic, social, and health impacts that were soon to engulf the world. This global pandemic has raised the profile of one of the most critical (and heavily researched) attributes of leadership: resiliency.

*Forbes* contributor, Brent Gleeson, noted several attributes that contribute to organizational (and I would add societal) resiliency including,

- Reducing hierarchical structures in favor of decentralized environments,
- Eliminating constraint-focused thinking,
- Refusing to reward mediocrity, and
- Embodying a people-first approach.

In looking at that list, we can easily begin to connect each of the aforementioned attributes with a corresponding attribute of a free and liberal society versus a socialist, authoritarian one. Reducing hierarchical structures and decentralizing looks a lot like limited government versus centralized planning. Eliminating constraint-focused thinking looks like growing the economic pie instead of redistributing it. Refusing to reward mediocrity looks a lot like a meritocracy instead of the resiliency-killing idea of equality of outcome and “everyone’s a winner.” And encouraging a people-first



↑ Top: Dr. Swim facilitates the Executive Accelerator training in Tyson's Corner, Virginia.

↓ Bottom: Dr. Swim speaks with Michael Melendez (director of policy at the Libertas Institute) during the Executive Accelerator training.



approach looks a lot like respecting the individual and his/her inherent dignity versus collectivist thinking and/or the reliance on the wisdom of the all-knowing technocrat.

It is said that a crisis doesn't define character. Rather, it reveals it. The same can be said for the resilience of an individual, organization, and community. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed just how destructive statism, populism, socialism, and all the other “isms” associated with authoritarian control are as it relates to creating resilient individuals and societies.

In contrast, our philosophy of freedom is the ultimate resilience-building regimen. As we continue to make the case for greater freedom in the COVID pandemic environment, we need to more clearly highlight the beneficial aspects of freedom in creating a resilient society and make the case that our ideas are not just sound philosophically but they are also what great leadership requires.

COVID-19 is not the last pandemic or other globally disruptive event that will come our way. However, as we continue to advocate for our core philosophical principles in pursuit of our shared vision of a free, prosperous, and peaceful world, we can help ensure that we are more than resilient enough to handle whatever new challenges we may face.



# NICOLÁS IBÁÑEZ SCOTT

I am excited for Drake Foundation to partner with Atlas Network so the freedom movement across [Latin America] can be more robust and energetic. We need to appeal to the hearts of a younger generation that has been gravitating to dead-end ideologies like socialism.



– NICOLÁS IBÁÑEZ SCOTT



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