FREEDOM’S CHAMPION

WINTER 2021

Alumni in Focus:
Joanna Baron

The 2021 Templeton Freedom Award Finalists

The 2021 Sir Antony Fisher Achievement Award

Supporter Spotlight:
Michael Krupp

A HARROWING ESCAPE

Afghanistan at Twilight

New Borderless and Hablemos Libertad Podcasts
When the country’s republican government fell to the Taliban in August, he and his wife Nilab led a harrowing escape with the help of the partners to improve performance and achieve extraordinary outcomes.

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.

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.

Our vision is to partner in their local communities, Atlas Network’s unique network of independent partner organizations that promote individual freedom and are committed to identifying and removing barriers to human flourishing.

At our core is the conviction that the extension of freedom is the most powerful force for good in the world. We believe so deeply in this cause that we have made it the driving aspiration of our lives.

The 2022 Regional Liberty Forums
Impact Story: First Week Out
Alumni in Focus: Joanna Baron
Borderless and Hablemos Libertad Podcasts
New Book: Development with Dignity

I am sending you this message on the eve of Thanksgiving, and I am feeling especially grateful for loved ones, the simple wonders that fill our days, and the resilience and generosity of the extended community around Atlas Network.

Your gifts sustain a committed team with a high-leverage strategy for helping more people enjoy the fullness of life. We certainly encounter dispiriting setbacks, as you’ll read about in our cover story about Khalid Ramizy and the Afghanistan Economic and Legal Studies Organization. But the setbacks only amplify why we need to work harder for the cause we love.

This is not a time to be discouraged. There is progress being made every day by the partner network you help with your donations to Atlas Network. There is progress being made every day by the partner network you help with your donations to Atlas Network.

Since our last issue of Freedom’s Champion, our team has been busy: providing training and in-depth consultations to key leaders in our movement, launching a new web site with updated branding, achieving impact with our award-winning First Week Out documentary and our podcasts; and starting up our new Center for Asia & Oceania.

None of this happens without your support, and I am tremendously grateful.

There is a Jewish prayer I heard once that stuck with me. It began with a lengthy expression of gratitude for all the blessings that fill our days, and ended with an appeal to God: “Help me contribute to a more just and compassionate society, so that all may share your gifts in the joy of freedom.” It is a line that very much sums up what Atlas Network is all about. I feel tremendously privileged to work with you toward these ends.

Thankful for freedom
As the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan, it left a chaotic scene in its wake. As the Taliban reclaimed power, many who had advocated for the principles of a free society became targeted in violent reprisals. Atlas Network quickly and quietly mobilized to help the CEO of Afghanistan Economic and Legal Studies Organization (AELSO), Khalid Ramizy, escape the country. Dr. Tom G. Palmer recently spoke to Khalid, now safely abroad.

Afghanistan at Twilight

A Harrowing Escape

Dr. Tom G. Palmer: Tell us about your work going back the last ten years in Afghanistan.

Khalid Ramizy: Afghanistan suffers from extremism and communist ideologies and needs institutions such as AELSO to counter such backward ideas. Classical liberal ideas are both inspiring and practical.

We had very limited resources but an important mission to educate every Afghan about their basic human rights and to spread the ideas of liberty. Although advocating for principles such as pluralism can be life-threatening and to spread the ideas of liberty. Although advocating for principles such as pluralism can be life-threatening in a place such as Afghanistan, AELSO has a dedicated team and the support of partners worldwide, especially in Atlas Network, and that made a big difference.

Khalid: We concluded that for the ideas to spread, they are quick and quietly mobilized. NSD sent me warnings until the last days of the republican government that my name was on the lists of militant groups and that they would kill me. The National Security Department of Afghanistan told me my name was on the lists of militant groups and that they would kill me. The National Security Department of Afghanistan told me my name was on the lists of militant groups and that they would kill me.

Tom: One of AELSO's impressive accomplishments is the establishment of projects and starting autonomous organizations, including a grassroots organization.

Khalid: We worked particularly with university students who are most open to discovering these values from the standpoint of Islamic teachings was based on the conservative nature of our society and our own heritage. We also used different languages and respected personalities from different communities.

Tom: How many people did you reach with the ideas of liberty?

Khalid: In 2020 alone we reached more than 610,000 people, with more than 5,500 public and private university students.

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One achievement that will affect the country for many years is the availability of important texts explaining free society values in national languages of Afghanistan. Extremists may burn them, but they will not burn them all.

Khalid: After the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, it seemed totally impossible to leave the country. It was hard to make the final decision to go into hiding even as threats, we work with more energy for promoting democratic values, reaching areas where we were unable to venture in the past due to ongoing war, creating a national conversation on the compatibility of Islam with the ideas of a free society, translating and publishing books, and producing more radio and online content.

Tom: It seems that many people were surprised by the Taliban takeover, including even the Taliban. What led to such a rapid collapse, after two decades of foreign military presence and the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars that were pumped into the country?

Khalid: Many things immediately come to mind: a shocking level of corruption, social exclusion of villagers, lack of quality education, extreme poverty, monopolistic behavior by government and warlords, foreign interference from Pakistan, lack of unified voice and fulfilling their demands is the only option available to the Taliban. It is important not to isolate the country again, because it may easily become once again a safe haven to terrorist organizations.

Khalid: Unfortunately, there is no ideological or fundamental difference between the Taliban of 1996–2001 and the Taliban of today. They conduct violence in a systematic way and spread disinformation for their own benefit. The Taliban do not accept any kind of differences. In their view, anyone who advocates for their rights and beliefs has disrupted order, and he—and especially she—is an enemy of Islam and of the Taliban. In one of the last press conferences, Taliban spokesmen Zabihullah Mujahid declared any kind of protest illegal and forbade journalists to cover these movements without permission. They used weapons to suppress civil protests and women’s advocacy, and some journalists were arrested and severely tortured in recent days.

Khalid: After the Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan, the Afghan government was forced to leave the country because my mission and work for the Afghan people was important. I remained in the country until the last possible moment. After the collapse of the government and takeover of the Taliban—and as they searched for me—finally, I decided to leave my country and my entire life to survive and to continue our work. I intend to continue the mission of supporting Afghan people, especially youths, to stand against the extremists in the country and to promote the ideas of liberty.

Tom: The现代 Taliban compare to that of 1996–2001 and the Taliban of today. They conduct violence in a systematic way and spread disinformation for their own benefit. The Taliban do not accept any kind of differences. In their view, anyone who advocates for their rights and beliefs has disrupted order, and he—and especially she—is an enemy of Islam and of the Taliban. In one of the last press conferences, Taliban spokesmen Zabihullah Mujahid declared any kind of protest illegal and forbade journalists to cover these movements without permission. They used weapons to suppress civil protests and women’s advocacy, and some journalists were arrested and severely tortured in recent days.

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Khalid: Afghanistan is in the midst of economic and political crisis. Engaging with the international community and fulfilling their demands is the only option available for the Taliban. It is important not to isolate the country again, because it may easily become once again a safe haven to terrorist organizations. If the world is silent about Afghanistan again, I am sure that the situation will get worse and terrorist activity will rise. I have not lost hope.

Tom: How can our readers help you and the people of Afghanistan?

Khalid: By nullifying negative stereotypes about Afghans, and by fundraising to support the freedom advocates still in Afghanistan. Their lives remain in danger. Supporting the work of AELOS and our partners and network over the next year is critical. We know so many partners helped us and when we can, we will help them, too.
Tom: I’m bullish. The investments of time, thought, and resources provided by our sponsors, our board of directors, and our colleagues have hugely increased our effectiveness, in measurable, positive returns on investment. What used to be seat-of-the-pants reckoning is now systematic and businesslike. That’s not to say there’s no use for judgement, for what Aristotle called phronesis, but that’s been greatly magnified by institutionalized processes. At the center of our transformation have been principled liberty-loving businesses, such as P.K. Steiner,12 which has generously underwritten major work over the world; Debbi, another entrepreneur, is laser-focused on applying sound business practices to boost our effectiveness and to sharpen our mission focus. Our thousands of supporters give up their own entire to make our work possible and we owe it to them to get the most impact for what they have entrusted to us. Gerry Chrsydez, who’s leaving our board, is a focused value investor, as was our late and much missed friend Don Smith. They stressed adding value in everything one does. It shows. It seems that not hating businessespeople, but instead admiring people who add net value to the world, whether as carpenters or hedge fund managers or truck drivers or farmers, helps us to focus on the bottom line: is this activity making the world on net free, more just, or poorer than the other uses of the resource? And lastly, I’m happy that our younger colleagues are so capable and so dedicated. I’ve no plans to die any time soon. It’s a time of transition and there are many people much more able and more capable to take “favors” now, when they have little to offer in return, and to pay back by helping other people when they can. When I was a lad, I bought used books through the mail from P.K. Steiner, a bookseller. She was a wise lady and a deep and sincere libertarian. She let me buy books on credit and even gifted me books she thought I should read. She sent me battered books by Erich Maria Remarque and Christiaan Jiljens, an admired friend. I tell young people and people about the “favor bank.”

Brad: You’re admired not just as one of our era’s great scholars of liberty, but for your bravery. When was the first time you put yourself in harm’s way for the values you believe in?

Tom Palmer: I wouldn’t count myself as brave. I’m just a young person, I remember her and many other people who are struggling to accept help to take “favors” now, and to pay back by helping other people when they can. When I was a lad, I bought used books through the mail from P.K. Steiner, a bookseller. She was a wise lady and a deep and sincere libertarian. She let me buy books on credit and even gifted me books she thought I should read. She sent me battered books by Erich Maria Remarque and Christiaan Jiljens, an admired friend. I tell young people and people about the “favor bank.”

Brad: You remember making a similar point at a conference you organized in Taipeh for Cato in 2006 before you joined our team. I found very poignant how you talked about the “favor bank.”

Tom: It’s an old idea. I got the term from Prof. Randy Barnett, an admired friend. I tell young people and many other people who are struggling to accept help to take “favors” now, when they have little to offer in return, and to pay back by helping other people when they can. When I was a lad, I bought used books through the mail from P.K. Steiner, a bookseller. She was a wise lady and a deep and sincere libertarian. She let me buy books on credit and even gifted me books she thought I should read. She sent me battered books by Erich Maria Remarque and Christiaan Jiljens, an admired friend. I tell young people and people about the “favor bank.”

Brad: Loyal friends of Atlas Network are curious about where you and your husband, Sonoram, will be living.

Tom: Near the Gulf of Thailand. We sold our house in the U.S. and we’re building a house with a separate office/studio, so I can close the door and focus. It’s also a library I designed—with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and stacks and a brass rail and a wheeled ladder. I used to fantasize about such a library in Thailand, but instead I have nothing but the most modern tools. I can travel more efficiently. Bonuses: we’re near family and our cats love Thailand.

Brad: Finally, how about a favorite classical liberal quote that many of us will not have encountered before?

Tom: The Austrian novelist and scholar Robert Musil, in his masterpiece The Man Without Qualities, noted that “Nowadays only criminals dare to harm others without the help of philosophy.”
The two organizations that took top honors in the 2019 Investors Summit—the Property and Environment Research Center and the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy—went on to become finalists for the prestigious Templeton Freedom Award in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The 2022 Smart Bets encompass three U.S. states and seven countries representing five continents. Without further ado, here are Atlas Network’s 2022 Smart Bets:

**NEVADA, UNITED STATES**

**Better Cities Project**

Better Cities Project (BCP) is devoted to the “last mile” in public policy, highlighting the strategic need for local government reform and an ever-increasing number of elected officials needing solutions. BCP’s Freedom Should Be At Home Downtown coalition program leverages locally focused policy ideas from across the freedom movement into a package of ready-made model ordinances and research.

**URUGUAY**

**Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo**

Making Uruguay the First Developed Nation in Latin America

After 15 years of leftist governments, Uruguay is at a crossroads in its history. Despite stable political institutions, significant barriers to economic freedom and open markets exist, and a new, heterogeneous government leaves open the door for necessary reform. Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo (CED) is spearheading a three-part reform initiative to improve Uruguay’s competitiveness: 1) opening the economy to increased international trade, 2) freeing up regulation of the labor market, and 3) reducing costs in markets with very low competition and artificially high costs. After making progress on the first two, CED has its sights on developing a “Guidebook for Economic Reforms in Uruguay” to outline necessary reforms and provide a roadmap for implementation.

**HONDURAS**

**Fundación Eléuteria**

For a Clean Sea and a Prosperous Economy

For the last 15 years, between August and November, the town of Omoa on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras, has been flooded with large amounts of garbage that originates in Guatemala City. This is due to poor municipal management of solid waste. This environmental externality persists despite the repeated failed promises to fix the situation made by both governments, and this drives a lot of citizens to migrate to the United States. Fundación Eléuteria has a “green market” plan to improve the situation for the 50,000 people living in Omoa through a mix of public and private lands, property rights, and the rule of law.

**NEW YORK, UNITED STATES**

**Human Rights Foundation**

HRF’s Online Activist Academy

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF)’s Online Activist Academy seeks to develop a robust, engaging curriculum to support human rights and pro-democracy activists working in the 95 countries ruled by authoritarian regimes. This curriculum will be tailored to the needs of activists and civil society organizations working in countries under authoritarian rule, including building their capability for financial stability through accessing cryptocurrency funding, and will be fully accessible in an online learning platform for activists within the HRF and Atlas Network communities.

**LEBANON**

**Lebanese Institute for Market Studies**

Lebanon NOW—Lebanon News and Opinion Website

Lebanon faces several interrelated crises, and its political class continues to peddle fake news and misleading data to justify these failures and promote more of the same. The Lebanese Institute for Market Studies (LIMS) is building a digital media platform that provides credible data, in-depth analysis, reliable information, and free-market recommendations for the Lebanese economy. Their team plans for the LIMS website to become the go-to online platform for journalists, think tanks, international organizations, policymakers, and groups seeking meaningful change in Lebanon. The resources your organization can provide allow greater transparency, fact checks, civic empowerment of citizens, and informed decision-making.

**CAMEROON**

**Nkafu Policy Institute**

Nkafu Fellows Program

Nkafu Policy Institute has steadily grown since it began work six years ago, developing a strong bench of talented young analysts. Their next frontier is to attract highly experienced senior policy wonks to engage directly with high-ranking policymakers across a wide range of issues. The Fellows—each with high-level technical expertise—will anchor core programs at Nkafu, including economic affairs, health policy and research, governance and democracy, and peace and security. This will include creating and facilitating core products such as the annual “Nkafu Budget Report,” the monthly ON POLICY Magazine, quarterly public Nkafu Debates, and a platform for non-political debates to examine issues related to Cameroon’s economic development.

**LOUISIANA, UNITED STATES**

**Pelican Institute for Public Policy**

Defining Louisiana’s Future

Many think tanks struggle with finding an audience to consume their research and become activated to champion reform. Pelican Institute has innovated in this space with their owned-audience strategy. Building off the success of their “A School That Fits” education reform messaging campaign, which went online and eventually was cited in a PBS debate between gubernatorial candidates, Pelican Institute is looking to build their owned-audience strategy to effectively shape the debate about policy in Louisiana.

**CANADA**

**SecondStreet.org**

Health Care Choice

SecondStreet.org seeks to inform Canadians about health reform options that could improve outcomes for patients—including allowing patients the additional option of purchasing insurance using non-government providers of their choosing. SecondStreet.org will continue to produce ground-breaking research into how many Canadians die each year while waiting for government care and tell stories about the real people impacted by the shortcomings of the existing system.
SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Michael Krupp

Michael Krupp is a longtime supporter of Atlas Network. Our Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Vale Sloane, recently interviewed Michael about his philanthropy and his involvement with Atlas Network.

Vale Sloane: Thank you for speaking with me, Michael. What was your original introduction to Atlas Network?
Michael Krupp: Ironically, I found out about Atlas Network through the back door. Having a sincere interest in precious metal, I attended a few precious metals conferences, including Freedom Fest. In the early years of Freedom Fest, sponsorship and exhibitors participating in this conference had ties to those operating in the precious metals industry. When perusing the exhibition hall in Las Vegas, I was drawn to the Cato Institute table, discussing what Cato did and gathering some informational materials. It became apparent this way of thinking was coupled with the inner responsibility of becoming self-reliant and responsible. As our relationship grew, certain in the realization that these higher universal and eternal principles and truths ushered in the foundation of Mysticism, the underlying but most important link missing in most religions today. When understood and practiced correctly, they bring greater freedom from fear, worry, and anxiety. Atlas Network and Liberalism present universal and eternal principles for living in the world today in greater freedom while Mysticism presents the highest universal and eternal principles for living within Oneself. For me, finding both have become a beautiful marriage.

The mission and activities of Atlas Network speak deeply to me … Atlas Network has taken the principles of classical liberalism and meaningfully put them into action.

Vale: What excites you most about being a supporter of Atlas Network and the worldwide freedom movement?
Michael: It provides an opportunity to practice and bring greater awareness of specific ideas and principles that can manifest into far greater levels of freedom, harmony, and liberty for most individuals, while providing clearer guidance for governments and organizations. When this is allowed to transpire, these entities will eventually recognize the efficacy of this way of life, gently allowing them to become compassionately interwoven into the fabric of treating and governing its citizenry and the governments in other areas of the world.

Vale: What is your fondest memory at an Atlas Network event?
Michael: It’s not one event as that would be unfair. It’s not necessary to be an open spokesman on the right side. It is not necessary to be an open spokesman in times of danger, but rather share these ideas with others when they are drawn to you and want to know more. The longer these seeds are nurtured and allowed to take greater root, the stronger will be the impact and success when these beautiful new expressions of freedom and truth break through into the world.

Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Mohammedism, or other legitimate religions. Once the revelator and his closest followers were gone, these teachings in most respects gravitated towards becoming religions, more organized with differing rules, laws, and directives. The initial revelations and teachings were focused on the Oneness of all creation, further focusing on the sacredness, sanctity, and uniqueness of the individual with recognition of his or her individual freedom and liberty to live authentic lives and love for mankind. These universal revelations and truths ushered in the foundation of Mysticism, the underlying but most important link missing in most religions today. When understood and practiced correctly, they bring greater freedom from fear, worry, and anxiety. Atlas Network and Liberalism present universal and eternal principles for living in the world today in greater freedom while Mysticism presents the highest universal and eternal principles for living within Oneself. For me, finding both have become a beautiful marriage.

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TEMPLETON FREEDOM AWARD

2021 Finalists

Organizations from Burundi, India, United Kingdom, and United States have been named as finalists for Atlas Network’s 2021 Templeton Freedom Award

Awarded since 2004, Atlas Network’s Templeton Freedom Award is named for the late investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton. The prestigious award annually honors his legacy by identifying and recognizing the most exceptional and innovative contributions to the understanding of free enterprise and the public policies that encourage prosperity, innovation, and human fulfillment via free competition. The winning organization receives a US$100,000 grand prize and the runners-up each receive US$20,000. The award is generously supported by Templeton Religion Trust and will be presented during Atlas Network’s 2021 Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner in Miami, Florida.

Here are the 2021 finalists:

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA
Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy
Initiating Education Choice Reform

Quality education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty, but for decades, West Virginia students have been trapped in a system consistently ranked at the bottom of national rankings, with no alternatives available. Leaders of the Cardinal Institute for West Virginia Policy knew there was a better way, and in 2015 they began a journey to transform education in their state. As a result of their tireless efforts, West Virginia opened to charter schools in 2019, and this year the West Virgin-ia legislature adopted the Hope Scholarship Program, a nation-leading education reform that provides funding directly to families and students rather than systems. Parents across West Virginia now have the agency they need to make the best decisions for their children, and by introducing competition into the education marketplace, Cardinal Institute has revolutionized educational choice, creating the gold standard for reform and bringing a West Virginia “miracle” closer to fruition.

WASHINGTON, DC
Cato Institute
Working to Eliminate Qualified Immunity

Just a few years ago, “qualified immunity” was an obscure legal concept known only to a small handful of lawyers and legal scholars. Now, it’s a household term. Uniting advocacy groups and leaders from across the political spectrum, Cato Institute demonstrated how qualified immunity enables government officials to violate the civil rights of citizens with impunity. Their work to promote public awareness of the topic has been so successful that more than 60% of Americans now favor ending this abusive legal loophole, and legislative efforts to ban qualified immunity are picking up steam. Several jurisdictions—including Colorado, New Mexico, and New York City—have already banned the legal defense, clearing the way for citizens to bring lawsuits against officials (including police officers) who have violated their rights. Bills to that effect have also been introduced at the national level by members of Congress representing three political parties. Cato Institute’s efforts aim to restore the civil rights of every American and give renewed energy to the creed “liberty and justice for all.”

BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI
Centre for Development and Enterprises–Great Lakes
Opening Borders to Increase Trade

In the landlocked Central African nation of Burundi, oppressive regulations, complicated bureaucracy, and physical barriers at border posts force Burundians desperate for cross-border trade to enter the informal economy, condemning millions to lives marred by poverty and abuse by border officials. The Centre for Development and Enterprises–Great Lakes (CDE) is dedicated to reduce these barriers and create the conditions for formal, open trade—and, consequently—for a better life in Burundi. CDE launched their “Fungwa Njia” or “Open Road” campaign in 2019, which has culminated in fewer required commercial documents, the elimination of 90% of non-tariff barriers, the establishment of a simple local travel document to replace costly passports; the reduction of regulatory agencies from 19 to 4; and, most importantly, the legal recognition of over 30,000 women traders, who have finally been extended protection against sexual harassment, illegal seizure of their goods, physical violence, and bribery at the border. These changes have cleared the way for explosive growth in trade that is not only more frequent, but also more affordable and secure. CDE’s work demonstrates the power of free enterprise and trade to bring dignity and prosperity to millions of people across Africa’s Great Lakes region.
NEW DELHI, INDIA
Centre for Civil Society
Securing Legal Protections for Street Vendors

Street vendors are essential to India’s economy, accounting for over US$10 million in transactions each day. But these entrepreneurs often operate at the mercy of local authorities who arbitrarily extort, abuse, and threaten them, seizing their goods and charging them hefty fines. Centre for Civil Society (CCS) has been a consistent champion for street vendors, securing the passage of the landmark Street Vendors Act in 2014. Sadly, implementation of the law has been fragmented and remains unfinished in states across the country. With sustained research and publicity campaigns on behalf of and in partnership with vendors, Centre for Civil Society has maintained pressure on government officials to protect street vendors’ economic rights. Moreover, CCS work to educate vendors about the law is enabling millions to stand up for their rights, ultimately allowing them to earn a livelihood free from the fines and fear that have prevented them from plying their trade in peace.

LONDON, ENGLAND
Institute of Economic Affairs
Revitalizing a Free Trade Champion

Just over 40 years ago, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) laid the intellectual groundwork for sustained economic expansion across the United Kingdom, and today they have once again helped to lead the country out of crisis. Out of the uncertainty created by the Brexit referendum, the IEA worked to make the most of the opportunity to redefine economic policy in the United Kingdom. For four years they played a significant role in changing hearts, minds, and policy with a clear vision for advancing free trade. Their “Plan A+” program became a media sensation and was championed by a wide range of policymakers and U.K. leaders who have since implemented dozens of free trade deals worth over US$1 trillion. Overcoming immense opposition from think tanks, regulatory agencies, social media attacks, and even targeted burglaries, the IEA achieved their most monumental policy contribution in decades. Their steadfast commitment to open trade has helped to secure a more prosperous future for the people of the United Kingdom, rekindled Britain’s deep liberal tradition, and created a model to be emulated around the world.

LEHI, UTAH
Libertas Institute
Unleashing the Potential of Utah’s Small Businesses

Red tape and bureaucracy often discourage aspiring entrepreneurs, overwhelm small businesses, and hinder established companies from reaching their full potential. Utah’s Libertas Institute aims to change this stifling environment with the nation’s first comprehensive regulatory sandbox. This innovative system allows business owners to seek exemption from onerous regulations, giving entrepreneurs and enterprises time to innovate while providing lawmakers the opportunity to review and repeal outdated or restrictive policies. By decreasing unnecessary regulations, Libertas Institute’s regulatory sandbox creates a welcoming environment for fresh business ideas. Sandbox programs in Utah have helped dozens of companies serve their customers more cost effectively and efficiently by reducing their regulatory burden. Libertas Institute is encouraging similar sandboxes across the country and hopes to see their policy proposals adopted on the national level. Libertas Institute’s concerted deregulation efforts are allowing a new generation of entrepreneurs in Utah to achieve their dreams, making the state a beacon of innovation and opportunity in the United States.
First Week Out

For those who have lived behind bars for decades, the first week of freedom is often the hardest. Many struggle to get a foot-hold, return to crime and, eventually, prison. Unfortunately, hard work and a desire for a better life isn’t always enough. That’s where organizations like Atlas Network partner Georgia Center for Opportunity (GCO) come in. They are dedicated to removing barriers to prosperity and human dignity for all Georgians, including those who have served time. GCO has made great strides in helping former prisoners reintegrate into society through programs that make it easier to find and keep work and housing. An example of an independent reentry home is Vital Signs Reentry Home in northern Georgia.

**Larry’s first week out**

After over forty years in prison, Larry Williams spent his first week of freedom in Vital Signs Reentry Home. “This program helps them with food, clothing, shelter, a safe haven for them to get restarted back in life,” said Pastor Lee Robbins, founder of the home. A safe haven is exactly what Larry found at Vital Signs. “People do what they have to to survive in prison,” Larry said. “It’s a blessing to be free.”

“It’s a different society”

Freedom might be better than incarceration, but that doesn’t mean it’s easy. “We have to have the ability to be able to cope with society,” Larry said. “It’s a different society than what we left. It’s a big change.

We have to adjust mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. If you don’t, you’re lost. I had some friends who just totally lost their minds. They got out and went right back into the system. They said they couldn’t make it out here.”

Like a lost sheep

The lack of opportunity that exists for formerly incarcerated individuals can crush any hope they might have for a brighter future. A dearth of job skills—in addition to the simple presence of a criminal record—makes it difficult to obtain gainful employment. For those who have been behind bars for an extended period, the technology that most of us take for granted is a daunting challenge all its own. “You get your freedom, then you become somebody,” Larry said. “But you have to make a lot of changes in life in order to stay out here in this world.”

Tony Kitchens, a board member for Georgia Center for Opportunity, knows this struggle. “The toughest time for me was when I got out of prison,” Kitchens said. “There was a time I would’ve wanted to go back to prison, because in prison I knew how to survive, but coming out, you’re like a lost sheep.”

A chance for freedom

Larry went to Vital Signs on his first day of freedom after 42 years in prison. Besides the basic necessities, the reentry home helped him fill out job applications and learn how to use the internet. “A chance for freedom, it’s ok,” he said. “But I’m trying to get back to work.” The reentry program helped Larry navigate the employment process, and he secured a job at a chicken processing plant. “It’s good work,” he said. “Good exercise. Having a job is one of the biggest, best responsibilities you have. The time that you did incarcerated doesn’t set you apart from the next person that’s in society. A job makes you a citizen all over again, makes you responsible for a lot of things in life.”

Opportunity that brings dignity

“Getting someone a job in their first seven days out is critical,” said Pastor Robbins. “We know jobs and opportunities like that bring dignity.” Organizations and services like Vital Signs are essential to helping individuals reenter society on a path toward a healthy and constructive future. Georgia Center for Opportunity is critical to this effort as they break down barriers that stand in the way of that better future. Through their “Ban the Box” campaign, for example, GCO convinced the government to remove from state job applications the requirement that formerly incarcerated people indicate a past criminal record. Believing that no one’s life and prospects should be defined by their worst day, this makes it easier for them to get an interview and, hopefully, a job based on their merits and relevant skills rather than being passed over due to past mistakes.

Larry’s story is one of success thanks to Vital Signs and Georgia Center for Opportunity, but there are many more people like him who leave prison without the guidance and support he received. GCO is committed to helping them too.

Atlas Network supports Georgia Center for Opportunity through grant funding.
I began the training as a fairly new CEO of a thriving small organization and came out with a clear roadmap of how to magnify Canadian Constitution Foundation’s impact over the next five to ten years. What really distinguished Executive Accelerator from all previous trainings I’ve taken was how hands-on and interactive it was. We were thrust—on day one—into a case study concerning an organization in crisis with so many internal and external challenges that it stretched my cognitive capacities to consider them all.

The genius of Executive Accelerator was that we were taught concepts and frameworks for solving problems and guiding decision-making and then immediately asked to apply them both to our own organizations and in real time to the case study with fellow participants. The “meta-level” of seeing my own management style play out in my case study group under time pressure drove home my own personal strengths and weaknesses as a leader. It was not for the faint of heart, but it was immensely illuminating.

The practice of formulating North Stars—specified organizational goals created to help measure success—to help filter our vision and drive our mission into concrete actions and decisions resonated deeply with my team and board.

I came back to the office with a strategic plan I feel confident about and that has energized my team. I am using the Executive Accelerator framework with each of my team members to help them have clear direction and confidence in their work.

As someone trained as a lawyer who is very comfortable in the realm of law, policy, and thought leadership, I cannot overstate the value of spending a week learning how to operationalize ideas so that they can actually help make the world a freer place. I’m looking forward to the next level of CEO strategy at Atlas Network’s CEO Summit next year!
Have you checked out our podcasts yet?

The AtlasNexus podcast has been updated, upgraded, and rebranded as Borderless!

You’ll still hear the same great interviews of partners by show host Vale Sloane, but we’ve added several exciting new aspects. First, you can now watch full episodes on YouTube. It’s a great way to get a sneak peek at our beautifully redesigned in-house studio and get to know Atlas Network partners better. Our partners are doing so much good work to advance individual liberty that we had to find a new way to bring all the news to you. That’s why we added a partner highlight segment to the podcast. In each episode, Vale sits down with a co-host to discuss a recent partner success story and why it matters.

In recent episodes of Borderless, Vale has interviewed Templeton Freedom Award finalists on their nominated projects. Be sure to tune in to learn more about who will be up on stage at Freedom Dinner in Miami this December!

If you can’t get enough of Borderless, influencer Antonella Marty has a show just for Spanish-speaking listeners!

She talks to influential people in the freedom movement from all over Latin America on issues of economic freedom, political rights, and individual agency. The show covers topics like feminism, the ongoing clamor for freedom in Cuba and Venezuela, and populism from a classical liberal perspective in addition to dispelling common myths such as popular support for Che Guevara and Cuba’s education and healthcare sectors.

Don’t miss her recent episode with Ruhama Fernández, a Cuban Youtuber and political dissident dedicated to getting the word out about the regime’s treatment of those who advocate for freedom.

Hablemos Libertad is available on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts.

A New Book by Matt Warner and Tom Palmer

At a time when the global development industry is under more pressure than ever before, this book argues that an end to poverty can only be achieved by prioritizing human dignity.

Unable to adequately account for the roles of culture, context, and local institutions, today’s outsider-led development interventions continue to leave a trail of unintended consequences, ranging from wasteful to even harmful. This book shows that increased prosperity can only be achieved when people are valued as self-governing agents. Social orders that recognize autonomy and human dignity unleash enormous productive energy. This in turn leads to the mobilization of knowledge sharing that is critical to innovation and localized problem solving. Locally-led think tank initiatives have secured dignity and freedom for millions of people and have succeeded when top-down programs from outside have failed. Offering a wide range of interdisciplinary perspectives and specific examples from the field showing these ideas in action, this book provides NGOs, multilateral institutions, and donor countries with practical guidelines for implementing “dignity-first” development.

Dignity is central to establishing the right institutions for prosperity. The mother of Mohammad Bouazizi, the Tunisian man who burned himself when his property was stolen and he was humiliated, concluded, “When he set fire to himself it wasn’t about his scales being confiscated. It was about his dignity. Dignity before bread. Mohammad’s first concern was his dignity. Dignity before bread.” Lasting change that results in prosperity rests on securing equal rights and dignity for everyone.

DEVELOPMENT WITH DIGNITY

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Adults are to be accorded the dignity of ‘the equal presumption of liberty and citizen-based democratic political principles’ ...

You need this lucid and eloquent book. Read it, right away. No time to waste...

—Deirdre N. McCloskey, Distinguished Professor, Economist, and Author

Read this book and you will be introduced to new perspectives on the power of local knowledge—rooted in human experience—to fuel sustainable development and to generate the socio-economic wealth of nations.

—Vernon L. Smith, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences

AtlasNetwork.org/Books
Atlas Network has taken the principles of classical liberalism and meaningfully put them into action.

MICHAEL KRUPP