



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LIBERTY

Building a Free Society,
One Conversation at a Time

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We live in an age of mass communication. From emails and text messages to social media and video conferencing, it has never been easier to communicate with others. Yet while our ability to communicate has increased, the substance of our communications has deteriorated. More and more, our public discourse takes the form of echo chambers that amplify rather than challenge pre-conceived ideas.

At the Center for the Study of Liberty, we believe that vigorous exchange in the marketplace of ideas is critical to the building and maintenance of a free society. Furthermore, we believe that the responsibility for this kind of exchange belongs to all of us, not just pundits. For this reason, we invite women and men who

have a diverse range of professional backgrounds, personal experiences, and ideological perspectives to join us in conversation. At our events, we ask people to talk with one another about the meaning of individual liberty and its relationship to human flourishing. We hope that our events start meaningful discussions that continue well beyond our formal programs.

While the Center was founded in 2015, 2017 was a breakout year for our work. As the following pages will show, we grew in every recognizable measure. We hosted more events, partnered with more organizations, and engaged more people in conversation, all coordinated by a growing number of staff members and an increased base of support.

As we make our way through 2018, I invite you to join us in building a free society, one conversation at a time.

Sincerely,



Jennifer K. Thompson
Executive Director





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ABOUT THE CENTER

A Case for Conversation

At the Center for the Study of Liberty, we recognize that a peaceful and prosperous society requires not just the free exchange of goods and services, but the free exchange of ideas as well. Yet our public discourse is too often characterized by increasing hostility toward (and a lack of empathy for) those with whom we disagree. The intense anger that pollutes many of today's conversations leads us to view those with opposing opinions as "the other," or even, as "un-American."

Through in-person and online conversations led by experienced facilitators, the Center brings people with diverse ideological viewpoints together to read about, respectfully discuss, and think through issues critical to the meaning of liberty and our shared quest for human flourishing. Our events invite participants from all walks of life to listen to and to challenge one another in productive ways. We make conversations possible that offer those involved a richer understanding of important issues that affect their communities. As they leave Center events, participants are equipped with the knowledge and encouragement needed to continue the conversation with family, friends, and others.

Mission

We support the building of a free society by creating spaces for civil conversations among independent thinkers.



Values

Our values spring from our guiding philosophy and keep us accountable in our work:

- **We are responsible.**
We are responsible for our actions and for our own intellectual development.
- **We are open-minded.**
We believe open-minded people choose a disposition of curiosity and humility.
- **We value inquiry.**
We are curious people and we love to be around other people who want to join us in the process of inquiry.

2017 IN-PERSON EVENTS

Center events engage participants in exploration of principles and ideas that support human flourishing.

In 2017, we partnered with several organizations to host ten events across the country. These events encouraged sustained conversation between thought leaders, entrepreneurs, and other community members on topics including: education reform, poverty, entrepreneurship, and regulation. While partner organizations convene the audience, our staff designs the curriculum, identifies faculty and policy experts, and provides educational resources that allow participants to continue the conversation after the event.



THE ETHICAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF DRUG PROHIBITION

June 6, 2017 | New Orleans, LA

Co-hosted by America's Future Foundation

FEECon LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST WORKSHOP

June 18, 2017 | Atlanta, GA

Co-hosted by The Bastiat Society

AN EVENING DISCUSSION ABOUT OPEN BORDERS

June 21, 2017 | Detroit, MI

Co-hosted by America's Future Foundation

ORIGINS & ALTERNATIVES OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

July 8, 2017 | Atlanta, GA

Co-hosted by America's Future Foundation

MINIMUM WAGE: HOW DOES IT WORK IN THE REAL WORLD?

July 18, 2017 | Albuquerque, NM

Co-hosted by America's Future Foundation

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN UNREGULATED MARKET

August 29, 2017 | San Antonio, TX

Co-hosted by State Policy Network

AN EVENING OF CONVERSATION: BASTIAT'S *THE LAW*

October 25, 2017 | Carmel, IN

*Co-hosted by The Bastiat Society and
Americans for Prosperity*

RISING ABOVE POVERTY IN INDIANAPOLIS

October 30, 2017 | Carmel, IN

*Co-hosted by The Policy Circle and
Shepherd Community Center*

MASS INCARCERATION AND ITS ALTERNATIVES


November 7, 2017 | Jackson, MS

Co-hosted by America's Future Foundation

TAKING ON INEQUALITY

November 29, 2017 | Winter Park, FL

Co-hosted by Acton Institute



"This was an informative and thought provoking event. It really inspired me to consider different alternatives to mass incarceration, and it challenged me to examine all of the contributing causes of the problem."

— COURTNEY HELFRICH, event participant,
Mass Incarceration and Its Alternatives

In November, we co-hosted an event in Jackson, Mississippi with the local chapter of America's Future Foundation on the topic of mass incarceration. As the state with the fifth highest imprisonment rate in the United States and a thirty-eight percent recidivism rate, this subject is an important one for the local population.

Dr. Chris Surprenant, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of New Orleans and editor of *Rethinking Punishment in the Era of Mass Incarceration*, led a discussion on the facts about and policies relevant to criminal justice reform and mass incarceration. Participants left the event with the tools to engage others in conversation about this complex, politically charged subject, connecting big ideas about freedom to their local context.

Online Programs

Like its in-person events, the Center's online programs directly engage participants in face-to-face conversations about human freedom and flourishing.

In 2017, we ran two successful online discussion experiments that brought people from around the country together to exchange ideas in an intimate environment. By leveraging video conference technology and expert facilitators, we provided participants with unique opportunities to dig underneath the surface of controversial topics like healthcare regulation and police militarization to work together to find common ground and develop more nuanced opinions.

By carrying civil conversations to an online platform, the Center helps individuals go beyond the common echo chambers of the internet and rediscover the art of civil conversation—the ability to listen, think about, and respond to the person with whom we are speaking.

AFTER THE ACA: FREEING THE MARKET FOR HEALTHCARE

September 20, 2017 | [Online Discussion](#)

Co-hosted by State Policy Network

POLICE MILITARIZATION

November 29, 2017 | [Online Discussion](#)




CENTER FACULTY AND SPEAKERS

The quality of the Center for the Study of Liberty events begins with the selection of our experts and faculty facilitators.

Before each event, Center staff rigorously research speakers who are well-versed in the event topic and who share our interest in bridging theory and practice through civil discourse. We work with them to prepare resources and reading materials in advance of the discussion.

Center programs feature world-class faculty and communicators representing a range of institutional affiliations including think tanks, universities, and civil society organizations.



"The Center for the Study of Liberty is an invaluable addition to the suite of liberty-oriented organizations and serves a crucial role in bridging academic expertise and public outreach—a role that, for a long time, had gone underserved. I hope to continue working with them for many years."

— CHRISTOPHER FREIMAN
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
College of William and Mary



Featured Faculty

- **HOWIE BAETJER**
Towson University,
Department of Economics
*Author of Free Our Markets:
A Citizen's Guide to Essential
Economics*
- **CHRIS FREIMAN**
College of William and Mary,
Department of Philosophy
*Author of Unequivocal
Justice and winner of the
Alumni Fellowship Award
for Excellence in Teaching at
William and Mary*
- **CHRIS SURPRENANT**
University of New Orleans,
Department of Philosophy
*Recognized by the Princeton
Review as one of the top 300
professors in the United States*

CENTER PARTNERS

Since 2015, the Center for the Study of Liberty has partnered with organizations across the country that share our commitment to building and maintaining a free society. These partnerships benefit the Center by connecting us with networks of individuals who are eager to play a role in advancing civil discourse. At the same time, the Center's resources and expertise benefit the partnering organization by providing their constituents with quality content that engages them in meaningful conversation.

"In 2017, America's Future Foundation has partnered with the Center for the Study of Liberty to host five events in cities across the United States. Through our partnership, over 120 young adults had nuanced, thoughtful, and spirited discussions about the major issues the nation faces. Thanks to the Center's expert faculty and thought-provoking resources, AFF was able to further its mission to equip America's future leaders with the principles, ideas, and arguments needed to win hearts and minds in their communities."

— CINDY CERQUITELLA

Executive Director, America's Future Foundation





CENTER LEADERSHIP

Staff

JENNIFER K. THOMPSON
Executive Director

JAFFE ABESHAUS
Director of Operations

BETH ERBER
Director of Programs

KELLY BARBER
Assistant Director of Programs

Board of Directors

EMILIO J. PACHECO
President, Chairman, and Director

DOUGLAS J. DEN UYL
Director

JO KWONG
Director

JOIN A DIFFERENT KIND OF CONVERSATION

Support the Center for the Study of Liberty

While many organizations are committed to bringing like-minded people together, we believe that a free society only flourishes when like- and unlike-minded people come together to think about and discuss critical issues of human freedom and flourishing.

Support for the Center for the Study of Liberty enables us to host meaningful events that explore issues relevant to participants' communities. The Center's resources and faculty provide substance for these conversations and allow people from all backgrounds to join us in a different kind of conversation.

"We were pleased to support the Center for the Study of Liberty in 2017 with a grant from the Think Tank Startup Fund because we want the Center to succeed as it works to expand the invitation to join Hayek's 'intellectual adventure' of 'building a free society' to an audience outside of the academy. The Center is committed to providing educational resources about the ideas of freedom, and creating opportunities and connections for business professionals, and this is work that Atlas Network wants to support."



— BRAD LIPS
Chief Executive Officer, Atlas Network

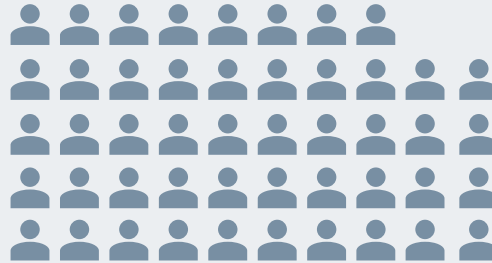
BY THE NUMBERS

(as of the end of 2017)

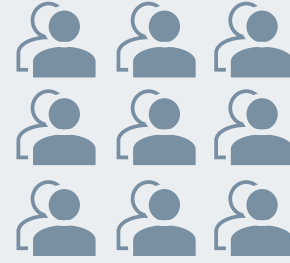
Sparking important conversations since 2015



17 events



483 attendees



9 co-hosts/partner orgs

A look at what's to come

In 2018, we'll once again partner with America's Future Foundation to host an event on civil discourse; we'll co-host a Socratic seminar on entrepreneurship with the Adam Smith Society at the Manhattan Institute; and we'll experiment with an extended series on free speech with alumni of Rhodes College. As a result of a grant from Atlas Network, we'll conduct multiple events on poverty alleviation. We'll also launch a monthly newsletter at the end of the first quarter, and we will increase the number of online discussion groups we hold.

FINANCIALS

2017 (actual)

■ Program	\$383,275
■ Operations	\$105,320
■ Fundraising	\$85,395
TOTAL	\$573,990

2018 (projected)

■ Program	\$540,000
■ Operations	\$105,000
■ Fundraising	\$155,000
TOTAL	\$800,000





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