THE BRIEF

Celebrating 10 Years of Impact

FROM THE DESK of gabe conger

Dear Friends,

understand why so many are pessimistic about America's future. When you see institution after institution cave to the zeitgeist and leader after leader who is not up to the task of righting the ship, the bleakest predictions seem to be coming true.

But the more I consider the state of our nation, the more I'm struck by the genius of the American Founding—a world-historic event that occurred in perhaps even darker times. Professor Wilfred McClay reminds us that George Washington and his founding brothers knew how to "look backwards and forwards." To look at the sweep of history is to see the times when small, bold groups of exceptional men and women defiantly chose hope over despair and did the impossible. They felt a duty to those they loved, and those who would come after them, to persevere rather than succumb to the hardness of their times.

American Exceptionalism

The theme of October's Bradley Impact Conference was **American Exceptionalism and the Duty of Citizenship**. In these pages, you'll find unfairly brief summaries of several enlightening presentations from friends of the Impact Fund who know well both the threats we face and our tradition of resilience and resolve in

facing the worst that comes our way. North Korean defector Yeonmi Park delivered moving remarks about what the stakes really are when we censor speech and turn away from the Founding Fathers' vision for our nation. That you've made wonderful events like the Impact Conference and the incredible efforts we consider here

possible must not go without mention—it's an honor to work with friends and patriots who put their philanthropy where their very American hearts are. Thank you.

Onward.

Gabe Conger President, Bradley Impact Fund





Four Questions with Jason Graham bradley impact fund member since 2017

Why is philanthropy so important to you?

My wife lived in Vietnam until she was sixteen and came here. I was raised in a working-class family. And we've succeeded way beyond anything we could even dream of. But we didn't get there by ourselves. We both attended Marquette University on scholarships, we both had coaches and mentors that have helped us achieve the level of success that we have. And so, it's really important for both of us to ensure that young people coming up have that same opportunity set that we did.

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What does "Principled Philanthropy" mean to you?

I think it's because we worked so hard to develop the resources that enable us to be philanthropic, it is vitally important that we be strategic and deliberate with how we give. And we have certain principles free enterprise and limited government, for example—that provided the framework that enabled our success. And so, we don't blindly give to philanthropies that are in direct contradiction to the things that we cherish.



What has been of greatest value that the Impact Fund has provided, given your philanthropic approach?

I think the exposure to thought leaders: scholars, nonprofit leaders, people with the boots on the ground who are actually doing the work has been incredibly valuable. You want to be as strategic and deliberate as you can in terms of supporting causes that correspond with your own personal values. And so, the Bradley Impact Fund has been just a terrific resource for my wife and me.

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The theme for this year's Impact Conference was American Exceptionalism and the Duty of Citizenship. How does partnering with the Impact Fund in your own philanthropy reflect this theme?

American exceptionalism is such a powerful idea. As Reagan said, we're never more than a generation removed from tyranny. Freedom isn't something we're entitled to, but it's something we need to tend to and take care of if we're going to ensure that future generations have those same advantages and blessings that we had. So, partnering with a community like this, that shares our sense of obligation and will respect our intent, couldn't be more important.



FEATURED SPEAKER TOM ROGERSON

Tom Rogerson, founder of GenLegCo, an organization that helps families prepare for the future and build their legacy, shared his company's findings on families that successfully pass on their legacy and those that don't. One key finding is that by the end of the second generation, after significant wealth is earned in a family, sixty percent of families lose unity, connection, and history, and therefore most of their wealth.

It's not that they lost the money and that caused them to lose the family. It's the other way around.

A nd unfortunately, according to Mr. Rogerson, traditional estate plans are actually speeding up this process. The families that report failure in this area say they did so for three reasons: First, they lost their identity and history. Second, they lost connection with one another. Third, they suffered the loss of financial legacy. Addressing the family identity and relationships must be the top priority.

If today you hear the story of your greatgrandfather as a child, you know the story of somebody that lived through depressions (not recessions), world wars, and pandemics. Then you know that you're connected to people that actually got through difficult times. And it turns out that's the beginning of that ability to pull oneself up by the bootstraps... and today's youth can actually feel like 'I can do this, too.' Knowing the family story can be the basis for the group decision making that is essential to preserving both the philanthropic intent and legacy of a family. Mr. Rogerson's team found that less than five percent of families that lost their legacies did so based on poor planning and investing. The majority had to do with a failure to build a culture of collaboration and prepare the next generation for philanthropy. This means getting away from the traditional legacy planning approach where parents make all the decisions families must learn to make decisions together.

As Mr. Rogerson likes to say, "A strong business cannot hold a family together, but a strong family can hold the business together." The same holds for philanthropy, a tremendously rewarding enterprise whose success rests upon family unity and trust.

> Less than five percent of families that lost their legacies did so based on poor planning and investing.

special address WILFRED M. McCLAY

Wilfred M. McClay holds the Victor Davis Hanson Chair in Classical History and Western Civilization at Hillsdale College. Dr. McClay has written <u>several books</u>, including his most recent, Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story. He served for eleven years on the National Council on the Humanities, the advisory board for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and is currently a member of the US Commission on the Semiquincentennial, which has been charged with planning the celebration of the <u>nation's 250th birthday in 2026</u>.

n a speech entitled "American Exceptionalism and the American Citizen," Wilfred McClay revisited the epigraph of his latest book, *Land of Hope*, which is a quote from novelist John Dos Passos that concludes:

That is why, in times like ours, when old institutions are caving in and being replaced by new institutions not necessarily in accord with most men's preconceived hopes, political thought has to look backwards as well as forwards.

America is, by some measures, still a young nation. But after years of neglect in education, few are accustomed to looking backwards or forwards. Yet, to know the "backwards" of America is to know we've seen our fair share of trials, including the times we're now in. Understanding our heritage is important to find reasons for the hope we need, like our predecessors, to move forward. It's not just about knowing the facts of our history.

We have to recover the grandeur and sweep and audacity. In some respects, it's the American story itself, its aspirational qualities, its shared



memories, that are essential to our cohesion as a people. We need to balance critical thinking with appreciative thinking.

Having hope for our nation does not mean ignoring our failures. Indeed, *"We wouldn't experience them* so sharply if we weren't a land of hope. If we didn't embrace that outlook, that doctrine, that aspiration."

Professor McClay implored, however, that we not let distorted views of our history offered by the likes of Howard Zinn and the 1619 Project leave us culturally disinherited. We can acknowledge our shortcomings while continuing to embody the exceptionalism of our founding principles and to work for those principles and ideals in communities such as the Bradley Impact Fund.

Ultimately, Professor McClay sees his book, as the subtitle indicates, as "an invitation to the Great American Story. It's meant to usher readers into a larger room, a larger gathering . . . of which they're actually already members, even if they did not know it. . . The story is not merely someone else's, it's theirs too. If they wish to claim it."



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Born in Hyesan, North Korea on October 4, 1993, Yeonmi Park has become a leading voice for those oppressed by communism around the world and a champion of America and American values. Her 2014 article about North Korea's "Black Market Generation" in The Washington Post created a sensation worldwide, and the memoir about her escape from North Korea, In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom, has been published in twenty languages.

he Impact Fund audience fell silent as Yeonmi Park recounted her survival of and escape from North Korea and her admonition to Americans to not lose what makes us great. This greatness animates her, in part because she was raised in a culture of fear and ignorance.

The very first lesson that my mom told me as a young girl, I still remember, is that she said: 'Don't even whisper because the birds and mice could hear me.'... So I learned not to even whisper. And when you cannot talk, of course it leads to not being able to think. So, North Koreans don't even know what critical thinking is.

On why the North Korean people don't rise up against their oppressors:

The reason that we don't rise up is because we don't know that we are slaves. We don't know that we are oppressed. We are oppressed to the point where government removes words like liberty, freedom, human rights, or even love... The fact that you don't have the word means you don't understand the concept.

Ms. Park's harrowing journey led her from eating insects to survive in North Korea, to escaping over a frozen river into China, to being taken by human traffickers and sold into exploitation, to a long, perilous trek through sub-zero temperatures *en route* to South Korea. Even after coming to America, she was shocked to find familiar communist narratives embraced.

I went to Columbia University, my university professors at the Ivy League school told us that math is made up by the white man to control the minority. And I remember my very first lesson in North Korean school from my teacher. She asked me, 'What is one plus one?' I answered two, and she said I was wrong. Kim Jong Il one day added one drop of water to another drop of water. What does it become? It becomes a bigger one. So that's how he proved that math was made up by the greedy capitalists in the West to control the minority, and the exact same lesson we were taught in the twenty-first century at Columbia University. So, you know, I didn't escape that far from the tyranny, I guess.

Ms. Park wanted those present to know that slavery is still practiced today, and she urged Americans not to weaken themselves with falsehoods when we live in the greatest nation in history and there is so much to be done.

keynote conversation TREY **GOWDY**

A proud native of Greenville, South Carolina, Trey Gowdy is a former federal prosecutor who served as the US representative for South Carolina's fourth congressional district from 2011 to 2019. Gowdy chaired the United States House Select Committee on Benghazi and employed his famous wit and intellectual rigor in bringing accountability to government, earning the praise of conservatives and the ire of opponents. After leaving Congress, he joined Fox News as a contributor and now hosts Sunday Night in America with Trey Gowdy.

fter what some in attendance called the most rollicking intro in the thirteen years of the Bradley Impact Conference, Trey Gowdy launched into a stirring call to those present—laid out in three simple points. The first was to not just tell people what you believe, tell them *why* you believe it:

Do we still believe that education paves the pathway to prosperity? Do we believe that education is the closest thing to magic that we have in our culture? You can transform not just an individual life, but all the lives that follow in that family with education. We just happen to think [education] decisions should be made closest to the student at the state and local level. Can you make that argument?

The second piece of advice was that we should make our arguments in a winsome, persuasive way.

There was a bumper sticker on the back of a car, back when my wife used to drag me to church. It said, 'Don't blame me. I didn't vote for the idiot.'... If you're talking to people that already agree with you, that's great. If you're trying to convince somebody who did vote the other way last time, calling them an idiot is not the way to do it. Insults don't work. I mean, they're great at rallying the base. They're not great at persuading people.

Third, don't wait for someone else to do what must be done.

I spent probably the first six months in Congress staring out that side of the plane, where you overlook Washington, and you were just overwhelmed with your own inadequacy... But there's another set of windows on the other side. And you can see these gently rolling hills punctuated with elegant white crosses. And I can't name a single person there, I don't think. So who built this country? Who perfected this country? Who's defended this country? ... Women and men who found something a little bigger than themselves to serve and sacrifice for. For me.



PANEL Public Service for the Public Trust

N ot long ago, state finances were rarely discussed outside of policy wonk circles or the occasional media coverage of financial scandal. But in the era of ESG—the reorientation of the world's top financial services companies toward leftist Environment, Social, and Governance priorities rather than traditional standards—the realm of state finance officials has become a hot topic.

During a panel discussion led by Derek Kreifels, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the **State Financial Officers Foundation** (SFOF), Impact Conference attendees heard about the latest ESG concerns from two state treasurers. Marlo Oaks of Utah noted that the option of socially responsible investing has been around for some time. But what's new about ESG is the extent to which it uses coercion—both toward small investors and toward companies that now must comply with often unreasonable demands in order to avoid hits to their stock prices.

> Bringing transparency to the budgetary process after years of neglect is especially valuable in the era of ESG and runaway spending.

With membership including thirty-five state leaders that collectively control \$3 trillion in state assets across twenty-eight states, SFOF members have been credited with pulling billions of dollars of state retirement fund investments from the top ESG funds, like Blackrock and Vanguard. Through SFOF, members like Messrs. Oaks and Lieber share ideas and collaborate to protect their states' financial health and the interests of employees.

One example of ESG pressure being put on states came in the form of an email from Standard & Poor's, alerting Mr. Oaks that the state would now receive an ESG score as part of their state credit rating. Mr. Oaks quickly organized a letter signed by Utah's entire congressional delegation and all financial officers informing S&P that Utah no longer wanted a credit score. The result was that, earlier this year, S&P announced they would no longer apply a separate ESG score to states.

Mr. Lieber is in a different position as the only conservative in a very liberal administration, so his focus has been on restoring the Wisconsin state treasurer's office accountability role, which has been systematically reduced for the last two decades. Bringing transparency to the budgetary process after years of neglect is especially valuable in the era of ESG and runaway spending.



PRINCIPLED PHILANTHROPY

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Transparency for an Informed Citizenry

hen the government and elite institutions obfuscate or hide information from the public, who is there to retrieve that information, analyze it, and inform citizens about what it means?

Tarren Bragdon, CEO and Founder of the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA), spoke with two fellow leaders who are piling up wins in bringing transparency and accountability to institutions that have abandoned their mandates.

Adam Andrzejewski thanked the Bradley Impact Fund donor community for making possible a record year for government transparency. His organization, Open the Books, filed 55,000 Freedom of Information Act requests (the most in one year by any single organization in American history), while publishing 700 investigations and receiving 16,000 media citations.

Among the narrative-shifting findings of the last two years was the fact that Anthony Fauci was the highest-paid government employee in the nation, which seemed odd for a director of a subagency of Health and Human Services. After publishing this fact in an article, Mr. Andrzejewski found himself fired from *Forbes* magazine and his profile removed from Wikipedia. "*I'm not a* Forbes *columnist, but* I'm actually leading a transparency revolution. And so, in the end, it was actually a positive experience."

For his part, Dr. Stanley Goldfarb described how, in just a year and a half, Do No Harm (DNH) has gained 6,000 members fighting against wokeness in the medical community. Together, this growing community is pulling back the curtain on the abuses of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs in medical schools and the harm done to children by doctors who've adopted "gender-affirming care" standards.

Dr. Goldfarb shared several alarming examples of race-based preferences in medical care, in scholarships at elite medical schools, and how afraid people are of where the medical profession is headed. In response, Do No Harm has turned more than 700 submissions to its anonymous tipline into 140+ complaint filings with the Office for Civil Rights under the US Department of Education. Several schools have quietly abandoned racial preferences under DNH's scrutiny, but much more must be done.

We've been suing schools. We've (written more than 600) letters to the Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Education. And this has led to real change. But I think it requires the medical community to finally rise up. And we've given a voice to it.



SPOTLIGHT Building an Army for Freedom



Leadership Program of the Rockies (LPR) trains local leaders in Colorado to learn how visionary, principle-centered leadership can positively impact their community. Through an intensive, nine-month course of study tailored to mid- to late-career professionals and retirees, LPR teaches leaders to apply and share American founding principles in an array of legal, economic, business, political, nonprofit, and civic professions.

Director of Network Engagement and 2015 LPR alumna Stephanie Muth shared with Impact Conference attendees several dramatic member turnarounds seen through the program. One such story featured Melissa, a woman from Boulder who began asking more questions as her liberal friends became more illiberal during the pandemic. At LPR, she learned more about the reasoning and history behind her more conservative intuitions, and today, as Stephanie put it:



"Now she's a woman on fire, spreading these ideas to others. She's not afraid...She's persuasive. ..She recommended over seventeen women for the next class."

> Each LPR class is limited to sixty-five participants to foster collaboration and maximize interaction among students and presenters. Most alumni join an active network—an army for freedom of more than 2,200 members—that brings the ideas of liberty into all corners of society.

> By focusing on a broad range of backgrounds and established and retired professionals, LPR alumni are positioned to have a more immediate impact than college students, as important as it is to similarly form the next generation for impact. With support from The Bradley Foundation and Impact Fund community, LPR has welcomed fellows from seventeen states in recent years, highlighting the need to grow their reach: they now have a program in Connecticut and are working with leaders in Wisconsin to bring a program to the Great Lakes region.

A Bottom-up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity



Strong Towns isn't your traditional nonprofit. Begun as a blog by civil engineer and city planner Chuck Marohn, Strong Towns highlighted in rigorous detail the self-defeating nature of so many well-intended, topdown projects. Somehow, a blog for civic development "nerds" grew a wide following, and Mr. Marohn ended up speaking both to specialists and to city activist groups around the Midwest (he is based in Brainerd, MN), then around the nation.

Today, Strong Towns helps foster and promote a model of development that better positions America's cities and towns to become financially strong and resilient. Marohn and his team work all across the country to help city leaders avoid unsustainable infrastructure projects and make changes that actually work for communities. While around thirty percent of Strong Town's 5,000 members are city officials and planners, most are local citizens who want healthy communities unburdened by backwards city policies. And they've activated themselves in many cases, leading Strong Towns to a recent shift in strategy: We are focusing really intently on the bottom-up energy. And that's where our Local Conversations program comes in. When I say we started that program last year, we started it formally last year. People were already meeting and calling themselves Strong Towns Tulsa, Strong Towns Dallas, Strong Towns McAlester (OK), and others. We had no clue what these groups were, but we watched them, and we saw them doing amazing things. They were cleaning up the park. They were putting out benches. . . They were showing up at city council meetings and bringing the math that [city] staff were not putting together on their projects.

Recognizing the potential of self-starting allies, Strong Towns provides their members with the types of tools that municipal leaders have to make changes. Two of their top programs for doing so are their Local Conversations program and Strong Towns Academy, both of which help citizens hold their city leaders accountable.

Strong Towns helps foster and promote a model of development that better positions America's cities and towns to become financially strong and resilient.





SPOTLIGHT Building Resilience Through Trust in Family and Community





Nicole Zorn from Safe Families and Ashley Thomas from Hope Street Ministry discussed how an individual learning to trust and feel a community of people support them leads to deep and lasting transformation in the lives of everyone involved.

Safe Families works with volunteer host families who shelter children while their parents work toward the healing or restoration they need. The goal is to, whenever possible, reunite families rather than relegate children to a life in the foster care system. The network of over one hundred chapters across the country is made up of many churches who both host and provide for the children until they can be reunited with their parents. Discussing what those they serve have in common, Nicole answered:

They often come from multiple generations of every kind of poverty: material poverty, social poverty, spiritual poverty. And the thing they share in common is a sense of isolation from the broader community.

Ashley and Nicole also discussed the hard realities of work with those who are experiencing some kind of brokenness and the tough love and difficult decisions that have to take place to help people on their journey toward restoration.

Hope Street Ministry is based near downtown Milwaukee. They provide housing and community to empower broken men, women, and children who cultivate a relationship with Jesus, themselves, and others. The organization restores hope that flourishing is possible for us all. Begun as a housing facility, Hope Street has expanded to offer classes and programming to address whatever restoration the members need, from faith and financial literacy to counseling and physical wellness. Membership comes with rigorous expectations to participate, meet individualized goals, and follow conduct rules. Members with children are permitted to live with their families—a necessity for achieving true restoration and trust—something other living facilities are unable to offer.

In 2022, Shechem community center opened next door to Hope Street, extending the programming to neighbors who may not require housing but can benefit from the classes, relationships, and community. As Ashley put it,

We have a thousand members, and our first year we have over fifteen schools represented. We have fifty to seventy-five kids coming in for after school programing every single day, looking for a snack, help with homework, a safe place to be.

While many write off such community organizations as ineffective, discriminatory, and exclusionary and prefer the government get involved to solve personal problems, it is in the love and direct and sustained presence with our brothers and sisters in need that true transformation happens.

SPOTLIGHT GET MARRIED —

Why Americans Must Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families, and Save Civilization



Brad Wilcox, Senior Fellow of the Institute for Family Studies and Director of the National Marriage Project at University of Virginia, discussed the main ideas of his book, Get Married: Why Americans Must Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families, and Save Civilization, which is set to be released on Valentine's Day, 2024.

f particular interest to Dr. Wilcox is the "closing of the American heart," or the decline in marriage and childbearing as they impact Americans' happiness and flourishing. For decades, elite media have painted the single life as the ideal—as one free of obligations that allows the accumulation of wealth, constant travel, and such, especially for women. In reply, Dr. Wilcox points out that the reverse is closer to the truth: married women tend to have far higher wealth than their single counterparts as they approach retirement age and report higher levels of happiness.

Against the mainstream, anti-marriage narrative, Dr. Wilcox presents a data-based wake-up call to America.

The marriage rate has come down by sixty-five percent since 1970... What this means is that if you have kids or grandkids who are in their twenties today, about one in three of them will never, ever marry. We've never seen this kind of flight away from marriage that we're going to be seeing in the coming decades.

The same holds true for fertility.

So we're now at about 1.66 babies on average in the US. And . . . I think we're going to keep going down when it comes to fertility. And again, what does that mean practically for the people in this audience? It means that twentysomethings today, probably about a quarter of them, will never have children.

Key to restoring a proper respect for marriage and children is providing the data-based case for their flourishing in opposition to the narrative that traditional family and marriage are the cause of societal problems. As Dr. Wilcox makes the scientific case, he is working more with those in other disciplines to advance a compelling, broad-based case for generosity in marriage and life.

YEAR-END DEADLINES

To ensure processing by year end, grant recommendations must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. CT on December 19.

Checks | Postmarked by December 31 Stock Transfers | Initiated by December 28 Credit Cards | Received by 11:59 p.m. CT on December 31 DAFs or IRA Contributions | Postmarked or received by December 31

For other contribution types or questions, please contact us at (414) 291-2500 or donorservices@bradleyimpactfund.org.

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