



A Life of Meaning

May 18, 2023

My wife and I are attending tonight's *Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty* [dinner](#) at the Cato Institute. We are very excited, for this year's [award](#) will be given to a very worthy recipient: Jimmy Lai.

The 75-year-old Lai, alas, won't be there.* He sits in a Hong Kong jail for committing the Chinese Communist Party's most feared crimes: speech, association, practicing religious faith, advocacy for democracy and human rights. And he awaits more charges that could (and probably will) keep him in prison for life.

Lai is no [stranger](#) to this audience. Last [December](#), I gave two thumbs up to the Acton Institute's [documentary](#)†, "The Hong Konger: Jimmy Lai's Extraordinary Struggle for Freedom"; [back in 2020](#), I noted his long deployment on Hong Kong's front lines of freedom.

Lai escaped to Hong Kong from Communist China as a kid. His hard work and entrepreneurial skills made him a wealthy man. He used that wealth to advance freedom, including publishing the pro-democracy Apple Daily, which was [shuttered](#) by Chinese authorities in 2021 under the National Security Law.

Mr. Lai could have escaped it all with plenty of money to live comfortably somewhere far away from the Chinazis. "I think you have to live a life of meaning," he offers. "And I find taking responsibility to fight for freedom is meaningful for me."

Thanks to Jimmy Lai and the Hong Kong protesters for standing up against the CCP, the world has a much clearer view of those imprisoning him. Let's hope the world acts accordingly.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* The Wall Street Journal's William McGurn, a friend of Lai, will give the keynote address. Jimmy Lai's son, Sebastian, will be there to receive the award.

† The documentary now has over a million views on YouTube, which may be why Tik Tok "shut down" the Acton Institute's account. Meanwhile, for context, a documentary to "mark the handover anniversary," on which the Hong Kong government spent \$1.3 million, garnered only 4,000 views.