



Promoting  
Academic  
Freedom and  
Excellence

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## Trustees Learn How to Address Alcohol and Drug Use on Campus



On November 18, 2019, 80 college presidents, trustees, and administrators from across the country gathered in Boston for **Everything to Gain: How Higher Education Leadership Can Confront Campus Substance Use and Enable Student Success**. The conference, hosted by ACTA and the Mary Christie Foundation, in partnership with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, alerted college leaders to the urgency of tackling student alcohol and drug use. The speakers, panels, and vibrant Q&A sessions generated great momentum for transforming the campus culture around substance use and provided the most effective policy recommendations that college leaders will need to equip students for meaningful lives.

The conference was inspired by ACTA's recent report, *Addressing College Drinking and Drug Use: A Primer for Trustees, Administrators, and Alumni*. Dr. Amelia Arria, co-author with ACTA's Greta Wagley of the publication and professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Health, presented the findings of the report to the audience. She highlighted the ample evidence tying substance use to diminished cognitive ability, critical thinking, academic performance, and negative impact on employment post-college. Dr. Arria explained that confronting campus alcohol and drug use is essential to creating an environment that eliminates barriers to success and helps students maximize their potential. *(continued on 2)*

## Save the Date for ACTA's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala!

ACTA was founded in March of 1995. On November 13, 2020, we will celebrate our **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary** at the storied **Library of Congress**, which Thomas Jefferson envisioned as a temple of learning for our nation. Please join us as we review a quarter century of work for academic excellence and academic freedom and look ahead to the frontiers before us. Visit the anniversary page at [GoACTA.org/anniversary](http://GoACTA.org/anniversary) for further details and for information about other special events throughout our anniversary year.

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## ACTA President Becomes Columnist for Forbes

ACTA President Michael Poliakoff is now a regular contributor to Forbes Online, expanding our impact on the pressing challenges in higher education. Since August, President Poliakoff has published nine pieces, exploring a variety of important issues including solutions to the college cost crisis, lax board oversight at Liberty University, and how Historically Black Colleges and Universities are defending free expression and the liberal arts.

One of his latest columns, “How Diversity Screening at the University of California Could Degrade Faculty Quality,” generated an alarmed response from university leaders in the state. The piece raises concerns about the way that the University of California (UC)–Berkeley is implementing the UC System’s new rubric to score job candidates according to their commitment to diversity. As college campuses increasingly become more diverse, seeking faculty with different backgrounds and experiences is reasonable. However, the rubric outlines that a candidate who, in his or her diversity statement, describes “only activities that are already the

expectation of Berkeley faculty (mentoring, treating all students the same regardless of background, etc.)” is deemed to have given an unacceptable answer.

More alarming yet, in a number of job searches, the rubric is being used as a screening tool, applied by diversity administrators before job applications are seen by the departments seeking to hire new faculty. Dr. Poliakoff writes, “If the likes of Albert Einstein or Enrico Fermi or any other great scholar and teacher did not craft a diversity statement judged satisfactory in light of standards devised by a campus inclusion and equity bureaucracy, his or her application could stop cold. It doesn’t take much imagination to figure out that finding academic excellence and sheer, life-changing, history-making brilliance in teaching and research will be a lucky accident for schools that follow the Berkeley experiment.”

Follow Dr. Poliakoff’s column on Forbes.com for the latest on issues concerning free speech, intellectual diversity, and good governance at America’s colleges and universities. ●

### Alcohol and Drug Use on Campus, *continued from 1*



Brandon Busteed, Philip Hanlon, Damon Sims, Dr. John Howe, and ACTA President Michael Poliakoff discuss successful prevention programs.

The first panel, moderated by **Dierdre Fernandes** of the *Boston Globe*, featured the insights of **Dr. Robert DuPont**, president of the Institute for Behavior and Health; **Dr. Joseph Lee**, medical director at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation; **Ronald Daniels**, president of Johns Hopkins University; and **Shirley Collado**, president of Ithaca College. The panelists highlighted how alcohol and drug use negatively affect the lives of students and pushed back against the dangerous assumption that substance use

is a commonplace or harmless practice. In Dr. DuPont’s powerful words, “Drug prevention is brain protection. . . . [University and college boards] must say, ‘Use is a problem. It is unhealthy. It is a major threat to academic achievement. It’s a major threat to having a good life.’”

In order to address these serious threats, the second panel explored the best strategies implemented by college leaders. Moderated by **Brandon Busteed** of Kaplan University Partners, the panel included **Philip Hanlon**, president of

Dartmouth College; **Damon Sims**, vice president for student affairs at Pennsylvania State University; **Dr. John Howe**, president of the Mary Christie Foundation and trustee at Boston University; and ACTA President **Michael Poliakoff**. The speakers shared that the most successful substance use prevention programs start and end with the data, from tracking how classroom utilization statistics can reveal an unwholesome party culture, to how many students referred to mental health services also report

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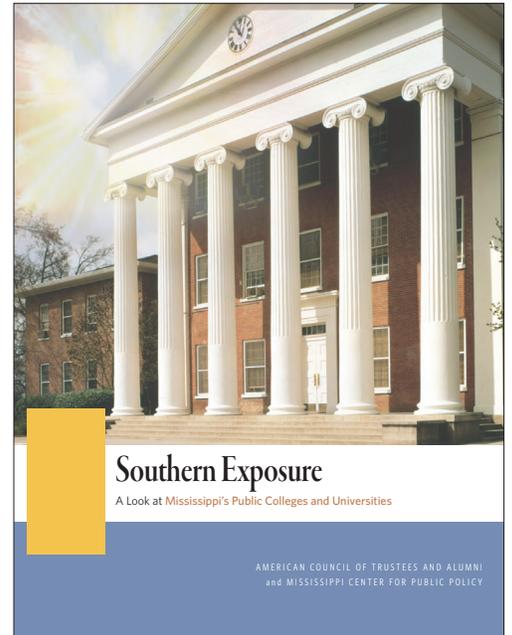
## ACTA Releases Report on Higher Education in Mississippi

On February 5, ACTA, in partnership with the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, released *Southern Exposure: A Look at Mississippi's Public Colleges and Universities*, which assesses the performance of the eight public universities governed by the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). *Southern Exposure* examines each university using four key metrics: Academic Strength, Intellectual Diversity, Cost & Effectiveness, and Governance.

Not a single one of Mississippi's public institutions requires students to complete a course in American government or history, a deficit that diminishes graduates' ability to participate in our democracy. In addition, requirements in economics and intermediate-level foreign language, two essential liberal arts subject areas, are largely absent at these universities. ACTA suggests that the IHL Board conduct an in-depth review of the core curricular requirements at each campus in order to rectify these deficits and ensure that all students graduate prepared for informed citizenship and successful careers.

Although *Southern Exposure* notes that most of Mississippi's public universities have codified good free speech policies, there are significant threats. The University of Mississippi operates a Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) that chills campus discourse and restricts the free expression of students and faculty. Especially considering that the Sixth Circuit found a bias response team had a deleterious effect on free speech, ACTA strongly recommends that Ole Miss's BIRT be immediately dissolved. In

(continued on 5)



### Alcohol and Drug Use on Campus, *continued from 2*

struggling with substance use. This type of comprehensive approach, Mr. Sims explained, requires dedication from presidents and trustee boards that are “genuinely committed to this cause [and] empower those who are really responsible for providing leadership to these kinds of initiatives to actually do so. They trust them . . . and support them in whatever way they can.”

During the rich discussion sessions following the panels, trustees and other college leaders asked thought-provoking questions, received detailed advice from the expert panelists, and came away with a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how to ensure that substance use does not derail the health of their students and their institutions. Several trustees in attendance have reached out to ACTA for best practices and individualized seminars. ACTA is extremely hopeful about our continued progress addressing this perennial problem that afflicts colleges and universities nationwide.

In the words of President Poliakoff, “the combined effect of institutions working together in such a whole-some way is the key to success in overcoming substance use on campus and helping all students to flourish.” ●



### ACTA Announces Newest “A” School

Wyoming Catholic College has become the 23<sup>rd</sup> school to earn an “A” rating from ACTA’s What Will They Learn?® (WWTL) project for its outstanding core curriculum. A private liberal arts institution, Wyoming Catholic requires students to take core courses in six of the seven WWTL subject areas.

The school emphasizes the close examination of American heritage through the study of Lincoln, Jefferson, and Tocqueville, as well as the Great Books, including Aristotle, Homer, Plato, Sophocles, and many others. To nurture understanding of the virtues explored by these classical thinkers, such as courage and temperance, students embark on a three-week backpacking trip and take courses in outdoors skills like rock climbing and canyoneering. Upon being notified of the College’s “A” rating, Glenn Arbery, president of the school, remarked, “We are proud to be named to this prestigious group.”

Wyoming Catholic College’s excellent curriculum was brought to ACTA’s attention by a concerned parent whose son is considering the school in his college application process. We are delighted that students and parents across the nation are appraising college core requirements in light of our WWTL criteria. ●



## ACTA Meets with Congressman and Former Trustee Greg Murphy

Armand Alacbay, ACTA's Vice President of Trustee & Government Affairs, recently had the pleasure of meeting with Congressman Greg Murphy to discuss the problem of growing administrative bloat in higher education. Representative Murphy, of North Carolina's 3<sup>rd</sup> district, knows firsthand how trustees can combat this issue. After graduating from Davidson College, he served as Davidson's alumni association president and sat on its board of trustees. Once in Congress, Rep. Murphy continued to advocate for higher education reform through his sponsorship of the Rural STEM Education Act. Most recently, he authored an amendment to the Higher Education Act which would require colleges and universities to disclose when they increase non-instructional spending by more than 5% annually. This amendment passed through the House Committee on Education and Labor unanimously, proving once again that the high cost of college is an issue of bipartisan concern.

ACTA agrees with Representative Murphy's assertion that "with the average price of college rapidly increasing, the least we can ask of our colleges and universities is to be transparent about how much they are spending on costs that do not contribute to teaching students." It was this need for transparency that drove us to launch **HowCollegesSpendMoney.com**, a website designed to give the public the ability to analyze spending trends at their schools and create benchmarks in comparison with other institutions. Of the nearly 1,500 schools surveyed between 2015 and 2016, over one-third saw their per-student administrative expenses increase by 5% or more, while only a quarter saw per-student instructional spending increase at the same rate. Trustees must ensure that their institutions are investing in the future by prioritizing spending which enriches their students' education. It is our hope that efforts like Rep. Murphy's will drive schools to take a thorough and penetrating look at their spending habits. ●

## FAR Launches Intelligent College Giving Series

The Fund for Academic Renewal (FAR) is excited to announce a new series called Intelligent College Giving. Over the next few months, FAR will release video and print interviews with donors who have made innovative, meaningful gifts to higher education. Intelligent college giving has the power to renew our nation's universities. By sharing the stories of donors who have led the charge to support academic excellence, enrich course offerings, and promote intellectual diversity and academic freedom on campus, FAR hopes to inspire others to follow their lead.

FAR's first interview in the series features **John W. Altman**. Dr. Altman is a distinguished entrepreneur and philanthropist as well as a member of

ACTA's Board of Directors. In 2019, he made his gift to Miami University conditional upon the school adopting the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression. As a result, Miami University became the 69<sup>th</sup> school to endorse the Chicago Principles.

In the interview, Mr. Altman shared, "Growing up in a family with no high school diplomas on the south side of Chicago, you know one thing for sure: I don't want to stay here forever. I was lucky because I worked for a wealthy country club in Flossmoor, Illinois. . . . Nate Winski, the president of the club, turned out to be a great philanthropist who never got a tax deduction or plaques to hang on the wall.



Dr. and Mrs. Altman at the John W. Altman Institute for Entrepreneurship at Miami University in Ohio.

"When I was 17, I wanted to go into the Navy, because that's what duty, honor, and country meant to kids like myself. My dad wouldn't sign the papers unless I visited a college. I applied for college, and that summer . . . I said, 'Mr. Winski, I've got to find a way to go to

*(continued on 7)*



# H E A R D ON C A M P U S

## Speech Policies at Iowa State Violate First Amendment

In January, Speech First, a nationwide advocacy group for free speech on campus, filed suit against Iowa State University, alleging that three of its policies violate students' First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. The policies include restrictions on the use of chalk, a Campus Climate Reporting System, and a prohibition on student emails related to political campaigns and elections.

The Campus Climate Reporting System tasks university faculty and staff with reporting bias-related incidents to the administration. Speech First argues that Iowa State's definition of a bias incident—speech that is “demeaning,” “taunting,” “bullying,” “verbal harassment or intimidation”—is a viewpoint-based restriction, and thus unconstitutional.

The solution to combating hateful speech is more speech. ACTA has

already filed two amicus briefs in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth and Seventh Circuits supporting Speech First's efforts to contest the constitutionality of policies that chill political speech. As evidenced by a recent Sixth Circuit decision against the University of Michigan's bias response team, such policies do not hold up in court. Iowa State would do well to abandon these harmful restrictions on free speech.

## Intellectual Diversity Under Fire Again at Williams

In the past two years, Williams College has been home to a number of assaults on free expression, including the cancellation of a play for alleged racial insensitivity; an effort by the student council to deny recognition to a pro-Israel student club; and its latest incident, a student-organized boycott of all English classes with demands for an investigation into the racial culture of

the English department. Students have accused the department of failing to “engage substantially with issues of race,” despite many current course offerings on African American literature and culture.

In his *Forbes* column, ACTA President Michael Poliakoff encourages trustees and administrators at Williams to listen to many faculty voices on campus—including Professor Luana Majora, one of ACTA's Heroes of Intellectual Freedom—who have called on the institution to uphold intellectual diversity and to endorse the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression. He writes, “If Williams capitulates to activists . . . they will be letting down their students, failing to offer a rigorous and balanced education. College leadership needs to understand that being ‘student-focused’ does not mean being ‘student-run.’ The adults at Williams must stand up and say, ‘This is not who we are.’” ●

## Mississippi Report, *continued from 3*

addition, to date, not one of the campuses has adopted the Chicago Principles on Freedom of Expression.

Mississippi's public universities are grappling with increasing tuition costs and growing levels of student debt. To address these challenges, the report recommends that all board members receive comprehensive budgetary information on their institutions' ratio of expenditure for instruction compared to administrative expenses; reconsider high rates of athletic spending in light of academic needs; and closely review classroom utilization rates.

The report found that rates of compensation for IHL presidents or chancellors have been rising, while salaries for faculty have remained stagnant. At the same time, the cost of tuition has more than doubled at six of Mississippi's public universities. Among Mississippi graduates who were scheduled to begin making student loan payments in 2014–16, 6,523 borrowers are already in default, indicating that the quickly-escalating college costs in Mississippi are in urgent need of attention.

As the fiduciaries of their institutions, Mississippi's Board of Trustees bears responsibility to the public for making transparent spending decisions, maintaining a competitive and challenging academic curriculum, and upholding the free exchange of ideas. By following the advice outlined in this report, ACTA is hopeful that Mississippi's public institutions will offer the best possible education to their students and become beacons of excellence for other public universities across the country. ●



Cultural Jetlag series by Jim Siergey and Tom Roberts.



## 2020 Oases of Excellence Inductees

ACTA's Oases of Excellence project is continuing to grow in 2020, exposing more and more students nationwide to the best of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. The network now includes 72 programs that are committed to transmitting the values of Western Civilization, teaching American heritage, and ensuring free inquiry into a full range of intellectual viewpoints.

Joining the Oases network in 2020 is the **Lincoln Scholars Program**, which offers a 15-credit certification for first and second year students, as well as an excellent lecture series, at American University in Washington, DC. The Lincoln Scholars Program's small seminar classes focus on a diverse selection of readings in political theory, philosophy, economics, and literature. By encouraging students to

examine the strongest arguments on every side of a political or intellectual issue, the program fosters a community of conversation and enables undergraduates freely "to explore the great questions of moral and political life."

ACTA also welcomes the **Pepperdine School of Public Policy**, a two-year Master of Public Policy program. Through both philosophical and quantitative study facilitated by top policy academics and practitioners, the Pepperdine School prepares students to be effective public leaders, capable of navigating the current polarized political climate.

With many schools failing to offer a comprehensive liberal arts education, Oases are filling the gap and ensuring that America's college students graduate with the necessary knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to our society. ●

## Substance Use Threatens Colleges' Academic Mission



Co-author of ACTA's *Addressing College Drinking and Drug Use* and professor of behavioral and community health at the University of Maryland, **Dr. Amelia Arria**, sat down with ACTA to discuss some of the most important strategies that college leadership will need to tackle alcohol and drug use on campus.

**ACTA: What were some of the best messages that came out of ACTA's recent conference, "Everything to Gain"?**

**Dr. Arria:** We should really reconceptualize substance use to view it as something that might get in the way of having a rewarding college experience. It isn't something that we should ignore or see as benign or pass off as a rite of passage. I think that really resonated with the leadership there because their focus is on making sure that people have as rewarding a college experience as possible, and they spend a lot of time and resources creating those opportunities for students to take advantage of. I think an "aha moment" for them was to say this is not something on the side, but this is something that gets in the way.

**ACTA: How does substance use affect students' academic experience?**

**Dr. Arria:** As drug use becomes more regular . . . it competes with the longer-

term rewards of students' academic experiences, their friendships, and the great opportunities at college. Those responsibilities and opportunities can fall by the wayside . . . The other way is through a more direct "toxic" mechanism whereby substance use affects cognitive performance. Studies show that alcohol use, marijuana use, and other drug use can impair brain functioning to the point where students can't learn and remember things . . . if you can't learn and remember things and you find it difficult to get through a book, or to understand a passage that you're reading, or to do well on an assignment because your mind is cloudy, well, then it makes it much easier to say, "I'm not going to really spend a whole lot of time doing this because it can be frustrating."

**ACTA: What are some effective strategies colleges can implement to address substance use?**

*(continued on 7)*

# In Memoriam: Gertrude Himmelfarb



ACTA mourns the passing on December 30, 2019, of Gertrude Himmelfarb, renowned historian and public intellectual.

Born to a Russian Jewish family in Brooklyn, Dr. Himmelfarb went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts degree at Brooklyn College and her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Over the course of her career, she held a professorship at the City University of New York, wrote 16 books and countless essays, and edited eight volumes. Among her most celebrated books are *The De-Moralization of Society* (1995) and *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians* (1986), in which she revealed how virtues including temperance, chastity, and industry served to enable cultural flourishing and stability.

ACTA was proud to honor Dr. Himmelfarb with our 2007 Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding Contributions to Liberal Arts Education, a prize recognizing those whose work fosters appreciation of the foundations of our civilization. Her unparalleled ability to apply rigorous historical analysis to contemporary cultural challenges made her a most fitting recipient of the award.

In further recognition of her great contributions to western intellectual thought, Dr. Himmelfarb received the 2004 National Humanities Medal from President George W. Bush. She served on the Council of Scholars at the Library of Congress, the Council of Academic Advisors at the American Enterprise Institute, the Board of Trustees at the Woodrow Wilson Center, and the National Council for the Humanities. She was also a Fellow of the British Academy and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

We were greatly inspired by her defense of excellence in liberal arts education, as well as her commitment to informed discourse, creative thought, and unending thirst for ideas and discovery. She will be greatly missed. ●

## Interview with Dr. Arria, *continued from 6*

**Dr. Arria:** One of the most critical elements in the toolbox of a higher education leader is policy. We know that policies vary all over the place and that's one area in which we can really, without much trouble, do a lot more work to make them stronger, more enforceable, and enforceable in a sensible way to help students get back on track. . . . What has been successful for reducing underage drinking has been those environmental level policies by which we limit access and availability—making sure that we delay the onset of drinking until the age of 21, putting limits on false IDs, having strict policies, and enforcing those policies.

**ACTA:** How do colleges involve all stakeholders to do that?

**Dr. Arria:** A lot of people need to be involved in identifying students who might be at risk coming into college, for instance, high-risk drinkers. Identifying them right away when they come in and not waiting for something to happen, like failing grades or a car accident or a violation of an alcohol policy, but making sure that they're given the prevention opportunities to de-escalate their potential drinking or drug use problem. We know that just educating them about risk . . . does not seem to have any effectiveness. . . . We must use evidence-based approaches like cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a clinical-based therapy, or motivational interviewing—having a skilled person, who

doesn't have to be a clinician, connect the dots between what they are doing and how that is interfering with their progress. . . . Training of existing personnel to identify students in these ways is a very cost-effective strategy.

It's not that these solutions are strictly about alcohol and drug use. It's about student-centered approaches. . . . It's about making sure that that student is performing and functioning at the highest level possible and putting in place those eyes and ears on the campus to make sure that that's happening.

Listen to the full interview on ACTA's podcast, **Higher Ed Now**. ●

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## John Altman, *continued from 4*

college, so I'd like to work for you' . . . He asked, 'Why don't you go now?' and I had to tell him I didn't have the money. The next Saturday night, he put 10 \$100 bills in an envelope in my tuxedo.

"The night he bet on me is when philanthropy started for me. I vowed that night, if I ever had the resources, I would try to emulate what he . . . had done for one kid from the south side of Chicago."

To view the full interview, visit [AcademicRenewal.org](http://AcademicRenewal.org). ●



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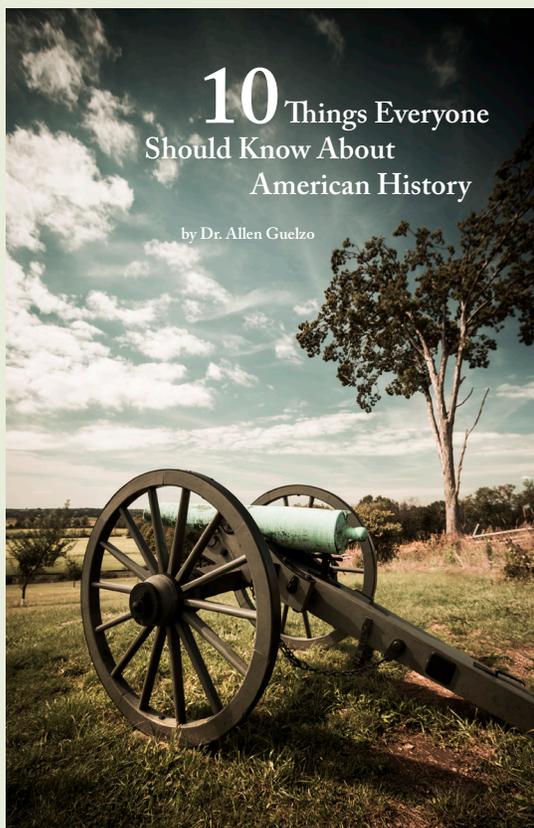
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Dr. Allen Guelzo Tells Us What Everyone Should Know About American History



ACTA will soon publish the remarks that Allen Guelzo delivered at our trustee seminar, **“What Every College Student Should Know about U.S. History,”** held last year at Eastern University. Dr. Guelzo is a leading authority on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Abraham Lincoln, and is a three-time winner of the Lincoln Prize.

He serves as Senior Research Scholar in the Humanities Council at Princeton University, where he also directs the James Madison Program’s Initiatives on Politics and Statesmanship.

His speech, entitled **10 Things Everyone Should Know About American History**, is a gripping journey through the defining moments and grand achievements of our nation, with reverberations around the world.

As Dr. Guelzo remarks at the end of his speech, “These 10 lessons from our history help to teach us who we are. They do not teach us that we have always been perfect, or deployed our principles perfectly, for we have not. Still, the wonder is that ‘any nation, so conceived and so dedicated’ to such principles ever managed to implement them as well as we have done.”

You will not want to miss this compelling essay. Contact us at info@GoACTA.org or call 202/467-6787 to order a copy. ●