

ACTON INSTITUTE PRESENTS

THE HONG KONGER

JIMMY LAI'S EXTRAORDINARY
STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH CROSSFIRE PRODUCTIONS
AND IRON LIGHT LABS

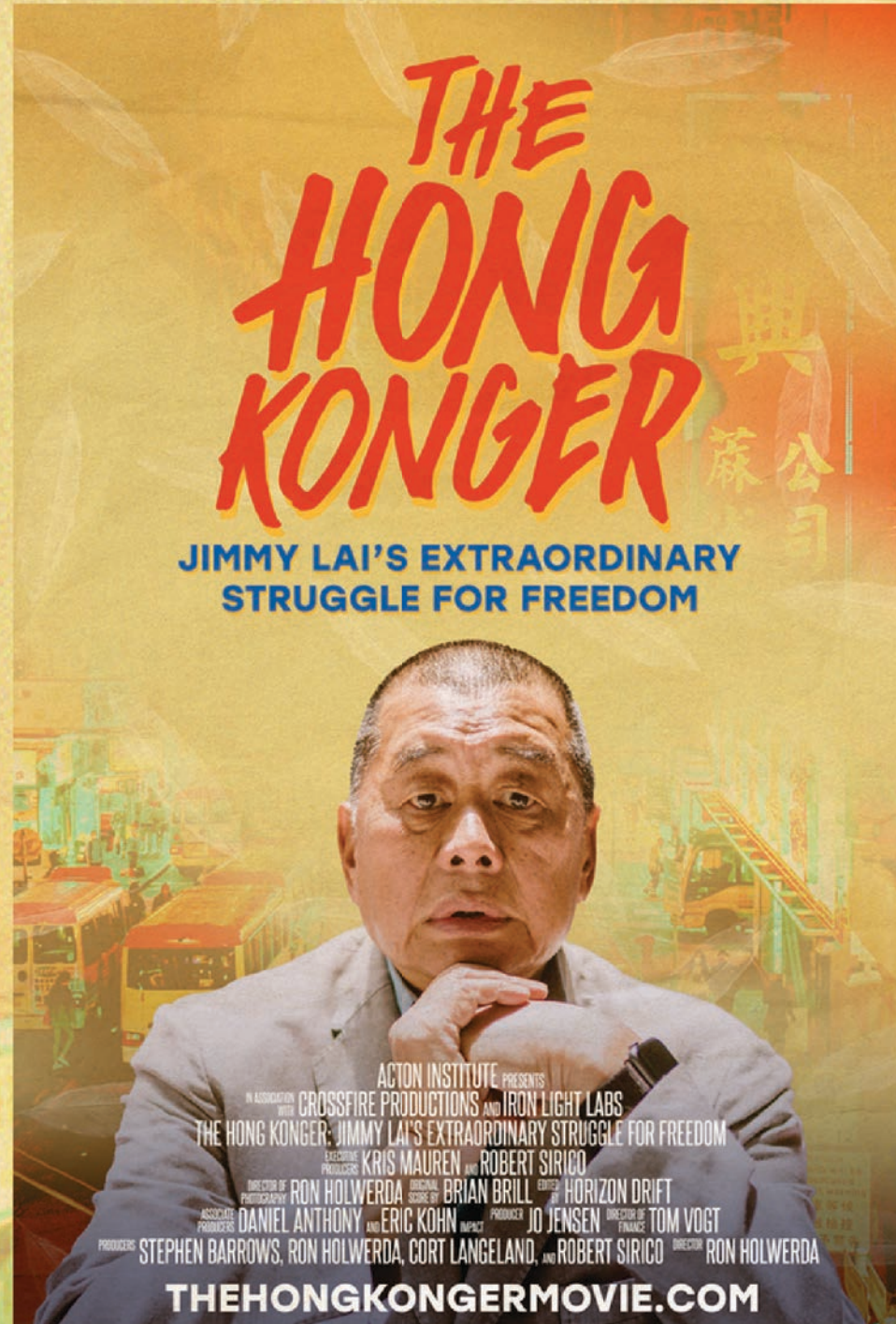
PRESS KIT



LOGLINE

When Hong Kong's basic freedoms come under attack, media tycoon Jimmy Lai finds himself in the crosshairs of the state and must choose between defending Hong Kong's long-standing liberties, or his own freedom.

HIGH RES IMAGES



SYNOPSIS

Jimmy Lai personifies Hong Kong's entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit, coupled with an embrace of freedom, unleashed economic prosperity for Hong Kongers and made Jimmy a billionaire. Jimmy's native China underwent a similar prosperity by undertaking an experiment with personal and economic freedoms, lifting an astounding 800 million Chinese out of poverty. Today, it's a different story—and the stakes couldn't be higher for Jimmy Lai, the citizens of Hong Kong, and the people of China.

Jimmy fled Maoist revolutionaries as a 12 year old and began a new life as a simple textile laborer in Hong Kong. Within 30 years he started a fashion house and built Giordano into an enormously successful clothing retail business with thousands of stores worldwide. In reaction to China's 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, Jimmy launched Next Media and published Hong Kong's most successful newspaper, Apple Daily. As guardian of freedom of speech and the press, Apple Daily provided an independent voice for Hong Kong following its 1997 transition from British rule to Chinese control.

SYNOPSIS CONTINUED

Reassured by Beijing's "one nation, two systems" approach, much of Hong Kong's prosperity and freedom continued—until a palpable shift occurred under the leadership of Chinese president Xi Jinping. As China retreated from its "one nation, two systems" policy and began installing pro-Beijing leaders in Hong Kong, Jimmy became a leading voice against repressive policies. Jimmy could have fled but he chose to stay, marching alongside millions of his fellow Hong Kongers in defense of freedom and democracy. He was soon arrested and jailed. International banks froze his assets. Apple Daily was raided and key executives arrested. In June 2021, Apple Daily printed its final edition and shut its doors.

Today Jimmy perseveres in a Hong Kong prison cell awaiting trial. Featuring Lord Christopher Patten, Rev. Robert Sirico, Mary Kissel, Victoria Hui, Joey Siu, William McGurn, Lord David Alton and others, The Hong Konger chronicles Jimmy's story of heroic sacrifice and symbol of the freedom movement. From his own testimony as well as through exclusive interviews with diplomats, citizen activists, scholars, and friends from across the globe, one thing becomes clear: Jimmy's fate is in our hands. His cause must not die in a prison cell—for freedom is not merely his cause, but the cause of all Hong Kongers, the Chinese people, and indeed all humanity.



FLED TO CHINA
1959

FOUND S CLOTHING
RETAIL BRAND
GIORDANO
1981

FOUND S NEXT MEDIA IN REACTION
TO CHINA'S 1989 TIANANMEN
SQUARE MASSACRE
1990

FOUND S APPLE DAILY
1995

ARRESTED FOR VIOLATING
NEW NATIONAL SECURITY
LAW
2020

APPLE DAILY FORCED
TO CLOSE OPERATIONS
2021

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

By Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Hong Kong has long epitomized the essence of the human spirit: creative, alive, energetic, and free. This spirit unleashed prosperity, urbanity, and peace for Hong Kongers—and is embodied by its most prominent entrepreneur and newspaperman, Jimmy Lai. Jimmy's life is the song of freedom—and now the authorities have put him in a cage.

I will be upfront: Jimmy is a personal friend. I produced this film not only because Jimmy is a friend, but because this is the cause of humanity: every person by nature longs to be free, to create, and to live in harmony with others. Jimmy arrived in Hong Kong as a stowaway child from mainland China, fleeing the oppression of Maoist revolutionaries. By sheer inspiration and grit, he built businesses and launched the most successful newspaper in Hong Kong. Yet fabulous business success is not what drives this man. Rather, it is his capacity for love and sacrifice. His love for Hong Kong is matched by his lifelong yearning for his culturally rich homeland to fully embrace freedom—that same freedom which enabled Jimmy and millions of Hong Kongers to flourish.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT CONTINUED

For a time, the Chinese Mainland undertook an experiment toward economic liberalization: permitting local family businesses, opening to global trade, and promoting advanced education for its citizens—which lifted hundreds of millions of its own citizens out of poverty. This showed that what had happened in Hong Kong could also happen in the Motherland. Yet now the ruling Communist party has taken a dramatic turn, and by suppressing the democratic aspirations of Hong Kongers, it is undermining the very foundations upon which its own prosperity depends. It is coming at an enormous human cost.

Jimmy could have fled the vise which is slowly gripping Hong Kong. But he decided not to because, as he explains, he owes freedom his life. Jimmy's story is one of sacrifice. He has given up all he has: his businesses, his wealth, the comfort of hearth and home, to speak out on behalf of all Hong Kongers and for that matter, all Chinese people. Jimmy's story is one that cannot die in a prison cell—it is one that must reignite a persistent movement to defend the cause of freedom for Hong Kongers, for China as a whole, and humanity everywhere.



**“EVEN IF THEY KILL ME, I WILL
FIGHT TO THE LAST DAY.”**

– JIMMY LAI

FEATURING



LORD DAVID ALTON

UK House of Lords



For over 40 years Lord (David) Alton has served in both Houses of the British Parliament. A member of the House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations and Defense he is Vice Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hong Kong and a Patron of Hong Kong Watch. He is one of seven British parliamentarians sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party for campaigning against the destruction of Hong Kong's freedoms and for highlighting the persecution of Uyghurs and Tibetans and the intimidation of Taiwan.

SUNNY CHEUNG

Exiled Hong Kong activist



Sunny Cheung is a young politician from Hong Kong. As a former student leader, he testified before the UK Parliament and US Congress. Ahead of the 2020 Legislative Council election, he participated and emerged victorious in the Hong Kong democratic camp's primaries and became an elected representative. He is now the advisor of the Hong Kong Democracy Council, a Washington DC based advocacy group. Having graduated from the University of Hong Kong majoring in China studies, he is now pursuing an M.A. at Johns Hopkins University's SAIS.

SAMUEL M. CHU

Founder & President, The Campaign for Hong Kong



Samuel Chu is the founder and President of the Campaign for Hong Kong. Samuel was also the founding and managing director of Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC), a Washington DC-based, nonpartisan nonprofit for Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. While leading HKDC, Samuel successfully advocated for the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, the Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and numerous other pro-Hong Kong policies. A first-generation immigrant, Samuel is the son of the Rev. Chu Yiu Ming, co-founder of Occupy Central that led to the Umbrella Movement.

AMB. JAMES B. CUNNINGHAM

Former Consul General of Hong Kong



Ambassador James B. Cunningham served as Ambassador to Afghanistan, Israel, and the United Nations, and as Consul General for Hong Kong and Macau, with nearly 40 years of service.. He is now a consultant, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a member of the adjunct faculty at Syracuse University's Maxwell School, and Board Chair of the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong. Earlier in his career, he worked in European security and political affairs, including as Chief of Staff to NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner.

VICTORIA TIN-BOR HUI

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science,
University of Notre Dame



Victoria Tin-bor Hui is Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Notre Dame. She has written on Hong Kong's democracy movement and the crackdown in the Journal of Democracy, Foreign Affairs, The Diplomat, and Washington Post's Monkey Cage. She is a Council on Foreign Relations fellow with the Congressional-Executive Commission on China in 2021-22. Hui also studies the centrality of war in Chinese history.

JO JENSEN

President, Iron Light Labs



Jo Jensen is the president of Iron Light Labs, winner of the 2021 "Non-profit of the year" Shorty Award. As a serial entrepreneur, Jo has created three successful companies, led non-profits, produced award-winning films, and designed high-profile marketing campaigns. Jo mastered social listening tools and visual storytelling to make an impact and shape the digital narrative to achieve policy outcomes. An invited speaker at the White House, Jo's work has been featured in national news outlets including the Wall Street Journal, Good Morning America, IndieWire, and People Magazine.

MARY KISSEL

Senior Advisor, US Secretary of State (2018–2021)



Mary Kissel is executive vice president and senior policy advisor at Stephens Inc., a Little Rock, Arkansas based, privately held financial services firm, where she advises management and clients on foreign policy and geopolitical risk. Prior to joining Stephens, she served as senior advisor to U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo from October 2018 to January 2021. In that role, she provided advice to advance the national interests of the United States, conducted special projects for the Secretary, and traveled to more than 60 countries.

SIMON LEE

Former Op-Ed Columnist, Apple Daily



Simon was a columnist with the Apple Daily since 2005. The newspaper was forcibly closed down by the Chinese Communist Party in 2021.

WILLIAM MCGURN

Columnist, The Wall Street Journal; Friend of Jimmy Lai



I first met Jimmy in 1992, when I was based in Hong Kong for the Far Eastern Economic Review. In 1997 I was his godfather when he was received into the Catholic Church. My wife is godmother to his daughter Claire, and his wife Teresa is godmother to my daughter Maisie. We are family.

RT HON LORD CHRIS PATTEN

Governor of Hong Kong (1992–1997)



Christopher Francis Patten, Baron Patten of Barnes is a British politician who served as the Governor of Hong Kong from 1992–1997 and Chairman of the Conservative Party from 1990–1992. Patten was Britain's last Governor of Hong Kong, tasked with overseeing the transition of power to China in 1997. Following his governorship, Patten led the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland from 1998–1999 and served as Chairman for the BBC Trust from 2011–2014. He has been the Chancellor of the University of Oxford since 2003.

BENEDICT ROGERS

Co-Founder and Chief Executive, Hong Kong Watch



Benedict Rogers is co-founder and Chief Executive of Hong Kong Watch, Senior Analyst for East Asia at the human rights organization CSW, an advisor to the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), and author of six books. He is a regular contributor to international media and has testified at hearings in the US Congress, European Parliament and UK Parliament. In 2020 he was awarded the “International Religious Freedom (IRF) Champion Award” by the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington, DC.

MARK SIMON

Former Executive, Next Digital



Mark Simon worked for Jimmy Lai inside Apple Daily and Next Digital for 20 years, remaining today as the Senior Executive for Mr. Lai's on- media businesses outside Hong Kong.

Mr. Simon held multiple positions inside the Next Digital Group, from General Manager of Apple Daily to Group Director and Chairman's Deputy. Mr. Simon also wrote the "Second Opinion" Column of Next Magazine, the most read English Language column in Hong Kong.

FR. ROBERT SIRICO

Friend of Jimmy Lai



Fr. Sirico is the President Emeritus and co-founder of the Acton Institute, and pastor emeritus of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Grand Rapids, Mich. His writings on religious, political, economic, and social matters are published in a variety of journals, including: the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, the London Financial Times, the Washington Times, The Detroit News, and National Review. He is the author of numerous books, including Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy, A Moral Basis for Liberty, and the forthcoming The Economics of the Parables, due for release in May 2022.

JOEY SIU

Activist; Policy Advisor of Hong Kong Watch



Joey Siu is a Hongkongese-American student activist, policy advisor of Hong Kong Watch and advisor to the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC). She participated actively in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement in local grassroots campaigns and international advocacy for Hong Kong. Her focus is on human rights in Hong Kong, East Turkestan, Tibet and other regions in China. She has testified before the U.S. Congress, spoke in the U.K. Parliament and United Nations, and gave briefings at the European Union Delegation office at the U.N.

GEORGE WEIGEL

Distinguished Senior Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center



George Weigel, Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, is a Catholic theologian and one of America's leading public intellectuals. He holds EPPC's William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies.

Mr. Weigel is perhaps best known for his widely translated and internationally acclaimed two-volume biography of Pope St. John Paul II: the New York Times bestseller, *Witness to Hope* (1999), and its sequel, *The End and the Beginning* (2010).

FILM SPECS

Title: The Hong Konger: Jimmy Lai's Extraordinary Struggle for Freedom

Duration: 73 minutes

Release Year: 2022

Country of Production: USA, Hong Kong, UK

Genre: Documentary

Screening Format: DCP, Pro Res

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Sound Format: 5.1 Surround Sound

A Film By: Acton Institute

In Association With: Crossfire Productions and Iron Light Labs

FILM CREW

Director and Director of
Photography: Ron Holwerda

Executive Producers: Kris Mauren
and Robert Sirico

Producers: Stephen Barrows, Ron
Holwerda, Cort Langeland, and
Robert Sirico

Editor: Horizon Drift

Original Music By: Brian Brill

Associate Producers: Daniel
Anthony and Eric Kohn

ABOUT ACTON INSTITUTE

ACTON
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The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty is an ecumenical, nonprofit research organization that promotes the benefits of free enterprise to religious communities, business people, students and educators. With an international scope, Acton manages a robust publishing and events outreach that argues for a moral foundation to the market economy. Wholly independent, the nonpartisan Institute works across many faith traditions including Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

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