



Why Wealth Inequality Matters: A Symposium

Speaker Bios





Daron Acemoglu is an Institute Professor at MIT, Faculty Director of the James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Center on Inequality and Shaping the Future of Work, and a Research Affiliate at MIT Blueprint Labs. He is an elected fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, American Philosophical Society, the British Academy of Sciences, the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Econometric Society, the European Economic Association, and the Society of Labor Economists. He is also a member of the Group of Thirty.

He is the author of six books, including *New York Times* bestseller *Why Nations Fail: Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (joint with James A. Robinson), *Introduction to Modern Economic Growth, The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty* (with James A. Robinson), and *Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity* (with Simon Johnson). His academic work covers a wide range of areas, including political economy, economic development, economic growth, technological change, inequality, labor economics and economics of networks.

Daron Acemoglu has received the inaugural T. W. Shultz Prize from the University of Chicago in 2004, and the inaugural Sherwin Rosen Award for outstanding contribution to labor economics in 2004, Distinguished Science Award from the Turkish Sciences Association in 2006, the John von Neumann Award, Rajk College, Budapest in 2007, the Carnegie Fellowship in 2017, the Jean-Jacques Laffont Prize in 2018, the Global Economy Prize in 2019, and the CME Mathematical and Statistical Research Institute prize in 2021. He was awarded the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel in 2024 (with Co-Laureates Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson), the John Bates Clark Medal in 2005, the Erwin Plein Nemmers Prize in 2012, and the 2016 BBVA Frontiers of Knowledge Award. He holds Honorary Doctorates from the University of Utrecht, the Bosphorus University, University of Athens, Bilkent University, the University of Bath, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Saclay Paris, and the London Business School.



David Autor is the Daniel (1972) and Gail Rubinfeld Professor in the MIT Department of Economics, codirector of the NBER Labor Studies Program and the James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Center on Inequality and Shaping the Future of Work. His scholarship explores the labor-market impacts of technological change and globalization on job polarization, skill demands, earnings levels and inequality, and electoral outcomes.

Autor has received numerous awards for both his scholarship—the National Science Foundation CAREER Award, an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellowship, the Sherwin Rosen Prize for outstanding contributions to the field of Labor Economics, the Andrew Carnegie Fellowship in 2019, the Society for Progress Medal in 2021—and for his teaching, including the MIT MacVicar Faculty Fellowship. In 2020, Autor received the Heinz 25th Special Recognition Award from the Heinz Family Foundation for his work “transforming our understanding of how globalization and technological change are impacting jobs and earning prospects for American workers.” In 2023, Autor was selected as one of two researchers across all scientific fields a NOMIS Distinguished Scientist. In 2024, Autor was one of five senior scholars selected by the Schmidt Sciences Foundation as an AI2050 Senior Fellow.

The Economist magazine labeled Autor in 2019 as “The academic voice of the American worker.” Later that same year, and with equal justification, he was christened “Twerpyp MIT Economist” by John Oliver of *Last Week Tonight* in a segment on automation and employment.



Credit: Malin Lauterbach / EFN

Simon Johnson is the Ronald A. Kurtz (1954) Professor of Entrepreneurship at the MIT Sloan School of Management, where he is head of the Global Economics and Management group. At MIT, he is also co-director of the James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Center on Inequality and Shaping the Future of Work and a Research Affiliate at Blueprint Labs.

In 2024, Johnson received the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel, joint with Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, “for studies of how institutions are formed and affect prosperity.”

In 2007-08, Johnson was chief economist and director of the Research Department at the International Monetary Fund. He currently co-chairs the CFA Institute Systemic Risk Council with Erkki Liikanen. In February 2021, Johnson joined the board of directors of Fannie Mae, where he is vice chair of the audit committee and a member of the risk and capital committee. He is a Research Associate at the NBER and a Fellow at CEPR.

Johnson's most recent book, with Daron Acemoglu, *Power and Progress: Our 1000-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity*, explores the history and economics of major technological transformations up to and including the latest developments in Artificial Intelligence. Power and Progress is currently scheduled for publication in about 20 languages around the world. It was long listed for the 2023 Financial Times and Schroders Book of the Year and for the Baillie Gifford Prize for Non-Fiction, and it was shortlisted for the 2024 Lionel Gelber Prize.

His previous book, with Jonathan Gruber, *Jump-Starting America: How Breakthrough Science Can Revive Economic Growth and the American Dream*, explained how to create millions of good new jobs around the U.S., through renewed public investment in research and development. This proposal attracted bipartisan support, as reflected in the 2022 Chips and Science Act.

Johnson was previously a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C., a cofounder of BaselineScenario.com, a member of the Congressional Budget Office's Panel of Economic Advisors, and a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's Systemic Resolution Advisory Committee. From July 2014 to early 2017, Johnson was a member of the Financial Research Advisory Committee of the U.S. Treasury's Office of Financial Research (OFR), within which he chaired the Global Vulnerabilities Working Group.

“The Quiet Coup” received over a million views when it appeared in *The Atlantic* in early 2009. His book *13 Bankers: the Wall Street Takeover and the Next Financial Meltdown* (with James Kwak), was an immediate bestseller and has become one of the mostly highly regarded books on the financial crisis. Their follow-up book on U.S. fiscal policy, *White House Burning: The Founding Fathers, Our National Debt, and Why It Matters for You*, won praise across the political spectrum. Johnson’s academic research papers on long-term economic development, corporate finance, political economy, and public health are widely cited.

“For his articulate and outspoken support for public policies to end too-big-to-fail”, Johnson was named a Main Street Hero by the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) in 2013.



Richard M. Locke is the John C Head III Dean of the MIT Sloan School of Management. A scholar of international labor standards and comparative political economy, his appointment as dean marks his return to MIT, where he previously served as head of Political Science and MIT Sloan's deputy dean. He began his career at MIT in 1988.

Before this appointment, Locke was Dean of Apple University, focusing on internal leadership and management education for Apple, Inc. Prior to that, he served for nearly eight years as Provost at Brown University, overseeing its strategic plan, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and boosting research growth. He joined Brown's faculty in 2013 as a professor and director of the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs.

As dean, Locke envisions MIT Sloan charting the future of management education, with a focus on how new technologies will impact education, industry, and the workplace. He is also committed to exploring opportunities for international growth and impact through MIT Sloan's global corporate and educational partnerships. Central to Locke's vision is the ongoing development of partnerships and engagement with key initiatives at MIT which are focused on health, climate, AI, policy, and more.

Locke's career has consistently bridged theory and practice. He has advised organizations like Nike and the U.S. Department of Labor, authored several books, and published numerous peer-reviewed articles. An award-winning teacher and researcher, he holds degrees from Wesleyan University, the University of Chicago, and a PhD from MIT.



Elizabeth Anderson is the John Dewey Distinguished University Professor of Philosophy and Women's & Gender Studies and Professor of Law at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In 1987, she earned her Ph.D. in Philosophy from Harvard University and joined the Philosophy Department at University of Michigan. Professor Anderson designed University of Michigan's Philosophy, Politics, and Economics program, and was its founding director. She chaired the Department of Philosophy from 2014-2019. She has won fellowships from the ACLS and Guggenheim Foundations, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the British Academy, served as President of the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association, and is a 2019 MacArthur Fellow. She is the author of *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Harvard UP, 1993), *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton UP, 2010), *Private Government (How Employers Rule our Lives, and Why We Don't Talk About It)* (Princeton UP, 2017), *Hijacked: How Neoliberalism Turned the Work Ethic Against Workers, and How Workers Can Take It Back* (Cambridge UP, 2023) and numerous, widely reprinted articles in journals of philosophy, law, and economics. She specializes in moral and political philosophy, social and feminist epistemology, and the philosophy of economics and the social sciences, with strong interests also in the history of philosophy. She has written extensively on egalitarianism, the interaction of facts and values in social science research, the intersection of democratic theory and social epistemology, pragmatism, and the philosophy of work.



Oren Cass is the founder and chief economist of American Compass and editor of *The New Conservatives: Restoring America's Commitment to Family, Community, and Industry*. He is a contributing opinion writer for the *Financial Times* and the *New York Times*. His 2018 book, *The Once and Future Worker: A Vision for the Renewal of Work in America* has been called "absolutely brilliant" by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks and "A brilliant book. And among the most important I've ever read" by Vice President JD Vance.



Hélène Landemore is Damon Wells 58 Professor of Political Science at Yale University, a Faculty Fellow at the Institute for Social and Policy Studies, and a Distinguished Researcher at the Institute for the Ethics of AI at Oxford University. She is the author of *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many* (Princeton University Press, 2013), *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the 21st Century* (Princeton University Press, 2020), and *Politics Without Politicians* (Penguin, 2026).

Her work explores how political systems can better harness collective intelligence, inclusion, and deliberation. She is known for her work on deliberative and participatory institutions such as citizens' assemblies, which she argues can improve both the legitimacy and quality of collective decisions. Her research sits at the intersection of political theory, political epistemology, and democratic innovation, with growing attention to the implications of artificial intelligence for democratic life. She has worked with governments, NGOs, and democratic reformers, centrally in France, her native country, where she co-governed the 2022-23 Citizens' Convention on the End of Life. Her work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Financial Times*, and *The Nation*, and discussed on The Ezra Klein Show, at the Aspen Festival of Ideas, and the Athens Democracy Forum. She has also written for *Boston Review*, *Slate*, *The Washington Post*, *Project Syndicate*, *Foreign Policy*, *l'Humanité*, *Libération*, and *Le Monde*.



Katrina Forrester is a political theorist and historian of twentieth-century political thought and the John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences in the Department of Government and Committee on Social Studies at Harvard University. She is the author of the multi-award-winning book *In the Shadow of Justice: Postwar Liberalism and the Remaking of Political Philosophy* (Princeton 2019), a critical history of liberal egalitarianism, and co-editor of *Nature, Action and the Future: Political Thought and the Environment* (Cambridge 2018). She is currently at work on a book provisionally titled *In and Against: Struggles over the State in the Late Twentieth Century* and a new project on a social and political theory of dependency. Her research has been published in edited volumes and journals such as *Political Theory* and the *American Political Science Review*, and her essays and criticism—on topics from work and privacy to Bob Dylan—have appeared in many publications, including the *London Review of Books* and *The New Yorker*.



Ellora Derenoncourt is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Princeton University, a member of the Industrial Relations Section of Princeton Economics, and the founding director of the Program for Research on Inequality at Princeton Economics. She works on labor economics, economic history, and the study of inequality. Recently she has studied the long-run evolution of racial inequality in the US and the effect of labor market institutions on low wage workers. She received her Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University in 2019.



Alexandra (Sasha) Killewald is Professor of Sociology, director of the Stone Center for Inequality Dynamics, and the Robert F. Schoeni Research Professor at the Institute for Social Research, all at the University of Michigan. She uses quantitative methods to study inequality in the contemporary United States. In one line of research, Sasha investigates the gendered intersection of work and family, exploring how parenthood, paid labor, and unpaid labor are differently associated for men and women. In a second line of research, she analyzes how wealth inequality persists across generations and the role of intergenerational processes in maintaining racial disparities in wealth.



Wojciech Kopczuk is a Professor of Economics and International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, where he specializes in tax policy and income and wealth inequality. He is a research associate at the NBER, the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Public Economics*, serves on editorial boards of many other journals, and is the former president of the International Institute of Public Finance.



Gary Gensler is Professor of the Practice, Global Economics and Management, and Professor of the Practice, Finance, at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Professor Gensler previously served as Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission (2021-2025), Chair of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (2009-2014), Under Secretary of the Treasury for Domestic Finance (1999-2001), and Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (1997-1999). He also was Chair of the Maryland Financial Consumer Protection Commission (2017-2019) and Senior Advisor to Senator Paul Sarbanes (2002). Earlier, Gensler worked at Goldman Sachs for 18 years, where he became a partner. His research focuses on artificial intelligence, finance, and economic policy.



Sheri Berman is a professor of political science at Barnard College, Columbia University. She writes about democracies and dictatorships, populism, fascism, European politics and the history of the left for both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences. Her last book was *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Regime to the Present Day* (Oxford University Press) and her forthcoming book is entitled *The Political Consequences of Economic Ideas: Neoliberalism, the Left, and the Fate of Democracy* (Oxford University Press).



David Y. Yang is Yvonne P.L. Lui Professor in the Department of Economics at Harvard University. David is the director of the Center for History and Economics at Harvard, and the director of Scholars' House, a China research hub in Tokyo. David is a Faculty Research Fellow at NBER and a fellow at BREAD. David's research spans three main topics: authoritarian regimes, the political economy of technology, and data-driven geopolitics. David received a B.A. in Statistics and B.S. in Business Administration from University of California at Berkeley, and PhD in Economics from Stanford.



Ya-Wen Lei is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Harvard University and a former Junior Fellow at Harvard's Society of Fellows. She is also affiliated with the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies and serves as a Senior Scholar with the Weatherhead Center's Academy Scholars Program. Her research examines political and socioeconomic transformation, with a particular focus on the relationship between technology, society, and political economy. She is the author of two books: *The Contentious Public Sphere: Law, Media, and Authoritarian Rule in China* (Princeton University Press, 2018) and *The Gilded Cage: Techno-State Capitalism in China* (Princeton University Press, 2023), the latter of which has received seven national and international awards. Her work has appeared in leading sociological journals, including the *Annual Review of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, and *American Journal of Sociology*. Her publications have received extensive recognition from the American Sociological Association, the Law and Society Association, the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, and *The China Quarterly*.