

INSIDE NEWS

from the President

May 2025

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112 Elden Street, Suite P
Herndon, Virginia 20170
703.318.0730
www.cblwomen.org

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Meet Our Summer Interns!



Summer may be the most rewarding time of year at the Luce Center—because it's when we open our doors to college women from across the country who participate in our highly selective internship program. This year's interns hail from **New York, Florida, Oregon, Virginia, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania**. Their Luce Center experience will include 10 weeks of specialized education, training, and mentorship.



Virginia Fehrer

School: Virginia Tech (Blacksburg, Virginia)
Home State: Virginia
Favorite Book: *Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins
Favorite Conservative Woman: Brett Cooper



Emilie Santoso

School: Hillsdale College (Hillsdale, Michigan)
Home State: Oregon
Favorite Book: *Let Me be a Woman* by Elizabeth Elliott
Favorite Conservative Woman: Riley Gaines



Ann Rodgers

School: University of Florida (Gainesville, Florida)
Home State: Florida
Favorite Book: *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by V.E. Schwab
Favorite Conservative Woman: Kayleigh McEnany



Anastasia Shanahan

School: Thomas More College (Merrimack, New Hampshire)

Home State: Virginia

Favorite Book: *Kristen Lavransdatter* by Sigrid Undset

Favorite Conservative Woman: Lila Rose



Daniela Villavicencio

School: Queens College (Flushing, New York)

Home State: New York

Favorite Book: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell

Favorite Conservative Woman: Brett Cooper



Lucy Ruse

School: University of Dallas (Irving, Texas)

Home State: Virginia

Favorite Book: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

Favorite Conservative Woman: Her mother, Cathy Ruse



Fiona Williamson

School: Christendom College (Front Royal, Virginia)

Home State: Virginia

Favorite Book: *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen

Favorite Conservative Woman: Alice Von Hildebrand





Anastasia Leffas

School: Benedictine College (Atchison, Kansas)

Home State: Virginia

Favorite Book: *Mount Wonder* by Scott Bloch and *The Awakening of Miss Prim* by Natalia Sanmartin Fenollera

Favorite Conservative Woman: Edith Stein



Mercedes Skidd

School: University of Dallas (Irving, Texas)

Home State: Connecticut

Favorite Book: *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

Favorite Conservative Woman: Isabel Brown



Jenny Ryan

School: Muhlenberg College (Allentown, Pennsylvania)

Home State: Pennsylvania

Favorite Book: *The House Across the Lake* by Riley Sager

Favorite Conservative Woman: Riley Gaines



A Voice for the Voiceless: North Korean Defector Seohyun Lee Inspires Full House



***Seohyun Lee** shares her compelling personal story about escaping communism and embracing freedom in her new home in America.*

As a young woman, Lee had never even seen the northern part of her own country, a stark reminder of the extreme restrictions placed on North Koreans.

In 2014, after a harrowing experience that included witnessing the disappearance of a close friend at the hands of North Korea's secret police, Lee and her family made the decision to defect.

"We risked everything in the pursuit of freedom," she said. In 2016, following a media leak that put their safety in jeopardy, the family sought asylum in the United States.

The Luce Center welcomed human rights activist and **North Korean** defector **Seohyun Lee** to speak before a full-capacity audience of students, members, and guests on May 9. Lee shared a deeply powerful and emotional account of her family's escape from North Korea and her ongoing fight for freedom.

Born and raised in **Pyongyang**, Lee grew up in a privileged household due to her father's high-ranking government position. But even within North Korea's elite, she lacked basic freedoms. "I had certain privileges," Lee told the audience, "but I did not have the basic human rights you have here today."



***Lucy Evich** and her mom, **Amy**, attend their first event at the Center after joining us at our **Nashville Student Summit** in November 2024.*



Lee speaks to a full-capacity audience of students, members, and guests.



(Left) **Laurel Ensign** and her mom, **Susie**, and (right) **Ester Greene (Leadership Institute)** and **Andrew Greene (NumbersUSA)** enjoy the company of fellow conservatives following Lee's remarks.

Since then, Lee has become a powerful global advocate for human rights, speaking at TEDx, briefing the **United Nations Security Council**, and serving as a **Korea Unification Opinion Leader** recognized by **South Korea's Ministry of Unification**. She has received multiple awards, including the **North Korea Freedom Scholarship** and serves on the **Global Advisory Council** at the **McCain Institute**.

During her remarks, Lee emphasized how easily Americans can take their freedoms for granted. "Freedom of movement—the ability to go from point A to point B—is something many of us overlook, but for people like me, it's a profound privilege," she said.

When asked what Americans can do to help the North Korean people, Lee stressed the importance of information and education. "Knowledge is power," she said. "Support organizations that provide opportunities for North Korean defectors to study and grow. They will be the messengers for those still inside."

Lee's closing words served as a rallying cry: "North Koreans are not aliens. They are people like you, who carry love and family responsibilities. Please don't forget them."

As a token of gratitude, we presented Lee with a **Grizzly Coolers** tumbler—a symbol of resilience in itself, following YETI's controversial decision to cancel our custom order due to the phrase "conservative women." In honoring her with this gift, we affirm our mission: to prepare and promote conservative women leaders who, like Lee, speak truth with courage and conviction.



(Left) Lee reads the inscription on her new **Grizzly Coolers** mug—our favorite quote by **Clare Boothe Luce**: "Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount." (Middle) President's Club member **May Hardiman** and **Nica Marin**, our events and marketing coordinator, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow conservatives. (Right) **Catherine Hendershott**, our assistant to the president, introduces Lee from the podium.

Reaching the Next Generation Where They Are—with a Message That Inspires

Instagram is one of the most important platforms for reaching today's young women. Nearly 60% of U.S. women ages 18–29 use it regularly. That's why we're thrilled to report major milestones in May: **Reagan Conrad**, host of **The Daily Wire's** *The Comments Section*, added our "speaker reveal" post to her Instagram grid; our "What JD Vance Said to Defend His Wife" is our most-liked post of the year so far; and our "Tradwife vs. Girlboss" is our most shared post of the year so far. Because of all the momentum, two high-profile women contacted us privately through Instagram asking how to get involved—stay tuned for what's coming next! If you're not already following us on social media, now's a great time to join us. Follow **@cblwomen** on Instagram, X, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

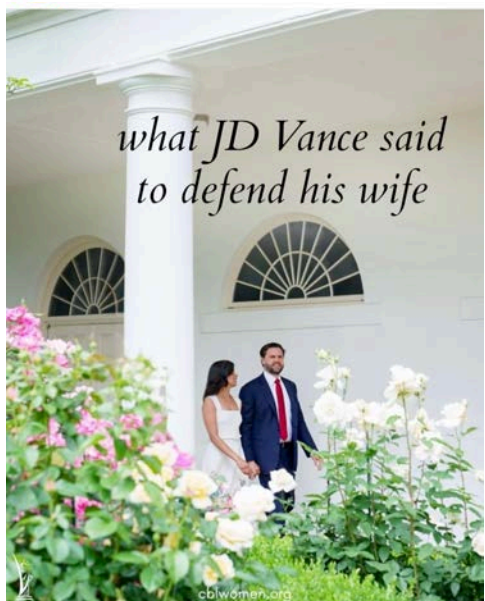
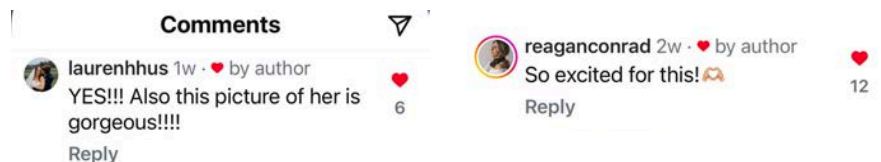


cblwomen Speaker #2 confirmed: Reagan Conrad! ✨

We're so excited to welcome [@reaganeconrad](#) to the stage at our College Women's Summit this fall! She's bold, brilliant, and a voice this generation needs! 🇺🇸

Ladies, registration is open—don't miss it! RSVP through our website or through the link in bio.

And be on the lookout as we reveal more of our summit speakers! 📣



cblwomen And that's our vice president 🌟 He stood up for her, loud and clear—that's how a man defends his wife.

The love and respect that both Vance and Usha have for each other is public, unapologetic, and admirable. ❤️

It's so incredible that we have a vice president and a second lady grounded in that kind of love, strength, and honor as they help lead the United States of America. 🇺🇸



❤️ 458 💬 30 📌 146



Comments



kristanmercerhawkins • 3d • ❤️

by author

This message is so needed right now.

Reply

❤️ 22



cblwomen 3d • Author

@kristanmercerhawkins

Yes! We've talked with so many young women who feel this tension, and they need support!!

Reply

❤️ 5

cblwomen This image conveys a false choice—one that quietly shapes how today's young women see themselves and think about their future.

You won't always see it spelled out on a billboard, but the message is everywhere—especially here on social media: be the ambitious, high-powered “girlboss” or the perfectly traditional “tradwife.”

Pick a side. Get in line. Never look back.

The pressure many young women feel is as misguided as it is limiting.

Because real life is more complex and more beautiful than a slogan.

And the either-or mindset flattens the richness of a woman's calling. It suggests your value comes only from fitting into one of two cultural molds. But God's design is far more personal. He gives each of us unique gifts—intelligence, creativity, compassion, strength—not to be hidden, but to be used boldly and faithfully in the world.

Some women will pour their creativity into writing, teaching, or running businesses. Others will focus on the profound responsibility of raising children and shaping the next generation. Many will do both—though not always at the same time. Every season carries purpose and dignity.

As Kate Obenshain Keeler, Luce Center Board Member and popular conservative commentator, puts it: “It's not an either-or proposition.”

Real life allows for seasons. For nuance. For paths that don't look like anyone else's. It's not about choosing sides—it's about living with purpose, conviction, and courage.

Kate has advice for today's young women:

“Stop listening to social media's lies. Be brave. This journey is going to look different for each of us. Look to God for your identity and His plan for your life. Fix your eyes on God and everything will fall properly in its place!”

“He who has started a good work in you will bring it to completion.” Philippians 1:6

Let's affirm the value of women's work and support young women as they discern how best to live out their calling with courage and conviction.

Share with a young woman who needs to see this!!👩🏻💡

On a Personal NOTE

The start of summer brings with it a renewed sense of possibility. At the Luce Center, it also marks the arrival of a new class of bright, promising interns—young women eager to grow into the principled leaders our country so urgently needs.

Our summer interns arrived the day after **Memorial Day**. During their first week, they met with our team, toured our nation's capital, and participated in a day of training at **The Heritage Foundation**, where they spent time with Heritage interns **Isela Becerra**, **Yael Shavelson**, **Lucy Spence**, and **Felicity Schmidt**—all of whom were involved with the Luce Center over the past year.

Watching these women step into challenging new experiences together is a powerful reminder: courage is not just a virtue—it's a habit, strengthened each time we choose to act with conviction. In May, **Seohyun Lee** inspired us with her harrowing story of escaping North Korea—told with honesty, humility, and grace. She reminded us that standing for truth often comes at great personal cost, and that bravery isn't limited to grand gestures.

Our interns practiced courage in quieter ways—leaving the familiar behind to begin a personal and professional journey far from home, stepping into a nationwide network of conservatives with openness, determination, and faith.

Your support makes these formative moments possible. Thank you for helping us prepare today's young women for conservative leadership.

In Friendship & Freedom,



Kimberly Begg
President
kimberly@cblwomen.org



2023 Luce Center summer intern **Nicole Gillis**, now **Young America's Foundation's** program officer for campus advancement, connects with other conservatives at our **Conservative Network Event** with **Seohyun Lee**.



2024 Luce Center summer interns **Riley Swedberg**, **Lucy Spence**, **Isela Becerra**, and **Yael Shavelson** return to Washington, DC to begin new internships and reconnect with good friends.