

LUCE LADDER

“Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount.”

– Clare Boothe Luce

From the President

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Courage in the Public Square: Luce Center Interns Stand at SCOTUS for Fairness in Women’s Sports



(Left) Luce Center interns **Lucy Evich** and **Hannah Martin** stand with Program Officer **Nicole Gillis** and Louisiana Attorney General **Liz Murrill** at the United States Supreme Court. (Right) **Riley Gaines** addresses the crowd, calling America to protect women’s sports for future generations of women, including her four-month-old daughter.

On the steps of the Supreme Court, Luce Center interns **Lucy Evich** and **Hannah Martin** attended a rally for women’s sports hosted by the **Alliance Defending Freedom** on January 13, as the Court heard oral arguments in *State of West Virginia v. BPJ* and *Little v. Hecox*. Both cases center on state laws intended to safeguard fairness in women’s sports—fairness that is still being compromised as biological men continue to displace women in female athletic competitions and enter spaces reserved for women.

Courageous advocates for women’s sports delivered messages of conviction and encouragement to the crowd, including women athletes **Riley Gaines** and **Selina Soule**, Speaker of the House **Mike Johnson**, Secretary of Education **Linda McMahon**, former ESPN anchor **Sage Steele**, and other conservative leaders. In her remarks, Selina Soule, a defender of women’s sports and former track and field athlete asserted, “... Men have no place competing against women... I hope the Supreme Court will stand up for women so that the next generation of girls will not have to suffer the same pain and heartbreak I went through my four years of high school.”

Reflecting on the powerful voices and testimonies at the rally, Hannah shared, “You could see the passion with which these women spoke, the desire for true fairness in sports, and the pain from having to compete and lose against men.”

Hannah and Lucy spoke directly with women’s sports advocates from across the country, including Louisiana Attorney General **Liz Murrill** and representatives from **Do No Harm** and **FIERCE Athlete**. Lucy reflected on the experience, saying, “It was such a positive, uplifting, and encouraging atmosphere to be a part of.”

Gen Z Women Lead A Powerful Witness for Life in the Nation's Capital



The Luce Center marches alongside thousands, giving a voice to the voiceless and affirming the dignity of all human life.

Luce Center students, interns, and staff gathered with more than **100,000 pro-life Americans** in Washington, D.C., for the **53rd annual March for Life** to affirm the dignity of every human life.

Throughout the day, hosts of the Center's podcast, *Gen Z Unplugged*—**Rachel Hurley**, **Catherine Hendershott**, and **Lauren Husmann**—interviewed participants from across the country, listening to the personal stories and convictions that brought them to the nation's capital to march for life.

In those conversations, young marchers made clear that defending life remains a crucial issue for the next generation. Students from **Belmont Abbey College** in Belmont, North Carolina shared, “life is so precious... life is worth defending at every stage,” and “the very thing that we were created for is to be children of God.” One young woman from Pennsylvania, holding a sign that read “stop telling women we can't succeed without abortion,” shared simply, “women are strong and we can do anything.”

The rally featured remarks from national leaders, including **Vice President JD Vance** and **Speaker of the House Mike Johnson**, who called attendees to raise strong families and remain steadfast in their defense of the unborn.

Vice President Vance referenced his remarks from the 2025 March for Life, saying, “I told you all [last year] that one of the things I most wanted in the United States of America was more families and more babies. So let the record show, you have a vice president who practices what he preaches.” Just days earlier, Vice President Vance and **Second Lady Usha Vance** announced they are expecting their fourth child.

The Luce Center team also reconnected with 2024 summer interns **Lucy Spence**, a junior at the **University of Notre Dame**, and **Isela Becerra**, a fellow at the **John Jay Institute** in **Pennsylvania**, who were in DC for the march.



Luce Center students, staff members, and interns engage, listen, and stand for life with courage and purpose.

Xi Van Fleet Sounds the Alarm on America's Role in the Rise of Communist China



(Left) **Xi Van Fleet** shares insights from her new book, *Made in America*. (Right) Van Fleet meets with spring intern **Hannah Martin** and 2025 summer interns **Fiona Williamson** and **Daniela Villavicencio**.

The Luce Center welcomed bestselling author and leading anti-communist voice **Xi Van Fleet** for a powerful conversation—covered by **C-SPAN**—about her new book, *Made in America: The Hidden History of How the U.S. Enabled Communist China and Created Our Greatest Threat*, on January 30.

Released just days before her visit, the book uncovers a story few Americans fully understand: how decades of misguided policies and elite cooperation helped transform Communist China from an impoverished regime into a global superpower—at America's expense.

Xi, the acclaimed author of *Mao's America*, is known for drawing striking parallels between China's Cultural Revolution and the ideological forces reshaping the United States today. In her newest work, she expands the lens—revealing that the Chinese Communist Party's rise was not driven by Soviet backing alone, but by sustained support from the United States itself.

Attendees included 2025 interns **Daniela Villavicencio**, an intern for Speaker of the House **Mike Johnson** (LA), and **Fiona Williamson**, a junior at **Christendom College**; 2023 intern **Nicole Gillis**, who joined our team in January as a program officer; and Luce Center members and guests.

Van Fleet opened with warm gratitude for the event and for the women whose leadership has shaped the conservative movement. "It is such an honor to be here and talk to you at the Luce Center," she said, recalling a previous visit when she attended a talk by **Mollie Hemingway** and admired the portraits of strong conservative women on the walls. She added, "Today I'm here as a speaker. **This is more than an honor. It is unbelievable.**"



Xi Van Fleet speaks to a standing-room-only audience as C-SPAN records the event for a national audience.

She emphasized that the Luce Center's focus on young women is not only timely, but urgent: "This is a center for conservative women, especially for young women. We need more of them in today's America."

She framed that need as a warning: "We know that the woke revolution is fueled by Marxist feminism."

"I left communism behind me... and I believed the freedom here is a given."

Van Fleet then shared the story that has shaped her voice and her warning—her upbringing under the Chinese Communist Party and her arrival in the United States as a young adult. "First of all, I'm from China and I'm an immigrant," she said. "I came here as a student."

She described living under "one of the most brutal communist regimes in the world," having attended school during the Cultural Revolution before coming to America at age 26, in 1986. She said that at the time, she "fully believed" she had left communism behind.

But that confidence was shaken over time. "I believed the freedom here is a given," she said—before adding a hard-won realization: "It's not."

She pointed to 2020 as the turning point that forced her off the sidelines, when she decided she could no longer stay quiet, that she had to "do something." Van Fleet described joining local conservative organizations and showing up at a Loudoun County Public School board meeting to give a short speech—one that, she said, unexpectedly "went viral."

That moment helped shape a new identity she now embraces without hesitation: "Now I'm so proud to call myself anti-Communist. That is my real title. I'm an anti-communist activist."

America's freedom needs new generations defending it

In a striking reflection, Van Fleet shared that she recently rewatched the film *The Patriot* while thinking about America's approaching 250th anniversary—and came away with "a renewed appreciation" for the courage required to secure liberty.

"[America's] freedom was not given," she reflected. "It was fought for and bled for and paid for—and needs new generations defending it."

She argued that America is now facing a new kind of conflict—harder to see, but just as consequential.

"Today we're in the second American revolution," she said, describing "a fight to keep our sovereignty" and warning that "this time is different... our enemies are very difficult to identify. The battlefield is blurred, the lines are hard to see, but the stakes are just as high."

Van Fleet described the threat as both external and internal: "Externally, our number one threat is China," she said, calling it "the most powerful adversary the United States has ever faced," and warning that China is "determined to replace [the] United States... to be the number one superpower."

"But internally," she continued, "it is the radical left... they're not hidden anymore."

"Communism... Marxism... wokeness—are they different? I say, no."

A central theme of Van Fleet's remarks was the ideological thread she believes connects these forces.

"What is the underlying connection between these two?" she asked. Then she answered plainly: "Communism, socialism, Marxism, and neo-Marxism known as wokeness—are they different? I say, no, there's no difference. It's just a matter of different terminologies."

"These two forces have been working together, hand in hand," she warned, "against their shared enemy. That is our republic and our freedom."

"This was never told... it's never taught in school."

Van Fleet explained that her new book is an attempt to answer a question that has haunted her: *how did the United States help create the very threat it now faces?*

"In *Made in America*... I uncover a very, very important history," she said—because "to know that history will help us to make sense of what's going on today."

And, she added, that history has been kept from ordinary Americans: "It was never told to the American public. It's never taught in school."

She acknowledged that what she shares may be difficult to hear. "This is an uncomfortable truth," she said, "that many... may feel hard [to] swallow."



(Left) President's Club member **Richard Ryan** and his guests meet Van Fleet. (Middle) Chief of Staff **Lauren Husmann** shares our favorite quote. (Right) **Rita Kargol** and **Rachel Kargol**, a junior at **George Mason University**, hold their signed book.



(Left) President **Kimberly Begg** welcomes guests. (Middle) **Sue Spiotto**, **Patti Hidalgo Menders**, and **Karen Catella** spend time in conversation. (Right) Men and women of all ages listen attentively to Van Fleet's compelling remarks.



(Left) Van Fleet signs her book for President Club member **Sonja DeCarlo**. (Middle) Program Officer **Nicole Gillis** leads Q&A. (Right) President's Club member **Sandy Dominick** takes a photo of Van Fleet with **Loudoun County** conservatives.



(Left) **Isabelle Rosini** asks a question during a lively Q&A. (Right) **C-SPAN** records Van Fleet's talk for programming available in over **100 million** homes.

Yet she argued that ignorance has consequences: “If Americans had truly understood what communism is all about, the true nature of communism and acted accordingly, the CCP may not [be] empower[ed] today.”

A “snapshot” of the history she traces

Van Fleet offered a rapid overview of the timeline she explores, describing what she called “ignorance and misjudgment” that helped “set the stage” for communism’s rise in China. She pointed to President Woodrow Wilson as a major early figure in the story: “Who was the player? No other than President Woodrow Wilson,” she said.

She then described the formation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 with Soviet help—and noted a detail she said surprises many Americans: “Communism was here first,” she said, before emphasizing that communist movements are typically elite-driven at the start.

“In the beginning there were only 50 members,” she explained. “Who were they? You probably think... the poor peasant... wrong... the elite... a few were the professors of Beijing University, kind of like Harvard... and their students.”

She underscored what she sees as a recurring pattern: “Communist movements never start from bottom up.”

Van Fleet also reminded the audience of what followed: war, mass violence, and the staggering human cost of communist rule under Mao Zedong.

She spoke of Mao’s campaigns, including land reform killings, the Great Leap Forward famine, and the Cultural Revolution’s “unbelievable violence.” She described her own “reeducation” in the countryside and compared it to “the equivalence of the gulags,” as a way to make the experience more legible to Americans.

Finally, she pointed to a pivotal moment she believes rescued the Chinese Communist Party at a critical time: “In 1972, President Richard Nixon decided to visit China,” she said. “He single-handedly rescued the CCP from the brink of collapse.”

On Islam and Cultural Marxism

In Q&A, one attendee asked about Islam and how it has gained cultural and political ground in the West. Van Fleet began with a disclaimer—“it’s not my expertise”—but then offered what she called her firmest conclusion: “Without Marxism, without cultural Marxism, Islam could not establish a foothold here in the West.”

She argued that Islam advances in Western countries “because they have a helping hand” of “unholy alliances.” She pointed to DEI, CRT and identity politics as frameworks that “help Islam to make progress here.”

Van Fleet explored what she described as a hierarchy of threats: “Communism is our number one threat. And if we can defeat cultural Marxism, there’s no cover for [radical Islam].” Yet she also emphasized that the two ideologies are ultimately in tension: “The two are incompatible with each other... in a life and death struggle.... they’re both ruthless. I don’t know who will win.”

“There Is No Common Ground”

Another question pressed her on whether it is still possible to find middle ground with the Left. Van Fleet’s answer was direct: “We passed that stage a long time ago. There was no common ground. There is absolutely no common ground.”

She framed the conflict as moral and civic, saying, “The fight is between freedom and totalitarianism, good and evil.” She argued that the Left’s ability to label opponents as “fascists or Hitler” flows from long-term control of the educational system.

She pointed to what she said many children absorb in history class: “There are two things [today’s] kids learn in history lessons... Slavery, slavery, slavery, slavery. And then Nazi, Nazi, Nazi, Nazi. They have no idea about anything else.”

Van Fleet concluded that this is “the result of decades of indoctrination,” and reiterated her central claim: “It is absolutely a battle between good and evil. The sooner we realize that, the better off America will be.”

Meet Spring Intern Hannah Martin



Name: Hannah Martin
School: Belmont Abbey College
Major: Marketing
Minor: Great Books
Home State: North Carolina
Favorite Book: *The Divine Comedy* by Dante
Favorite Conservative Woman: Congresswoman Lisa McClain (MI-09)
Prior Luce Center Experience: Attending our College Women's Summit in Nashville in 2024

We are delighted to welcome Hannah Martin as a spring intern at the Luce Center. Hannah is a senior in the **Honors College** at **Belmont Abbey** in North Carolina, and is spending the semester in Washington, D.C. through Belmont Abbey's *Semester in Washington* program while completing her internship with us.

Hannah's internship is already off to a strong start. She works closely with **Catherine Hendershott**, our membership director and a fellow Belmont Abbey Honors College alumna, supporting the growth of our membership program and helping to organize our monthly **Conservative Network Events**. She is also gaining hands-on experience in student activism through her work with Program Officer **Nicole Gillis**, contributing to our student Ambassador Program and broader outreach efforts.

Reflecting on her path to the Luce Center, Hannah shared:

*I wanted to intern at the Luce Center after attending the Nashville Summit, where I was struck by the seriousness and courage of the conservative women I met—women who were willing to defend their beliefs and engage thoughtfully in public policy. I've always been conservative because of my family's values and faith, but **that experience motivated me to take greater responsibility for my own beliefs and to stand up for them more intentionally.***

I never imagined I would have the opportunity to intern here, but everything came together in a remarkable way, and I'm incredibly grateful. I'm eager to learn more about conservative work in Washington and how organizations like the Luce Center can make a real difference, and also to build skills in marketing and communications that will serve me well in the future.

Hannah is joined this spring by **Lucy Evich**, our fall intern who has returned for another semester of mentorship and leadership training before beginning her studies at **Christendom College** this fall. Together, Hannah and Lucy will build practical skills in social media, public speaking, writing, and student outreach, while also playing an active role in planning our **Young Women's Luncheon** on **Capitol Hill** this March.

Along with hands-on experience, their time at the Luce Center includes mentorship from accomplished conservative women through our events and our national network—an integral part of our commitment to forming confident, capable leaders prepared to shape the future.



*Hannah Martin became involved with the Luce Center when she attended our **College Women's Summit** in **Nashville** in 2024, where she met conservative women from across the country, including women's sports advocate **Paula Scanlan**.*

On a Personal NOTE

Dear Friend,

As we begin a new year, we are filled with gratitude, resolve, and a deep **appreciation for the role you play in advancing our mission**. 2026 will be a year of bold work at the Luce Center. And like so many meaningful journeys, this one begins with a crucial question:

How do young women find the life-changing opportunities available through the Luce Center? The answer varies.

- **Daniela Villavicencio** (2025 intern from **Queens College**) found us when she attended our College Women's Luncheon at **Young America's Foundation's** National Conservative Student Conference.
- **Ann Rodgers** (2025 intern from **University of Florida**) found us through her aunt who saw us standing up for conservative women on national television when YETI canceled our mug order, citing "political" reasons.
- **Isela Becerra** (2024 intern from **Biola University**) found us when we visited her campus in advance of our College Women's Summit in Santa Barbara.



*It was wonderful to have 2025 summer interns **Fiona Williamson** and **Daniela Villavicencio** back at the Center—just two of the many young women in our nationwide network whom we continue to mentor and support.*

Increasingly, young women also find us through **@cblwomen** on **Instagram** and **YouTube**, engaging with content that reaches thousands. Yet one pattern has been clear: for many young women searching online for guidance and community, it has not always been easy to find us.

That's why—because of your belief in this mission—we are so excited to share an important milestone as we step into 2026. **Thanks to the generosity of two faithful friends of the Luce Center, we have now acquired conservativewomen.com and conservativewomen.org.** These domains connect common search terms directly to our work—so when young women search for conservative education, mentorship, and community, they will be far more likely to find the opportunities you help make possible.

We will, of course, continue to use our longtime website, cblwomen.org, which remains our official domain for now. These new domains strengthen our digital front door—opening wider the path for courageous young women to discover the opportunities you help provide.

This is only the beginning. In the months ahead, we will expand our programs, grow our national presence, and prepare more young women to lead with clarity, courage, and conviction. **None of this is possible without you. Your support sustains our mission and shapes the future.** You are helping open doors for women we may never otherwise meet—women who are searching for support and a place to belong. As we step into this new year together, we are sincerely grateful for your partnership and trust in our work and mission.

In Friendship & Freedom,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kimberly Beegs'.

President

P.S. We are so grateful to begin this new year with you by our side. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at kimberly@cblwomen.org or **703-507-9999** at any time. I would be delighted to hear from you.