

LUCE LADDER

"Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount."

From the President

– Clare Boothe Luce

August 2026

THE LUCE CENTER

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Caroline Downey Warns About the Socialist Tide Sweeping Gen Z

The Luce Center welcomed *National Review* staff writer **Caroline Downey** on July 10 for a standing-room-only discussion examining why socialism is gaining traction among Gen Z. Drawing on her background in economics and years covering politics and culture, Downey argued that socialism appeals to young people not because of its record, but because it is marketed as compassionate while its history is forgotten.



Caroline Downey explains the dangers of socialism and how Americans can resist them.

Addressing an audience made up largely of Gen Z interns and students, Downey warned that socialism is being "packaged and sold to young people with the euphemistic qualifier, 'democratic.'" More than half of Gen Z now views socialism favorably, she noted, because many encounter promises of free healthcare, affordable housing, and equality without learning about the bread lines, political repression, and economic collapse that have followed socialist regimes throughout history.

"The System Is Rigged"

Downey was careful not to dismiss the economic pressures facing her own generation. As a member of Gen Z herself, she pointed to soaring housing costs, student debt, inflation, and the lingering effects of COVID as genuine hardships. The danger, she argued, is that socialism offers a compelling diagnosis—but the wrong cure.



Downey challenges the Luce Center's interns to recognize socialism's false promises and warn others about its devastating consequences.

Rather than rewarding creativity and hard work, socialism destroys the incentives that drive innovation. When “effort is not rewarded and failure is not penalized,” she said, “no one innovates because rewards only go to the connected, not the productive.”

Treating Symptoms Instead of Causes

Downey argued that socialism repeatedly mistakes symptoms for causes. Housing, she said, is fundamentally “a supply issue.” Healthcare costs stem from “government meddling.” Rising crime reflects deeper problems, including family breakdown, failing schools, and policies that undermine personal responsibility.

Instead of confronting those realities, socialism “treats symptoms through redistribution while undermining the rule of law that protects everyone, especially the poor and vulnerable.”

The Power of Personal Testimony

One of the afternoon's most memorable exchanges came during the question-and-answer session when Luce Center intern **Amira Hawat**, a rising junior at **Lipscomb University** who emigrated from **Venezuela**, asked how young women can speak out against socialism while staying safe amid growing political hostility.

Downey encouraged Hawat to let her own experience speak louder than political arguments. Americans, she said, are far more likely to reconsider socialism when they encounter “real victims.” Calling Hawat’s story uniquely powerful, Downey concluded, “**I think this is a great opportunity for you to share your testimony.**”

A Better Future for Gen Z

Downey closed by urging conservatives to meet Gen Z's idealism with truth rather than frustration. Young people, she said, genuinely desire fairness, opportunity, and purpose. The answer is to “educat[e] them relentlessly,” teach the history too often omitted from classrooms, defend entrepreneurship and innovation, strengthen families and local communities, and speak to young Americans in language they understand. “Capitalism isn't perfect,” Downey concluded, “but with reforms rooted in freedom, it offers the only path to human flourishing.”



(Top) Chief of Staff **Lauren Husmann** raffles off a copy of **Liz Wheeler's** *Hide Your Children* following Downey's talk. (Middle) **Amira Hawat** (Lipscomb University) asks how young conservatives can speak out against socialism while staying safe. (Bottom) **Ella Finkbeiner** (Grove City College) asks how conservatives can communicate the truth about socialism in ways that resonate with young women.



(Left) Downey addresses a standing-room-only audience of interns, students, and supporters. (Middle) President's Club member **Kerry Bedard** reconnects with **Anastasia Shanahan**, the 2025 intern she sponsored, now assistant to the president. (Right) President **Kimberly Begg** visits with **Lindsay Ryan** (Wake Forest University) before the program.

Kerry & Kady Bedard Equip Interns for Financial Planning and Thriving



(L) **Kerry and Kady Bedard** pass on practical skills for financial planning. (R) **Lucy Carney** (Benedictine College) and **Mary White** (University of Dallas) apply conservative principles to financial stewardship in a hands-on budgeting exercise.

Financial coach and President's Club Member **Kerry Bedard** and her daughter, 2022 Luce Center intern **Kady Bedard**, led our July 8 Financial Management seminar, equipping interns with practical tools to manage their finances. Through hands-on exercises like building a budget, interns developed real-world financial skills while exploring how wise stewardship cultivates prudence, temperance, and discernment.

"Kerry and Kady Bedard's seminar was incredibly valuable," said **Alena Peethala**, a Luce Center intern and rising sophomore at **Vanderbilt University**. "I learned that fiscal responsibility... aligns with conservative values by allocating our time, talents, and treasures wisely." She added that the seminar introduced her to financial concepts she had never encountered before and inspired her to budget more carefully.

Interns left the seminar with greater financial confidence and practical habits for managing money wisely.

Dr. Abby Hall Brings Economics to Life



Dr. **Abby Hall**, professor of economics at the **University of Tampa**, joined Luce Center interns virtually on July 1 to introduce eleven principles that shape economic decision-making. From scarcity and tradeoffs to incentives and unintended consequences, Hall showed how economics helps explain everyday choices and human behavior.

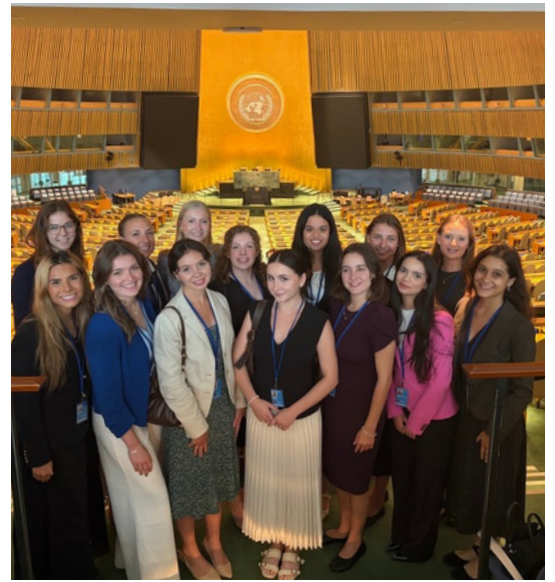
Using familiar, everyday examples, Hall made economics both engaging and accessible. "Professor Hall's presentation was so engaging and educational," said **Lucy Carney**, a rising sophomore at **Benedictine College**. "It convinced me to take an economics class to learn more!"



(Clockwise from top) Interns take notes as Dr. **Abby Hall** leads a virtual seminar, while **Alena Peethala** (Vanderbilt University) and **Catherine Mochen** (Hillsdale College) discuss the day's economic principles.

Hall emphasized that economic thinking is valuable in every profession and every area of life, leaving interns with practical tools they can apply personally and professionally.

United Nations Visit Introduces Interns to Conservative Principles in International Affairs



*(L) Luce Center interns gather outside the United Nations Headquarters before the day's meetings. (M) **Alena Peethala** (Vanderbilt University) and **Amira Hawat** (Lipscomb University) reflect on a day of international diplomacy. (R) Interns stand in the United Nations General Assembly Hall, where representatives from 193 nations convene.*

Just ten days after our nation's 250th anniversary, our interns headed to New York City to visit the United Nations Headquarters. Thanks to the **Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam)**—a pro-life policy organization defending human dignity on the global stage—the interns attended the UN's High-Level Political Forum on Messages from the UN Environment Assembly, and a Youth 2030 meeting.

The sessions gave interns a firsthand look at how the United Nations operates and the priorities that shape much of its work. They encountered an institution that frequently promotes progressive approaches to climate policy, gender ideology, and wealth redistribution, while emphasizing increased government action and international funding as solutions to many of the world's challenges.

During the Youth 2030 meeting, repeated calls for additional funding reinforced those themes and prompted thoughtful discussions about the proper role of government, fiscal stewardship, the limits of international institutions, and the moral foundations necessary for genuine human flourishing.

Beyond the Forum and the Youth Conference, our interns had the opportunity to visit the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. Reverend Monsignor **Marco Formica**, a staff member of the Mission, explained the Catholic Church's engagement with diplomacy, its commitment to promoting peace and human dignity, and what it means to be an observer state. The meeting encouraged our young women to consider how careers in international affairs can remain grounded in principle and conviction.

Reflecting on the trip as a whole, **Amira Hawat**, a rising junior at **Lipscomb University**, shared, “As an international relations major, an aspiring international lawyer and humans rights activist, this trip was not just an experience, but a turning point that reinforced a passion for my goals and my career.”

What began as a visit to the United Nations transformed into far more than an educational trip. It inspired interns to consider the importance of international policy, while highlighting the need to defend truth, freedom, and the dignity of every person on the world stage.

Self-Defense Seminar Builds Confidence & Awareness



*(L) **Ansley Ayers** practices getting out of a chokehold with **Grand Master Jeffrey Cook**. (R) Interns gather with Cook after practicing techniques and awareness for personal safety.*

Self-defense is an important part of preparing our interns to be strong, capable, and confident. Our young women participated in a self-defense seminar led by martial arts expert Grandmaster **Jeffrey Cook**. With more than 50 years of experience, Grandmaster Cook offered a rare level of expertise, blending ancient combat disciplines with modern techniques tailored for women's self-protection.

The seminar focused on building muscle memory and situational awareness. Interns learned practical strategies for everyday situations, including maintaining situational awareness, recognizing potential threats, and responding calmly under pressure—skills that can be applied while walking to a car, exercising outdoors, traveling, or running errands. “The hands-on training was my favorite part of the seminar. I learned practical self-defense skills that I can now confidently apply in everyday life,” shared **Lindsay Ryan**, a rising junior at **Wake Forest University**.

Grandmaster Cook emphasized mastering a small set of powerful defensive movements. Interns drilled responses to deal with some of the most common real-world scenarios women may face. Through repetition, drills, and thinking through real-life situations, they developed the physical skills and presence of mind needed to respond effectively under pressure.

We are deeply grateful to our dear friend **Laird Holliday** whose generous sponsorship made this seminar possible.

Museum of the Bible Brings Scripture & History to Life

Our interns had the opportunity to visit the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., where they experienced the intersection of religion, history, and politics.

Catherine Mochen, a rising sophomore at **Hillsdale College**, shared how the trip impacted her: “The Museum of the Bible reminds us that our heritage as Americans is deeply intertwined with Biblical tradition. I was particularly reminded of this by the Old Testament walk-through exhibit. By remembering God’s faithfulness to his people, we can see His plan continues to play out in our lives today.”



Luce Center interns enjoy a day learning about Judeo-Christian History and how it has shaped the United States.

Firearms Training Equips Interns to Exercise Their Constitutional Rights Responsibly



(L) **Lindsay Ryan** (Wake Forest University) practices safe firearm handling under the guidance of a certified instructor. (R) Luce Center interns and instructors gather after a day of firearms safety, marksmanship, and emergency response training.

One of the most anticipated parts of the Luce Center internship is the Day at the Range. Guided by experienced instructors, our interns learned the fundamentals of responsible firearm ownership, firearm safety, and the laws surrounding the Second Amendment before putting those lessons into practice on the range. While one group trained with .22 caliber and 9mm pistols, the other completed emergency trauma response instruction, learning life-saving skills such as wound packing and tourniquet application.

Reflecting on the experience, **Amira Hawat**, a rising junior at **Lipscomb University**, shared “One lesson from this training will stay with me for years to come: protecting our rights requires more than simply knowing they exist—it requires exercising them responsibly. Rights are preserved when citizens understand them, appreciate them, and practice them safely.”

Our young women left with greater confidence, practical skills, and a deeper appreciation for their Second Amendment rights.



(L) **Amira Hawat** (Lipscomb University) puts her firearms training into practice on the range. (M) **Ansley Ayers** and **Ryan** (both Wake Forest University) proudly display their awards after winning the internship shooting competition. (R) **Ayers** celebrates a well-placed shot during the afternoon on the range.

Brenda Hafera Explores the Principles that Shape America



(M) **Brenda Hafera** explores the philosophical roots of the American founding as (L) **Lucy Carney** (Benedictine College) and **Catherine Mochen** (Hillsdale College) and (R) **Ansley Ayers** (Wake Forest University) and **Ella Finkbeiner** (Grove City College) engage in the discussion.

Brenda Hafera, assistant director of the **Heritage Foundation's Simon Center for American Studies**, came to the Luce Center on July 29 to lead our summer interns in a seminar on America's Founding Principles.

Contextualizing the familiar story of America's founding with lesser known philosophical and historic influences, Hafera explained how the thought of Cicero, Locke, and Aristotle informed the work of Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and many others.

What was most impressed on our young women was that history is more than just the founding documents. While Brenda described the Constitution as a ship and the Declaration of Independence as its cargo, she explained that America's story is primarily one of people striving to live by the founding principles, and hold a nation to a standard of freedom, equality, and opportunity unseen anywhere else.

Interns Recover a Vision of Rights Rooted in Virtue



Kimberly Begg leads interns in a close reading of **Erika Bachiochi's** *The Rights of Women*.

Over three book club discussions this summer, Luce Center President **Kimberly Begg** led interns through **Erika Bachiochi's** *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, exploring Bachiochi's argument that the women's movement lost its way when it abandoned 18th century writer **Mary Wollstonecraft's** vision of women and men fulfilling their familial and civic responsibilities together.

Drawing on philosophy, history, constitutional law, and Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Bachiochi demonstrates that rights exist not as ends in themselves, but to help human beings fulfill responsibilities to God and their families and others. She contends that genuine freedom depends upon intellectual and moral virtue—the habits of thinking well and acting well. As Wollstonecraft wrote, “**Unless virtue be nursed by liberty, it will never attain due strength.**”

Through thoughtful discussion and close reading, interns gained a deeper appreciation for the relationship between rights, responsibilities, and virtue. The conversations challenged them to consider how the cultivation of virtue prepares men and women to contribute to a free and flourishing America.

Code Red: The Left, the Right, China, and the Race to Control AI with Wynton Hall



(L) **Wynton Hall** explores the opportunities and challenges artificial intelligence presents for America and the world. (R) Hall continues the conversation with Luce Center interns following his presentation.

President's Club members gathered at the Luce Center on July 24 for an evening with media strategist and author **Wynton Hall**. Drawing on the themes of his *New York Times* bestselling book, *Code Red: The Left, the Right, China, and the Race to Control AI*, Hall explored one of the defining challenges of our time: how artificial intelligence is reshaping politics, culture, national security, and the future of human flourishing.

Hall began by speaking directly to the Luce Center interns. "The fact that you're getting to learn from Kimberly Begg is such a privilege," he said, recalling that his sister, Holly Carter, came through the Luce Center years earlier and now balances her life as a wife, mother, and policymaker using skills she first developed through the organization. Turning to the President's Club members, Hall concluded, **"For all of us older folks who complain all the time and worry and pray every night about the next generation... the Luce Center is the solution."**

Hall organized his remarks around five areas in which AI presents both opportunities and challenges: jobs, free speech, education, national security, and faith and family. While AI will transform many white-collar professions, he argued, it also creates unprecedented opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation. Yet the greater concern, Hall emphasized, is that **"AI is not just a tool. It is also political power."**

Hall concluded by reflecting on the questions AI cannot answer—meaning, purpose, faith, and human dignity. Although artificial intelligence may threaten authentic human relationships, he expressed confidence that it will also remind people of their need for genuine community and enduring truth. He closed with Clare Boothe Luce's reminder: **"There are no hopeless situations. There are only men who have grown hopeless about them."**



(L) President's Club members and honored guests fill the room for a standing-room-only discussion on artificial intelligence. (M) Luce Center Vice President **Cindy Rushing** visits with President's Club members and guests before the program. (R) **Charlie Carney**, brother of Luce Center intern **Lucy Carney**, joins President's Club members for the evening's discussion.



Grace and Confidence Shape the Next Generation of Conservative Women Leaders



(L) **Lynn Williams** helps interns cultivate the confidence, grace, and poise that distinguish exceptional leaders. (R) Lucy Carney and her sister, Evie, enjoy the Summer Intern Tea, the culmination of the interns' etiquette training.

Lynn Williams, etiquette and protocol instructor and former director of the Old Dominion Cotillion, led our interns through multiple seminars designed to build habits of confidence and grace that will serve them in every setting. The training blends timeless principles with practical instruction to prepare young women for both social and professional environments, impressing the value of elegance, openness, and poise. We are deeply grateful to our dear friend and President's Club member **Mary Lu Clark** whose generous sponsorship has made this program possible for the past several years.

The training combined engaging instruction with hands-on learning. Our young women practiced how to give a proper introduction, navigate formal greetings, and handle professional interactions with tact.

The seminars culminated in the Summer Intern Tea. Our young women welcomed friends, family, and supporters to the Luce Center for an elegant afternoon that gave them the opportunity to practice their new skills—hosting with confidence, engaging with grace, and demonstrating the poise that will serve them well in every chapter ahead.



Thank you for supporting conservative women

Explore sponsorship opportunities to give today's young women the conservative education and mentorship they need to become the strong conservative leaders our country needs

Fall Interns \$7,500 2 Fully Sponsored - Thank you!

Campus Firearms Training \$5,000 4-5 needed per semester

Campus Speakers \$10,000 3-4 needed per semester

College Women's Summit in San Antonio - 39 needed - please consider

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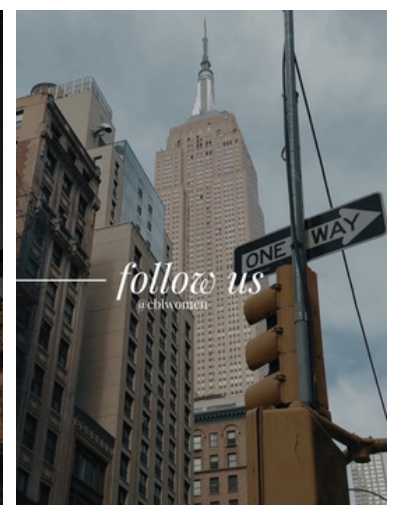
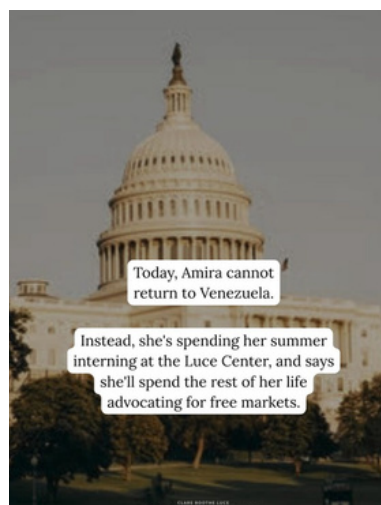
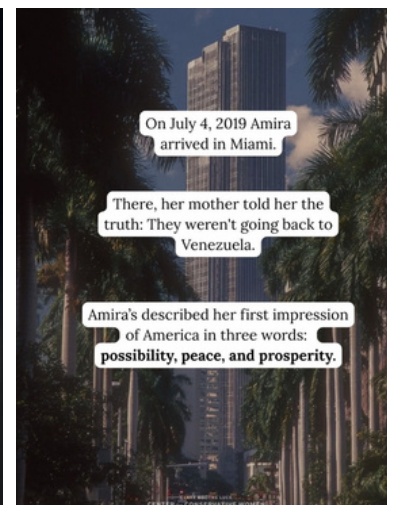
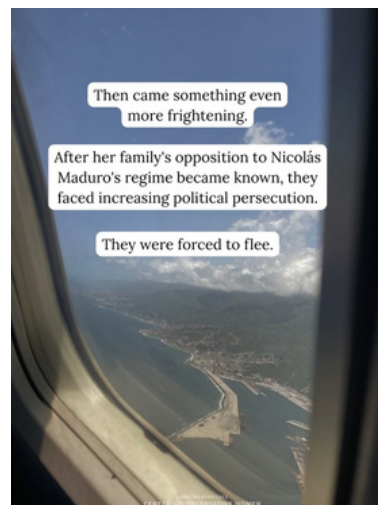


Intern's Story of Escaping Socialism Reaches Thousands



This summer, the Luce Center shared the story of intern **Amira Hawat**, a rising junior at **Lipscomb University**, in an Instagram carousel **chronicling her family's escape from socialist Venezuela**. The post follows Amira's journey from boarding a plane at age 14 believing she was simply traveling to Disney World, to discovering she would never return home after Nicolás Maduro's regime forced her family to flee.

Viewed more than 42,000 times and shared, saved, or reposted more than 1,400 times, the carousel recounts how soaring taxes, price controls, and rolling blackouts destroyed her family's businesses before increasing political persecution drove them from their homeland. Having completed her internship at the Luce Center, Amira now hopes to use her firsthand experience to warn young Americans about socialism's human cost. Her message to Gen Z is simple: "Socialism is a fairytale... perfect in theory, but horrible in practice and reality," and the best way to understand its consequences is to "talk to people who've actually lived under socialism."



President's Club Retreat at the **College Women's Summit** SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



EXCLUSIVE
President's Club Event

CLARE BOOTH LUCE
CENTER for CONSERVATIVE WOMEN

October 16 - 18, 2026

President's Club members are invited to join us for an exclusive retreat during our annual College Women's Summit in San Antonio, offering a unique opportunity to encourage the next generation of conservative women leaders while enjoying fellowship with friends of the Luce Center.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS



Isabel Brown

Host of the Isabel Brown Show and author of *The End of the Alphabet: How Gen Z Can Save America*



Mary Margaret Olohan

White House Correspondent for *The Daily Wire*



Nicole Parker

Former Special Agent at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)



Caroline Downey

Columnist and video personality at National Review and a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum

More speakers coming soon!



San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa
in charming San Antonio, Texas



Friday, October 16

6 p.m. President's Club Reception

7 p.m. Opening Banquet

Saturday, October 17

9 a.m. Speakers and Photos

5 p.m. Tejas Rodeo Show



Your only responsibility is your hotel accommodations. Reserve your room through our discounted room block by September 20, and let the Luce Center take care of the rest—including retreat programming, meals, and an evening at the Tejas Rodeo Show.



Want to know more?

Contact Anastasia Leffas, Membership Coordinator, at aleffas@conservativewomen.com or 703-318-0730

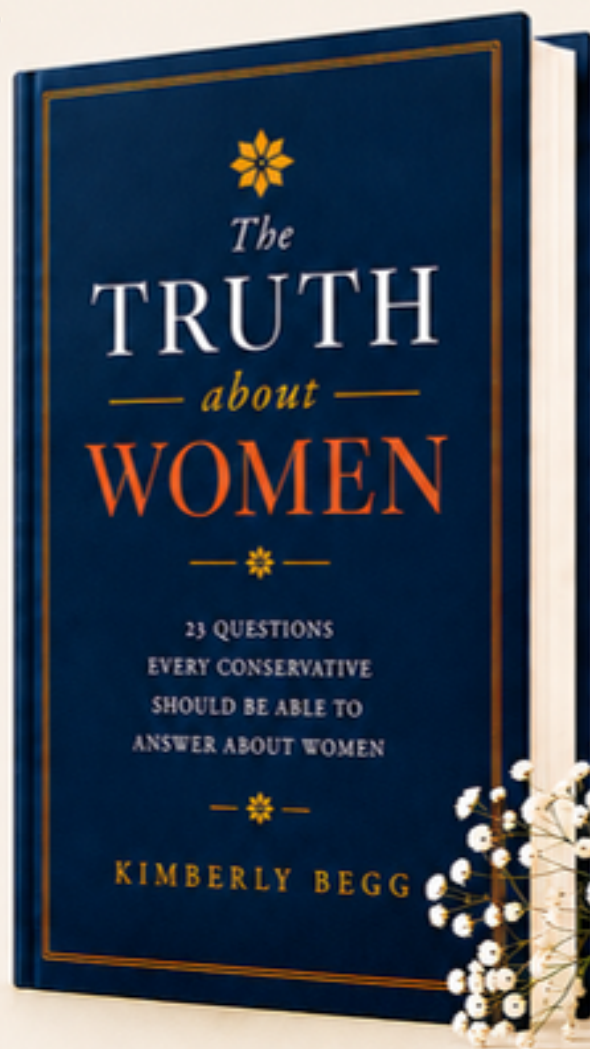
THE CONSERVATIVE ANSWER TO TODAY'S CONFUSION *about Women*



In *The Truth About Women*, Kimberly Begg, president of the Clare Boothe Luce Center for Conservative Women, addresses a concern she hears from young women across America: they are tired of being offered false choices.

On their campuses and in the broader culture, they are told that they must choose between marriage, family, and motherhood on the one hand, and a fulfilling life on the other. Increasingly, they also encounter voices claiming that intellectual achievement and public leadership are incompatible with authentic femininity.

Begg offers a more compelling alternative: a conservative vision of womanhood rooted in biological, philosophical, and scriptural truth that affirms women's dignity, celebrates their unique gifts, and equips them to flourish in all areas of their lives.



PRAISE FOR *The Truth About Women*

“

“A must-read book for America's girls. When my own daughter is old enough, I'll be giving her this book.”

— RYAN T. ANDERSON, PH.D.
President, The Ethics and Public Policy Center

“

“Anyone interested in strengthening and growing the Conservative Movement should read and understand *The Truth About Women*. It is crucial that we continue to share these important truths.”

— GOVERNOR SCOTT WALKER
President, Young America's Foundation

“

“Give this little book to the young women and men you know: studied and lived profitably, it could revolutionize our time.”

— ERIKA BACHIOCHI,
author of *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*

“

“Not since Russell Kirk's *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism* has there been a book this important for conservative women.”

— PAUL KENGOR, PH.D.
Professor, Grove City College
Author, *11 Principles of a Reagan Conservative*

“

“As young women are bombarded with confusing advice and dangerous narratives, *The Truth About Women* offers clarity grounded in truth. This little book is a lifeline for young women.”

— MARJI ROSS
former President and Publisher, Regnery Publishing

“

“The first step toward wisdom is asking the right questions. An astonishing amount of wisdom has been condensed into this powerful little package.”

— THOMAS SPENCE
Executive Editor,
Basic Liberty, an imprint of Basic Books



KIMBERLY BEGG
PRESIDENT OF THE
CLARE BOOTHE LUCE CENTER
FOR CONSERVATIVE WOMEN



America's mentorship institution
for conservative women.



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On a Personal NOTE

Dear Friend,

I have become increasingly concerned by young women's sharp shift to the Left in recent years. Today's **young women are twice as likely to identify as liberal** over conservative—and that identification is increasingly associated with more radical views, including support for socialism (56%) and political violence (women are now 21% more likely than men to justify political assassination).

The reason **young women are being radicalized is because they spend their formative years in spaces where Marxist, anti-American ideas are normalized**, especially social media, K-12 schools, and college campuses. Teen girls spend more than five hours a day on social media (20% more than boys) and are significantly more likely to report that social media harms their mental health (25% to 14%), confidence (20% to 10%), and sleep (50% to 40%). Sixty percent of today's college students are women, and they are more likely than men to study disciplines that have been captured by the Left (earning 80% of psychology degrees, 74% of education, 62% of humanities, 67% of social science, and 85% of health-professions degrees).

Some of the most radical ideas young women encounter are *about* women.

- **The Left denies the reality of biological sex and devalues marriage, motherhood, and family**, encouraging young women to reject the truth about who they are and the relationships that give life its deepest meaning, stability, and fulfillment.
- Manosphere and reactionary online influencers (Andrew Tate, Nick Fuentes, etc.) objectify women and even promote violence against women.
- Some public figures with conservative concerns about the above (biological sex, family formation, and the objectification of women) promote non-conservative ideas that diminish women's intelligence and discourage them from using their gifts to flourish in all aspects of their lives. **The Left amplifies these voices as representative of conservatism, making it easier to persuade young women that the conservative movement has little to offer them.**

I wrote ***The Truth About Women: 23 Questions Every Conservative Should be Able to Answer About Women*** to reach a broader audience of men and women with the **conservative message that we teach young women** through our programs. It answers questions such as:

- What does science tell us about the biological nature of women?
- Did the sexual revolution liberate women?
- Is marriage good for women?
- Do women have to choose between career and family?
- Is the "Great Feminization" responsible for the rise of wokeness in America's institutions?

If we hope to win the hearts and minds of today's young women, we must offer better answers to the questions they are asking in good faith about who they are and how they can thrive. I pray this book will help restore confidence in the conservative understanding of women and, in turn, inspire a new generation to embrace conservative principles. Please consider sharing it with parents, educators, young men and women, and anyone who believes the next generation is worth fighting for.

In Friendship & Freedom,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K. B. Begg". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "B" and a trailing flourish.

President

P.S. Every day, your support changes lives one young woman at a time through the Luce Center. Now, through *The Truth About Women*, you are multiplying that impact by bringing the conservative message to readers across the country. Thank you for your generosity, prayers, and confidence in our mission.