



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM  
MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

# FALL 2018 NEWSLETTER

## VOC Rallies for Religious Freedom in Asia

In July we participated officially in the first-ever “Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom” hosted by the State Department in Washington, D.C.

The gathering—led by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, and with a keynote by Vice President Mike Pence—convened leaders from across the human rights community and delegations from over 80 nations for three days of productive talks on how to combat persecution and ensure greater respect for religious liberty.

In coordination with the Ministerial, VOC hosted a Rally for Religious Freedom in Asia at the U.S. Capitol in observance of Captive Nations Week, a tradition established in 1959 by President Eisenhower to recognize nations suffering under communist tyranny.

Our six speakers were: Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) and co-chair of the Congressional Vietnam Caucus; Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX); Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, former prisoner of conscience in Vietnam; Bhuchung Tsering, of the International Campaign for Tibet; Golog Jigme, Tibetan Buddhist monk, human rights advocate, and survivor of torture in Chinese detention centers; and Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress and laureate of our Human Rights Award.

Hundreds showed up both in person and virtually on Facebook Live, and the rally received wide press coverage including



*VOC held a Rally for Religious Freedom in Asia on Capitol Hill on July 23 in coordination with the State Department’s Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. Left to Right: Kristina Olney (VOC), Dolkun Isa, Golog Jigme, Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh, Bhuchung Tsering, David Talbot (VOC).*

in *The Hill*, *Radio Free Asia*, and *The Washington Examiner*.

In his remarks, Pastor Chinh recounted how “my family and church have suffered years of persecution by Vietnam’s communist government.” Chinh was released in 2017 after serving six years in prison for ministering to minorities and daring to criticize his government’s ban on preaching in the Central Highlands.

Dolkun Isa described horrific ethnic and religious discrimination against the Uyghur people by the Chinese Communist Party, saying: “Religious

belief is such an important part of one’s existence that it should not be controlled by the government.”

Sen. Ted Cruz spoke of his family’s flight from Cuba, noting: “The thing that the apologists for communism never seem to notice is that the rafts in Key West are all going in one direction.”

Rep. Alan Lowenthal spoke of new efforts in Congress to respond to governments that oppress their own people, and vowed: **“I will continue to fight until all prisoners of conscience throughout the world are released and free to express their views.”**

# Black Ribbon Day Committee Donates Official Archives



*Foreign dignitaries and honored guests gathered at the Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington, D.C. on August 23 to mark Black Ribbon Day commemorating the victims of totalitarianism. Left to Right: Jonas Mažeika, Minister Counsellor of Lithuania; Markus Hess, founder and Chairman of the International Black Ribbon Day Committee; Andris Teikmanis, Latvian Ambassador to the US; and Marko Koplimaa, Estonia's Deputy Chief of Mission.*

On August 23, VOC acquired the official archives of the International Black Ribbon Day Committee, a civic organization that successfully advocated to establish an international day of remembrance for the victims of totalitarian regimes.

Black Ribbon Day began in the 1980s, when refugees from nations held captive by the Soviet Union started holding demonstrations to protest Soviet atrocities behind the Iron Curtain. They chose August 23, the day the Nazis and Soviets signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact to carve up Poland in 1939 and ushered in a brutal occupation of more than half of Europe.

Their efforts eventually helped bring down the Berlin Wall, culminating in the “Baltic Way” demonstration of 1989, when 2 million people joined hands to form a massive human chain across the Baltic States to defy Soviet occupation.

Black Ribbon Day was officially recognized in 2009 by Canada and the European Union—where it is known as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism—followed by the US House of Representatives in 2014.

With official backing, the Committee became a movement of citizens devoted to educating people about the brutality of collectivist regimes.

At the donation ceremony, Markus Hess, the committee’s founder, said the courage to hold course was inspired by moral clarity and a confidence that historical justice could be achieved. **“We knew we were completely right and that they were completely wrong. And we knew that we were going to win and they were going to lose.”**

The gift expands VOC’s growing archives—which include the Gulag Collection, a series of paintings by Nikolai Getman depicting the horrors of the Soviet gulag, and the Novacovici Romanian Archive—and advance our goal to become the leading repository of knowledge on communism.

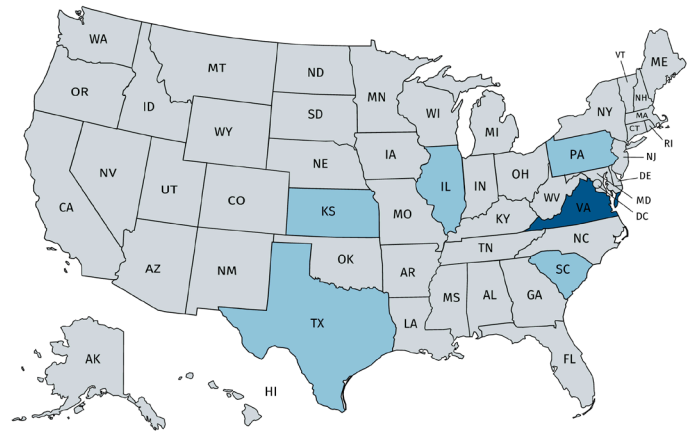


# Six States Move to Recognize Victims of Communism Day

Last March, Virginia became the first state to officially recognize November 7 as “Victims of Communism Memorial Day” after passing a resolution spearheaded by Virginia Delegate Mark Cole. Now five more states—Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas—are moving to adopt similar resolutions by early 2019.

This is the direct result of VOC’s work. In June our government relations department became an official member of the Federalism and International Relations Task Force convened by the American Legislative Exchange Council. We drafted a resolution—modeled on the Virginia law and a 2017 Presidential Message designating November 7 as “National Day for the Victims of Communism”—and presented it to the Council.

On September 19, our draft was adopted as official model policy recommended to all Council members, who comprise one-quarter of all state legislators in the country. Our goal is to see resolutions passed in all 50 states, so that more people will be aware of the vast human suffering caused by totalitarian regimes.



*Five states are set to join Virginia in officially recognizing November 7 as “Victims of Communism Memorial Day” by early 2019, a direct result of efforts by VOC’s government relations department.*

## Strengthening Memory and Conscience in the Baltics



*Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid pauses for a moment of silence at the dedication of a new Victims of Communism Memorial in Tallinn, Estonia following a conference on communist crimes on August 23, also known as Black Ribbon Day.*



*Left to right: Dr. Murray Bessette (VOC), Mari-Ann Kelam, Kristina Olney (VOC), and Tunne Kelam, founding member of the Estonian National Independence Party and a Member of the European Parliament.*

On August 20-26, VOC’s Dr. Murray Bessette and Kristina Olney, directors of academic programs and government relations, completed a weeklong tour of the Baltics to support our European partners in public education and remembrance.

**VILNIUS, LITHUANIA:** Participated in the 2018 President Valdas Adamkus Conference on “Restoring European and Transatlantic Resilience” and commemoration of Black Ribbon Day. Featured speakers included Viktor Yushchenko, former president of Ukraine, and Vytautas Landbergis, first Lithuanian Head of State and laureate of VOC’s Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom. Toured the Museum of Genocide Victims housed in a former KGB prison. Met with Valdas Adamkus, former president of Lithuania.

**TALLINN, ESTONIA:** Participated in a conference on “Communist Crimes and European Memory” and official dedication of a new Victims of Communism Memorial hosted by the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. Featured speakers included President Kersti Kaljulaid, Justice Minister Urmas Reinsalu, and Göran Lindblad of VOC’s sister organisation, the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. Toured Patarei Prison, the future location of an International Museum of the Crimes of Communism. Met with Tunne Kelam, founding member of the Estonian National Independence Party and Member of the European Parliament.

**RIGA, LATVIA:** Received private tour of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia. Met with the museum’s director, Gunars Nagels on the importance of preserving historical memory.

# Dissident Artists and Musicians Shine at Free2Be Event



*VOC Executive Director Marion Smith opens our Free2Be exhibit celebrating dissident art, music, and film at Washington, D.C.'s historic Dupont Underground on June 12.*

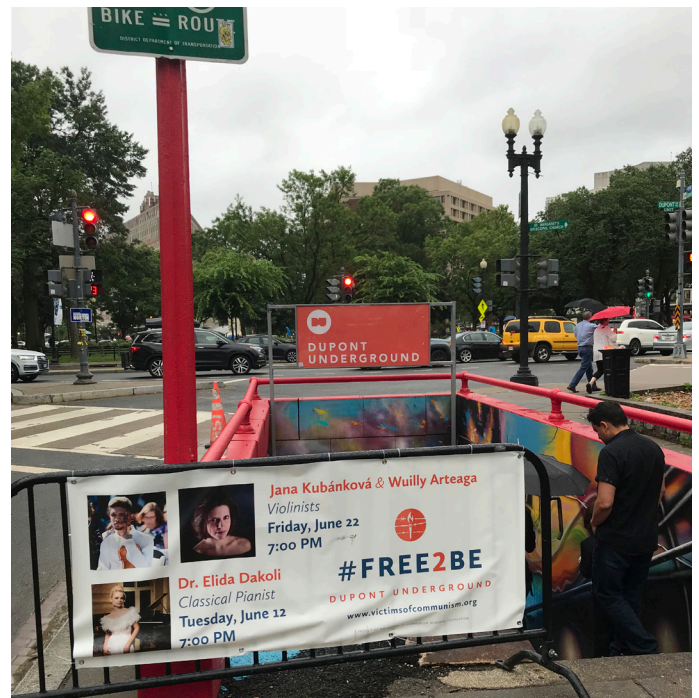
On June 12-22 our Foundation hosted a multimedia exhibit and dual concert event called Free2Be in Washington, D.C.'s historic Dupont Underground, featuring dissident art, music, and film viewed by hundreds of tourists and locals throughout a 10-day period.

The exhibit displayed a selection of oil-on-canvas from the Gulag Collection, a series of 50 paintings by gulag survivor Nikolai Getman depicting the brutal nature of Soviet concentration camps. Interspersed among the paintings, VOC's award-winning Witness Project videos played on loop, telling the harrowing stories of witnesses to communism such as Cambodia's Nal Oum and Hungary's Dániel Magay.

The exhibit was bookended by concerts featuring young musicians inspired by a yearning for freedom. The opening performance was by Dr. Elida Dakoli, an Albanian-American pianist who also spoke on the effect communism's legacy has had on her creative development.

The closing concert featured Wuily Arteaga, a native of socialist Venezuela who gained worldwide fame for braving street protests against the brutal dictator Nicolas Maduro armed only with his violin. He was injured by buckshot to the face, arrested on false charges, held in prison for 19 days, and had his violin

destroyed by a National Guard soldier. Arteaga was joined on stage by Jana Kubánková, a Czech violinist and composer whose family suffered under communism. The two musicians performed a duet composed by Kubánková expressly for the Free2Be event, and earned a standing ovation.



*The Free2Be exhibit opened to the public free of charge in a historic subway line at Dupont Circle in central Washington, D.C.*



# in Dupont Underground



*Albanian-American pianist Dr. Elida Dakoli and VOC Executive Director Marion Smith during the opening event.*



*Freedom-inspired musicians Wuilly Arteaga of Venezuela and Jana Kubánková of the Czech Republic engaged a rapt audience during the final concert.*



*VOC staff with musicians after the closing concert.*



*Visitors take in paintings from The Gulag Collection, an oil-on-canvas series by Soviet gulag survivor Nikolai Getman.*



*Arteaga and Kubánková performed a duet composed by Kubánková expressly for the Free2Be event.*



*Pianist Dr. Elida Dakoli explains the effect communism has had on her creative development during a media interview.*



# Fourth Annual China Forum: Understanding the Nature

On September 27-28 our Foundation convened the fourth annual China Forum at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. bringing together top experts, policymakers, and scholars to help Americans understand the nature of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and key issues in US-China relations.

The first day of the forum featured a series of panels on topics including the CCP's tools of economic and military coercion, its abysmal treatment of ethnic minorities, and its use of revisionist history as a tool for statecraft. Josh Rogin, a columnist for the *Washington Post*, moderated a discussion on how the CCP enforces domestic censorship and manipulates foreign journalists.

The panel also included *New York Times* reporter Michael Forsythe, who was suspended from *Bloomberg News* in 2013 for revealing that a story of his detailing corruption among Chinese officials was pulled after the CCP threatened to shut down the newspaper's Beijing bureau.



*Dr. Frank Dikötter, Robert Suettinger, Dr. Miles Maochun Yu, Dr. Samantha Hoffman, and VOC's Peter Mattis analyze the Chinese Communist Party's strategic outlook and the rising tension between the US and China over global influence.*

**“The CCP does not directly censor foreign journalists, but it does find ways to suppress them.” - Michael Forsythe**



*Dr. Frank Dikötter, Chair Professor of Humanities, University of Hong Kong.*



*Josh Rogin, Columnist, The Washington Post.*



*Matthew Robertson, China Studies Research Fellow, VOC.*



# of the Chinese Communist Party



*Rep. Ted Yoho (center), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Asia, with VOC staff after delivering a keynote address during our China Forum Dinner at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC on September 28.*

**“Foreign journalists cannot do their job anymore in China...it does not mean anything to be a journalist in China.” - Ursula Gauthier**

Forsythe unpacked some of the “red lines” journalists are greatly discouraged from crossing, especially if they report anything relating to President Xi Jinping’s background.

Ursula Gauthier of the French publication *L’Obs* spoke on the difficulties of being a foreign journalist in China, noting how during multiple trips to China she had to conceal that she was a foreign corespondant to be able to speak with anyone other than CCP representatives.

Chairman Ted Yoho (R-FL), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Asia, delivered a keynote address on the US-China strategic competition, the political and ideological nature of the CCP, and the paramount importance of the US-Taiwan relationship.

The forum concluded with a private policy roundtable where scholars and experts discussed US options in dealing with China, the implications of Chinese infrastructure financing abroad, and the future of the US-China relationship.



*Ursula Gauthier, Journalist, L’Obs.*



*Dr. Adrian Zenz, Analyst, Jamestown Foundation.*



*Michael Forsythe, Reporter, The New York Times.*



# Boots on The Ground: Engaging Minds, Teaching Future Leaders



Marion Smith spoke to the 100 “senators” of Boys Nation selected from all 50 states to participate in a week-long mock government hosted by the American Legion in Arlington, Virginia on July 23.

On July 23 VOC Executive Director Marion Smith gave a speech in Arlington, Virginia to the young men attending the American Legion’s Boys Nation, a week-long civics training symposium for 100 rising high school seniors, who learn the rights and duties of self-governing citizens by running a mock government of their own.

Smith, an alumnus of Boys Nation, encouraged the young men to cultivate America’s democratic institutions by becoming involved in their local communities. He drew a stark contrast between Boys Nation and the Soviet Komsomol, a youth organization that indoctrinated young men with communist

ideology—to the point where some even denounced their own parents. To conclude, Smith exhorted these future leaders: **“Educate, don’t indoctrinate. Build happy communities, don’t just denounce and condemn. And have faith in our American civics and the processes and traditions that come with it.”**

## Azusa Pacific University: Campus Lecture in California



On September 20, VOC Director of Academic Programs Dr. Murray Bessette spoke to 75 students of history and national security at Azusa Pacific University in California about the deficiencies of Marxist theory, the threat socialism poses to freedom, and how communist regimes use ideology and revisionist history to manipulate public opinion on foreign policy issues.

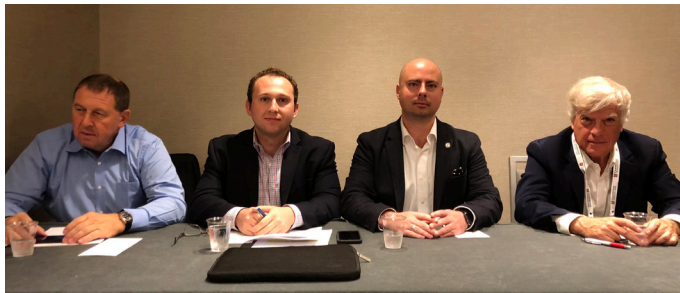
## Hudson Institute: Discussing China’s Interference in D.C.



VOC’s China Studies Research Fellow Peter Mattis (center) participated in the Hudson’s Institute’s Mark Palmer Forum on “China’s Global Challenge to Democratic Freedom” on October 24 in Washington, D.C. He spoke on the nature of the Chinese government’s interference in western society, and how a free and open press is the most helpful tool to combat this.



## American Political Science Association: Expert Panel in Boston



On September 1, VOC sponsored its first panel at the American Political Science Association in Boston, Massachusetts. Panelists Dr. Andrei Illarionov, David Satter, VOC Baltic Studies Manager Naphtali Rivkin, and VOC Director of Academic Programs Dr. Murray Bessette presented on the Soviet legacy in Putin's Russia.

## Newnan High School: Witness to Mao's China Shares Story in Georgia



In partnership with VOC, John Garner, an alumnus of our 2017 National Seminar for High School Educators, organized visits by Lily Tang Williams to both Newnan High School and Northgate High School in Georgia. Williams spoke to three classes at each school, sharing her personal story of growing up in Mao's China with approximately 300 students.

## Presbyterian College: Lecture on Socialism's Flaws in South Carolina



On October 3, Dr. Murray Bessette delivered the 10th annual BB&T lecture at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina to an audience of 179 students. Dr. Bessette's talk, "So You Think You're a Socialist?" laid bare the gap between socialism's promises and its realities.

## Knights of Columbus: Explaining Socialism in Glendora, CA



Dr. Murray Bessette was invited by the council of the Knights of Columbus in Glendora, California to give a presentation on September 20 about why socialism has such a hold on Millennials today and how to combat it.

## Baltic Studies Association: Talking De-communization in Estonia



**AABS**  
June 1-3

VOC's Naphtali Rivkin organized and held a panel on de-communization in the Baltics for the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies' Conference at Stanford University on June 1-3 and again a week later in Tartu, Estonia. The discussion focused on how to best commemorate the Baltics' communist past.

## Princeton University: Discussing Communism's Legacy in New Jersey



VOC co-sponsored an evening event entitled "Consequences of an Idea: Assessing 100 Years of Communism" with Princeton University's James Madison Program on September 25. The event featured experts from various disciplines discussing the dangerous impact communism has had on history and politics up to the present day.



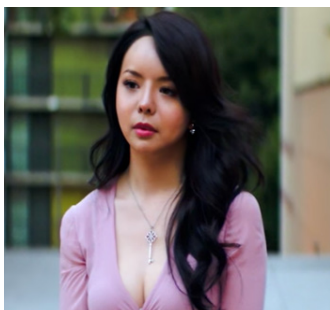
# Witness Project Wins Second Award at Anthem Film Festival



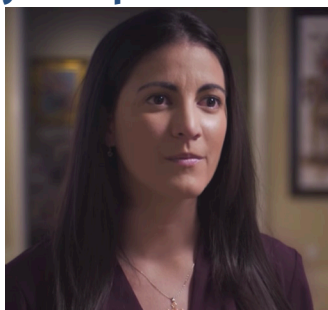
*Witness Project Director Adam "Hawk" Jensen accepts the "Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking" award at the 2018 Anthem Film Festival in Las Vegas on July 20.*

On July 20 our latest Witness Project episode won an award for "Excellence in Documentary Filmmaking" at the Anthem Film Festival in Las Vegas, Nevada. This year's submission, released on May 17, tells the story of Wanda Woc Lorenc, a survivor of both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia who was an active member of the Polish resistance during World War II. After the failed Warsaw Uprising, Wanda was sent to a concentration camp where she was ultimately "liberated" by the Red Army. Upon returning to Warsaw, Wanda and her family fled communist Poland, escaped to Austria, and eventually found their way to the United States. The award follows VOC's victory in the same category last year for our Witness Project episode featuring Anastasia Lin, a Chinese-Canadian beauty queen and human rights activist whom the Chinese Communist Party has tried to silence.

**Watch Witness Project Episodes on YouTube: [youtube.com/vocvideos](https://youtube.com/vocvideos)**



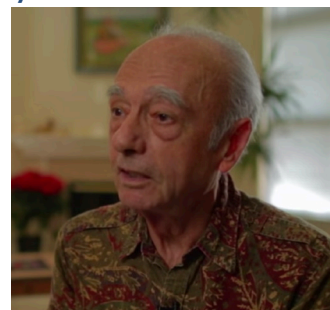
*Anastasia Lin, Chinese-Canadian beauty queen.*



*Rosa María Payá, Cuban democracy advocate.*



*Wanda Woc Lorenc, Polish freedom fighter.*



*Dániel Magay, Hungarian olympic fencer.*



*Nal Oum, Cambodian doctor.*



*Ji Seong-ho, North Korean defector and escapee. Coming soon!*



*Dan Novacovici, Romanian prisoner of conscience. Coming soon!*



*David Smolansky, Soviet, Cuban, and Venezuelan dissident. Coming soon!*



# Film on Soviet Crimes Hits Big Screen in Los Angeles



Dr. Murray Bessette with best-selling author Ruta Sepetys and director Marius Markevicius after a successful world premiere of the film *Ashes In The Snow* on September 21.

On September 21, VOC Director of Academic Programs Dr. Murray Bessette attended the LA Film Festival for the world premiere of *Ashes in the Snow*, a film directed by Marius Markevicius and set to be released in select theaters and video-on-demand on January 11, 2019. Based on the *New York Times* best-selling novel *Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys—an advisor to VOC's Baltic Studies Program—the film tells the story of a 16-year-old artist and her family being deported from Lithuania to Siberia amid Stalin's brutal dismantling of the Baltic region. In partnership with Mrs. Sepetys, the Foundation is working to incorporate new materials based on the book and film into our high school curriculum. VOC plans to work with Mrs. Sepetys to deliver this curriculum to teachers during our professional development workshops in the spring of 2019.



## SUPPORT OUR MISSION WITH YOUR LEGACY

Did you know you can support the Foundation through a bequest? If you would like to make a planned gift, you can use the following language:

*"I give, devise, and bequeath to the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in the City of Washington, D.C. [dollar amount, percentage, or percent of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate] to be used for its work fulfilling its mission to educate this generation and future generations about the ideology, history, and legacy of communism."*

If you would like to discuss a potential planned gift, please contact Abraham Armstrong, Assistant Director of Development, at [abraham.armstrong@victimsofcommunism.org](mailto:abraham.armstrong@victimsofcommunism.org) or (202) 629-9500.

# Meet the Foundation's Newest Class of Research Fellows

## Włodzimierz Batóg, PhD

*Polish Studies Senior Research Fellow*

**From:** Poland

**Education:** Ph.D., American History, Jan Kochanowski University

**Project:** Researching the influence of communists in the Polish diaspora of Chicago and Detroit during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Currently Reading:** 2001 World Press Photo Album



## Enrique Altimari

*Latin America Studies Research Fellow*

**From:** Venezuela

**Education:** M.A. Philosophy, King's College, London.

**Project:** A report analyzing the evolution of Venezuela's socialist regime and its influence in Latin America.

**Currently Reading:** Group Agency: The Possibility, Design and Status of Corporate Agents by Christian List & Phillip Pettit



## Peter Mattis

*China Studies Research Fellow*

**From:** United States

**Education:** M.A. Security Studies, Georgetown University

**Project:** Raising awareness in Europe, Australia, and the United States of the Chinese Communist Party's foreign interference activities today.

**Currently Reading:** A Culinary History of Taipei: Beyond Pork and Ponlai by Steven Crook and Katy Hui-wen Hung



## Matthew Robertson

*China Studies Research Fellow*

**From:** Australia

**Education:** Doctoral Candidate, Political Science, Australian National University

**Project:** A report detailing and assessing the evidence that the Chinese Communist Party has engaged in extrajudicial killing of prisoners of conscience for the purpose of transplanting their organs.

**Currently Reading:** Lives of a Cell by Lewis Thomas

