



## VOC Welcomes New President and CEO

This quarter, the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) announced Dr. Eric Patterson as VOC's new President and CEO.

"As we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, the Board is excited that Dr. Patterson has taken the reins in pursuing our educational mission and expanding our increasingly important work," said Dr. Elizabeth Spalding, VOC's Chairman. "A scholar, leader, and fighter of oppression, Dr. Patterson understands the false ideology, destructive politics, and history of communism, and why we must remember the more than 100 million victims killed by communism and advance the freedom of more than 1.5 billion people who are still oppressed by communist regimes today."

A foreign policy expert and long-time opponent of totalitarianism, Dr. Patterson previously served as President of the Religious Freedom Institute (RFI), where he led the organization's efforts to advocate for religious liberty around the world through training and educational programs for students, teachers, public officials, and other audiences.

Prior to RFI, Dr. Patterson was a university dean and professor. His government experience includes service as a White House Fellow, at the U.S. Department of State, and, for over 20 years, as an Air National Guard commander. He is an active scholar on the moral dimensions of national security and international affairs, and has authored or edited over 20 books, including *Just American Wars: Ethical Dilemmas in U.S. Military History* and the co-edited volume *The Reagan Manifesto: 'A Time for Choosing' and Its Influence*.

Dr. Patterson succeeds Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, who will remain engaged as VOC's President Emeritus, and Ken Pope, who will focus on VOC's education and coalition programming as Vice President for Academic Operations and Strategic Partnerships. "The Foundation has celebrated many achievements in the last three years with the opening of the VOC Museum, launch of the VOC Congressional Caucus, publication of groundbreaking research on China and Latin America, and release of our new digital curriculum and teacher certification, as well as the expansion of the Witness Project," said Ambassador Andrew Bremberg. "I look forward to working with Dr. Patterson as he builds upon VOC's success and ensures an enduring legacy for the future."

On the latest episode of VOC's Witness Project conversation series, "Profiles in Freedom," Ambassador Bremberg sat down with Dr. Patterson. Watch this episode in which Ambassador Bremberg and Dr. Patterson discuss VOC's mission and goals at the following webpage: [victimsofcommunism.org/eric-patterson-profiles-in-freedom](https://victimsofcommunism.org/eric-patterson-profiles-in-freedom).



*Dr. Eric Patterson is VOC's new President and CEO.*

***"It is a true honor to serve as President and CEO of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. I am humbled and excited to work with this team and our allies to stand for freedom and fight against the deadliest ideology humanity has ever known."***

***—Eric Patterson, VOC President and CEO***

# VOC Hosts Lech Wałęsa



*VOC Chairman Dr. Elizabeth Spalding interviews Former Polish President Lech Wałęsa.*

On February 9, VOC was privileged to host Lech Wałęsa, a beacon in the global fight against communism, in the inaugural episode of our “Profiles in Freedom” Witness Project series, moderated by VOC Chairman Dr. Elizabeth Spalding. This event was made possible in partnership with The Fund for American Studies. The conversation was live-streamed in partnership with C-SPAN, expanding VOC’s reach to audiences far and wide.

Wałęsa, a dissident, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and former President of the Republic of Poland, shared his inspiring journey with invited guests and members of the press. His story is one of resilience and dedication, from losing his job at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk for standing up against the communist regime to leading the Solidarity

Free Trade Union, which grew from a local movement advocating for workers’ rights into a revolution that united Poland against their totalitarian rulers and effectively toppled a brutal regime.



*Lech Wałęsa stands in front of his own photo displayed on the VOC Museum’s “Remember Us Wall.”*



*VOC President Emeritus, Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, gives President Wałęsa a tour of the Victims of Communism Museum.*

VOC President Emeritus, Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, gave President Wałęsa a tour of the Victims of Communism Museum prior to the interview. He was pleased to see the museum feature on Polish resistance, along with his own photo on the museum’s “Remember Us Wall.”

***“Stalin was laughing when he managed to impose his system on Poland. He used to say that communism on Poland looks like a horse saddle on a pig. And we had to carry that saddle for 50 years. So to me, it was clear that [communism] was ending. The challenge was how to end it peacefully—and it ended sooner than people expected.” —Lech Wałęsa, Former President of Poland***



# VOC Launches Bipartisan Congressional Caucus



*Merita McCormack, speaks about her family's experience living under communism in Albania.*

VOC is proud to announce the launch of the bipartisan Congressional Victims of Communism Caucus, co-chaired and in partnership with Representative Michelle Steel (R-CA) and Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL).

The Victims of Communism Caucus honors and brings awareness about the millions of people who have been harmed or killed by communist governments. The Caucus focuses on commemorating the 100 million victims of communism who perished in the 20th century, and on showing the impact of the communist legacy in former captive nations, as well as the ongoing oppression of the five existing communist regimes of China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam.

The Victims of Communism Caucus was launched on February 14 during the 118th Congress at the Capitol Visitor Center with a panel of speakers who gave remarks, including VOC's Director of Government Relations Karina Lipsman, VOC's Founding Chairman Dr. Lee Edwards, VOC Trustee Ambassador Aldona Z. Woś, Representative Michelle Steel (R-CA), Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), and witness speaker Merita McCormack.

"As a proud first generation American whose parents fled from communism in North Korea, I understand how precious our democracy truly is," said Representative Steel. "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. We must never take the hard-won freedoms we enjoy for granted. Through this caucus, I am proud to work in bipartisanship to ensure we never forget the cost of communism, the value of our liberty here in the United States and bring awareness to those who are suffering today."

"Over the course of the last century, countless people have suffered under oppressive communist regimes more interested in consolidating absolute power than protecting fundamental rights," said Representative Wasserman Schultz. "But today, on our watch, autocracies like Cuba, China, and North Korea continue to suppress dissent, deny basic necessities, and coalesce to threaten global democracy. I'm proud to join Congresswoman Steel in leading this effort to ensure that victims of communism, past and present, are not forgotten."

# VOC Experts Testify to Congress on Forced Organ Harvesting in China



*VOC China Studies Fellow Ethan Gutmann testifies to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.*

On March 20, VOC's China Studies Fellows Ethan Gutmann and Matthew Robertson testified to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CEEC) in a hearing entitled "Stopping the Crime of Organ Harvesting—What More Must Be Done?"

The hearing evaluated the evidence of organ harvesting from formerly detained Uyghurs, Falun Gong practitioners, political prisoners, and assessed the Chinese government's denials that it is complicit in transplant abuse and its assertion that the PRC has stopped sourcing organs from executed prisoners. The hearing took a comprehensive look at the approaches being taken by the scientific and medical research communities to handle the gathered data on organ harvesting. It also reviewed the legislation in Texas that bans health insurance coverage for organ transplants conducted in, or involving organs sourced from, China and other nations implicated in organ harvesting practices. Witnesses provided recommendations for addressing organ harvesting, the complicity of United States corporations in the PRC's transplant abuses, and the issue of "organ tourism," which often fuels transplant abuse.

Matthew Robertson noted, "The atrocity of forced organ harvesting in China has been occurring for decades on a large scale, claiming tens, if not hundreds of thousands of lives, in a state-sponsored program that has targeted political prisoners and members of dissident groups Beijing sees as a threat."

Ethan Gutmann testified, "Realistically, the infrastructure of harvesting may be too robust to save Uyghur and Kazakh lives in the near term. Yet Congress can stop Beijing's ongoing attempts to normalize medical deviance to spread this practice, and the passage of the Stop Organ Harvesting Act could galvanize the international transplant community to stop seeing research and investigation into Chinese harvesting as inflammatory or a deal breaker, but instead as a quest for justice on behalf of those young men and women whose only crime was that they were healthy."

Representative Chris Smith, Co-Chairman of the Commission, was especially complimentary of Gutmann and Robertson's research on this issue, calling their work "reliable and ... actionable." He noted, "Mr. Gutmann, thank you again for your leadership which informs this commission and I think the whole world on this issue."



# Virginia Attorney General Keynotes VOC Event

On February 8, VOC hosted an exclusive event entitled “Voices for Freedom,” which featured nearly a dozen witnesses of communism, including a keynote by Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares. He spoke about the stark differences between free countries and those under communist rule. He talked about the lack of education for young people today and the importance of VOC’s mission.

*“What communism does, and what makes it so insidious, is it robs you of your own dreams in the need of the so-called state, which is always constantly re-defining its needs.”*

*—Jason Miyares, Virginia Attorney General*



*Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares gives the keynote address.*



*Witness share their personal stories during roundtable discussions.*

Witnesses shared their personal stories during small group roundtable discussions. In addition to Attorney General Miyares, we were honored to have eight other witnesses join us for this important discussion: Maximo Alvarez (Cuba), Vi Kha Hoang (Vietnam), Boris Hoffman (Lithuania), Anna Kwok (Hong Kong), Merita McCormack (Albania), Miriam Miyares (Cuba), David Smolansky (Venezuela), and Bhuchung Tsering (Tibet). The evening concluded with a mixology class by Gio Gutierrez of Bacardi’s “The Real Havana Club,” during which Gio shared the history of the Bacardi family’s opposition to communism in Cuba.

## Student Education Grows at VOC Museum

We have hosted 18 school and young leaders groups at the VOC Museum since January 2024, totaling 568 young people educated about the history and horrors of communism.

Each visiting student group receives a tour of the museum’s galleries, along with a lecture by a VOC expert or witness of communism. Teachers have reported that after their students’ visit, students gained significant knowledge about the history and horrors of communism, and continued talking about their museum experience long afterwards.



*Students from Patrick Henry College visited the VOC Museum in February and heard a lecture from Ken Pope, VOC Vice President for Academic Operations and Strategic Partnerships.*



# New Temporary Exhibit on Lithuania



*Lithuanian Ambassador Audra Plepytė speaks at the exhibition opening event.*

On March 15, the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation hosted an opening ceremony for the VOC Museum's latest temporary gallery, "From the Soviet Red Flag to the Lithuanian Tricolor: 50 Years of Struggle for Freedom."

The event featured welcome speeches from VOC President Emeritus Ambassador Andrew Bremberg; Her Excellency Audra Plepytė, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to the U.S.; and Ramunė Driaučionaitė, curator of the exhibit from the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights.

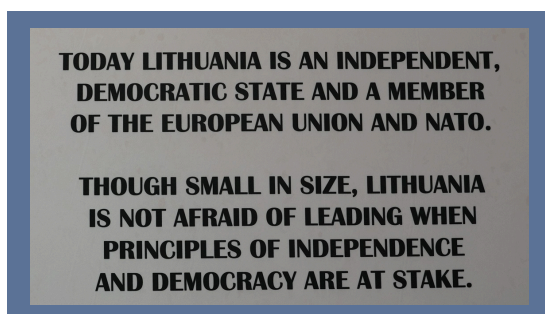
Viktoras Nakas, former head of the Lithuanian Information Center; Michael Sawkiw, Executive Director of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of

America; and Shelby Magid, Deputy Director of the Eurasia Center at Atlantic Council explored Lithuania's legacy of resistance, fight for freedom, and support for Ukraine today on a panel moderated by Milda Mataciunaite-Boyce, VOC's Director of Fellowships and Coalitions.

Following the panel, VOC Chairman Emeritus Dr. Lee Edwards and Viktoras Nakas were presented with the Freedom Fighter Award from the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.



*Above and right: Guests tour the exhibition at the opening event on March 15.*





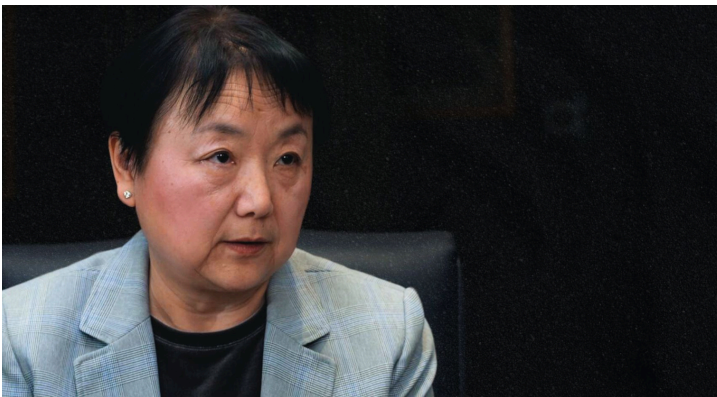
# New Witness Project Episodes Released

VOC continues to memorialize the stories of individuals who have experienced communist oppression through our award-winning Witness Project documentary series. As time passes, countless stories are being lost and it is our goal to record as much testimony as possible from these living witnesses. VOC recently launched “Profiles in Freedom,” a Witness Project conversation series. Through our “Profiles in Freedom” and Witness Project mini-documentaries, we have recently featured the stories of Maximo Alvarez, Lech Wałęsa (story detailed on Page 2), Xi Van Fleet, and Stephanie Salazar Landaeta.

After Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba, the communists took over all areas of life. Educational institutions, including Max’s Catholic school, were purged of religious educators. Overnight, life on the beautiful island of Cuba would never be the same. Max’s parents feared for his safety so he was sent to Florida on a ferry, along with thousands of other Cuban children, in hopes that he would be protected from the chaos of revolution. This mass exodus would come to be known as the Pedro Pan Operation, organized by Catholic priest, Monsignor Bryan O. Walsh. Today, Max is a successful businessman and a staunch supporter of preserving the legacy of the Pedro Pan Operation.



*Maximo Alvarez escaped communist Cuba as a child through the Pedro Pan Operation.*



*Xi Van Fleet survived Mao’s Cultural Revolution and fulfilled her dream of coming to America.*

Xi Van Fleet is a Chinese dissident, American activist, author, and survivor of Mao’s Cultural Revolution. She was sent to work in the countryside at age 16. After Mao’s death, she was able to go to college to study English and has lived in the United States since 1986. She devotes her time to warning about the parallels between Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China and what is unfolding in America today. During Ambassador Andrew Bremberg’s interview of Xi Van Fleet for our “Profiles in Freedom” series, they explored China’s dissent into communism, the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party, and Xi Van Fleet’s heroic story of the pursuit of liberty.

Stephanie Salazar Landaeta is a human rights lawyer from Venezuela. After her country was ensnared by socialism under Hugo Chávez, her once prosperous home spiraled into oppression, poverty, and the slow erasure of democracy. Stephanie refused to remain silent and watch her nation wither under authoritarian rule. She founded the student movement Giro 58, and in 2010, participated in Operation Libertad, an initiative to defend democracy and human rights. In 2017, Stephanie joined the growing Venezuelan resistance movement and took to the streets to demand the resignation of President Maduro. In response, regime agents raided her home, abducted her from her family, and imprisoned her in El Helicoide, the National Intelligence headquarters and brutal political prison.



*Stephanie Salazar Landaeta refused to remain silent and watch Venezuela wither under authoritarian rule.*

# Volkswagen Responds to VOC Findings on CCP

Last quarter, our commitment to uncovering and combating the abuses of communism was exemplified by the spotlight placed on allegations of forced labor in Xinjiang, involving multinational automotive company, Volkswagen.

VOC's Dr. Adrian Zenz, Senior Fellow and Director in China Studies, was instrumental in bringing these allegations to light. His research, featured in the *Financial Times* and German newspaper *Handelsblatt*, revealed unsettling connections between Volkswagen's operations in Xinjiang and the use of Uyghur forced labor.

Volkswagen, in response to the mounting evidence, announced discussions with its Chinese joint venture partner on the future direction of their business in the region. This crucial development underscored the power of knowledge and steadfast research in driving change.

The allegations included claims that Volkswagen's joint venture with the Beijing-owned carmaker SAIC utilized forced labor for the construction of a test track in 2019. Despite an audit clearing the company of these allegations, Dr. Zenz's research indicated otherwise.

In one instance, Dr. Zenz's study highlighted images of Uyghur workers in military uniforms at the construction site, suggesting their involvement in forced labor programs. Further, the report noted invasive surveillance practices, such as iris scans of workers, that raise crucial human rights concerns.

Volkswagen has since committed to reviewing these new claims, marking a significant step in our collective effort to combat the human rights abuses under communist regimes. This development underscores the necessity and impact of our research work. By continuously shedding light on the hidden abuses of communist regimes, we can influence corporate accountability and global awareness, fulfilling our mission so that the world will never forget.



*VOC's Dr. Adrian Zenz was instrumental in revealing Volkswagen's complicity in Uyghur forced labor.*

## Thank You to Our Supporters!

**Our work is made possible by the generosity of our donors who value our mission. We are grateful for your support, which enables us to educate the next generation about the detriments of communism.**

***We especially recognize the following members of our Victims of Communism Museum Remembrance Society who have given a leadership gift in 2024.***

### **Pillars of Memory**

Amb. Aldona Z. Woś & Mr. Louis DeJoy

### **Flames of Liberty**

Mr. Maximo Alvarez

*For more information about the VOC Museum Remembrance Society and to join, visit [victimsofcommunism.org/remembrance-society](https://victimsofcommunism.org/remembrance-society).*