



NEWSLETTER

YEARS OF VOC

SUMMER 2024

## VOC Commemorates 17th Annual Roll Call of Nations



On June 14, representatives from 15 embassies, 3 delegations, and 40 ethnic and human rights organizations gathered together with leaders of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) for the *17th Annual Roll Call of Nations Wreath Laying Ceremony & Dissident Human Rights Award presentation* at the Victims of Communism Memorial on Capitol Hill. This ceremony honors the lives that have been lost as a result of communist regimes.

This year, VOC was proud to present the Dissident Human Rights Award to Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett for her outstanding work in human rights advocacy, religious freedom, education, and fighting against antisemitism. Dr. Lantos Swett serves as president of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice. Throughout her career, she has served as Chair of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom and is Co-Chair for the Board of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea. During her remarks, Dr. Lantos Swett said:

**“...from the genocide of the Uyghurs to the brutal suppression of Tibet, the persecution of Falun Gong and the Christian House Church movement, the open and credible and really looming threats against Taiwan which threaten to bring the whole world to the brink of war, all of these examples remind us of a very important lesson that I hope we do not forget: namely that the nature and the danger of communism remains unchanged and the need for vigilance and for moral courage remains urgent.”**



*Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett received VOC's Dissident Human Rights Award, presented by VOC Chairman Dr. Elizabeth Spalding.*



# VOC Museum is Our “Schoolhouse”



*VOC President & CEO Dr. Eric Patterson with students at the museum.*

The Victims of Communism Museum is our schoolhouse, serving as the hub of our educational activities. Thousands of visitors have toured to date and this year alone we have hosted 24 middle school, high school, and college student groups who received a museum tour followed by a presentation by an expert or witness of communism. We already have several more student groups confirmed for visits in the next few months, and continue to add to that number.

Education is our foremost tool to shape the future. Our schoolhouse is essential in educating the leaders of tomorrow about the false hopes and crimes of communism.

Students who visit our museum are taught that Marxism is a harmful and dangerous ideology. With a constantly evolving group of exhibits, students can gain a more in-depth knowledge of the atrocities of communism that are oftentimes not discussed in their classrooms.

An additional part of VOC’s campaign to educate the youth of America includes our digital middle and high school curriculum and recorded scholarly lectures available through VOC’s partnership with the online learning platform *Streamable Learning*. These materials serve as supplemental educational materials to actively inform students across the country about the human rights abuses of communist regimes.

**“I think having a good understanding of history and seeing past examples of attempted socialist societies helps a person gain a better understanding of why it has not worked historically.”**

**—Student from The Fund for American Studies summer internship program**



*Students from the Florida Debate Initiative tour VOC’s museum galleries.*



*Students from St. Paul’s Lutheran School in front of the VOC Museum.*

Teachers report an increase in student knowledge following school tours, with many students reflecting on what they learned at our museum long afterwards. We challenge students to learn world history and think critically in order to avoid the pitfalls of communism, socialism, and neo-Marxist ideas. VOC’s goal is to ensure that the students of today—our children, grandchildren, and neighbors—become the strong anti-communist, pro-freedom leaders of tomorrow.

# Empowering Teachers to Educate Students



*Channy Chhi Laux presents to Arizona teachers about life under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.*

VOC is particularly focused on training teachers on the content and best methods to educate their students about communism, and equipping students intellectually and rhetorically on communism and other forms of totalitarianism so they can speak up in their classrooms if pro-Marxist, anti-freedom ideals are presented in a positive light.

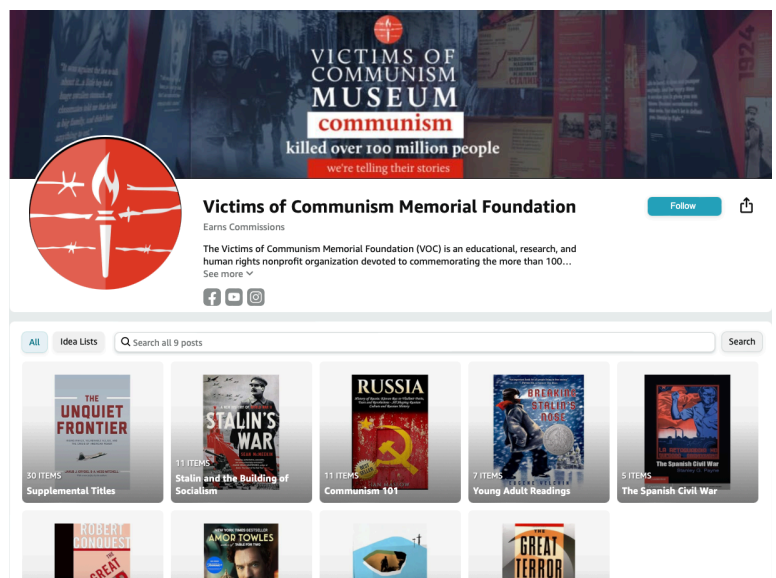
VOC works with witnesses of communism to directly educate teachers on what life is like living under a communist regime. In June, we partnered with Arizona State University's Center for American Civics and The Goldwater Institute to bring Channy Chai Laux, survivor of the Cambodian genocide, and Swylvia Cavalcant, survivor of communist Poland, to share their stories with Arizona teachers at summer educator trainings.



*Dr. Elizabeth Spalding recorded two PragerU talks.*

In June, VOC launched our online bookstore. The bookstore highlights leading scholarship and literature for all ages. Featured in this collection are books that discuss the founders and tools of communism, communism's antipathy toward religion, and novels for children and young adults including *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. The material featured in our bookstore provides a wide variety of perspectives that can be used to inform readers about the terrors of Marxism in a compelling and nuanced way.

In addition to in-person witness lectures, VOC experts give scholarly talks both in-person and online. Dr. Elizabeth Spalding, VOC Chairman, Founding Director of the Victims of Communism Museum, and senior fellow at Pepperdine University School of Public Policy, released two videos with PragerU on the history of Harry Truman's atomic bomb decision and his quest to contain communism. These videos have reached over 579,000 views to date and can be viewed online at [www.prageru.com/presenters/elizabeth-spalding](http://www.prageru.com/presenters/elizabeth-spalding).



Access our online bookstore: [www.amazon.com/shop/victimsofcommunism](http://www.amazon.com/shop/victimsofcommunism)



# North Korean Defector Visits VOC Museum

VOC was honored to host Ji Seong-ho, a survivor of North Korea, a human rights activist, and a south Korean politician at the Victims of Communism Museum. Ji Seong-ho met with Dr. Eric Patterson, toured the museum where he is prominently featured, and watched his *Witness Project* documentary which explores his harrowing escape from communism.



*Ji Seong-ho stands in front of his own photo displayed on the VOC Museum's "Remember Us Wall."*



*North Korean defector Ji Seong-ho and Dr. Eric Patterson at the museum.*

As a child in North Korea, Ji Seong-ho was so malnourished that he fainted while trying to steal coal to sell for food. A train severed his left leg and fingers, and he underwent surgery without any anesthesia. The police would torture him and say, "Cripples bring shame and should die." He resolved to escape. Ten thousand harrowing kilometers on crutches later, he earned his freedom and became a heroic witness against communism. VOC tells the stories of witnesses like Ji Seong-ho in an interactive witness exhibit feature of our museum so they can better understand the human cost of communism.



*Ji Seong-ho plays the interactive witness exhibit feature in our museum which explores his harrowing escape from communism.*



# UN Adopts VOC's Recommendations to Counter Forced Labor in China



*VOC China Director Dr. Adrian Zenz testifies before the U.S. Congress on Beijing's state-imposed forced labor system in Xinjiang.*

This April, in a major blow to China's system of oppression, the *United Nations' International Labor Organization (ILO)* refreshed its handbook on combatting forced labor, issuing new guidelines to address the risk in global supply chains. The ILO adopted nearly all of VOC's recommendations to more accurately measure and counter forced labor.

Changes to the ILO's handbook address key shortcomings and now squarely target Beijing's system of forced labor. This refresh also addresses what VOC described as the "Xinjiang blindspot" in ILO forced labor metrics, which largely missed coerced work perpetrated by authoritarian regimes and employed outdated measurement frameworks.

The ILO's update builds on a paper published by VOC in November 2023 in the *Journal of Human Trafficking*. Prior to

publication, VOC had discussions with senior ILO officials detailing how these metrics fail to adequately capture state-imposed forced labor in places like Xinjiang, Tibet, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

"Given how seldom the ILO updates its forced labor guidelines, the influence of VOC's research on this revision to the UN's forced labor standards is a historic outcome," said Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, VOC's President Emeritus and a former US Ambassador to the UN.

## VOC Expert Testimony Used in Letter to State Department

On May 3, 2024, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging the State Department to take action on the issue of organ trading in China. The letter cites research from VOC's China Studies Research Fellow Matthew Robertson and directly references his 2022 seminal paper in the *American Journal of Transplantation* where he exposed the organ harvesting epidemic with some Chinese surgeons violating the "dead-donor" rule for organ procurement. The bipartisan letter was signed by CECC Chair Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), CECC Ranking Member Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Reps. Jennifer Wexton (D-VA), VOC Caucus member Michelle Steel (R-CA), Zach Nunn (R-IA), and Ryan Zinke (R-MT).



*Earlier this spring, VOC China Studies Fellows Matthew Robertson and Ethan Gutmann both testified to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China on forced organ harvesting in China.*

In the letter, members of the CECC stated, "Getting the PRC to account and fully address evidence of forced organ harvesting will be critical in ending this horrific practice and promoting, long term, the establishment of a truly voluntary organ donation system. With effective enforcement mechanisms, we can work towards ensuring organs are procured safely and ethically."



# VOC Remembers Victims of the Tiananmen Square Massacre



On June 4, 1989, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) crushed a massive pro-democracy movement by sending tanks into Tiananmen Square. Beijing has since erased all mention of June 4 from its history. We still do not know the death toll. VOC honored the individuals who stood for freedom at our annual *Tiananmen Square Massacre Candlelight Vigil*. The Chinese regime continues to suppress democratic thought and freedom of expression, but we will never forget the CCP's victims. The commemoration featured Chinese dissidents and leaders of the Hong Kong, Uyghur, and Tibetan communities. Speakers discussed the need to continue to educate our communities about the horrors of the CCP, and memorialized those who continued to advocate for democracy even in the face of oppression.



*Chinese civil rights activist and 2015 recipient of VOC's Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom Chen Guangcheng speaks at the vigil.*

**“On the 35th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre, we should not only remember the victims, we should also seek justice from the violent CCP regime.”**

**—Chen Guangcheng, Distinguished Fellow, Center for Human Rights at Catholic University**

**“What we do know on this 35th anniversary of the massacre is that the regime of President Xi Jinping has become more aggressive and less free over time.”**

**—Dr. Eric Patterson, VOC President and CEO in WORLD Magazine**





# Special Exhibit: A Bulgarian Resistance Story

The VOC Museum hosted a special interactive exhibit “Belene – A Bulgarian Resistance Story” from June 12-14, providing visitors with the unique opportunity to converse with Nikola Daskalov, a survivor of the Bulgarian gulag, through artificial intelligence (AI). This interactive exhibit is a part of the Belene Camp Project, created by the Sofia Platform Foundation with support from the America for Bulgaria Foundation. The exhibit helped to memorialize and publicize the experiences of Bulgarian gulag survivors for all who visited, and its inclusion of modern technology assures all who viewed it that communism is still a very real, and very present, threat.



*Participants converse with an AI model of Nikola Daskalov*

## VOC Participates in Annual PEMC Conference



*VOC's Dr. Eric Patterson spoke on a panel at the Annual PEMC Conference.*

In May, Dr. Eric Patterson spoke on a panel at the annual meeting and conference of the Platform for European Memory and Conscience (PEMC) in Vilnius, Lithuania, on “Crimes of Totalitarianism – Justice and Remembrance in the XXI Century.”

Broadcast on Lithuanian television, Dr. Patterson joined panelists in a discussion on the critical role of memory spaces, such as the VOC Museum, in preserving historical remembrance. The panel also examined locations that serve as stark reminders of the symbolic oppression of totalitarian regimes, such as parks with statues of Lenin and Stalin, which should no longer persist in a liberated Europe.



*Conference participants visited historical memory sites and Dr. Patterson along with PEMC leadership laid flowers at the Memorial Complex of Tuskulėnai Peace Park in Vilnius.*

During the Council of PEMC members, VOC Founding Chairman Dr. Lee Edwards was welcomed to the PEMC Board of Trustees. The PEMC Board said of Dr. Edwards' appointment, “The Trustees play a very important advisory role for the other bodies of the Platform. We are very happy that Lee Edwards has accepted to serve on our esteemed Board of Trustees. With his experience, expertise, and unwavering commitment to the mission, we are confident that Lee will play a pivotal role in advancing our organization's goals and objectives, especially throughout the USA.”



# VOC Welcomes Nine Summer Interns



*VOC's 2024 Summer Intern Cohort*

This summer, VOC welcomed nine new interns from across the globe, including Florida International University, Gonzaga University, Tallinn University, University of Iowa, University of North Carolina, University of St Andrews, University of Texas, and University of Virginia. They have participated in professional development trainings, participated in events on Capitol Hill, and have learned more about the history and deadly legacy of communism through guided readings and seminars. Our interns have helped with our signature summer events and have had the opportunity to experience the daily operations of the Victims of Communism Museum.

**“Learning from the staff at VOC has given me the opportunity to widen my professional network in DC and has opened my eyes to the nuances behind communism and the necessity of bipartisan activity. I no longer see communism in the abstract. I see it as a real and pertinent threat.”**

**—Alexander St. John, VOC 2024 Summer Intern**

## 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 the past quarter.*

### **Pillars of Memory**

Maximo Alvarez

### **Voices for Freedom**

Linda & Ed Feulner

Edith K. Lauer

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