

## Who We Are

**The Janusz Korczak Association of the USA**, founded by Mariola Strahlberg of Shining Mountain, is a member of the International Korczak Association (IKA), whose roots date back to the Polish Korczak Committee, founded in 1947.

Dr. Korczak, a pediatrician, children's author, educator, and humanitarian, was well-known in Poland and Europe for his innovative work at his Orphans' Home and Our Home in Warsaw. Dr. Korczak, his assistant Stefania Wilczynska, nine staff members, and approximately 196 children were taken to the Treblinka death camp on August 5-6, 1942. They disappeared into its bowels, never to be seen again.

After WWII, Korczak's legacy as an educator and hero grew in Poland as well as abroad.

Here in the United States, we officially formed Janusz Korczak Association of the USA in April 2013. We are currently working on the Korczak USA website, and will let you know when you can help us test it.

A big thank you to all of you who have already sent your membership dues and donations for 2016. If you haven't done so yet, please renew your membership to help us continue our work.

For more information, visit us at [www.facebook.com/korczakUSA](http://www.facebook.com/korczakUSA).

## Upcoming Events

**Korczakowo Camp 2016**, located in Western Poland, is in a forest on the unpolluted Lake Grzybno. The session for teens 13 years or older takes place Jun 26 – Jul 15, 2016. Younger children, 8-12, enjoy the camp Jul 17-30, 2016. To learn more about the camp, visit their website in English at [www.korczakowo.org](http://www.korczakowo.org), or in Polish at [www.korczakowo.org/obozy-letnie/](http://www.korczakowo.org/obozy-letnie/).

**CATS 2016, Children as Actors for Transforming Society** (Jul 26 – Aug 1, 2016, in Caux, Switzerland) is the 4th annual conference, entitled "Local to Global: How will we influence policy?" To learn more, visit their website at [catsconference.com](http://catsconference.com).

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## Report from the Polish School

By Mariola Strahlberg



Since the spring of 2015, members of our Association have been collaborating with the Mikolaj Kopernik school in Mahwah, NJ (visit their website at [polskaszkolawmahwah.com](http://polskaszkolawmahwah.com), in Polish only). We began with Mariola's talk about Janusz Korczak to students 11-18 years old. We were then invited to offer a pilot program of six sessions for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in the 2015-2016 school year. Children learned how to focus better and how to stay calm by participating in the Five Star Program™ and doing exercises that are great for their brains. They created Take a Break Area in their classroom and in their homes; they learned about children's rights and put their own children's rights on the kites they built with the help of Dariusz Chludzinski. We talked about fighting, racing minds, gratitude, and many other important topics valuable for building character. Cezare Ciaglo amazed children with his Magic Show and his beautiful reading of the excerpts from the Korczak's book. Children and their teacher looked forward to each session. We ended with a beautiful gratefulness project for their teacher. Mariola received letters from the students (in Polish), thanking Association for the programs they enjoyed and giving suggestions for future meetings.

Our plan is to come back and do a similar program for older students in the school. We also plan to offer a similar program to other Polish schools in the New York and New Jersey areas.



## Upcoming Events

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**International Brain Gym Conference 2016** (Jun 23-26, 2016, in Portland, Maine) bears the title "Port of Potential". Mariola will be giving a talk on "How to Love a Child". To learn more, visit the Educational Kinesiology Foundation website at [www.edukconference.org](http://www.edukconference.org).

**International Korczak Association (IKA) Gathering 2016** (Oct 12-15, Holland) is called "Trust as the Foundation of Emotional Safety". The official yearly IKA meeting will take place after the gathering on Oct 15 at the same location. Next year, IKA will be held at the Museum of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland, Sep 13-15, 2017.

If you are interested in attending any of these conferences, or would like to learn more, contact us at [shiningmtnny@aol.com](mailto:shiningmtnny@aol.com).



## 2016 Yom Hashoah Celebration (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

**Report from Mariola Strahlberg:** Marcia Talmage Schneider and I were invited to give a presentation at the Jewish Educational Project in New York City for their Yom Hashoah Day. The Jewish Educational Project works with educators, clergy, principals, and volunteers to create outstanding Jewish experiences for 160,000 children, teens, and families in 800 programs in Westchester, Long Island, and New York City. I presented Korczak's life and work; Marcia talked about specific events in orphans' lives. We ended by reading the poem *A Prayer for the Children* by Ina J. Hughs. I cut the prayer into seven pieces, and gave them to seven people to read. After a person read, s/he lit one electric candle on the table. At the end of the prayer, we observed one minute of silence for all who perished during the Holocaust, and all who died in the many wars, attacks, and accidents since then.

**Report from Marcia Talmage Schneider:** Rabbi Yael Hammerman, the principal of the Anshe Chesed Synagogue in New York City asked me to talk to students about Korczak and the orphanage for their Yom Hashoah commemoration. Besides speaking about Korczak, I told the story of Stefa Wilczynska, her influence and her "guidance" to the children and counselors. The story of Shlomo Nadel's Afikomen Walnut, as retold in my book *Janusz Korczak: A Sculptor of Children's Souls*, was enjoyed by the students. I mentioned that on Yom Hashoah we remember people who aren't alive anymore, and I lit a memorial candle.

### A Prayer for the Children

#### **We know and pray for children**

who put chocolate fingers on everything,  
who stomp in puddles and ruin their new pants,  
who can never find their shoes.

And **we remember and pray for the children**,  
who couldn't run down the street in a new pair of shoes,  
who couldn't go outside to play,  
who trembled, alone, in their dark hiding places.

#### **We know and pray for children**

who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,  
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

And **we remember and pray for the children**  
who had no safe blanket to drag behind them,  
who watched their parents watch them suffer,  
who didn't have rooms to clean up,  
and whose monsters were real.

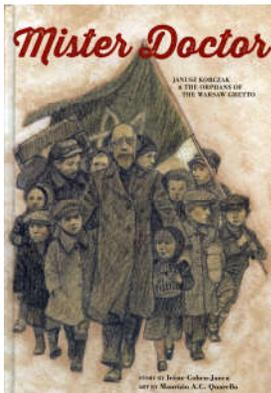
#### **We know and pray for children**

who spend their allowance before Tuesday,  
who throw tantrums in the grocery stores,  
who shove dirty clothes under the bed,  
whose tears we sometimes laugh at,  
and whose smiles can make us cry.

**We remember and pray for the children**  
whose nightmares came in the daytime,  
who were separated from their family,  
who went to bed hungry and cried themselves to sleep.

**We pray for children** who like to be carried,  
and for those who had to be carried,  
for those who gave up and those who did not give up.  
For those who grabbed the hand of those kind enough to offer it,  
And for those who found no hand to grab.  
For all these precious children, O God, we remember and we pray.

By Ina J. Hughs (adapted and shortened)



**Mister Doctor: Janusz Korczak & the Orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto.** Story by: Irène Cohen-Janea, Annick Press, 2015

Our member Daniel Berek reviewed the book: "*Mister Doctor* is a picture book, but with the amount of text on each page, it is more suitable for older children to read on their own. The illustrations are beautifully executed & complement the narrative perfectly. The book is a little pricey, but the quality of materials is exceptional. This is a book to be kept & treasured" ([dlberek.wordpress.com](http://dlberek.wordpress.com)).

## Is there a possibility to have a Korczak inspired democratic school in the U.S.?

By Mariola Strahlberg

To answer the question, it is helpful to learn what is happening with democratic school systems around the world. I would like to share the information from **AERO (Alternative Education Resource Organization)**. **The 2016 International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC)** was held in Mikkeli, Finland. It was co-sponsored by the EUDEC, the European Democratic Education Community, which is one of the sub-groups that grew out of the IDEC. Unlike many education conferences, more than half of the participants were students, many from democratic schools.

People came from 35 countries!

**There are democratic schools around the U.S., but none Korczak inspired. It is time for one to open up soon.**

**Any volunteers to start this project?**

To learn more about AERO and the U.S. democratic schools, visit [www.educationrevolution.org](http://www.educationrevolution.org).

**Finnish public schools:** Parents can't be charged for education due to the need for equality. An independent school gets most of the funds from the government. **Homework is restricted** to a half-hour, and **it's illegal** to give homework for weekends or vacations. There's practically no testing of younger students, and very little thereafter. Teaching is an esteemed profession. Finland scores the highest on international measurement tests. South Korea is the second and Poland is the third. Why do we ignore what they do?

### **Polish democratic schools:**

The first democratic, learner-centered school in Poland was opened by a woman who took AERO's online course for school starters. Later she attended an AERO conference. Not only is her school flourishing, but it has led to several others in Warsaw, and about 30 around Poland!

### **Democratic schools in other European countries and Israel:**

Two new democratic schools are active in Paris, and more are starting around France. A new democratic school opened in Barcelona. In Germany, there are now more than 100 democratic schools, and a waiting list. After a steep drop in learning when Netherlands instituted a national curriculum, democratic schools are now again on the rise there. Israel already has over 25 public democratic schools, and at least six more starting.

## How Did I Get Involved with Janusz Korczak's Work

By Efrat Sara Efron, Professor, National Louis University in Chicago

Hanna Arendt wrote that no matter what our intellectual ideas are and how theoretical our arguments may appear, there are always stories and authentic life experiences behind them. Thought itself, she contends, arises out of the actuality of life incidents, and these life experiences should always guide our thinking and writing. I remembered Arendt's words as I was asked by Mariola to relate how I got involved with Janusz Korczak's work and turned to his ideas as inspiration for my educational work.

It was late at night in September 2004 when I moved to the small house I rented in Kiryat Tivon, a small and beautiful town in the north of Israel. I was excited to have my own space, close enough to my daughter and grandchildren, but secluded enough to allow me the freedom to dedicate myself to writing during my sabbatical from university. What to write about was another matter. Those were the confusing and painful years that followed the collapse of the twin towers on September 11. The horrific transnational terrorist act, and the global national and cultural wars of intolerance that followed, struck a deep, alarming chord of "existential crisis" within me. Is the human race ever going to learn? Is it capable of changing? Is the human race ever going to learn? Can I possibly believe that education has the power to halt humanity's moral decay?

Education is inherently based on hope for the future. You can't teach without believing in change and renewal. I believed deeply in education. I was a classroom teacher, then a teacher's educator, working closely with the teachers. I passionately advocated the issue of moral education and the need to work toward a just and democratic world. This was also a focus of my research and writing. Was all this a worthless illusion? Can education bring about change and strengthen the ethical core of human nature?

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**Sara Efrat Efron** is a professor at the National-Louis University, Wheeling, IL.

Her articles were published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals, like the *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, and *Curriculum and Inquiry*. She presented several papers at national conferences, and lectured before different audiences in Israel and the United States.

Sara joined the Shining Mountain's Board in September 2014.

She can be reached at [sefron@nl.edu](mailto:sefron@nl.edu).



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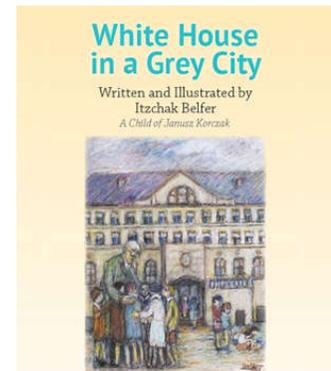
I had to reexamine my ideas about moral and ethical education, and reevaluate my beliefs, my hopes. I was not looking for simplistic solutions. As companions on my journey, I chose thinkers and educators who lived through the radical evil and the darkest of time during the Holocaust. What were their ideas, reflections, and reactions as they witnessed the collapse of ethical standards and human decency? How did they make sense of education? Did they give up on their “big” dreams of justice, truth, and beauty? I studied Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Simone Weil, and Janusz Korczak. In the educational academic circles, Korczak was the least known. But my thoughts kept returning to him, his pedagogy, his ideas and actions. As most Israelis, I read his books and stories as a child, and I knew, in general, about his progressive ideas as the educator, and about his heroic walk with the children to the train station that brought them all to Treblinka, the site of my own family’s murder. I chanced upon his optimistic saying: “Mending the world means mending education”. Did he think that the world is mendable, or worth mending, as he wrote in his *Ghetto Diary*? How did he reconcile the disparity between the ethical world he created in the Children’s Home and the surrounding immoral society? Did he continue to teach the values of truth, justice, and acceptance of the Other while the world around him was awash in hypocrisy, injustice, and hate?

My heart longed to spread his ideas among the educators, teacher’s educators, and students. I wanted to work toward making his belief—in the child, in the dignity of human being, and in the power of education—arise from the ashes of Treblinka.

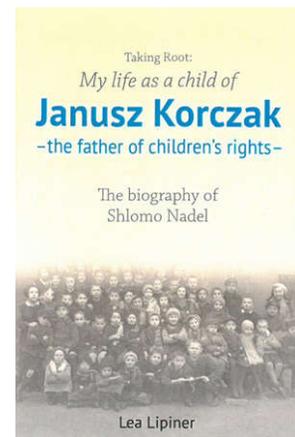
I couldn’t sleep. I had to make a choice between following my heart and spend the next few months in exploring Janusz Korczak, or elect the “safe” route of exploring a thinker-educator who is much more known within the academic world. The second choice would provide a stronger chance of being able to publish articles and present papers in prestigious journals and conferences.

I woke up tired, undecided, unsure. I walked out to the small garden in front of the house. And then, across the street was a big sign *Gan Korczak!* A small nursery school bearing Janusz Korczak’s name was right next door. The joyful, vivid voices of the children moved me: Don’t the lively, happy children in nursery school in Eretz Israel represent a victory over the Nazis? If Janusz Korczak’s name is exalted among the Israeli children, parents, and educators, why not in the U.S.? My choice was made!

The sabbatical, and the years after, were dedicated to researching Korczak. I was amazed how advanced his pedagogical ideas were. To my surprise, although I doubt that either of them read the other’s writing, Korczak’s educational ideas and his vision for the role of educators were very similar to those of John Dewey. Korczak put into practice methods of moral education that many years later have become central to many contemporary theories. Moreover, I discovered that Korczak advocated the notion of practitioner action research (and used it as part of his daily work) even before the term was established. I was also in awe learning that, although not a religious man, he was a spiritual man who held on to faith in a world from which Deity seemingly withdrew. Most of all, I was amazed by his ability to harmonize his vision and deed, words and actions, theory and practice. The more I knew, the more I became convinced that it is a moral obligation to make his praxis familiar to the American educational community. Slowly, I become acquainted with a dedicated and devoted group of people, who share my passion. They all work hard and each does different things, but all with a common purpose to spread Korczak’s light in the world.



Click here to download for free



#### From our friends at the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

The Advocate for Children and Youth of Ontario in cooperation with the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada has recently published two books:

- ***White House in the Grey City* by Itzchak Belfer**
- ***Taking Root: My Life as a Child of Janusz Korczak* by Shlomo Nadel**

We all read many accounts of these two “orphans”, and finally we have the stories in their own words. If you think that you know everything there is to know about the life in Dom Sierot, you will not only be surprised, but also receive the depth of feelings that these two very special human beings went through in the early years of their lives.

I highly recommend both of these books. You can download them for free from the publisher’s website by [clicking here](#). I’m also trying to receive paper copies from Canada for our members.

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

The mission of the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA is to disseminate information about his life and work, his humanism, and his sacrifice. Through our practical work with children at the Shining Mountain, we strive to follow the Fundamental Rights of the Child. For example:

1. **The Right to One's Own Life** – We help educators and parents to create a safe environment for children to discover things on their own while allowing them sufficient space and time.
2. **The Right to Live in the Present** – We want to prepare children for the future, but children yearn to live in the here and now, therefore, we support their need for play and relaxation.
3. **The Right to Be Himself or Herself** – We ask to accept children the way they are, with their talents and shortcomings.

With your help, we plan to translate Korczak's most important pedagogical writings, promote advanced courses for teachers on his educational philosophy, establish Korczak's camp in the U.S., and strive for the U.S. ratification of the 1989 United Nations "Convention on the Rights of the Child". Please let us know if you would like to receive information on how you can help with the following activities:

- Children's Project based on Korczak's books and his legacy
- Korczak Institute in New York for Exhibits, workshops and lectures
- Korczak's Summer Camp in the U.S. and Poland
- Workshops and lectures for parents and educators on Korczak's pedagogy
- Five Star Program™ training for your school or organization

### MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

Membership includes quarterly newsletters that focus on putting Korczak's philosophy into action along with suggestions and strategies for creating a harmonious childhood for children in our lives. You will be kept abreast of the latest U.S. and international Korczak activities, and will have a possibility to join in these activities with various groups and organizations.

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Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

I am:        (    ) a student                    (    ) an educator                    (    ) a parent  
              (    ) other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, I would like to support the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Enclosed is my contribution.**

Please write your check to                    Janusz Korczak Association of the USA  
and mail it to                                    Mariola Strahlberg, 11 Beckett Ct, Monsey, NY 10952

**Basic Membership (annual):**  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 (student/senior)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$20 (individual)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 (Family)  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$75 (organization/corporation)

**Benefactor Membership:**  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 – \$249 Friend  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 – \$499 Associate  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$500 – \$999 Patron  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$1000+ Founder Circle

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