



# JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

NEWSLETTER January 2020

## 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 USA, Dr. Korczak's legacy was promoted by Prof. Millicent Magaliff and Dr. Kurt Bomze, through their Janusz Korczak Society of America, founded in 1991. In 2013, Mariola Strahlberg officially joined International Korczak Association and formed Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Joyce Reilly, Professor Efrat Efron, Max Gilman, and Mariola Strahlberg are current board members. You can reach us and learn about our activities via our website ([korczakusa.com](http://korczakusa.com)).

Thank you to all who have already sent your donations. To help us continue our work, you can contribute [via the DONATE button on our website](#), or send us a check with the form at the end of this newsletter.

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## 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

To commemorate the Convention, governments all over the world, as well as the Palais des Nations in Paris and the United Nations in New York City, pledged their alignment with the Convention and supported the **2019 Global Pledge: For Every Child, Every Right**. Here is an **open letter to the world's children** from UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore:

### 8 Reasons Why I'm Worried, and Hopeful, About the Next Generation

As we look back on 30 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we should also look ahead, to the next 30 years. We must listen to you—today's children and young people—about the issues of greatest concern to you now and begin working with you on twenty-first century solutions to twenty-first century problems. With that in mind, here are eight reasons why I'm worried for your future:

1. You need clean water, clean air and a safe climate.
2. One in four of you is likely to live, and learn, in conflict and disaster zones.
3. We must make it OK to talk about mental health.
4. Over 30 million of you have migrated from your place of birth.
5. Thousands of you will officially never exist, unless we act.
6. You need twenty-first century skills for a twenty-first century economy.
7. Your digital footprint must be protected.
8. You might be the last trusting generation of citizens ever.



Photo: U.S. Department of State from United States [Public domain]

Henrietta Fore continued the letter with eight reasons she thought there is hope. To hear her speech, [click here](#).

At Korczak USA we believe there is hope and that is why we work on promoting the rights and voices of children and strive to create a better world for them. It is clear to us that we need to do everything in our power, starting with small steps to make sure that the world we leave for our children is safe, meaningful and affords opportunities for all children.

### Life is a Story You Write as You Go —A Voice of a Child

Last summer, Mariola Strahlberg visited Sicily. One day she spent a whole day on a beautiful farm, milking cows, baking bread and learning how to make a ricotta cheese. There she heard a story of a little 13-year-old girl who couldn't go to school because there was no way for her to get to and from school. This is the story of courage, incredible drive and the possibility for a child's voice to be heard loud and clear.

(Continued on page 2)



## WORTH KNOWING



The Spring 2019 Issue of PRISM, an Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators had two articles that mentioned Janusz Korczak—

*Oral Torah from the Warsaw Ghetto: A Personal Interview with Professor Israel Gutman, and Turning Points: A Reflection on Jewish Warsaw and Lublin.* To read the articles, visit <https://www.yu.edu/azrieli/prism-journal> and scroll down to page 14 and page 71. Thank you to Karen Shawn, editor, for sharing the journal with us.



On November 14th, 2019, the **Janusz Korczak Association of Canada** invited Senator Murray Sinclair to deliver the University of British Columbia Dean's Distinguished Lecture: *Janusz Korczak the Father of Children's Rights—Turning Rights into Action*. You can listen to his speech by [clicking here](#) or read about it in the article in the Jewish Independent entitled *Canada's Legacy of Trauma* at <http://www.jewishindependent.ca/canadas-legacy-of-trauma/>.



In October 2019, Joyce Reilly met with Dr. Kurt Bomze to initiate a new project, "History of Janusz Korczak in the USA." They are planning to create a chronological documentation of the work done by Dr. Bomze and Professor Millicent Magaliff under the auspices of Janusz Korczak Society of America.

## Life Is A Story You Write As You Go - cont'd from page 1

My name is Caccamo Agostina Margherita. My grandparents have always lived in a farm in the countryside since they were children. They considered their children as work arms in fact the sons worked in the fields and fed the animals while the daughters did the housework and looked after the younger brothers. When they were 14 or 15 years old, they could marry and have their own family.

My grandparents were illiterate but my parents went to school because, after the Second World War, the Italian Government decided to build the primary school in the countryside. So my father and my mother studied until they were 10 years old and they finished the primary school. When I was born, children were obliged to go to school until 13 years old and you could marry after 18 years old.

Since I was a child, I loved studying. I was very curious and I always asked a lot of questions to my teacher because I wanted to know everything. She answered me with the love and the passion that she had for her job. Instead my parents told me: "Margherita, stop asking questions!" My teacher was fantastic, so, one day, I asked her how I could become a teacher. She answered me that I was very good at school, I helped my classmates, I loved studying so I could attend the high school to become a teacher. I was enthusiastic! When I went back home, I told my parents I wanted to attend the high school and become a teacher. My dad answered me that it was impossible because I had to work in the farm and that only those who lived in the city could attend high school.

The high school was 20 kilometres from my house and nobody could drive me. So, when I finished the secondary school, I stayed at home. It was a terrible period for me. Day by day I felt depressed, I didn't eat anything and I couldn't get up from bed. My parents were worried and they didn't know what to do.

One day Mrs. Rose, one of my mother's friends, came to my house. When she saw me, she understood I felt very bad and she asked me the reason of my illness. She was surprised when I told her that I wanted to go to school but my parents didn't agree. In her opinion it was necessary to find a solution because I loved studying

while almost all the children hated to go to school! So the next day Mrs Rose and I went to the Mayor of my town. We asked him if it was possible to have a minibus that brought students from the countryside to the town to attend the high schools. I told him these words that I have never forgotten: **"My name is Margherita. I am a 13 years old child who lives in a farm. I want to continue my studies because I love studying but nobody can bring me to school. The Italian Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that to study is a Right so, when parents cannot help their children, the Italian Government must help them. Mr Mayor, can you help me please?"** He looked at me and he didn't say any words. He was surprised by my self-initiative and desire to study. After few minutes he told me: **"Don't worry Margherita. Tomorrow a minibus will bring you here and you will go to high school."** My dream came true! I attended the high school and I became a teacher. Since that day all the children that lived in the countryside could go to high school by minibus and they were free to choose the school they wanted to attend.

Margherita sent this update when she heard that her story would be published in the Korczak USA newsletter:

"I am honored that my story is going to be known abroad. I had to work after high school, even if I wanted to go to the university.

"I was a teacher at the elementary school, wife and mother of two wonderful boys: Giada, 12 years, and Luca, 10. The day I turned 41, I decided to give myself a gift—I joined the university. And with great joy I would like to let you know that **I graduated with the degree in psychology on September 18th, 2019.** Today I am



very happy, I will work as a specialist for disabled children and I hope one day to become a school principal. **I want to be always close to children, the most precious asset."**

Margherita's email:  
[agostinamargherita@gmail.com](mailto:agostinamargherita@gmail.com)

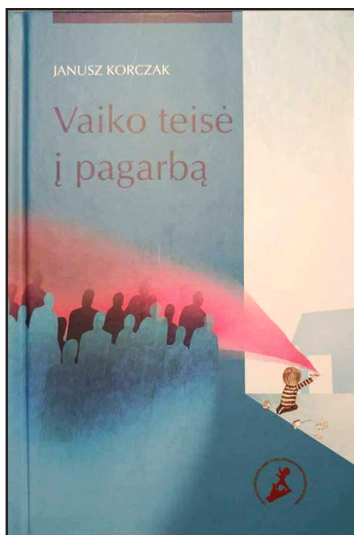


## WORTH KNOWING

On October 23rd, 2019, **Professor Svetlana Petrovskaya**, a “mother” of Ukrainian Korczak Society was honored by Ukrainian children for her Korczak work over the past many decades. During a festive ceremony, she **received the Order of the Smile**. Marek Michalak, chair of the IKA did the honors.



On November 18, 2019, the Ombudsperson of Children's Rights in **the Republic of Lithuania** announced the publishing of Janusz Korczak's book *The Child's Right to Respect* in Lithuanian. The book received a lot of positive feedback from lawyers, psychologists, medics, social workers, teacher, parents, and of course children.



## PASSING OF PROFESSOR JADWIGA



*Professor Jadwiga Bińczycka*  
1930-2019

Professor Jadwiga Bińczycka died on August 27th, 2019, in Warsaw. A true educator, Professor Bińczycka was one of the key people in Poland who started to promote Janusz Korczak's ideas right after the World War II and was active both in the Polish and International Korczak Associations. She was an adamant defender of children's rights and a recipient of the Order of the Smile, given to her by children.

I met Jadwiga for the first time in Russia. We met many more times over the years during the International Korczak Association's gatherings. Every time we spoke, she had the same message for me: **Where are the young people in the US who are interested in Korczak's ideas? Without young people, Korczak's ideas, so very important for our times, will die.** Her book, *Meeting with Korczak*, although only in Polish, served as a required text for many teachers involved with Korczak's pedagogy in Poland and helped me to understand Korczak's teachings.

Those of us who attended the Korczak 2017 gathering at the Polin Museum in Warsaw were able to spend time with Jadwiga and honor her for the last time. Her passing is a great loss to those who appreciate the legacy of Janusz Korczak and Stefa Wilczyńska.

Take the time to read the text of one of **Professor Bińczycka's speeches in English**, entitled *Janusz Korczak—Champion of Children's Rights*. The talk was given in Warsaw in September, 2010. [http://www.januszkorczak.ca/Prof\\_Binczycka.pdf](http://www.januszkorczak.ca/Prof_Binczycka.pdf).

Korczak USA honors Professor Bińczycka's memory by working with children in schools, teaching them about children's rights outdoors on hikes on the Children's Rights Trail, and supporting organizations such as Acupuncturists Without Borders, that bring healing to children whose rights are not being honored at the US borders.





## WORTH KNOWING

The Korczak Educational Center in the Spirit of Janusz Korczak and Stefa Wilczynska was officially opened on November 11th, 2019, on the campus of the Hadassah Neurim Youth Village, 40 minutes from Tel Aviv. The Youth Village is home to youth-at-risk from low socio-economic backgrounds and was founded in 1948. The Educational Center will offer space for meetings, exhibits and concerts.



The **next IKA Meeting** will be held in 2020 in Kazań, Russia. Korczak USA member, Marcia Talmage Schneider will be representing Korczak USA at this meeting. Her book, *Janusz Korczak—A Sculptor of Children's Souls*, was recently translated into Russian and she will be making presentations about her book.



On behalf of Korczak USA, Joyce Reilly has been asked by the Holocaust/Genocide Study Center at Drew University in New Jersey to offer a three-part in-depth study seminar on the life, work and legacy of Dr. Korczak. The seminar will be offered in the spring of 2021 and will be attended by teachers, graduate school students, and high school students from all over the region.

## THE SCHOOL OF LIFE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Conference Report By Professor Efrat Sara Efron

In Israel, at the campus of Tel Aviv University, 140 people from different parts of the world gathered together for the 9th International Conference on the Educational Legacy of Janusz Korczak. For three days, 26-28 of November 2019, the conference participants, classroom teachers, school administrators, social workers, social activists, artists,

children at Korczak's orphanages. Among the themes that were highlighted were the nurturing of sense trust between children and educators, the concept of responsibility for self, others and community, viewing the child as the 'expert,' the value of education for work, and the importance of patience for and acceptance of children as they are. The lecturers considered the challenge



academicians, university students, as well as middle and high schools students discussed and debated the trends, challenges, and initiatives in education for a culture of rights in lights of Janusz Korczak's humanistic thoughts.

In the vast and energetic campus, experiencing spring-like weather, the enthusiastic participants were involved in thought-provoking, and at times, heated debates about Korczak's moral and educational legacy as a springboard for creative and transformative forms of education appropriate for the 21st century. Reporting on the many exciting and vibrant discussions that took place during the conference is a complex challenge for me. I'll try overcoming the problem by constructing the report around the three major themes that, in my eyes, captured the ideas discussed throughout the conference's sessions.

One of the major themes around which the discussion evolved were the educational concepts that served as the foundations of the school of life experienced by the

of implementing these progressive and humanistic ideas in the current educational era of standardization and accountability.

Another theme that was highlighted in several sessions was the acceptance of diversity and the respect of the Other in a multi-cultural and multi identity society. The concept of multiculturalism was discussed from the perspective of the migrant crisis in Europe and the child of migrant workers in Israel. Methods of integrating new immigrant children into school and community were shared, and a session was dedicated to discussing gender transformative approaches for girls' meaningful participation. Papers focused on the development of educational systems that support and embrace children with special needs, children at risk and children living in poverty were presented, followed by productive conversations. Inspired by the spirit of Korczak's view of children's rights, the participants discussed the role of dialogue, respect and acceptance in embracing the Other.

Children's rights were, in fact, a recurring



## YOUR DONATIONS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

In 2019, **27 generous donors** contributed from \$6 to \$1500 to support our Korczak presence in the United States. As you know, all our work, including presentations, conferences and exhibits, is done on a voluntary basis. However, the materials for the presentations, website and Facebook presence, newsletters and news need to be supported financially. We also have big dreams: A Korczak Camp and Institute in the US. So please, support Korczak USA in 2020, keep us as one of your favorite charities on Amazon Smile, and let us know what you are doing to promote Korczak's legacy in the US.



## *The School of Life in the 21st Century, cont'd from p.4*

motif throughout the conference as the 30th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was celebrated. The idea of children's right resonated powerfully from the keynote speech given by Professor Philip Jaffer, a member of the UN Committee on Children's Rights to the presentations given by many sessions' lecturers on how to translate Korczak's belief in children's right into the current culturally and politically troubled environment. It was argued that education for autonomy and agency is the child's primary right.

Such autonomy and active agency are fundamental for establishing a culture of right in school. Participants discussed ways of giving youths a voice and teaching them ways of democratically making collective decisions. They related opportunities for the realization of children's rights that took place in different educational settings, such as pre-schools and schools, after-school clubs, boarding schools, and children's courts. In these settings, children took upon themselves the responsibility to become partners in formulating their daily educational and social lives. Another ray of hope glimmered when we heard about the

story of a successful children's parliament in one of the Israeli cities that was shared before an amazed audience. The youth parliament was implemented as a model of youth participation in formulating policies and in becoming involved in the local community and the country. Such youth parliaments currently exist in many cities in Israel and are supported by the school administration, local municipalities as well as the educational ministry.

One of the unique features of the conference was the attendance of middle and high school students. These youngsters listened attentively, raised questions and even served as presenters in several sessions. They shared their experiences in children's committees and answered patiently, politely, but with assertive confidence the adults' questions of disbelief. In my mind, I could see Korczak smile with pride and nodding his head with "nachos" (satisfaction). For me, such assertive youth participation was one of the highlights of the conference and served as proof that although it took many decades, Korczak's visionary ideas will be implemented successfully and prove their practicality.

## 2019 GENERAL MEETING

On November 29th, 2019, after the Conference, the **International Korczak Association (IKA)** held a **General Meeting** to review last year's work and to approve new members. The meeting took place in the newly opened Korczak Educational Center in the Spirit of Janusz Korczak and Stefa Wilczyńska (see sidebar, page 4). During the meeting, financial reports for last year were presented and accepted, and the following new board and audit committee members were elected:

Chairperson: Marek Michalak (Poland)

Vice-Chairpersons: Jerzy Nussbaum (Canada)  
and Barbara Sochal (Poland),

Secretary General: Michał Kozień (Poland, )

Vice-Secretary General: Eva Haller (Germany),

Treasurer: Rosa Valeeva (Russia).

In addition, the association elected nine board members, including Mariola Strahlberg from the US.

At the request of the Chairperson, **Professor Jadwiga Bińczycka and Batia Gilad** received honorary memberships.



*Pictured, far left: Professor Sara Efrat Efron (USA); center, front row: Dr. Marek Michalek, Chair of the IKA (Poland); far right: Dr. Misha Epstein (USA).*



**Janusz Korczak (1878/9-1942)**, a Polish-Jewish pediatrician, children's writer, educator, father of progressive orphanages and children's rights, is well known all over the world and yet most Americans have never heard of him. The purpose 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, we strive to follow the Fundamental Rights of the Child, including:

**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 sufficient space, literally and spiritually.

**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.

**The Right to Be Himself or Herself** – We ask to accept children the way they are, with their talents and shortcomings.

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### Yes! I want to support the important work of the Janusz Korczak Association!

Please send me your semi-annual newsletter so that I can learn more about:

- Putting Korczak's philosophy into action
- Suggestions and strategies for creating a harmonious childhood for children
- The latest US and international Korczak activities and ways to join in these activities with various groups and organizations.

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I am: ☐ a student

☐ an educator

☐ a parent

☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### I would like to further support the work of the Association with a donation in the amount of:

☐ Friend (\$15 - \$49)

☐ Patron (\$100 - \$999)

☐ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Associate (\$50 - \$99)

☐ Founder's Circle (\$1000+)

You may include my name as a donor in your informational materials ☐ Yes ☐ No

I prefer to remain anonymous ☐

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### Please send me information on how I can help with the following activities:

- ☐ Children's project based on Korczak's books and his legacy
- ☐ Korczak exhibits and lectures for parents and children
- ☐ Workshops on the Convention on the Rights of the Child for educators and children
- ☐ Workshops and lectures for parents and educators on Korczak's pedagogy
- ☐ Five Star Program® training for educational institutions

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*Thank you for your commitment. Your financial support is greatly appreciated. Many schools, teachers and parents are not able to afford our services. With your help, we are able to bring our work to them for free or at greatly reduced rates.*

*There is power in numbers, and with your help, every day we are creating a more peaceful and happy childhood for all children.*

*You can contact us by calling 845-425-7243. Learn more at [www.korczakusa.com](http://www.korczakusa.com). and [facebook.com/korczakusa](https://facebook.com/korczakusa).*