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# **The Kosciuszko Foundation, Its Alumni and American Studies**

## **The Purpose of the Special Volume**

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The text explains the idea behind publishing a special issue of “Ad Americam. Journal of American Studies” dedicated to the Kosciuszko Foundation. It also discusses the role that the Foundation has played for Polish scholars, and focuses on its contribution to the continuous development of the field of American studies through the grants awarded to researchers specializing in American affairs. The text additionally discusses the initiatives undertaken by the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni in order to promote the Foundation’s ideas, programs and knowledge acquired by its former grantees. The final section briefly presents the authors contributing to the volume and their research.

**Keywords:** The Kosciuszko Foundation’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni, KF Alumni’s conferences and seminars, American studies

The Kosciuszko Foundation, founded in 1925 by Szczepan Mizwa in New York City,<sup>1</sup> has been offering scholarships, grants, and exchange programs to American and Polish individuals for almost 100 years. By promoting research projects conducted by Polish scholars and through developing Polish studies programs in the USA, it has contributed greatly to Polish and American academia. The idea behind this volume is to honor these contributions and to celebrate the Kosciuszko Foundation's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary which will take place in 2025.

The initiative to dedicate one of the volumes of "Ad Americam. Journal of American Studies" to the Kosciuszko Foundation and its grantees was born at one of the meetings of the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni association.<sup>2</sup> As a member of the association, a former grantee, as well as a managing editor of "Ad Americam" and an American studies scholar, whose expertise profited greatly from the possibility of conducting research in the USA provided by the Kosciuszko Foundation, I decided to suggest such a project. Being aware of how many of my colleagues specializing in American studies have been awarded grants by the Kosciuszko Foundation over the years and how much they contributed to the development of our field of studies, I found our journal a perfect forum to pay tribute to the Kosciuszko Foundation. For an American studies scholar, the possibility of doing research in the US (at the source) and collaborating with American universities is invaluable. Thanks to the approval from the Editor-in-Chief; Professor Łukasz Wordliczek, and Honorary Editor-in-Chief; Professor Andrzej Mania, the idea of creating a volume with a "Focus on the Kosciuszko Foundation" has come true.

Celebrating the Kosciuszko Foundation's anniversary by publishing examples of its grantees' research results, however, has not been the first initiative developed by its former grantees. In fact, the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni association, established in 2013, has organized various events promoting the Kosciuszko Foundation grants, academic exchange programs, and the value of Polish-American academic cooperation as well as honoring the foundation's achievements and contributions to Polish science. Professors Piotr Wilczek and Robert Kulski who were the founding fathers of the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni wanted the association to be a forum of academic discussion and networking that would bring former Kosciuszko Foundation grantees together in promoting intellectual, educational and cultural cooperation between Poland and the USA as well as in supporting the Kosciuszko Foundation programs. The founding meeting of the Alumni association took place on March 25, 2013 in Collegium Artes Liberales in Warsaw, where representatives of the Kosciuszko Foundation (including Alex Storzynski, President and Executive Director) and former grantees discussed possibilities for future collaboration and formulated the goals of the new association. Between 2013 and 2017, when Professor Wilczek served as President of the association and Professor Kulski as Vice-President, events fulfilling these goals were organized in Warsaw and in Łódź. Between 2017 and 2019 with Professor Kulski serving his term as President, the Alumni meetings took place in Warsaw, Gdynia and Krakow. Since

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<sup>1</sup> More about the history of Szczepan Mizwa and the Kosciuszko Foundation in Małgorzata Szymańska's text below.

<sup>2</sup> Official name in English: The Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni, in Polish: Stowarzyszenie Klub Stypendystów Fundacji Kościuszkowskiej; <http://kosciuszkofoundationalumni.pl>.

2019, under the leadership of Dr. Karolina Mania, the association was involved in organizing meetings in Krakow and in Łódź.<sup>3</sup>

One year after its founding, on March 22, 2014, the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni organized its first academic seminar, entitled *American Cultural Identity and Immigration (Tożsamość kulturowa Ameryki a imigracja)* at the University of Łódź. The meeting was joined by representatives of the US Embassy and the Kosciuszko Foundation who, together with a number of former grantees, listened to the presentations by professors: Elżbieta Oleksy, Zbigniew Lewicki, Magdalena Lesińska, Longin Pastusiak, and Jacek Skrzydło. The next event took place on March 20, 2015 at Collegium Artes Liberales, at the University of Warsaw. The panel discussion chaired by Professor Piotr Wilczek centered around the history of Polish-American academic and cultural relations as well as on their future (*Polsko-amerykańskie stosunki naukowe i kulturalne: tradycje i perspektywy*). It was joined by Professor John Micgiel (President of the Kosciuszko Foundation), Alex Storzynski (Vice-President of the Kosciuszko Foundation Board of Trustees), Kenneth Wetzel (Cultural Attache at the US Embassy) and other guests, including Grzegorz Kozłowski (Head of the Department of America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Professor Ron Hagadus (Chair of the Kosciuszko Foundation Scholarships and Grants Commission), Paweł Potoroczyn (Adam Mickiewicz Institute), and Marzena Polak (US Embassy, Alumni Programs). Speakers presented academic and educational programs of their institutions and discussed possible joined projects and cooperation with scholars from the USA.<sup>4</sup> On March 15, 2016 Collegium Artes Liberales hosted a visiting lecture organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni. It was presented by Professor Yohanan Pterovsky-Shtern from the Northwestern University, who at that time was a Kosciuszko Foundation Visiting Professor at Warsaw University. The presentation, entitled *Rise and Fall of the Shtetl. Poles, Russians, and Jews in a Polish Private Town, 1770s-1914* concerned his research within the area of Jewish studies. The fourth event organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni was a meeting hosting a visiting lecture delivered by prof. Vassilika Betty Smocovitis from the University of Florida which also took place in Warsaw. On March 25, 2017 she presented a paper entitled "*Man is but a worm*": *Darwin, His Legacies, and What Evolution Means Today* to a group of former grant recipients and other guests.

A year later, on March 24, 2018, a much larger event was organized at the Museum of Emigration (Muzeum Emigracji) in Gdynia. The conference, entitled "*Mother of Exiles*": *American Patters of Immigration Policy and Challenges of the Contemporary Europe* ("*Mother of Exiles*": *Amerykańskie wzorce polityki migracyjnej a wyzwania współczesnej Europy*), was co-organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni, History Faculty of the University of Gdansk and the Museum of Emigration. A group of almost 40 Kosciuszko Foundation alumni, representing various Polish universities, listened to a welcome note by Professor Robert Kulski and a speech by John C. Law from the

<sup>3</sup> Currently, the executive board of the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni includes: Dr. Karolina Mania (President), Dr. habil. Bohdan Szklarski, Professor of the University of Warsaw (Vice-President); Dr. (M.D.) Aleksandra Uruska; Dr. Mariusz Dyląg; Dr. Anna Rudek-Śmiechowska; Dr. habil. Rafał Syska, Professor of the Jagiellonian University; Dr. habil. Joanna Kulska, Professor of the University of Opole. The members of the auditing commission are: Iwona Flis, Dr. Paulina Napierała and Professor Dr. habil. Ewa Miklaszewska.

<sup>4</sup> More about it in: Czapnik, "Stowarzyszenie...".

US Embassy in Warsaw, before attending two academic sessions chaired by Dr. Rafał Raczyński (Museum of Emigration) and Dr. Magdalena Żadkowska (University of Gdansk). The sessions included presentations by professors: Anna Mazurkiewicz, Witold Klaus, Bohdan Szklarski, Anna Horolets, Adriana Mica, Mikołaj Pawlak, and Paweł Kubicki.<sup>5</sup> Among the special guests who joined the event were representatives of the Kosciuszko Foundation, including professors Ewa Radwańska and Hanna Chroboczek-Keller as well as the President of the Foundation, Marek Skulimowski, who thanked the organizers for promoting Kosciuszko Foundation programs and operations in Poland. He also stressed the role and contributions of Dr. Grażyna Czetwertyńska (President of the Kosciuszko Foundation Poland).

Another considerable event was organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni on March 2, 2019 at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. It was a conference commemorating 100 years of Polish-American relations (*100 lat relacji polsko-amerykańskich*), attended by a number of American studies specialists from the Institute, and by Kosciuszko Foundation alumni representing various other academic fields. The panel sessions were opened by Professor Robert Kulski and included papers on different aspects of Polish-American relations (from diplomatic, educational, cultural, legal, medical to economic). The presentations by professors: Andrzej Mania, Andrzej Ślebarski, Artur Nowak-Far, Rafał Syska, Marcin Majka, Magdalena Grassman and Bartosz Kurek were followed by vivid discussions.<sup>6</sup>

In 2020 the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni co-organized a conference in Łódź and supported the exhibition *Polish Americans/American Poles. Polscy Amerykanie/Amerykańscy Polacy*, organized in Kraków by the US Consulate and the Villa Decius Institute for Culture.<sup>7</sup> The conference in Łódź which took place on February 29, 2020 concentrated on new communication methods between Polish and American research institutions (*Nowe narracje komunikacji. Wzajemne relacje polskich i amerykańskich instytucji badawczych*) and was co-sponsored by the Kosciuszko Foundation, the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni and Centrum Nauki i Techniki. Among the Kosciuszko Foundation alumni who presented papers during the conference were professors: Rafał Syska, Mirosław Granat, Maciej Aleksandrowicz, Paulina Niechciał, Jarosław Kopiński as well as visual artist Jan Dobskowski, Professor Robert Kozielski (Director of the PAM Center) and Dorota Janiszewska-Jakubiak (Head of the POLONIKA Institute). The presentations were followed by discussions and networking.

Since then, the Kosciuszko Foundation Alumni have been supporting local initiatives that promote Polish-American intellectual cooperation, American culture and education, and the Kosciuszko Foundation programs (advertised on the Alumni's Facebook page and other social media). It also organizes yearly general meetings (online), to encourage networking and cooperation among the Kosciuszko Foundation alumni. At one of these meetings the idea of creating this volume was born.

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<sup>5</sup> A complete report of all the sessions and presentations has been published in *Studia Migracyjne - Przegląd Polonijny* [Migration Studies - Review of Polish Diaspora]: Napierała, "Sprawozdanie...".

<sup>6</sup> I would like to thank Professor Kulski for the conference posters and additional information on the events provided for the purpose of this article, and to Dr. Karolina Mania for the short overview of the recent years.

<sup>7</sup> Information provided by Dr. Karolina Mania.

Among the scholars who accepted the invitation to contribute to the volume are researchers whose main focus is in American studies, including renowned specialists (professors: Andrzej Mania, Halina Parafinowicz, Dorota Praszalowicz) as well as scholars specializing in other fields of studies but researching topics concerning America. They received Kosciuszko Foundation grants to do research in the USA in different years and at different stages of their careers. Thanks to the KF Exchange Program to the US all of them deepened their knowledge, developed expertise in their researched areas, and contributed to our academic field. Their willingness to share the results of their research was crucial for the creation of the volume. Thanks to Małgorzata Szymańska's (the Program and Operations Manager at The Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City) kind offer to write a short editorial introduction to the history of the Kosciuszko Foundation and its programs, the volume became a complete tribute to the foundation. Her text, together with this editorial, opens the "Focus on the Kosciuszko Foundation", being followed by contributions of the KF alumni. The volume also includes a "Varia" part, in which younger authors (Polish and American) who have not (yet) had a chance to benefit from Kosciuszko Foundation grants present the results of their research.

Articles written by the Kosciuszko Foundation alumni have been organized in alphabetical order. The section *The Kosciuszko Foundation Grantees' Contributions to American Studies* begins with the article authored by Dr. Dominik Jarczewski from the Institute of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków who specializes in epistemology, especially in virtue and social epistemology, and who defended his doctoral thesis at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His article entitled *Generous Virtues: Rethinking the Value of Intellectual Virtues in Social Terms* focuses on the contributions of American philosophers who in the 1980s and 1990s proposed and developed Virtue Epistemology. His recently awarded Kosciuszko Foundation grant allowed him to work at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma for three months and consult his research (*Generous Virtues: What Contributes to a Benign Epistemic Social Environment?*) with Professor Wayne Riggs (who was his advisor) and Dr. Adam Green. He also had a chance to present his research and discuss its direction with Professor Linda Zagzebski; one of the most important philosophers in his field. His article presents partial results of his research, while contributing to American studies.

The second article, *Gorbachev – Reagan Geneva Summit, November 1985. Documentary study* has been authored by Professor Andrzej Mania; a historian and political scientist specializing in international relations and American diplomacy who was the founder of American studies at the Jagiellonian University, and between 1993 and 2017 the Head of the American Studies Department. Between 2005 and 2008 he was also the Director of The Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora. After serving as the Dean of the Faculty of International and Political Studies (2000-2002) and Vice-Rector of the Jagiellonian University for Educational Affairs (2008-2016), he retired from the Jagiellonian University in 2020 but remains academically active. His article is a review of the negotiations between the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, and the General Secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, during their summit meeting on November 19-21, 1985, in Geneva. Professor Mania was a recipient of the Kosciuszko Foundation grant in 1989 and 1990 and conducted his research at Columbia University (its archives and libraries) as well as at the New

York Public Library. He also visited the Library of Congress and National Archives. The grant allowed him to advance his research on U.S. foreign policy, which has been continued over the years.

The third article, *Martin Luther King Jr.'s Theological Evolution and the Impact of the (Black) Social Gospel on His Political Views*, authored by Paulina Napierala from the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora of the Jagiellonian University, presents theological ideas that influenced Martin Luther King Jr.'s political and social activism, especially the (Black) social gospel. Theological influences on political activism and theological divisions among Black churches were the focus of my research in New York in 2022. Thanks to the Kosciuszko Foundation grant I conducted interviews with Black pastors and consulted my research with specialists from CUNY and Union Theological Seminary (Columbia University), including professors Cornel West, Nkosi Anderson, Timothy Adkins-Jones, and Philip Kasinitz. Earlier, in 2015, also thanks to the Kosciuszko Foundation, I was able to do research on the religious right and consult professors from the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life, Boston College and Harvard University, including Brian Hehir, Gary Dorrien, Erik Owens and Alan Wolfe. Feeling deeply indebted to the Kosciuszko Foundation, I decided to also contribute to the volume, presenting a review and partial results of my recent research.

In the next article "*Let's All Be Americans Now.*" *The Drive for Americanization during the Great War*, Professor Halina Parafinowicz, Chair of American Studies and Diplomacy at the Faculty of International Relations at the University of Białystok, presents a brief overview of the Americanization movement during the Great War, which strongly impacted the national policy on this matter as well as its evolution. Professor Parafinowicz specializes in American history in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among her books, there is a biography of Herbert Clark Hoover and the first published in Europe biography of Eleanor Roosevelt. Her current research focuses on the memory of the Great War, the U.S. presidency and modern American first ladies. She was awarded the Kosciuszko Foundation grant in 2020 and conducted her research at the Library of Congress, being affiliated at George Washington University, in the History Department (where she had been a Fulbright scholar before). One year earlier, in 2019, she received a Centennial Award from the US Embassy and the Kosciuszko Foundation. Thanks to the materials gathered during her stay in the US (although interrupted by COVID), she published a number of articles concerning the American participation in the Great War and adds this one to this list.

In the article *Polish Pioneer Communities in the Pacific Northwest: A Forgotten Chapter of Polish Diaspora* Professor Dorota Praszalowicz explores four pioneer Polish American communities in Washington State: Pe Ell, Wilkeson, Aberdeen and Enumclaw. By presenting them, she aims to shed light on a lesser-known aspect of Polish diaspora history in the United States. Professor Praszalowicz is a sociologist and heads the Department of Migration and Ethnic Relations at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora at Jagiellonian University. Her research concerns American Polish communities and their transformation, the institutionalization of immigrant life, and past and present migrations in a comparative perspective. Her books concerning Polish diaspora in the USA include topics such as Polish-American parochial schools, Polish-German relations in Milwaukee and oversees migrations from

the partitioned Poland. She was awarded the Kosciuszko Foundation grant in 2022 and spent six months at the University of Washington Seattle, researching the project *Poles In Pacific Northwest: An Overlooked Phenomenon*. The article submitted to this volume presents the partial results of this study.

The last article in the “Focus on Kosciuszko Foundation” part of the volume has been authored by Professor Marzena Smol, who is the Head of the Division of Biogenic Raw Materials at the Mineral and Energy Economy Research Institute, Polish Academy of Sciences, and who received Polish Minister’s Scholarship for Outstanding Young Scientists (2020-2023) and Bekker scholarship (2019). While she does not represent American studies, her article *Circular water and wastewater management in State College, Pennsylvania* and research on American solutions concerning the management of water resources contributes to our widely defined field of studies. Her expertise in the principles of sustainable development and its implementation in the USA enriches the discussion on American attitudes towards ecology. The article submitted to this volume that analyses examples of circular management of water in the student town of State College Pennsylvania is a result of Professor Smol’s research conducted in 2022 thanks to the Kosciuszko Foundation grant. It allowed her to do research in Pennsylvania where she cooperated with Professor Alfonso Mejia from the Pennsylvania State University.

Our articles provide just a small sample of topics related to American studies that have been researched thanks to the support of the Kosciuszko Foundation. Although “Ad Americam. Journal of American Studies” focuses on research concerning the Americas and therefore can publish only the research results concerning this area, it is important to remember that the Kosciuszko Foundation awards grants and fellowships in many different academic disciplines, including an increasing number of scholarships in science. It is possible to create similar volumes that would publish research results of Kosciuszko Foundation alumni within any particular area of studies. It clearly indicates the impact of the Foundation on Polish academia. Without its support, research for many of us would be very difficult if not unattainable in certain areas (especially American studies). It is impossible to be an American studies scholar without the possibility of visiting the country of academic interest. Therefore, we are grateful to the Kosciuszko Foundation for all the support we have received. We would like to thank Marek Skulimowski, President of the Kosciuszko Foundation and Dr. Grażyna Czetwertyńska, President of the Kosciuszko Foundation Poland for their professionalism in running the foundation and keeping high academic standards during long interviews. Our gratitude also goes to all former Presidents, Board Members (past and present), and experts dedicating their time to assess applications and interviews; to Vice-Presidents and all the staff responsible for various aspects of the foundation’s activities as well as to all Program and Operations Managers (past and present), who oversee the KF Exchange Program to the US and welcomed many of us in New York City, offering a helping hand and advice.

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