Letter from Paul Burke: A New Strength from a New Day

Eleanor Roosevelt's leading role in the formation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is well documented. She was duly recognized, albeit posthumously, for her international leadership with the UN Human Rights Prize in 1968.

Eleanor was a singular figure. Like the changemakers in girls' school classrooms everywhere, she was brilliant, brave, and far ahead of her time. She led this effort in 1949 as East-West tensions were running high, and importantly, she was not alone. She was joined by women from all corners of the globe. Most significantly Hansa Metha, a staunch defender of women's rights in India and beyond and the only other female delegate to the commission. Hansa was responsible for changing the phrase “All men are born free and equal” to “All human beings are born free and equal.”

Beyond the committee, leading international women altered language to make it more clearly gender inclusive, and therefore more true to its “universal” claim. To name a few: Evdokia Uralova from the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Bodil Begtrup from Denmark, Minerva Bernardino from the Dominican Republic, Marie-Helene Lefaucheux from France, and Begum Shaista Ikramullah from Pakistan. Evdokia Uralova advocated including Article 23: “Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.” When viewed within the hardened reality of a 2022 lens, Article 23 demonstrates that statements alone are not sufficient. The United Nations, a coalition of nations whose influence rises and falls based on the level of commitment of its individual members, couldn't do it alone.

The International Coalition of Girls' Schools, in this way, resembles the UN. We matter only as much as our member schools believe we do. In this way and to borrow from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., there is an “inescapable mutuality” to our Coalition. Leaders at all levels of ICGS schools—from the boardroom to the classroom and back again—are called upon to support the cause of girls’ schools, and to do it in community with others from all over the world. We can celebrate our transition to ICGS while also acknowledging that achieving our global vision won't materialize because we said so. Now is the time for us to seize our opportunities and to do our work. Go to the new ICGS website and check out our expanded membership and our expanded resources. See how you can learn in new ways from ICGS, and how you can share differently as well. Join a Headways cohort.

Showing up for ICGS should never compel us to sacrifice our special localness with all of our home-grown and fully parsed-out poetry and powerful prose. On the contrary, we ask that you bring all of that with you. That is the good stuff. The stuff that makes it challenging, interesting, and meaningful for the rest of us. If we bring each of our schools to the fore with all of their accomplishments—and especially all of their frailties—we will allow others to do the same. The learning will flow from there.

We are, after all, in the business of learning. It is both our aim and our means of pursuit. It is also where we may diverge from our UN compatriots. Girls’ schools offer us a chance to make our declaration, while also giving us an equal chance to act on our claim every day in the curricula we teach, in the connections we forge, and in the globally minded cultures we create. In one of the more powerful moments from last month's Global Forum on Girls' Education III, Marise McConaghy, Board President of the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia, said that taken together, ICGS girls' schools serve more than 300,000 students. Marise was making clear that with the
The arrival of ICGS, a new day has arrived for girls’ schools everywhere. Not coincidentally, she was also echoing none other than Eleanor Roosevelt herself, who was known to say how “with the new day comes new strength.”

The new day of the ICGS Board includes three wonderful new governing directors, and it also includes new leadership. My term as President has come to a close after three years in true partnership with Megan Murphy and her amazing ICGS team. Danielle Heard, the Head of Nashoba Brooks School, will elevate our Board to meet this moment and then go beyond it. With her, the ICGS governing body will have more than a new day; we will have new strength.

Paul Burke is the immediate past president of the ICGS Governing Board of Directors and Head of The Nightingale-Bamford School. We are abundantly grateful for his leadership and counsel. You can find the full text of this letter on the ICGS website here.

Virtual Global Forum Sessions Accessible Online
All those who registered for the virtual and/or in-person components of the Global Forum on Girls’ Education® III are able to access the entire virtual program until September 22. Recordings of all sessions are now available for “on demand” viewing. Click here to access them using your Forum login password. Contact Director of Strategic Initiatives & Professional Development Jen Evers if you require assistance.

Join Us for the Educating Girls Symposium
Registration opens soon for the ICGS Educating Girls Symposium: Meaning, Mission & Making Connections, which will take place on October 24 at The Harpeth Hall School in Nashville, Tennessee.

School leaders and educators from around the world will come together to explore essential questions such as:

- What does it mean to be global citizen? What does it mean to be a leader, an ally, a student and a girl in today’s world?
- Does our mission clearly capture what we strive to do for every student within our care? Does it underpin our strategic goals and initiatives?
- How are we communicating with all members of our school community and facilitating healthy, respectful connections among and between them?

On Educating Girls Episode 11: Girls Who Speak Up
NOW STREAMING: We have all experienced the significant frustrations of engaging in civil discourse in our increasingly polarized world. More and more often, we seem to live in “a culture of outrage” in which public shaming has become an unfortunate norm, and intellectual discourse has taken a backseat to shouting matches. It should not surprise us then, that for educators, it has never been more critical to be intentional about teaching the skills needed to use one’s voice when the attacks become personal, and the disagreements become fierce. For many girls, who often confront societal norms not to speak up and not to be disagreeable, this is...
tricky terrain. It requires the use of the courage muscle; it demands vulnerability. It takes both empathy and practice.

Are You LinkedIn With Us?
The Coalition maintains a robust presence on LinkedIn, where we share news and information about professional development events and initiatives, along with timely resources that make the case for the important work of girls' schools around the world. Connect with us today!

Recent Headlines

Riding to school: How bicycles are changing education for girls in rural Africa
Brookings

Striving for quality over quantity: A common challenge for schools around the globe
Phys.org

Girls' schools buck decline in maths participation
The Sydney Morning Herald

Forgotten women in chemistry
Chemistry World

What it's like being a woman in Afghanistan today: 'death in slow motion'
NPR

'An absolutely beautiful moment': How the inaugural Tour de France Femmes can change women's cycling
CNN

Check out the all-new Events Calendar on the ICGS website! With this feature, you can easily search for ICGS professional development and networking opportunities taking place online or in person. Member schools will soon be able to add their own events to this calendar as well. Stay tuned for details.

Discover Career Opportunities at Girls' Schools
www.girlsschools.org