

Shanghai, September 15, 2026

To the Selection Committee,
Young Polish Woman Award

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing in support of Margaret Czarnik's application to the Young Polish Woman Award. I have come to know Margaret as a student in my Legal Psychology course at NYU Shanghai last semester, and I can say without hesitation that she was one of the strongest students in this class.

What first struck me about Margaret was not just the quality of her work — which was consistently excellent — but the way she thinks. In a course that draws heavily on experimental methodology, forensic science, and psychological theory, she has shown a genuine ability to move between disciplines and pull ideas together in ways that most undergraduates do not. She earned top marks on assignments covering child investigative interviewing, suspect interviewing, and an experimental research proposal, and performed at a very high level across the board.

Her research proposal stood out in particular. She designed a multi-study experiment examining how contextual bias may have contributed to the wrongful fingerprint identification of Brandon Mayfield in connection with the 2004 Madrid train bombings. It showed analytical maturity and a willingness to tackle difficult, sensitive questions with both precision and thoughtfulness. That combination is not easy to find.

I also want to mention something that does not show up in grades but that I value highly in a student: Margaret was genuinely active in class. She participated regularly and, more importantly, she was willing to voice her own perspective on complex topics where there was no clear or comfortable answer. In a course like Legal Psychology, that happens often — questions about the reliability of evidence, the ethics of interrogation techniques, the tension between security and civil liberties. Margaret did not shy away from these discussions. She engaged with them directly and thoughtfully. That kind of intellectual courage is not common, and I think it speaks to the sort of person she would be to represent Young Polish Woman Award.

Beyond the classroom, Margaret's academic record reflects intellectual curiosity — from

political theory and US-China relations at NYU Shanghai, to a semester at NYU Washington DC studying the American presidency, public opinion, and leadership. She has navigated different academic environments across continents, and that kind of adaptability, combined with her strong analytical skills, strikes me as exactly the profile that benefits from — and contributes to — Young Polish Woman Award.

I recommend Margaret with confidence. She has the intellectual ability, the discipline, and the broader perspective to make the most of this opportunity and to be its meaningful contributor.

Please feel free to contact me if additional information would be helpful.

Sincerely,

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pokka Santtila". Below the signature, the text "PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY" is printed in a small, sans-serif font.

Global Network Professor
New York University Shanghai