



AiS 2018 - Week 2 in Berlin, Germany

**Day 14 – Fri, June 1, 2018**

## **Seeking Refuge**

Today marked our final day in Germany. We were tremendously sad about this, but we are looking forward to the second part of the Academy in the United States. There were still some events on our schedule! We talked to a German activist, which helped a plethora of people to escape from former East Germany (GDR) to West Germany. Her name is Ulla Peitz, MD.

Without her, Ambassadors in Sneakers would not exist since she helped Ms. Ulrike Krone's parents to escape the socialist state of the GDR. Ms. Peitz's own experiences – she spent her first two years in Eastern Germany – made her aware of the precarious situation in the GDR. Her own family was forced to leave, and while she could not grasp the idea of a government forcing people to live basically in exile, Ms. Peitz was familiar with the feeling of seeking refuge. Also, denying [Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) is inhumane and undemocratic:

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.*
- (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.*

Listening to her story made us feel uncomfortable due to the current refugee situation that Europe, and really the world, is facing. Crises that are as complex and difficult to handle is putting thousands, no, millions of people of risk in dying. We all say that we stand for human rights for all, but we have to confront ourselves and think about what that means and what it entails. We believe we got a step closer, but will we ever find a definite answer?

In conclusion, the first part of the Transatlantic Summer Academy on Human Rights was phenomenal and had a tremendous impact on all of us!

**Bhavin Patel and Ray-Kevin Finger**



*1 - Ms. Ulla Peitz (who is still practicing medicine today) tells us about her time helping citizens of the GDR escaping the socialist regime.*

**Day 13 – Thu, May 31, 2018**

## **Foreign Service, Women's Rights & WWII Bunkers**

In the morning, we departed to the Pariser Platz to visit the U.S. Embassy. We had the honor to meet the Deputy Chief of Mission, Kent Logsdon. He has a close connection to Germany because he started his career in the foreign service in Stuttgart at the General Consulate there. Mr. Logsdon took time out of his busy schedule to answer our questions regarding diplomacy and human rights. His experiences sparked an interest to become a diplomat in many of us.

Later that day, we were invited by Terre des Femmes, a non-profit women's right organization, to learn more about their work and their focus on women's rights around the world. One focus area in their activism is domestic violence. We learned that one of four women experience domestic violence in their lifetime.

Another area that Terre des Femmes centers their work is sex work and human trafficking. Terre des Femmes is advocating for prostitution being prohibited by law. One of our fellow peers made a remark explaining that prostitution is all over the world and it is almost impossible to stop at this point. She then went on to suggesting that the government should legalize prostitution to those women and men who choose to do so. The government would then have an easier time regulating sex work and protect the rights of sex workers. This viewpoint sparked a controversial discussion between the representative of Terre des Femmes and us.

Another controversial topic that led to a heated debate was adoption for same-sex couples. Based on studies, families with same-sex parents are able to provide an equal or a better environment for children than different-sex parents. One of the students disagreed with the argument, saying each child deserves one female and one male figure until the age of five. Another student argued that he grew up with a single mother and turned out fine. He also noted that there are other role models that are not necessarily part of one's household, e.g. teachers, coaches, etc. to not having one gender in the household, such as a coach, trainer, teacher, etc.

The visit at Terre des Femmes was definitely thought-provoking and shifted our perspectives on women's rights.

To end our second to last day, we went to the Gesundbrunnen railway station to experience a place full of history that we were not aware of. A guided tour through the "Berliner Unterwelten" revealed the history of how German civilians hid in bunkers during the World War II bombings of the allied forces in Berlin. We travelled through twisted passages underground and saw rooms where citizens stayed during the air raids. We learned that 80 percent of the city center were destroyed. Our tour guide also showed us the development of the Berlin subway and the pneumatic post systems.

It really was a "dark world"! All the stories that we have heard today are the reasons we are participating in this program: Learn from past mistakes and do better in the present and future.

**Alexandra Gropius and Klara Lankford**



4 - Kent Logsdon, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, talking about his experiences in the foreign service.



3 - Kent Logsdon, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, talking about his experiences in the foreign service. His stories sparked an interest for diplomacy as a profession for us!



2 - We had a great time at the U.S. Embassy with Kent Logsdon (pictured in the center) and Scott Robinson (not pictured).



5 - Terre Des Femmes is a non-profit organisation advocating for women's rights worldwide.



6 - Our visit at the Berlin offices of Terre Des Femmes sparked some heated debates about sex worker's rights and rights for same-sex couples.



7 - We ended the day underground, visiting the bunkers where civilians hid from the brutal destruction of the air raids during World War II.



**Day 12 – Wed, May 30, 2018**

## **Media Literacy & Youth Engagement in the UN**

On this beautiful Wednesday we had the opportunity to visit “Deutsche Welle” (dw) in Berlin. Deutsche Welle, now commonly known as DW, is Germany’s international broadcaster.

Their mission is to “convey a comprehensive image of Germany, report events and developments, incorporate German and other perspectives in a journalistically independent manner. By doing so we promote understanding between cultures and peoples. We simultaneously also provide access to the German language.” Thus, fostering media literacy and human rights globally.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

The media, being the fourth pillar of a (democratic) government, not only influences the opinions and perspectives of society, but checks and balances our governments’ power. DW is providing information from an objective point of view, since viewers and listeners should form their own opinions. What surprised us the most is that 85 percent of the global population do not know that they have the right to freedom of opinion, due to the suppression by undemocratic governments. The Deutsche Welle broadcasts in over thirty languages and provides people who usually lack a variety of media sources with news and information.

In the afternoon we invited a speaker to talk with us about youth participation. Mio Kuschick was the UN-Youth Delegate for Germany together with Anaick Geißel in 2017/18. He talked extensively about what the program of the United Nations entails and how he got involved in the program in the first place. The youth delegates accompany the German delegation to the UN General Assembly in New York City. Mio and Anaick advocate for the interests and goals of German youth and represent them in an official capacity. The ultimate goal of the youth delegates in Germany (and eight other nations) is to establish a stronger youth participation in the United Nations.

What stood out: Mio, similar to Vincent-Immanuel Herr earlier this week, believes that not being a member of a political party makes it easier to advocate for youth rights.

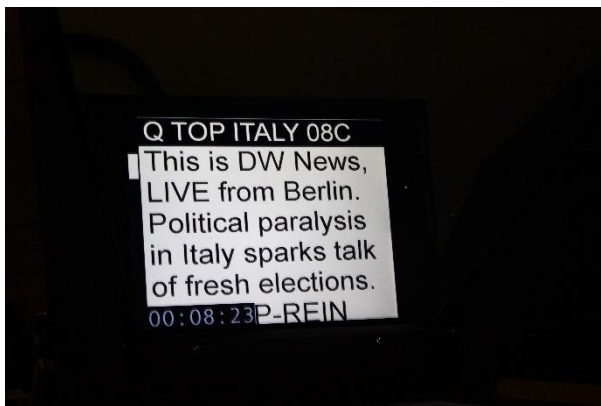
**Shantrell Sinclair and Clara Soekler Sanchez**



9 - Made for minds, indeed.



10 - Mr. Engelmann explaining the work and mission of Deutsche Welle, Germany's international broadcaster.



8 - We had the opportunity to visit one of the television studios, where they broadcast news. On that particular day, the news was mainly about the elections in Italy.



11 - In the Berlin headquarter, DW broadcasts for television. In their offices in Bonn, the broadcast for radio.

DW offers news and information in over thirty (!) languages.



12 - Mio Kuschick, a former UN youth delegate of Germany, explains the importance of youth participation not only in Germany, but also in the United Nations.

**Day 11 – Tue, May 29, 2018**

## **Allies vs. Enemies**

Today's focus was World War II and its after effects on Germany more specifically Berlin. We traveled to the Allied Museum. This museum offered a lot of information on the lives of soldiers stationed in Germany. The museum also discussed the conferences between the members of the Allied Forces: France, Great Britain, United States, and the Soviet Union. These countries partitioned Berlin into sections. France and the United States were positioned on the Westside of Berlin and The Soviet Union positioned on the east of Berlin. After the war, the beautiful city of Berlin was in shambles. France and Great Britain were in bad shape after the war too. The only country that could provide for the German citizens were the Americans. We learned that the Americans began giving gifts (this is a false friend! gift ≠ Gift!) care packages filled with food to the citizens of Berlin. The Americans had to provide enough food for 2.1 million people. Thousands of planes flew in everyday carrying supplies. In fact, every 90 seconds a plane was getting unloaded. The goal of reconstructing Germany was to form a democratic society after the infamous Nazi era. The West of Germany became a democratic society, but the East of Germany became a communist autocracy. Many Germans were drawn to the west because of the democratic society that was presented there. The Leader of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht proposed the idea of building a wall so that people would not leave the GDR to go to the west. The U.S. and France built tunnels to intercept Russian communications, a publicity scandal followed after the Russians discovered these tunnels. During this time period, spies became very popular in the intelligence community. Throughout this period, some historians say this period was the start of the Cold War. After our tour concluded, we visited the 1st McDonald's in Germany.

In the evening, we were offered the opportunity of learning more about Berlin's past and its important role during the different periods of Germany's history. Starting right next to the Checkpoint Charlie, which used to serve as one of three German checkpoints that had been installed by the western Allies we did a video bus tour. While driving for two hours through some parts of Berlin, mainly on the Eastern side and seeing lots of different places, we were shown many historical video sequences. Therefore, we were able to recognize how special places but also the image of the whole city of Berlin were changed during history. A format of city tour that most of us have not known or experienced before. But not only our minds took benefit from that special type of tour – also in regard of our tired feet everyone seemed quite happy about it. Apart from seeing some of the most important sights such as the Brandenburger Tour, Alexanderplatz or Bundestag the most interesting part of the tour was how you could visually discover the history of the fascinating city of Berlin and certain places that you would probably not think of when seeing them.

Since the Nazi period is one of the most tragic and important part of the German history we were also able to get to know a lot about what exactly happened in Berlin these days. Only one of the many events was the burnings of more than 20.000 books that took place in 1933 at the Bebelplatz, including books from famous authors like Erich Kästner or Heinrich Mann. Another time that influenced Berlin a lot and still can be seen in the image of the city was World war II. We were able to see what we had earlier learned about in the Allied Museum- the traces of destruction due to bombings and of reconstruction. But not only destroyed buildings from world war II have been reconstructed. Also, historically and culturally important buildings which have been teared down

due to communist ideals in times of GDR (German democratic republic) are being rebuilt these days. In general, the time of the GDR and the fact that Berlin was separated in four different sectors has shaped the character of Berlin to a great extent.

All in all, this day showed the whole Team World again how different the influences were to which the city of Berlin has been exposed in the past. From Hitler and the ideology of the Nazis, to World War II, the western values of the Allied and the communist state of the GDR. And therefore how historic and special Berlin is.

**Jai Shy and Elisabeth Jetter**



*14 - The Ambassadors in Sneakers visited the Allied Museum to learn more about the impact of the Allied Forces in West and East Germany during the Cold War Era.*



*13 - The original Checkpoint Charlie was relocated and now can be visited at the Allied Museum.*



*16 - Our guide shows and explains how Berlin was divided in four sectors during the Cold War.*



*15 - A Cold-War-Era airplane of the British Royal Air Force can be viewed at the Allied Museum.*



Day 10 – Mon, May 28, 2018

## German Federal Parliament

Today we were honored to get meet and talk to MdB and German Parliamentary State Secretary for Migration, [Annette Widmann-Mauz](#), where she explained some of [largest questions](#) arching over Germany's [migration policy](#). This was an amazing experience as Secretary Widmann-Mauz was able to convey the motives behind Germany's migration policy, and why they allowed so many asylum seekers into the country. Through this meeting us Youth Ambassadors were able to delve into Germany's wide cultural awareness that other EU States seem to lack. This experience really has had an long lasting effect on us, because now we understand the culture, politics, and social stigmas that surround immigration in the EU— with special attention on Germany's policy.

While migration was a large portion of our meeting, we also discussed feminism and equality in the Christian Democratic Union, giving us ambassadors insight on the growing feminist movement.

Overall, today was a memory I will remember for a lifetime, as the topics we explored were parallel to movements we have in the US— immigration, feminism, and equality. Giving me a broader outlook on how Germany's solutions to these issues can be applied back home in my own country.

### Keylem Collier and Mika Wicher



18 - The Ambassadors in Sneakers visit the Reichstag building – which is the location of the German Federal Parliament called Bundestag – on invitation of Annette Widmann-Mauz (CDU), German Parliamentary State Secretary for Migration. We received a guided tour through the building in the morning before heading to the Paul-Löbe Haus (adjunct to the Reichstag building, where committees conduct a majority of their legislative work) for a meeting with Secretary Widmann-Mauz. In the picture behind the Ambassadors you see the plenary, where the members of the Bundestag conduct their business (e.g. elections on bills). On the left you can see the federal eagle (dt. Bundesadler).



17 - Secretary Widmann-Mauz (pictured in front in light blue blazer) explains her work and the current migration policy of Germany and the European Union.

Day 9 – Sun, May 27, 2018

## Settling In / “Bassing Away the AfD”

The first full day in Berlin was a day of readjusting and orienting yourself. The plan for the students was to get some rest and to discover the new area. Initially, a visit to the [Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe](#) was scheduled for the afternoon followed by an accompanying workshop that was dealing with anti-Semitism and religious diversity and tolerance. These plans were disrupted by a German political party, its affiliates, and Berlin citizens. Let me explain:

As in many European countries, populist ideologies are on the rise (again). In Germany, it is the populist and right-wing party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland, engl. Alternative for Germany). The federal executive board of the party [decided to assemble party enthusiasts and members on May 27](#) at the main train station. Since our hostel is in close proximity, students heard loud music and were perplexed by 10 AM in the morning.

While it may sound odd that a political party organizes a demonstration, it is perfectly fine since the right to assembly is statutory in the German constitution (dt. Grundgesetz; cf. [GG Article 8](#)). It is also statutory in the U.S. constitution and included in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. Article 20 of the says:

*1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. 2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.*

The AfD argued that their message, i.e. ideology, not only belongs in the state and federal parliaments, but also on the streets, hence the decision for a demonstration. However, what they, and eventually us, did not expect was a huge countermovement on the same day. Various political groups, e.g. the Antifa, were organizing protests against the AfD's agenda, namely nationalist and anti-immigrant messages. Law enforcement were present all over the city, many from other German states, in riot gear to prepare for any confrontation between both sides. Many Berlin citizens however, used the protests to advocate for unity, equality, diversity, and tolerance for all people, hence the atmosphere of the countermovement resembled a music festival. The hot summer day and being the weekend contributed to the huge amount of counter-protesters: according to multiple news sources over 25,000 people protested against the far-right, outnumbering the AfD-enthusiasts by 5:1.

In the afternoon many students were exploring different parts of Berlin in small groups, eventually ending up one of the routes of two major protests. This was a unique experience and well suited for a summer academy on human rights. Ivan Olvera representing the Hampton Youth Council said: “I never saw a protest live!” Since over a dozen protests were occurring all over the city, public transportation was stopped. As chaperones we also decided to postpone the visit to the Holocaust memorial, which is in close proximity to the Brandenburg Gate and Tiergarten (a large park). We also deemed it too dangerous to visit a site commemorating Jewish people, due to the xenophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic ideology of the far-right groups.

In the video clip I took you can see counter protesters shout “Ganz Berlin hasst die AfD,” which translates to the whole city of Berlin hates the AfD. At the main train station, protesters were awaiting the train (S-Bahn) arriving with AfD-affiliates and members holding German flags. A group

of students and myself left the premises as the protests started to dissolve. We waited for another group who were surrounded by both the Antifa and the AfD to arrive safely and meet us at the main train station. Back in the hostel we decided to hold an impromptu session on how these events are impacting human rights.

Many of the students, Americans and Germans alike, said that they were stunned by the size of the demonstrations and how German law enforcement were keeping chaos and violence to a minimum by heavily controlling and immediately de-escalating risky situations. However, they also noted that tear gas was used against the Antifa.

While we did not plan for this kind of live experience on how human rights are respected and adhered, this day has been a lesson for all on how to be active / be an activist in a different way. It is almost as being active and enforcing human rights is the duty of every citizen on this planet. Yet, not every citizen is granted this opportunity.

For more information on:

- The Berlin demonstrations:

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/05/27/world/europe/ap-eu-germany-populist-protest.html> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44273617>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/berlin-thousands-gather-afd-counterrallies-180527115334438.html>

- Right-wing political groups in Germany:

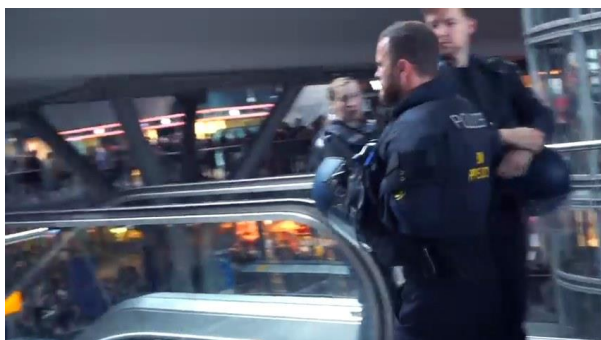
<http://www.dw.com/en/a-guide-to-germanys-far-right-groups/a-39124629>

- Populism in Germany and Europe:

<http://www.dw.com/en/the-rise-of-far-right-populists-in-germany/av-40676821>

<http://www.euronews.com/2017/12/29/rise-of-populism-in-europe-a-real-threat-to-democracy-https://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/15/europe/populism-in-european-elections-visual-guide/index.html>

**Yasmin Nasrudin (Project Coordinator d.a.i. / Leader Team Germany)**



*19 - Counter demonstrators awaiting AfD enthusiasts at the Berlin Hauptbahnhof (Berlin main train station) on Sunday, May 27, 2018.*