

American Youth Take on the Streets of Berlin

Only a couple of days into my summer vacation, I found myself in the Berlin Scönefeld Airport walking towards three strangers, and that is when my Berlin adventures started.

The activities and experiences during my week-long stay in the capital of Germany were plentiful. From sunset to sundown, at least that is how early and late it felt like, my schedule was completely booked. Together with the other FAWCO youths, I discussed global issues, painted the Ronald McDonald house, packed baby bags for pregnant refugee women, marveled at the city's diverse graffiti art, listened to the powerful story of a Holocaust survivor, ate delicious food, walked and then walked some more. This is only a mere glimpse into the bustling week I had, a week which would not have been fulfilled without the people.

Each and every person somehow involved in this year's FAWCO youth program, made the week extraordinary by contributing in their own ways. The participants, the chaperones, the FAWCO organizers, the cooperating organizations, and the few random Berliners, all gave a different and meaningful insight into the program. It is simply phenomenal how many people one can meet and how much knowledge one can obtain from those one meets in the span of only seven days. Even more phenomenal is how the diversity in people comes forth from simply listening to what they choose to share. Take for example the wise Holocaust survivor Margot Friedlaender and the brilliant adventurer Tom (no last name, just plain Tom).

Margot shared with us the horrifying experience of her life as a Jew during world war two. She communicated this story to her audience by reading bits and pieces of her biography in a quiet and proper manner. Tom, on the other hand, spoke to us of traveling, seeking adventures, making memories and not money, and gave us many more small but significant life advices. Tom's way of communicating was lively, energetic, and non-stop. They both told stories of two very different lives and they both told them in very different ways, but even so, they still shared a common theme. With their stories, Margot and Tom encouraged us to make the best of what we have and appreciate it, try our hardest to accomplish our goals, and to truly live in the present so as to create meaningful memories. I am aware that these exact words of

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encouragement were never spoken by either Margot or Tom, but it is what their stories communicated.

My week in Berlin was, in conclusion, a wonderful week filled with amazing opportunities and even more amazing people. I will be honest and say that I will most likely not remember all the activities and specifics because there were so many, but I will remember the joy they gave me and the life lessons they taught me. The FAWCO youth program of 2018 was definitely a success and time well spent for my part!