

FAWCO Youth Trip 2018: Berlin
Natalie Parker

Going into this FAWCO Youth trip to Berlin, I had two main goals: to gain new perspectives and meaningfully serve the community. However, nothing could have prepared me for this trip.

We are so used to turning a blind eye to people that are less fortunate than us. Whenever I go to a new place I rarely take notice to the homeless and refugee centers. However this trip was different. In Berlin I was able to expand my awareness of global issues and also felt like I had power to do something about it. During this trip, our group spent a lot of time talking about world issues. We discussed what issues are prevalent in the places we live and the differences and similarities in our cultures. These discussions also helped me gain new perspective about different cultures around the world. For me, this was my favorite and most meaningful part of the trip. I loved being surrounded by people my age, from all different backgrounds, that were as eager to learn and serve as I was.

One of my main goals for the trip to Berlin was to meaningfully engage in community service, although I didn't quite understand what it meant to meaningfully engage. I now realize "meaningful engaging" is different for everyone. For one person, the way they feel most comfortable helping is behind the scenes so they might have liked sorting clothes at the homeless shelter. However for others, their preferred type of contribution might

For me, the most meaningful community service experience was volunteering at the elderly home. I learned that for me, the best and most enjoyable way for me to participate in community service was to engage with the people I am serving. Physically being with and helping people feels the most rewarding for me. I think this is why I really liked serving at the elderly home. We were not there for that long and still had a language barrier, but I still felt like I connected with some of the people there. For me, getting to know people's personalities is the best part of volunteering.

Overall, this trip was an great experience and exceeded my expectations in many ways. I think I was able to learn a lot about other cultures, not only Berlin culture, but also about where the other FAWCO Youths came from. I loved meeting so many amazing people and given a chance to go on another trip like this, I would do so in a heartbeat.