

CDS SUMMER INTERNSHIP 2008

Türkischer Bund of Berlin-Brandenburg

CDS Summer Internship Report

September 26, 2008

I left for Berlin on May 2 of this year unprepared for the adventures that lay ahead. I had never been away from my family, friends, or home for more than a month at a time and my eight years of German were just enough for me to get by. However, I learned more about myself and my potential career plans than I had originally expected. I spent eight weeks learning, exploring, and growing. I am very thankful for the opportunity and every event, both positive and negative, that I experienced while abroad.

I was placed by CDS at the Türkischer Bund of Berlin-Brandenburg. The specific projects I worked on were MOVE (Motivieren und Vermitteln) and Hoffnung. Both projects are aimed to aid Turkish youth under the age of 25 who are living in Berlin. MOVE is a voluntary program which gives unemployed youths the chance to learn basic skills like math, English, German grammar, and computer training. The goal is to help them to find internships, training opportunities, and jobs. Hoffnung is a non-voluntary program composed of youths sent by JobCenter. They are required to complete the program in order to continue receiving aid from JobCenter. Hoffnung participants take part in similar skill training classes as the MOVE participants however they are also asked to complete two four week internships throughout the course of the program. The overall goal for both programs is to give these youths a chance to enhance their job potential.

During my internship I spent each of the eight weeks focused on a different specialty at the Türkischer Bund. I shadowed social workers, instructors, and the director. I was also able to

work with the secretaries to learn basic office skills and about the inner-workings of a non-profit organization. I was able to learn about the different pieces that make up a non-profit. I spent a lot of my time sitting in the on the lessons and observing. I also was able to use my English to help teach classes, translate documents or power points, and to speak or email with people interested in finding out more information about the programs.

I was able to step outside of my comfort zone and experience a different culture. I worked with people of many different backgrounds and had the chance to learn so much that I had never known before. For example I shared an office with a woman from Turkey, a Palestinian woman, and a man from the former Yugoslavia. We talked about everything from music to politics. Working together day to day opened up a forum to discuss the situation in Berlin, Germany, and the world. Just like Berlin, the TBB office was a multicultural environment, which was one of my favorite things at my internship and in the city.

Living in Berlin gave me the chance to truly experience life outside of suburbia. I have lived in a suburb of Metro Detroit my entire life. After living in Berlin it was truly hard to come back. Berlin has a little bit of everything and one never wants for something to do. During my two months I attempted to visit and explore every major site in Berlin. I talked to my coworkers and friends and made a to-do list of places to see. I visited museums, palaces, parks, landmarks, and shopping meccas. If I was bored it meant I wasn't trying hard enough, and so I was constantly pushing myself to see new places.

The first month I was in Berlin I lived in a student village on the outskirts of the city in the district Zehlendorf. It was near two lakes, Wannsee and Schlachtensee, and was very quiet. I had a single room in a hallway of international students. We shared a communal kitchen and

living space. There were lots of trees and the area as a whole was green. As a result my first month was quiet and relaxed. I experienced a Berlin different from those living in the center of the city. On the weekends I would go with friends to one of the lakes and play soccer or just relax. However, the ride to work was over an hour via bus, S-Bahn, U-Bahn, and a short walk. Needless to say after a while it became a bit of a hassle. As a result I moved to an apartment in Schöneberg which cut my travel time in half and put me closer to the hustle and bustle of Berlin.

I shared my new apartment with a German man, Patric, and an American exchange student, Talia. It was more expensive than the student dorm, but well worth it. The apartment was a modern three bedroom in an older building. It was near grocery stores, restaurants, and parks. Not only was I still near nature but I was able to experience a completely different side of Berlin. I was able to spend more time in central Berlin because of my shortened commute and was also able to enjoy the nightlife and different cultural pockets that make up central Berlin. I think living in both places allowed me to see two different sides of Berlin and I am thankful for both opportunities.

I did form lasting relationships both at work and outside of work. My boss, Dagmar, was always available and helped me get through many obstacles. When I lost my wallet, she lent me money, and when I was new in town, she invited me into her home for brunch with her family. I also really enjoyed talking to the secretary Christian. When there was nothing to do around the office, he was always up for a conversation and was really very interesting to talk to. I was also able to learn so much from the program participants. Their lives are so different than mine. I, entering my fourth year of university with my future laid out, and them, starting from the ground up with many decisions still ahead.

At work I was friendly with my coworkers, however, all of them were older and not necessarily people I would be able to hang out with after work. When I lived in the student village I made friends from around the world but not many Germans. I was still speaking German, but it was with other people who also spoke it as a second language. When I moved to the apartment I was able to meet more German friends through my American roommate who had been living in the city and studying with Germans. Having German friends made me feel less like a tourist and more like a Berliner.

At the end of my eight weeks I felt like I had grown as a person. However, I am still at an impasse as to what exactly I want to do in the future. Going into the internship I thought I wanted to do community organizing, and while I liked my internship and admired all the work my coworkers did, I am still not sure what my future contains. I think from the experience I learned that I am truly interested in international relations and would still like to do community service on a global scale. I enjoyed being a part of something that was making a difference and am sure that is something I want to do for the rest of my life. This experience will only help to further that goal.

Living in Berlin gave me the opportunity to experience living abroad and the process of assimilation into another culture. Thanks to the CDS scholarship I was able to subsidize my trip and enjoy Berlin on another level. I am thankful for every opportunity I received and appreciate all of CDS's help in the process!

Pictures:

Picture 1: Brunch with my boss Dagmar (furthest to the left) and her family.

Picture 2: Some of the women I work with in the office we shared

Picture 3: Döner with my fellow intern Jessica

Picture 4: Going out to watch Germany play in the European Soccer Championships with my roommate Talia



