

For the past eleven months I have worked as volunteer with Action Reconciliation Services for Peace (Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste) in Dachau, Germany. My year has been filled with many challenges and new experiences. I was initially nervous when I received my letter of acceptance from ARSP. Working at a former concentration camp for a year seemed daunting and even potentially depressing. As a German and political science major during college, I had done extensive research on topics related to the Holocaust and genocide studies. Nonetheless, I felt less than prepared to actually work at a Holocaust memorial.



The Dachau Altstadt

The most fulfilling part of my job has been the opportunity it gave me to interact with new people. I led three tours a week to groups of German school students, many of whom have never before visited a memorial site. Although working with teenagers can be challenging, I also found it extremely rewarding. As cliché as it may sound, the youth are our future. They are the generation who will shape the world in the years to come and it is important for them to learn about the mistakes of the generations who came before them. The group that I remember the most came from a technical school near Munich. The students were a mixture of backgrounds and nationalities. Although technical school students have different academic standards than college-bound students, these youth were brimming with questions. After the tour, when groups are usually all too eager to leave the memorial site, the group stayed in the church and discussed issues of racism today. Many of them expressed their disbelief that racist and anti-Semitic attitudes can still exist in a post-Holocaust world. These teenagers, who are too often ignored or looked down upon by society, were speaking more thoughtfully about racism today than any other group I'd had. It reminded me of how important our work here is, and why it is still so necessary in today's world.



In addition to giving tours with the Church of Reconciliation, I also worked with the Remembrance Book Project and the Förderverein for the International Youth Meeting and Memorial Site Work. Most of the work with the Remembrance Book revolved around the completion and marketing of the exhibition "Names Instead of Numbers." The exhibition featured selected biographies from the Remembrance Book. Working with the project director Sabine Gerhardus, the other ARSP volunteer and I helped to compose texts for the exhibition banners and the companion brochure, find photos at the memorial site archive, edit the texts during the design and layout process, and even later market the exhibition to potential partners in Germany, Austria and Great Britain. The exhibition was a huge success and it was a wonderful opportunity to share the fates of these former Dachau prisoners with a much larger audience. The exhibition is currently on tour in six countries and has been translated into five languages.

The work with the Förderverein primarily involved working with Dachau survivors and preparing for the International Youth Meeting, which is held annually in Dachau. I had the opportunity to come into contact with many former prisoners and was always impressed and inspired by their willingness to return to Dachau in order to educate school groups and other visitors on what they experienced here. I was blessed to have the opportunity to meet them and learn from them and I hope that my generation does not fail in its responsibility to continue their work and repeat their



stories to future generations. Many of these survivors also volunteer to participate in workshops and give survivor talks during the International Youth Meeting. I prepared a workshop on remembrance culture and helped with various other preparations. Unfortunately, I was unable to be present for the entire Youth Meeting, but my few days there were nonetheless an amazing experience, giving me the opportunity to come into contact with youth and young adults from all over the world.



I want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who supported and helped me this year: Klaus Schultz, Ulrike Mayr, Björn Mensing, Michael Buchmann, Sabine Gerhardus, Nicole Schneider, Thomas Heldt and all the many volunteers at the Church of Reconciliation and the members of Peace Church in Munich. You have all helped me to feel welcome and at home during my year of service. Ich wünsche Euch alles Gute und Gottes Segnen in der Zukunft. Hoffentlich sehen wir uns wieder!

Ganz liebe Grüße!

Sarah Heim

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