Berlin Reflection

I have been fortunate enough to be able to travel to 8 other countries prior to this trip. When I was a freshman in college, I lost my best friend since 5th grade. It was really hard to adjust to college to begin with, but this made it seem unbearable. I had gone to Europe before in high school, so I talked to my parents and decided to study abroad the fall semester of my sophomore year of college. I thought that the time away from IU would help me figure out how I felt about the university, and if I still didn’t like it by the end of my sophomore year, I would transfer to Fordham in New York. Luckily, after living in London and traveling all around the world, I was more thankful to go to a school like Indiana University.

Having all of this traveling experience, you would assume that I would have no problem with traveling to Berlin. Surprisingly, this trip was almost as hard as it was when I moved to London. I am diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Social Anxiety, so I often think irrational thoughts about things that will never happen. This was not any different on my flight to Berlin. I was worried about not making friends on the trip, and I was also worried about being afraid of traveling completely by myself. I learned that I absolutely hate traveling alone. Spending a whole day by myself in Berlin felt like constant anxiety for me. I have always wanted to try solo traveling, and I’m glad that this was the trip that I found out that it is not for me.

While on this trip, I also realized that sometimes it’s best to put yourself in these uncomfortable positions to meet others. I was afraid that either I wouldn’t like anyone of this trip, or that they wouldn’t like me. To my surprise, we all got along really well. Our group was quite diverse in many different ways, but we all also blended well. We all came from different
backgrounds, and have had different experiences in our lives, and I loved hearing about how their experience in Berlin was going based off of those differences. For me, this trip was a way to feel like I was back in London again. London was a place that helped me heal and meet new people. Berlin allowed me to have that feeling again, while still learning about its rich history.

I think the most impactful part of this trip was Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. It brought back similar feelings that I had felt when I went to Auschwitz and Birkenau in Poland. It is mind boggling to me that millions of people were murdered because of who they were. It breaks my heart that so many people had to die before Hitler was stopped, but I am happy that the lives that were lost will never be forgotten. The fact that there are people in this world that still do not believe that the holocaust happened infuriates me. If they would just step foot into a concentration camp, then they would believe.

I am so grateful that I was accepted into this program and was able to travel to Berlin to learn more about its history and how it runs. I am even more grateful for the people that I had met because of this trip, and the knowledge I have learned. It was nice to talk to like-minded individual about topics that aren’t usually discussed in a classroom setting. It was nice to have a professor who was interested in what our experience was, and the impact that he has left with me. Dr. Audretsch and I had a discussion at the Italian restaurant after the concentration camp about the importance of traveling while you are young. I think it is essential for young people to travel and see the world while they can. I have learned so much about the world and I feel that I have become wiser because of it. When you travel to new places, you learn about their culture and their way of life. You also learn about their history and their triumphs and failures as a country. Could you imagine if a majority of young people were able to experience this? How
would the United States be if more people were able to see and understand other cultures and people from around the world? I could only imagine that levels of acceptance we as a nation would have for others if we could see what they have gone through with our own eyes.

This course has allowed me to think more about ways the future generations of The United States could be if more people saw the rest of the world. There is so much out there to see, and even leaving your hometown, state, or country can broaden your horizon on what is possible in this world. By leaving, you get to see how others think or do, and that can spark innovation to create and do better. Going to a new country is more than just pictures to post on your social media; it creates memories with new people and new knowledge for greater strides towards a better future.