

As a Jewish-American woman, I felt both excited and anxious to be in Berlin, Germany. For much of my life my relatives adamantly dissuaded me to stay away from Germany. That the country was ever stained with the blood of my ancestors. As I flew to Berlin, I was anxious about my identity. I was frightened by what I might experience in such a diluted space. I feared that in Berlin I might be overcome with grief for fear. Yet, a part of me was fascinated by Germany's, especially Berlin's, response to the violence their country has subjected and been subjected to. I was curious about how Berlin has maintained its resiliency and continues attempting to take responsibility for its past.

I wanted to inquire about how Berlin addresses its long and violent history, through art, monuments, memorials, narratives, architecture, etc. I was asking questions such as: how does a country with such a history hold themselves accountable and acknowledge its damages? How is it that after being built, destroyed, rebuilt, destroyed, and rebuilt, that Berlin still stands strong today? Does Germany and the U.S. respond to their atrocities in similar matters? Who matters in Berlin? Who/what might define that inclusion?

Berlin gave me the opportunity to explore each of these questions of self, nation-building, boundary creation, and memorialization. I found that Berlin felt like a second home to me; A space in which I felt safe and at ease. The topics I discussed, the spaces I occupied, and the memorials I encountered led to a variety of emotions ranging from: fear, grief, loss, comfort, excitement, safety, etc. However, it is a complicated city within a complicated country, one that is still trying to make amends for its past. I found that the Jewish memorials and Jewish spaces, such as the Judisches Museum, were informative, powerful, and emotion laden for me. While some of Germany's other atrocities were left unattended to, such as the ignoring of their colonial history in Africa, or the sufferings of the Sinti and Roma during the Holocaust. These are conversations that Berlin and Germany are just beginning to talk about and are necessary for healing the wounds embedded within spaces.

Berlin is a space in which one is invited to feel a multitude of emotions. Though my inquiries offered me more questions than answers, I felt like I had come back more knowledgeable and curious about the world around me.