

If I had an ounce of musical talent, I would re-write the lyrics to “I left my heart in San Francisco” to make it “I left my heart with Burns in Berlin.” The connections I made throughout this program, and the experience of living within a different culture will stick with me forever.

I found the Washington D.C. portion of the program important for establishing a relationship with the other fellows, as well as getting up to speed on significant political developments in Germany. Peter Sparding of the German Marshall Fund was particularly useful to give a lay of the political land to those of us who are not as well-versed in German government. One of the most surprising, and helpful, sections for me was when we had time to share journalistic advice between the German and U.S./Canadian fellows. German journalists regularly send and discuss direct quotes with sources -- something I have never done and am really glad I had heads-up on. Nearly all of the sources I spoke with in Germany, including one who was a freelance journalist himself, asked me to run their quotes by them before publication.

The week of language class once we arrived in Berlin was enriching, though definitely hectic. We were all a bit jet-lagged. With different teachers, this could have been a deal-breaker but Marie Louise and Sven were awesome. It helped me get a sense of the rhythm of the language and learn some common phrases. The best part was instructions on culture, and the *ausflug* we took to learn more about the history and people of Berlin.

I was a bit overwhelmed by the process of choosing a paper to work at in Germany, especially because experiences can vary so widely depending on where you're placed. Luckily, former Burns fellow Maris Hubschmid was really helpful in outlining major features of several papers. I ended up at in the business section of *Der Tagesspiegel* (where Maris also works), a large daily in Berlin. I feel incredibly lucky with my placement. The reporters at *Tagesspiegel*, like at many newspapers, are really busy people, but everyone on my team did not hesitate to help me out every day. My colleagues helped me to refine story ideas, find sources and translate information in reports. They eat lunch together nearly every day, and they would graciously spend the entire time talking in English so I could understand what was going on.

My German skills are low and that made morning planning meetings at *Tagesspiegel* a bit of a bewildering experience. I've never been in a newsroom where I didn't know what was going on! Luckily, the editors and reporters were happy to clue me in and even hold large parts of the meetings in English when it pertained to something I worked on or was involved with. The newsroom itself is gorgeous and full of people who were gracious and friendly and happy to talk to me about my various half-baked story ideas.

I went into the program with a few ideas for stories I wanted to work on. I had done some preliminary research, but had not yet contacted sources or started building out the stories. As I probably should have expected, all of those ideas fell through. I think doing some early research is helpful, but reporting on a city that you're not actually in is incredibly difficult. Once I got to Berlin and started talking to people, I realized that my ideas were not on point. But the great thing about being there was that stories are all around. I started out in my comfort zone -- tech

reporting -- and got a couple articles published in Tagesspiegel in the first couple weeks, which my colleagues translated for me. The editors did not assign me stories, but they were really encouraging of pretty much everything I wanted to work on. At first this was scary; I'm not used to not knowing what is going on or having a specific beat. But it became really fun. I got to work on things I wouldn't normally be able to at home.

I started out with a feature story about Airbnb and new tours it was launching. This was a fun story, but the best part was the contacts I made while reporting it. One person helped connect me to multiple startups around town. Another turned me onto a story idea I pursued later. I had made the decision before I left home to focus mainly on things other than the election. That was partly because of 2016 fatigue, but also because I knew that it would be getting plenty of coverage and I wanted to explore something totally different. I ended up spending a big chunk of my time working on a story about family leave policies and how they impact women in the workplace. Washington state recently passed a paid family leave law, and I decided to work on a story for my home paper, The Seattle Times, about the potential outcomes of the law. It was fascinating to learn about the changes in Germany's policies in the last ten years and what the impact has been at workplaces (mostly positive).

And now, for Berlin. This city is intoxicating. Starting just with the public transportation that actually works and is a breeze to use (something that is insane to me coming from Seattle), and onto beautiful green spaces and friendly people. I lived in Prenzlauer Berg, a lovely, somewhat hipster neighborhood, which was full of cafes and parks. Berlin is really international and its easy to find any type of food you're craving or event you're in the mood for. Berlin is a good mix of relaxed, bike-riding people and big city that always feels lively. I took short trips to Potsdam, Prien am Chiemsee in Bavaria, but I mostly could not tear myself away from Berlin.

Overall, Burns did a couple big things for me. I gained a significant amount of confidence as a reporter, and I learned what it is like to be the newcomer in a different culture and to soak in everything that I could. Thank you to everyone who had a part in building this experience, especially the wonderful other fellows who pushed me to try new things and always made me feel at home.

The work:

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/nicht-in-seattle-amazon-sucht-standort-fuer-ein-zweites-hauptquartier/20297828.html>

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/ferienwohnungen-in-berlin-bezirksamt-pankow-verliert-rechtss-treit-gegen-airbnb/20105766.html>

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/amazon-wie-der-internetkonzern-uns-ins-reale-leben-folgt/20337986.html>

Family leave story publishing later this month