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November, 2017

Dear Melissa Yaverbaum and the Council of American Jewish Museums,

I recently participated in the fellowship trip to Poland, which was a transformative journey, and I want to express my deep gratitude for the opportunity.

Judaism has always been central to who I am as a human being - the traditions, culture and history of my Jewish ancestry are fundamental aspects of my identity. The work I do as a Jewish museum professional is rooted in my passion for engaging, enriching and educating the public about the history and continuum of the Jewish experience. Through this trip I have gained knowledge, insight and an increased, intensified awareness of the essential role and on-going work of Jewish institutions and colleagues across the country, and the world.

Throughout the trip we visited and toured a diverse range of historical, religious, cultural, and architectural venues and sites. Being physically present at these museums and cultural centers, cemeteries and memorials, monuments and restoration sites, was immensely impactful. Despite what one has been taught - what you have researched, read, and heard through the testimony of Holocaust Survivors, the visceral power of witnessing the incomprehensible loss first-hand is immeasurable.

Following a full day at Auschwitz/ Birkenau, spending the late afternoon and evening at the Auschwitz Cultural Center in the town of Oświęcim with Director Tomasz Kuncewicz was just what was needed. Seeing the facility, hearing about the important education, programs and services they are providing, their national connections and partnership with the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and seeing a group of young Israeli teens/ men dancing in the restored synagogue, was an inspiring sight – instilling hope for Jewish renewal.

Invaluable on many levels was meeting and talking with historians, scholars, archivists, curators, artists, educators and guides on diverse and compelling subjects ranging from Jewish history in Poland, Polish history, the histories of Warsaw and Krakow and many smaller outlying towns, to the Holocaust, impact of loss of Jewish life/ culture/ presence, the preservation of memory

# Jewishmuseum



A PROGRAM OF **MILWAUKEE**  
JEWISH FEDERATION

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and treatment of memorial sites, to restoration, art, presentation and comprehension of information, to genealogy, identity and Jewish renewal.

The fellowship group was a synergistic and effective mix of backgrounds, knowledge and experiences; Deborah Cardin did a wonderful job facilitating resonant and helpful conversations, and the Taube Jewish Heritage guides were incredible. In my role as Curator at Jewish Museum Milwaukee I have already begun to integrate and utilize the information and experiences acquired on this trip as well as the meaningful relationships and connections established.

I am so appreciative of the fact that future exhibits, programs and community engagement will be enriched by and reflect the culmination of activities experienced on this trip and can't thank the Council of American Jewish Museums enough for the opportunity to participate in this life changing fellowship.

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