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To the supporters of the Council of American Jewish Museums,

I used to think of Poland as a graveyard with regard to Jewish history- a desolate place void of Jewish life and culture; the mass murder of the Holocaust coupled with rampant antisemitism. My recent trip to Poland exposed me to how narrow minded and mistaken I actually had been. After the fellowship trip with CAJM, I left Poland fully understanding, for the first time, that Poland would not be what it is today without the history of the Jews, and in turn, Judaism would not be what it is today without the history of Poland.

This deduction impacted me both personally and professionally, shaping how I recognize myself as a descendent of a Polish Holocaust Survivor and furthermore how I recognize my work as the Director of Education at a Holocaust Museum. Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust is fortunate to have a direct loan from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, and as a primary source institution we create numerous customized tours around these artifacts. Moreover, several Holocaust Survivors in our community are Auschwitz Survivors, so their narrative and experiences are at the heart of our galleries and education programs. Standing in front of Block 10 in Auschwitz I, where several hundred female prisoners were used for sterilization experiments, knowing Betty Cohen- a 96 year old Survivor who speaks against hate and that she was experimented on here is an experience that I cannot put into words. I have an even greater appreciation for what we do as a Museum and community and understand that it is of upmost of importance to continue teaching about the Holocaust and how its lessons can inform and inspire us to create a more dignified world.

Poland represents the past, present, and future. I was particularly moved in the Warsaw Ghetto- the cemetery captures the poignant history of Polish Jews- headstones depict the delicate dialogue between Orthodox and secular Jews during the 19th century, speaking to the changes in Orthodox practices allowing women and men to be buried together over time and the divide within the cemetery on who would be buried where based on religious practices. Tombstones in Polish, Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew tell us about the people they commemorate -- their beliefs, their identities. They depict all professions, classes, backgrounds, religiosity, and the rich tapestry of Jewish culture and life. The juxtaposition of broken, desecrated graves with restored, clean and brightened ones, one bearing the crest of the Polish soccer team, is both jarring and hopeful. The community still exists, generations of Jews are still living and dying in Warsaw,

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lying beneath stones that tell of the modern world, adding another layer to our Polish Jewish history.

I am so grateful for this tremendous opportunity- it has been incredibly beneficial to me, the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, and the tens of thousands of students who engage in the programs I design and lead. I look forward to continuing to educate and give back to my community and offering as much as I have gained to the CAJM one. Thank you so much for supporting and providing this unique and enriching program.

Thank you,



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