

# CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM

November 13, 2017

Dear Melissa;

Thank you for you for the opportunity to participate in the CAJM Poland Fellowship this past October. Through this trip I experienced a deeper understanding of the rich history of Jews and Jewish heritage in Poland and the complexities that this history brings to contemporary Poland and our views of the country and its people.

The broad range of this trip's itinerary offered multiple avenues into exploring the people and places of Poland. I appreciated the walking tours through the city streets, viewing both the contemporary public art and the historic commemorative sites. But it was the meeting of colleagues at institutes such as the Polin Museum, the Galicia Jewish Museum, and the Auschwitz Jewish Center that really changed my view and understanding of Poland. I truly thought of Poland in black and white before this trip – my only experience coming from history books or the photographs of Roman Vishniac. It was transformative to experience the color of Poland – the rich history of Jewish culture, the revival of Jewish life, and the amazing and thoughtful people who are dedicated to being the caretakers of that heritage and carry it into contemporary life. This new connection to the institutions and colleagues in Poland will, I believe, have a profound impact on my work and role at my own museum.

I came away from this trip with a new sense of the importance in creating experiences and conversations about Poland, the Holocaust, Jewish heritage and the politics of memory. I was inspired by some current work being done to move the narrative toward the richness of Jewish life and history and the role it plays in all its citizens' lives. Even more so after some experiences that highlighted some of the biases and politically motivated methods still in use in some places.

One of the most important aspects of this trip for me was traveling with a cohort of Jewish Museum professional. I value the time spent together committed to exploring, learning, and discussing the various experiences, narratives, and methods at play in presenting the history of the Jews in Poland. I was able to sharpen my critical thinking, refine my ideas and language around this complex story, and develop skills that will be useful in my role working with visitors to The Contemporary Jewish Museum.

Thank you again for this wonderful and transforming opportunity.

Best,

Julie Grigoryan  
Family Programs Manager