



**Lauren Moore**

It is difficult to describe the impact the Global Citizenship Program had on my life in a few short paragraphs, as it was one of the best, most influential experiences I have ever known. My GCP experience continues to motivate me and remind me of my responsibility as a global citizen: a responsibility to care about the world and to do my part promoting positive change and humanism.

While it can be easy to focus on familiar, local surroundings, this program pushes individuals to relate to others as a citizen of the world rather than just as a citizen of one country or community. Such an enhanced worldview fuels appreciation for the entire human family and a responsibility to care for that family. After experiencing such a groundbreaking shift in perspective, it's hard to ever see the world in the same way. As such, this program instills a sense of responsibility, solidarity and conviction in its participants. Rather than dismissing an injustice in some distant corner of this planet, a global citizen cares because a fellow human is suffering.

During my two weeks in Salzburg I was surrounded by brilliant young minds and had the opportunity to learn from a superhero faculty of eyewitnesses to critical times in history. Hearing their stories not only brought history to life with unforgettable humanism, but it also imparted a strong warning to prevent history from repeating itself. This warning came with the understanding that every person plays a role in the unfolding of history: every person can make a difference. Visiting Dachau and learning from the speakers at the GCP was a humbling experience that continues to affect the way that I think and the choices that I make. The program encourages a lifelong journey to have respect for, and learn about, the broader human family. As a current second year medical student, this journey will undeniably push me to become a better doctor to my patients and also to have sensitivity to global health disparities.

As I write this I am participating in a medical externship in Bangkok, Thailand to explore how medicine is different in this part of the world. My decision to participate in this program was largely inspired by the GCP. I am only in the beginning stages of my medical education, but will continue to use the inspiration and tools the GCP gave me to guide my career and professional choices. After finishing my education and becoming an established doctor, I will not forget the lessons I learned nor the responsibility that I have.

In addition to affecting my choices, the GCP demonstrated firsthand how powerful a group of motivated individuals can be. My experience gave me a sense of solidarity with the group that continues to provide me with ongoing motivation and support regardless of my surroundings and circumstances. The bond that was forged within the group in those two weeks is lasting and powerful. I left the program feeling that I had entered into a mutual pact to hold myself to a higher standard and to have the courage to advocate for the world and seek opportunities to make a positive impact on it. At the end of my two weeks, my group created a "global citizenship passport" where each stamp represented a quality of a global citizen, which we all now strive to be. My stamp was compassion and it hangs on my wall as a reminder of my time at the GCP and the lessons I learned there. At the end of our group presentation, we played John Lennon's song Imagine. Before the song's end, the whole room had locked arms and was swaying meaningfully together to the music, channeling the song's message. The interconnectedness, solidarity and mutual understanding

that coursed through the group was a powerful demonstration of the potential for a diverse group of people to come together toward a common goal. To everyone who experienced that moment, it felt poignant and symbolic for the potential of the world.

One of the most powerful experiences I had at the GCP was listening to Hedy Rose's story about growing up in Amsterdam and surviving the atrocities of WWII, hiding from the Nazis to avoid being sent to a concentration camp. After hearing her story, I asked her what she thought of the current irrational and pernicious fear of Islam and Middle Eastern people in the world today, particularly in America. The profound concern she expressed in response was deeply moving.

Hedy's concern could not be more relevant to the UK's departure from the EU, the refugee crisis, and the current US presidential election. The fact that discussion over banning Muslims from entering the US is even a part of serious political discourse demonstrates the profound issues we are having with being citizens of the world. Rampant Islamophobia is a testament to the need for more widespread programs like the GCP that promote critical unity within the human family and appreciation for the differences that exist among us, dispelling the growing xenophobia in our world today. To be a global citizen is to be an active member of an accepting, inclusive world and today's world deeply needs more global citizens.

The value of learning and personal growth that the GCP produces is immeasurable. It is an outstanding, life-changing experience that I will always treasure and that will continue to push me, personally and professionally, to do more as a global citizen and remember what I have learned.

*Lauren participated in the program in 2014 as a student of Eastern Kentucky University. She is currently a student at the University of Louisville School of Medicine*