

## WIR BLEIBEN HIER!

On May 2, 2008 I watched kids sing and dance their hearts out for an audience in a historic building near the old Courthouse in Berlin's center. Musician Waldemar Olesch works with these kids, helping them to compose and perform their own music. They are from immigrant families and are struggling to complete their high school equivalent degrees. Their music and movement tells their stories -- and their performance is amazing. One of these songs, "Wir Bleiben Hier" (We are Staying Here!), proclaims Berlin as their home and themselves as Berliners. These kids and their talents give hope to the problems of ethnic integration in Germany.

I was fortunate to receive a Fulbright Senior Specialist Award to work with faculty and students of the Kulturarbeit Programm (Cultural Management Program) March 25-May 5, 2008, at the Potsdam Fachhochschule. Potsdam is about 30 minutes by train southwest of Berlin. My specialty is community cultural development – the intersection of community and cultural development and management – and I teach this within the University of Oregon's Arts Administration Master's Program.

In Potsdam I lectured, participated in seminars and continuing education trainings, and advised students and faculty. I especially enjoyed working with faculty of the Regional Governance Research Group; they advise public and private non-profit organizations around issues of local cultural development and management, much as I do in the United States. Growing numbers of non-profit organizations and stressed public agencies in Germany are seeking mutually beneficial ways of working together.

During my residency I traveled to Frankfurt (Oder)...the "other" Frankfurt, on the German/Polish border...to meet with artist Michael Kurzwelly. The two cities were one before 1945, and Kurzwelly's mission is to bring people in the German (Frankfurt) and Polish (Slubice) sides of this city in closer understanding. Kurzwelly uses his imagination and wit to make people re-think barriers. He has created a new virtual city (made up of both sides of the current city) called Slubfurt, has proclaimed the two mayors now to be neighborhood mayors, and has created parts of new city walls on both sides of the City. The walls are about 18" high and are perfect for sitting, or for children to play on.

At the end of my time in Germany I attended an international conference at the University of Kassel on new forms of gardening in urban development. I am fascinated with the growing network of multicultural gardens in Germany. These gardens, based on the American notion of "community gardening", bring people from different ethnic groups together to garden in a common space. As a Kurdish gardener from Iran said as she was sharing her multicultural garden with us – "Our garden is about learning. This is the place where migrant women can bring their unique knowledge, support one another, and practice the language needed to integrate with German society. And people from the larger community see that we do not fit the stereotypes associated with migrants."

Thank you Fulbright for this rich experience!