

## **Amelia Amber Klein**

### **Remembrance and Reconciliation: Dialogue between third generation Jews and Germans**

“Reconciliation demands a willingness to become vulnerable and honest in the presence of another”

- Bjorn Krondorfer

In August 2002, I was a participant in the International Summer Program of the Holocaust - a one month dialogue on the legacy of the Holocaust. The group comprised of twenty students all in our 20's. I was the first ever Australian, Jewish participant. There were nine Germans, nine Americans (six of whom were Jewish), and one Czech student. The program took place in Washington DC, USA, Berlin, Germany and Krakow, Poland. Facilitated by Professor Bjorn Krondorfer, (Religious studies Professor at St Mary's College, Maryland, USA), the program, based on interactive and interpersonal learning in an international environment, offered a completely alternative approach to understanding the Holocaust.

Throughout this month of direct encounters and dialogues we explored our national and religious identities. Many questions occupied my thoughts: What aspects of the Holocaust did the German students struggle with? How did our perceptions vary when hearing Holocaust survivors personally retell their testimonies? What did it mean to the German participants to be post-Holocaust third generation Germans and me a third generation Jew? How do twenty people plan a commemoration in Auschwitz together? How do we learn to acknowledge and respect each others' different pasts – histories, cultures and family backgrounds?

This program has had a profound impact on the way I understand Holocaust history, memory, legacy and commemoration. My experiences on the program were enlightening as I realised that a space could be created where Germans and Jews my age could meet and discuss significant questions which impact our life today. In this paper I will discuss issues and dilemmas surrounding the meeting of third generation Jews and Germans. Through my personal experiences, insight into the process of reconciliation between young Jews and Germans will be illuminated.