

Helene Jahn
Weill Cornell Medical College
New York City
11th of December 2017 until the 10th of August 2018

My „American Dream“

December – Just before Christmas I arrived in New York City – my new home for the next 8 months. My first impression – a cold, loud, busy, expensive and unbelievable gigantic city with some kind of charm which I still had to define. My first day at work was – like almost all first days – fascinating and exciting, with the bonus that I lost my orientation a couple of times.

In the following weeks, I managed to build up my project in the lab, to get to know my colleagues, the humor of my professor – and the most important – I managed to find my directions. Not just in respect to my work but also in my free time. I got to know the city – though, I never stopped observing new aspects – I started volunteering in an animal shelter – I joined a choir and took singing lessons – traveled to New Jersey, Boston, Maine, Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland – and most importantly I made good friends. Reflecting my stay now being back in Europe, I had an incredibly awesome stay. My work went very well, I have learned a lot and got very nice results. But also I developed personally, besides learning to speak English on a native level, I got infected by the American charm and learned to be open and friendly to every stranger (well, I luckily didn't start to call them darling or honey as some Americans do). I got to know a lot of different cultures from meeting international and American people - in total I just had a lot of fun. However, I also saw the poorness and sadness of New York City. I learned to be grateful to be born in a country with such a good insurance system which prevents me of the fear of ever becoming homeless. I experienced that for a lot of people only the facade mattered – your skin color, your outfit, your money. But I also met people which were encouraged to change this, I went to places where everyone was welcome – I felt that in New York City everything is possible, you can be whoever you want to be and would still find a place you fit in just perfectly.

August – I left New York with the feeling of leaving home behind – I had become a New Yorker – always in a rush, extroverted, addicted to chocolate chip cookies, with the feeling that everything is possible if wanted enough. New York City for me: home, warmth, friendship, variability, diversity, expensive, international, a place of unlimited possibilities.

I don't want to miss anything I experienced and nothing of this would have been possible without the support of the Noora Baart foundation. I am so grateful that they enabled this opportunity. I hope that in the future many others get this chance too so that others can make these awesome experiences just as I did and get the chance to develop. Thank you for this great experience.