

2015 STUDY TOUR TO THE USA RELIGION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY



15th September – 2nd October 2015

ATLANTA (GEORGIA), BIRMINGHAM (ALABAMA), NASHVILLE (TENNESSEE)
MONTGOMERY (INDIANA), CHICAGO (ILLINOIS)

The fourth student study tour organized jointly by

INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN STUDIES AND POLISH DIASPORA,
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKOW, POLAND
THE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG, GERMANY

TOUR LEADER: PROF. HARTMUT KEIL, UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG
JU COORDINATOR: DR. AGNIESZKA STASIEWICZ-BIEŃKOWSKA

“Religion in American Society” 2015, the study tour to the heartland of the United States, focused on the areas and cities mirroring central beliefs and values in American society. Fourteen Participants set out to discover various religious practices in the USA, to meet representatives of major denominations and academics knowledgeable of the role of religion, as well as to attend different religious services and ceremonies, while covering the distance of over 700 miles from the Bible Belt in the South up to Chicago, Illinois.

Read more about their inspiring, eye-opening experiences!

THE STUDY TOUR DOCUMENTARY: IN PREPARATION
WATCH THE MOVIE FROM THE PREVIOUS TOUR [HERE](#).



“The participation in this study tour was one of the most important experiences in my life. I had hoped to broaden my horizons and expand my competences within the field of American Studies. The tour met my expectations one-hundred percent.” (Joanna)

“My participation in this year’s study tour will have a huge impact on my future academic, professional and personal endeavors. It strongly influenced my perception and understanding of the role of religion in the American society. We have had an exceptional opportunity to gain a complex and deep knowledge about religious matters – we discussed them with scholars and officials, visited places of historical significance, and had a hands-on experience of participating in different religious services.” (Patrycja)

“We traveled to Montgomery, Indiana, to visit an Amish community. It was one of the most amazing moments of the tour. An Amish family who agreed to talk to us appeared reserved at first but as the meeting progressed, they seemed to lose their doubts about us. When we expressed interest in their music, they spontaneously started to sing. Still, the best was yet to come. A few hours later fourteen Amish people showed up at our hotel to sing and play for us. It was such a beautiful moment. This experience was special to me as it was yet another proof of how we can all relate to one another embracing our differences.” (Dominika)



Amish country (fot. Dominika Słowik)



Artist studio (fot. Anna Styrzczała)

“In Nashville, Tennessee, we visited the Downtown Presbyterian Church which was both a temple and a place for artists who rented one of the floors in the building. It was an impressive example of a place of dialogue among people of different beliefs and backgrounds. The artists-in-residence have complete freedom of expression, the church neither influences nor censors their work.” (Anna)

“We visited The Civil Rights Institute, where we met with prof. Horace Huntley, born and raised in Birmingham. Prof. Huntley remembers well the years of segregation which affected every aspect of life in the South. I will never forget the story of his visit to Canada where he was shocked by a white woman taking a seat next to him on a bus and starting to small talk. At that time such an encounter was unthinkable in his home area. This trip proved to be a formative experience to him. He came back to Alabama and fought against segregation.” (Joanna) “His story was so far away from the official discourse. It was very personal. Prof. Huntley talked about his participation in the movement and how uncertain the future of the protesters was. His story was very powerful; it showed us real people behind the history textbooks.” (Anna)

“We drove straight to Martin Luther King Memorial District - National Historic Site. The house where Martin Luther King was born still stands. Visiting any museum or memorial is always a good lesson, but walking through the same door or the same stairs as the hero of the



Martin Luther King (fot. Joanna Śnieg)

Civil Rights Movement was an unforgettable moment.” (Joanna)

“We had a chance to visit several different religious ceremonies, starting with



16th Street Baptist Church (fot. Anna Styrzula)

famous 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.” (Dominika) “The atmosphere of the church was very welcoming. We, as a group, were greeted by the reverend. Soon we felt like a part of the community.” (Anna) “When the service began we were all taken aback by the wonderful gospel (MUSIC?) and the pastor’s vigorous sermon; it was funny, energetic, passionate and, what is most

important, carried a sense of universalism that could be related to by people of different religious backgrounds.” (Dominika)

“Now I know that in America you do not ask the question ‘Do you go to the church?’. Rather, you should ask: ‘What church are you a member of?’” (Patrycja)

WANT TO LEARN MORE? FOLLOW THE STUDY TOUR STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE BLOG WRITTEN DAILY BY THE PARTICIPANTS:

[HTTPS://STUDYTOUR2015.WORDPRESS.COM/](https://studytour2015.wordpress.com/)



JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANTS:

JOANNA ŚNIEG, DOMINIKA SŁOWIK, ANNA STYRCZULA, PATRYCJA LECHWAR

THE INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN STUDIES AND POLISH DIASPORA AND THE TOUR PARTICIPANTS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AWARD), AMERICAN EMBASSY IN WARSAW, AND THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE GENERAL IN KRAKOW. WE ARE ALSO THANKFUL FOR THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE BRATNIAK STUDENTS' AND GRADUATES' OF JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION.

