

Berlin Seminar 2019:

Annual Meeting of the German-American Fulbright Commission March 16-20, 2019 in Berlin

Theme of Courage

Courage – *Mut*, in German – is the main theme of this year's Berlin Seminar. Defined as "bravery, strength or fearlessness," courage contains two essential components: on the one hand, an inner or outer challenge that must be tackled (with the help of courage); on the other hand, an active, engaging element in which courage also manifests itself for the environment.

The cultural or community dimension of courage involves standing up for a conviction (someone in whom or something in which one believes) – being fully aware of the personal costs or even risks involved: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." (former South African President Nelson Mandela).

An individual's inner attitude, a "personal compass" (writer Mely Kiyak), that also withstands extreme experiences, seems indispensable for courage.

In the context of the Fulbright program, the personal dimension of courage is expressed in, among other things, the scholarship holders' will to leave their comfort zone at home, to personally experience a foreign country with its different language, and to engage with different attitudes, perspectives, and ideas.

Fulbright's advocacy for tolerance and intercultural understanding is accordingly not self-evident, but the result of a constant struggle for successful exchange. Thus: "Diversity needs encounter. [...] Therefore let us consciously seek the encounter of the other [...]" (former Federal President Joachim Gauck). Against this background, diversity and inclusion are also important aspects of the Berlin Seminar Program.

2019 will mark various anniversaries of courageous advocacy for democracy and against totalitarianism: the signing of the first German democratic constitution in 1919, the Berlin Airlift and enactment of the Basic Law in 1949, as well as the peaceful revolution in 1989, which – embedded in the European-transatlantic community – contributed significantly to overcoming the systemic conflict of East-West German division.

Indeed the 2019 Berlin Seminar offers a variety of approaches to the topic of courage: standing up for inclusion and equal rights; historical perspectives on courageous action and its effects on the European peace project; and the significance of courage in the present. Participants can also take advantage of seminar workshops to hone their reflection and action skills, which they can use personally and by mobilizing others for the benefit of all.