

When I first applied for the March of the Living, I don't think I fully understood what I was signing up for. I knew that I wanted to go to Poland and see the places that I've been hearing about my whole life. But, I was wrong in the way I perceived the March of the Living, because in my mind, it was really a march for the dead.

I thought I'd come back from the March broken, and devastated, and unable to cope with the things I saw. I thought I'd be bitter. And throughout the trip, I did feel those things. I felt pain outside of the Warsaw ghetto, and in Auschwitz I and Birkenau, in Majdanek, in Treblinka, in gas chambers, and crematoriums. I felt pain at mass grave burial sites in forests and cemeteries. I felt pain visiting places of old Jewish life in shtetl and markets, places that I could envision myself.

But I felt the most pain when I realized the lives that were taken away. And my heart broke in so many of these places. But *my* heart, along with others. When one person in our group felt pain, we all felt pain. And I recall how frustrated I would get when I cried, because I wanted to be strong for my friends. We carried each other through that trip. We carried each other through Poland. And our chaperones carried us through Poland. And our survivors carried us through Poland. And when it felt like the world had fallen beneath us, or we could no longer go on, it was their voices that carried our weight. It was their hope, and their tolerance, and their love. When we finally got to Israel, we had gone through so much. It was in Israel, however, that we learnt the most. Because it was in Israel that we found

strength. And so, I believed that I'd come back with unbearable pain, but I have come out of that place. I came back home with the most hope and the most love that I've ever felt. I've never been so thankful and so in love with my family, and so in love with my country. I believe an enormous part of that was the effect that our survivors had on us. After everything they'd been through, they couldn't find it in their hearts to be bitter. It was their optimism, and the hope that they instilled in us, that enables me to keep going, and to keep fighting. There has never been, and there will never be, a day that I forget.

History repeats itself and will continue to repeat itself in a different disguise. That is why we need to be able to recognize it before atrocities occur. Every day we experience disappointment with our world. But we can never lose hope or give up. I believe that peace will not be achieved in my lifetime. However, I hope to be instrumental in bringing peace in someone else's. I believe a day will come that peace will have fallen among us, and if I could've helped in any way, that would've been enough. Every day I hold with me the promises that I made in Auschwitz. I promised that I would honour their memory, that I would never let this happen again, that I would keep Israel safe. That I would use my power for good.

The March of the Living is a vow to go on when others can't. And that is what we are doing.  
Thank you.