

Transatlantic Grant Report

I am a PhD student at the Ruhrcenter of American Studies (affiliated with the TU Dortmund and Ruhr University Bochum) in Germany and I received a Transatlantic Travel Grant from the European Association for American Studies in connection with my dissertation project on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (otherwise known as the Mormon church). My project focuses on transnational contexts of Mormonism; more specifically, I am involved with tracing cultural memory in a global church. How does the LDS church promote shared cultural memories in an attempt to create a usable past accessible to all Mormons everywhere? Key to my research is the question of how cultural memories are reinterpreted and reappropriated by groups with no direct connection to the original site or event.

The LDS Church has its headquarters in Salt Lake City. The EAAS grant allowed me the opportunity to visit the Church History Library, as well as the special collections of the University of Utah (located in Salt Lake City) and Brigham Young University (located in nearby Provo), in order to peruse materials related to missionary efforts, internal church affairs, and the public image of Mormonism. These books, church documents, and personal writings were incredibly illuminating for my research, and I would not have had access to them anywhere else.

Furthermore, the grant gave me the opportunity to visit the Church History Museum, Temple Square, and church history sites located in Utah (such as This is the Place Heritage Park) that are closely connected to the ritualization of history and the formation of Mormon cultural memory. Being able to visit these sites myself added richness to my analysis and a wealth of information besides.

Lastly, Utah is known as the 'Mormon culture region,' and I made sure to visit church services and activities during my stay. This allowed me to gain practical knowledge of Mormon cultural processes, along with the theoretical knowledge I had gained elsewhere.

I would like to thank the EAAS for its generosity in funding my stay in Salt Lake City. My research visit allowed me the perusal of books, documents, and articles and let me gain knowledge that strengthened my ideas, helped prove points, restructured my dissertation into a more productive form, and brought the project this much closer to completion. As this will be translated into dissertation chapters as well as conference presentations, it was an incredibly productive stay.