

A huge thank you to Suleika Blume, for allowing this story to be used. It is amazing. I hope other people enjoyed it as much as I did.

"The red bike I borrowed from my mum was covered with lots of luggage and it looked as if I would intend to travel around the globe. I looked for the last time in this year at our voluminous white roses, hugged my love ones and cycled through the fresh breeze of Tuesday morning 5th August. Lake Constance seemed to be half asleep and the mist danced around with its white seducing skirts that filled my heart with contentment. I breathed in the clean air of freedom and stopped near a cross to drink some water. Attached to my luggage there was a white bed – sheet and with red colour I had written on it "Help! Save Thomas" and so a man who sat on a stone in front of the cross asked me what it was about. He hadn't read the newspaper as he was travelling by bike himself. He was a Christian man in his late fifties who was very good at listening and seriously interested. I gave him a copy of the article and we talked for about half an hour. In between friends of mine passed by and wished me good luck. We laughed in a lighthearted way about the amount of luggage I had with me. Anyway, the Christian me was in a way pretty unique. To his bike he had attached a vase and in this vase there was a bundle of flowers. He was in love with flowers, had no money for travelling with public transport and still he gave me one Euro for Thomas. He felt bad about the money he had given me but I assured him that this was much concerning his financial situation and that I greatly appreciated it. He invited me to a building site where we would get free food from friends. I thanked him and said that I would rather continue cycling. He looked at my bike, noticed some mistakes and was so kind as to repair them. We shook hands and he wished me success. I think after fifteen minutes I was still smiling because of the courage he had given to me.

Few kilometres later I sat down on a bench next to the lake and ate a slice of bread with cheese. I saw an elderly man with a newspaper and asked whether he read the article about Thomas. He had read it, nodded his head and looked at me contemptuously and then turned his eyes back to the newspaper. It was no use talking to him, he didn't even give me a chance to start a discussion so I cycled away from his grumpy judgemental aura. I cycled through settlements, vineyards and fields. I ate some plums that had fallen outside the fence of a farmers land and continued to push my feet into the bike pedals. Few moments later a racer wanted to know why I was cycling and so I told him why I was cycling and what it was about; a protest about the Death Penalty. In the evening I arrived at Lindau, a picturesque town at Lake Constance that has cobbled roads and houses with pinnacles. I pushed my bike along the promenade a looked dreamily at the reflection of the sunbeams that sparkled on the dark blue water. I drunk milk and saw an elderly man swimming along the promenade wall where no one else usually swims.

I watched out for a place to sleep. I thought of a situation where I had slept on a tree at age fifteen and looked if there was any that would offer me some comfort. I'm not joking, it can indeed be a good bed. It was so that I was on a school trip and slept with three other girls in a tent. The air was stuffy and while the others were fast asleep, I went outside with my sleeping bag. I walked a little and then saw a tree next to a big river. I climbed in to a comfortable tree branch junction, heard the flowing water below me and looked at the silver white moon. I feel asleep and felt very strong the next day. Well, I was looking for such a tree but couldn't find any that looked half

as comfortable there in Lindau at Lake Constance. It was getting darker and I asked some people whether they know a place to sleep that doesn't cost anything but they didn't. Finally it came to my mind that my mum's uncle and cousin live in Austria near by. I found out his phone number and crossed the border. My great cousin gave me tomatoes with mozzarella. Vinegar and bread to eat. Afterwards I went into the guest room and fell down flat on the mattress. I awoke a few hours before midnight and walked down the stairs to the kitchen so as to find my relatives that were still awake. They wanted to know more about Thomas and we talked about him, the Death Penalty and God for more than an hour.

Next morning I continued cycling. The Austrian beginning of the Alps were pretty steep and one of those hills made me push my bike upwards for one hour under the burning sun. Pearls and pearls of perspiration till I finally was on top of the hill. You might call it a mountain but I spent so much time in the Alps that a real mountain is for me the Matterhorn, you know. I had crossed the border and was back in Germany again.

I had no bread left and no money for food as it was my goal to manager the bike trip without spending any coin, without having a tent, so I asked a farmer whether he's got a slice of bread for me. He was so kind as to give me half a loaf of bread and three juicy ripe tomatoes and he wished me good luck. I immediately ate all the tomatoes and then I cycled via Simmerberg to a lake called "Grober Alpsee." I sat down on a brown wooden bench, observed the sailing ships and ate bread and cheese. A young woman sat next to me and asked me why I have so much luggage. I laughed at myself in a light-hearted way and told her that the trouble with me is that I always pick two times more luggage than I really need and this from childhood on. As I was already in the Federal state Bavaria she didn't know the newspaper article and so I gave her a copy of it and talked and talked. She had long dark brown hair, an elegant pale skin and amazingly beautiful olive green eyes that looked so friendly and made it very easy for me to be relaxed. She knew quite a lot about Death Row and we exchanged knowledge. Like me she was disgusted by the inhumane conditions at Polunsky Unit and agreed with me that prisoners should get a long prison sentence instead of the Death Penalty no matter what they have done. I told her the bike trip was not about making a horrible crime appear to be harmless, it was a demonstration against revenge. Like Gandhi said: "Hate the sin, love the sinner. I said farewell to the nice young lady and drove as a change across flat fields. I stopped at a farm and knocked on a wooden door that looked quite ancient. There were little windows in the middle of it, which opened slowly. An old farmers wife looked sceptically at me. Her grey hair was covered by the traditional beautiful headscarf and her skin was as wrinkled as the surface of an old apple. I asked whether I could possibly sleep in her haystack or stable, explaining I had no tent and was doing social work. Without saying goodbye the window was shut with a slam. I felt like in an old fairy tale and I tried not to get discouraged. In the next village I asked two elderly men who looked like farmers, whether they knew a haystack where I could spend the night. They looked at me if I was from a different planet because people nowadays go to hotels or camping places when they travel. A woman standing next to them invited me to her home. She was called Barbara and was about fifty years old. Barbara had dark greyish voluminous curly hair, one earring in her right ear and two in the left that looked handmade and tasteful. She was cheerful and a real pleasure to be with. They allowed me to take a shower and afterwards we had a nice dinner together with her

husband on their balcony. They also introduced me to their neighbour where I talked a little about the conditions on Death Row. We then walked to a waterfall and even went higher up the mountain. Cows and sheep with bells around their necks were ruminating. The sunset and the rocks shone in orange pinkish colours. We walked down a steep road, which was between juicy green fields. The air was amazingly fresh and I took a deep breath and thanked God silently for all those wonderful moments I had experienced so far. Back at Barbara's home, she played guitar for me and sung with a clear voice, songs by the Rolling Stones. She takes singing lessons and she told me that she would give her music teacher amongst other people, a copy of the newspaper article. She kind of became my minister for propaganda. That night her grown up daughter allowed me to sleep in her bed. Barbara said that "sunshine" like me is welcome at their house and I can come there in winter because she knew that I love snow. Next morning we had a breakfast with fresh rolls and Barbara opened a new glass of self-made jam, which I ate with pleasure. I hugged that kind family and continued cycling. I arrived in Fuessen and below castle Neuschwanstein that Tuesday afternoon 7th August. Next day after sleeping again in the house of a stranger that was also so hospitable, I met a young journalist who wrote a tiny bit about me in their local newspaper. At the time people had already donated some monies for Thomas, that he might be able to afford to have some decent legal help. I was blown away by that financial news and danced barefoot on the cobbled roads of Fuessen that were warm from the sun.

This bike trip changed my entire life. I used to have minority complexes but now I'm a confident young woman who sees that she can change things in the world even though what I did is little. At least it is a declaration of friendship to Thomas. If you are also writing to a prisoner I'm happy, if you are just a reader who feels caring empathy for prisoners I'm also happy. If you are a Pro Death Penalty person I ask you to take your heart out of deep freezer. Think about this sentence "Life has sunk to a zero sum game and everyone has their neighbour to blame." What do you feel and think? Is erasing people through lethal injection really the answer to live in a world of harmony? Doesn't harmony mean that we treat our neighbour with respect no matter whether he's a Jew, a Muslim, a Christian, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a doubter, a murderer or whatever? I myself have a good friend who is for the Death Penalty, I respect him but I disagree with his opinions concerning DP and we talk about other things in life. Once he complained and asked me whether I consider myself to be a better person than him because I am against the Death Penalty. I am defiantly not better, but I am a good mixer as I love people of all nationalities, skin colours, religions and I don't judge people for their past. All that matters to me is that people try to better themselves and that they regret their crime.

Even if I don't agree with you, I embrace you all with love and I thank you for reading my humble words.

God be with you."