

Samantha Rolat Asulin, USA

My Identity

I grew up in a town that was twenty minutes outside of New York City. Neither of my parents was born in the United States. My mother was born in England and my father was born here in Czestochowa, Poland. Even though I always knew that my parents were from other places, I grew up feeling like an American family.

It is always interesting to ask people from the United States where they are from. You will always get a unique answer. If you ask my children where they are from they will tell you: Poland, England and Israel. But they will also definitely tell you that they are Americans. Most people that I know have a strong sense of national identity. The beauty of my country is that we can feel American while also embracing our family's religious and cultural traditions.

The United States is known as a "melting pot" where many different people come from many different places and combine to form a nation. This does not mean, though, that our own cultural, religious and philosophical differences melt away. Rather, we proudly celebrate our differences. It is these differences that make us unique and interesting.

When I was young, I traveled to Poland with my father several times. I grew up with stories from his childhood in his hometown of Czestochowa. These stories came to life on our trips here, and I continue to enjoy visiting Poland with my husband and our children. In fact, I think this is my 8th trip to Poland. It is important for my children to see where their grandfather grew up and where their family is from because it is our heritage that makes us who we are.

The Jewish people have a 1,000 year history here in Poland. I am very proud that my father is helping to build the Museum of the History of Polish Jews which will open soon in Warsaw. It will commemorate our many contributions to the country of Poland and celebrate the heritage of Polish Jews.

When my father was growing up, he and his family considered themselves to be Polish Jews. I was raised as an American who happens to be Jewish. Being Jewish is a very important part of who my family is. We attend synagogue, support and travel to Israel and celebrate Jewish holidays. Being an American and a Jew are both important parts of who I am. One does not take away from the other. My national identity and my religious identity are two separate issues. My family members are Americans and Jews. Being Jewish does not make me any less American. And being American does not make me any less Jewish.

My family will continue to celebrate all parts of our heritage and continue to learn about and respect our past.