

Where Are They Now?

Elsie Almodovar-Reyes, 2015-16 NBA XPLOR Resident in North Hollywood, CA



In 2014, the National Benevolent Association (NBA) launched the NBA XPLOR Residency, a 10-month internship program for young adults. Centered upon spiritual and vocational discernment, the Residency offers 21- to 30-year-olds time and space to live in simple community and address social injustice. Residents serve with host

congregations and community engagement sites, developing their leadership skills as Disciples.

Now in its fourth year, NBA XPLOR alumni are dedicating themselves to systemic justice work, as well as direct care and action, across the life of the church. We look forward to seeing where the call takes them!

In this story, XPLOR alum Elsie Almodovar-Reyes shares how her experiences at her community engagement site informed the next steps she chose to take in her life.

1. When was your XPLOR Residency?

I was a part of the 2015-2016 XPLOR cohort.

2. Where did you serve?

I was at the North Hollywood Site, with First Christian Church of North Hollywood, and served at All Peoples Community Center in South Los Angeles.

3. What was the focus area of your community engagement site?

At All Peoples, I was the Family and Youth Advocate; so I worked with children attending the after school program and their families to provide relevant information and resources. I also assisted with the domestic violence support group at the community center.

4. What experiences led you to decide to remain working in this focus area?

I'm still working in the human services field but now with adults with learning disabilities. My time in XPLOR helped me to see that I feel most engaged working in a hands-on environment where I can build relationships.

5. How are you currently working to address this particular issue?

I am currently working as a job coach at a day center for adults with learning disabilities and in August I finished a year of service in L'Arche London, which is a program where you live and work with people with and without disabilities.

6. What lessons, if any, did you learn from your Residency which you are applying to your current work?

During my Residency, I think I began to really comprehend how institutional oppression can impact every aspect of an individual's life. I also began to see real life examples of how our intersecting identities play out in terms of access to resources. I apply these understandings every day not only in my job but in how approach all interactions.

7. How did your faith develop before, during, and after your 10 months with XPLOR?

Before my residency I was very active in my church and was the leader of a college aged youth group, during my residency and with the help of my spiritual companion I began to explore other faith practices and spiritualities, something I have continued to do. I don't subscribe to one particular belief system, but instead seek to understand and appreciate how we connect to a higher power in all its forms.

8. Do you have any advice for current and future Residents? If so, please share.

My advice for any current or future residents would be to speak up, whatever that means for you in your own situation. If you are struggling with your mental health ask for help, if you are having issues with a housemate reach out to someone else, if you see injustice say

something. Finally, I would say take every opportunity during your Residency. The people I met during my year helped me to do some truly amazing things and I'm thankful I was able to take those opportunities and create moments of connection.

NBA XPLOR is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.**