



National Benevolent Association

XPLOR

FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

Not As Far from Home As You Think

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Poverty is a universal invariant; it's everywhere you go. When I learned that I was moving to California, I imagined I would be surrounded by glamour and the excess you encounter in a big city; but I came to realize that the economic disparity and struggle I had become so accustomed to seeing in my hometown of Toledo was just as prevalent in Hollywood. I had formed an idea in my mind about what living in a famous city would be like, but I had not given much thought to the distinct hardship that would be around me. The truth is that Los Angeles is a complex city; it's gritty and layered, and within its sprawling borders live many impoverished people.



Living in Hollywood, but working in South Central Los Angeles, feels like I am in two completely different worlds. During my commute to work I pass by fancy houses in the hills, and I step off the train an hour later and see people laying in the street begging for anything. Although this is something I had seen in the neighborhoods I grew up in, I am still having a difficult time reconciling these two worlds I inhabit. Growing up in a city that is built on economic oppression and corruption, I had become desensitized to seeing individuals living on the street, but living and working in Los Angeles has truly opened my eyes and my heart. Los Angeles has the largest population of homeless individuals in the nation, and I encounter one of these folks every day.

A mission of the National Benevolent Association is to create communities of compassion and care, and this has become a mission in my own personal life because of the experiences I have had over the last few months. Wherever I go, I would like to be a part of building and fortifying a community that is empathetic and cares for all of its members, even those whom we choose to ignore and walk past. I hope so much that Los Angeles can become a community where homeless individuals are given the tools and resources to not only find housing, but to feel at home. It is also my hope that my hometown can increase its efforts to help those who are impacted by systems of injustice and oppression, and can begin to heal.

I know that poverty is in every part of this world, but I also know that in every corner of the globe there are people working to dismantle the structures that keep people impoverished and immobile, and for that I am thankful.

*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.***