



National Benevolent Association

XPLOR
FAITH, JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY

Making Moves, Making Deals

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It is hard to believe as I sit down to write this blog post that I am exactly a month away from my time with NBA XPLOR coming to an end. It is hard to believe where I was a year ago and where I am today. Beginning this program, I was unsure of a lot of things: I was unsure of my career path, unsure where I was going to exist, at times unsure of my worth. I was living in a state of limbo, seeing where I wanted to be but unsure of how I was going to get there. I had a plan—I usually have a plan—I was just struggling with the execution.

So that is how I found myself in this place. I knew that I wanted to end up in seminary—that has been a call on my heart for most of my life—but I did not know how I was going to get there, or even when I was going to be ready. I felt like there were a million things that I had not done, and my heart was not in the place for the serious educational commitment I knew seminary would be. I knew I wanted to be involved in social justice, particularly through the nonprofit sector, but I was unsure of the roads that I would need to take in order to have the education and experience necessary to contribute in this sector. I could tell you where I wanted to be in ten years without much of a struggle at all, but talking about the next three felt impossible. So, like any logical 22-year-old, I packed up my life and moved across the country to start a new adventure.

It has paid off.

While this year has not been absent of challenges, it has allowed me to grow, in both expected and unexpected ways. I will be attending Pacific School of Religion in the fall to pursue a Master of Divinity. I have learned the ins and outs and business side of the nonprofit world, and have had the opportunity to write grants for the position that I have been shadowing in the field. I have made incredibly valuable connections. I have met a wide range of people who remind me of the passion and beauty that is present in this world. People who work to advocate with those on the margins of society. People who stand in solidarity with those who are facing systematic oppression. I have seen people who want to change the world actually doing it. For that, I am absolutely thankful.

In the midst of uncertainty, I have found peace. Peace with who I am right in this moment, with being able to love myself right now and not wait until I get to the “ten-years-down-the-road-Mel.” I have found incredible support; I have found incredible love. I have learned that maybe uncertainty creates a space that allows us to grow, to find the pieces of ourselves that so often sit outside of the realm of who we think we can be.

Remember when we were young and someone we looked up to said, “You can do anything you put your mind to”? When did we stop believing in that? When did I stop believing in that?

So, for the little girl who went to career day as a pastor in third grade: I have not forgotten about you. For the woman I hope to be ten years down the road: be patient; I will find my way to you. For the 23-year-old future seminarian: hey, we are getting there.

Enjoy the ride, take a deep breath, and embrace the challenge. For all of us, do not forget that advice from all those years ago that is echoed in the voices of those around us today. You have got this; we have got this; “how lucky we are to be alive right now.”

*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.***