

Faith—Context—Action

Rachael Wentworth, 2016-17 NBA XPLOR Resident in St. Louis, MO



NBA’s ministry capitalizes on helping people think about and reflect on their faith, beliefs, and values; the context or realities they live in; and then coming to understand how God calls them to live within their faith in conversation with the context. In many ways, NBA encourages discovery and action in the intersection of faith, context, and action. When Rebecca Hale told me this during breakfast recently, I realized that this was the definition of my experience within the NBA XPLOR program.

My call has always been to help people foster good relationships with themselves and others, but deep down I doubted my ability to do so. Much of my life, I knew that there were serious problems going on, but I had a very skewed view of social justice. I had even told Ben Bohren in my XPLOR interview that social justice scared the living daylights out of me.

As far as I was concerned, social justice was all of the riots I saw on the news, and I wasn’t about that. I was taught to value people for their differences, not riot against them. I didn’t see how I could do anything in the realm of social justice. How could I love people if I’m rioting against them? I had concluded that somehow, somehow, I would conduct myself based on the values that I had been taught and the hope and faith that were growing within me. I thought that would be enough, but God didn’t think so.

In the beginning of my experience, I had the rude awakening that my faith and values did not match my actions. As a matter of fact, my lack of action only contributed to the problems around me. I wanted to help people foster good relationships, but I was encouraging the opposite. Also, I realized that my view on social justice had no context. I chose to stay on the outside of any cause as opposed to looking deeper into the situation. I was devastated, but I wasn’t allowed to stay that way.

My entire journey in St. Louis has actively broken away fears and insecurities within myself that have hindered me from pursuing the call to bring justice to the world. I was put in a job that challenged me to be engaged, present, active, and dedicated even when I didn’t feel like it. I was placed with housemates who challenged my personal convictions and worldviews and opened my eyes to the beauty, struggle, and necessity of pursuing justice in an unjust society. I was placed into a church and organization that welcomed me with open arms and accepted me for who I was and who I was becoming.

All the while, God pushed, me challenged me, comforted me, and revealed Godself to me, strengthening my resolve, my faith, and my determination.

I'm leaving this program excited and better equipped to contribute to the cause of social justice. I, as GMP nominee Terri Owens eloquently stated in her recent video, realized that acknowledging the problem is not the same as working through it together. I know now that when God calls, or sets a challenge in our midst, the only appropriate response is to take action.



I now, thanks to NBA, Union Avenue Christian Church, my housemates, and all of my church family have a renewed confidence in my ability to answer God's call and spread God's love no matter where I go next. Without NBA's ministry of exploring faith, values, and beliefs in dialogue with current realities, I could not have gone forward.

It is my hope and prayer that NBA continues to grow so that it may reach out to more people who want to heed God's call but may not know how, and that it may change the lives of anyone who participates as much as it has changed mine.

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.