

Back from Cali

Cristian Marin, 2015-16 NBA XPLOR Resident in Quad Cities, IL/IA



I'm back in Iowa after spending the holidays in California. I didn't realize how much I missed my family until now. It felt great to see Cali again. My parents weren't expecting me home, so I was excited to see their reaction. When I saw the joy in my mother's eyes and the excitement on my dad's face, I knew it was worth every penny I had spent. Christmas Day was great; I got to eat all the food I was craving for months and enjoyed every single minute of it.

I got to spend time with friends and even went to Six Flags for some G-force adrenaline. Wilber and I got to eat some Korean BBQ with Eula, and man, did it taste good. Overall, being back home was a well-needed vacation.

Although I loved being back, there was a part of me that was not at ease. A part of me that wouldn't let me get comfortable. Yes, this is my home, where I grew up, where I first found God, but it wasn't where I was supposed to be. I knew that I had to go again, that I couldn't stay, because if I did, I would lose the parts of me that I've been working so hard to find.

I'm not saying you need to travel miles away to figure these things out, but sometimes that's what it takes. I've grown so much over these few months, and many doors have opened in my time here in Iowa. Sometimes I lay in my bed and look at the ceiling while I daydream. I try to imagine my future: what will I be doing, where will I be? I get lost in my mind searching for answers that I will never completely understand.

Whatever the future holds, I know I'm on the right path. Living in Iowa has been a complete culture shock. I've found some Mexican restaurants here and there, and somewhat of a variety of foods, but none like back home. I'm forced to think about the color of my skin, my background, my culture more often than when I'm in California. Many times I find myself to be the only person of color around. I've got to say, that feels pretty weird and sometimes uncomfortable.

Being here isn't always that easy, but it's where I need to be. I have a great support group, and I'm sure you can see that just by reading Anna's letter to Laura. You get what you put into it, right? You can't expect a blueberry banana shake without first throwing blueberries and a banana into the blender. If you want it to taste good, then you also have to make sure you don't throw in some rotten fruit. Of course, you'll also need a good blender in order to get a tasty texture.

Well, enough of that. Shout out to the other XPLOR Residents: I hope you are all finding what you're looking for. About six more months to go—hang in there!

*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.***