



Reflection: Ecumenical Advocacy Days

C.J. Dyer, 2015-16 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH



On April 15, 2016, my XPLOR housemate Sarah, our spiritual companion, her husband, and myself traveled to Washington, D.C., to take part in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) happening there that weekend. We were lucky enough to get a room in the hotel where the conference was taking place. We get into the hotel and there are people every which way, going upstairs, downstairs, in and out of the exhibit hall, heading to the first speaker that night. We stowed our bags and headed to the first speaker ourselves.

The first keynote speaker of the weekend was Rev. Dr. William Barber. He had just come from a civil protest in North Carolina. He talked about the gift of prophesying and cursing. He talked about how we as the church need to bring back the art of prophesying and cursing to the church and not have others do what used to be the job of the church. Later that night, he would board a plane to go back to the protest, but he would not make it that night. He would be escorted from the plane because someone on the plane decided to choose that night to cause a disturbance and Rev. Dr. Barber would be the one who is escorted from the plane. Those who escorted him off were very polite and quite a number of them (and employees of the airport and plane) were embarrassed and confused as to why he was escorted off and not the other person.

The next day, there were a couple more speakers, Ashindi Maxton and Sandy Sorenson, who would speak on racism, class, and power. They talked about voting rights and stopping the Trans-Pacific partnership. Later that day, Sarah and I took part in a couple classes during the workshop session of the day. The first one talked about bridging the Racial Divide. There were a lot of questions asked during the presentation, so the speaker was not able to finish her presentation. But one thing she continually stressed was the changing of certain vocabulary words. Things like “black deeds,” the “black sheep of the family,” “blackmail,” just to name a few. We do not even know we are saying these half the time and do not mean to put any racial meaning into them. But that happens; we add the word “black” or “dark” to something we think as bad and add “white” or “light” to something that we think as good. We then went to a class that talked about power inequality and the climate and how we can work with both and still get what we want done.

That night, we went out and walked the monuments. We only saw a couple before we went back to the hotel, but those that we saw were very big and imposing. Talking about civil rights and other topics that day and then seeing Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s memorial was really cool.

Seeing all the different presidents’ memorials reminded me of how our forefathers wanted our country to be. Reading some of the quotes on the memorials also brought about a sense that our politicians need to take a walk around the monuments a couple of times, and read each and every one of the quotes on the walls, and think about what they are saying compared to what the quotes say. I think it might help change some small things that will eventually turn into big things.

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 at nbacares.org/xplor.***