

"A Great Way of Growing Up"

Melissa Peralez, 2017-18 NBA XPLOR Resident in Hiram-Mantua, OH

My name is Melissa Peralez and I am from San Benito, Texas. For those of you who don't know, it's part of deep south Texas which is about 40 minutes away from Matamoros, Mexico. I decided to join NBA XPLOR to grow spiritually, mentally and emotionally. I'm a huge introvert and I am extremely close to my mom and the rest of my family. So leaving for 10 months sounded like a great way of growing up!



I love Bonnie, who doesn't? She is the director of the NBA XPLOR program and it just so happened that we had the same shirt so we thought, "Let's be twins, why not?"

This is the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri from the MetroLink that we took. I had never been there before, it was a great place to explore. I think having XPLOR Laboratory (antiracism and anti-oppression training) in St. Louis was a great idea.





Taking the metro in St. Louis was a fun experience - if you don't have seat you better hold on for dear life.

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I am dyslexic, so telling time isn't my friend. The numbers literally look like this sometimes! So the story goes on Thursday of the first week I was at my host site, the Hiram-Mantua house has a meeting with my roommate Ian's boss Mark. After the meeting I ask Mark if I can take a picture of his clock because I really like it. He takes it off his wall and says to me, "If you like it so much it's yours. Anything else in my office that you like you can have too." Now that I have that I don't need to tell time, but I can just look and know that sometimes time doesn't matter it's... WHATEVER.





After Laboratory we stayed in Indianapolis on our way to Hiram-Mantua with a lovely family named the Barnes. It amazed me that there were fresh flowers in every room in

the house. This was the dining room.

The Hiram sign to let us know we finally made it.



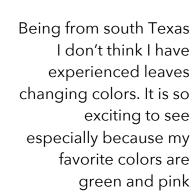


This is the street we live on and what a fun name it has.



This is when we finally arrived to our home for the next 10 months on August 26,2017.

Being from south Texas I don't think I have experienced leaves changing colors. It is so exciting to see especially because my favorite colors are









This was totally new to me I didn't know that a pink sunflower even existed.



This is from a restaurant in Garrettsville, Ohio called The Lucky Dragon. I have always wanted a "to go" container like this and I finally got it.





Again this was my favorite flower I saw at Hiram College. I kept

stopping to take pictures because the colors were overwhelming to me the first two weeks.

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This is the maple bacon doughnut from Maggie's, a doughnut shop that is literally down the street from our house.

I LOVE popcorn!! This is a store in Kent that our spiritual companion Linda took us to and bought us some popcorn. YAY!! Long story short I am afraid of heights.



This is Derthick's hill, I have to drive over this to get to Mantua Center Christian Church, my host congregation. This was my real-life Goliath and I can proudly say I conquered my giant.



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 <u>nbacares.org/xplor</u>.