

Our Mid-Year Update

NBA XPLOR 2018-19 Tucson-Marana, AZ House

Halfway through NBA XPLOR 2018-19, Tucson-Marana, AZ Residents: Emily Bray, Natalie Maxson, and Ethan Bradfield share symbols that have taken on great importance for them during their XPLOR journey.



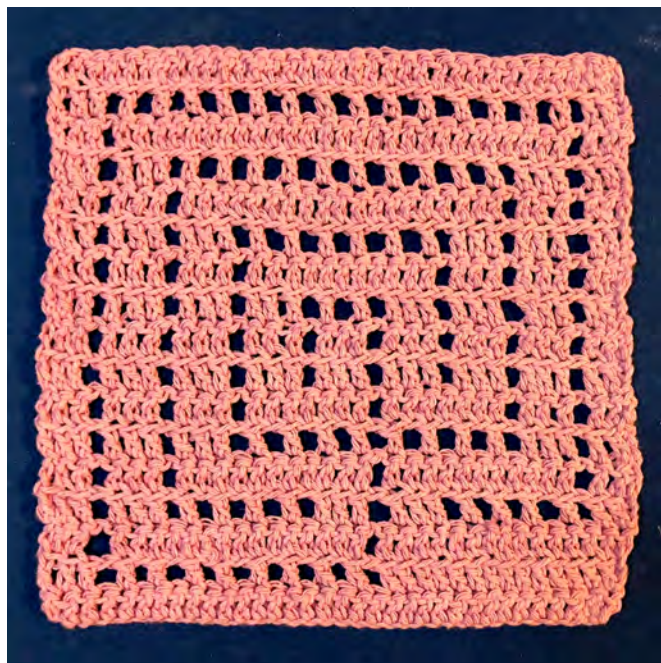
Emily Bray: This coloring page that I finished has a lot to do with my XPLOR experience. The print says "Let your gentleness be evident." It's a verse from Philippians. First off, elephants are my absolute favorite. I actually have a tattoo that looks really similar to this one that I colored. Elephants represent courage and bravery. I feel like for some, the XPLOR program takes a ton of courage and bravery. For me, I was afraid of being really far away from home

with people that I didn't know. I was scared that this wouldn't work out and that I wouldn't belong. This drawing reminded me that I am courageous. It took a lot of courage for me to move out to the desert from chilly Ohio, but I did it, and I'm stronger because of it. I am brave because even though I knew this journey would bring homesickness, disappointment, and some pain, I took the chance. I think my housemates would agree that this program has not been easy. It has had a lot of ups, and some really big downs. I am reminded constantly (because of my tattoo and this drawing) to be courageous. Through all that this program has thrown my way, I am encouraged to be gentle with myself and with others. I am encouraged to be brave and face the challenges. Though this is only a drawing, it has reminded me to spread gentleness, kindness, and love, especially to myself. It has also reminded me of the gentleness, kindness, and love that I've received from the people here in Tucson. Wow, who knew I could get so emotional over an elephant? :)

Natalie Maxson: It's process, not perfection. It's daily commitment. It's uncertainty, vulnerability, and liminality. It's "making the path by walking," only to realize that, in many

ways, it's been walked before. ^[1] It's trusting that others will walk when you can't, but that—sometimes—stillness is the true catalyst.

During my time in Tucson's XPLO program, labyrinths have become a recurring (and increasingly personal) symbol. From the Tohono O'odham nation's "Man in the Maze" motif to the labyrinths set in the grounds of local DoC churches, the image and its significance have been ever-present. For this brief house blog, I wanted to share something I had created since being in Tucson, but I wanted it to be tactile rather than exclusively analytical. Here we have a bit of both. Still, I'll cut down on further analysis and leave you to consider this small crochet labyrinth, which I unraveled multiple times before weaving in its ends. After all, sometimes, It's tangles.



^[1] The phrase at the start of this line is a reference to Antonio Machado's poem

"Caminante, no hay camino." Specifically, it makes use of the idea that "se hace camino al andar," which loosely translates to "the path is made/makes itself by walking."

Ethan Bradfield:

Isaiah 55:12:

"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Proverbs 3:27

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act."

When people think of Arizona they think of the desert. Hot. Dry. No rain. No green. Ugly. Uncomfortable. Empty. But Tucson is a beautiful place, with mountains capped in snow and national forests with waterfalls surrounding it. Just as beautiful though, are the people. Tucson has 526,000 registered people living there, but it feels like a small town. Local and/or family businesses are everywhere, and everyone seems to know everyone. Tucson was also named one of the country's top 25 most giving cities, and it definitely deserves



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that. With non-profits all over the city, Tucson is a place of love and helping others. Caridad community kitchen hires people who can't find employment elsewhere, and trains them as cooks. The food they cook is for Caridad's soup kitchen, which feeds the hungry. Felicia's Farm is a mostly volunteer run farm that donates one hundred percent

of its produce to Casa Maria's kitchen. And Ben's Bells Project, whose mission is simply to spread kindness through their art and education programs. Tucson is reminding me that beauty isn't always where you expect it, and that kindness can come from anyone.

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.**

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