

#LPRD# A Field Worker's Diary [#Part 43](#) # 5 September 2020

After spending two days unexpectedly in Chicago, our seven-member team finally left for Kansas City on August 6, 2017. According to our plan, we were supposed to get there by August 4. But the rain made us stay in Chicago. That rain did not leave us yet. Kansas City greeted us with heavy rain, thunder and lightning on August 6 as well. Unlike the cities that we had visited before, Kansas was a very peaceful city. It looked even more beautiful in the rain. Though we had reached the hotel in the afternoon, we could not go anywhere due to rain. Anyway that day was a Saturday. We had no official events that day or the next day according to our schedule. After the rain stopped for a bit in the evening, we walked as far as we could near the hotel to look at some places.

We left early the next day, a Sunday, to the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum. The museum was constructed in a vast area with beautiful architecture. We spent a lot of time there looking at the wonderful paintings, sculptures, art pieces and reading their descriptions. Rare artefacts, collected from almost all the continents across the world, were safely preserved in the museum. I felt elated to see some sculptures from my native Guntur district. Some Handicrafts Mela was also taking place just outside the museum that day. Many youth were serving as volunteers in that Mela.

That day, we received a special invitation. A woman named Trudy invited me, my Liberian friend Melinda, my Tunisian brother Hadi over to her house for dinner. The rest of the members of our team also received a similar invitation from another family. In the evening, Trudy herself drove to the hotel in her car to pick us up. She was 86 years old. I was quite astonished to see that even at that age, Trudy not only drove us to her home but also cooked dinner for us on her own without any help. Trudy told us that she had been to 108 countries and participated in more than 20 marathons. She had participated in her last marathon at the age of 80. She has read numerous books. She even paints.

Her house was filled with bookshelves and paintings hanging on the walls. She served us a simple yet tasty meal of barley, chicken and cake. She had neatly arranged the dining table with our names written along with the flag figurines of our countries. Trudy also invited two other friends' families to dinner with us that day. There was a festive atmosphere at Trudy's house that day.

Most of our official events were canceled as we had arrived in Kansas later than scheduled. An official event was scheduled for one day only in that city. Firstly, we went to an organisation called Alliance for Economic Inclusion by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The organisation works for financial inclusion by designing special schemes for those in poverty and unable to avail banking services. It implements a number of programs

such as opportunities to save small amounts, loans in small amounts at low interest rates, financial education programs, social security schemes designed to make them affordable. To this end, banks, non-banking financial institutions, community-based organizations as well as educational institutions and certain individuals have formed a special alliance. I felt that the programs done by the alliance towards fulfilling its aim — of no one being left behind when it came to availing financial services — are something that are more necessary for our country. From there, we went to another organization called Sheffield Place. It's an organisation that was similar to Rosie's Place that we had visited in Boston. It supports women who have lost their livelihood due to various problems and are living alone. It seemed to me like a family home rather than a shelter home. There, women with trauma and depression are given complete freedom. There are three kitchens where the women can cook and eat their favorite food as if they were in their homes. Otherwise, there are cooks present who will cook for them. Those who come here with problems not only receive many facilities such as counselling, therapy, skill training, but the organisation also helps them through arranging housing facilities if and when they decide to live independently without support from the organisation. The organisation even bought a few houses in the vicinity. The women can start a new life there.

Finally, we went to a company called Synergy Services. It is an organization that provides various services required by young men and women. Young people registered there can come there anytime and get the services they want. In addition to services like counseling for youth, career guidance, financial literacy programs, the organisation boasts of amenities like sports area, library, etc. Training in music, cooking and other arts is also available. It is said that over a thousand youngsters avail their services there every year. After looking at the youngsters learning various works there, I wondered if we could ever start such an organisation in our country to facilitate youngsters to utilize their leisure time productively.

The organisation I currently work for conducts vocational training for young people. We talk to hundreds of young people. Comparing the shy and soft-spoken youngsters in our country to the ones I talked to at Synergy Services, I wondered when we will see our youngsters display such self-confidence and courage to speak their views. It pained me to think as to why our education, educational institutions and systems could not provide clarity to our youth about their future.

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