

Exodus Transitional Community: A place of hope and healing.

Written by Rossana Rosado



As you climb the steep flight of stairs into the Exodus Transitional Community, leaving the street sounds of East Harlem behind, you are unsure of what's behind the big white door. An organization that serves men and women who are formerly incarcerated conjures up images of a parole office with high windows, government tiles and uncomfortable metal folding chairs. But instead, as you cross the threshold into the reception area you are immersed in warmth.

You cannot help but be struck by the colors and the gentle surprise of music playing softly. The place buzzes with activity amidst immaculate wood floors and track lighting. The mustard yellow walls are decorated with contemporary pieces and the furniture is black leather. The coffee table is filled with recent magazines, periodicals and condoms – there are literally bowls of condoms everywhere as if to remind you that this is not your average office.

Rafael Romero, receptionist, says “hola rayito de sol” and I smile, I am radiant-- I am home.

And that is how each visit begins. I come to life when I leave my corner office in downtown Brooklyn with a view of the NYC skyline to come uptown. I am here to witness people beating all the odds and overcoming barriers to live normal lives again. I am here to see a new definition of success.

Exodus is a book in the bible that speaks of a journey to the “promised land” and this organization was founded by a visionary man on his own journey. It's a faith based model, so all meetings, meals and conversations begin with a pause to give thanks--but it's far from a church! There are battles and tears; drama and dysfunction – just like in El Diario's newsroom.

Many clients, they are called “participants” here, are men, but we are seeing more women due to recent outreach efforts. Participants are not sitting in waiting as in other offices, here they are engaged. Some are on laptops scrolling through job listings, some are reviewing resumes with their coaches. Still others are practicing a cool walk in their new suits ready to go out on interviews or reporting back on their interview experiences.

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