

Finding hope, safety and welcome in Sandy Hill

Michelle Miller

In the heart of Sandy Hill, within the walls of Carty House—Ottawa’s only transitional home for refugee women — lies the story of Yvanova, a young Haitian student whose journey has been marked by resilience, determination, and the unwavering pursuit of education amidst adversity.

Despite the challenges that surrounded her — from economic hardship to political instability — Yvanova remained steadfast in her pursuit of education, determined to defy the odds and carve out a path for herself that transcended the limitations of her circumstances.

With limited options available to her in Haiti, Yvanova made the difficult decision to leave her family and study in Canada, hoping to find a new home where she could pursue her dreams without the barriers that had hindered her in her homeland. While she was studying in Ottawa, her father died back in Haiti and that changed everything — gone was her support.

Dropping out of school was excruciating. She loved reading and writing and learning, but she needed to wait for the daunting asylum process to run its course. When she was granted refugee status, she was both relieved and scared. What now? Where will I live? How will I continue my studies? How will I support myself? Important questions for any refugee, let alone a 20-year-old woman on her own in Ottawa.

She was becoming so tired of telling her story to those who seemed compassionate but were unable to help. She had been deceived before about support and housing that was available. When she was offered a room at Carty House, she wondered if it was too good to be true. But, when she was met with a big smile and an even big-



Yvanova is now hopeful about her future in Canada, thanks to the support of Carty House in Sandy Hill.

Photo: Christine Aubry

ger hug, she knew she was safe. She was given a room of her own to study, rest and heal, fresh food, and a community of other refugee women, each with their own story of resilience and strength, who support one another as they each rebuild their lives, one step at a time. She has been profoundly impacted by meeting past residents of Carty House, women who have worked hard to make their way to a new life in Canada. “If they can do it, so can I,” she remarked.

Yvanova is now back in school and pursuing her degree in social work. She wants to work in addictions and believes that everyone deserves a chance to get better, especially those who reach out and have the strength to ask for help. She has begun to envision a future filled with promise and potential, one where she could pursue her passions and make a meaningful impact on the world around her.

Today, Yvanova stands on the threshold of a new chapter in her life. Her journey from Haiti to Ottawa is a testament to the power of resilience, determination, and the transformative impact of education. When asked what she wanted others to know about her, she responded “I’m a person, I’m not just a refugee. Don’t feel sorry for me. We all have different challenges, and we all have different gifts. Life is a process.”

Carty House is a first home and helping hand for female refugees in Ottawa. Due to great need, Carty House will be opening a second location this year. To learn more or to support them, visit CartyHouse.org, email outreach@cartyhouse.org or call 613-236-8855.

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Thank you so very much!

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