

# EVERY VOTE COUNTS AND NOT VOTING IS A VOTE

by Kayla Miranda

I remember the first election after my 18th birthday. It was Bush vs Kerry. With my voter registration card in hand, I stood in line for 25 minutes in order to cast my vote. When I finished, I walked back to my truck feeling like I was a part of something important. I had done my civic duty and I remember letting the pride of that moment wash over me. Since then, I have cast my vote in every election with the knowledge that while my singular vote may not be the deciding factor, it is part of the foundation to bring my chosen candidates closer to victory. Sometimes they won, sometimes they lost. But the outcome was never a result of my inaction. I cast my ballot.

In 1776, when the people of the colonies grew tired of unjust taxes by the King, they created the Declaration of Independence and started a revolution. That revolution created our country. And while there are many things that need to change, the fundamental sentiment of that Declaration still rings true: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” In simpler words, we, the people, elect our officials to create a government for us.

We give them the power to be our voices. To decide our laws and policies. And what WE GIVE, WE can take away.

The 2020 presidential election was historic. Never had so many people cast their ballots. Never had any candidate received so many votes. And NEVER had any U.S. President behaved so ungracefully. What has occurred since is an embarrassment for all and a slap in the face of democracy. The riot in the capital on January 6, 2021 was nothing short of an act of treason and a bitter man’s attempt at becoming a dictator. If you take anything away from this election, it’s that every single vote counts. If you chose to stay silent, if you chose to allow others to decide for you, then you’re just as guilty as those who put people like President Trump in power. By not voting, you are casting a vote.

Presidential elections are not the only elections. In five short months on May 1, 2021, San Antonio holds its mayoral election. We as a city, as puro San Antonio residents, have the opportunity to choose our local officials. If you think this has no effect on you, you’re sorely mistaken. Everything you see in the city is covered by at least one department—from roads to parks, schools to stores, homes or apartments. For example, the zoning commission has the power to change the lot your local grocery store is on into a multi-family lot and developers can then build a 4 story apartment complex. Every decision on a city level is made eventually by the city council after going through several other departments. It is just as important as who is our president. Let me show you just how close the numbers are.

During the last city election in 2019, only 101k San Antonio residents voted for city elections. Our city is made up of 1.2 million residents and there are 782k registered voters: about 13% of SA voted.

- Mayor Ron Nirenberg won . . . . .by 2k votes
- D1 Trevino . . . . .by about 4k votes
- D2 Sullivan . . . . .by 200 votes
- D3 Viagran . . . . .by about 1k votes
- D4 Gracia . . . . .by about 600 votes
- D5 Gonzales . . . . .by about 2k votes
- D6 Havrda . . . . .by about 1.5k votes
- D7 Sandoval . . . . .by about 4k votes
- D8 Pelaez . . . . .by about 3k votes
- D9 Courage . . . . .by about 2k votes
- D10 Perry . . . . .by about 6K votes

These are incredibly small margins. We have the ability to make real change in this city. But only if we stand up and take it.

When I look at candidates, I do as much research as possible. I select my ballot choices based on who I believe will make decisions close to what I would decide if I was in the position—people with similar beliefs and policies, that align with my needs. I am in District 5. We have the most essential workers, the highest COVID numbers, the lowest income individuals and the most vulnerable population. I don’t want an outsider who recently moved here to be my champion in city council. I want someone who grew up here, shares not only my values, but my struggles—someone I will see in the neighborhood or at the grocery store, someone I can talk to that wont be dismissive or inaccessible, someone that knows what it’s like to live, struggle and thrive in Distrive 5. The only candidate that fits that criteria for me is Teri Castillo. She has fought by my side for housing justice. She was a teacher at Lanier, she is active in the community, and a passionate advocate for the people of D5. When you look at your ballot, I hope you find the candidate that best suits you and your community. Not the richest people or those with personal ambitions, but people just like you.

I have so much hope for this coming year. After all the hardship that 2020 brought us, it is time to recover, recoup, heal from our wounds. The only way to do that is to be sure that the people we give our voices to share our ideals. We need to show up in mass to our local election like we did for our presidential election. Let’s show the city that we will be heard.

*BIO: Kayla Miranda, a housing justice advocate organizing in the Westside of San Antonio resides at the Alazan/Apache Courts.*

*NOTE: The Esperanza does not endorse candidates. Candidate preferences stated in this article are the author’s own opinion.*

