

From “Let it snow” to “I hate snow”... the week the lights went out in Texas

By Kayla Miranda

I remember the first time I saw snow. My family is originally from Danville, Illinois, but we moved here to San Antonio when I was a baby and my dad was stationed at Lackland AFB. When I was twelve, we moved back to Danville for a few years before returning to Texas. I was at my aunt’s apartment, where I spent nights with my younger brother while our dad worked graveyard shifts. I woke up around 6 am, happened to look out of my cousin’s window, and there it was. A perfect, undisturbed first snow. Everything looked so magical. With a steady fall of large white flakes, I imagined that I woke up in a snow globe. I had already been dazzled by the autumn leaves and their vibrant colors. But this—it was the most amazing thing I’d ever seen. That feeling was short lived.

An hour later, I was ushered outside to wait for the school bus in three feet of snow. Over the winter months of my first year up north, I learned that melted snow turns to ice. Kids are mean and throw snowballs packed with that ice. It gets dirty and looks like mud, everywhere. No matter what you do, your pant legs will get soaked. Snow will leak into your shoes, making your socks wet and toes freeze, and it’s so cold your face gets wind burned. All the images of Santa with rosy cheeks were really almost the same effects as sunburn—only from the cold, instead of the sun.

When my family returned to Texas, the best part for me was no snow. Every time we get a little powder down south, everyone gets so excited. I’m usually thinking, “If they only knew”.

I knew the reports of cold weather and snow just before Valentine’s Day would cause some problems. I figured there would be a lot of closures because the roads were not prepared as they are up north. So I went to the grocery store on the 14th to make sure I wouldn’t have to venture out, later. I set my faucets to a slow drip so the pipes wouldn’t freeze and burst. I told my neighbors to do the same. I thought it would be no big deal. Never did it cross my mind that we would be without power and water in freezing temperatures. This is the United States in 2021—not a third world country, or a hundred years in the past. We have laws in place that don’t allow utility companies to shut off services during extreme weather—don’t we?

We know what followed. Some parts of the state went without power for 4-5 days while others didn’t experience any power outages at all. People died. People were trapped without power, water,

food or supplies. Families huddled together for collective body warmth. Houseless and homeless individuals suffered out in the elements, while rich investors made millions and politicians went on

vacation. I will caution the community to not forget this on May 1st when we go to the polls for the leadership of this city. Remember this when we vote again, and every time we go to the polls. We must hold those responsible, accountable. We must incite change. Not a single life should have been lost in this city, state or country because they froze to death.

I was reminded of why we are called *Texas Strong*. When disaster strikes us, we come together. While anger was my ruling emotion, my heart was full of pride as I saw my friends, family, community jump into action with water

and food distribution, supplies and blankets delivered to those who needed them. Even charging stations were set up at houses and businesses who still had power. I was on text chains, email chains, phone calls and social media watching the planning and execution and participating myself. I saw people brave the weather to go out and deliver goods where they could. I saw neighbor, helping neighbor. Community looking out for their own—all across the city. Even some folks from out of state filled up their vehicles and made the drive here. After the weather had passed, there was even more of an outpouring of help.

There were a lot of flaws, too. There should have been a plan to deal with this arctic freeze, but no one expected it. I was most happily surprised when SAHA came out and delivered hot meals, door to door. It gave me hope for the future. Change truly is in the air. Just four months ago, if someone had asked me if I believed the SAHA Interim CEO would personally deliver hot food to the Alazán/Apache residents, I would have called them crazy. My hat’s off to SAHA, especially Ed Hinojosa and all the staff who worked so hard to get help to the residents. My total gratitude and respect to Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, Historic Westside Residents’ Association, Texas Organizing Project, Party for Socialism and Liberation and many other non profits who rushed to our aid. Beautiful things happen when everyone can put their differences aside for the common good. That is something worth fighting for.

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



The snow outside my front door.



SAHA Interim CEO, Ed Hinojosa, delivering food to Alazan/ Apache tenants during the Arctic freeze.