

[FINAL REFLECTION]

What was the purpose of this experience?

It wasn't about the service. In the beginning, I would have said something ~~that~~ along the lines of "it was to use tornado relief volunteering as a catalyst to develop leadership skills while being in a different culture." What it turned out to be was more. It taught me about intramural connections. It showed me the strength that lies in others as well as in myself. It gave me appreciation and physical proof of what I thought I believed about myself. It was a lesson of what we gain when we engage and reflect upon our experiences rather than passively experiencing them. We learned, and saw what courage is. What leaders look like, and the importance of engaging. We learned how to implement our fraternal values into what we want to be.

What happened to me during this experience?

I grew. I felt. I experienced. I cried. I connected. I was inspired, humbled, speechless. I learned. I saw. I engaged. I reflected.

My expectations were blown away. Yes, I didn't know who I was getting into, but I did know that this trip was my own option. For some reason, I was meant to be here at this time in this place with these people to receive a very important message. I learned not to take the people in my life for granted. I learned to stop being so attached to my possessions and to put my energy into the quality of my life in the form of nonmaterial things. I was inspired by the "quiet confidence" and hope that the Tuscaloosa community signifies. Wake-Up Call just I needed so badly.

What happened to us during this experience?

We certainly bonded as a group. Coming out of our bubbles, our circle of familiar faces, and environments gave us fresh perspectives and open eyes to one another. I think we saw each other for differently than we would have otherwise. I am so glad and so blessed to have had the opportunity to spend quality time with people I may not have had more than a generic conversation with. I think we all transformed in ways, and we were able to learn and feed off of each other's insights.

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How did I connect to and/or impact the Tuscaloosa Community during this experience?

Our simple presence and effort to help reassured the hope of recovery of the community. After hearing their stories, I became emotionally connected to them. Their stories became so much more than another old story on the news.

What am I looking forward to upon my return to my campus/my community?

Stay positive, don't think negative. Inspiring others. I realize that I can't go back to my chapter and try to give a speech about the experience and expect them to understand it. What I can do is have small conversations with the FAF community and relay the beautiful messages and experiences I have had here. Stop caring about what others think of me.

As a result of this experience, what do I want to do differently in my life?

Live more humbly. Don't take life, family, or friends for granted. Let go of my possessions. Stop caring about what others think.