

Ben Winter

The only thing I knew about Houston before the trip was its lack of zoning laws. I boarded a plane early in the ungodly hours, desperate for whatever sleep I could find. I landed to a 30 degree temperature change, and a full 4 days of work planned out.

Expecting to collapse after starting my labor, i was surprised to find that moving sheetrock and painting walls did not irritate my sleep deprived self. We heard the owner's story, which was the first experience shared with us. This gave me an insight to the magnitude of the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, which further validated my work.

The next labor intensive event was the building of the house in what seemed to be the middle of nowhere. In very rural Texas we burned in the sun for hours framing a new house. We eventually met the man we were building for, which was awarded a similar feeling as the first house. Although I was sunburnt, I was proud of my efforts and the carpentry skills I learned.

Before leaving Houston, we volunteered with the impressively massive Houston food bank. This was surprisingly the most backbreaking of the labor of all 4 days. I chose the job of restocking the care package assembly line, which was fast paced and involved a lot of lifting. Wielding my box cutter, I moved hundreds of cans of food so my friends could pack it into boxes.

I chose to reminisce about these three projects in particular because they were all physically demanding. Throughout this trip, I was reminded of the value of work and the value in the reason behind work. It was gratifying to experience the pain of these tasks for the betterment of Houston and the people I worked with. While sending money is the most popular form of hurricane relief, I felt a more personal dedication to the cause as I gave it all my energy. Providing my time and receiving tremendous perspective and satisfaction, the city of Houston is not just a flood zone, but a community I care about.