

# The Crimson White

Providing Disaster Updates

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## Fear, Panic, and Survival

by [Letter to the editor](#)

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by Jessica Trull

Wednesday, April 27, 2011 was a day that began like all other Wednesdays this spring semester. I prepared for my regular, daily routine. I left my apartment in University Village at 11:30 and headed to campus. I noticed the wind damage around me from the early morning thunderstorm and though I knew more storms may come, I thought, “it probably won’t be worse than this.”

I went into Gallalee Hall and prepared to serve as a TA for the last class before finals of the semester. At 2:30, I returned to my apartment in anticipation of the bad weather because I wanted to be somewhere I felt comfortable and safe. I flipped through different news channels as they were covering tornadoes around the state. I was live tweeting with my friends all over Alabama, the southeast and elsewhere as we discussed the storms and tried to remain calm and lighthearted in light of the potential for disaster.

I remember making jokes and saying to my “followers” that I had to do so or else I would go into shock from fright, as I am and have always been afraid when it “comes up a cloud,” as my Maw Maw used to always say.

Bad weather and tornadoes are one of my worst nightmares. James Spann made a comment on TV about putting on a bicycle helmet, to which I tweeted, “Well James, I’m fresh outta of helmets.”

I kept with the lighthearted spirit because friends and followers replied saying it was making them laugh and feel better. I then tweeted, “In my safe space. Keeping my valuables safe: laptop, iPhone, shoebox full of money, a picture of Ross, some diet coke, and chocolates. #alwx”

Soon after, around about 5:00 p.m., the TV stations showed what I thought was just a wall-cloud and rain, but was actually a huge tornado on the television. I began to get very scared, tweeting: “Okay. Seriously freaked. @spann is showing this massive tornado he says is headed to Tuscaloosa right now. #alwx”

It was unclear the path this enormous twister was taking. I didn’t know what to do. It was then my brother texted me “GET THE \*\*\*\* DOWN NOW.” to which I replied, “Omg, I know! It’s huge!! They’re showing it on tv.”

I still couldn’t tell where the tornado was or where it was headed. My brother then texted saying, “BF Goodwrich. Hunt oil. Very close to ur apts. Just mentioned TPD,” following up with, “I MEAN \*\*\*\* NOW.” I looked outside, couldn’t see anything. I looked back to the TV and still couldn’t tell where it was. I called my mom, freaking. She said to get in the tub. I then heard James Spann’s voice from my TV saying “Kauloosa Avenue and 35th street.” I said to my mom on the phone, “Momma that’s me!”

I looked back out my living room window, and there it was. I saw people outside, they pointed to the looming tornado and took off running. My mom was yelling on the phone telling me to get in the bathroom. I screamed, “I see it!!! Oh my God Mamma its right here!” I began to cry as I ran to the bathroom. The instant I got in the tub the power cut out. I was so afraid. My mom was trying to calm me, but I could not be helped.

My worst nightmare was happening. I heard the disturbing roaring and then just noises of things being tossed around and ripped apart. Then it stopped. I was alive. There was no major destruction to my place. I went to my window saw some debris lying about but nothing too damaging. People began to come out of their apartments and look around.

University Village suffered minimal damage compared to our community—some shingle and siding damage, a couple of buildings with roofs blown off, debris strewn about, busted windows from cars and apartments. But a mere cross of the street and there is literally nothing left. Rosedale Court and Charleston Square apartments—gone. Looking around, the damage seemed insurmountable. Sirens

continuously blared.

I kept checking twitter to see what was happening around me. People started to post pictures and videos. They said 15<sup>th</sup> street was demolished. Forest Lake was ruined. It was all so surreal. Celebrities began sending condolences on twitter. Alyssa Milano tweeted, “My thoughts and prayers are with the people of Alabama. [#Tornado](#).” I replied to her, “thank you! The 1 in Tuscaloosa was a mile wide. And there’s so much damage. I have no power & am worried about my community.” She tweeted back to me with, “hang in there.”

At this point, I have moved back in with my parents due to the lack of power and water. I am so grateful and so lucky to even have a home still standing, but at the same time, I also feel displaced. I weep for my city. But I know we are strong. I help when and where I can and am needed. [#wearealabama](#)

*Jessica Trull is a graduate student in women’s studies.*

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