

On a fall October night in 2019, around 7 pm, I was finishing homework and dinner. I got a phone call from my cousin, she was crying. She was crying so bad that I could barely understand her, but then I heard shot, so I tried to calm her down. Now that I finally have her calmed down, I hear someone's phone on my end start ringing. I got so mad because I could not hear her talking; it turned out my aunt called my mom telling her that my other cousin was shot. I was stunned. What just happened? My mom and I jumped into some clothes and rushed to the hospital, and as we are in Uber, we get another call from my other aunt, and she tells us that he did not make it. When I heard those words come out of her mouth, I could not believe it. I was in shock. What is happening? My cousin called back and told me that he did not make it, and she just cried and cried on the phone. Then the next day, my mom and I went around to visit family, and I spent the day with my cousin, who was on the phone crying that night. I didn't know how to make her feel better. I still could not believe that he was gone myself. For the next couple of days, all you hear is crying, arrangements, collecting money, it's all over the news, and it's on social media. As I look around I know what's happening, but what just happened? Three days later his funeral came around and seeing all of his friends, family, teachers, and the news reporters, it hit me "this is real, He's gone."

The boy that was killed was my cousin. He was only 15 years old. We had a lot of happy and exciting moments together. We were together during the summer and weekend, going to the pool, going on vacation, eating at different restaurants, and many more memories. He was so good at all the things he put his mind to, such as music (rapping), riding dirt bikes, and most of all, basketball. He was becoming well known for his music, wonderful sense of humor. Most importantly he was deep into social media. Because of these significant factors, he had many people starting to get jealous of him because of his upcoming fame. When social media should have been a platform to show off talent, it turned very negative. There was a lot of feuding and threats that were exchanged on something that should have been positive. I often think, "wow, he was only 15 and killed because of social media, jealousy, and wanting to belong but often times identifying and belonging to the wrong crowd", then I also think, "I'm now 15 as well. I have great things going for myself and I feel the opposite. I don't feel the need to broadcast every little thing on social media just to belong". And this is why I also listen to my mom's lectures on life because what she always says is "a mother knows" and she now has convinced me that mothers are psychic.

As a result of belonging, and identifying as something sometimes a lot of people mainly teens feel that they do not belong. They feel that they need to make themselves something they're not just to belong to a group. So they will create social media or what we sometimes call catfishing to hide their identity to fit into someone's or a group of people's criteria or expectations. The fact and lesson that I think is essential for teenagers to understand are that being a teenager in these times, social media can not become your journal. Social media is full of entertainment that people enjoy, which draws their attention. Social media has its positives and negatives, but people need to understand that social media can sometimes put targets on your back even if you came on there with all good intentions. Like my cousin, he came on social media with good intentions of