The Story Of The Friendship

In 8th grade I had my own little crew I guess you could call it. Everyone in the neighborhood knew about our group because we would do everything together. If we didn’t do it together we didn’t do anything at all. There seemed to be about 30 of us in the group when in reality there was only about 8. These people weren’t blood but they were my family. All ranging in different ages, so we would usually be in one big group but we would be in smaller groups at the same time. We had our favorite people so to say. Well everyone did except for me. I felt like the odd man out all the time just sticking around. I guess you can say I was the one that no one really needed to make the group seem full. Or that's how I felt at least.

As a group, no matter where we went in the hood it seemed as if we always resorted back to our local gym. This was our park in the neighborhood, it was dead smack in the middle of a residence street and was always “bussing” as we would say. This is where we would be when it was too hot in the summer and when it's too cold in the winter. Either we’re playing basketball or were just in there talking, we still had a great time even with the little things we had. Especially seeming to come from somewhere that doesn’t necessarily have much, we still had a lot it seemed, but really all we had was each other.

It seems as if our memories were just yesterday when in reality it happened in the summer of my 8th-grade year. The day started out amazing to be fully honest. Woke up bright and early, glad to be out of school and ready to enjoy my summer vacation. Nothing could have indicated how terrible my day was going to go, I was taking my life as you would say it “one day at a time.” I then proceeded to step outside onto the bright sunny day, with the ground hot like sand at a beach. It was a lovely day indeed, with the sun shimmering down onto everything it touched.

So I then went on to do what I did every summer, go to the open gym with my friends. Every Friday, the gym would be packed like Easter Sunday but everyone was from the community and were good friends. So it was always a welcoming environment with so much love. I can proudly say I never went a full day in that gym without smiling. This is the same block where there would be barbeque and block parties for days on end, so you could say it was a pretty popular thing in the neighborhood.

We would play from when the gym opened to when the gym closed, there was never a dull moment to be found there. We’ve made so many memories I could go on and on about how special this gym was to everyone. We were a family, that had seemed to have found ourselves a home.

Now my friends and I had been at the gym all day and it was finally time to go home. Now, this day had been going like a routine day; there were 8 of us that would all walk together to each other houses and basically drop each other off, house by house, every open gym night.

Every night, this boy and I were always the very last ones to go home. We would walk together, knowing that we both were in the same group but we never really talked. It would always be quiet the whole way or we would get on our phone or something to pass the time.

On this particular night, as everyone’s going home, it's just me and the boy left to go home like usual. This time in particular for no reason at all, that boy said,

“I never asked you but, what is your name?”

I was astonished to hear the boy even talk to me! So I responded

“Dar-” my voice cut short by how tired I was.

“What did you say?” he said.

I stayed silent...

He said “it’s ok, I want to be your friend, I don’t really see you talking to people when we hoop. You must be all about business huh?”

as he laughed. I repeated

“Darryl, and what’s your name.”

“Ahmad” he answered.

I really felt as if someone had cared about the loner of the group, he made that lost feeling go away.

The very next day, we talked the entire day and became close friends. He was one of the nicest people I’ve ever met in my life and I can proudly say that no one’s even close. Ahmad was the most caring person I had ever met, he would rather see other people make it to their goals before himself even if he deserved it or make sacrifices himself. We never really had anything and he was still willing to give up everything.

Then on June 17th of 2015, was the day everything changed. That day is still as vivid as blinding light. As we’re walking to go home again a car pulls up alongside us and lets off roaring gunshots. Each shot letting off sounds of thunder. Me and Ahmad dash off running as fast as we can. We both get to the corner of the block while the car is still chasing us and we split off in two separate directions and the car follows him. I ran off, hid, and waited a while before leaving from my hiding spot. I waited for minutes, seemed like hours, to only just calm myself down. Then just as I check to see if everything was okay, I hear sirens. I’m guessing they’re coming over here for the gunshots to check and see what’s going on when really it was something else. I could feel it.

It’s usual to hear sirens and blue and red lights where I’m from but I had this terrible feeling in my gut like something wasn’t right. As I walked away from the hiding spot I just couldn’t get over that I almost died but came out unscathed and I can only thank God.

As I calmed down, I began to think,

“Where is Ahmad? I hope he’s okay, he probably went home. I hope he made it back safe.” (Our phones were off)

As I’m walking I hear the sirens really close. Like REALLY close, remember that feeling I had in my stomach; It only got worse.

I walked around the block only to see bright red and blue flickering lights and yellow tape with about 4 cop cars with the street blocked off and families standing outside. Ahmad was there. Laying on the ground, on his stomach about to be put on a stretcher to go to the hospital. Just to find out he was dead on the spot. This day was indescribable when compared to even some of my worst worst days. This is nothing you ever can EXPECT to happen but this is what happens where I’m from. We lose close people, family, mothers, fathers, teachers, kids, everything but we can’t do anything about it but just act strong for the next day ahead.

That boy’s death affected the entire school. That boy’s death affected the whole community. That boy’s death affected families and a number of friends. That boy’s name was Ahmad Smith. Ahmad’s death was tragic and breathtaking but we didn’t let his death bring us down. If anything it didn’t do anything but bring us together and make us one. After this day I participated in many group makings for “Put The Guns Down Chicago” including for my school and the community of Chicago. Though one thing about this movement, It didn’t have all positives. This caused Mayor Rahm Emanual to flood police on almost every block to try and control the violence. Though this did get everyone off the corners and slowed down the violence, the people of Chicago can tell you that it’s never been the same since. In Chicago a lot of people actually don’t like the police because of our past experiences, they constantly abuse their authority with an abundance of harassment and a lot of people can tell you, they’ve killed neighborhoods and plenty of more people.

Though still, I took what happened to Ahmad and now that is the lens I look at life through. Anything and everything you see, have, or own are all privileges and even the most dearest things can be taken away. Without warning or even without preparation. And there’s nothing no one can do about it because it’s simply just life. Still, till this day, I regret leaving him. I should have never split off from him, we were family and now we will forever be without a piece of it all because of me. Though I feel that I miss him, I feel as if he made me who I am today and though I’ll never see him again, he’s always on my mind and he knows that. I Love You, Ahmad.