

## Cell Phones Anonymous

By: Nick Munyaneza

I am brought back to that dreadful October night that turned my life upside down. As I walk into the San Bernardino Community Center, I am filled with hope. Maybe I can relate and find people to help me through this. I walk around until I find the room I am looking for.

I see everybody sitting in a circle. I do not know why that stood out to me, I did all the research I could the day I heard about this. The meeting starts and everybody introduces themselves, it's my turn.

"Hi, my name is Justin's iPhone." I say.

"Hi Justin's iPhone," the drone of voices says back to me.

We start talking about our experiences. Jessica's iPhone starts.

"I blame myself. If I wasn't buzzing so loud, maybe Jessica wouldn't have picked me up. I'm too irresistible. With Instagram, Snapchat, Messages, and all my games, how could she resist me? Especially when traffic looked so slow."

What Jessica's iPhone said swayed me. I feel the exact same. She goes on and talks about how she tried her best. The internet was slow, she started glitching, but Jessica was too persistent.

"Thank you for gaining the courage to share your story with us Jessica's iPhone. It's hard to live with that everyday. We have to remind ourselves that the driver picked us up, not the other way around." James' iPhone says.

James' iPhone is the guy who told me about this. We met at the gym. We've been friends for a while now. He helped me through this.

James' iPhone says, "Justin's iPhone, you want to share your story today? There's no pressure if you don't feel comfortable."

"No, I can share." I say as I try to recall that godforsaken day.

"Justin had just come back from a basketball game. It was late, so the roads were pretty empty. 'Let's see who texted me back' he says and grabs me. He puts his password in and I try to stop him but he just clicked the I'm not driving button and went straight to the Messages app. After seeing he had no new messages, he went straight to Candy Crush Saga. He played for about half a mile. We stopped at a red light for a little bit. The light turns green and Justin just hits the gas but forgets to look both ways. That's when a driver ran a red light and hit us. I sustained a broken camera, also shattering both front and back screens but the phone repair guy was able to piece me back together. Justin was lucky enough to have just gotten a concussion, a few broken ribs, and a broken leg."

"Thank you Justin's iPhone," the drone of voices monotonically responds back. This was my first time retelling the full story to another person let alone people other than James' iPhone.

"Again, it's important to understand that the drivers know that they aren't supposed to be looking at us, but rather at the roads. It's not our fault."

Next up is Jose's iPhone.

"We were just from the bar. We all knew Jose wasn't sober enough to drive but he kept insisting that he was fine. 'I'm fine. You guys know me, I'm the best driver in San Bernardino.' He fumbles through his keys and barely manages to open and start his beat up Chevy Silverado.

Because of his drunkenness, he swerved out of his lane into the opposite lane and had a head first collision with a small little Kia Soul. Jose made it through the crash and after many months of surgeries and PT, he was able to make a full recovery. Unfortunately, the old woman in the Kia Soul died shortly before the paramedics made it.”

“Thank you for sharing your story Jose’s iPhone,” James’ iPhone says.

“It must have been hard seeing Jose like that and still deciding to drive. This sheds the light on the other side of distracted driving. You don’t have to be distracted by something physical like a phone, you can also be distracted mentally.”

Jose’s iPhone was the last to share for the night. Jose and Jessica’s situation shed some light on how little a distraction needs to be to cause an accident and how a distracted driver can hurt more than themselves. I hope that we all walk out of here today willing to share our stories because it needs to be out there. Drivers need to be alert when driving. Drivers need to get off their phones. Drivers need to stop changing the song. But most importantly, drivers need to understand that a mistake, however little, can drastically change someone else’s life for the worse.