If we haven't met yet, hi! I'm Morgan McCaffery. At just 18 years old I was brutally murdered by my ex-boyfriend. Like most teens in a new relationship, I thought I was in love. I would wake up to "good morning beautiful" texts, get treated to my favorite meals, and would cheer on my boyfriend at his sporting events. My family welcomed him in and his did the same for me. Things were going great. Until they weren't...

A few months into our relationship I started noticing changes. Was the "honeymoon phase" over? I noticed more anger in my boyfriend. It started as small things that would send him into a rage, such as me not texting him back right away or not answering my phone. At the time I validated his actions, telling myself, "he is just having a bad day". Occasionally he would call me names but again I defended him and would

tell my friends, "we all say things when we're angry. I know he doesn't mean it".   When we were with my friends or family he didn't show much interest in being there. He would sit quietly on his phone, hardly interacting with everyone. It bothered me, but I thought maybe he was just tired, or maybe he was just wishing it was just us two so we could cuddle up and watch Netflix. I wished he would want to spend time with my friends and family, but I always tried to brush it off. Sometimes I would get upset at the way he acted and I would try to tell him that, but he never seemed to understand. He would tell me I was being dramatic and that I needed to get over it. This went on for months and never seemed to get better. Actually, things were getting worse.

I remember the first time he got so angry that he threatened to hit me. I was so scared, but thought

I was okay because "he wouldn't ACTUALLY do that, right?" This wasn't the first or last time he expressed his anger like this. My friends tried to tell me this wasn't normal. They told me he was no good for me and to move on, but I just didn't want to hurt him. I had my heart broken in the past, I'm sure we all have at some time or another, and I never wanted to break someone else's heart. So, I did what I thought any teen would do, I tried to work it out with him. Things would be better for a period of time. We would be happy again, laughing, enjoying each other's company, and just having fun. But then something would happen that would make him angry again. Eventually, the empty threats weren't so empty. I had been shoved, I had been punched, I had even been bit. I couldn't understand why he would do that to someone he loved, and I knew it was time to end things. . .

After ending the relationship the threats didn't stop. I received messages threatening to kill me and to "keep my head on a swivel". I agreed to meet him to give him closure. I was scared but I never thought he would actually kill me. Until he did.

I was blinded from seeing the red flags. The emotional abuse, the threats, the physical abuse, it was all there, but I didn't see it until it was too late.

Now my story is helping other teens, young adults, and parents to recognize the signs of unhealthy, toxic, relationships. It is encouraging those in relationships to reflect inward on their relationship and evaluate if it is healthy or if there are some concerns. My story is shining a light on a topic that isn't widely talked about but yet is so prevalent in our community.

With your help, we can put an end to teen dating violence, domestic violence, and the silence surrounding them. If my story touched you in any way, I'm asking you to please share this with your friends and family. No one should have to feel confused, unsafe, alone, or scared in their relationship. If you or someone you know is in an unhealthy relationship there are resources out there to help.

Remember to always Shine Bright;

Love

morg♥