

Deleting Your Racist Uncle on Facebook

By Emily Minarik

Anytime that there's controversy in the news, logging onto Facebook is scary. Everyone suddenly becomes an expert on all topics pertaining to that controversy. I get it: freedom of speech and all. Yes, I did willingly add these people; and yes, I willingly agreed to allow them complain on my newsfeed. But sometimes things go too far and it's time to finally hit delete.

Opinions vary from person to person on whether America should be letting in Syrian refugees. For now, I do not want to discuss the specifics over the refugee debate in order to avoid further conflict. However, people have a lot to say about the things that they don't know very much about. I am no way an expert on the refugee crisis, yet I'd like to share my two cents about the situation.

Through working with the Nashville International Center for Empowerment, or NICE, I have welcomed a new perspective pertaining to the conflict surrounding refugees. I in no way mean to say that I understand the refugees' situation. Claiming that I know what these people have gone through is completely disrespectful to them, and I refuse to allow myself to discredit their struggle just because I've seen a few news stories.

But volunteering has reminded me of one essential thing: these people are people. Refugees are human and should not be treated like anything less. Without a doubt, the refugees I have met through NICE are some of the kindest people I've ever met. Working with both refugee adults and children were transformative experiences. No, I did not "save" these people; I'm not ignorant enough to think that I could make their pain go away. But I did form a connection with these refugees. And for that, I refuse to view them or any refugee as anything less than people who simply deserve a chance.

Lately when I've seen rude comments on social media, it's been difficult to not get offended. These specific refugees may not be the ones that your racist uncle is referring to, but it all goes back to the same thing – ALL of these refugees are human.

The problem is not only that one uncle either: it's your extended cousin and that random acquaintance from high school too. Personally, I don't like to talk about politics on Facebook. I have better things to do with my life than fight with someone in the comments section of my newsfeed. I cannot change someone else's opinion. Period. I believe what I believe, and that's what should matter to me when it comes to social media.

So my advice is next time you see yet another Facebook status that offends you: delete that person. I've learned the hard way that their ignorance is not worth my hurt feelings. Everyone has different opinions when it comes to politics, and that's okay – that is what this country was founded upon. But out of respect for the refugees that I have briefly come to know, I refuse to read any more rants of racist stereotypes and generalizations. I stand with these people because losing faith in their humanity is not the way to keep mine.