Don’s Encounter with the Police

At 10:45pm, Don is on his way home and remembers that he needs to pick up some eggs and milk before going home.

Don meets up with his girlfriend, who gives him grocery money. He hugs and kisses her and heads to the store.

No more than five minutes after leaving his girlfriend, Don is pulled over by cops.

The cops get out of the car and search Don. They claim they witnessed a “transaction” between Don and his girlfriend.

The police take Don into custody for possession of marijuana, though they did not find any.

Don cannot afford an attorney so cannot fight his case effectively.

Don accepts an offer of probation for something he did not do. The alternative given to him was 3 years in detention.

Ethan’s Story

Age 16

Ethan is sitting in class at his school when a security guard enters the classroom and tells him that he must come down to the office.

The security guard escorts Ethan to the office and handcuffs him so that he is locked to a chair. Ethan’s friend already is in the office.

Ethan repeatedly asks what is going on and if he’s under arrest. He becomes angry because the officers will not explain what is happening. One officer tells him, “You’re the bad guy.”

Another officer handcuffs Ethan so that his hands are behind his back. The officer waits for the bell to ring to begin the next passing period. The officer escorts Ethan out of the school, through the hallways in front of his friends and fellow students.

The officer drives Ethan to a police station a couple of blocks away and leads him to the interrogation room. Ethan doesn’t know his rights, and officers question him without a parent or lawyer present.

The officers interrogate Ethan about a theft at a recent party where he was the only Black youth who attended. Someone has falsely accused him. Ethan feels scared and stressed but has no information to share. The officers eventually release Ethan.

This is the second time officers have removed Ethan from his school to question him about an incident not related to the school. After a couple of additional incidents with school staff, Ethan decides he’s “never going back to CPS.” He leaves school.