

Good Evening everyone, my name is Ian Johnson, and I am the president of the African American Student Union on Montgomery College Germantown Campus, as well as a senator at large, a Student Activities Board member, and a board member of the Young People for Progress. I support this bill to ban consent searches because they are ineffective and disproportionately affect black and brown people.

Let's cut to the chase: consent searches by the police are car-centric ways of increasing criminalization of African Americans. The police have always had a goal to incarcerate Black Americans, ever since their creation as slave patrols that copied the KKK's homework, but changed the name. A lot has changed since then but their clear discriminatory practices still ring strong in today's society. I was stopped by the police for incorrect usage of the crosswalk. Not his words, but the essay version of jaywalking. I used the crosswalk when no one was around, but when the hand was red. I'll never forget the cop speeding up from down the block to turn the corner where I was crossing, almost hitting me to stop me about traffic safety. I would have gotten a ticket too, but when I said I was 13, he just told me to go home. You probably noticed that this wasn't an example of a consent search. So why am I telling you this? So that you can see just how harmful and stressful police interaction can be, whether you're just watching police cars drive down the street, or just walking down the street yourself, all the while thinking, am I going to be the next name on some tired black man's t shirt?

This pressure to comply with an officer's orders amounts to coercion during a consent search. People are coerced into opening their trunks because of course they "don't have a body back there." There is no good intention here.

My parents always told never to be afraid of the police, but to always comply. We do what we're told and we still get pulled over for it. Most people don't know they even have a choice to say 'no' because saying no to an officer is linked with disobedience. That is something that has always been shared between different African American households: you always keep your hands out of your pockets, in front of you, you announce every movement before you make it, and you speak clearly and you won't get hurt. Consent searches are proof that we are not the issue, and we never were.

Consent searches are supposed to be just that. Us giving you, an officer, consent to search our vehicles. But that's not what they're doing. They're planting drugs, harassing people, wasting time and money, and making us feel unsafe. It's supposed to be a mutual agreement, not a coercion where one of us has a weapon and the law on their side. Go ahead, you try saying no to the guy with your life in his hands.