



Clayden's interview about his experiences of being stopped and searched

'I'm not allowed to have feelings...because this is everyday life of being a black person'

In 2020, Clayden was stopped and searched about 70 times. He told me that he stopped counting after 45. The first thing that comes to his mind when he thinks of the police is: 'problems, trouble, more annoyance than anything else that's positive'. [Watch an extract of the interview here](#) [INSERT LINK](#)

Experiences of being stopped and searched

Clayden tells me that last summer, he was stopped and searched about 30 times. 'I think once a week I was getting stopped and searched so it's kind of normal'. He tells me that one day, he was stopped and searched twice within the same 30-45 minute period.

The first time was when he was got into his car in his driveway to go to the shops. The police officers asked him who the owner of the car was, how many points he had off his licence, whether his record was clean. They told him that they were doing 'random' stop and searches.

When he came back from the shop and wanted to park in his driveway, he was stopped again by another set of police officers. They didn't let him park in his driveway and made him cross the road where he was stopped and searched again. Clayden told them that he had just been stopped and searched 30-45 minutes ago and asked them if they didn't keep a record of the number plates and people they'd stopped and searched. An officer told him 'I don't recall that happening'.

Clayden told them that he needed to get back to work and ask them if they could 'get it over with'. The police officers asked him whether he had insurance, if he owned the car, where he lived. He told them that there was no



point in them asking him questions that they could find the answers to by running the licence plate.

The police officer wanted his car keys, so that he wouldn't 'drive off', but Clayden replied 'where can I drive off to? You have my address and I live across the road, you don't need my keys, my engine is turned off'.

When he's stopped and searched, the reason he's often given is drug-related or because he looks suspicious. They tell him he fits the description of a suspect they're looking for because he has a beard or because he looks like 'a big black guy'.

The most 'ridiculous' situation where a police officer stopped him was when an officer told him 'we could see that there was Vaseline in your car and that's normally used for people to hide drugs'. He did have a small tub of Vaseline in his glove compartment, which the police officer couldn't have seen. He told the officer 'you can't stop me for that reason because you can't see into my glove compartment'.

He tells me that they just put a 'stereotype' on him. They assumed that, as a black person, he'd have drugs just because he had Vaseline in his car.

The first time he was stopped and searched, he was 14. According to him, he was tall for his age and had a little bit of a beard. The officers told him he fit the description of a suspect who was wearing all black and had a massive bag. He was taken into custody because they didn't believe he was 14.

After he was arrested, they realized that he had his basketball kit in his bag because at the time he was playing basketball professionally. They didn't believe he was 14 when he told them, but by the time they found out, 'it was too late'. He missed his game that day.

Racial profiling

When he gets stopped and searched, the officers tend to assume he has convictions. When they check his record and his license, they are 'shocked' to

find that he doesn't have convictions, he hasn't been arrested, and he doesn't have points off his licence.

'They're surprised that nothing's happened but really they should assume nothing's happened'

He tells me that his clothing makes a difference as to the likelihood of him getting stopped, whether he's in dark clothing or wearing a hood for example. But it's more likely he'll be stopped than 'other ethnicities' regardless of his clothing. He tells me 'it's common knowledge for being a black person'.

'I'm not allowed to have feelings'

'I'm not allowed to have feelings...because this is everyday life of being a black person, so there's no point in having feelings because if I have feelings I'm still going to get stopped, I'm still going to get abused either way, the only difference is I have to educate myself and be smart about it, because if I cry or whatever, they're still gonna do what they want to do'

'I've found best ways to deal with it, so depending on the aggression or how they approach me, I'll navigate my way through to get the best outcome'

He tells me that there's no point in becoming angry or upset during a stop and search because 'it may make my situation worse' and his emotions will 'be used against [him]'.

'I'm 6.3, if I raise my voice even one little bit, I'm automatically deemed and seen as an aggressive black person...I'm automatically seen as a violent person, so I've got to humble myself, to protect myself'.

'I know if I comply and be quiet, the situation will go over quickly with'

His advice

He tells me that if you know what the stop and search process is, it 'makes your life easier'.



During the stop and search, 'correct the statements' they make about you if they're wrong, and 'make sure you record everything'. It's best to have video or sound evidence of the stop and search in case anything bad happens or lies are told. Clayden considers his 'collection' of video and sound evidence to be his 'safety net', in case he gets wrongfully convicted 'for the sake of someone getting numbers or points, getting their stacks up to look good in front of everyone else, or the fact that they don't like who I am'.

Be educated about what your rights are, what the police powers are, and record it because 'at least you have evidence of what you have done against what people may say you haven't done'.

He tells me that even if you know your rights, sometimes it's best to comply even if you know the stop and search is being done incorrectly, because the stop and search can become longer and more complicated and 'that 10-15 minute stop ends up being an hour stop and that's going to cost me my job, the things I go through, my mental health, my wellbeing'.

He does believe that 'everybody needs to have a basic understanding' of their rights. He tells me that some people can become scared during a stop and search and the police officers 'will prey on that'. Your reaction to the stop and search can 'make the situation worse'.

He recommends that you 'should have a calm demeanour, be able to articulate yourself well'.

'It's very difficult to be cooperative when you know you've done nothing or there's no reason for you to be searched'. But if you raise your voice during a stop and search, for example, you then 'become a threat', or if you say 'what are you doing to me?!', then you're seen as 'aggressive'.

'If they come in aggressive, the best thing to do is just be quiet, comply, listen to whatever they say, if they call you names or accuse you, there's no point in arguing because it causes you to be in a longer situation than you need to be'.

Perception of the process of stop and search

Clayden tells me that using stop and searches makes sense if you're in a location where there is 'truthfully' more crime or the police have 'people on their radar'. But he is constantly stopped and searched even if he's never been in any (dangerous) situation, so 'clearly there's something wrong with the process'.

His neighbour has told him that he's been only stopped and searched once in his life, but C can tell me the amount of times he's been stopped and searched in a day, a week, a month. And 'there's no difference between us' – apart from the colour of their skin.

'So clearly the process is not right, if the process was good, you wouldn't be having this interview with me today...if the process was right there wouldn't be so many people complaining, there wouldn't be so many cases of wrongful stop and search'.

What should be done?

He tells me that 'there's needs to be a reform'. He believes there needs to be a more 'thorough' system of recruitment and training, to ensure police officers don't have 'unconscious bias' and that they are there to make a positive difference. According to him, the problem is that 'there's just more worse police officers, then there are ones that are good... I feel sorry for those that are good because they can't speak up'.

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