

Jazmine's Story



Jazmine was referred to the youthSpark Voices program after being placed on probation at Fulton County Juvenile Court for a long history of running away and truancy. She was only 14 when she began leaving the home after arguments with her mother. She felt misunderstood and would be angry because she felt her mother never listened. In fact, Jazmine felt that the only time her mother really "listened" was when a teacher or someone else had something negative to say. So when Doug followed her on Instagram, she loved his eagerness to listen to her. He asked her questions about school, encouraging to attend every day because she was smart. He even told her he'd go after anyone, including her mom, that didn't treat her like the queen she was. One day, Doug told her that he wanted to meet her in person and although Jazmine's hesitated, she was intrigued to meet him also. They met up one day after school and he bought her Subway. They mostly talked in the car. *"We would talk about any and everything! He asked about my day and he wanted to know about my family. You know, all the things people in normal relationships talk about."* The more time she spent with Doug, the more she fell in love. Jaz started doing whatever she could to spend time with him. After yet another heated argument with her mom, Jaz was grounded but she knew that Doug would be waiting. She called him and told him she needed to sneak out. When Jaz finally arrived, he told her he wanted to introduce her to the business. He said she was mature and that he'd never told any other girls because he didn't trust them like he trusted her. For a while, she only had to pose for pics until one day he told her that his other "business partners" were unavailable. He explained that he needed her to step up. Thinking back about the incident, Jaz recalled, *"I didn't exactly know what that meant, but I knew I couldn't say no."* On this day, Doug seemed different. They didn't talk as much as they normally did and he spent a lot of time on his cell phone. She overheard him saying that the door would be open and that he'd be waiting upstairs. Doug told her that he knew she was going to be a good girl and take care of business. Jaz was afraid and texted her mom but by then, her mom was clearly upset. She knew she was in trouble and felt she deserved whatever happened. That was the first time she was forced to have sex. Like many young girls, Jazmine did what she thought she had to. Like many young girls, she did not see herself as a victim and considered Doug to be her boyfriend. After realizing Doug's "love" didn't feel like love anymore, Jaz leaned more into the Voices program. It was through weekly support and having a safe space to talk about hard things, that Jaz flourished and began building healthy relationships. Jaz completed youthSpark's Voices program and helped welcome other girls to the group. She shares her story and teaches others that sometimes a boyfriend isn't just a boyfriend.