


EXCLUSIVE: Black couple whose surprise marriage proposal was ruined by racial profiling speaks out: 'I just wanted to leave'

 theGrio.com/2019/07/23/exclusive-black-couple-whose-surprise-marriage-proposal-was-ruined-by-racial-profiling-speaks-out-i-just-wanted-to-leave/

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A Black couple is speaking out after their special moment was ruined when security at the Angry Orchard hard cider brewery interrupted their romantic wedding proposal with an accusation of stealing a \$28 T-shirt from its gift shop.

On Sunday, **Cathy-Marie Hamlet** to recall the moment she says her party was racially profiled at the Walden, N.Y., location with her fiancé **Clyde Jackson** who was celebrating his 40th birthday with six friends.

"As a Black person in a White environment, you always tend to have a heightened awareness because you know people are going to perceive you differently, and not always in a positive way," Hamlet said in an email interview with *theGrio*.

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The couple had been together for three years, when Jackson led Hamlet out to a lawn area to propose in front of their loved ones, she didn't see it coming. But what should have been one of the most beautiful moments of her life, quickly turned ugly as an Angry Orchard security official stormed over to the couple and said to Jackson, "'I'm sorry sir, but I have to check your back pocket. I was told that you stole a T-shirt from the gift store.' "

"I was shocked and bit annoyed, but I brushed it off," Hamlet said of that initial encounter, determined to focus instead on the man she loved.

But even after Jackson, "emptied all of his pockets, while still trying to keep the ring box hidden," dismissing the guard to get back to the matter at hand, the overzealous security guard chose to return again "mid-proposal," and asked *her* to empty her bags as well.

"They way they relentlessly approached us I think was telling, especially with us knowing we did nothing wrong," Hamlet recalls.

"I emptied my entire bag in front of her, and since this was the SECOND time she had walked over, I said, 'I know you're just doing your job, but I can't help but wonder if this is because we're Black. We're the only Black people here at your establishment.' "

"Of course, she said that that wasn't the case," Hamlet continued.

But after soon the couple successfully finished the proposal and their guests started cheering in celebration, security came back over to harass them and this time shouted out, "Call the police!"

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The newly engaged doctor says at one point a member of Angry Orchard's team even went as far as to lie and say, "I saw you do it," while pointing to her then boyfriend.

"To be honest everything else was a blur because I just wanted to leave after I heard "Call the police," she now admits. "I know what some encounters with law enforcement and people of color can lead to, and I wasn't interested in finding out where that would lead to that day."

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Since the story has gone viral the couple says Angry Orchard reached out to them by phone to "apologize and say they overreacted," and have also posted messages on Hamlet's Instagram and Facebook pages.

As for what they want the company to do moving forward, "I'm not sure, but I knew I shouldn't stay silent after Sunday," Hamlet admits, adding, "But I do want to know specifically what is going to happen to those employees in particular there that day."

TheGrio reached out several times to the Angry Orchard brewery as well as its corporate parent The Boston Beer Company for comment, but officials did not respond.

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However, the company did send a statement to [PEOPLE](#), saying: "We reached out and spoke directly with the guest involved to express our apology and offer to make it right. Our security team approached a group of guests based on what they thought was credible information at the time. We believe that we mishandled the situation and we're now working on additional training for our team to prevent something like this from happening in the future. We're deeply sorry. The situation didn't reflect our values of respect and creating a welcoming environment for our guests."

The company later posted a statement to its social media accounts saying that it investigated the incident and replaced the security team and managers that were present and would do more training of its staff.

pic.twitter.com/S94yuczu5d

— Angry Orchard (@AngryOrchard) July 23, 2019