

mu@massupdater.com

From: erica@massupdater.com
Sent: Monday, August 06, 2012 5:55 PM
To: 'valerie@chicagochocolatetours.com'
Subject: FW: Follow-up to our call earlier today

Hi Valerie,

Below is the email reply from Paul.

It's all spin. In fact, he even suggested that we wanted him to fire Shane, which is ridiculous.

So, bottom line is, DaShan and I will not be returning to the Herrington, ever. If you're looking for the email draft that I forwarded to you originally, it won't be in this group, because I never sent it to them. I sent them the 'missing element' email that you can read just before Paul's reply. You can see for yourself that they are game playing racist jerks. I feel sorry for Jennifer because she still has to work there.

-Erica

From: Paul Ruby [mailto:paul_ruby@shodeen.com]
Sent: Monday, August 06, 2012 3:09 PM
To: erica@massupdater.com
Cc: Jennifer Piazza
Subject: RE: Follow-up to our call earlier today

Erica,

I'm not sure if this will help or not, but here is the actual schedule of all male employees who worked on 7/18 and 7/19:

7/18 Front Desk 7am – 3pm, Shane (Front Office Manager)
7/18 Bellman 6am – 3pm, Chris
7/18 Bellman 3pm – 10pm, Marty
7/19 Front Desk 7am – 3pm, Chris
7/19 Bellman 7am – 3pm, Marty
7/19 Bellman 2pm – 10pm, Tim

According to our log you checked in at 12:39pm on 7/18, which means you were assisted by Shane or Chris. Your check-out time was 12:00pm on 7/19, which means you were assisted by Chris as Marty the Bellman has not been cross trained to check out guests yet. If you are positive that the person who checked you out (Chris) is not the same person who checked you in then we can deduce that Shane our Front Office Manager checked you in.

I am disappointed that you still feel that one of our staff members is a bigot. However, I have thoroughly investigated this situation and I am quite certain that this is a misunderstanding that has resulted in some serious allegations.

I assure you that I have taken this matter seriously, but based on the staff involved I do not feel the situation warrants additional time or energy from either of us. I certainly do not intend to terminate our Front Desk Manager who has been with the hotel since 1999 without incident.

Sincerely,

Paul Ruby

From: erica@massupdater.com [mailto:erica@massupdater.com]
Sent: Sunday, August 05, 2012 10:39 AM
To: Paul Ruby
Cc: Shane Walker; Jennifer Piazza
Subject: RE: Follow-up to our call earlier today

Dear Paul,

I think I have the missing elements that you were looking before, and that clears things up.

After your last email, I think there's a bit of intentional confusion going on here. Not on your part, and not on my part. But, the guy who checked us out is the same guy who carried our bags during the last year's retreat and he was also the same guy who carried our bags during our honeymoon. I understand he is the bellhop. And he does not check people in and out, but he carries their bags.

Well, the person who checked us out was the bellhop who carried our bags on two separate occasions. He was the one behind the counter with the nametag Chris on the last day during our checkout and he looks completely different from the guy who checked us in.

We recognize the bellhop who checked us out immediately when we come to the Herrington, we look for this guy, because we had such a positive experience with him every time, on multiple occasions. On check in, when we came to the counter, there was no one there to check us in initially, but a bald man (sorry, we don't know his name, but my husband says his bald haircut works well for him), who was sitting behind the desk called for someone from the back. We were truly hoping that it would be the bellhop that we are used to seeing. But it wasn't, it was a new guy – or at least a guy we had never seen or interacted with before. What I suspect is going on is that you have a guy who is not fessing up to what he did, and actually convinced your resident bellhop to take his place on checkout. The only problem is that he did not know that we have seen the bellhop before on multiple occasions and would not mistake him for anyone else. Although we may not know his name personally, we do know that there were two different people who checked us in and checked us out. Even though the one who did the bigoted check in may believe he looks exactly like the other guy, or that we wouldn't be able to tell the difference – he was mistaken. Is your bellhop named Chris? If your bellhop is not named Chris, then the actual Chris has some explaining to do.

We know that there are two different guys, because on check-out day we walked right past the guy who checked us in – he was on the main floor near the desk talking to another WIN member. Even though he was talking to the other WIN member he looked directly at us as we walked past, as we walked up to the counter to check out . Paul, the guy knew he did something absolutely wrong, and he knew that it may get him in a heap of trouble, so he came up with a quick plan, but he didn't think through one small crucial element: that we would know the guy who would check us out in his place. Here are the questions that we have to ask: does the bellhop have the same name as one of your desk clerks? Was the desk clerk working at the Herrington in November 13, 2011, and would he would be working at the Herrington during July 19-21 2011? Paul, we just want to get to the bottom of the matter and I think this will help. The guy had obvious holes in his plan and we're sorry and saddened that the bellhop was pushed and dragged in to take the fall for a guy who should have been courageous enough to stand by his poorly chosen methods. Now we understand clearly why the bellhop – the guy on checkout – looked so surprised and confused when we said we were dissatisfied with our stay. I think at that moment, he realized he had been put purposefully in a bad position.

Please apologize to the bellhop for us, we understand his name might be Tim. When this began we always had the intent to make sure that his reputation wasn't dragged into this matter.

Thanks so much, I look forward to your email response and your findings.

-Erica Thomas

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From: Paul Ruby [mailto:paul_ruby@shodeen.com]
Sent: Friday, August 03, 2012 11:03 AM
To: erica@massupdater.com
Cc: valerie@chicagochocolatetours.com; Shane Walker; Jennifer Piazza
Subject: RE: Follow-up to our call earlier today

Dear Erica,

I am a little confused by your comments about Chris at the front desk who not only checked you out but also checked you in. You may not have realized this as he was in a bellman's uniform when he checked you in and in a shirt and tie when he checked you out. Although Chris may be guilty of lacking attention to detail regarding the clerical portion of the check-in process I am quite certain he is not guilty of discrimination. Chris clearly recalls checking you in and out and he was taken aback by your accusations.

I apologize that it appeared that the procedures Chris followed seemed different because of your husband's race, but it is necessary to explain to all guests how banks implement a credit hold on all debit card authorizations to avoid issues with overdrafts. I also apologize that your experience was compromised because of the mistake regarding the number of people registered in the room. This issue most definitely should have been corrected when you checked in.

I sincerely hope you realize that there are two sides to every story and sometimes there are reasonable explanations for situations. And sometimes small issues such as not correcting the number of people registered in a room can create a domino effect of problems.

I hope you will consider returning and I assure that you that with or without me making your arrangements you and your husband will be treated with the same respect and appreciation as any other guest.

Sincerely,

Paul Ruby

From: erica@massupdater.com [mailto:erica@massupdater.com]

Sent: Thursday, August 02, 2012 3:23 PM

To: Paul Ruby

Cc: Valerie Beck; Valerie Beck

Subject: Follow-up to our call earlier today

Hello Paul,

Thanks so much for calling back today, I was glad to talk with you about this matter.

I must admit, despite our conversation, I'm still left with the concern that any specific action will be taken about this matter, specifically with regards to the individual who checked us in. While your assurance to me that this would not happen again was good to hear, I'm just wondering how such an incident would be prevented in the future, not just for myself and my husband - but for any African American who checks in at the Herrington.

It was lovely of you to suggest that we call you directly if we ever stay at the Herrington again, but I worry what would happen if we were to check in without calling you, or if other African American guests checked in without having that same opportunity to call you directly. Again, it was lovely of you to suggest that and I appreciate the personal concern, but it doesn't necessarily solve the specific possibility that an individual staff member at the Herrington has the potential to mistreat one of your guests.

Because of these concerns, I wanted to email you to detail exactly what happened to my husband and I when we checked in, for your information. Beyond that, I'd love if we could touch base again sometime next week. Valerie Beck has also indicated that she would like to join us on said follow up call.

When my husband and I first checked in, we were astonished by the treatment we received at the front desk. It was unlike any experience we have had in the past at the Herrington.

Firstly, I understand that you had a clerical issue that has been dealt with regarding how my name was the only one listed on the room, however I can't help wonder why when my husband and I were standing in front of the individual who checked us in and stating that we were "DaShan and Erica Thomas", he could not fix that clerical issue at that time. Or why he did not fix it when my husband filled out the paperwork for the room. Or at any time during our stay. In addition, we are both computer programmers, and we know that

such a computer error seems unlikely, particularly because in our two stays prior, both of our names were easily placed on the reservations.

Secondly, when my husband handed the man behind the counter his business debit card, the same individual treated the card with great drama and disdain, holding it up to examine it like it was counterfeit.

He then declared "this is a debit card!" and went on to make a declarative speech that he would be precharging the card, both for the room "plus" an extra charge of \$50 for "incidentals" immediately.

I should mention that every time we have stayed at the Herrington, we have used the same card, and we've never heard that speech before. Nor have we ever been treated before as if there was an expectation that we would not be able to pay.

This man then went so far as to even repeatedly check that our card had been approved before handing it back to us.

All paperwork and information for the room was repeatedly handed to me, even when my husband was there with his hand to receive it - as if the man behind the counter was pretending my husband was invisible. Even after my husband filled out said paperwork, the man behind the counter continued to hand all relevant items to me.

At this point, I see no reason why he could not have adjusted the clerical information for the room to indicate that we would both be staying in it. As I mentioned to Jennifer, I spoke with Herrington staff the day before we checked in, and reminded them that my husband and I would both be staying in the room, and again described the two of us as "DaShan and Erica Thomas". The individual on the phone took a moment to double check - "how many people will be in the room?" and I again said "Two: My husband and myself, DaShan and Erica Thomas".

But even after it was not changed at that time, I see no reason why the individual who checked us in could not clearly see two equal humans before him, both staying in the same room, both giving their names, and not simply add my husband's name to room. As you mentioned, housekeeping of course could have no idea how many people were in the room if that was not indicated in the system, so knowing that, and combined with the abhorrent treatment we received from the front desk at check in, it seems abundantly clear that the continued absence of my husband's name on the room was intentional.

When he asked, as we are used to Herrington staff asking, if we had stayed at the Herrington before, he ignored our response completely and went into the same speech he would give to first-time guests. The speech itself was mumbled, rushed through, he did not making eye contact with either of us, and the speech was completely without any acknowledgement of us ever having stayed there before even though we had just told him that we had.

Just before we first entered the Herrington, my husband mentioned to me that since our luggage was not heavy, he would probably just carry them up to our room himself and not bother the staff with helping us. "Good luck", I said, remembering how energetic the Herrington staff has been in the past to help in any way.

But in fact, when the man at the counter was finally convinced that our card had successfully been charged, he simply waved us off with a half-hearted "did you need help getting to your room? The elevators are over there."

Throughout the experience, my husband was ignored, again as if he were invisible. As if he were not an equal human being. His business debit card was treated as though it were expired food stamps. Whereas during our previous stays we had been made to feel welcomed and appreciated, this trip was filled with anxiety and disappointment for us.

The one employee who we interacted with during our stay who has seemed consistent - both during this stay, and during our previous visits, in treating all guests equally and with great customer service is the young gentleman who checked us out, Chris. His professionalism and friendly courtesy during previous visits to the Herrington is in part why we had less than zero expectation that my husband would ever be met with prejudice at the Herrington.

We have recommended the Herrington all year, to people of varying backgrounds, ethnicities and races. While again I appreciate very much the request that we call you before staying again to ensure that we have a happy stay, I worry about other future African American guests, and I hope that when we speak again you can convey some specifics to me about how you will ensure that this does not occur to anyone in the future. Specifically, I am of course wondering what action will be taken regarding the individual who checked us in, as it seems the greatest portion of the problem revolved around him (and whomever I spoke with previously who failed to indicate that we would both be staying in the room, but again, that is a problem that could have been remedied by the individual who checked us in had he been motivated to do so).

I appreciate that you stated that there would be no tolerance for racism at the Herrington, and I hope that when we speak again next week, you can provide some specifics as to how that policy will be applied to the employee who clearly expressed racism towards one of your guests.

Whether such discriminatory behavior towards an African American man is prompted by envy, jealousy, deeply held racist belief or hostility towards interracial couples, the result is the same and it taints the overall image of any staff.

This type of characteristic is without class and antiquated for today's world. Frankly, at the time my husband and I felt like we had walked into an educational history movie depicting what it was like to live in the deep south in times when racism was the norm,

the type of movie made for young people who today would have no frame of reference for it.

My husband and I are business owners ourselves. My own belief is that, were this one of my own employees, I would fire them. I would not want to employ anyone who would treat one of my customers in such a manner, and clearly the staff of any business reflects that business directly as the face of that business. I wonder, why should such an employee have a second chance to make another person of color feel unwelcomed? And in my opinion there's only one way to enact a no tolerance policy for racism and that is simply not to employ staff that expresses bigotry.

I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

P.S. Perhaps it might be time for the Herrington to consider hiring some African Americans in visible, front-end, hospitality roles. On staff diversity often can be an organic method of rooting out racism.

-Erica Thomas
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