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Statement of Brandy Palacios

I am the current representative for the State of Missouri in the 2018 Mrs. America System. On August 18th, 2018, I left for a week stay in order to participate in the 2018 Mrs. America Pageant that was held at the Westgate Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas Nevada. Throughout my stay there we attended many functions including a function on August 21st 2018 at the Elvis suite. In attendance at this event were all 52 contestants and the current Mrs. America.

Hosting the event were the owners of the pageant Mr. David and Elaine Marmel. Unbeknownst to us, also in attendance were several of the judges who would be conducting our interviews the next day. During this time, while at the function, I noticed Mr. Marmel was sitting with four other women outside of the main group. In that group were Mrs. Delaware, Mrs. New Jersey and another state pageant winner. Mrs. Ohio was nearby. Mr. Marmel noticed me looking over towards the group and called me over to sit right beside him to his left. When I sat down he began to have a conversation on what he has done for the black community, including developing a program entitled The Black Achievement Awards, with the founder of Ebony magazine.

As he spoke he diverted the conversation to his concern about athletes kneeling for the flag and how that was disrespectful. He stated how he had fought in Vietnam for the flag alongside black men and this was a slap in their faces. He continued on with the conversation by stating that black men need to stop shooting each other and black women need to stop having so many babies. He went on to describe a black friend who brought himself up out of poverty and said that he makes no excuses and there is no room for others to make excuses during this time. He said that when he played baseball in the 60's he was down in Alabama and Florida and there were signs that read no Jews or Niggers allowed.

We were shocked by his language during this conversation and none of the ladies said anything including me. He went on to say how he worked in the newsroom of Ebony magazine and that was one of the most racist places he had worked. He said that they would use the word Nigger throughout his time working there and they gave him a pass because they were “brothers”. At this point he rolled up his sleeve and put it next to my arm in order to compare skin color. He continued about the importance of the program that he had developed with the founder of Ebony magazine and then stated that even during this time our pageant has had a black winner. Simultaneously all the black contestants with whom he was speaking said the name of the contestant who had previously won which was Austin Williams. He then backed that up and said that we’ve also had some first place winners and we also said that person’s name which happens to be the director of the Delaware pageant.

He ended our conversation with how he hoped we would have a good pageant and interview and then left. The ladies and I gathered our thoughts and began to express our disappointment in his outright disrespect and callous thoughts. I was highly disappointed after we left the function which was at about 8:30 pm. I explained what happened to my roommate, who was Mrs. Kansas and also a third runner up in this year’s pageant. I also called my parents and my husband.

Brandy Palacios
Mrs. Missouri America 2018
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