

A Misunderstanding that Lead to Extreme Measures

By Mirchaye Sahlu

Washington, D.C – Sharon Powell, a mother of one, started her Saturday morning running her errands like she did most weekends, but little did she know she'd find herself in a county jail three hours later. It's indeed rare to hear about people who steal their own clothes in the news every day.

Powell was accused of stealing her own clothes and spent that very night in jail. A native of Chicago, she was foreign to the Washington, DC area and was looking for a dry cleaning store to take her clothes. She one day came across one dry cleaners nearby and took some of her clothes, along with some of her husband's to dry clean. A few days later, when she went to pick her dry cleaned clothes, she realized that some of them were ruined, but she was told that they'd be redone. About a week later, she returns to the dry cleaners only to find her blouses at an even worse state. Enraged, she refuses to pay for the poor service she was provided with. She says; "There was no way I was going to pay them a dime, they entirely ruined my clothes." She adds, "If anything, they should have paid me for ruining my designer outfits."

Her refusal to pay the \$ 8.60 she was asked for the service led to disagreements and complications. A quarrel with the cashier at the dry cleaners took a whole different turn when she called the owner of the store. "The owner didn't even have the audacity to admit the poor service that was provided by his store," said Powell. She adds; "...he insisted I pay the amount I was asked, get my clothes and leave." Frustrated, Powell called the police and explained about her problem. As she was waiting for the police to come, she sat down on the bench at the store.

When the cashier went back on the phone, Powell picked up her clothes with no intention at all of completely leaving. "... behind the counter was my blouses and she was on the back on the phone, and so I went over and picked up my blouses and walked out the door with them. Not intending to leave, but just to get out, just to get my blouses, my precious blouses" she explains. She visits the pharmacy next door to pick up her husband's prescription, hoping to hit two birds with one stone to save time. "Time is money, I don't have time to waste on nonsense people, so I had to get moving, that's the only reason I left the store," Powell informs.

Once back to the store, the police had arrived and the cashier was already pressing charges against her. At that point, Powell wasn't even given the chance to pay the \$ 8.60 she was told to pay in the first place. The owner insisted she get arrested and three hours later she found herself sharing a cell with other prisoners in the DC county jail. She utters "I was like, what? Arrested? Are you kidding me? For what?" The reason she was given by the policeman was brutal. She explains; "The officer said when you turn items over to be repaired, to be worked on or cleaned, they are their possessions."

"I was taken down to the police station, got fingerprinted and photographed like a criminal would," Powell emphasized. At the end, she ended up paying the amount she was charged. Powell describes this event as an unjust and miserable experience she doesn't wish to relive.

