Extreme Discomfort

How one couple handled their worst moment of anxiety

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Although interracial couples strolling the streets together may no longer seem noteworthy, there are still places where these folks are treated with hostility and contempt. I learned that firsthand when I visited Boston with my significant other at the time, an older white man with whom I had been in a relationship for two years.

He was Italian and I'm African American, and in addition to the racial difference there was also an age gap. We both lived in New York City, and we'd encountered uncomfortable ogling before—quick glances and even long, rude stares. But Boston was another challenge entirely.

In that city, I actually felt threatened by the reaction some people exhibited when my boyfriend and I walked down the street. One evening, all the negativity crystallized when my boyfriend and I decided to chance dinner at an Italian bistro that seemed as good as any other.

I'll never forget when we opened the door and stepped inside. All conversation ceased, and a hush descended on the eatery. It seemed as if every eye in the place was on us.

My boyfriend wanted to tough it out and stay. But I convinced him otherwise. In my mind, we did best to walk out while we could and live to fight bias and prejudice another day.

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