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Mandi Hamlin, right, who claims a Transportation Security Administration agent forced her to remove a nipple ring with pliers in order to board an airplane demonstrates what she was asked to do by the TSA during a news conference Thursday, March 27, 2008, in Los Angeles. Behind her is her attorney, Gloria Allred. **NICK UT: AP**



March 27, 2008, 8:02PM

Texas woman claims TSA forced nipple ring removal

By GREG RISLING
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — A Texas woman who claims she was forced to remove a nipple ring with pliers in order to board an airplane called Thursday for an apology by federal security agents and a civil rights investigation.

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"I wouldn't wish this experience upon anyone," Mandi Hamlin, 37, said at a news conference. "My experience with TSA was a nightmare I had to endure. No one deserves to be treated thi

Hamlin said she was trying to board a flight from Lubbock to Dallas on Feb. 24 when she was scanned by Security Administration agent after passing through a larger metal detector without problems.

The female TSA agent used a handheld detector that beeped when it passed in front of Hamlin's chest, th resident said.

Hamlin said she told the woman that she was wearing nipple piercings. The female agent then called over one of whom said she would have to remove the body piercings, Hamlin claimed.

Hamlin said she could not remove them and asked if she could instead display her pierced breasts in priva agent. But several other male officers told her she could not board her flight until the jewelry was remove

She was taken behind a curtain and managed to remove one bar-shaped nipple piercing but had trouble v ring.

"Still crying, she informed the TSA officer that she could not remove it without the help of pliers, and the her," said Hamlin's attorney, Gloria Allred, reading from a letter she sent Thursday to the director of the T Rights and Liberties. Allred is a well-known Los Angeles lawyer who often represents high-profile claims.

Hamlin showed reporters at the news conference how she took off the second ring by applying pliers to th mannequin that had a peach-colored bra with the rings on it.

She said she heard male TSA agents snickering as she took out the ring. She was scanned again and was even though she still was wearing a belly button ring.

"After nipple rings are inserted, the skin can often heal around the piercing, and the rings can be extreme to remove," Allred said in the letter.

TSA officials said they are investigating Hamlin's allegations to see if its policies were followed.

"Our security officers are well-trained to screen individuals with body piercings in sensitive areas with digr ensuring a high level of security," the agency said in a statement.

On its Web site, the TSA warns that passengers "may be additionally screened because of hidden items su which alarmed the metal detector."

"If you are selected for additional screening, you may ask to remove your body piercing in private as an a pat-down search," the site says.

Hamlin would have accepted a "pat-down" had it been offered, Allred said.

If an alarm does sound, "until that is resolved, we're not going to let them go through the checkpoint, no wearing or where they're wearing it," said TSA spokesman Dwayne Baird in Salt Lake City.

People routinely pass through security wearing wedding rings without problems and it might take a larger trigger an alarm, Baird said.

Hamlin filed a complaint but the TSA's customer service manager at the Lubbock airport concluded the sc properly, Allred said.

Hamlin wants an apology from the TSA and an investigation by the agency's civil rights office.

Allred said she might consider legal action if the TSA does not apologize.

Hamlin was publicly humiliated and has "undergone an enormous amount of physical pain to have the nip because of scar tissue," Allred said.

Hamlin said her piercings have never set off an airport metal detector. She added that she will never fly o

"The conduct of TSA was cruel and unnecessary," Allred wrote. "The last time that I checked a nipple was weapon."

COMMENTS

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JohnnyQPublic wrote:

Rosa: Good for you, dear.

What may be decoration or toys to you or me, might be a WEAPON or a PART OF A WEAPON to others. These folks doing their jobs. We might not like it, but they are trying to protect us from bad people. And what do they get the "You can't do that to me or I will sue you" mentality. And who backs the scanners? Your guess is mine.

They are trained to be suspicious of many items that, in our minds, are not weapons. We do need to remember there are bad people out there that would like to hurt us. And they look like you and me. These scanners are our friend in the sky. If that stuff is not allowed... "Leave that stuff at home". Stop making these people's jobs tougher than they do you feel, when somebody thinks they know your job better than you, yet they don't know what you do???

What somebody does to their own body is their business... unless they choose to share that with others. She should... whether it be directly or indirectly, when she brought that through a metal detector. She brought it to the staff. They did what they were supposed to do. These folks are just trying to do their jobs. Make their jobs easier.

My comment was directed towards her taking those things with her on a plane and not just having them.

Oh, before I forget. You assume that piercing bothers me. They don't. And if you want to share more about your experience, I know and I will send you my email address.

3/28/2008 11:09 PM CDT

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dbldwn88 wrote:

The chick should have told them that they were permanent prosthetic devices and as such were not removable. She demanded a pat down or body inspection as that is her right. If she was denied that, then she has the right to refuse the command of TSA at the airport. NOBODY can make you remove nipple rings against your will and they are not responsible for you about whether they are removable or not.

3/28/2008 9:36 PM CDT

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rosa111 wrote:

"Leave that stuff at home"? It's not bothering you!! I have both nipples pierced, and a piercing below the belly button. What JohnnyQ, men like you may complain in public, but you sure don't in private. You need to grow up and stop bothering you - (as piercings BENEATH her clothes obviously aren't, then it doesn't concern you.)

3/28/2008 9:35 PM CDT

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JohnnyQPublic wrote:

If that is their policy, it's their policy. As for the 37 yo. Stop being a tiny baby. Leave that stuff at home.

The more silly things that we do, the more law (or rules) that they make. Thus, we have fewer freedoms.

3/28/2008 8:36 PM CDT

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JSKY wrote:

anudagirl wrote:

What did DDH say y'all? You don't have to use his words, but a summary of his alleged abuse might be enlightening.

Or just plain funny :)

3/28/2008 6:59 PM CDT

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