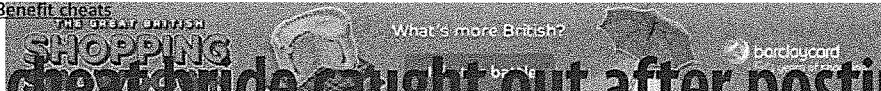


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Benefit cheat bride caught out after posting New York honeymoon pictures on Facebook

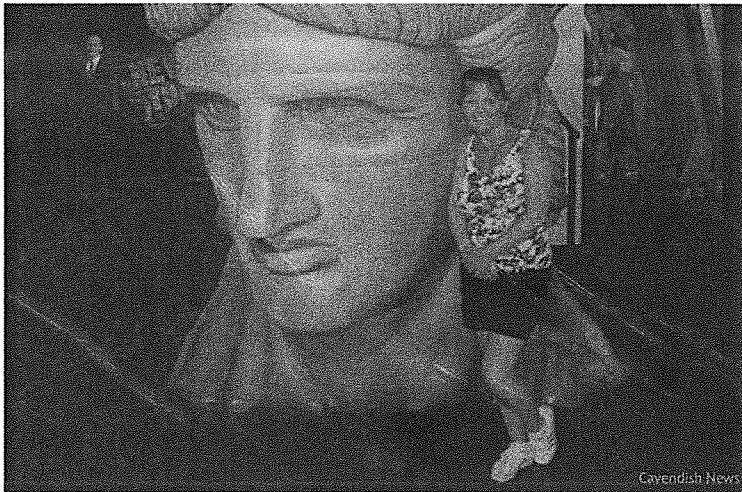
14:36, 16 JUN 2016 | UPDATED 16:00, 16 JUN 2016 | BY WENDY BARLOW

Jacqueline Blake, 51, netted £13,000 in benefits by falsely claiming she was single but she was "banged to rights" by sightseeing photos

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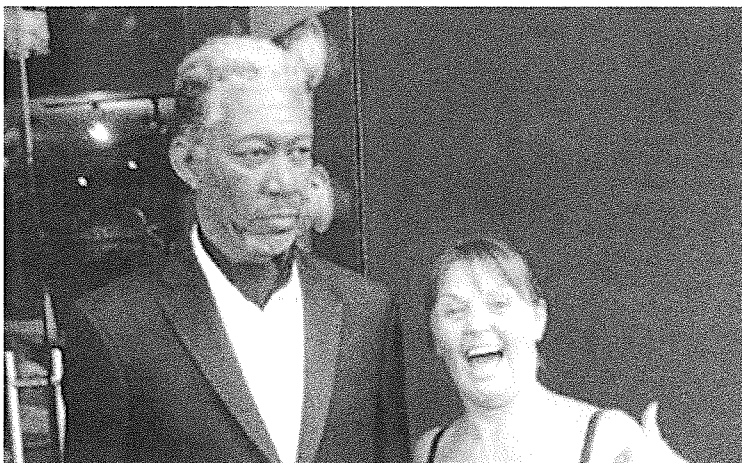
Blake in New York

A bride who received £13,000 in benefits by falsely claiming she was single was unmasked as a cheat when she posted bragging pictures of her New York honeymoon on Facebook.

Jacqueline Blake, 51, pocketed allowances by wrongly claiming she was living alone - whilst enjoying married life with second husband George.

The scam was rumbled after pictures of Blake and George were put on the social site showing her on a helicopter ride above the Statue of Liberty posing at the top of the Empire State building and sightseeing in Times Square and Central Park.

She was also picture with a waxwork dummy of Morgan Freeman outside Madam Tussauds in the Big Apple and also at the NBC studios.



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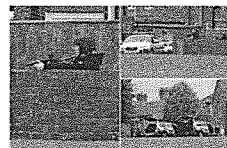
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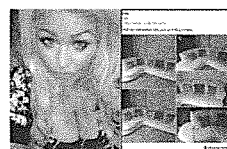
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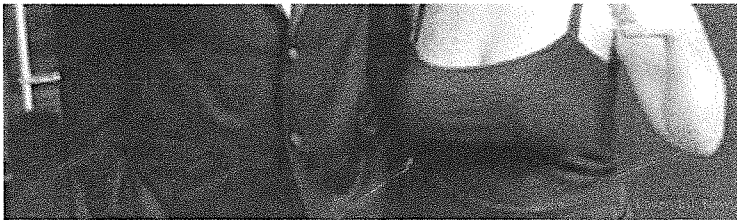


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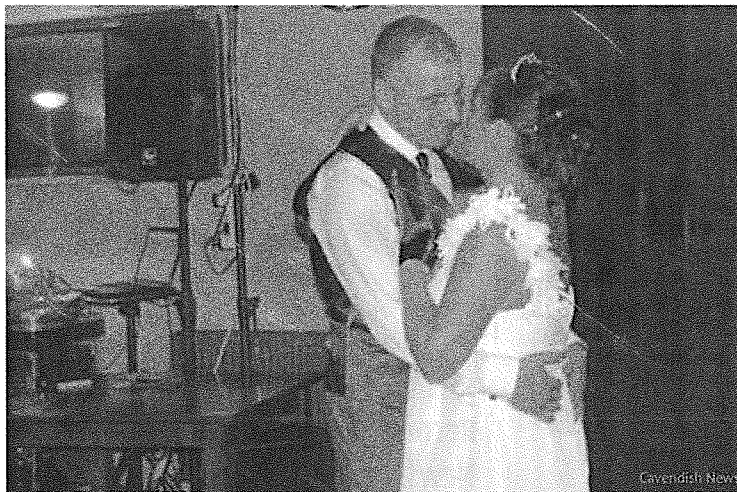


Jacqueline Blake with dummy of Morgan Freeman

Inquiries revealed Blake, formerly of Colne, Lancs, had been living with George for almost four months before the nuptials and carried on the fraud after the ceremony in August 2014.

It emerged she wrote to the Department for Work and Pensions telling them she wanted to change her surname to her maiden name following her divorce from her first husband - but failed to mention she was due to be marry again in just 48 hours.

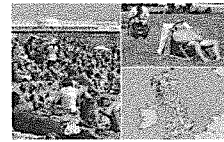
Blake, who was receiving housing benefit and employment and support allowance, owned up to the year-long scam - but claimed her actions had been more of an oversight than deceit.



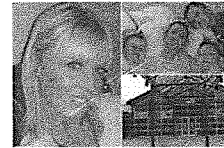
Blake and George on their wedding day

At Burnley magistrates **court**, Blake who suffers from multiple sclerosis and walked into court with a stick admitted two counts of dishonestly failing to notify a change of circumstances - not informing Pendle Borough Council between May 19, 2014 and May 27, 2015, that she and partner were living together as husband and wife and not notifying the DWP she was sharing a home with him between May 12, 2014 and May 27, 2015.

Blake, now of Bradford, West Yorks, was given a 12 month community order with supervision and must pay £85 costs, a £60 victim surcharge and a £40 fine. She was told by the JPs the probation order would have been more onerous had she not pleaded guilty.



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The couple in Times Square

A probation officer who interviewed Blake told the court she expressed remorse and added: "She informed me she is mortified by her actions and her actions were more an oversight, rather than a deceitful way to behave.

"Unfortunately, she failed to notify a change in circumstances. She recognises the dim view the court will take of this behaviour."

The court heard Blake, a former mobile social care worker, was diagnosed with MS in 2007.

She lives with her husband, who currently has a claim for benefits, in a council flat. The officer said: "She now spends a lot of her time watching daytime television and playing games on her laptop. She is really struggling with her finances."

Bash Khan, in mitigation for Blake, said: "She accepted responsibility for these offences in interview. She has entered a guilty plea at her first court appearance. This wasn't a fraud from outset. For nine years, she has suffered from multiple sclerosis and she has mobility issues. She is of previous good character."



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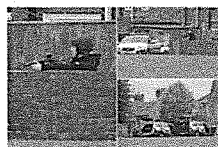
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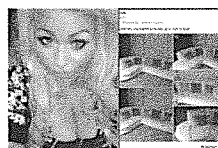
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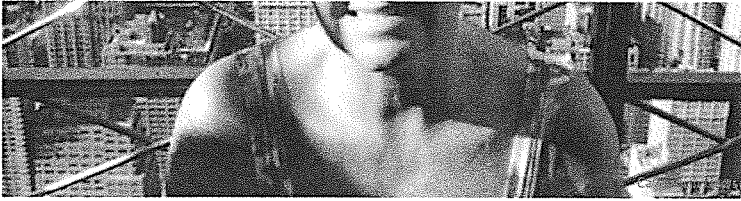
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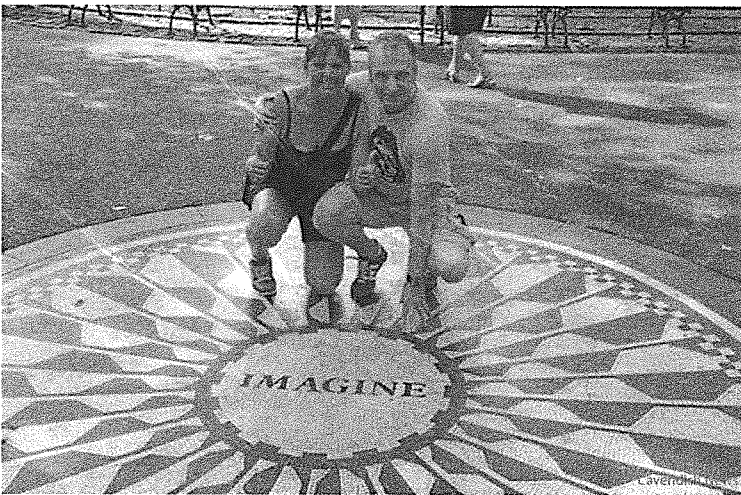


Blake on top of the Empire State Building

Prosecutor Andrew Robinson said Blake's claim was not a fraud from the outset. She at first made a claim in 2012, for both ESA and housing benefit, on the grounds she was unfit to work, lived alone and had no income, capital or savings.

The DWP received information that from May 12 2014, Blake was maintaining a common household with her partner. They were living together from that date and were married on August 30, 2014, but she continued with the claim - falsely stating she still lived alone.

Mr Robinson told the hearing: "Inquiries did reveal this lady was telling them information she knew was wrong in the build-up to them being married. On August 28, the DWP received a letter, saying she wanted to change her name to her maiden name, following her divorce. She made no mention of the fact she was due to be married just two days later.



Blake and George in Central Park

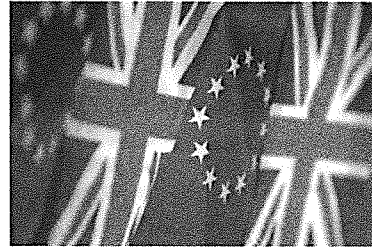
"The department made inquiries. She had got married on August 30 and whilst making that false declaration had actually gone on holiday to New York. The department found out that information on a Facebook page. Clearly, the information given two days earlier was not correct."

Mr Robinson said when Blake was interviewed, she at first made denials. The DWP had been able to get a copy of the marriage certificate, the Facebook posts and financial arrangements linking both to the same address. She conceded she had been dishonest and, according to the department, was "banged to rights."

The prosecutor said the total amount overpaid to her was £12,815.68, of which £8,700 was in ESA. Blake had no previous convictions.



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