

FIRST CLASS EVENT SERVICES PUBLIC STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 1ST, 2025

Dear Valued Clients & Community Members,

While we know this is impacting communities all over the nation, we are witnessing firsthand the devastating impact of mass deportations tearing families apart right in our hometown in Western New York. We have seen members of our own community—people of color, those who speak a different language, even Puerto Ricans (who are U.S. citizens)—being detained and mistreated. These actions are not just an attack on undocumented immigrants; they are an attack on the values of dignity and humanity that we hold dear.

Social media has exposed the dark underbelly of this issue. Facebook posts filled with hateful rhetoric like **“take them all”** and mocking those who feel vulnerable have become far too common, especially from First Class Event Services family members, friends, supporters, current, and former clients. The same individuals who preach from the Bible are now celebrating the suffering of others. To them, we say: **“Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”** (Proverbs 14:31). If faith is truly your guide, then your actions must reflect compassion, not cruelty. It is disheartening to see blatant racism growing in our own backyard. The hateful rhetoric, the social media bullying, and the public targeting of people based on their language or appearance is unacceptable. We must hold those we know accountable for their words and actions. We will not tolerate this behavior in our company, and we promise to keep First Class Event Services a safe space for all Team Members and Clients (current and potential). Racism has no place in our business or community.

Not All Immigrants Are Criminals

The claim that immigrants, especially undocumented ones, are inherently criminals is false. The facts show that immigrants—both legal and undocumented—commit crimes at lower rates than native-born citizens. According to the Cato Institute, the incarceration rate for native-born Americans is higher than for immigrants. Furthermore, undocumented immigrants contribute billions in taxes, including over \$27 billion in state and local taxes annually.

We do not and will never stand for violent crime—whether committed by an immigrant or a U.S. citizen. Crime must be dealt with swiftly and justly, but **using crime as an excuse to target an entire population is unjust**. The focus should be on actual criminals, not innocent families who contribute to our community. We believe in securing our borders, but what is happening now is inhumane. Immigration policies must be fair, just, and rooted in real solutions—not fearmongering, mass deportations, and family separations.

Yes, entering a country illegally is a crime. But ask yourself—if you were in a nation where your family faced extreme violence, poverty, or government oppression, would you not seek safety and opportunity elsewhere? Would you not cross a border if it meant keeping your children alive? Are we not fortunate to live in a country that has the ability to provide refuge for those in danger? And should we not feel equally fortunate that, if the tables were turned, other nations would welcome us if we were fleeing for our lives? This is not a matter of politics—it is a matter of humanity.

Trump's Policies and the Dangerous Path They Set

It is dangerous for President Trump to erase important historical celebrations and holidays. These commemorations are not just about looking back—they are essential for recognizing the struggles and triumphs of marginalized communities. Erasing these holidays, such as Black History Month or Pride Month, is more than just a political statement; it's an attempt to rewrite history and silence the voices of those who fought for basic human rights. The absence of these observances erodes the awareness we need to ensure progress. Without recognition, there can be no reckoning, and without reckoning, we risk repeating the mistakes of the past. This is eerily reminiscent of what happened in Nazi Germany, where Hitler sought to erase entire groups of people from history and society by denying them their identity and their rights. These actions didn't begin with large-scale violence; they started with silence, with erasure, with policies that undermined the value of certain lives.

To Trump supporters, we want you to understand that we all want the best for our country. We support the goal of making America strong, prosperous, and secure. However, some actions and policies that have been put in place under Trump's leadership are deeply concerning. The deportation policies, the harmful rhetoric, and the divisive rhetoric against marginalized groups are not only morally troubling, but they are also strategically damaging to the future of our nation. These policies contribute to fear and division—threatening the very unity and inclusiveness that America was founded upon.

But we also acknowledge that Trump has made strides in areas such as tax reform, criminal justice reform, and economic growth, and these are areas where we agree and want to see continued progress. We support the push for a strong economy and fairer policies, but we cannot ignore the harm caused by the rhetoric and actions that alienate so many. It's crucial that we remain vigilant in protecting the rights and dignity of all Americans, regardless of race, religion, gender, or background.

We need Trump supporters to understand that while you may agree with some of his policies, it's important to recognize the hurt caused by others. The policies put in place, and the rhetoric surrounding them, create an atmosphere of fear and hostility. For those who believe in unity, this is not the path forward. When we hurt others, we hurt ourselves. This is not about politics—it's about human dignity and the future of our country.

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Trump's Statement on DEI Policies and the Latest DCA Aviation Incident

We must also address a particularly harmful statement made by Trump regarding DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) policies and their alleged link to a plane crash. This statement is not only factually incorrect, but it also points to a deeply troubling disregard for the training and expertise of those who work in aviation. Pilots, air traffic controllers, flight crews, and FAA officials all undergo rigorous, extensive training and testing to ensure safety. These individuals are highly qualified, regardless of their gender, race, or background.

To blame DEI policies or minority hires for a tragic incident is irresponsible and disrespectful. Does this mean that every woman, every minority, or every person with a disability is somehow unqualified because of their background? Absolutely not. These individuals meet all necessary qualifications and pass all required tests. To suggest otherwise is not just inaccurate—it is harmful and perpetuates a narrative that undermines their hard-earned accomplishments and qualifications. We should never blame individuals for their identity, especially when they are performing their jobs to the highest standard.

What DEI Hiring Really Means

There is a common misconception about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) hiring policies. Some think DEI is simply about hiring individuals based on race, gender, or ethnicity. But DEI goes beyond just those categories—it is about creating opportunities for everyone to succeed, regardless of their background.

DEI is about ensuring that all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, or background, have access to the same opportunities in the workplace. It's about creating an environment where everyone is treated fairly, has a voice, and is given equal access to opportunities for advancement. It is not about lowering standards or giving anyone an unfair advantage—rather, it's about addressing the systemic barriers that have prevented marginalized groups from having equal access in the past. DEI programs strive to eliminate biases and ensure fairness in hiring, promotion, and workplace treatment. The goal is to recognize that diversity in experiences and perspectives enriches any organization, making it stronger, more innovative, and better equipped to solve complex problems.

This [DEI] includes some of the following:

- Wellness Programs & Incentives
- Breast Feeding/Pumping Stations & Accommodations
- Size-Inclusive Chairs & Beds in Medical Facilities
- Family Restrooms
- Subtitles & Captions (TV & Phone)
- Rams & Sidewalk Curb Cuts
- Large-Print Materials
- Belt Extenders on Planes

To suggest that DEI policies are the reason for failures, such as in the case of the recent tragic plane crash, is to ignore the truth. The people in aviation—whether pilots, air traffic controllers, flight crews, or FAA officials—undergo extensive, rigorous training and testing to ensure safety. These individuals are highly qualified, regardless of their gender, race, or background.

Being in the aviation industry, this was especially difficult to hear and read about. We know many minorities working in aviation and travel, and to imply that anyone in the industry, based on their skin color, background, or nationality, could cause a safety failure because of a DEI hire is deeply hurtful. As a minority working in an industry that is 100% focused on ensuring the safety of others, it is difficult to process the idea that, *if I were to make a mistake during a safety-related duty, people might perceive that as the result of a DEI mistake and not based on my qualifications or the expertise I've worked hard to develop. Does that make me any less qualified?*

Trump's Attacks on Minority-Owned Businesses

First Class Event Services has been fortunate to work with federally funded contracts, thanks to the experience we bring, the resources we provide, and the professionalism we uphold. However, under Trump's new policies, we have been removed from the Government's Vendor List simply because we were listed as a DEI vendor—because I am a **Minority-Owned Business**. This is what is truly troubling. The same people who are close to me, friends and so-called “supporters” of my business, are supporting an administration that has removed our business from the list for something that we didn't even do: exist as a minority-owned business.

So, I ask my Trump supporters: Do you feel the same about me and my business? Do you believe that my business, because it is minority-owned and qualified under DEI, should be stripped of the opportunity to serve our community, even though we've proven ourselves based on merit? Is that really what you believe?

Would You Be Okay with Your Friends and Neighbors Feeling Unsafe?

Let's take a step back. If you are a Trump supporter, ask yourself: Would you be okay with your Black, gay, or minority friends, neighbors, or colleagues feeling unsafe, overlooked, or alienated because it is justified under the guise that “we are all equal”? Would you be comfortable knowing that people in America—your own neighbors—are still facing prejudice and racism simply for looking different, speaking a different language, or existing outside of societal norms?

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The truth is that, today in many parts of America, it is still dangerous to look different or speak differently. Many people are still subjected to racist and discriminatory acts, and in some areas, it can even be life-threatening. This is not the “America” we should aspire to be. This country was founded on principles of equality and opportunity for all. For us to move forward, we need to confront these issues head-on and ensure that we are working toward a future where everyone—no matter their skin color, gender, or background—feels safe, valued, and accepted.

Our Stance Against Trump's Proposed Camps

Trump's administration has proposed detaining immigrants in camps—an idea that is historically and morally indefensible. Studies show that long-term detention leads to severe psychological distress, especially in children. These policies echo dark moments in history, from Japanese internment camps to other human rights violations worldwide. We stand against these camps and any policy that dehumanizes individuals.

To those who support this administration's approach, we ask: *What does “making America great again” look like to you? Does it include separating families, locking people in camps, and dehumanizing those who look or speak differently? Is that what Jesus would do?*

If you claim to follow Christian values, consider these words: **“Do not oppress the foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.”** (Exodus 23:9). Compassion is a choice. Humanity is a choice. It's time to decide what kind of America you truly want to live in.

This is not about politics—this is about human rights, dignity, and the future of our community. We stand for justice, fairness, and the belief that America is strongest when it upholds its values of inclusion and opportunity.

Our Commitment to Immigrant Families

We will not stand idly by. We are establishing scholarships to support students from immigrant families in their pursuit of education and career advancement. Additionally, we are working on a First Class Financial Assistance Program for families affected by deportation, ensuring that those who have lost their main financial provider have access to resources and referrals. Legal resources will also be made available to those who seek assistance with their immigration status. Moreover, we pledge to assist and guide those who wish to become legal U.S. citizens.

We Are Committed to Transparency—Check In for Updates

As we work to create a solid and effective system, we plan to have a program up and running by February 10th, 2025. Please check in regularly while our team is actively working together to ensure this system is well-constructed. We will provide frequent updates, as this program may be released earlier or later than expected, but we are committed to making it happen.

We urge everyone to reconsider the implications of these policies and join us in the fight for justice, equity, and dignity for all. America is great because of our diversity, not in spite of it. We believe in justice, fairness, and the inherent worth of every human being—no exceptions.

Standing Strong with Our Community, Now and Always,

Christopher Rivera
Owner, First Class Event Services

