



ZIONIST ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

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January 14, 2019

Mr. Edward M. Christie III
President, CEO and Director
Spirit Airlines
2800 Executive Way
Miramar, FL 33025

Dear Mr. Christie:

We write to express our shock, horror and dismay at the despicable way an Orthodox Jewish family was reportedly treated last Tuesday, on a Spirit Airlines flight from Newark to Fort Lauderdale. According to passenger accounts reported in the media, this Orthodox Jewish family – a father, mother and their three small children – endured an antisemitic “[nightmare journey](#)” because of the way they were treated by your employees. We demand that you immediately (1) personally and publicly apologize to the family; (2) make full and fair remuneration to the family; (3) terminate all employees whom a full and fair investigation reveals participated in subjecting the family to antisemitic bigotry and mistreatment; and (5) mandate company-wide anti-bias training for all employees, which includes education and training on antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.

The events reported in many media outlets are horrifying. A passenger on the flight overheard a male flight attendant complaining to other crew members about the Orthodox Jewish family and referring to the father in the family as “[that retarded Jew](#).” This rant reportedly followed after the family obtained the authorization of a gate agent at Newark Airport to take a baby seat/car seat on board for their one-month-old baby, only to be told by a female flight attendant, after they boarded, that the seat was not permitted on board after all. When an argument ensued, the male flight attendant reportedly told the Orthodox Jewish father to “[shut up](#).”

Here is how an eyewitness to the events [described](#) it:

It was painful to see. It was a young couple with three little kids. They [Spirit’s flight crew] were just out to get them [the Orthodox Jewish family]. It was disgusting. . . . It was like they were out to get *them* [emphasis in original]. It was antisemitism. The guy [the male flight attendant] was full of hatred. You could see it.

Spirit employees continued to target harass and humiliate this Orthodox Jewish family. When the father attempted to bring his two-year-old to the toddler’s mother, the same male flight attendant ordered him back to his seat. When the plane landed, the family was forcibly escorted off the plane by police and ground staff – reportedly because they allegedly “had not been

wearing seat belts.” Your employees reportedly informed the family that they should “find another flight home” and were banned from future Spirit flights.

The treatment this Orthodox Jewish family endured is unconscionable and inexcusable – especially because the family reportedly complied with all directives of the crew on the flight. Spirit compounded its wrongdoing by issuing a [statement](#), blaming the family and expressing pride in its employees instead of the condemnation and shame the employees deserved.

There have been widespread media reports about these events, letting the public know which airlines to patronize and which to avoid. Spirit Airlines surely does not need this negative publicity about its reprehensible treatment of customers. We understand that in a 2018 Consumer Reports survey, more than 50,000 economy-class passengers recently gave Spirit Airlines the [lowest rating](#) in customer service.

To avoid further damage to Spirit’s reputation, we urge you, at a minimum, to take the steps we laid out above. Please be advised that the ZOA is comprised of thousands of members and supporters around the U.S. We intend to alert them to the outrageous antisemitic nightmare your employees inflicted on an Orthodox Jewish family that Spirit was supposed to serve. We will also be sure to let our members and supporters know whether Spirit fully acknowledges its wrongdoing, makes full amends to the family, fires the employees involved, and makes it crystal clear – through words and actions – that Spirit Airlines truly has zero tolerance for antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.

This matter demands your immediate attention, but as another indication of Spirit’s poor customer service, there is no way of contacting you or any other corporate officer quickly and directly, by email or fax. Your customer service department was quite insistent today that our only means of contact is by filling out a generic form on Spirit’s website, which is inadequate and unacceptable.

We are therefore mailing this letter and also sending it as an open letter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Very truly yours,

Morton A. Klein, National President
Mark S. Levenson, Esq., Chairman of the Board
Elizabeth Berney, Esq., Director of Special Projects
Susan B. Tuchman, Esq., Director, Center for Law and Justice