

To: Continental Airlines
From: Libby R. Sherrill

Re: Continental's Pit Bull Embargo

Date: 10.31.09

I am very disappointed with Continental Airlines' policy that bans American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers (and crossbreeds of the two) from travel aboard its fleet.

I am a filmmaker currently producing a documentary about pit bulls and breed discrimination. I am also the owner of an American Pit Bull Terrier named Fern. Over the past two years, I've traveled to cities across the United States interviewing pit bull advocates and activists who oppose breed specific legislation (BSL), many of whom keep pit bulls as their companion animals. I've interviewed lawmakers and animal control officials who enact and enforce BSL. I've seen first-hand the emotional and physical damage BSL causes to responsible dog owners and good dogs.

I recently flew Continental from my hometown of Knoxville, TN, to Sacramento, CA. While in Sacramento, I adopted Joey, a four-month old pit-bull-type dog, from the Chako Rescue Association. Joey is about 4 months old, but he weighs approximately 26 lbs. I checked your website prior to my planned departure to verify that he would be allowed to return with me as cargo.

Your website states that:

Continental Airlines will accept American Pit Bull Terrier puppies which are between 8 weeks and 6 months of age provided they do not weigh more than 20 lb (9 kg). All American Pit Bull Terriers more than 6 months old or weighing more than 20lb (9 kg) will be refused. Crossbreeds with American Pit Bull Terriers are also excluded from this embargo. This embargo is due to the danger presented to our aircraft and our customers.

Since Joey is a rescue dog, it's hard to tell whether he is a purebred American Pit Bull Terrier or a mix. Nevertheless, when I spoke with a Continental representative, I was told that *despite what your website says, your current policy does in fact prohibit crossbreeds*, as well as purebred pit bulls *and* American Staffordshire Terriers. As a result, I was forced to leave CA without Joey.

I returned to Tennessee without my new puppy because I chose not to lie to circumvent your policy—a policy that only perpetuates misguided and uneducated assumptions about this once-esteemed breed and that

undermines the work of advocates—like me—who spend a great deal of time combating just this sort of ignorance.

Joey is not an isolated example of a stable and loving pit bull. Thousands of responsible people across the country—myself included—choose American Pit Bull Terriers and pit-bull-type dogs as companions, and they are just as sick of this discrimination as I am.

In fact, pit bulls can be trained to be service dogs and therapy dogs and, as such, are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in those cases. If allowing pit bulls in the cabin is deemed an acceptable risk to assure federal ADA compliance, it makes even less sense to ban them from caged transport away from passengers.

Sixteen-week-old Joey poses no threat, and certainly isn't more of a danger than any other breed of adult dog caged in your cargo area. Furthermore, Continental seems to be ignoring the fact that bad people can abuse any breed of dog, not just pit bulls.

I am publicly requesting that you lift your pit bull embargo and redirect your safety-related policies away from targeting specific breeds of dogs and their owners, and focus your efforts on evaluating each individual dog's behavior and providing a completely safe cargo compartment in which all pets may travel.

My film will reach a wide audience, one that includes not only pit bull advocates, but also animal advocates of all kinds in the U.S. and abroad. I plan to tell my supporters about your policy and ask them to boycott Continental until the embargo is dropped. This is not just about pit bulls—it's about being realistic. Breed specific laws and policies harm good people and good dogs. Talk to American Airlines—they finally got it right.

I appreciate your time and consideration. If I can assist in any way with this matter, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Libby R. Sherrill, Filmmaker
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