Statement from Amy Calvert, CEO  
5 June 2020

Standing together, asking tough questions, leading courageous conversations

This week we celebrated our global exhibition industry and shared how Exhibitions Mean Business. And yet we know that exhibitions mean so much more. We know exhibitions are a means for direct economic impact, a path to build and support communities, support research, new educational opportunities, economic development, investments, career pathways and collaborations far beyond what transpires on the tradeshow floor. Exhibitions are urban accelerators.

While I was with Visit Baltimore, we worked with an organization known as Thread. Thread believes that, “by cultivating relationships that transcend racial and socioeconomic barriers – and by creatively building unconventional families and communities not defined by DNA and addresses – we can overcome the poverty of isolation and, in its place, establish a wealth of human connection permanently linked by unconditional love and support. Thread understands that children growing up in concentrated poverty need more than just improved financial resources or better classrooms; they need the same unassailable support and deep interpersonal bonds that we all need. Thread builds these bonds for students, volunteers and collaborators.”

For their 2018 convention in Baltimore, Student Youth Travel Association, through the SYTA Foundation whose mission is to connect and support at-risk students and offer meaningful travel experiences, connected with Thread and hosted groups of students for a civil rights tour in Birmingham, Alabama. This is just one example of the transformational leadership our industry offers globally – and this is love in action.

Over the past week, we have seen unity despite the continuous efforts to drive a divide into our hearts and minds, into our communities, into our families, our friendships. Yet still we have seen citizens globally standing together in the face of injustice, inequities, brutality and violence. This is love in action.

Through our recently completed Vision 2025 exercise, the Events Industry Council articulated our values: ethical, transparent, inclusive, innovative and responsible.

We have the power to build and serve communities through the strength of the global events industry to stand united against inequity and racism.
This power is grounded in love and a deep respect for our common humanity. We see that over and over again as we travel the globe and meet dedicated professionals willing to connect, collaborate and put aside the needs of one for the greater good.

This pandemic raises questions for us as society around equity. We must work to solve for these injustices. A friend of mine speaks often of our collective consciousness. Should we ask ourselves as an industry if we can show up and stand up each day? Protests are temporal in nature. Our commitment cannot be. Are we checking in on ourselves, checking in on each other to love and support and challenge each other each day to hold fast to our commitments? Are we using our resources to drive change one step and one action at a time?

Can we create welcoming communities more consistently, more intently, more passionately? Can we thread and knit together a more loving, accepting, safe, sustainable and responsible world and leave this planet better than we found it?

I believe we can.

Amy Calvert, CEO, Events Industry Council