



July 28, 2020

Dear Representative,

In advance of the House Judiciary Antitrust Subcommittee’s hearing on “Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 6: Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Facebook, Google and Apple” on July 29, 2020, we write to introduce you to the Stop Hate for Profit campaign and to share some information about Facebook’s continued refusal to effectively address hate and disinformation on its platforms.

In response to Facebook’s repeated failure to meaningfully address the vast proliferation of hate on its platforms, ADL, Color of Change, Common Sense, Free Press, LULAC, Mozilla, NAACP, National Hispanic Media Center, and Sleeping Giants launched a new campaign, #StopHateforProfit, which asks large Facebook advertisers to show they will not support a company that puts profit over safety. To date, thousands of major businesses including Ford, Verizon, Walgreens, Pfizer, Colgate-Palmolive, Dunkin, and Levi’s have joined us in an ad pause to call on Facebook to address rampant hate, racism and disinformation on its platforms.

Facebook’s continued indifference to hate is the byproduct of its monopoly position. Mr. Zuckerberg has already dismissed this campaign, insisting that advertisers will “be back on the platform soon enough.”¹ This is because Facebook’s vast user base and reach provides a captive audience for advertisers to microtarget and engage. As you know, Facebook has some 2.3 billion users across its four platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and WhatsApp. As a platform that does not just allow users to post content, but rather promotes and recommends specific posts and groups to different users through its algorithms in order to optimize engagement, their policy decisions are massively influential to our civil society and democracy.

Based on what we know about how extremists use social media – and in turn how social media benefits from extremist use – this is extremely alarming. And algorithms that are not well understood but consistently promote divisive and polarizing content, including hate and racism, are also enormously concerning. Seven in ten adults in the United States use Facebook and four in ten adults get news from Facebook – a significantly higher share than any other large social media platform.²

¹ <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/zuckerberg-dismisses-facebook-boycott-advertisers-will-be-back-on-the-platform-soon-enough/>

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>; <https://www.journalism.org/2018/09/10/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2018/>

In his 2018 House testimony, Mr. Zuckerberg told Rep. Engel that “We do not allow hate groups on Facebook overall. So, if there’s a group that their primary purpose or a large part of what they do is spreading hate, we will ban them from the platform overall.” Mr. Zuckerberg’s statement is blatantly false. Not only does Facebook recommend groups that promote hate, it allows them to grow to thousands of people. Many of these highly problematic groups have thousands of members and are full of hate, violence, misinformation and conspiracies, harassing language, and racist content.

Facebook continues to recommend groups that radicalize people who only experiment in reading about hate and violent conspiracy theories. It’s worth noting that later in a 2018 interview with Recode, Mr. Zuckerberg proactively gave the example of Holocaust denial as an issue that he didn’t have any problem with on his platform.

Facebook is not a public square. It is a platform that uses sophisticated algorithms to maximize user engagement and time spent on the platform so that it can show more ads. Consistently, they feign ignorance at the divisive political environment they helped create. To use the words of their own internal studies, “Our algorithms exploit the brain’s attraction to divisiveness.”³ In other words, Facebook’s business model relies on feeding users the type of content that generates the most engagement, and its top executives and engineers know and use the fact that polarizing, divisive and hateful content does just that. Notably, when Facebook executives were confronted with this reality and presented with recommendations by their own team to curb divisiveness, their leaders shelved them in favor of juicing growth and profits.⁴

We hope you will have the opportunity to ask Mr. Zuckerberg why he continues to refuse to stop hate for profit on Facebook’s platforms.

Sincerely,



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³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-it-encourages-division-top-executives-nixed-solutions-11590507499>

⁴ Id.