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An Open Letter to the Companies that Advertise on Facebook

Last week a group of organizations launched Stop Hate for Profit with one simple goal: convince social media companies to finally put people over profit. **We launched asking advertisers to join the campaign and pause their spending on Facebook and Instagram ads for the month of July 2020.**

You might be asking: Why Facebook? Haven't they done better lately? What are the biggest problems you're tracking?

Why Facebook?

Our partner organizations have been working with Facebook for years and we'll continue to work with them. But when it comes to dealing with rampant hate and harassment, the platform continues to come up short. What are they doing with \$70B in revenue and 17B in profit? Their hate speech, incitement, and misinformation policies are inequitable. Their harassment victim services are inadequate. Their advertising placement's proximity to hateful content is haphazard. And their "civil rights" audit transparency reports aren't helpful to the civil rights community.

Every day, we see ads from companies placed adjacent to hateful content, occupying the same space as extremist recruitment groups and harmful disinformation campaigns. Your ad buying dollars are being used by the platform to increase its dominance in the industry at the expense of vulnerable and marginalized communities who are often targets of hate groups on Facebook.

Haven't they done better lately?

"Better" isn't good enough when you have billions of users and rampant hate pervading 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across the globe.

- In ADL's just-released national survey studying Hate and Harassment online, [42 percent of daily Facebook users experienced harassment](#) on the platform.

- Facebook regularly recommends extremist groups on its platform to users. In fact, [according to its own internal research in 2016](#) on German political groups on the platform, the company found that **64 percent** of all extremist groups joins are due to their own recommendation tools. While they have made improvements since then, our researchers still experienced recruitment recommendations to hateful groups just last week.
- Just this week, Facebook made the decision to create a giant loophole in its fact-checking program that will allow [climate science denial](#) to flourish further.
- During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Facebook chose to [decrease the number of human content moderators](#) who monitor hateful content on the platform. Those human moderators who remain have not been focused on hate but we know the company could afford to do both, it just isn't convenient, and it would impact the bottom line - but with proper resourcing, this is a completely solvable problem.
- Facebook has repeatedly [refused to remove political advertisements that contain blatant lies](#).
- The platform has also been slow to respond to calls to take down conspiratorial content [like QAnon](#) and content that links to fringe websites. In fact, Mark Zuckerberg explained the company's decision to [not remove Holocaust denial content, stating](#) "I don't believe that our platform should take that down because I think there are things that different people get wrong."

Society has tried to address these foundational problems: civil society groups like ours have behind-the-scenes conversations, congress has held hearings, Facebook staff have staged walk-outs. It's time to show our dissatisfaction where it hurts: their bottom line.

And to be clear, hate on Facebook is not good for advertisers. [Advertisements are running alongside divisive, hateful and conspiratorial content](#)--not something that most companies want. Our analysts were easily able to find examples like an ad from the auto insurance company [Geico](#) appearing alongside an antisemitic and racist conspiracy post accusing George Soros of funding Black civil rights efforts in order to fuel martial law. Similarly, we found an advertisement for [Verizon](#) appearing next to a video from the conspiracy group QAnon drawing on hateful and antisemitic rhetoric, warning that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is planning to bring on civil war with concentration camps and coffins at the ready and claiming Americans are already quarantined in militarized districts.

Following the launch of Stop Hate for Profit, we were made aware of messaging that Facebook was providing to its advertisers to allegedly clarify its record around hate, extremism and misinformation. They point to a handful of steps they have taken over the years. But, like so much content on Facebook, they omit or misrepresent the truth: Hate, extremism and misinformation still thrive on Facebook in sanctioned misinformation, conspiracy theories, and unmoderated hateful groups.

While erring on the side of caution can be helpful on speech related matters, consistently [exhibiting a lack of understanding](#) around language that has been used historically to demean marginalized groups is inexcusable. If civil society can expect civil discourse in the public square, then why not on the social spaces we inhabit online, where arguably the majority of public speech is taking place today?

Luckily, given where Facebook is now, improvement is not that hard: Clamp down on common misinformation and conspiracies. Stop recommending hate. Make a number of clear, common-sense changes to ameliorate and mitigate hate - [we've made a list](#). Provide human beings to help people when they are being brutally harassed.

But while those steps are easy, we've learned that Facebook won't take this seriously unless forced. So we invite businesses and all people of good conscience to join us, our partners, and the companies that have signed on already. Together, we can make sure that Facebook is good not only for advertisers, but also for society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Greenblatt', written in a cursive style.

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director