



## **An open letter**

To: Mark Zuckerberg, Meta Platforms, Inc.; Shou Zi Chew and Vanessa Pappas  
TikTok, ByteDance Ltd.; Elon Musk, Twitter, Inc.; and Susan Wojcicki YouTube, Alphabet Inc.

### **Re: Social media companies actively harm people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ communities.**

Your companies, Meta (including Facebook and Instagram), YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, claim that you value diversity and inclusion. However, a new non-partisan study from YouGov, commissioned by UltraViolet, GLAAD, Women's March, and Kairos revealed that the experiences of people of color (POC), LGBTQ+ people, and women on the major social platforms are far from supportive.

### **The truth is that social media companies are failing POC, women, and LGBTQ+ communities.**

Meta, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter rely on controversial content like conspiracy theories, sexist name-calling, racist dog whistles, and transphobic tropes to generate engagement and increase ad revenue. The platforms prioritize this content and their profits over protecting their users, and the results can be violent—even deadly—attacks on already vulnerable communities.

Social media has been a central breeding ground for malicious disinformation and the explosive growth of misogynist and white supremacist conspiracy theories. Online hate speech has translated to real-world violence in El Paso, Texas; Charlottesville, Virginia; Atlanta, Georgia; and the halls of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Right-wing extremists used Facebook to plot a kidnapping of Michigan's Governor Whitmer. Representatives Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and other women of color leaders have reported death threats and online abuse for years.

The hate-based lies perpetuated against the LGBTQ+ community regarding “grooming” have remained on Meta, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube even though all four companies claim to support the LGBTQ+ community. This content resulted in bomb threats on the Children's Hospital in Boston. The man who violently assaulted Nancy Pelosi's husband had a history of Facebook posts that supported conspiracy theories and demonstrated white supremacist, misogynist beliefs. The mass shooter in Buffalo, NY, who intentionally targeted and murdered Black people, planned his attack using videos on YouTube--some that remain online to this day.



**The study found that 57 percent of respondents in the base sample have seen a post that calls for actual violence against someone based on their race, gender, sexuality, or other personal characteristics.**

The response from social media companies to violence and disinformation on your platforms is almost always too little, too late. Facebook and Twitter removed the Proud Boys, QAnon, and Trump only *after* they sparked violence. You removed the Stop the Steal hashtag only *after* the attack on the Capitol, even though the hashtag came into use months before the 2020 election.

Nearly one in three Americans said social media platforms are doing a poor job addressing online harassment on your sites, while almost two in five LGBTQ+ respondents said the same. Further, Americans overwhelmingly agree that disrespectful and hate speech are a problem in online spaces. The gap grows even more prominent when asking the same questions of LGBTQ+, POC, and women respondents--individuals with marginalized identities.

The study also found that online hate and harassment harm more than just the intended victim. **People who witness harassment targeted against someone with whom they share an identity also feel harmed from seeing this harassment.** This proves that it is not enough to remove individual offending posts and that loopholes that allow hateful content against public figures to remain on the platform perpetuate harm to entire communities.

We urge policymakers, platform executives, and shareholders to review the full report and take immediate action to:

- Improve the design of algorithms that circulate and amplify harmful content, extremism, and hate, particularly content targeting women, Black, Indigenous, people of color, and LGBTQ+ folks.
- Be transparent concerning content moderation, community guidelines and terms of service policy implementation, and algorithm designs. Remove special exemptions allowing high-profile individuals from historically marginalized or oppressed backgrounds to be targeted with hate, harassment, and false information campaigns.
- Train moderators to understand the needs of women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ users and to moderate equitably across all languages, cultural contexts, and regions.
- Strengthen and enforce existing community guidelines and terms of service that protect women, BIPOC, LGBTQ people, and others.
- Observe human rights frameworks and work with independent researchers to understand how to keep users safe. Allow and encourage vetted researchers access to the entirety of your AI, database, and code while ensuring user privacy is preserved.
- Respect data privacy, especially where people are vulnerable to severe harm and violence. This includes ceasing the practice of targeted surveillance advertising, in which companies use powerful algorithms to recommend content to users to maximize profit.



- Confront the problems of bias in artificial intelligence (AI), which disproportionately impacts women, BIPOC, LGBTQ people, and other marginalized communities (this is also intricately connected with surveillance advertising).

Our organizations have repeatedly proposed solutions and called on Meta, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube to halt the spread of hate and harassment on your platforms. Though we have made some progress in advancing individual rule changes, the study demonstrates that platforms must make dramatic systemic changes. Your companies have the technology and resources to make the necessary changes; you have chosen to prioritize profits. Failing to remove hate, harassment, and violence is not a matter of personal politics. It's a question of whether or not your companies, your leadership, and your shareholders continue to support hate and violence against marginalized communities. Should your companies fail to act, you should note that the study from YouGov also found strong support for platform accountability with respondents, especially POC, women, and LGBTQ+ people. Respondents grew more supportive of government regulation of platforms than at the start of the survey – indicating that when people reflect on their experiences on social media, they are more likely to support regulation.

On behalf of our communities, we continue to demand that your companies address these many extremely serious problems.

Sincerely,

GLAAD, Kairos, UltraViolet, Women's March