

## Executive Summary

The examination of these cases through a gender lens reveals several key points:

- Marginalized genders have historically faced discrimination, requiring the protection of their human rights.
- Meta must rectify past failures in addressing power dynamics and privilege.
- The majority of Americans support the right to abortion.
- Abortion is not uncommon: Nearly one in four women in America will have an abortion by age 45.
- The Board should prioritize the needs of marginalized communities.
- Case 1 highlights the need for posts that equate abortion with murder to be labeled hate speech. Labeling abortion as “murder” overlooks the systemic barriers and inequalities that affect marginalized communities’ access to comprehensive reproductive health care.
- Cases 2 and 3 showcase state-endorsed gender-based violence and emphasize the need for inclusive discussions that differentiate between hate speech and violence and advocating against hate speech and violence.
- Medical disinformation about abortion, especially medication abortion, poses a direct threat to life and demands urgent attention.
- Ableist hate speech perpetuates harmful stereotypes and undermines efforts to combat mental health stigmas.
- By addressing these issues, Meta can foster a welcoming platform that encourages debate without promoting gendered hate and violence.

## Examining these cases through a gender lens

Throughout U.S. history, genders that do not conform with cisgender masculinity have been and are marginalized. Women, transgender, and nonbinary people are still severely underrepresented in positions of power in government and business leadership. They make less money than their cisgender men counterparts, giving them less influence on law and politics through the use of “money as a form of speech.”<sup>1,2,3</sup> Any attempt to take away bodily autonomy and rights from these groups is not a matter of political opinion--it is about basic human rights and dignity. In fact, more than 200 human rights groups have urged the United Nations to intervene in the U.S. based on its recent abortion policies<sup>4</sup>

In the past, Meta has failed to account for power dynamics and privilege when dealing with gender discrimination. It banned a comedian who commented “men are trash” on her friend’s post about the experience of receiving threats of violence and rape from numerous men.<sup>5,6,7</sup> In this case, the men who made the threats should have been removed/banned, not the friend who commented to offer support.

Similarly, these identified cases should not be viewed in isolation but rather within our society’s gendered systems of power and privilege. The Board must question whose voice Meta is amplifying, and who is being silenced. The Board must prioritize the needs of the impacted

<sup>1</sup> [FINAL Money Equals Speech Fact Sheet 10.2012](#)

<sup>2</sup> [‘Those dollars and cents add up’: Full-time trans workers face a wage gap, poll finds](#)

<sup>3</sup> [5 Fast Facts: The Gender Wage Gap | U.S. Department of Labor Blog](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Almost 200 rights groups call on U.N. to intervene over U.S. abortion access](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Warning: Saying that men are trash will get you banned from Facebook](#)

<sup>6</sup> [On Facebook, Comments About ‘Whites,’ ‘Men,’ And ‘Americans’ Will Face Less Moderation](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Women banned from Facebook for saying ‘men are trash’](#)



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community--pregnant people and people who could become pregnant, especially those who are BIPOC, disabled, LGBTQ+, low income, or immigrants. Accordingly, the Board must focus on creating a nuanced set of recommendations that center the needs of the impacted community. Specifically, the Board must recommend policies that remove and ban violence, hate speech, threats, or incitement against abortion seekers, activists, providers, or their friends and family, while allowing room for users to advocate against hate and violent legal policies. Moderation policies must have a nuanced set of criteria to differentiate hate speech and harmful or violent content from content that is explaining or advocating against hate and violence.

### **Case 1: Equating abortion to murder**

The Board should consider banning posts that label abortion as “murder” or use similar terms as a form of violence or hate speech that targets the marginalized group of people who get abortions. As previously established, people who are capable of becoming pregnant lack the societal power and privilege to influence laws, courts, and election in the same way cisgender men can. Calling abortion murder is not only factually incorrect but also deeply harmful to the people who get abortions as well as to the majority of Americans who support the right to abortion.

Calling abortion “murder” dismisses the fundamental right of individuals, especially women and marginalized communities, to make decisions about their bodies and reproductive health. It undermines their agency and autonomy, disregarding their right to make decisions about what happens to their bodies.

Labeling abortion as “murder” overlooks the systemic barriers and inequalities that affect marginalized communities’ access to comprehensive reproductive health care. Calling abortion “murder” contributes to the shaming and stigmatization of individuals who have had abortions or are considering them. This rhetoric perpetuates harmful narratives that equate reproductive choices with criminal acts, creating a hostile environment that further marginalizes and silences those seeking reproductive health care. [Abortion is not uncommon: Nearly one in four women in America will have an abortion by age 45.](#)<sup>8</sup>

There is no other circumstance where people are expected to sacrifice their body for someone else and where failing to do so would be considered murder. For example, failing to throw yourself into oncoming traffic to stop someone else from being hit by a car is not considered murder. Organ donor programs require that the life of the donor is saved and prioritized—doctors are not expected to give up trying to save someone because they have another patient who needs a kidney, yet this is not considered murder or criminal.

It is essential to consider the language used when discussing reproductive rights. The framing of abortion as “murder” relies on emotionally charged rhetoric that aims to manipulate public opinion. Engaging in respectful debate about reproductive rights and choices does not mean intentionally stigmatizing an entire group of people and accusing them of crimes. Banning posts that label abortion as “murder” as a form of violence or hate speech is necessary to create a respectful environment for discussions or debates about reproductive health care.

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<sup>8</sup> [Abortion Is a Common Experience for U.S. Women, Despite Dramatic Declines in Rates | Guttmacher Institute](#)



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### **Case 2 and Case 3: Differentiating between posts that are advocating for and against violence and hate**

Case 2 and Case 3 involve posts discussing proposed laws that equate abortion to murder and seek to punish abortion patients with death. Both cases are examples of how moderation and algorithmic policies need to differentiate between hate speech and violence and those advocating *against* hate and violence or providing educational resources. Meta's policies must allow users to raise awareness, provide educational materials, and organize against policies promoting violence, as in both Cases 2 and 3. By carefully evaluating posts and considering the intent and context behind them, Facebook can promote healthy discussions, encourage productive dialogue, and stop the spread of extremism and violence.

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for social activism and raising awareness about important issues. By permitting posts that condemn hate and violence, Facebook enables users to voice their opinions, share educational resources, and mobilize communities against harmful ideologies.

Distinguishing among posts that advocate against hate and violence and those promoting them is crucial for combating online radicalization and extremism. Extremist groups often use social media platforms to recruit and spread their ideologies of hate and violence. Meta has a responsibility to remove content that disseminates harmful and dangerous ideas that can lead to real-world harm. Hate speech and violent content can have severe consequences, including inciting real-world violence, fostering discrimination, and causing emotional harm.

### **Case 2 and Case 3: State-endorsed gender-based violence**

Case 2 and Case 3 shed light on the gravity of state-endorsed gender-based violence and the need for robust moderation and algorithmic policies. Both are advocating against the death penalty for abortion, but there are posts on Meta platforms supporting these policies. Any post advocating for these policies must be taken seriously and promptly removed. Advocating for such policies is tantamount to endorsing genocide and should be recognized as a grave violation of human rights. It is important to note that these policies would disproportionately affect marginalized communities, sending low-income individuals, BIPOC communities, immigrants, disabled individuals, and LGBTQ+ individuals to prison or a state-mandated death sentence. These individuals often lack the necessary resources and support to protect themselves or access alternative options, compounding the human rights violation. Legitimizing violence against abortion patients through these discussions could lead to direct threats and an increase in violence against abortion providers and patients at a time when both are already on the rise. Advocating for abortion patients to be killed cannot be divorced from the context of gender-based violence. Any type of violence directed toward women or transgender people cannot be taken lightly because it encourages and feeds into the ongoing epidemic of gender-based violence. Statistics show that in the U.S.: 1 in 7 women compared to 1 in 25 men have been injured by an intimate partner; 1 in 5 women compared to 1 in 71 men have been raped in their lifetime; 19.3 million women compared to 5.1 million men have been stalked.<sup>9</sup> In 2021, the Human Rights Campaign tracked a record number of violent fatal incidents against transgender and gender non-conforming people--with 50 fatalities documented.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [National Statistics - National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2022 - Human Rights Campaign](#)

### **Case 2 and 3: Related uses of killing and violence against abortion patients, providers, and supporters**

The Board must also consider content that advocates for criminalizing or promoting harm toward patients, providers, advocates, caregivers, friends, and nonprofit organizations assisting patients. The criminalization of health care providers and the targeting of those involved in providing health care services pose significant dangers to individuals and society as a whole. Calling for criminal charges against patients, helpers, patient advocates, and providers only exacerbates the issue and undermines access to safe and compassionate health care.

The Board also needs to consider broader examples of how “killing” and related terms (murder, execute, assassinate, electrocute, put to death, slay, poison, etc.) are used against abortion patients, providers, activists, etc. Posts suggesting that abortion seekers, providers, or activists should be killed should be removed as inciting violence even if not a direct threat to one person. While this issue is not explicitly present in the cases mentioned, it is related to the use of “killing” and similar terms.

Violence against providers, patients, advocates, and their friends and family has dramatically increased in recent years, and any post advocating more violence furthers this problem. According to the National Abortion Federation (NAF), which has been tracking these incidents for over 45 years, since 1977, there have been: 11 murders, 42 bombings, 200 arsons, 531 assaults, 492 clinic invasions, 375 burglaries, and thousands of other incidents of criminal activities directed at patients, providers, and volunteers. For example, in 2009, George Tiller, an abortion doctor in Kansas, was murdered while attending church in Wichita. In 2015, a gunman opened fire at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, killing three people.<sup>11</sup> In 2022 alone NAF found that: Stalking increased by 913% (from 8 in 2021 to 81 in 2022); obstructions increased by 538% (from 45 in 2021 to 287 in 2022); bomb threats increased by 133% (from 3 in 2021 to 7 in 2022); burglaries increased by 100% (from 5 in 2021 to 10 in 2022); and assaults and batteries increased by 29% (from 7 in 2021 to 9 in 2022).<sup>12</sup>

The Board must recognize the broader implications of language that promotes violence or harm, prioritize the safety and well-being of health care providers and patients, and implement policies that foster an environment of education, awareness, and advocacy against violence.

### **Disinformation can be life-threatening**

Medical disinformation about abortion, particularly medication abortion, must be addressed on Meta platforms, because it creates a direct threat to life by encouraging people to take steps that have sent women to the emergency room. [UltraViolet and dozens of medical professionals raised this urgent issue directly to Meta staff in 2022.](#) For example, abortion “reversal” is a non-medical term used by those who are anti-abortion to describe a medically unproven protocol. In December 2019, the results from the first randomized control study (the highest level of scientific study) on abortion “reversal” were published. This study had to be ended early because of significant safety concerns, namely heavy bleeding that in some cases required blood transfusion and even emergency surgery. Notably, the American College of Obstetrics and

<sup>11</sup> [A brief history of attacks on abortion providers](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Violence Against Abortion Providers Continues to Rise Following Roe Reversal. New Report Finds.](#)

Gynecology (ACOG), which publishes practice guidelines for OB-GYN care, including abortion, does not recommend the practice, stating that “claims of medication abortion reversal are not supported by the body of scientific evidence, and this approach is not recommended in ACOG’s clinical guidance.” This is not a political issue. It is about the inherent and potentially life-threatening dangers of allowing false medical information to overrun Meta platforms, undermining patient safety and the authority and trust of the FDA, especially amid an ongoing global pandemic.<sup>13,14</sup> Any medical disinformation is a threat to public health and safety. Allowing this information to continue unchecked and even profiting from paid advertisements is not only irresponsible corporate behavior-- it is a breach of Meta’s policies prohibiting the promotion, sale, or use of unsafe products or inappropriate use of regulated products. We urge the Board to take immediate action to limit the spread and reduce the harms of medical disinformation about mifepristone and misoprostol: Remove disinformation, link to accurate medical information, and expand disinformation policies to include a ban on medical disinformation.

### **Case 1: Psychopath as ableist hate speech**

The comment in Case 1 that refers to an entire group of people as “psychopaths” must be removed immediately for its hateful and discriminatory nature. Clinical terms, such as “psychopath,” should not be casually used to label behaviors, let alone an entire group of people. These terms have specific meanings and are utilized by professionals for diagnostic purposes, not as slurs. Using words like “psycho” or “crazy” is a common way to target women, particularly Black women.<sup>15,16</sup> It is not a coincidence that this language is being used in the context of abortion, as its purpose is to cast women as mentally unstable and undermine their autonomy and decision-making.

Carelessly throwing these words around harms people with mental health disorders. Clinical psychologist Scott Bea, from the Center of Behavioral Health at Cleveland Clinic, emphasizes that this kind of language trivializes mental health and can have a profound impact on those who live with these conditions.<sup>17</sup> Approximately one in five Americans experiences a mental illness, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Labeling someone as “crazy,” “sicko,” or “psycho” perpetuates the misconception that individuals with mental illness are dangerous. In reality, evidence shows that people with mental illness are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of crimes.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, misusing psychiatric illness as a means of insult only serves to perpetuate stigmas and discourage people from openly discussing their struggles and seeking help. Sarah Petersen, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, affirms that this misuse further hinders progress by creating barriers to addressing mental health issues.<sup>19</sup>

“Psychopath” is not listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the authoritative guide used by mental health professionals for diagnosis. This derogatory comment must be recognized as hate speech and promptly removed.

<sup>13</sup> [WHO says COVID emergency is over. So what does that mean? | AP News](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Is the COVID-19 Pandemic Over? – Cleveland Clinic](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Men really need to stop calling women crazy - The Washington Post](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Stop Calling Women Crazy - Gaslighting, Hysteria](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Calling people crazy, OCD, or psycho has negative impacts](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Mental Health Myths and Facts | SAMHSA](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Calling people crazy, OCD, or psycho has negative impacts](#)