

# Reddit bans 2,000 communities in major censorship action

By Kevin Reed  
2 July 2020

In a major act of social media censorship, the news aggregation site Reddit banned more than 2,000 communities, known as subreddits, on Monday, claiming they were in violation of the platform's new content policy against "hate speech."

The most prominent of the terminated subreddits was a right-wing forum called *r/The\_Donald*, a pro-Trump group that was a notorious online gathering place for sharing racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic memes, videos and other content. The subreddit had approximately 790,000 active members.

Reddit executives, including CEO Steve Huffman, also a founder of the platform, argued that the group had regularly broken platform rules by allowing its members to target and harass others with hate speech. Huffman told reporters on Monday, "Reddit is a place for community and belonging, not for attacking people. 'The\_Donald' has been in violation of that."

In an official statement on its content policy, Reddit wrote: "All communities on Reddit must abide by our content policy in good faith. We banned *r/The\_Donald* because it has not done so, despite every opportunity. The community has consistently hosted and upvoted more rule-breaking content than average (Rule 1), antagonized us and other communities (Rules 2 and 8), and its mods have refused to meet our most basic expectations." The full eight point content policy can found here: [Reddit Content Policy](#).

However, according to a report in the *Washington Post*, by the time Reddit shut down *r/The\_Donald*, "there was little sign of recent activity. The most popular posts were several months old."

Meanwhile, hiding behind the banning of the widely despised subreddit *r/The\_Donald*, Reddit executives also took action to shut down some 2,000 other groups, including a popular left-radical forum called

*r/ChapoTrapHouse*, named after a popular podcast, which had approximately 160,000 users in its community.

Although the subreddit is not officially sponsored by the Chapo Trap House podcast, it is associated with something called the "dirtbag left," a political tendency that eschews civility and uses vulgarity to advance its ideas, which can be characterized as hostile to neo-liberalism and political correctness. The group emerged during the 2016 presidential primaries and campaigned aggressively for the nomination of Bernie Sanders against Hillary Clinton, and Joseph Biden in 2020.

The Reddit banning of *r/ChapoTrapHouse* was based, according to the platform statement, on the fact that it "consistently host rule-breaking content and their mods have demonstrated no intention of reining in their community." Mods are volunteer moderators responsible for managing and monitoring the activity in subreddit communities.

Among the hundreds of other subreddits banned by the platform, Reddit claimed that 90 percent of them had less than 10 users. The company published a list of all 200 banned subreddits with 10 or more users, but provided no explanation as to why those had been deleted.

The censorship moves by Reddit represent a departure from the company's previous posture, which has been hands-off since its founding in 2005, allowing moderators to determine what content is permitted within subreddit communities.

With the conversion of the site—which has called itself "The Front Page of the Internet"—into a property of the Newhouse publishing empire Condé Nast/Advance Publications, and the adoption of an advertising revenue model, the demands of sponsors

and the American political establishment have forced policy changes.

The censorship at Reddit is part of a broader campaign on all social media platforms against “hate speech,” driven by the demands of advertisers in the wake of the mass protests against police violence following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day.

As reported by the *Washington Post* on Monday, Facebook “is facing a growing advertiser boycott over its refusal to remove a Trump post that many saw as encouraging violence during the George Floyd protests.” The article added, “Twitter hid the post with a warning label, noting that the post broke the company’s policies against encouraging violence.”

It has been reported that Ford, Unilever, Starbucks and Verizon are boycotting putting ads on Facebook for the month of July in an effort to force the platform to submit to an audit of how it controls hate speech. On June 18, Facebook deactivated dozens of President Trump’s campaign ads for their inclusion of a symbol associated with a Nazi designation for political prisoners in World War II.

The Amazon-owned live-streaming site Twitch also temporarily suspended the Trump campaign account for violating its rules of conduct against hate speech, and Google-affiliated YouTube shut down the video channels of white supremacists such as David Duke.

It is becoming increasingly clear that financial and corporate interests, along with the entire political establishment and intelligence apparatus of US imperialism, are moving rapidly to gain control over the information and political discussions taking place on social media platforms accessed daily by billions of people around the world.

While the coronavirus pandemic continues to expand throughout the world, the same corporations that are withholding advertising from the social media platforms on the pretext of concern over hate speech are demanding that workers everywhere in the world return to their jobs and risk becoming sick and dying or infecting their family members.

The latest censorship moves by Reddit confirm the analysis made here on the *World Socialist Web Site* last April, when moderators for the subreddit r/coronavirus banned the domain wsws.org from sharing articles in that community of over 2 million users. The

moderators banned our articles on the grounds that they constituted “off-topic political discussion” and that the wsws.org was not a “reliable” source.

In response, we wrote: “Given that references to ‘reliable’ and ‘recognized’ sources are well-known euphemisms for the corporate media and our article had already received a widespread response on r/coronavirus, the banning of the WSWs by subreddit moderators is unmistakably an act of political censorship designed to block our analysis of the unfolding crisis from reaching the public.”

To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>