

August 19, 2019

Newsweek – Legal Department
33 Whitehall St.
New York, NY 10004

Sent via email (to n.wapshott@newsweek.com and n.cooper@newsweek.com) and FedEx (tracking #776018514830)

**Re: Cease and Desist Demand
Retraction of Article on Big-Tech Censorship Against Live Action**

Dear Newsweek Representative:

I represent Live Action and am directing Newsweek to immediately cease and desist from further publication of its online article written by Sharon Kann, attached hereto and published per the following link: <https://www.newsweek.com/no-big-tech-isnt-censoring-anti-abortion-contentjust-look-data-opinion-1450940>. Publishing this false, defamatory, and grossly inaccurate article violates laws and journalistic standards and thereby harms both Live Action and its President Lila Rose in financial and other material ways, giving rise to economic damages per se and attorney fees under applicable defamation, trade libel, and tortious interference laws.

The blatant lies, couched misleadingly within this so-called “Opinion” piece, further warrant immediate retraction. My client representatives sought to informally resolve this matter, through emails sent to Newsweek representatives Nick Wapshott and Nancy Cooper along with the attached social media suppression documentation. We received no response. Short of retracting the article, Newsweek should at least allow Live Action to provide a rebuttal article in accordance with the following points of direct refutation.

Author Sharon Kann asserts through her article’s title that the “Data” shows that “Big Tech Isn’t Censoring Anti-Abortion Content.” For example, she disagrees with Lila Rose’s assertion that media outlet “ads are systematically blocked based on ideology” – “they aren’t.” In addition, she denies that Twitter is “censoring” Live Action – “the content was never removed from the platform.” Kann goes on to assert that “the actual data consistently tells a far different story” than Live Action’s and Rose’s claims of ideological censorship. And in response to Rose’s statements that Live Action has been censored or intentionally suppressed on Pinterest, YouTube, and Twitter, Kann asserts that such “allegations are as inaccurate as they are self-serving.”

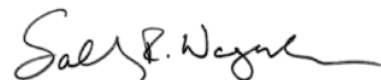
The truth is that Live Action’s and Rose’s assertions are indeed accurate. Per the attached additional materials, Live Action has clear and longstanding proof of its pro-life educational content being suppressed from distribution by social media entities, with easily obtainable evidence to demonstrate such wrongful suppression, including the following: physical emails from Twitter; screenshots of blocked Facebook ads; a Slate reporter bragging about getting Live Action videos eliminated from top search results; and internal Slack messages at Pinterest stating Live Action is a “porn*graphic site” among others. A simple “Google” search would have shown that The Washington Post itself has covered Live Action’s censorship more accurately and fairly. All of this information is publicly available online.

A simple question remains: Does Newsweek seek to likewise suppress the truth, through articles like Kann's piece, or will it remain true to journalistic standards of integrity and retract it as false and incredibly misleading? Or will Newsweek at least allow Live Action's and Rose' voices to be heard through a rebuttal article, refuting Kann's so-called "opinion" and reliance on untrue data with Live Action's own data about social media suppression, censorship, and unfair bias. Be assured that Live Action is prepared to press forward with all available legal and other remedies for Newsweek's wrongful publication of Kann's article. Her false statements, as published by Newsweek, defame both Live Action and Rose through such statements as that their assertions can be factually "debunked." In addition, Kann's false statements raise issues of tortious interference with Live Action's supporters, through her claims that Live Action's and Rose's assertions of social media suppression and censorship are incongruous with their fundraising appeals. By seeking to discredit Live Action's and Rose's reputation and truthfulness with Live Action supporters, Kann's article interferes with their fundraising credibility and relationships with donors and is therefore legally actionable.

The simple solution here is for Newsweek to retract the article. Secondly, allow Live Action's voice to be heard through a follow-up article published by Newsweek. That would honor journalistic integrity and promote full and fair dialogue.

Live Action has other media outlets through to speak the truth about Kann's article and Newsweek's refusal thus far to right this wrong. Live Action is fully prepared to use its national platform to further address the present issue, if Newsweek will not do so. Accordingly, and to avoid such adverse media and legal action measures, I encourage you to respond to this cease and desist letter by no later than **Thursday, August 22 at 5 pm Eastern**. I can be reached via email at sally@wagenmakerlaw.com or at the above-listed telephone number. I appreciate your prompt attention in this matter.

Sincerely,



Sally Wagenmaker

Enclosures:

1. Newsweek Article: "No Big Tech Isn't Censoring Anti-Abortion Content – Just Look at the Data" (<https://www.newsweek.com/no-big-tech-isnt-censoring-anti-abortion-content-just-look-data-opinion-1450940>)
2. Live Action Social Media Suppression Materials (Twitter, Facebook, Youtube)
3. Slate Article: "YouTube's Search Results for 'Abortion' Show Exactly What Anti-Abortion Activists Want to Women to See" (<https://slate.com/technology/2018/12/youtube-search-abortion-results-pro-life.html>)
4. Daily Mail Article: "Whistleblower reveals how Pinterest BANNED pro-life group Live Action by categorizing it as porn" (<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7132879/Whistleblower-reveals-Pinterest-BANNED-pro-life-group-Live-Action.html>)
5. Washington Post Article: "Yes, Twitter can reject this anti-abortion group's ads for displaying 'sensitive content'" (https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/twitter-wont-run-an-anti-abortion-groups-paid-advertising-unless-it-scrubs-its-website-of-sensitive-content/2017/09/22/d914fc8a-9ecb-11e7-9083-fbfff6804c2_story.html)

cc: Lila Rose, Live Action President;
Alison Howard Centofante, Live Action Director of External Relations

NEWSWEEK ARTICLE
“NO BIG TECH ISN’T CENSORING ANTI-ABORTION CONTENT -
JUST LOOK AT THE DATA”

No, Big Tech Isn't Censoring Anti-Abortion Content—Just Look at the Data | Opinion

 [newsweek.com/no-big-tech-isnt-censoring-anti-abortion-content-just-look-data-opinion-1450940](https://www.newsweek.com/no-big-tech-isnt-censoring-anti-abortion-content-just-look-data-opinion-1450940)

July 24,
2019

Earlier this month, at an event lauded by the Trump administration as a "social media summit," a group of right-wing media firebrands and conspiracy theorists gathered at the White House to air their grievances. Chief among them: alleged censorship of conservative views by tech giants, most notably Facebook and Twitter.

"We're joined by someone affected by this troubling bias very, very much," President Donald Trump told the crowd on July 11. "Lila Rose."

Lila Rose is founder and president of the anti-abortion group Live Action, which boasts of having the "largest and most engaged online following in the pro-life movement." Rose herself wields a sizable social media presence, with more than 200,000 Twitter followers of her own.

Taking the podium, Rose echoed Trump's remarks, complaining of a "double standard and bias" in how tech companies and social media platforms treat conservative content. She alleged that Live Action content has been censored or intentionally suppressed on a number of platforms, including Pinterest, YouTube and Twitter.

Such claims of rampant anti-conservative censorship may animate supporters and drive fundraising campaigns. But the facts and hard evidence consistently tell a different story: These allegations are as inaccurate as they are self-serving.

Rose and her right-wing media allies haven't been shy about alleging that platforms and media outlets are censoring conservative content—claiming that an anti-abortion movie was unfairly suppressed (it wasn't), that ads are systematically blocked based on ideology (they aren't) and that search engine traffic is manipulated to disadvantage anti-choice content (highly unlikely).

The recipe for a right-wing media censorship allegation is equal parts anecdote and repetition—a recipe that Live Action has whipped up to energize supporters and raise funds.

For example, on June 26, Rose said on Fox News' *Tucker Carlson Tonight* that Twitter was censoring the group—and she used the claim to promote the organization's fundraising campaign.

"We're actually doing a campaign right now to get people to fund Live Action and to get out the information that Twitter is trying to block," she said.

Right-wing media predictably amplified these claims, with the Christian Broadcasting Network saying the fundraising campaign was necessary to "compensate" for Live Action's "losses due to Twitter's censoring," even though the content was never removed from the platform. Another anti-abortion outlet, LifeSiteNews, has also blamed censorship—a so-called "war by the globalist social media giants"—for a "struggling" annual fundraising campaign.

Incendiary claims of bias serve a tactical (if disingenuous) purpose, but the actual data consistently tell a far different story.

In a 2018 study, Media Matters conclusively debunked these conservative censorship claims. Over a six-month period, both right-leaning and left-leaning political Facebook pages garnered virtually identical interaction rates (total number of reactions, comments and shares per post divided by the number of likes the page has). When Media Matters repeated the study in 2019, the results were consistent, further demonstrating the lack of hard data to support claims of anti-conservative bias.

This disparity becomes even more pronounced when examining abortion-related content on Facebook. Media Matters found that in April 2019 alone, 63 percent of the top-engaged abortion-related links and 72 percent of the top-engaged page posts about abortion came from right-leaning pages. Live Action and the anti-choice site LifeNews.com made up more than a quarter of the most popular posts during this time—with posts from Live Action and Rose outperforming posts from all left-leaning pages combined.

Although Rose and Live Action frequently allege censorship, the organization has been more than happy to cite high interaction statistics when asking supporters for money, arguing that "when you partner with Live Action you are reaching the most people possible on social media."



President Donald Trump gestures as he speaks at the presidential social media summit at the White House in Washington, D.C., on July 11. NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/Getty

As abortion rights have increasingly come under attack at the state and federal level, right-wing media continue to dominate the conversation about abortion rights online and in cable news. Republicans have already demonstrated that they will weaponize anti-abortion misinformation to attack pro-choice advocates as part of a broader 2020 electoral strategy.

For its part, Live Action has already weaponized misinformation about abortion to decrease access and spread stigma—promoting inaccurate and sensationalized claims about abortion later in pregnancy and nonexistent links between abortion and breast cancer. As Rose said at the social media summit, this content "reaches millions of people every week," while the Live Action website says the group has "the largest social media reach in the pro-life movement."

That doesn't sound like the result of consistent and intentional ideologically based censorship by tech companies.

Sharon Kann is the abortion rights and reproductive health program director at Media Matters, where she has worked since December 2015. She has a master's degree in communication from Wake Forest University and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Iowa.

The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

No, Big Tech Isn't Censoring Anti-Abortion Content—Just Look at the Data | Opinion | Opinion

**LIVE ACTION SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPRESSION MATERIALS
(TWITTER, FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE)**



Live Action Documentation of Social Media Suppression

1. Twitter

In 2015, Live Action and Lila Rose's ad accounts on the platform were suspended. Live Action spent nearly two years of back and forth with Twitter bots and then human staff members trying to find out how to reinstate our accounts. Live Action was told over a phone call with Twitter in 2017 that it would have to delete all references to abortion, criticism of Planned Parenthood, undercover investigations and ultrasound images from its Twitter feeds AND website in order to continue advertising. Twitter admits in an e-mail exchange the content it deems in violation of its hate and sensitive policy is simply pro-life speech. (See emails attached)

According to Twitter, the following content is problematic/banned from promotion:

- Content related to defunding Planned Parenthood
- Images and videos of medically animated abortion procedures
- Live Action's undercover investigations
- Investigations by the Center for Medical
- Ultrasound and images of preborn children
- Live Action's petition to defund Planned Parenthood

Twitter directed Live Action to delete its current accounts, eliminate the above content from its website, and start a new Twitter account in order to be reconsidered for advertising on the platform.

To date, our accounts remain suspended from running any ads. Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood spent hundreds of thousands of dollars this year alone running pro-choice ads on Twitter, and groups like ReproAction (a pro-abortion activist group) also run ads freely - including an ad calling for pro-life groups to be banned from Twitter. Their petition is live [here](#).

Although Twitter claims to be a forum of ideas, it's suppressing viewpoints it does not like - especially the pro-life view. By blocking Live Action from advertising, twitter violates its own mission statement to give "everyone the power" to share ideas "without barriers." Twitter has a responsibility to tell the truth to their users instead of using algorithms and ads to favor one political viewpoint.

Emails from Twitter:

EMAIL CHAIN #1 (read from bottom up)

From: TWITTER
Date: Monday, June 5, 2017 at 3:12 PM
To: Live Action
Subject: Re: Twitter advertising policy

OK, I'm finally back. Sorry again for the delayed response! Regarding Verification, have you submitted the handles via verification.twitter.com yet? Let me know if so or once you do that.

Regarding the content, all that you have listed looks correct. Please keep in mind that if you choose to go with the deleting content option we'll likely go through a few rounds of review with our Policy team - but eventually we'll get there! Just don't want to set the expectation that you'll automatically be eligible for advertising if you make changes outlined.

Thanks, Live Action. Around all week if you have additional questions.

TWITTER
Twitter, Inc.
Political & Advocacy Sales

On Thu, Jun 1, 2017 at 7:51 PM, Live Action wrote:
Hi, TWITTER

Thank you for your e-mail. Hope you had a great Memorial Day weekend, as well!

I reviewed the links you provided in the previous e-mail, and I wanted to run a few more items by you, for the benefit of our social media team, for clarification. As you mentioned, for us to continue our commercial relationship by continuing to advertise on Twitter, we must either:

1) Remove current and past sensitive content from our Twitter feeds. Based on the links you provided, this would include content related to:

- our undercover investigations
- investigations by the Center for Medical Progress
- images and videos of abortion procedures
- content related to defunding Planned Parenthood
- images and videos of late-term abortions

- ultrasound and images of preborn children
- our petition to defund Planned Parenthood
- links directing to sections of our website that contain videos with the content listed above

2) Create a new Twitter account

- solely for marketing and policy efforts
- account must direct to a new website that does not include content that violates Twitter's policy (as listed above)

We'd like to understand from a content perspective how we can best proceed. Appreciate your clarification here, as it is very helpful.

Thank you,
Live Action

The e-mails were sent following a phone call between Live Action and Twitter, during which Twitter representatives said Live Action is tweeting sensitive material and is not permitted to advertise on the platform. To rectify the issue, Twitter asked Live Action to delete all paid ads and organic tweets it deems “inflammatory,” “abusive,” or “offensive,” and to go through several rounds of edits with Twitter’s policy team

until Live Action's accounts are considered approved for advertising. In addition, Twitter said Live Action's tweets could not even contain links to its website with "sensitive" content, requiring Live Action to scrub and delete content from its web properties.

From: TWITTER
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2017 2:09:38 PM
To: Live Action

Subject: Re: Twitter advertising policy

Hi Live Action -

Hope you had a nice MDW. We're happy to discuss advertising but we will not be able to discuss making an exception to the ads policy. Have you discussed with your team if one of the options listed below would work best for your organization should you decide to move forward with advertising? Happy to help with either option.

You have two options to consider that will allow you to become eligible for advertising:

- Remove current and past sensitive content from your website and Twitter feed.
- Create a new Twitter handle for marketing/advertising efforts that drives to a new website that does not include content that violates our policy.

TWITTER
Twitter, Inc.
Political & Advocacy Sales

From: TWITTER
Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 4:34 PM
To: Live Action

Subject: Re: Twitter advertising policy

Hi Live Action

As mentioned on the phone, our Policy team is not client-facing. They do not meet with clients directly. Unfortunately an in-person meeting with this team will not be possible. If you have questions on our Ads Policy I again refer you to [this](#) information.

I'd be happy to help you and your team find a way to work within the boundaries of the existing policy to become eligible for Twitter advertising - but this policy is not negotiable and is applied universally to all Twitter advertisers.

TWITTER
Twitter, Inc.
Political & Advocacy Sales

From: TWITTER
Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 7:20 AM
To: Live Action

Subject: Re: Our Twitter accounts

Hello Live Action

Thank you again for your time yesterday. It was great to finally connect via phone. Per our discussion, below please find a few points of follow-up:

- **The following is prohibited under our sensitive advertising content policy regarding language and imagery:**
 - Threatening, violent, gruesome, abusive, shocking or disturbing content.
 - Offensive, vulgar or obscene content.
 - Inflammatory or provocative content which is likely to evoke a strong negative reaction.
- **Examples of the @LiveAction content that is in violation of our sensitive advertising content policy includes (but not limited to):**
 - [864821600604094465](#)
 - [634891968191971328](#)
 - [634000100147265539](#)
 - [32883236554176000](#)



 - [328838651549192192](#)
 - [328863891209728000](#)
- **You have two options to consider that will allow you to become eligible for advertising moving forward:**
 - Remove current and past sensitive content from your website and Twitter feed.
 - Create a new Twitter handle for marketing/advertising efforts that drives to a new website that does not include content that violates our policy.
- **Please provide the following information on behalf of @LilaGraceRose to be re-considered for Twitter Verification:**
 - link to BIO of choice.
 - link to TWO articles mentioning Lila and her position within the organization.
 - link to TWO TV appearances where Lila is representing the organization.



Happy to discuss any of these items further. We're here to help and hope we can find a solution to get you back to Twitter Ads eligibility soon! Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything.

TWITTER

Twitter, Inc.
Political & Advocacy Sales

Here are a few examples of tweets considered in violation, compared with similar tweets Planned Parenthood is permitted to advertise and run.

| Tweets Twitter has deemed acceptable | Examples of Live Action tweets Twitter flagged as “inflammatory or provocative” |
|--|---|
| <p>Planned Parenthood can talk about defunding and call those who want to defund it “extremists”... ✓</p>  | <p>... but Live Action can't talk about defunding and point out facts about Planned Parenthood's lack of health services ✗</p>  |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Planned Parenthood can say why it thinks women need Planned Parenthood... ✓</p>  | <p>...but Live Action can't say why women don't need Planned Parenthood ✗</p>  |
|---|---|

Planned Parenthood can declare women have the right to abortion...



...but Live Action can't declare a child has the right to life



A Planned Parenthood political statement that uses inflammatory language but is acceptable to Twitter:



A Live Action "political" statement that Twitter considers "inflammatory or provocative":



2. Facebook

This year, one of our ads featuring a simple picture of a 24-week-old premature baby on life support with text saying “Will We Protect Life?” (see screenshots #1 and #2 below) was disapproved. They disapproved the ad, and for three weeks, Live Action asked Facebook what we needed to do to get the ad approved. It wasn’t until Election Day at 11:52 am ET, the last day of the ad campaign, that Facebook cleared the ad for promotion.

Facebook is also blocking ads that link to a [webpage](#) with a video designed in consultation with OB/GYNs featuring medically accurate animations of 1st and 2nd trimester abortion procedures. Facebook has said the ads have been blocked due to them either being “shocking, disrespectful, or sensational content” or for showing “surgery or a medical procedure,” or the webpage the ads link to provides an “unexpected experience” for the user. However, Facebook currently allows other for-profit and nonprofit groups to promote medical procedures -- see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

We hope that in the interest of fostering an environment of free and open debate on such a relevant issue, Facebook would honor its public statements regarding open sharing of information and its stated policies and community standards.



We find the timing of these decisions suspect. Back in October, these ads were conveniently delayed until Election Day (with mere hours before polls closed), and now that abortion is back in the national spotlight with New York, Virginia, et. al, we are suddenly having the same issues again. We are concerned this is becoming a pattern where pro-life advertisements are being suppressed during critical national debates.

Screenshot #1 & #2: Images of two variations of the ad below. Both were blocked until Election Day.

LIVE ACTION Live Action ✓
Written by Cooper Anderson [?] · October 16 at 11:34 AM · 🌐

Our nation is at a pivotal crossroads. Over 2,500 preborn children lose their lives every day and Planned Parenthood still receives over \$500 million in taxpayer funding every year. You can stop this violence - will you join the fight to protect life?
Sign your pledge to "Stand for Life" today: pledge.liveaction.org



WILL WE PROTECT LIFE?

[PLEDGE.LIVEACTION.ORG](https://pledge.liveaction.org)
Sign Your Pledge Now » Sign Up

#2

LIVE ACTION Live Action ✓
Written by Cooper Anderson [?] · October 16 at 11:34 AM · 🌐

926,200 times a year...
Over 2,500 times a day...
Every 34 seconds... A child is killed by abortion.
And, every year, Planned Parenthood receives over \$500 million in taxpayer funding while dismembering, poisoning, and starving to death over 320,000 preborn children.
Our nation is at a pivotal crossroads. Only YOU can put an end to this violence - will you defend these innocent children?
Sign your pledge to "Stand for Life" today: pledge.liveaction.org



Every 34 seconds...A child is killed by abortion.

And, every year, Planned Parenthood receives over \$500 million in taxpayer funding while dismembering, poisoning, and starving to death over 320,000 preborn children.

Our nation is at a pivotal crossroads. Only YOU can put an end to this violence - will you defend these innocent children?

Sign your pledge to "Stand for Life" today: pledge.liveaction.org



PLEDGE.LIVEACTION.ORG

Screenshot #3: Response from Facebook. Disapproval of each ad above

A screenshot of the Facebook Ads Manager interface. The browser address bar shows the URL: https://business.facebook.com/adsmanager/manage/ads/edit?act=263621267171396&business_id=10152744754818728&columns=name%2Ccer.... The page title is "Live Action, Inc. (263621267171396)". The ad name is "Toby Still - C/PL-LC". The ad status is "Not Approved". A red banner at the top of the ad details section contains the following text: "Your ad wasn't approved because it doesn't follow our Advertising Policies. We don't allow ads that contain shocking, disrespectful or sensational content, including ads that depict violence or threats of violence." Below this, it says "How to fix: We suggest removing this type of content from your ad and/or using a different image or video." and "You can check the status of your review in your Support Inbox." There is a "View Request" button. The ad details section shows "Ad Name: Toby Still - C/PL-LC", "Ad ID: 6103474086171", "1 Campaign", "1 Ad Set", and "Facebook Page: Live Action". There is a checkbox for "This ad relates to politics or an issue of national importance." which is checked. At the bottom right, there are "Discard Draft" and "Publish" buttons.

The screenshot shows the Facebook Ads Manager interface. The top navigation bar includes the Facebook logo, 'Ads Manager', and a search bar. The main content area displays the details for an ad named 'Toby Still - C/PL-SC'. A red banner at the top left of the ad details indicates a disapproval. The text of the banner reads: 'Your ad wasn't approved because it doesn't follow our Advertising Policies. We don't allow ads that contain shocking, disrespectful or sensational content, including ads that depict violence or threats of violence. How to fix: We suggest removing this type of content from your ad and/or using a different image or video. You can check the status of your review in your Support Inbox. View Request'. Below the banner, the ad's identity is shown: Ad Name 'Toby Still - C/PL-SC', Ad ID '6103473279971', 1 Campaign, and 1 Ad Set. A 'Create Rule' button is visible in the bottom right of the ad details. The left sidebar shows a list of ads, with 'Toby Still - C/PL-SC' selected.

2019 NY PREMIE VIDEO DISAPPROVAL:

The screenshot shows the Facebook Ads Manager interface for an ad named 'NY Video - 01.25.2019'. The ad is marked as 'Not Approved'. A red banner at the top left of the ad details indicates a disapproval. The text of the banner reads: 'This ad isn't running because it uses an image or video that contains shocking, sensational, or excessively violent content. This type of material provides an unexpected experience for users, and goes against our core value of fostering a positive global community. To learn more and see examples, see our Advertising Policies. What to do next: Avoid using images or videos that may shock or scare users. If you've read our policies and think that we made a mistake, you can request a second review by our team. Request Review'. Below the banner, the ad's identity is shown: Ad Name 'NY Video - 01.25.2019', Ad Preview '1 of 1 Ad', and Mobile News Feed '1 of 7'. A 'Request Review' button is visible in the bottom left of the ad details. The left sidebar shows a list of ads, with 'NY Video - 01.25.2019' selected.

**In New York, it is legal
to abort babies at this age**



LIVE ACTION

Other issues:

- Ads with high performance (10-15% CTR depending on audience) saw steep declines that did not make sense, with some of these campaigns going from a 15% CTR to 3-5% overnight.
- Audiences based on our web traffic (millions of people each month) would deliver ads at a crawl, as if they were an audience that was only a few thousand people
- Warnings from FB that our ads would be shown to fewer people because of an "unexpected experience on the landing page," accusing us of click bait, when the ad content exactly match the content of the landing page
- The political disclaimer box continues to be a huge issue, especially as we are NOT a political organization, but an educational non-profit
- Audiences that were once highly successful for us and based on our own data, saw their performance steeply decline almost overnight (an example would be lookalikes based on our donor data)

3. YouTube

In December 2018, Youtube suppressed Live Action's best performing video series showing accurate medical animations of the most common abortion procedures after a writer from Slate pointed out their [relevancy and prominence](#) after searching "abortion" on the platform. With over 140 million views and translations into multiple languages, Live Action's "Abortion Procedures" video series has become the most widely viewed pro-life video series. It is now far past 150th in results on the platform behind pro-abortion content that was previously not given prominence in search results.

As recently as June 2019, we have experienced massive issues with running ads on the platform. We have had multiple ads approved to run and not delivered. Usually, ads are reviewed and start spending within 24 hours. Our campaigns are going 2+ weeks without spending, even after approval. It is also suspicious that we have upped our bids (YouTube ads are an auction-based platform) to incredibly high amounts to see if that was the reason that nothing was delivered.

Most videos can run ads between \$0.01 - \$0.03 CPV (Cost per view). Usually between a \$7 - \$9 CPM we see results between \$0.03 - \$0.05 CPV. However, after bidding \$10, \$12, and even \$18 CPM, our approved ads were still not delivered. After multiple support calls with Google Support, customer service reps have not been able to answer why the ads have not run, or they have given us non-sequitur responses - for instance, on one of our videos, "The Pro-Life Reply to 'A Fetus is not a Person,' We were approved and started spending money immediately. Then our ad was suddenly disapproved due to an "unavailable video." After another round of calls to Google support, we were told that our video was not posted to the channel or it was removed. That was false - the video was never removed from our channel or altered in any way.

Screenshots below: You can see the start date and end dates of 4 campaigns, the target CPM, and the current date (top right corner) where the campaigns still have not run.

Campaign #1 - 9 ads, only 1 disapproved. No spend.

Start Date: Jun 27th

Target CPM: \$10

| Ad | Ad group | Status | Ad type | Impr. | Views | View rate | Avg. CPV | Cost | Earned views | Video |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|--|
| Ads 2_June 2019 Stop ad H 03:59 | Ads 2_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Fired Pinterest whistleblower speaks out on pro-life censorship |
| Ads 4_June 2019 Stop ad H 02:42 | Ads 4_June 2019 | Disapproved Shocking content | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Woman goes ballistic on Live Action spokeswoman |
| Ads 5_June 2019 Stop ad H 01:57 | Ads 5_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Twitter censorship of pro-life messaging |
| Ads 9_June 2019 Watch her on abortion Stop ad H 02:53 | Ads 9_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | "The embryo, like, it's alive" - Watch her mind change on abortion |
| Total: All but re... | | | | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | |

| Ad | Ad group | Status | Ad type | Impr. | Views | View rate | Avg. CPV | Cost | Earned views | Video |
|----|-----------------|----------|----------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|---|
| | Ads 1_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Is abortion needed to keep children from poverty/abuse? |
| | Ads 6_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | PINTEREST BANS LIVE ACTION: Lila Rose hits back on Tucker Carlson |
| | Ads 7_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | 'I changed my mind already!' Abortion mind change |
| | Ads 8_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | 'I changed my mind already!' Abortion mind change |
| | Ads 3_June 2019 | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Lila Rose SHREDS abortion defender: 'Abortion is the number one killer of black people today' |

| Ad group | Status | Target CPM | Ad group type |
|-----------------|----------|------------|---------------|
| Ads 1_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 6_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 8_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 4_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 7_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 9_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 2_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 3_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |
| Ads 5_June 2019 | Eligible | \$10.00 | In-stream |

Campaign 2-3: 1 ad each; both approved. No spend.

Start Date: June 26

Target CPM: \$12.00

Google Ads | All campaigns > YT 1 - WWDFIA - June 2019 > YT 1 - WWDFIA

Enabled Status: Eligible Type: In-stream Start and end date: Jun 26, 2019 - Jul 5, 2019 Target CPM: \$12.00

ADS EXTENSIONS Custom May 1 - Jul 1, 2019

Views None

Ad status: All but removed ADD FILTER

| Ad | Status | Ad type | Impr. | Views | View rate | Avg. CPV | Cost | Earned views | Video |
|----|----------|----------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|--|
| | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | PRO LIFE REPLIES: "Women Will Die From Illegal |

Google Ads | All campaigns > YT 1 - WWDFIA - June 2019 > YT 1 - WWDFIA

Enabled Status: Eligible Type: In-stream Start and end date: Jun 26, 2019 - Jul 17, 2019 Target CPM: \$12.00

ADS EXTENSIONS Custom May 1 - Jul 1, 2019

Views None

Ad status: All but removed ADD FILTER






| Ad | Status | Ad type | Impr. | Views | View rate | Avg. CPV | Cost | Earned views | Video |
|----|----------|----------|-------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|---|
| | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | PRO LIFE REPLIES: "Women Will Die From Illegal Abortions" |

Campaign 4: 5 ads; all approved. No spend.

Start Date: June 26

Target CPM: \$18.00

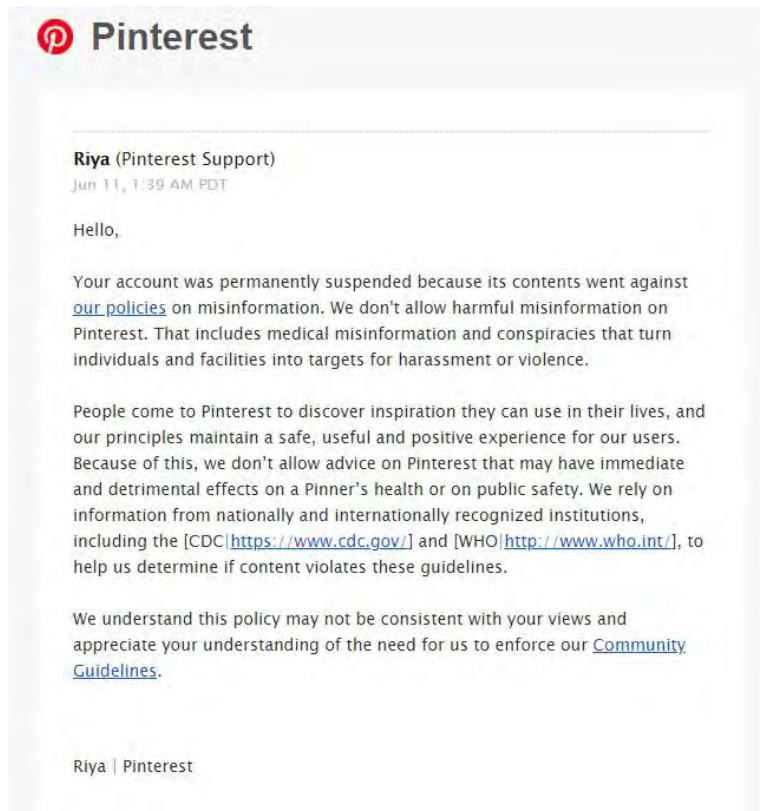
Google Ads interface showing campaign details for 'YT 2 - AWSO - June 2019'. The campaign is enabled, eligible, and has a budget of \$1,500.00 (total). The start and end dates are Jun 20, 2019 - Jul 10, 2019. A notification indicates the campaign is ending soon.

| Ad | Ad group | Status | Ad type | Impr | Views | View rate | Avg. CPV | Cost | Earned views | Video |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|------|-------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|---|
|  | YT 2 - AWSO - (Prolife Audience) | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Pro Life Replies: "Abortion Will Stop Overpopulation" |
|  | YT 2 - AWSO - (Remarketing) | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Pro Life Replies: "Abortion Will Stop Overpopulation" |
|  | YT 2 - AWSO - (Boomers, 55+) | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Pro Life Replies: "Abortion Will Stop Overpopulation" |
|  | YT 2 - AWSO - (Mushy Middle) | Approved | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Pro Life Replies: "Abortion Will Stop Overpopulation" |
|  | YT 2 - AWSO - (Prolife Audience) #2 | Ad group paused | Video ad | 0 | 0 | - | - | \$0.00 | 0 | Pro Life Replies: "Abortion Will Stop Overpopulation" |

| Ad group | Status | Target CPM | Ad group type |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------|---------------|
| YT 2 - AWSO - (Prolife Audience) | Eligible | \$18.00 | In-stream |
| YT 2 - AWSO - (Remarketing) | Eligible | \$18.00 | In-stream |
| YT 2 - AWSO - (Boomers, 55+) | Eligible | \$18.00 | In-stream |
| YT 2 - AWSO - (Mushy Middle) | Eligible | \$18.00 | In-stream |
| YT 2 - AWSO - (Prolife Audience) #2 | Paused | \$18.00 | In-stream |
| Total: All but re... | | | |
| Total: Campaign | | | |

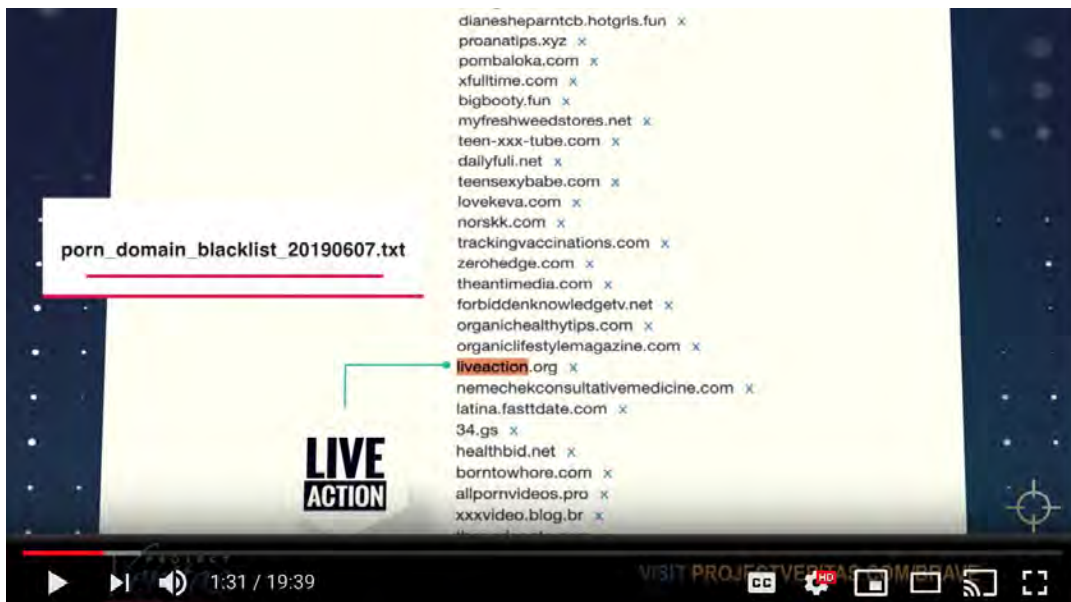
4. Pinterest

In June 2018, an insider at Pinterest revealed employees had purposefully added Live Action to a "porn block list" to prevent our content from being shared on the platform. After making this public, Live Action's account was [permanently suspended](#), and Pinterest accused us of spreading "conspiracy theories," "medical misinformation," and helping spread "anti-vaccination" ideas. Live Action develops its content in conjunction with medical experts and OB-GYNS, and in no way opposes vaccines. Pinterest provided no evidence for their wild accusations, and media groups like Vox and NowThis reported them as if they were facts.



Genet Girmay 🌴 May 29th at 4:53 PM

Hi, so I got a zendesk ticket (<https://pinterest.zendesk.com/agent/tickets/4696044>) where they are appealing the website <https://www.liveaction.org/> to be removed from the porn domain blocklist. I don't think it should be removed, but think this warrants a further discussion because we are currently not removing pro-life/pro-choice content, but this was added to a domain blocklist.



END OF DOCUMENT

###

SLATE ARTICLE
“YOUTUBE’S SEARCH RESULTS FOR ‘ABORTION’
SHOW EXACTLY WHAT ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISTS WANT TO WOMEN TO SEE”

YouTube's Search Results for "Abortion" Show Exactly What Anti-Abortion Activists Want Women to See

 slate.com/technology/2018/12/youtube-search-abortion-results-pro-life.html

December 21,
2018

future  tense

Gory videos rife with misinformation.

By [April Glaser](#)

Dec 21, 2018 3:32 PM

YouTube's results for abortion queries turns up anti-abortion results first.

Josh Edelson/Getty Images

When you Google "abortion," the top results are relatively staid considering the divisiveness of the topic in American life. There's a link to information about the procedure from Planned Parenthood, a Google map of nearby abortion providers, a link to an overview of anti-abortion and pro-choice arguments from the nonpartisan procon.org, and links to various news sources like the New York Times and the New Yorker.

If, until recently, you did the same over on Google-owned YouTube, it felt like you were searching in a whole other universe. Before I raised the issue with YouTube late last week, the top search results for "abortion" on the site were almost all anti-abortion—and frequently misleading. One top result was a clip called "LIVE Abortion Video on Display," which over the course of a gory two minutes shows images of a formed fetus' tiny feet resting in a pool of blood. Several of the top results featured a doctor named Antony Levatino, including one in which he testified to the House Judiciary Committee that Planned Parenthood was aborting fetuses "the length of your hand plus several inches" in addition to several misleading animations that showed a fetus that looks like a sentient child in the uterus. The eighth result was a video from conservative pundit Ben Shapiro, just above a video of a woman self-narrating a blog titled, "Abortion: My Experience," with text in the thumbnail that reads, "My Biggest Mistake." Only two of the top 15 results struck me as not particularly political, and none of the top results focused on providing dispassionate, up-to-date medical information.

I emailed YouTube Friday afternoon asking why anti-abortion videos saturated the search results for "abortion," and if the platform thought accurate, health-focused information had a place there. By Monday morning, before the company got back to me, the search results

had changed to include a number of news outlets among the top results, including a video from Vice about how women trying to get abortions are being stymied by anti-abortion centers that masquerade as clinics. The second video was a clip of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee describing his anti-abortion philosophy, and the third was a video titled “Speak Out: Abortion Is Not a Human Right.” By the end of this week, the top results (which are dynamic) included a news segment in Tamil, a video in which the director Penny Marshall (who died this week) “[Opens Up on Drugs and Her Abortion](#),” and a clip of an anti-abortion advocate responding to the abortion-legalization law passed in Ireland. Anti-abortion content meant to enrage or provoke viewers was no longer purely dominating the results, though they still looked very different from the generally more sober Google results.

Why this matters is that more than 1.8 billion people look for information on YouTube every month, and that could easily include someone who is considering getting an abortion, or simply trying to learn about the issue. Deb Hauser, the president of Advocates for Youth, a nonprofit that specializes in youth sexual education, told me she worries that the search results I originally found on YouTube could scare some people into delaying medical care or seeking advice from a doctor.* For the most part, those results gave an inaccurate portrait of what getting an abortion is like. The animation showing an abortion in the first trimester depicts a fetus with extended arms and legs and fully formed facial features, but neglects to note that, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), about two-thirds of first-trimester abortions happen within the first eight weeks of the pregnancy, when according to [the Mayo Clinic](#), the embryo has formed buds and is only about a half-inch long.

The video then transitions to bullet points outlining the serious risks of getting the procedure, but doesn’t add that major complications are extremely low, and occur less than one-quarter of 1 percent of the time.

There are plenty of videos from credible reproductive health-care providers on YouTube, but none of those videos surfaced in the top 20 results for “abortion”—both before I asked about it and now. One reason for this, according to Becca Lewis, a researcher with Data & Society who studies extremists content on YouTube, might be that YouTube is often seen as a place where people can broadcast and share ideas that aren’t found in mainstream media. “You see people talking about using YouTube to present the ‘other side’ of an issue or story and a lot of times those are conspiracy theories or disinformation,” Lewis said, adding that fringe right groups with political agendas in particular have proven to be very adept at placing keywords in titles and video descriptions to game YouTube’s search engine to make their videos float to the top. Content like graphic abortion videos is also likely to stir anger and other strong emotions—which can lead to high engagement on social platforms, an important ranking signal for search engines—but clearly not the only signal search engines trust. While it’s unlikely Google or YouTube would directly curate such results, they do control what signals their algorithms look for—and that matters a lot for ensuring that viewers encounter reliable and safe information.

It's not just the top results that are a problem. A lot of viewing on YouTube happens through the platform's discovery features, which automatically play an algorithmically chosen new video for viewers after they've finished their current one. The idea is that users will get more information on topics that interest them—but a growing criticism of the feature is that it directs users to more and more extreme content. With abortion, I found, even fairly nonpolitical videos were quickly followed by more heated content, generally of an anti-abortion bent. One video that came up in my search results this week, after YouTube updated them, was an AJ+ segment in which four women share their abortion experiences. From there, YouTube queued up a video titled "Story time: I had an abortion and KARMA came after me!" A video recommended after watching a BBC video was called "Abortion or Baby: Before You Decide." It is a seven-minute animation that looks like a simple instructional video, but describes how a fetus's body parts are pulled apart by surgical instruments in the womb and half the video is about how marriage and raising the child is probably the best, most fulfilling option for a pregnant woman. After that, YouTube suggests a video called "911-Moans, Screams Heard From Botched Abortion Victim At Carhart's NE Clinic," posted by vocal anti-abortion activist Cheryl Sullenger.

YouTube did not address whether and how it tweaked the results for "abortion," but did tell me it provides "a platform for free speech where anyone can choose to post videos, subject to our Community Guidelines." It stressed that the company is working to provide more credible news content from its search and discovery algorithms and has given users more ways to fact-check information they may consume on YouTube—for example, by including links to Wikipedia on the bottom of [a handful of videos the site](#) about topics that attract conspiracists, like claims that climate change is a hoax or videos questioning whether the Holocaust happened.


When I asked Google about its own search results, a representative said, "When someone types a word into Search, our ranking systems are designed to return relevant results from the most authoritative sources available." Two search engines, two very different results. Perhaps these corporate siblings ought to spend some more time comparing notes.

Future Tense is a partnership of Slate, New America, and Arizona State University that examines emerging technologies, public policy, and society.

Correction, Dec. 27, 2018: Due to an editing error, this article originally misspelled Deb Hauser's last name.

DAILY MAIL ARTICLE
“WHISTLEBLOWER REVEALS HOW PINTEREST BANNED PRO-LIFE GROUP LIVE ACTION
BY CATEGORIZING IT AS PORN”

Whistleblower reveals how Pinterest BANNED pro-life group Live Action

 [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7132879/Whistleblower-reveals-Pinterest-BANNED-pro-life-group-Live-Action.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7132879/Whistleblower-reveals-Pinterest-BANNED-pro-life-group-Live-Action.html)

June 12,
2019

Advertisement

Whistleblower reveals how Pinterest BANNED pro-life group Live Action by categorizing it as porn and censored Bible verses as 'sensitive terms'

- **Pinterest permanently banned anti-abortion group Live Action on Tuesday**
- **Meanwhile pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood remain on Pinterest**
- **Whistleblower revealed how Pinterest first blocked Live Action as a 'porn site'**
- **Leaked documents also show how Christianity and Bible verses were censored**
- **Pinterest says Live Action was banned for spreading 'harmful misinformation'**

By [Keith Griffith For Dailymail.com](#)

Published: 10:19 EDT, 12 June 2019 | Updated: 08:17 EDT, 14 June 2019

A whistleblower has leaked internal documents from Pinterest, showing how the social media company blocked the anti-abortion group Live Action by classifying it as porn, and also censored terms related to Christianity and the Bible.

Following the revelations, Pinterest permanently banned Live Action on Tuesday, saying that the group spreads 'medical misinformation' and 'conspiracies' in a shutdown notice shared by Live Action.


In a statement, Live Action founder and president Lila Rose said that 'we have more questions than answers about Pinterest's censorship of Live Action and the pro-life message.'

'By secretly applying the label of "pornography" to Live Action's pro-life content, Pinterest demonstrates a concerted effort to sideline a leading pro-life organization the only way they knew how,' Rose said.



Live Action founder and president Lila Rose (above) blasted Pinterest for banning her anti-abortion group while allowing pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood



Live Action 

@LiveAction

Follow

.@Pinterest has just permanently BANNED Live Action, claiming we are causing "immediate and detrimental effects on Pinner's health or public safety."

#LifeCensored

 Pinterest

Riya (Pinterest Support)

Jun 11, 1:38 AM PET

Hello,

Your account was permanently suspended because its contents went against [our policies](#) on misinformation. We don't allow harmful misinformation on Pinterest. That includes medical misinformation and conspiracies that turn individuals and facilities into targets for harassment or violence.

People come to Pinterest to discover inspiration they can use in their lives, and our principles maintain a safe, useful and positive experience for our users. Because of this, we don't allow advice on Pinterest that may have immediate and detrimental effects on a Pinner's health or on public safety. We rely on information from nationally and internationally recognized institutions, including the [CDC|<https://www.cdc.gov/>] and [WHO|<http://www.who.int/>], to help us determine if content violates these guidelines.

We understand this policy may not be consistent with your views and appreciate your understanding of the need for us to enforce our [Community Guidelines](#).

Riya | Pinterest

5:47 AM - 11 Jun 2019

@ Twitter

Pinterest responded in a statement to DailyMail.com: 'Religious content is allowed on Pinterest, and many people use our service to search for and save Pins inspired by their beliefs. To protect our users from being targeted based on personal characteristics such as their religion, we have policies in place so that ads and recommendations don't appear alongside certain terms.'

Pinterest's apparent censorship efforts first emerged on Tuesday, when the conservative site [Project Veritas](#) published an interview with an unnamed Pinterest employee who came forward with documents showing how the company had added LiveAction.org to a list of blocked porn domains.

The documents show that LiveAction.org was added to Pinterest's porn domain block list on February 13, with the comment 'health' by the employee that added it. The list blocks users from creating posts that link to the Live Action website.

Then on May 29, an internal message shows that someone complained to Pinterest and asked that Live Action be removed from the porn block list.

'I don't think it should be removed, but I think this warrants further discussion because we are currently not removing pro-live/pro-choice content, but this was added to a domain blacklist,' a customer service rep said in the internal message.

Documents leaked to Project Veritas show LiveAction.org listed on Pinterest's 'porn blacklist' (left) and an internal conversation (right) about whether to keep the site blocked

Live Action apparently remained on Pinterest's porn list until the interview with the whistleblower was published on Wednesday.

According to Pinterest, the domain block list was originally used for porn sites, but has evolved to include other uses. The company says that Live Action was added to the list for spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories.

Then, Pinterest briefly removed Live Action from their blocked list before sending the group a notification that it had been permanently banned from the service.

'Your account was permanently suspended because its contents went against our policies on misinformation,' the ban notification read.

'We don't allow harmful misinformation on Pinterest. That includes medical misinformation and conspiracies that turn individuals and facilities into targets for harassment and violence.'



Thread

content-policy-help



Genet Girmay  May 29th at 4:53 PM

Hi, so I got a zendesk ticket (<https://pinterest.zendesk.com/agent/tickets/4696044>) where they are appealing the website <https://www.liveaction.org/> to be removed from the porn domain blacklist. I don't think it should be removed, but think this warrants a further discussion because we are currently not removing pro-life/pro-choice content, but this was added to a domain blacklist.

1 reply



Carina Iverson 1 day ago

Hi! It is usually best to start, if possible, by following up with the person that initially blocked the domain to see if there was a specific reason other than it is abortion content.



Ben Silbermann, co-founder and CEO of Pinterest, is seen in a file photo. The company is under fire for apparently censoring a pro-life group and Christian terms

The Pinterest employee who came forward with the leaked documents has been fired, according to Live Action.

'Pinterest has targeted Live Action, I believe, because our message is so effective at educating millions about the humanity of the preborn child and the injustice of abortion,' Rose said in her statement.

'Pinterest users deserve to know the truth and our messages deserve to be treated fairly. If Planned Parenthood can promote their message on Pinterest, then Live Action should be able to as well,' she continued.

The tranche of leaked documents also shows how Pinterest includes many terms related to Christianity on a 'sensitive terms' list that censors them in various ways.

The terms 'Bible verses', 'Bible journaling', and 'Christian Easter' were all found on an extensive list of 'sensitive terms'.

The terms were marked 'severity level 2', or 'brand unsafe', which meant that they could not be trending topics, would not appear in recommended queries, and would be blocked from email notifications,

Full statement of Live Action founder Lila Rose

'We have more questions than answers about Pinterest's censorship of Live Action and the pro-life message. Based on the evidence provided, it appears that Pinterest intentionally added 'LiveAction.org' to a 'pornography' blocklist in an effort to suppress our pro-life content from being shared on the platform.

'By secretly applying the label of 'pornography' to Live Action's pro-life content, Pinterest demonstrates a concerted effort to sideline a leading pro-life organization the only way they knew how. This does not appear to be a simple mistake. When confronted with an appeal, their employees doubled down and kept LiveAction.org on the pornography list. What exactly is Pinterest attempting to block? Inspirational messages to pregnant mothers, ultrasound images showing the science of prenatal development, medically accurate information on the abortion procedure, and images saying women deserve better than abortion industry leader Planned Parenthood.

'Pinterest has targeted Live Action, I believe, because our message is so effective at educating millions about the humanity of the preborn child and the injustice of abortion. Pinterest says that their mission is to 'help empower people to discover things that they love,' but despite the fact that millions of people love babies and the pro-life cause, they are

secretly censoring our life-affirming messages. Pinterest users deserve to know the truth and our messages deserve to be treated fairly. If Planned Parenthood can promote their message on Pinterest, then Live Action should be able to as well.

'Pinterest trying to secretly and dishonestly censor free expression is every Pinterester's worst nightmare. We urge them to allow free expression on their platform and to stop censoring Live Action's pro-life message.'

Advertisement

Advertisement

Advertisement

Advertisement

Advertisement

Advertisement

WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE
“YES, TWITTER CAN REJECT THIS ANTI-ABORTION GROUP’S ADS
FOR DISPLAYING ‘SENSITIVE CONTENT’”

Yes, Twitter can reject this anti-abortion group's ads for displaying 'sensitive content'

[washingtonpost.com/business/economy/twitter-wont-run-an-anti-abortion-groups-paid-advertising-unless-it-scrubs-its-website-of-sensitive-content/2017/09/22/d914fc8a-9ecb-11e7-9083-fbfddf6804c2_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/twitter-wont-run-an-anti-abortion-groups-paid-advertising-unless-it-scrubs-its-website-of-sensitive-content/2017/09/22/d914fc8a-9ecb-11e7-9083-fbfddf6804c2_story.html)
<https://www.facebook.com/tracy.jan.10>

By [Tracy Jan](#)

[Tracy Jan](#)

Reporter covering the intersection of race and the economy

September 22, 2017

A major anti-abortion group has accused Twitter of blocking its ads and even demanding the removal of "sensitive content" from its own website, in what activists say is a clear departure from the social media giant's claims of hosting unfiltered debate.

In a letter to Twitter, attorneys for Live Action, known for its undercover investigations of abortion clinics, allege the social media platform wrongly applied its policies to censor advertisements that contain ultrasound images of fetuses, promote or link to its secret recordings, and oppose federal funding of Planned Parenthood.

Live Action says the blocked content makes up the very core of its message.

The Sept. 11 letter requested that the company reinstate the organization's ability to promote tweets to a broader audience beyond its tens of thousands of Twitter followers.

Live Action's allegations come at a time when Facebook, Google and other social media companies faced accusations of overstepping their role as hosts or moderators of the public square, and straying into the realm of censorship.

The social media platforms have been accused of blocking posts and revoking the accounts of white supremacists as well as minorities documenting the racism they experience.

But setting standards for acceptable speech becomes especially murky when it comes to paid advertising on some of the most divisive issues in America -- as it does in the dispute between Twitter and Live Action.

And companies have the right to set their own guidelines, even if it means blocking ads promoting controversial political or social issues.

Live Action claims Twitter, which has more than 300 million active users a month, went too far.

"This wasn't about one issue with one aspect with one ad. This was about the entirety of our message, from ultrasound images of life in the womb to criticism of abortion facilities," said

Lila Rose, Live Action's 29-year-old president who founded the group when she was 15.

"The heart of Twitter's self-named purpose is to 'give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers,'" said Rose, quoting the company's mission statement. "They are completely violating that."

A Twitter spokeswoman denied that the company censors advertisers based on their political viewpoints. She said Twitter had advertising relationships with a number of socially and politically conservative groups, including another prominent anti-abortion group, the Susan B. Anthony List.

But Twitter does set a higher bar for advertisers than regular users when it comes to the type of content it will promote.

The spokeswoman said the company has clear, transparent rules that all advertisers must follow. Twitter's extensive advertising policy states that ads must be honest and accurate. The guidelines prohibit advertisers from misleading people with sensationalized language and deceptive claims. And Twitter bars content that could offend or shock people, among other directives.

The spokeswoman said the rules are equally applied to all advertisers, no matter their political viewpoint. She would not address the specifics of Live Action's allegations or details of its ads, including why the content was banned.

In a May 18 email to Live Action, Twitter's political and advocacy sales team told the organization that its ads violated Twitter's sensitive advertising content policy, which prohibits "inflammatory or provocative content which is likely to evoke a strong negative reaction" as well as content that is shocking, disturbing, or offensive.

Twitter gave Live Action two choices to become eligible for advertising in the future: remove "sensitive content" from its website and Twitter feed, or create a Twitter handle linking to a new website without the offending content, according to the email exchanges provided by Live Action that The Washington Post has verified.

Among the "sensitive content" Twitter objected to that would have to be wiped from Live Action's website and Twitter feed: videos of the organization's undercover investigations, images and videos of abortion procedures, a petition to defund Planned Parenthood, and fetal ultrasounds.

Pete Slevin, one of the attorneys representing Live Action, characterized Twitter's parameters for reinstating the organization's ability to advertise as "unusual."

"It's not just that Twitter is saying, as a practical matter, that we're going to 'regulate' your Tweets, they're also seeming to 'regulate' what Live Action is posting on its own website," Slevin said.

Rose said Live Action has spent about \$50,000 on promoted tweets since it began advertising on Twitter in 2013, and some of the blocked ads had run in previous years without incident.

"Seems like for reasons unknown, Twitter has erred recently on the side of avoiding offense," said Slevin, who was retained in July.

Twitter suspended Live Action's ability to promote tweets in 2015 and blocked Rose's account -- which has nearly twice as many followers -- from advertising earlier this year. Both accounts are still allowed to tweet to their followers.

One tweet Rose said was rejected for promotion featured a photo of a fetus captioned "I am not a potential human. I am a human with potential." Others targeted Planned Parenthood, falsely accusing it of selling baby parts for profit. Another linked to a petition to stop taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood.

Rose said her organization has successfully run versions of the ads banned by Twitter on Facebook. It also advertises on YouTube and Instagram. A spokesman for Facebook would not confirm her assertion.

Wendy Melillo, an American University strategic communications professor who studies public service advertising, said the Twitter controversy with Live Action is reminiscent of a 2010 Super Bowl ad featuring star quarterback Tim Tebow and his mother, who famously ignored advice to have an abortion.

The 30-second ad, sponsored by Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian group that opposes abortion, urged viewers to "celebrate life" and directed them to the group's website "for the full Tebow story."

CBS drew backlash before the ad even aired because the networks generally had a policy not to air polarizing advocacy or political ads, Melillo said. Anti-abortion advocates were angry at reports that the ad had been watered down to fit the networks' standards. Abortion rights groups thought it gave their opponents an outsized platform during the most-watched television event of the year.

"Abortion is one of those hot button controversial wedge issues that divides us, and Twitter has the right to accept or reject ads based on its own standards," Melillo said. "At the end of the day, Twitter is a business and seems to be following a similar pattern long-established by the networks."

Live Action said it does not advertise on television or in print media, and believes it can command the largest audience on social media.

The tech companies all have their individual advertising standards, and Melillo said the industry as a whole risked appearing inconsistent, given how broad and subjective the rules can be.

"There's a danger that they could appear to be biased on one side of the abortion issue or the other," Melillo said.

Other anti-abortion groups have also accused tech giants of stifling their ability to spread their message.

Google several years ago removed web search ads for "crisis pregnancy centers" for violating the company's policy against deceptive advertising. The majority of the centers advertised abortion services when, in fact, they provided information about alternatives to abortion.

The Susan B. Anthony List, which promotes legislators and laws that seek to limit abortion, said Twitter rejected several of its ads in the spring for violating its "health and pharmaceutical products and services policy."

The tweets included one from its president, Marjorie Dannenfelser, that said, "Let's envision 'A Day without Abortionists'" -- a play on the "Day without Women." Another displayed a graphic of Mother Teresa saying that "Abortion is profoundly anti-women."

Twitter suspended the organization's ability to advertise for several days. Mallory Quigley, a Susan B. Anthony List spokeswoman, said the organization has now "reached an uneasy peace" with Twitter. She said her group stands with Live Action against what it called censorship by Twitter.

"Their voice is far too important to be silenced," Quigley said. "We remain vigilant about anything that could threaten our ability to effectively communicate the pro-life message."