

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2017

Jack Dorsey, CEO
Twitter
1355 Market St #900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Dorsey,

We are writing regarding concerns that dominant technology and social media platforms, such as Twitter, are being used for the purpose of propagating hate and undermining democracy.

It was recently reported that Twitter uncovered hundreds of accounts that were tied to Russian operatives and automated bots, disseminating ads to exploit political and social divisions in the United States. It is also troubling to learn that Twitter has become a platform where people feel comfortable sharing racist ideologies, ultimately contributing to the type of violence that we witnessed in August 2017 at the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, V.A.

Social networking technologies, such as Twitter have fundamentally changed the way people communicate here in America and across the world. Users are able to create “cyber communities” and share ideas. In some instances, Twitter has been used to galvanize social movements. While we acknowledge that Twitter can be a powerful tool to bring about positive information sharing, we are exceptionally concerned that Twitter is also being used as an avenue to spread racism and bigotry. As a result of the far-reaching nature of Twitter’s technology, we have seen an effort to undermine our democracy, create or fan flames of racial divisions, and spread hate speech that can ultimately cumulate into violence. Social media companies have enjoyed great freedoms, which the industry suggests is the key ingredient to its rapid growth and innovation.

In this constantly evolving technological environment, we believe that it is incumbent on Twitter to be proactive in seeking out solutions to combat the racial animus that is being spread on your social networking platform. We strongly urge Twitter to take immediate action to identify and suspend Twitter accounts and automated bots that are being used to spread racist and violent behavior. Further, Twitter has a responsibility to help guard against actions of foreign governments to undermine our democracy and cause cultural divisions in our country. We rely on Twitter to adopt common sense measures to hold these account holders accountable with consequences for sharing hateful and violent messages that put the lives of Americans at risk and meddle in our democracy.

This is a serious matter and we are greatly concerned about Twitter’s ability and capacity to tackle these issues on your own.

We are disturbed by the ease in which foreign actors were able to manipulate your platform to advance anti-American sentiments that both exacerbates racial tension and ultimately threatens our democracy. More importantly, we are disappointed by the silence from you and others in your industry on ways to counter such blatant manipulation of this medium to build racial animosity, the consequences of which are quite literally life threatening.

As federal representatives for the men and women most harshly affected by the consequences of your irresponsibility, we urge you to clearly outline: 1) what efforts you have made to detect these accounts and actions you have employed to eliminate racially divisive communications from your networks, 2) what security features you have in place to prevent foreign entities from meddling in our election process, 3) and what reporting process you have to inform the government and the public on the number, nature and impact of these problematic accounts.

Additionally, we are concerned that insufficient government oversight over your firm is inadvertently leading to deeper racial divisions and threats to our democracy. If Twitter continues to prove unable or hesitant to grasp the seriousness of this threat and combat the racialized climate that is being stimulated on your platforms, we, as Members of Congress, will be left with little option but to demand for increased regulations and government oversight of this industry to address these problems.

We strongly urge your swift attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12)
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-05)
MEMBER OF CONGRESS