Pinterest employees stage virtual walkout to protest discrimination

Pinterest employees are staging a virtual walkout today to protest discrimination and retaliation at the company. In a petition posted on the anonymous networking app Blind on August 13th, employees called for solidarity with three high-profile women who've recently accused the company of racial and gender inequity.

The petition encourages employees to overlay their Slack avatar with the faces of the three women. It also asks them to sign off Slack today at 1PM PT after posting the following message: "I am [upset/angry/shocked/unhappy/whatever you're feeling] about the racial and gender discrimination that has happened at Pinterest, and am leaving work early today. Join me. changeatpinterest.com."

The move follows news that former COO Françoise Brougher is suing Pinterest for gender discrimination and retaliation. Brougher, who joined the company in 2018, says she was paid less than her male colleagues, left out of important meetings, and given gendered feedback. After she spoke out about her mistreatment, she was fired, according to her complaint.

Scrutiny of Pinterest's treatment of women began in June 2020 when Ifeoma Ozoma and Aerica Shimizu Banks, two Black women who worked on the policy team, accused the company of racial and gender discrimination on Twitter. The news set off a firestorm, in part because Pinterest is a company that caters specifically to women and had been lauded for leading the tech industry on policies that prohibit racism and misinformation

on the platform. These were policies that Ozoma and Banks helped create.

In a statement, Pinterest said it respects employees' decision to walk out. "The leadership and employees at Pinterest have a shared goal of building and fostering a company we can all be proud of," a spokesperson said. "We know we have real work to do and recognize that it's our job to build a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for everyone."

But internally, support has been more measured. "Pinterest won't dissuade any members of our community from using their voice to show their support for social justice and ensuring a more equitable company," wrote Tyi McCray, the company's head of diversity and inclusion, on Slack on August 13th.

The company also said it would be announcing a new addition to its board today.

https://www.theverge.com/2020/8/14/21369035/pinterest-virtual-walkout-protest-discrimination-slack-blind