Reddit bans r/The_Donald and r/ChapoTrapHouse as part of a major expansion of its rules

Reddit will ban r/The_Donald, r/ChapoTrapHouse, and about 2,000 other communities today after updating its content policy to more explicitly ban hate speech. The policy update comes three weeks after Black Lives Matter protests led several popular Reddit forums to go dark temporarily in protest of what they called the company's lax policies around hosting and promoting racist content. It marks a major reversal for a company whose commitment to free expression has historically been so strong that it once allowed users to distribute stolen nude photos freely on the site.

"I have to admit that I've struggled with balancing my values as an American, and around free speech and free expression, with my values and the company's values around common human decency," Reddit CEO Steve Huffman said in a call with reporters.

In a blog post that cites the company's new rules, Huffman said users of the r/The_Donald subreddit had violated the site's policies for years. (The site has no official connection to President Donald Trump, although he did do an Ask Me Anything there as a candidate in 2016.) "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," Huffman said.

Similarly, r/ChapoTrapHouse had also hosted content that violates the site's rules, Huffman said. The subreddit is a

spinoff of the popular left-wing podcast.

Reddit's new policy begins with a first rule that requires users to "consider the human." It reads:

> *Remember the human. Reddit is a place for creating community and belonging, not for attacking marginalized or vulnerable groups of people. Everyone has a right to use Reddit free of harassment, bullying, and threats of violence. Communities and people that incite violence or that promote hate based on identity or vulnerability will be banned.*

That formed the basis of a policy framework that bans hate speech.

"Reddit's mission is to bring community and belonging to everybody in the world, and there is speech in the world and on Reddit that prevents other people from doing so," Huffman told reporters. "Harassing speech or hateful speech prevents people from coming to Reddit and feeling safe and sharing their vulnerabilities … So if we have speech on Reddit that's preventing people from using Reddit the way that we intend it to be used, or that prevents us from achieving our mission, then it's actually a very easy decision."

The introduction of the new policies has resulted in the removal of about 2,000 subreddits so far, and the company says "the vast majority" were inactive. Only about 200 of them had more than 10 daily users, the company said. They include:

- r/DarkHumorAndMemes
- r/ConsumeProduct
- r/DarkJokeCentral
- r/GenderCritical
- r/Cumtown
- r/imgoingtohellforthis2
- r/Wojak
- r/soyboys

Last year, Reddit “quarantined” r/The_Donald, placing it behind a warning screen after it was found to host content that incited violence. The company had previously prevented posts on the forum from reaching Reddit’s front page. Former users of the forum began moving to a new site off Reddit last year.

While Monday’s removals hit some high-profile political communities, Huffman said the company would continue to support a broad range of political speech.

“Political speech continues to be safe,” Huffman said. “But all communities, including our political communities, have to abide by our policies. And while we will do everything we can to help bring them in line, if they fail in doing so they are not allowed on Reddit.”

While r/The_Donald has no official connection to Trump, Reddit’s move could draw the ire of the president. Trump’s campaign complained after Snap removed him from promotion in Snapchat’s Discover tab earlier this month, and after Twitter began placing warnings on some of the president’s tweets.

At the same time, the company has been under more pressure to remove hate speech. Among the critics has been former Reddit CEO Ellen Pao, who earlier this month said r/The_Donald should have been removed long ago. “You should have shut down the_donald instead of amplifying it and its hate, racism, and violence,” she said in a tweet directed at Huffman. “So much of what is happening now lies at your feet. You don’t get to say BLM when Reddit nurtures and monetizes white supremacy and hate all day long.”

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