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LDF on the Efficacy and Principle of Facebook Bias Report

Today, Facebook released a document it has billed as an ‘anti-conservative bias’ report or audit. This so called ‘report’ is grossly lacking in rigor and documentation. Rather than serving as an independent analysis it is simply a regurgitation of complaints and perceptions from select conservative groups. Furthermore, we are particularly concerned by the apparent softening of standards related to the sharing of hate speech and sensational content at this critical moment when we have seen horrific actions motivated by hate in our country. In fact, the report is authored by an individual who himself has a sordid history of discriminatory and bigoted remarks.

The attempt to position this as a credible report is shameful given that independent and credible documents regarding the dangerous and harmful manners in which Facebook is used do exist. The Mueller Indictment (2018) provides clear evidence of the use of Facebook by right wing and foreign actors to stir racial discord and manipulate voters based on race. Additionally, the civil rights audit, which began last year, sets forth an array of areas of documented concern.

“‘Anti-conservative bias’ is a red herring often used by proponents of hate speech to combat civil rights work,” says Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF). “By legitimizing this report there is a real risk that hate speech is being normalized and softened in our national discourse.”

LDF will continue to push for accountability and change. Nothing in this report changes the urgent need for Facebook to prioritize the concerns outlined in the civil rights audit and it is to that end that Facebook should focus its resources.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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