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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

July 17, 2018

Jeffrey P. Bezos
CEO
Amazon, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109

Dear Mr. Bezos:

I am writing to you with my concerns about the amount of money Amazon has made from the sale of literature and music published by entities identified as “hate groups” by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). I would like to know whether Amazon is committed to ceasing the sale of all products that promote hateful and racist ideologies. For a company with a policy prohibiting the sale of “products that promote or glorify hatred, violence, racial, sexual, or religious intolerance or promote organizations with such views,”¹ there appear to be a disturbing number of groups with hateful, racist, and violent agendas making money using Amazon’s platform.

Since the election of Donald Trump, hate groups have been on the rise,² and racist violence has swelled in this country.³ The increase in political organizing around hateful ideologies like white nationalism has provided a growing base of support for racist policies⁴ like the Muslim ban, and the “zero tolerance” immigration policies that have driven family separation.⁵ Over the last

¹ “Offensive and Controversial Materials.” *Amazon Website*. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: https://sellercentral.amazon.com/gp/help/external/200164670?language=en-US&ref=mpbc_200277420_cont_200164670.

² Heim, J. Hate groups in the U.S. remain on the rise, according to new study. *Washington Post*. (February 21, 2018). Online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/hate-groups-in-the-us-remain-on-the-rise-according-to-new-study/2018/02/21/6d28cbe0-1695-11e8-8b08-027a6ccb38eb_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.a2e7246ae537.

³ Werner, K. “White supremacists committed most extremist killings in 2017 ADL Says.” *NBC News*. (January 18, 2018). Online at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/white-supremacists-committed-most-extremist-killings-2017-adl-says-n838896>.

⁴ “Neo-Nazis and white supremacists celebrated Trump’s SOTU.” *Al-Jazeera News*. (January 31, 2018). Online at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/neo-nazis-white-supremacists-celebrate-trump-sotu-180131114154878.html>.

⁵ “The Year in Hate.” *Southern Poverty Law Center* (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2018/02/21/year-hate-trump-buoyed-white-supremacists-2017-sparking-backlash-among-black-nationalist>.

decade, hate groups have used Amazon to fund their activities and spread their ideologies.⁶ Historically, Amazon has not responded effectively to this issue,⁷ and continues to allow hate groups and SPLC-identified neo-nazis and white nationalist writers⁸ to make money using its platform.^{9 10}

According to a recent report entitled *Delivering Hate* by the Partnership for Working Families and the Action Center on Race and the Economy (ACRE), available online at <https://bit.ly/2tX37yK>, as of June 2018, Amazon has been selling baby onesies, toys, children's Halloween costumes, flags, clothing, and jewelry emblazoned with nazi, neo-nazi, white nationalist, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and violent, racist imagery.¹¹ I am disturbed that Amazon would make racist and hateful products for children available on its platform.

Further, there appears to be a staggering amount of neo-nazi and white nationalist propaganda available for sale on Amazon, both in e-book and print format.¹² For example, five volumes of the *Occidental Quarterly*, a racist journal edited by SPLC-identified neo-nazi Kevin MacDonald,¹³ remain for sale on Amazon.¹⁴ Your company states that it takes 30-65% of revenue from all Kindle e-book sales.¹⁵ Amazon also takes 40% of revenue from the sale of physical books published by its CreateSpace self-publishing platform.¹⁶ I am alarmed that hate groups can make money by selling propaganda on Amazon, and that Amazon is able to profit from these transactions.

⁶ Dewey, C. "Amazon, Paypal and Spotify inadvertently fund white supremacists. Here's how." *Washington Post*. (March 17, 2015). Online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2015/03/17/amazon-paypal-and-spotify-inadvertently-fund-white-supremacists-heres-how/?utm_term=.88b1a43efc90.

⁷ Marchitelli, R. Amazon under fire for allowing sale of Nazi paraphernalia. CBC News. (December 14, 2015). Online at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/amazon-accused-of-profiting-from-hate-1.3358259>.

⁸ Hatewatch Staff. "Trump 2016: White Nationalists Throw Their Support Behind The Donald." Southern Poverty Law Center. (August 5, 2015). Online at: <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2015/08/05/trump-2016-white-nationalists-throw-their-support-behind-donald>.

⁹ Beirich, H. "Financing Hate." Southern Poverty Law Center. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2014/financing-hate>.

¹⁰ "Search Results for "Counter-Currents Publishing"" Amazon. (Accessed July 15, 2018). Online at: https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_ss_c_1_12?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=counter-currents+publishing&srefix=counter-curr%2Caps%2C124&crid=2G3IS36LYCNKH.

¹¹ "Delivering Hate: How Amazon's Platforms Are Used to Spread White Supremacy, Anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia." *Partnership for Working Families, Acre Action Center on Race & The Economy*. (July 2018). Online at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58d8a1bb3a041137d463d64f/t/5b3e4dd403ce6479df046dd1/1530809814928/Delivering+Hate+-+Jul+2018.pdf>.

¹² Ibid. p. 10-12.

¹³ "Kevin MacDonald." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/kevin-macdonald>.

¹⁴ "Search results for "Kevin MacDonald, Ph.D."" *Amazon*. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=dp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&text=Kevin+MacDonald+Ph.D.&search-alias=books&field-author=Kevin+MacDonald+Ph.D.&sort=relevancerank.

¹⁵ "Digital Pricing Page." *Amazon Website*. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G200634500.

¹⁶ "Understanding Royalties." CreateSpace website. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: <https://www.createspace.com/Products/Book/Royalties.jsp>.

As stated earlier, Amazon has a strict policy against hateful and racist products on its platform.¹⁷ The availability of all the material listed in the aforementioned report indicates to me that either Amazon is willfully refusing to enforce its own policies against the sale of racist products, or its sheer size makes it impossible for the company to police itself. In either event, Amazon must immediately cease doing business with groups that promote racist violence.

To better understand how hateful propaganda makes its way to be sold on Amazon, and how your company plans to correct this problem, I seek the following information:

1. How much money has Kindle Direct Publishing made from the sale of materials published by SPLC-identified hate groups since 2015?
 - a. How much money has Amazon made from the sale of SPLC-identified hate groups via its CreateSpace self-publishing service since 2015?
2. How much money has Amazon made from the sale of SPLC-identified hate music, since 2015?
3. How does Amazon enforce its policies against the sale of racist and hateful items?
4. Will Amazon destroy any merchandise with hate symbols currently in Amazon-controlled warehouses within the next three months?
5. Will Amazon stop publishing physical and digital materials from SPLC-identified hate groups in the next three months?

I respectfully request answers to my questions by July 31, 2018.

Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

¹⁷ "Offensive and Controversial Materials." *Amazon Website*. (Accessed July 12, 2018). Online at: https://sellercentral.amazon.com/gp/help/external/200164670?language=en-US&ref=mpbc_200277420_cont_200164670.