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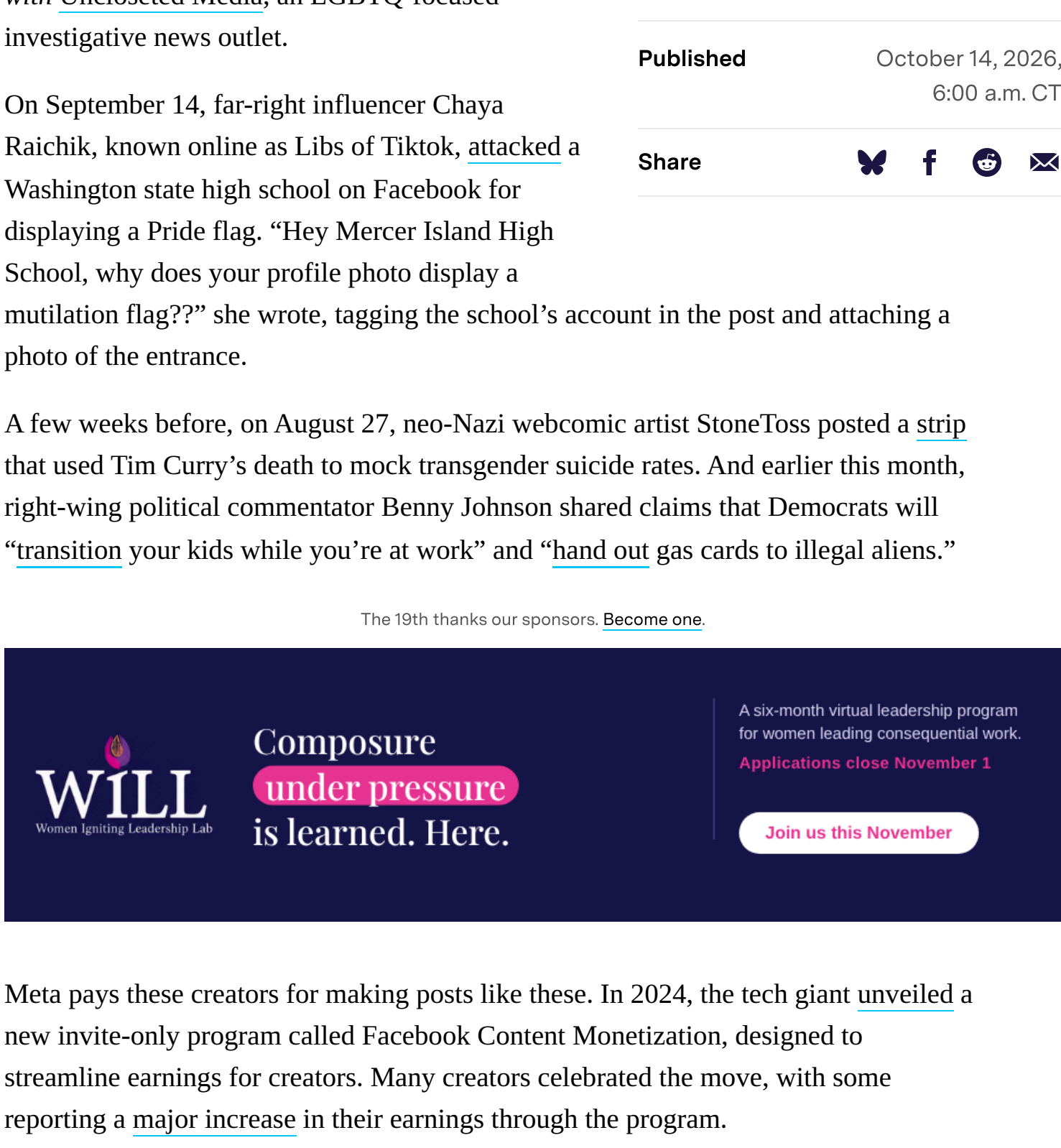
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LGBTQ+

Ahead of the midterms, Meta has paid at least 29 anti-LGBTQ accounts for their posts

The company's invite-only program for content creators has accounts promoting white supremacy, neo-Nazi ideologies and histories of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric.



This story was reported in partnership with [Uncloseted Media](#), an LGBTQ-focused investigative news outlet.

Hope Pisoni, Uncloseted Media

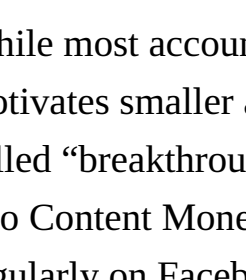
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On September 14, far-right influencer Chaya Raichik, known online as Libs of Tiktok, attacked a Washington state high school on Facebook for displaying a Pride flag. “Hey Mercer Island High School, why does your profile photo display a mutilation flag??” she wrote, tagging the school’s account in the post and attaching a photo of the entrance.

A few weeks before, on August 27, neo-Nazi webcomic artist StoneToss posted a [strip](#) that used Tim Curry’s death to mock transgender suicide rates. And earlier this month, right-wing political commentator Benny Johnson shared claims that Democrats will “[transition](#) your kids while you’re at work” and “[hand out](#) gas cards to illegal aliens.”

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Meta pays these creators for making posts like these. In 2024, the tech giant [unveiled](#) a new invite-only program called Facebook Content Monetization, designed to streamline earnings for creators. Many creators celebrated the move, with some reporting a [major increase](#) in their earnings through the program.

However, that program has recently come under scrutiny. In August, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation [reported](#) that Meta invited accounts promoting white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideologies. And after reviewing Meta’s monetization data, Uncloseted Media identified 29 accounts with histories of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that have been invited to the program. These include the three aforementioned accounts as well as podcaster [Candace Owens](#), who has blamed gay men for child abuse in the Catholic church, and [Turning Point USA](#), which has been connected to an assault on a queer Arizona State University professor. Meta did not respond to Uncloseted Media and The 19th’s requests for an interview or for comment.

With the midterm elections looming, some of the accounts Meta pays through the program have been spreading political misinformation. In the first week of October, for example, Benny Johnson [made 14 separate Facebook posts connecting the Democratic Party to election fraud](#).

Courtney Radsch, director of the Center for Media and Digital Governance at Open Markets Institute, said that promoting hateful rhetoric and misinformation like this is especially dangerous during an election season where the increasingly authoritarian Trump administration, which Meta has courted since its inauguration, has [openly discussed](#) attempts to interfere.

“Amplifying and enabling harassment campaigns and centering fringe conspiracy theories through algorithmic curation and monetization opportunities has led to a dissolution of democracy in America,” Radsch told Uncloseted Media and The 19th. “This administration is dismantling democratic oversight and increasing authoritarian control. ... You can’t look at your platform policies on monetization without looking at the context in which this is occurring in the U.S. with rising technofascism.

What is the program?

Meta launched its Facebook Content Monetization program to incentivize more creators to post on Facebook, which has faced an [aging](#) user base and competition from newer apps. Those incentives can be substantial — within the program’s first year, content creators who accepted Meta’s invitation to join [reported](#) huge increases in their payouts, with some calling it their most lucrative platform. One creator told The Hollywood Reporter that she consistently earned \$20,000 to \$30,000 per month, while another said his monthly earnings often hit six figures.

While most accounts aren’t big enough to rake in that amount of money, Meta also motivates smaller accounts to join. Starting in 2025, they launched a side program called “breakthrough bonus” that advertises up to \$5,000 and an [automatic onboarding](#) into Content Monetization for creators from other platforms if they start posting regularly on Facebook.

SK Smigiel, a content creator who posts about LGBTQ+ education and activism under the username justsaysk, joined the program through the breakthrough bonus initiative in April. They say Meta would offer them payouts for completing certain “missions.” For example, Smigiel says they earned \$500 a month for posting 10 reels. They say other missions included using trending hashtags and audio or cross-posting to relevant groups. These incentives initially convinced them to post on Facebook due to their poor earnings on Instagram, but they didn’t stick around.

“When I post on Facebook, I don’t even open the post that I’ve made because I already know that ... probably 99 percent of the engagement is negative towards me,” Smigiel told Uncloseted Media and The 19th.

Uncloseted Media identified accounts enrolled in the program via data compiled by What To Fix (WTF), a Dutch nonprofit focused on tech accountability. The [Meta Monetization Archive](#) is a searchable database of information [collected](#) from disclosures released by Meta.

Belén Luna Sanz, policy manager at WTF, said the program represents a broader shift in industry practices. While advertisers once paid content creators directly with companies like Meta taking a cut, platforms now collect all ad revenue and pay creators themselves.

“They’re only paying you royalties depending on how much engagement you are creating on your content,” Sanz told Uncloseted Media and The 19th.

Jason Hong, a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, says that while inflammatory and misleading content may go against Meta’s policies, both the company and the people posting it are financially incentivized to promote it.

“We know that things that get people really angry get a lot of engagement, we know that disinformation and misinformation ... also gets lots of engagement,” Hong told Uncloseted Media and The 19th. “[Meta is] at a fork in the road, and one path is about the morals and ethics and well-being of society and democracy, and on the other path is a really big pile of money.”

‘A reckless rollout’

Since Meta launched the program two years ago, WTF has identified over 18 million accounts in the program. But Sanz says the selection process has been opaque and describes the program’s rollout as “reckless.”

“[The program requires] little to no verification of their identity, there are not enough safeguards and their monetization policies are enforced in a very non-transparent way, so it’s hard to tell whether they are enforcing it properly or not,” Sanz said.

Uncloseted Media found numerous posts that seemingly violate Facebook’s content [monetization policies](#), which state that “content may be subject to reduced or disabled monetization if it depicts or discusses [debated social issues] in a polarizing or inflammatory manner.” Those issues include race, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation and more.

Libs of TikTok, for example, has [called the organizers](#) of an LGBTQ+ pride event “sick sick freaks,” accused pro-LGBTQ+ teachers of wanting to “indoctrinate your children” and [decried](#) the “lgbtq groomer cult.” Other posts may violate content monetization policies forbidding “derogatory words” and “hateful conduct,” including Raichik using a slur to [describe the usage of the term](#) “sex assigned at birth.”

Meta also states that misinformation, which they define as “content that has been rated false by a third-party fact checker,” is “ineligible to monetize,” even though the company [ended](#) its third-party fact-checking last year, leaving no clear mechanism to enforce the prohibition.

Meta [states](#) that “repeated violations of [content monetization policies] could lead to a temporary or permanent ban on your Page or profile’s ability to use our monetization tools.” However, as of the Monetization Archive’s most recent update on September 15, all of the accounts discussed above are actively enrolled in the program.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has designated several individuals in Meta’s program as extremists. These include Tucker Carlson, who has agreed with claims that gender-affirming care allows adults to “basically molest and abuse children”; [James Lindsay](#) and Jack Posobiec, who helped popularize “groomer” rhetoric against LGBTQ+ people; and Alex Jones, whose infamous conspiracy show InfoWars received an invitation prior to its acquisition by The Onion. It also includes Libs of TikTok, which is known for stoking anti-LGBTQ+ harassment — 2024 reports by [NBC News](#) and [The Washington Post](#) cumulatively found over 80 instances of violent threats against institutions like schools and businesses connected to its posts.

“There does need to be discussion and diversity of opinion allowed in the public sphere,” Radsch said. “However, there is a difference between rational debate and harassment.”

Reports from WTF suggest that Meta doesn’t consistently uphold the program’s other rules either. Despite Meta’s policies stating that “political and government entities are ineligible for monetization,” including “[current elected and appointed government officials](#)” and “political parties,” WTF found hundreds enrolled. In addition, Uncloseted Media confirmed membership of at least 8 official Republican Party pages, including the Republican Party of [Georgia](#).

A danger to democracy

In recent years, Meta has [courted](#) the Trump administration and its far-right allies, including influencers. Last August, the company hired Robby Starbuck, an anti-DEI campaigner who has [promoted](#) conspiracy theories claiming that pesticides turn children gay, as an adviser on preventing “political bias” in its AI systems. And in April, Meta sponsored a party celebrating Isabel Brown, a Daily Wire host who has [advocated](#) for people to leave their LGBTQ+ “lifestyles.” Brown and Starbuck are both enrolled in the content monetization program.

Radsch said that being able to control who gets monetized grants Meta significant power over political narratives.

“That can be problematic because it means that they can pick winners and losers, they can pick ideologies, they can discriminate at will, and we have very little way to know whether that’s happening,” Radsch said.

The stakes are high given the upcoming midterms. Misinformation that the 2020 presidential election was rigged inspired the Jan. 6 insurrection. Still, Meta monetizes accounts which spread similar claims. Libs of TikTok has [said](#), “Democrats want to cheat,” and Johnson responded to [reports](#) of new plague cases in Russia by [implying](#) that Democrats would use them to rig the election.

“There’s a level of commitment with trying to preserve electoral integrity that needs to be present, especially when there are very delicate elections coming up,” Sanz said. “Disinformation should not be rewarded financially—this is something that even they have in their own policies for monetization.”

What can be done?

Sanz has a “wish list” of new accountability policies that could push back against the anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and political disinformation being disseminated through this program. These include labeling monetized accounts and adding mechanisms for users to report monetization policy violations.

Hong added that platforms should restructure their algorithms and monetization systems to consider factors other than engagement.

“I wish that Facebook would have more kinds of metrics, like societal or individual well-being,” Hong said. “These are kinds of things that would be far better for society, but it is a corporation and this is what they’re trying to do because this is the mandate from the top.”

While Meta is protected from many forms of legal action in the United States, there may be a path to legal accountability in other jurisdictions. In 2022, the European Union passed the Digital Services Act (DSA), which, among other provisions, requires large online platforms like Facebook to mitigate the potential harms of content disseminated on their platforms. WTF filed a [complaint](#) against Meta in European courts last month arguing that by monetizing 11 accounts sanctioned by the E.U. for alleged involvement in pro-Russia propaganda campaigns, the company failed to meet the DSA’s risk mitigation obligations.

Perhaps most importantly, Sanz emphasizes that social media monetization needs more public attention.

“Creator monetization is a very ill-explored area,” she said. “Although there is a good amount of legislation here in the E.U. that gives us a playground to try to incorporate much more responsibility when it comes to monetization, I do think that globally this needs to be the case.”

Note: Jones and Raichik did not respond to requests for comment.

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