



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on August 26, 2019

Facebook Backs Down, Admits John Birch Society Post Was Not “Hate Speech”

In July Facebook removed a post by The John Birch Society, this magazine’s parent organization, claiming that the “post goes against our Community Standards on hate.” Facebook also banned the JBS from monetizing its videos on Facebook for 30 days. But there was nothing hateful about the post in question (reproduced below): It showed our July 8 print magazine cover, which carried the title “Immigrant Invasion” and included a real photograph of illegal aliens illegally crossing a border fence. *The New American* responded to Facebook’s actions with a print article ([also published online](#)) accurately accusing the social-media giant of censorship and hypocrisy. As a result of the backlash following the publication of that article, Facebook has backed down.



Last week, members of Facebook’s U.S. Politics & Government Outreach and Advertising departments reached out to JBS/TNA and scheduled a conference call with JBS Chief Strategy Officer Bill Hahn. During that call, Facebook “concluded that [the post] was not a violation and apologized for their original action and restored the post, as well as reinstated our video monetization,” according to Hahn.



Those Facebook representatives told Hahn that the post was tagged because “an automated system ‘learns’ hate speech and is employed to alert [Facebook employees] of it.” While pointing to the text of the article as the “red flag” — since it mentioned both immigrants and diseases — Facebook’s representatives declined to provide JBS/TNA with a list of terms to avoid, claiming that no such list exists.

While it is difficult for this writer to believe that an automated computer system can be taught to flag a list of terms, while no such list of terms exists, the positive takeaway is that — in a classic David vs Goliath moment — Facebook not only apologized and admitted it was wrong, but also restored the post and reinstated the ability of the John Birch Society to monetize videos on its Facebook page.

What this shows is that negative publicity can cause Facebook to back down where censorship of conservative posts are concerned. It is important to realize that nothing in the post Facebook tagged as “Hate Speech” could accurately be described that way. In fact, the cover article linked in that post was replete with factual data, including the real numbers of illegal immigrants — demonstrating that the use of the word “invasion” was justified.

Due to *The New American’s* high journalistic standards, Facebook was put in a position — when faced with negative publicity over its actions — to admit that neither the post nor the accompanying article should have been tagged by its system.

Facebook seems to want to paint this as an isolated incident involving a computer mistake; nonetheless, the truth prevailed and while this David may not have slain that Goliath, at least the giant step backed.



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