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TRENDING: CORONAVIRUS RELIEF PLAN PASSES MAKE CHINA PAY CHEAT BY MAIL LOCKDOWN PROTESTS MASTERS OF THE UN

FACEBOOK PANDEMIC PHILANTHROPY OVERSHADOWED BY ITS CENSORING OF PROTESTS



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by PENNY STARR | 22 Apr 2020 | 125



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Some media are praising Facebook for donating \$100 million to small businesses and other acts, but they are also putting a positive spin on the tech giant's efforts to censor its users for organizing groups around the country to protest state lockdowns.

The Verge website [reported](#) its Facebook-favorable version of the ongoing story:

Facebook is a publicly traded company that mostly operates in rational and predictable ways. Facebook is also a collection of posts from more than 2 billion people, and an enduring lesson from the company's history is that those people often operate in irrational and unpredictable ways. This weekend we got to witness an important tension between the two.

Facebook the company is fighting the good fight against the global pandemic. It has donated more than \$100 million to small businesses and is prominently displaying vetted information from public health authorities across Facebook and Instagram. It released maps illustrating regional mobility patterns that have informed elected officials' decisions to close parks and beaches. It's using machine-learning systems to help hospitals anticipate spikes in demand for intensive care unit beds, ventilators, and other supplies.

And on Monday, the company announced early results from its symptom tracker, which is asking people across the country to self-report their health status in a survey conducted by Carnegie Mellon University. Two weeks in, researchers say that results from the tracker correlate with available public health data, suggesting that the 150,000 reports a day the survey is generating can be used as an effective surrogate for in-person surveys. On Wednesday the survey will go international, in coordination with researchers at the University of Maryland.

But when it comes to reporting that almost one million people have expressed interest in attending the recent "open America" protests, the tone quickly goes negative and implies people who attend them are breaking the law.

"But while Facebook the company works on its maps and its symptom trackers, Facebook the user base continues to post in sometimes dangerous ways," The Verge reporter wrote. "And then over the past week, some people began using Facebook to organize protests of legal orders to stay home."

By Monday there were 100 state-specific groups, with more than 900,000 members who had organized at least 49 events, NBC News [reported](#).

ABC News anchor George Stephanopoulos interviewed Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg about the censorship.

"We do classify that as harmful misinformation and we take that down," Zuckerberg said. "At the same time, it's important that people can debate policies, so there's a line on this, you know, more than normal political discourse. I think a lot of the stuff that people are saying that is false around a health emergency like this can be classified as harmful misinformation."

The Verge writer then goes on to compare these "open America" protesters to the Islamic State (ISIS).

"These are the same mechanics that helped fueled the rise of anti-vaccination zealots, ISIS, and — most famously — Russian election interference," The Verge reported. "They are mechanics that benefit enormously from Facebook's vast reach and its commitment to permit the maximum amount of speech. And they are mechanics that seem to be working basically as well as they ever have."

“And so on one hand you have Facebook the company working to stop the spread of the pandemic, and on the other you have a small but growing group of users working to exacerbate it,” The Verge alleged.

As Breitbart News [reported](#), the media leaves facts about Americans’ rights out of coverage:

Protests and demonstrations, like other forms of lawful speech, are constitutionally protected. The First Amendment of the United States, in addition to protecting freedom of expression and religion, also specifically [protects](#) “the right of the people peaceably to assemble.”

President Donald Trump has been criticized for supporting protesters, saying it is their right to do so.

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