End the blacklist of the World Socialist Web Site on Reddit!

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Earlier this year, the *World Socialist Web Site* was officially blacklisted from r/politics, the largest political subreddit on the link-sharing social media site Reddit, with no explanation given.

On August 28, an article entitled, "Trump runs for Führer" inexplicably made it past the blacklist, having been shared by a Reddit user in the r/politics subreddit. It quickly won thousands of upvotes, received over 600 comments, and was elevated onto Reddit's front page.

The r/politics moderators immediately sprang into action. They labeled the WSWS article as coming from an "Unacceptable Source" and shut down the political discussion among Reddit members.

As we reported on Saturday, the censored WSWS article—which analyzed President Trump's nomination acceptance speech at the 2020 Republican National Convention—became instantly popular because it said what the establishment media refused to. It exposed Trump's "law and order" response to the mass protests, his appeals to the police, military and federal paramilitary forces, and his tirades against "socialism" and "Marxism" as part of an attempt to establish a personalist presidential dictatorship and create a fascist movement in the US.

The article's thousands of upvotes were accompanied by overwhelmingly supportive comments, including the following:

• "It's about time the media started calling it what it is. He's a fascist, plain and simple."

• "Ugly, but I think this is true, and I suspect more violence is coming. His ego would love a civil war on his behalf."

• "There are already armed militias in the streets. And they killed two protesters two days ago."

• "Exactly. Finally! Someone is calling Trump out for what he's really doing."

These events make clear the nature of Reddit's censorship of the WSWS. It is aimed at silencing left-wing criticism of the US political establishment, under conditions in which broad sections of its own readers are hungry for news and analysis from just such a perspective.

Moreover, the WSWS analysis pointed out that the only reason Trump has been able to take his dictatorial plans as far as he has is because of the spinelessness of his Democratic Party "opponents." As the article explained, the Democrats have consistently blocked "any appeal to the broad majority of the population and, in particular, the working class," and this is because, "as one of the two parties of Wall Street and big business, the Democrats are just as terrified of, and hostile to, the growth of mass popular opposition to capitalism as Trump is."

However, for the r/politics moderators, this analysis by the WSWS is considered unacceptable. And, approximately nine hours after the WSWS article was shared—and after it had received 9,200 upvotes (93 percent of those who voted) and more than 600 comments—the r/politics moderators labeled the article from an "Unacceptable Source" and shut down the political discussion.

The subreddit moderator's political censorship of the WSWS article "Trump runs for Führer" comes as no surprise given their previous removal of wsws.org from the r/politics domain whitelist.

On May 26, Reddit users attempting to post links from the *World Socialist Web Site* to r/politics were informed that the wsws.org domain had been removed as a recognized source of news and analysis on the subreddit.

Subsequent attempts by users to publish links to articles from wsws.org were returning an automated

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system message that says, “Your submission was automatically removed because wsws.org is not on our approved source whitelist. r/politics has a number of conditions that domains must adhere to in order to be approved as an acceptable source.”

As we explained in an earlier article on April 3, regarding the banning of the *World Socialist Web Site* from the r/coronavirus subreddit, the removal of the wsws.org domain by moderators is “unmistakably an act of political censorship designed to block our analysis of the unfolding crisis from reaching the public.”

In the case of the r/coronavirus ban in April, moderators claimed that WSWS articles were “off-topic political discussion.” In the more recent case of r/politics—a subreddit specifically devoted to political topics and political discussion—the moderators have resorted to a cruder form of censorship: the false claim that the *World Socialist Web Site* is “unacceptable.”

We have also pointed out that the *World Socialist Web Site* is recognized internationally as a major source of authoritative Marxist journalism and analysis. Articles on the site are frequently quoted by leading authors and journalists around the world and in dozens of academic papers. Articles and statements on wsws.org are translated into 24 languages and the site is followed daily by a growing international audience of hundreds of thousands of readers.

Both recent instances of political censorship by Reddit moderators were recently noted by Matt Taibbi—the freelance journalist and contributing editor for Rolling Stone—in his May 29 blog post “Planet of the Censoring Humans,” which surveyed a series of recent online censorship actions by the social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Reddit.

Taibbi wrote, “In late April, the *World Socialist Web Site*—which has been one of the few consistent critics of Internet censorship and algorithmic manipulation—was removed by Reddit from the r/coronavirus subreddit on the grounds that it was not ‘reliable.’ The site was also removed from the whitelist for r/politics, the primary driver of traffic from Reddit to the site.”

The subreddit r/politics was created in August 2007 and is one of the most widely used forums on Reddit. Out of 1.2 million subreddits on the news aggregation platform, r/politics ranks at number 56. It has 6.5 million members with tens of thousands actively participating users at any one moment. At the time of this writing, for example, there are approximately 150,000 users participating in live online political discussions on r/politics on a range of topics.

There are more than 1,020 news source domains included on the r/politics whitelist. These include newspaper publishers (359), policy think tanks (188), web publishers (183), magazine publishers (118), television networks (48), international news agencies (39), polling and research organizations (37), radio broadcasters (19), US government agencies (10), news wire services (10) and political parties (9).

The r/politics whitelist includes numerous right-wing publishers—such as The Federalist, Breitbart.com and the *Washington Times*—who engage in promoting racism, xenophobia, conspiracy theories and completely false and dangerous information about the coronavirus pandemic.

The *World Socialist Web Site* had been previously whitelisted nearly three years ago by the subreddit and, since August 2017, hundreds of article links have been shared. These articles have resulted in some of the most popular discussions on r/politics and produced a combined total of hundreds of thousands of upvotes and tens of thousands of comments.

We demand answers from the moderators of r/politics to the following questions:

- Why was the *World Socialist Web Site* removed from the r/politics whitelist?
- Why are article links from the *World Socialist Web Site* being labeled “Unacceptable Source”?

Finally, we call upon all Reddit users and others who defend free speech rights to demand an end to political censorship by r/politics moderators and that the *World Socialist Web Site* be restored to the subreddit whitelist with an accompanying official statement to this effect.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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