

Appendix to October 5, 2015 letter to Facebook

Note that where stories do not have citations to news articles or other online sources, they have been reported to Nameless Coalition member organizations. The Nameless Coalition includes Access, ACLU of California, Center for Democracy and Technology, EFF, Global Voices, Human Rights Watch, the Internet Democracy Project, One World Platform, Point of View India, and Take Back the Tech. This is only a small sampling of the many stories of how Facebook's names policy has negatively affected users.

People with traditional or religious names have struggled to prove their name is “real” under Facebook’s policy, often being forced to decide between anglicizing their names or being kicked off.

Native Americans: In the United States, Native American Dana Lone Hill was locked out of her account and repeatedly refused reactivation even after submitting multiple IDs, a library card, and a piece of mail showing her Lakota name.¹ Another Native American, Shane Creepingbear, found his account suspended on Indigenous Peoples’ Day,² In 2009 Facebook deactivated the account of a Native American user with the last name Kills the Enemy—the day after she emailed the site to ask that she be allowed to use her traditional name.³ As one Native user points out, “I think that Facebook ha[s] to have no general knowledge of Native Americans or their surnames.”⁴

After legally changing her name in 2010 (including all formal identification documents) and going by her Facebook name in the offline world for multiple years, user Misha Dancing Waters was suspended from her Facebook account in March 2015. During the period of suspension, Misha lost access to her business page, her contacts, and data – without access to Facebook, she was unable to tell many of her friends what had happened.⁵

Clergy: The policy has even been enforced against clergy for using clerical titles like “Father”, stifling religious expression.⁶ Monsignor Charles Pope, Rev. Michael Paris, and Rev. Raymond Harris were all subjected to enforcement under Facebook’s names policy.⁷ After Pope, a blogger for the Washington archdiocese and a columnist for the National Catholic Register, was locked out of his account and wrote about it, he realized that multiple members of the clergy has been

¹ Dana Lone Hill, *Facebook don't believe in Indian names*, Last Real Indians, <http://lastrealindians.com/facebook-dont-believe-in-indian-names-bv-dana-lone-hill/>.

² John Vibes, *Native Americans Get Facebook Pages Removed On Columbus Day For “Fake Names,”* TRUEACTIVIST, Oct. 20, 2014, <http://www.trueactivist.com/native-americans-get-facebook-pages-removed-on-columbus-day-for-fake-names/>; Creeping-Bear to RT: Facebook ‘fake name’ ban excludes native Americans from social media, RT NEWS, Feb. 16, 2015, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qx0OG1AcqkQ>.

³ *Facebook No Friend to American Indian Names*, Bismarck Tribune (Feb. 8, 2009), http://bismarcktribune.com/news/state-and-regional/facebook-no-friend-to-american-indian-names/article_5a4a204a-2764-5b77-8fee-7d84eef3f6c7.html

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *User Story: Misha Dancing Waters*, MYNAMEISCAMPAIGN.ORG, May 26, 2015, <http://www.mynameiscampaign.org/2015/05/user-story-misha-dancing-waters/>.

⁶ *Michelle Boorstein*, Facebook wouldn't let a Catholic priest use the title 'father.' Now he's fighting back., WASHINGTON POST, Aug. 27, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/08/27/facebook-wouldnt-let-a-catholic-priest-use-the-title-father-now-hes-fighting-back/>.

⁷ *Id.*

subject the policy as well. Harris highlighted how, for him, his name was an essential part of his identity: “Facebook doesn’t understand or chooses not to listen that for Catholic priests or sisters, we understand ‘father’ or ‘sister’ is not a title like a career choice. It’s a way of life, it’s integral to who we are. I’ve been known this way for 21 years.”⁸

Traditional Irish names: Users with traditional Irish and Scottish Gaelic names have also been suspended.⁹ As Irish activists have pointed out, “the policy affects many of those who choose to use their names in Irish later in life but who do not have official documentation to prove the authenticity of their names.”¹⁰ One Irish blogger has called the policy “a ridiculous form of linguistic colonialism.”¹¹

Journalists and writers have been kicked off the site for alleged violations of the name policy—even when using their everyday names.

Michael Anti in China: Facebook suspended the profile of Michael Anti, a Chinese journalist, in 2011.¹² A prominent Chinese commentator, Anti was locked out of his account for choosing to use an alternate name, or pseudonym. Despite China’s long tradition of writers adopting pseudonyms as part of their professional identity, or choosing a name to use for dealings with foreigners, Anti was not allowed to use his preferred name on the site. He pointed out that this reflected a massive cultural misunderstanding: “It’s not a ‘fake’ name, but a professional name in the English-speaking world.” Facebook refused to accept a certificate he had received for completing a fellowship at Harvard University as proof of this name, insisting instead on formal government

Laurie Penny: Journalist Laurie Penny was kicked off of Facebook this year. She wrote on Twitter: “Just got suspended by Facebook because I’ve been using a pseudonym so I can hide from goddamn trolls. Thanks to @facebook forcing me to use my real name, I am now at more risk of rape and death threats. But enjoy flogging that data, guys.”¹³

La Gringa in Honduras: Honduran blogger “La Gringa” was kicked off Facebook in 2011 for using her pseudonym. She lost 1,200 followers who read her critiques of the Honduran government on her page. After her account suspension, she wrote: “This week I started writing a series of blog articles about crime and narcotrafficking in Honduras — and that is likely what prompted the complaint about my account, just as postings of my political articles were blocked by Facebook for a

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Katy Harrington, *What is Facebook’s problem with Irish names?*, IRISH POST (Aug. 10, 2015) available at <http://irishpost.co.uk/what-is-facebooks-problem-with-irish-names/>.

¹⁰ *Protest at Dublin Facebook HQ over ‘real-name’ policy*, THE IRISH TIMES (Sep. 9, 2015)

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/protest-at-dublin-facebook-hq-over-real-name-policy-1.2345414>

¹¹ #MyNameIs And #NINA As Facebook Claims Irish Names Are Not Real Names AN SIONNACH FIONN (Sep. 10, 2015), <http://ansionnachfionn.com/2015/09/10/mynameis-and-nina-as-facebook-claims-irish-names-are-not-real-names/>

¹² Tania Branigan, *Facebook’s ‘real name’ policy attacked by Chinese blogger*, THE GUARDIAN, Mar. 9, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/09/chinese-blogger-mark-zuckerberg-dog>.

¹³ Nadia Khomami, *Journalist Laurie Penny banned from Facebook for using pseudonym*

THE GUARDIAN (Jun 24, 2015) <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jun/24/journalist-laurie-penny-banned-from-facebook-for-using-pseudonym>

time last year and the year before because of false complaints... By asking for a copy of my ID, Facebook is asking me to put my life in danger. By disabling my account, Facebook is silencing one of the few internet voices in English in Honduras.”¹⁴

Journalists and human rights activists in Vietnam: Several Vietnamese journalists and activists have been flagged en masse and forced to stop using pen names on Facebook.¹⁵ One user, a mother with two imprisoned sons, had largely used her account to campaign for their release from prison. In every case, Facebook asked the activists to verify their identities. To make matters worse, in several cases, when the activists submitted their identity documents, Facebook unilaterally altered their accounts to list their legal names, without consent or notice.

Human rights activists who risk political repression from their governments and harassment from non-governmental parties continue to be kicked off the platform or placed in danger.

Anti-caste activists in India: In 2015, Indian activist Preetha G – an anti-caste activist with over 23,000 followers – became the target of a reporting attack for her political opinions.¹⁶ Preetha had used her Facebook presence to fighting casteism by refusing to include her caste surname as part of her profile name. After being kicked off Facebook, she was asked to submit ID that included her caste name three times. Eventually, a Facebook changed her username to include the caste name without her consent—which could result in more mob violence, and is a requirement she considers “patriarchal” and an affront to her political goals.

Inji Pennu, Maya Leela, Arundhathi Naalukettil and other women were attacked by the same mob because these women supported Preetha.¹⁷ The mob threatened them on Facebook publicly and used the name policy to take down these women’s accounts. Maya and Arundhathi were forced to submit their official identifications multiple times to regain access to their account, and Inji’s account is still suspended.

Human rights activist in Egypt: In 2010, right before his famous Facebook page, We Are All Khaled Said, inspired thousands to join in the January 2011 uprising in Egypt, Wael Ghonim was reported for using a pseudonym.¹⁸ His account was suspended and his massively popular page devoted to the cause went dark as well. While someone else was able to take over the page, it was only returned because of unusual steps taken by Facebook in response to Ghonim’s efforts to connect with the company and solve the problem—he would have otherwise had few options, since using his legal name would have placed him under considerable risk.

¹⁴ La Gringa, *My ripples will continue*, LA GRINGA’S BLOGICITO (Oct. 22, 2011), <http://lagringasblogicito.blogspot.com/2011/10/my-ripples-will-continue.html>

¹⁵ Russel Brandom, *Facebook’s Report Abuse button has become a tool of global oppression*, THE VERGE (Sep. 2, 2014) <http://www.theverge.com/2014/9/2/6083647/facebook-s-report-abuse-button-has-become-a-tool-of-global-oppression>.

¹⁶ Preetha G., post on Aug. 3, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/preetha.gp/posts/862310883838735?fref=nf>.

¹⁷ *Targeting Women Online*, DECCAN CHRONICLE (Aug. 5, 2015), <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/150805/lifestyle-offbeat/article/targeting-women-online>

¹⁸ Jillian York, *The Case for Pseudonyms*, ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION (Jul. 29, 2011), <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2011/07/case-pseudonyms>.

Tanzanian education activist: Realizing that books are the first step to improve the condition and empower the residents of her village in Tanzania, activist Somy Solomon decided to create a library.¹⁹ She managed to collect hundreds of books through Facebook, but people started associating her name with a particular religion and started accusing her of being part of a religious conversion project.¹⁹ She decided to change her FB profile name to her childhood name, in Malayalam script. Then, she witnessed accounts of several of her FB friends get suspended for not using real name or not writing the name in English. Her FB account is essential for the progress of the library work and it would be difficult to connect with everyone who supports the library project, if her current account is blocked. Fearing this possibility, she changed her profile name back to her legal name, opening her to vicious attacks.

LGBTQ activists in countries where just being out can expose an individual to jail or even death have been kicked off the platform or placed in risk by having their legal names exposed.

LGBT activist in Ethiopia: An Ethiopian LGBT activist had his account blocked for using the pseudonym HappyAddis. HappyAddis “is the moderator of a number of groups for gay Ethiopians who want to keep their identities or sexual orientations private. In Ethiopia, homosexuality is illegal, and people can be arrested and receive up to 15 years in prison.”²⁰

LGBTQIA association and Members in Bosnia-Herzegovina: For an LGBT*IQa association active in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Facebook's real name policy has caused major setbacks in outreach and safety for the community. Transgender members have been forced to choose between using the names on their IDs that do not match their identities, or to avoid Facebook and the risk of “outing” one’s self. In addition to the profiles of its members, the association used a personal profile because it made safety and control over the sharing of sensitive information about public events and community events easier for the group. This profile was suspended and automatically shifted by Facebook to a public page, within couple of days time, without permission, without prior notice, with one option: to either have everything public or remove all of the comments made before. Suddenly, all of the association’s membership data were made public, meaning the association had to notify their friends of the risk of being publicly "outed'.”

Trans and gender non-conforming people have been kicked off the site for using names that reflect their gender identities—often simply because those identities aren’t reflected by documents that satisfy Facebook’s standards.

Anonymous, a transgender woman who was locked out of Facebook, points out: “I am a trans woman at the start of my transition. So I cannot do my legal name change right now (where I live, it may take a year).” For users who cannot change their names, the policy provides another

¹⁹ For a Better Facebook, post on Sep. 6, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/womenincampaign/photos/pb.446507785536689.-2207520000.1444003467./454877144699753/?type=3&theater>

²⁰ Selena Larson, *Facebook's real name policy claims account of Ethiopian LGBT activist*, THE DAILY DOT (Jul. 12, 2015), <http://www.dailydot.com/technology/facebook-real-name-policy-ethiopian-lgbt-activist/>.

barrier – according to one locked-out Texas transgender user, he “ha[s]n’t legally been able to change my name yet as it is a process.”²¹

On the day that the US Supreme Court made same sex marriage legal in the United States, Zip – a former Facebook employee and trans woman – was suspended from her account under the name policy for using a name she had chosen six years earlier. It was even found on her Facebook badge when she worked there. “By forcing us to change our names on the site,” Zip says, “Facebook changes the names we are known by in real life – whether we like it or not.”²²

In June 2015, Scout, a user and prominent researcher on LGBT health, was suspended from Facebook under the names policy. In fact, this name is consistently found a cross all of his legal documents. To regain access to his account, Scout submitted his U.S. Passport, which simply says “Scout.” Facebook rejected the passport as proof of identity. Scout only regained access to his account after he submitted his driver’s license, social security card, business card, health insurance card, and two credit cards.²³

Drag Queens, burlesque performers, and sexworkers all use names for professional purposes that may keep work and personal life separate but that they use as much, if not more than, their legal names.

Drag queens: Drag queen and community activist Sister Roma was kicked off of Facebook in September of 2014 for using her stage name.²⁴ Sister Roma stated after the suspension: “I use this site to keep up with friends and simply don’t want employers or crazy stalker people to log on and search me.”²⁵ While Roma and other drag queens accounts were reinstated after massive media attention, drag queens continue to have their account suspended.²⁶

Sexworkers: Sexworker and writer Siouxsie Q had her account suspended by Facebook in October of 2014, despite the fact that she uses the name Siouxsie Q for a weekly column in the SF Weekly and a podcast.²⁷ After the suspension, she wrote: “Of Facebook is concerned about protecting people from real harm, it should consider the impact its legal name policy will have on those of us who use pseudonyms to stay safe.”

²¹ *User Story: Anonymous*, MYNAMEISCAMPAIGN.ORG (May 29, 2015), <http://www.mynameiscampaign.org/2015/05/user-story-anonymous-18/>.

²² Zip, *My name is only real enough to work at Facebook, not to use on the site*, MEDIUM.COM, June 27, 2015, <https://medium.com/@zip/my-name-is-only-real-enough-to-work-at-facebook-not-to-use-on-the-site-c37daf3f4b03>.

²³ Zack Ford, *How Facebook Taught One Transgender Man What It Feels Like To Be Totally Cut Off*, THINKPROGRESS (Jul. 3, 2015), <http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2015/07/03/3676827/facebook-transgender-real-name-policy/>.

²⁴ *Facebook is demanding drag queens start using their legal names*, THE DAILY DOT (Sep. 11, 2014), <http://www.dailydot.com/lifestyle/facebook-demands-drag-queens-change-names/>

²⁵ Jay Barmann, *Drag Queens, Other Performers Outraged As Facebook Forces Them To Use Their Real Names [Updated]*, sfist (Sep. 11, 2014), http://sfist.com/2014/09/11/drag_queens_other_performers_outrag.php

²⁶ Jay Barmann, *Drag Queens Renew Fight Over Facebook 'Real Name' Policy, Demand That Company Be Banned From Pride Parades*, sfist (May 5, 2015), http://sfist.com/2015/05/05/drag_queens_renew_fight_over_facebo.php

²⁷ Siouxsie Q, *Being Yourself: Facebook Gets Personal*, SF WEEKLY (Oct. 28, 2014)

<http://www.sfweekly.com/sanfrancisco/whore-next-door-facebook-sex-work-drag-queens/Content?oid=3226693>

Burlesque performers: Burlesque performer Dottie Lux had this to say after she and other performers were subjected to the real name policy: “The very first thing I learned as a burlesque performer was to introduce myself by the name I had given myself. It does two things: helps keep me in character and keeps me safe. Ducky Doolittle was my teacher and she explained that by using a name that wasn’t the one on her ID she created a safe place for her to work and be herself. I learned this lesson over ten years ago but find myself getting refreshers all the time. We often travel alone and with a lot of stuff, many of us have careers outside of burlesque, and we may not be out to our family or simply may want to shelter our younger family members. This ‘real name’ policy is embarrassing at best and dangerous at worst. I’ve gone by Dottie since 2002; my parents call me this name and everyone knows this to be my name.”²⁸

Domestic violence and stalking survivors have been kicked off for using names that provide protection from their abusers and in some cases exposed to their abusers by having their accounts reinstated with their legal names.

Abuse survivors: Facebook enforced the policy against a user known as Lily in December 2014, forcing her to use her legal name. Only two weeks later a man who had, two decades earlier, beat and sexually abused Lily sent her a private message. “My blood ran cold, I was sweating, and [having] heart palpitations opening the message.”²⁹

One rape survivor lost access to her Facebook account for using a name that her friends and family (even her grandchildren) had known her by since 1997. Not only did this make it impossible to go by the name she was recognized by, it exposed her account and personal information to her former abusers. She notes: “I would prefer that the people who have caused me such pain not be able to find me again simply by typing my legal name into Facebook.”³⁰

Domestic Violence survivors in address confidentiality programs: Another user says that when they found themselves in enforcement, they provided Facebook with their Address Confidentiality government-issued card, given only to victims of stalking and domestic abuse in addition to other identification. They thought this would help Facebook realize that the user really did need to keep their pseudonym for safety reasons. Instead, Facebook changed the name on their account to their legal name, exposing them to their stalker. The user points out that “blocking his name on Facebook would do me no good, since in the past he’s used the accounts of others in his family to try to find me.”³¹

²⁸ Dottie Lux, *Facebook Real Name Policy: A Front Line Battle Report* 21ST CENTURY BURLESQUE (Sep. 22, 2014) <http://21stcenturyburlesque.com/facebook-real-name-policy-meeting-drag-queens-performers-dottie-lux/>

²⁹ Samantha Allen, *How Facebook Exposes Domestic Violence Survivors*, THE DAILY BEAST, May 20, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/05/20/how-facebook-exposes-domestic-violence-survivors.html>.

³⁰ *User Story: Anonymous*, MYNAMEISCAMPAIGN.ORG (May 11, 2015), <http://www.mynameiscampaign.org/2015/05/user-story-anonymous-5/>.

³¹ *User Story: Anonymous*, MYNAMEISCAMPAIGN.ORG (May 29, 2015), <http://www.mynameiscampaign.org/2015/05/user-story-anonymous-21/>