

Civil Rights, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Audit

Resolved

Shareholders of Amazon.com, Inc. (“Amazon”) request that the Board of Directors commission a racial equity audit analyzing Amazon’s impacts on civil rights, equity, diversity and inclusion, and the impacts of those issues on Amazon’s business. The audit may, in the board’s discretion, be conducted by an independent third party with input from civil rights organizations, employees, communities in which Amazon operates and other stakeholders. A report on the audit, prepared at reasonable cost and omitting confidential or proprietary information, should be publicly disclosed on Amazon’s website.

Supporting Statement

Recent events, including the murder of George Floyd, have galvanized the movement for racial justice and equity. That movement and the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have focused the attention of media and policymakers on systemic racism, racial violence, and inequities throughout society. Companies would benefit from assessing the risks of products, services and overall corporate practices that are or are perceived to be discriminatory, racist, or increasing inequalities.

In May 2020, Amazon tweeted its solidarity with the fight against systemic racism.¹ But some of Amazon’s actions have been criticized as inconsistent with that pledge:

- After a Black warehouse worker led a walkout over safety concerns, he was fired and subsequently described by Amazon’s General Counsel as “not smart or articulate.”² The employee has since filed a lawsuit alleging discrimination against Black and Latino workers.³
- Amazon’s disproportionately Black and Latino warehouse workers are paid low wages and exposed to dangerous working conditions, including exposure to COVID-19.⁴ Amazon has also been criticized by employees, lawmakers, and regulators for biased promotion practices, discriminatory employee surveillance, and hiding workplace injury rates.⁵
- Amazon’s fulfillment and distribution facilities, and the air pollution they cause, are disproportionately located in nonwhite neighborhoods.⁶

¹ <https://twitter.com/amazon/status/1267140211861073927>

² <https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dm8bx/leaked-amazon-memo-details-plan-to-smear-fired-warehouse-organizer-hes-not-smart-or-articulate>

³ <https://www.law360.com/newyork/articles/1328761/amazon-case-shows-how-a-gc-s-barbs-can-sting-back>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/technology/amazon-racial-inequality.html> ; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-30/amazon-covid-19-outbreak-worse-than-local-minnesota-community> ; <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-class-action-lawsuit-alleges-racial-discrimination-covid-19-response-2020-11> ; <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2017/01/31/fired-amazon-drivers-file-class-action-discrimination-complaints/tFiKVM12zNoxNXXmFJcgiN/story.html> ; <https://www.propublica.org/article/inside-documents-show-how-amazon-chose-speed-over-safety-in-building-its-delivery-network>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-amazon-com/amazon-workers-say-prime-day-rush-breaks-virus-safety-vows-bloomberg-news-idUSKBN2700E9> ; <https://gizmodo.com/exclusive-amazons-own-numbers-reveal-staggering-injury-1840025032> ; <https://revealnews.org/episodes/catching-amazon-in-a-lie/>

⁶ <https://amazonemployees4climatejustice.medium.com/environmental-justice-and-amazons-carbon-footprint-9e10fab21138>

- A class action lawsuit has been filed by employees alleging Whole Foods punished employees for wearing Black Lives Matter masks on the job.⁷

Amazon has faced criticism regarding its products and services:

- Ring doorbell cameras and its app Neighbors have been criticized for leading users to disproportionately tag people of color as suspicious.⁸
- Allegations that AWS's facial surveillance technology violates civil rights by disproportionately surveilling people of color, immigrants, and civil society organizations.⁹
- Reports assert inconsistent implementation of policies prohibiting the sale of products on Amazon's platform that promote hatred.¹⁰

Following controversies, Facebook and Starbucks conducted civil rights and equity audits that assisted each company to identify, prioritize, and implement improvements. These efforts provide an emerging model for such audits, typically conducted by a third party, in collaboration with experts in civil rights, and input from an array of stakeholders.

We urge Amazon to commission a racial equity audit of its policies, practices, products, and services to analyze the way Amazon impacts civil rights, equity, diversity and inclusion and the impacts of those issues on Amazon's business.

⁷ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/07/25/metro/whole-foods-protests-continues-days-after-workers-file-discrimination-lawsuit/>

⁸ <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qyvvzd/amazons-home-security-company-is-turning-everyone-into-cops>

⁹ <http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/racial-discrimination-in-face-recognition-technology/>

¹⁰ <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-hate-store-amazons-self-publishing-arm-is-a-haven-for-white-supremacists>