


Kamala Harris Is Big Techs Bitch. Her Family Makes Millions Off Of Google And Facebook Spying

New Emails Reveal Warm Relationship Between Kamala Harris And Big Tech

As California attorney general, Harris saw Facebook and other budding monopolies as allies rather than threats.

By Zach Carter

 Sen. Kamala Harris and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg talk at Facebook headquarters on Feb. 10, 2015, in Menlo Park, California
Justin Sullivan via Getty Images
Sen. Kamala Harris and Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg talk at Facebook headquarters on Feb. 10, 2015, in Menlo Park, California. Harris delivered the keynote speech at the event.

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Though it has been lost in the mists of other scandals, back in 2014, [Facebook](#) was in the middle of what was then the biggest public relations debacle in company history. That June, a Facebook data scientist and two academics released a paper demonstrating that users could be emotionally manipulated

based on the information Facebook's engineers fed into their accounts.

The conclusions of the study were alarming. But even more shocking was the means by which researchers had reached them. Facebook had used 700,000 of its users as social science guinea pigs without their consent. Not only *could* Facebook manipulate its users; it *had* manipulated them, without any regard to the ethical implications.

A firestorm of [bad press](#) and [user fury](#) ensued. Then, in December 2015, [The Guardian reported](#) that Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) had harvested "psychological data" from millions of Facebook users for his presidential campaign, relying on a small firm known as Cambridge Analytica.

These were the days before Facebook had been weaponized to incite [genocide](#) in Myanmar or [livestream](#) mass shootings in New Zealand or proliferate the far-right [propaganda](#) that helped elect Donald Trump. But there were plenty of indications that something was amiss with the world's most popular social network — which was already under a November 2011 [consent order](#) from the Federal Trade Commission requiring the company to take better care of user data and privacy.

At that time, [Kamala Harris](#) was the top state law enforcement official overseeing Facebook and every other major tech company in Silicon Valley. As attorney general of California, she possessed sweeping powers to restrain the growing power of those tech platforms.

"There's a lot that attorneys general across the country could have done to rein in Big Tech," according to Sally Hubbard,

director of enforcement strategy at the Open Markets Institute, an anti-monopoly think tank. “Most notably, challenging the Instagram and WhatsApp mergers.”

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Those acquisitions took place in 2012 and 2014, during Harris’ tenure as AG. And yet Harris, like federal regulators in the Obama administration, never confronted these metastasizing threats to American democracy from an antitrust perspective, nor brought legal action against them on consumer protection grounds. Even well into her 2020 presidential campaign, she pursued a soft touch with Big Tech, issuing [vague promises](#) to secure consumer privacy protections as her rivals for the Democratic nomination — particularly Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) — vowed to break up Facebook and implement ambitious new regulatory regimes.

More than 1,400 pages of emails obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request help explain this inaction, showing that Harris generally viewed Big Tech as a partner rather than a threat. At times, she even teamed up with tech companies to market herself as a rising star in American politics — a depiction that proved correct with her election to the Senate in 2016.

Today, Harris is a leading contender for the Democratic Party’s vice presidential nomination. One of the most pressing questions for the next administration will be how it chooses to grapple with the corporate behemoths that have come to dominate American culture. This look inside Harris’ record with

Big Tech suggests a politician who identifies with the tech elite and is wary of substantive reform.

Leaning In, Leaning Out

In February 2013, Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg wrote to Harris asking for a glossy photograph of the AG and a personal anecdote demonstrating how Harris had “leaned in.” Sandberg was looking for stories of powerful women proving their mettle in the male-dominated upper echelons of American power, from boardrooms to statehouses. As the top law enforcement official in the biggest state in the country, Harris was a natural target.

Sandberg was asking Harris to participate in a massive PR rollout for her soon-to-be-released book “Lean In.” The “Lean In” marketing campaign was intimately connected to Facebook itself. Ordinary women who wanted to follow the Lean In movement had to [sign up](#) through a Facebook account and “like” Lean In to receive further career advice.

Harris passed along a headshot and her own “Lean In” story — a tale of how she got her start in electoral politics running for district attorney of San Francisco in 2003 as a long-shot upstart who defeated several well-connected male challengers.

Harris was far from the only public figure to join in the marketing splash. When *Lean In* came out in March 2013, Sandberg’s memoir was celebrated as a women’s rights triumph — a road map to everything women could aspire to be in the corporate hierarchy. “Sandberg is not just tough,” wrote Anne-Marie Slaughter in a [glowing](#) New York Times review. “She also comes across as compassionate, funny, honest and likable” —

everything an ambitious young woman could hope to be. Slaughter was a former State Department official about to be named head of the New America Foundation, a liberal think tank.

So nobody made a fuss about a state law enforcement official joining a PR push for a top official at a company she ostensibly policed. The idea that either Sandberg or her company represented any kind of public policy problem was beyond the scope of what most politicians considered political.

But there were rumblings that the platforms — Google, Facebook, Twitter — were losing control of what they had created. In 2013, public fury began to mount over revenge porn, a practice in which men posted nude or compromising photos or videos of ex-girlfriends hoping to humiliate them. Revenge porn specialists were typically isolated grifters, but the tech giants gave them public reach. A website in a lonely corner of the internet wouldn't get much traffic if Google, Facebook and Twitter never directed anybody to it, or refused to host such images on their platforms.

As AG, Harris made revenge porn a signature issue, eventually broadening the scope of her crackdown to include all “cyber exploitation” — efforts to profit from abuse, particularly of women, online.

But she didn't go after the tech companies themselves. In 2013, she brought a case against Kevin Bollaert, the 27-year-old founder of UGotPosted.com, a site that invited misogynists to post photos of their exes. Bollaert was also the founder of ChangeMyReputation.com, a site that charged people a fee to take down those damaging photos. It was a clever scam: letting

bad actors post material without consent on one site and then forcing victims to pay him to take it down through another site.

Harris threw the book at Bollaert, who was eventually sentenced to 18 years in prison. For women's rights activists, it was a victory — free speech claims online didn't include efforts to humiliate people sexually without their consent.


"She took on cyber exploitation," says Danielle Citron, a law professor at Boston University who received a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grant in 2019. "No other AG in the country did that." Citron is a vice president at the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative, which has received funding from Facebook and Twitter.

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Harris's arguments in the case explicitly shielded Silicon Valley from any potential implications of a guilty verdict. Bollaert was responsible for what happened on his site because he was a publisher, not a neutral platform.

But as it became increasingly impossible to ignore the role Big Tech was playing in the revenge porn problem, Harris sent company representatives a note on Jan. 9, 2015, inviting them to her San Francisco office for a Feb. 4 meeting. The emails don't indicate much about what occurred during that discussion, but six days later, [Harris appeared onstage with Sandberg](#) at Facebook's Menlo Park headquarters, smiling and waving to the crowd before giving a talk about cyberbullying.

 Kamala Harris on stage at Facebook HQ with Sheryl Sandberg on Feb. 10, 2015.

Justin Sullivan via Getty Images

Kamala Harris on stage at Facebook HQ with Sheryl Sandberg on Feb. 10, 2015.

The emails show that Harris convened private meetings for her cyber exploitation program throughout most of the year, finally launching the initiative as a public campaign in October of 2015. Tech companies committed to changing the way they monitored abusive content on their platforms. Harris praised their efforts in a June 2015 Marie Claire profile, which her office repeatedly emailed out to representatives from the firms over the months ahead of the October launch.

“I asked some online companies to come in for a meeting about how we could create a safer environment online,” [Harris told Marie Claire](#). “They were wonderful. Many companies really want to lead on this issue.”

According to a February 2019 Politico [profile](#), Harris relied on an advocacy tactic known as “interest convergence theory,” which maintains that activists have better success with reform projects when they align their goals with the interests of powerful institutions. Showing Facebook and Google that revenge porn was hurting their bottom line would help bring them along.

The problem with this reasoning is that in many cases, Big Tech directly profits from socially destructive policies.

“Revenge porn, election integrity, the destruction of journalism — you can’t fix any of these problems at Facebook without

changing the way Facebook makes its money,” notes Open Markets’ Hubbard.

On the day of the launch, Harris’ office described it as a “nine month collaboration between Attorney General Kamala Harris’s office, major tech companies, law enforcement and victims’ advocates.”

For Harris, tech companies were part of the solution, not the problem. “I cannot emphasize enough how leaders in technology have stepped up,” she said during a press conference.

It was hard to miss the different approaches Harris had taken with powerful political actors and small-time crooks. Bollaert got 18 years, while Google and Facebook got a private meeting and public praise.

A Soft Touch And Big Checks

Harris’ initiative was not totally fruitless. “Within a month of our task force launching, Google took action to de-index the names of people from their platform,” notes Citron — meaning the search engine would not direct queries for individual names to revenge porn sites.

But many victims’ advocates [maintain](#) that Google is still a serious problem. Whatever its formal guidelines, the search engine lets a lot of harmful material slide.

Facebook is even worse. In 2017, a nonprofit military journalism outlet [reported](#) that veteran and active-duty Marines had been using Facebook to share nude photos of ex-girlfriends and strangers without their consent — including dozens of active-

duty female servicemembers. Four years after its meeting with Harris in San Francisco, Facebook was still a [breeding ground](#) for revenge porn.

By 2017, Harris was no longer in state government. She was elected to the Senate in 2016, backed by roughly \$214,000 in campaign contributions from Big Tech, including the maximum individual donation allowed under California law from Sandberg herself.

Two days after the election, Sandberg wrote to congratulate Harris.

Kamala,

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! We need you now more than ever.

I just did a Facebook post about you and all the women.

Cheering you on!

Sheryl

As a top contender for Joe Biden's VP slot, Harris' record with Big Tech is more than a historical curiosity.

For most of her tenure as California AG, Harris was aware that something was going wrong at the most powerful and profitable institutions in her state. But she chose not to pursue them, training her sights instead on bad actors who didn't carry political influence.

Meanwhile, the tech giants matured into a grave threat to American democracy. Today, Facebook is not merely a hotbed for cruel sexual vendettas, but a vector for Russian propaganda, white nationalist organizing and even terrorism.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has developed a close relationship with Trump and is bending the platform to fit far-right proclivities. Sandberg has made a point of attending [photo ops with Trump](#) and Vice President Mike Pence.

As a senator, Harris has been mostly quiet on policy-making issues that carry implications for Facebook and Google. She sat out the debate on a 2018 sex trafficking bill — once her signature issue — only entering her name as a co-sponsor after it was clear the bill would pass by a wide margin.

Last year, as other contenders for the 2020 presidential nomination called to break up Facebook and Google, Harris again suggested a lighter approach.

“I believe that the tech companies have got to be regulated in a way that we can ensure and the American consumer can be certain that their privacy is not being compromised,” Harris told [The New York Times](#) in January 2019.

When pressed on whether that included break-ups, Harris dodged. “My first priority is going to be that we ensure that privacy is something that is intact.”

For most tech experts, that approach is simply unrealistic.

“All of the problems with Facebook all come down to two things,” notes Hubbard. “Its business model and the fact that it’s a

monopoly power. You can't fix that with better privacy standards alone."

Who are the criminal mobsters of Silicon Valley's democracy manipulation millionaires and billionaires? Who are the elitist tax evader, sex freak, money-laundering, Senator bribing, off-shore cash hiding, election rigging insiders who manipulate the system for their own insider trading schemes: Reid Hoffman, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Elon Musk, Dustin Moskovitz, Mark Zuckerberg, Eric Schmidt, Laurene Powell Jobs, Steve Spinner, Steve Westly, Vinod Khosla, Andy Bechtolsheim, Brian Goncher, Cheryl Sandberg, David Drummond, Andy Rubin, David Plouffe, Tim Draper, Jeffrey Epstein, Gilman Louie, Ira Ehrenpreis, Tim Cook, McKinsey Consulting, Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, Jerry Brown, Richard Blum, James Breyer, John Podesta, Joe Lonsdale, John Doerr, Keith Rabois, Marc Andreessen, George Soros, Mario Rosatti, Martin LaGod, Michael Moritz, Viktor Vekselberg, Larry Summers, Pierre Omidyar, Tom Steyer, Steve Jurvetson, Steve Rattner and their CARTEL! They have *"command and control and exclusive beneficiary positions in ongoing, coordinated, criminal and anti-trust activities involving government and stock market funds..."*. The sex crime victims of Cartel member Jeffrey Epstein reported him to the DOJ a decade ago, yet nothing was done. We reported this Cartel in 2008, STILL, nothing has been done! These people are Ponzi Scheming State and Federal funds "stimulus" after "stimulus"! They use free government money, stock valuation pump-and-dump and black-lists to make certain that no competitor can ever operate against them in any market. How much of this will the public stand for?..."

[New Emails Reveal Warm Relationship Between Kamala Harris ...](#)

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