



NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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December 12, 2016

Mr. Jeffrey Bezos
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue N.
Seattle, WA 98109

RE: Distribution of Sexually Exploitive Materials

Dear Mr. Bezos:

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding Amazon's sale and distribution of sexually exploitive and pornographic materials via its online store.

In many instances, the sale and distribution of such material by Amazon may violate 18 U.S.C. § 2252, prohibiting distribution of child pornography, as well as 18 U.S.C. § 1461 and 1462, which prohibit the mailing and transportation by common carrier of obscene matter, and 18 U.S.C. §1466, which prohibits the wholesale and retail sale of obscene matter which has been transported in interstate commerce. This creates a potential criminal liability that endangers the financial interests of Amazon shareholders.

Though all pornography is demeaning and harmful and has no place in a great company, as the discussion below demonstrates, the items offered by Amazon cater to perverse sexual fantasies, normalize sexual exploitation of women and children, and reinforce dangerous sexist stereotypes. This is an insult to common human decency, and especially to victims of all forms of sexual abuse—many of whom are undoubtedly Amazon customers, employees, and shareholders. For these reasons, earlier this year the National Center on Sexual Exploitation placed Amazon in its 2016 Dirty Dozen List, and is considering doing so again in 2017.

Jock Sturges and David Hamilton Child Nudity Photo Books—Child Pornography

We are appalled that Amazon.com is selling books featuring collections of Jock Sturges and David Hamilton photography.¹ These publications contain numerous images that many, including experts on child sexual exploitation, consider child pornography. Their publications are replete with pictures of nude prepubescent and adolescent children—many of which display their pubic areas or genitals. These are not images reminiscent of a family photo album of children at bath time, but are haunting displays of provocative child nudity.

Even the images on covers of some of these publications are very troubling. For example, the topless adolescent girl on the cover of the books *Radiant*

¹ Hamilton's "works" also include filmography.

Identities, as well as the naked young girls on the covers of *Fanny*, *Evolution of Grace*, and *David Hamilton*—all for sale on Amazon—are deeply disturbing for their child sexual abuse images (i.e. child pornography) aesthetic. Soft focus, skillful framing, and beautiful backdrops do not negate the fact that Sturges' and Hamilton's photographs appeal to prurient interests and are pornographic.

A.O. Scott summed up the entirety of Hamilton's work well when he described Hamilton's film *Bilitis* as "soft-core artsploitation pictures." Sadly, *Bilitis* is also among Amazon's offerings.²

While these publications (and films) are widely available and have been in circulation for many years, such material is unfit for sale by any reputable retailer. Retailers like Amazon should strive to prevent the dissemination of material that gratifies perverse sexual interest in children, not cater to it. But catering to pedophilia and hebephilia is exactly what Amazon is doing in making these publications available to the general public.

Recently, Walmart.com was also selling Jock Sturges publications, but upon receiving a letter on the matter from us, took swift action and removed his books from their online store within 24 hours. We ask that Amazon act responsibly and do the same.

Pornographic and Sexually Exploitive Clothing

We are also found that Amazon is selling items from a pornography-inspired clothing line. Bettie Page was a famed pin-up and BDSM pornography performer of the 1950s. Many of her images are now being used as the basis for a line of T-shirts and hoodies (by Trevco Inc.) for men, women, and juniors that are sold on Amazon. The images on this apparel clearly evoke themes of BDSM and voyeurism, and normalize the sexual exploitation of women.

While all the T-shirts and hoodies in the Bettie Page line are offensive and concerning for their normalization of pornography, sadomasochism, and hyper-sexualization of women, it is utterly reprehensible that the Bettie Page motifs are available on *baby snaps suits*. Yes, babies and toddlers from 6 to 24 months in age can now wear snap suits emblazed with the image of a scantily clad pornography performer with words like "Pin-Up in Training" and "Baby Doll" and "Bettie Page"!

The sexualization of infants and toddlers is wholly unacceptable, and we demand that Amazon remove these items from its online marketplace immediately.

But there's more. Vulgar, highly offensive, sexually toxic, and pornographic T-shirts by E1Syndicate, FaPlus, DIYtshirt, Perky Fashion, and others are prolific on Amazon. The sexually explicit T-shirts by these companies are pure misogyny. Is Amazon not bothered at the grotesque objectification of women in a vast array of demeaning casual wear? Does Amazon think so little of its female customers and staff that it will continue to allow the sale of these items via its marketplace? We hope you will move quickly to demonstrate that this is not the case by removing these items with due haste.

² Emily Langer, "David Hamilton, photographer celebrated as artist and condemned as pornographer, dies at 83," *The Washington Post*, November 30 2016.

Pornography and Other Sexually Exploitive Merchandise

Amazon may be among biggest “non-porn-site,” online sellers of pornography and sadomasochistic paraphernalia in the country. A search for “porn” yields more than 55,000 items for sale in categories including movies, game apps, novelty, Kindle eBooks, and video entertainment.³ A search of “BDSM” yields more than 136,000 results.

A sample of Kindle e-book titles (many of which are free with “Kindle Unlimited”) includes:

- *Please Daddy . . . Teach Me How to be a Pornstar – Book 2;*
- *Babysitter Bent Over;*
- *A Schoolgirl’s Secrets: My First Porn;*
- *Daddy, I Can’t Stop Touching Myself;*
- *Wanting My Stepsister;*
- *Butt-Boning the Brat;*
- *Lucy Is a Big Girl: A Forbidden BBW [big beautiful woman] ABDL [adult baby diaper lover] Taboo Age Play Erotica Story*
- *Milking Kimberly;*
- *The Naughty Virgin: The Teacher Student Romance (set in a high school); and,*
- *Tortured Cumslut Silently Endures Brutal Treatment.*

Moreover, if one does an innocent search of “daddy daughter” they are confronted on multiple pages with incest themed books⁴—not academic accounts of the harms of parental or guardian sexual abuse of children—but fictional tales normalizing and romanticizing parental/relative sexual abuse.

Movie titles include the likes of hardcore standards like *Debbie Does Dallas, Deep Throat, Taboo, Long Jeanne Silver, Behind the Green Door, Barbara Broadcast* and *The Devil in Miss Jones*.

Other examples of pornographic and sexually exploitive merchandise on Amazon are not in short supply. There is, for instance, an entire line of pillow cases featuring anime characters (life-like cartoon images) of naked or nearly nude girls in pornographic poses. All of the images are shockingly offensive, but it is especially abhorrent that many of the anime characters clearly depict children. One can also buy any of several decks of playing cards featuring nude and pornographic images of women and men. There is also an extensive selection of pill boxes with depictions of hardcore sex. Although these pill boxes are “currently unavailable” the highly explicit images of them are still on Amazon’s website.

The terms of Amazon’s “Policies and Agreements” for sellers includes a list of “restricted products.” Prohibited items include “products that portray nudity in a gratuitous or graphic manner, such as: amateur pornography, pornography, X-rated movies, hard-core material including magazines.” If this is Amazon’s “policy” it is abundantly clear that no one is bothering to enforce it, which leads us

³ We recognize that not all 55,000+ items are hardcore pornography, but why does a search for “porn” yield any results when Amazon’s “Restricted Products” policy expressly prohibits “products that portray nudity in a gratuitous or graphic manner.

⁴ On some occasions a search result of “daddy daughter” yielded pornographic search results on page 1. On other searches these pornographic stories have appeared beginning on page 2.

to conclude that the policy exists in name only. We also note that Amazon's current policy allows "unrated erotic videos and DVDs," yet many of these unrated films are hardcore pornography.⁵

Thus, we urge Amazon to revise and strengthen its "restricted products" policy with respect to softcore and hardcore pornographic materials, and to institute a vigorous system by which the strengthened policy is enforced.

Material Promoting Sex Trafficking of Women

We also discovered books such as *Pimpology* and *The Pimp's Bible: The Sweet Science of Sin* available on Amazon.com. Despite prevailing stereotypes in popular culture which portray pimping as hip and cool, in fact pimps are violent, serial, sexual predators. The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provisioning, obtaining, patronizing, and soliciting, by means of force, fraud, and coercion, persons for exploitation in the commercial sex trade. This is the quintessence of what pimps do. *By definition, pimps are sex traffickers.* Thus, by selling books such as those named above, Amazon is selling sex trafficking "how-to" manuals.

In the book *Pimpology*, Ken Ivy (a.k.a. Pimpin' Ken) promulgates "the 48 laws of the game." He writes: "There are only two categories of people: pimps and hoes. You either give orders or you take them."⁶ He further explains that he utilizes "psychological warfare or Pimpology" to get what he wants, and that this pimpology is "more treacherous than physical abuse." In the chapter entitled "Prey on the Weak," Pimpin' Ken advises up-and-coming pimps to find and manipulate the frailties of females:

A pimp looks for that weakness, and if it isn't on the surface, he brings that mother****er out of them . . . Then he uses those weaknesses to his advantage. Weakness is the best trait a person can find in someone they want to control. If you can't find a weakness, you have to create one. You have to tear someone's ego down to nothing before they will start looking to you for salvation.⁷

Books like these are not harmless. For instance, police in Stockton, California, who arrested a man for sex trafficking of minors, reported that he had in his possession a book on "pimpology."⁸

We doubt that Amazon would sell books that explicitly give instructions on how to commit rape, yet by selling books on how to sexually traffic females, Amazon is doing just that, as victims of sex trafficking are victims of serial rape. It is important to remember that as a retailer which sells and distributes such material, Amazon is not only directly profiting from sexual exploitation, but is also furthering the sexual exploitation advocated in these materials. Is it compatible with Amazon's values and business model to offer its assistance to pimps and sex traffickers in their efforts to sexually exploit women and children?

⁵ For instance, these hardcore films are rated as follows: *Debbie Does Dallas* – NC-17; *Deep Throat* – NR; *Taboo* – Not Rated; *Barbara Broadcast*, no rating information provided by first three sellers.

⁶ Pimpin' Ken [Ken Ivy] and Karen Hunter, *Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game* (New York: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2007).

⁷ Pimpin' Ken [Ken Ivy] and Karen Hunter, *ibid.*

⁸ Andy Campbell, "Pimp Caught with Underage Girls, Condoms, Book on Pimpology: Cops" *The Huffington Post*, May 27, 2014.

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Therefore, we again ask that Amazon move swiftly to remove these and other titles that normalize the sexual assault and exploitation of women and children via pimping/sex trafficking.

Conclusion and Request

We submit that material Amazon could and would not display in its executive offices or corporate board rooms without facing a potential sexual harassment suit, is equally inappropriate to sell on your online store. Moreover, like brick and mortar retail locations, online retailers create an online community space. As in those physical community settings, the public expects and deserves an online environment in which they can experience a pornography and sexual exploitation free shopping experience. Anything less is a breach of public decency and corporate responsibility.

Thus, in light of Amazon's failure to implement and enforce its own brand standards, and due to the highly sexually explicit and exploitive nature of the materials discussed above, we are calling on Amazon to remove all Jock Sturges and David Hamilton publications and/or films, all Bettie Page T-shirts and baby-related clothing items, all sexually explicit and pornographic T-shirts, all sexually explicit anime pillow cases, all sex trafficking/pimping how-to items, and all hardcore pornography films (whether X-rated, NC-17, or hardcore NR) from your online marketplace. We further request that Amazon remove pornographic images of "currently unavailable" products, develop robust measures to ensure that innocent searches do not yield sexualized or pornographic results, and conduct a comprehensive review and removal from Amazon.com of any other sexually explicit and objectifying material. Furthermore, we ask Amazon to begin actively and rigorously monitoring the merchandise on its site, to revise and strengthen its existing policy on the prohibition of pornography and sexually exploitive material, and institute rigorous measures to enforce it.

We know that historically Amazon is a brand that has valued and respected its customers, but that reputation is now in jeopardy. However, Amazon can regain its standing by seizing this opportunity to join other corporate leaders in the fight against sexual exploitation by becoming a retailer which removes sexually exploitive and pornographic materials, whether soft or hardcore, from its business model. This is the only step that effectively deals with content that is harming children and families across the nation.

Major corporations such as Omni Hotels, Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Overstock.com, Walmart and others have eliminated or are eliminating pornography from their business models. Now is the time for Amazon to do likewise, and in so doing, take a leadership position among online retail corporations.

All boys, girls, women, and men have a natural human dignity, and thus a right to live lives free from sexual exploitation. Pornographic imagery is degrading, dehumanizing, exploitive, and a violation of this right. All pornography and sexual exploitation is a serial attack on human dignity, identity, and worth. NCOSE exists to make society aware of the full spectrum of sexual exploitation, to equip individuals and families to overcome and protect against its harms, and to advocate that all laws defending the right to be free from sexual exploitation are vigorously enforced. Our nation is now suffering the consequences from widespread distribution of pornography and sexually exploitive materials, and Amazon has an historic opportunity to play an important role in stopping it.

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Accordingly, we request the opportunity to meet with you and your representatives to discuss how Amazon can become a corporate leader in the fight for a world free from sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,



Patrick A. Trueman
President & Chief Executive Officer



Dawn Hawkins
Senior VP & Executive Director