

Female Meta employees created a secret 'Facebook Feminist Fight Club' group after feeling unsupported by Sheryl Sandberg, new book claims

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- Female employees at Meta formed a secret group to address workplace concerns, a new book claims.
- The group emerged after what they viewed as Sheryl Sandberg's silence during the 2017 women's protest.
- Meta's management introduced a bot to reward male allies, which faced criticism from the FFC.

Some Meta women employees formed a secret Facebook group in 2017 to talk about their workplace, according to a former group member, a new book claims.

Nearly 200 female employees who worked under then-chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg joined the group, called the "Feminist Fight Club," wrote Sarah Wynn-Williams. Meta had 17,048 employees at the end of 2016, according to its annual report.

Wynn-Williams, a former global public policy director at Meta, then called Facebook, published a memoir Tuesday about her six years at the company, which includes a chapter on the group.

The "Feminist Fight Club" encouraged employees to be more open about "systemic issues" women faced, including sexual harassment from men in leadership, Wynn-Williams wrote.

She wrote that the group was created after women took notice of Sandberg's silence around the Women's March, a large-scale women's protest against Donald Trump and the patriarchy in 2017. Sandberg, the highest-ranking woman at Meta, did not attend any march or post about the subject, the Washington Post wrote at

the time. Her absence was notable: Sandberg, who wrote the bestselling book "Lean In" to encourage women to advocate for themselves in the workplace, was viewed as a global advocate for women.

She later told tech journalist Kara Swisher that while an event precluded her attendance, she regretted her lack of posts.

Wynn-Williams wrote that she was relieved to know that she was not the only one surprised by Sandberg's seeming lack of interest in the Women's March.

She described an episode on a private jet on their way back from Davos, Switzerland, in which she and Sandberg's assistant repeatedly raise the matter of the Women's March but were ignored. Instead, Sandberg talked about her weekend plans and her boyfriend and showed a keen interest in what first lady Melania Trump wore to the inauguration.

Sandberg left Meta in 2022 and said she would focus on philanthropy.

Meta's response: the #ally bot

The "Feminist Fight Club" eventually made "enough noise" that Meta's management noticed and devised a solution to reward colleagues for being allies to women, Wynn-Williams wrote.

The company responded with the #ally bot, to be used by men to credit other men supporting women. The bot doled out badges that people could put on their internal Facebook profile and were connected to Meta's performance reviews.

"Men will be receiving a highly visible input to the system that will affect pay, promotions, and stock options and can be easily gamed by any men who decide to hand each other #ally hashtags," Wynn-Williams wrote.

The bot was not received well by the "Feminist Fight Club," who saw it as a way to "incentivize and reward men and not women." One woman posted: "Doesn't it seem like this is an undue amount of credit for men who are hitting the bare minimum of decency?"

It's not clear how widely the bot was used or if it was discontinued.

Meta and Sandberg did not respond to requests for comment. Meta spokesman Andy Stone called the book "a mix of old claims and false accusations about our executives" and said Wynn-Williams was fired for poor performance and behavior.