

The Ally Skills Workshop

Men learning to support women in their workplaces and communities - in real-time

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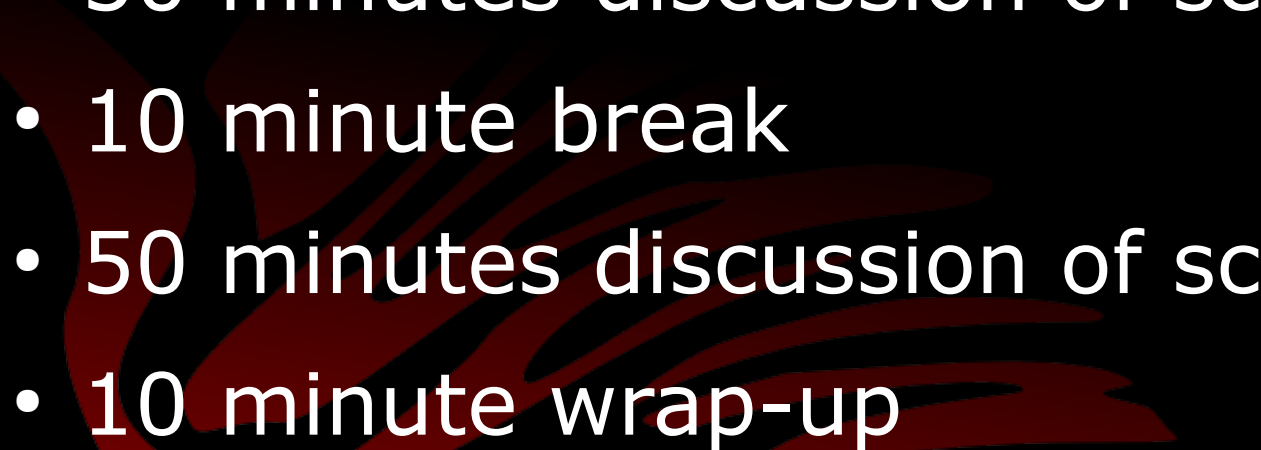
The Ada Initiative



Increasing the participation and status of women
in open technology and culture

<http://adainitiative.org/what-we-do/>

Format of the workshop

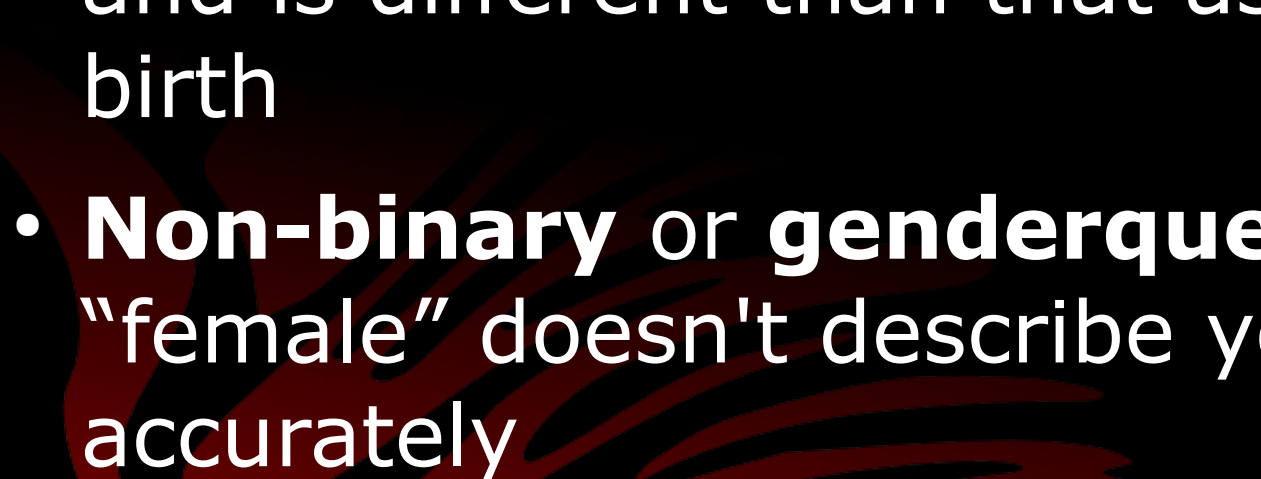
- 20 minute introduction
 - 50 minutes discussion of scenarios
 - 10 minute break
 - 50 minutes discussion of scenarios
 - 10 minute break
 - 50 minutes discussion of scenarios
 - 10 minute wrap-up
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SO LONG!

- 2-hour long workshop: most common complaint was that people wanted to talk more
- 3-hour long workshop: almost long enough



Gender is complicated!

- **Cis:** your gender is the same as the gender you were assigned at birth
 - **Trans:** your gender is male or female, and is different than that assigned at birth
 - **Non-binary or genderqueer:** “male” or “female” doesn't describe your gender accurately
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Some tips on language and assumptions in discussion

- Not all women have uteruses, ovaries, or XX chromosomes (and some men do)
- Not all men have penises, testicles, or XY chromosomes (and some women do)
- “Females” is often dehumanizing
- Don't use “girls” for women age 18 & up
- Just say “men,” “women,” and “genderqueer folks”

Why men supporting women?

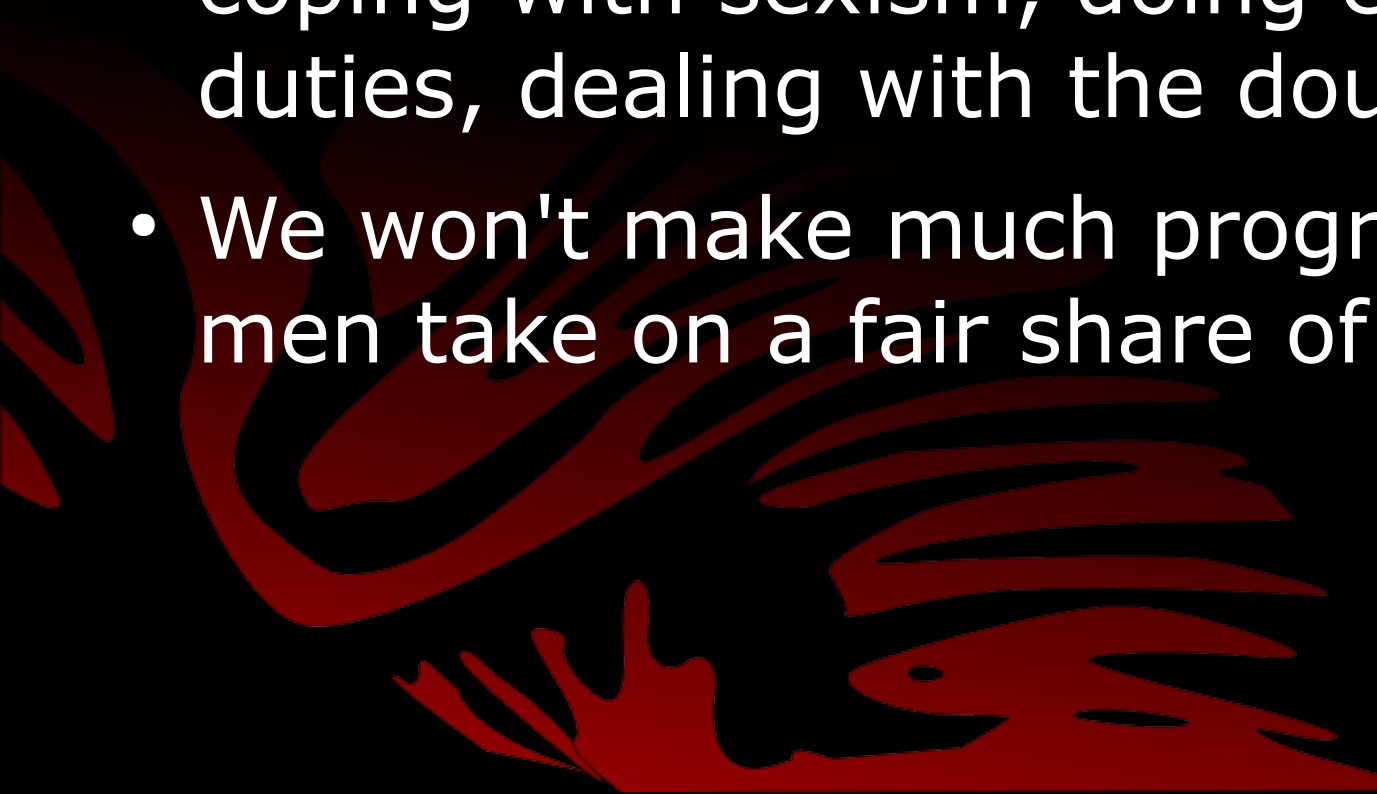
Studies show that men advocating for women benefit, but women doing the same suffer:

“Ethnic minority or female leaders who engage in diversity-valuing behavior are penalized with worse performance ratings than their equally diversity-valuing white or male counterparts.”

David Hekman, Wei Yang & Maw Der Foo, 2014

Does valuing diversity result in worse performance ratings for minority and female leaders?

Why men supporting women

- Men are the majority in many communities
 - Women already have a second shift: coping with sexism, doing extra caring duties, dealing with the double bind
 - We won't make much progress unless men take on a fair share of the work
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Why men supporting women?

- Men have unearned societal advantages that they have to support women
- That includes cis and trans women, women of all races, queer women, etc.
- While not unfairly harming people of any gender, race, sexuality, etc.

You have power in these situations, use it!

Off-topic for this workshop

- Does sexism exist?
- Is it a problem?
- Is it worth fixing?

Learn more:

<http://geekfeminism.org>

<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com>

Off-topic for this workshop

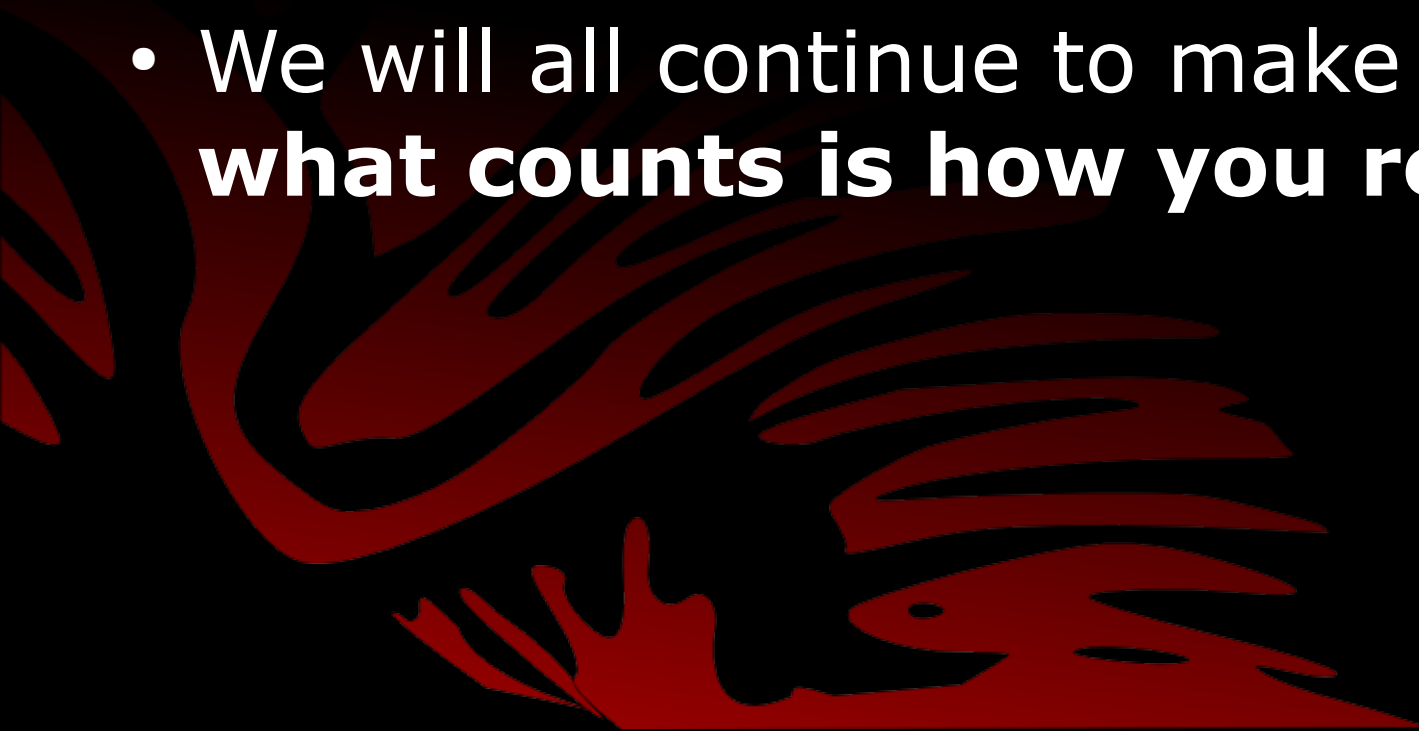
- Advice on anything involving lawyers or internal company policies

Official disclaimer:

The purpose of this workshop is to teach people simple, everyday ways to support women in their workplaces and communities and is not meant to instruct attendees on any company's human resource policies and / or procedures. As such, workshop facilitators will not comment or advise attendees on any action that has the potential to lead to legal action.

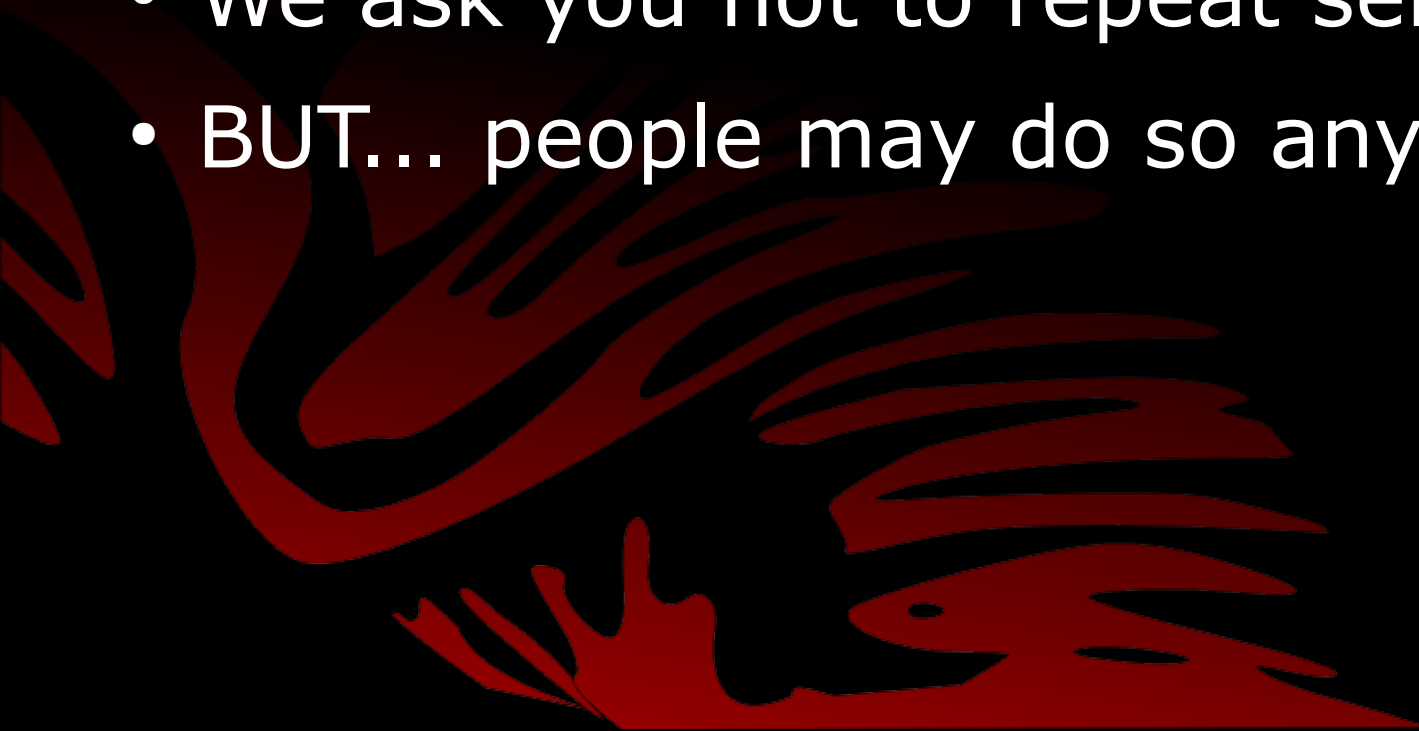
This workshop is not a certification

- Ally is a thing you do (sometimes), not a thing you are
- Attending this workshop does not give you cover for bad behavior, past or future
- We will all continue to make mistakes; **what counts is how you react**

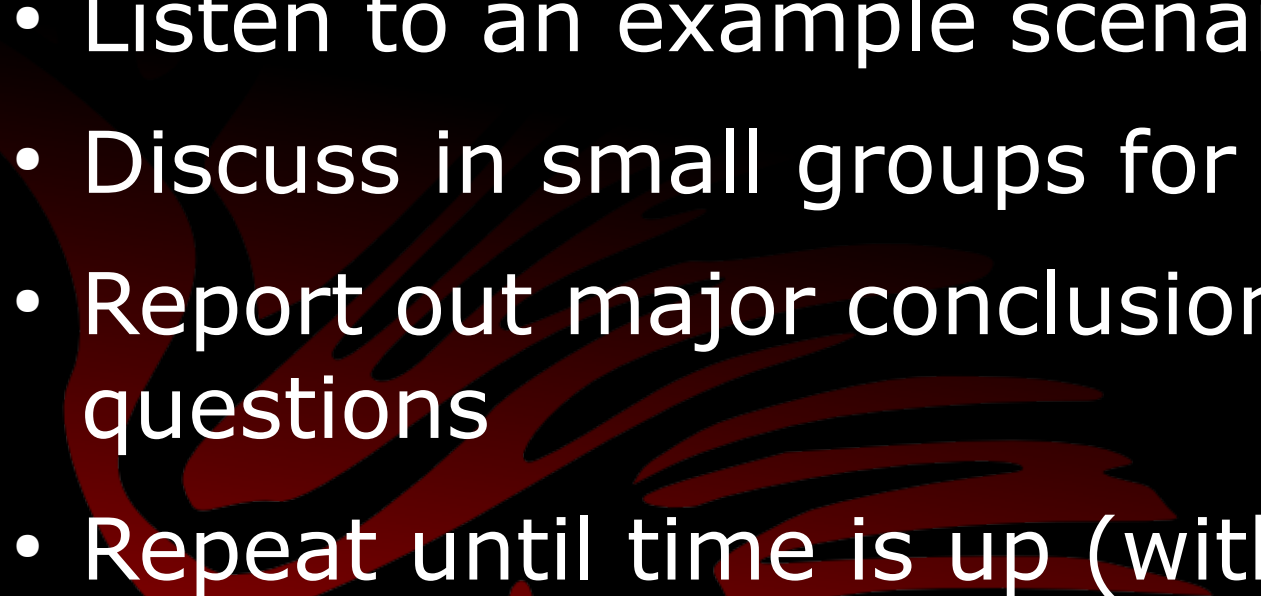


Help us create a safer learning space

- This workshop is not recorded
- This is a learning experience
- You are supposed to make mistakes
- We ask you not to repeat sensitive things
- BUT... people may do so anyway! :(



Format of the remainder of this workshop

- Review basic principles of responding to sexism
 - Form discussion groups of 4-6 people
 - Listen to an example scenario
 - Discuss in small groups for 3-5 minutes
 - Report out major conclusions and questions
 - Repeat until time is up (with breaks)
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- A large, abstract, red graphic element is positioned in the lower-left and bottom-center of the slide. It consists of several overlapping, curved, brushstroke-like shapes that resemble a stylized flame or a dynamic, organic form. The color is a deep, dark red, and the edges are somewhat irregular and feathered, giving it a sense of movement and energy.

Awwwwwwkward...

...talking about sexism, sex, gender,
discrimination is uncomfortable







<https://flic.kr/p/HaeRd> CC-BY John of Wales



<https://flic.kr/p/jXHrXR> CC BY-SA Jocelyn Kinghorn

Basic principles of responding to sexism

- Be short, simple, firm
- Humor usually backfires, avoid it
- Pick your battles
- Play for the audience
- Practice simple responses
- Don't be homophobic, transphobic, racist, classist or make fun of people for being sexually undesirable, unattractive, etc.

DREADED GROUP CHOOSING TIME

- Form groups of 4 - 6 now
- Groups that are more diverse (gender and otherwise) have better discussions
- At the breaks, please volunteer to change groups



Prepping for group discussion

- Take 3 minutes to introduce yourselves to the rest of your group
- If everyone has the same preferred pronouns on their badge, tell the instructor
- Choose a “gatekeeper”: someone whose job is to call on people who aren't talking as much and make sure they get time to speak

A few more tips for group discussion

- At the beginning of each scenario, choose someone to report out at the end with the ideas and questions from your group
- Avoid rules-lawyering: “But what if there was some specific highly unlikely circumstance in which this situation was not actually sexist?”
- Focus on what men can do to help in this situation (not women)

Creating a friendly environment

A woman you don't know is standing near your group at a conference or similar event in your field. She is alone and looks like she would rather be talking to people.




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Things to notice

- Who is speaking most in your group?
 - Is someone having difficulty being heard?
 - Are there patterns related to gender?
 - How do these discussions compare to ones you have in other contexts?
- 

Speaking up about casual sexism

At a meeting, a woman makes a suggestion but no one picks up on it. Later, a man makes the same suggestion and is given credit for it.



Speaking up about casual sexism

On a mailing list in your community, someone writes “How would you explain this [technical thing] to your girlfriend?”

(using a woman as an example of a technically unsavvy person)



Tip: Charles' Rules of Argument AKA "Avoiding flame wars"

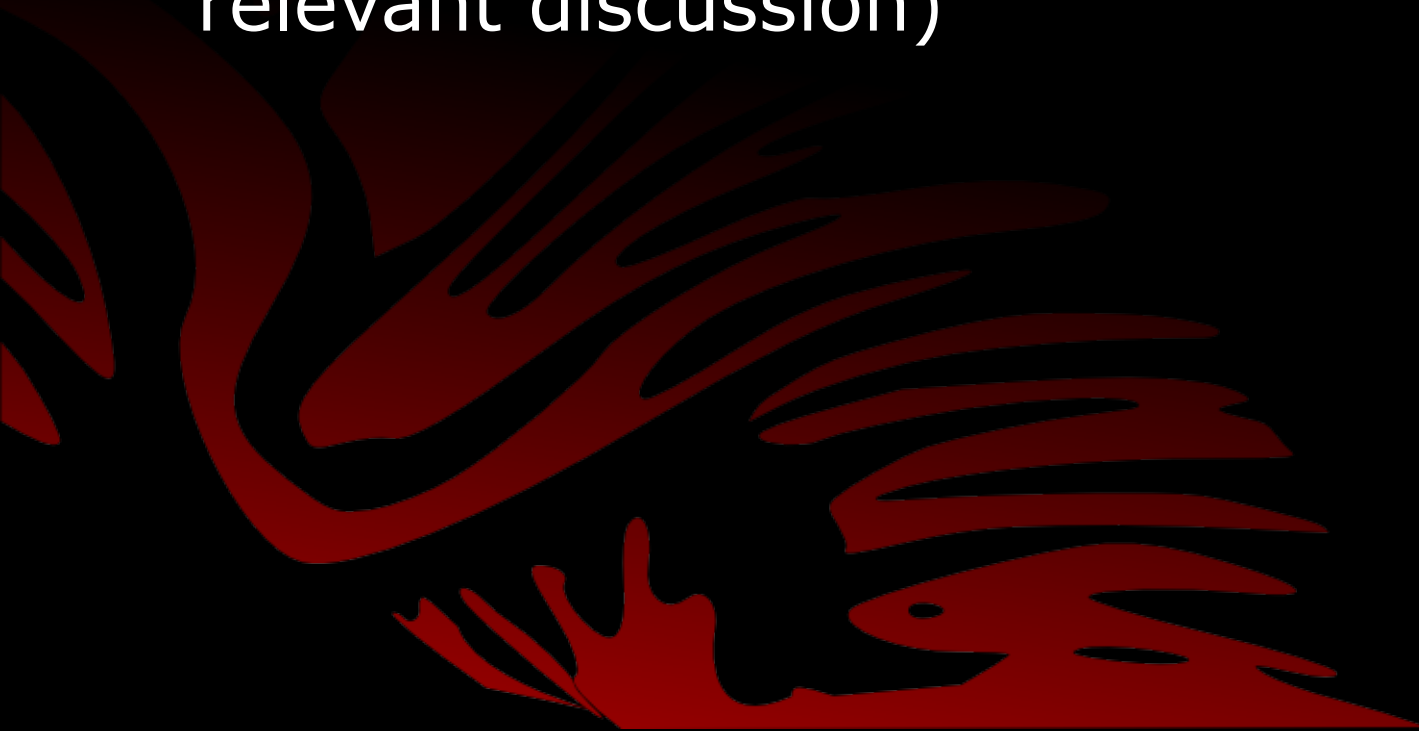
- Don't go looking for an argument
- State your position once, speaking to the audience
- Wait for absurd replies
- Reply one more time to correct any misunderstandings of your first statement
- Do not reply again
- Spend time doing something fun instead

http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Charles%27_Rules_of_Argument

Intervening in harassment of women

You are in an IRC channel (chat room) when someone says to a person they perceive as female: "Are you single?"

(in a work context, outside any conceivable relevant discussion)



Tip: Read Captain Awkward

- <http://captainawkward.com>
- Advice blog that answers questions on social interaction from an awkward, geeky perspective
- Great for “How do I get someone to stop doing something without upsetting anyone?” type of questions
(hint: someone is already upset)

Speaking up about casual sexism

You are part of a yearly performance review process. Several women's reviews criticize them for being abrasive, aggressive, or unfriendly to co-workers. Few (or none) of the men's reviews have similar comments.

(Emotional care of co-workers is not part of the women's job descriptions.)

“Abrasive [...] was used 17 times to describe 13 different women, but the word never appeared in men’s reviews. In fact, this type of character critique that was absent from men’s reviews showed up in 71 of the 94 critical reviews received by women.”

- Kathleen Davis writing about Kieran Snyder's research

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3034895/strong-female-lead/the-one-word-men-never-see-in-their-performance-reviews>

Intervening in harassment of women

At a party at work, someone makes a joke about how much sex a co-worker must have had in order to produce their children. Everyone is holding an alcoholic drink.

(At a company for which this discussion is not a work-related topic.)

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Sexual harassment while drunk is a cultural construct

“There is overwhelming historical and cross-cultural evidence that people learn not only how to drink but how to be affected by drink through a process of socialisation [...] In simple terms, this means that people who expect drinking to result in violence become aggressive; those who expect it to make them feel sexy become amorous; those who view it as disinhibiting are demonstrative.”

- Heath, quoted in "Social and Cultural Aspects of Drinking" by Social Issues Research Centre

<http://www.sirc.org/publik/drinking4.html>

Why is talking about sex at work harmful to women?

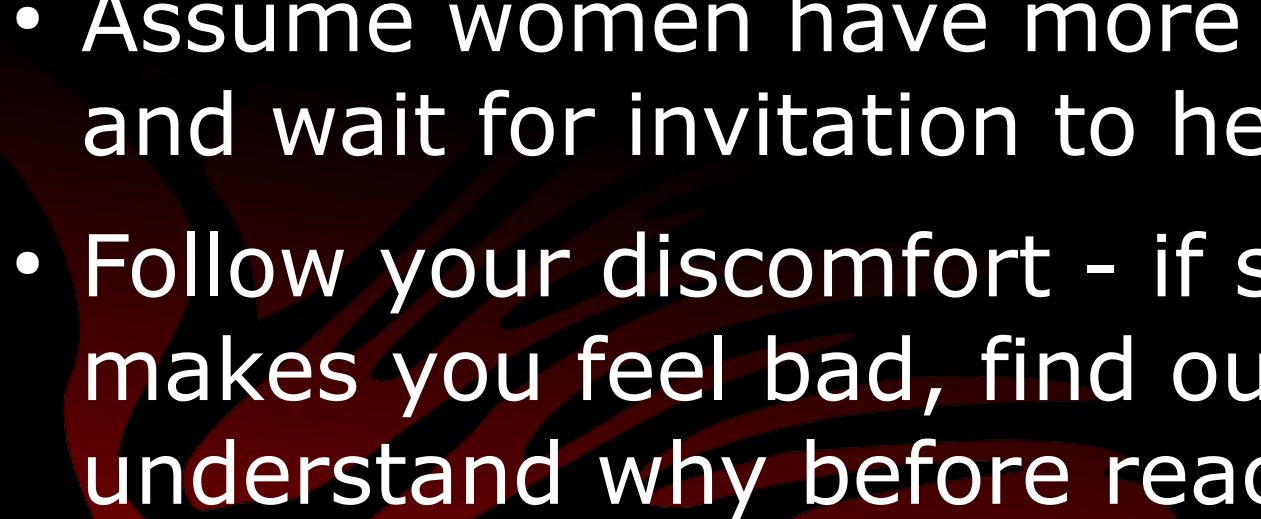
- In many societies, women are sexually objectified far more than men
- Objects != people
- Women's participation in sex is viewed far more negatively than men's
- Talking about sex at work often triggers objectification, discrimination, harassment of women
- If on-topic, must be done CAREFULLY

Educating yourself

Someone tells you that you have said or done something sexist. You didn't mean to be sexist and don't consider yourself a sexist person.



Advanced ally skills

- Don't expect praise and credit for not being sexist or fighting sexism
 - Follow and support women leaders
 - Assume women have more knowledge and wait for invitation to help or explain
 - Follow your discomfort - if something makes you feel bad, find out more and understand why before reacting
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- A large, abstract, red graphic element is positioned in the lower-left and bottom-center of the slide. It consists of several overlapping, curved, and somewhat jagged shapes that resemble stylized flames, a hand, or a dynamic, organic form. The color is a deep, dark red, and it contrasts sharply with the black background.

More resources

Slides, video, curriculum at:
<http://supportada.org/allies>


Geek Feminism Wiki:
<http://geekfeminism.wikia.com>

The Ada Initiative

<http://adainitiative.org>
contact@adainitiative.org

Avoiding derailment

You propose a code of conduct for your community and make the mistake of asking for comments on a forum with limited comment moderation features, such as GitHub. A few dedicated people argue against it with several 2,000 word comments.




Troll traps for SJWs

- “I'll change my mind if you just explain it to me”
- Boundary-testing
- Pretending to agree on some points
- Appeal to politeness and respect
- Sob stories/claiming victim status
- Accusation of bias
- False consensus seeking

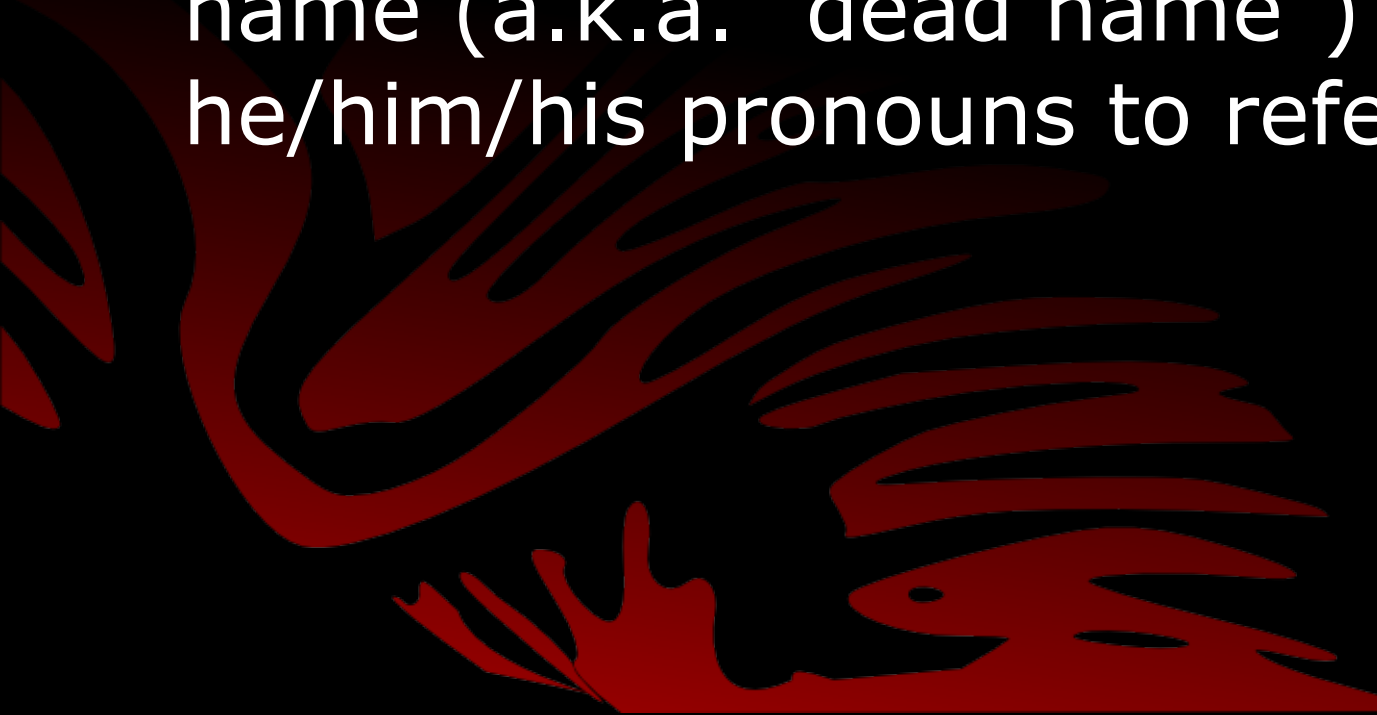
Creating a friendly environment

Several women talk about starting a women-only mailing list or event on a project's mailing list. Several people object with arguments like “we need unity, not division,” and “reverse sexism is bad.”



Speaking up against advocacy of transmisogyny

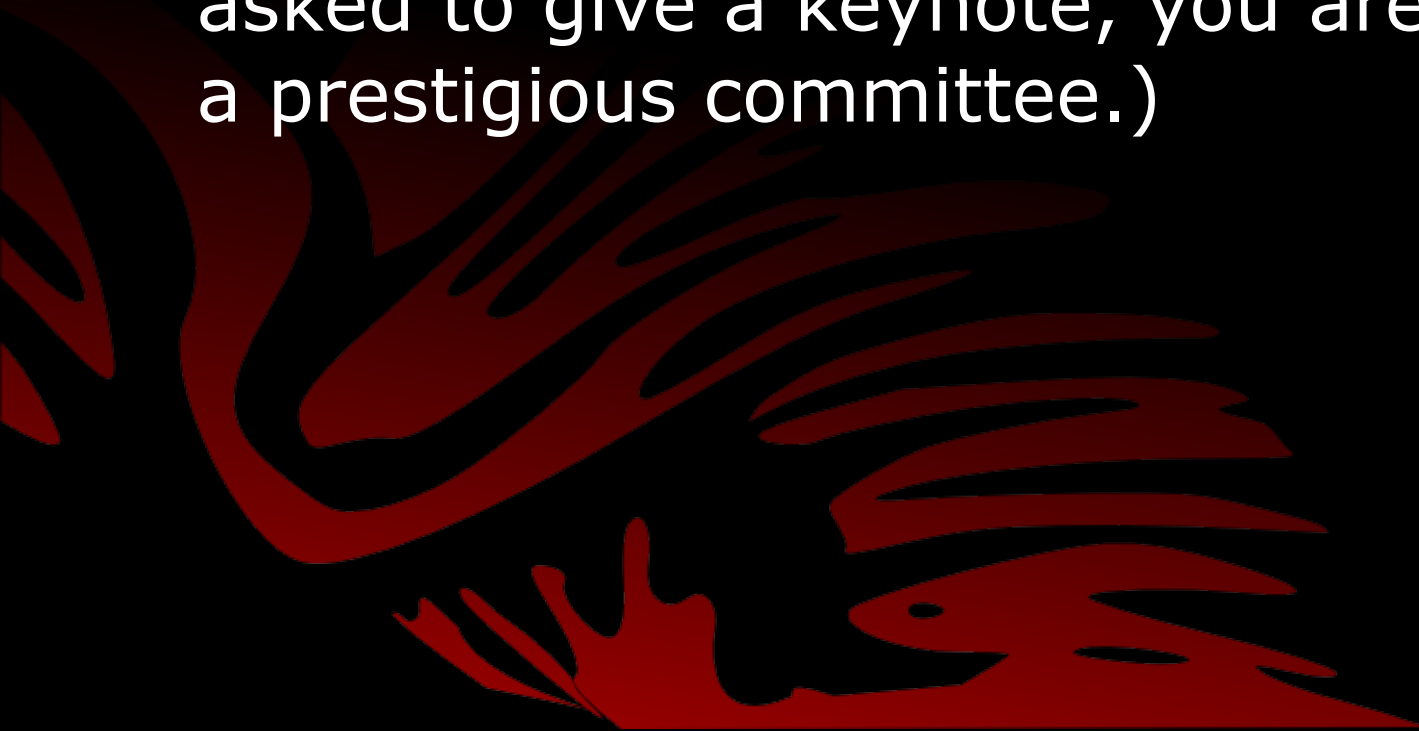
In an email, you refer to a trans woman's work using her preferred name and pronouns (she/her/hers, in this case). Another person replies using her previous name (a.k.a. "dead name") and he/him/his pronouns to refer to her.

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Speaking up about casual sexism

You receive an invitation to a panel. You are male, and so is everyone else on the panel.

(Alternate versions: you are all white, you are asked to give a keynote, you are asked to join a prestigious committee.)



Breastfeeding support

You are organizing an event, and you receive an email from a woman attendee asking about your support for breastfeeding mothers attending.



Avoiding casual sexism

You have a party at work or for a community group that includes food and drink. The party is ending and there is a lot of trash left on tables and chairs. No paid janitorial service is present.



Creating a friendly environment

You are organizing an evening reception for a conference with a catering budget. Some of the location options are not in the main conference venue itself.



Speaking up about casual sexism

In a conversation about a recently hired woman, someone says they've heard the hiring bar is lower these days.



Speaking up about casual sexism

Someone you follow on social media posts, "Ugh, that [band name] song counts as ear rape." You know each other and in general this person tries not to be sexist.



Speaking up against advocacy of sexism

On Twitter/Google+/Facebook/etc., someone complains publicly about a woman in your community for cussing, being too “aggressive,” “loud,” “out of line,” etc.



Speaking up against advocacy of sexism

You point out a decision that will probably be unpopular with women (sexist ad, etc.). Someone replies "I asked my [female partner/friend/relative] about it, and she isn't offended by it."



Not supporting sexist organizations

You are attending a conference your company is sponsoring, and you notice a booth with “booth babes” or sexist advertising.



Intervening in harassment of women

You're standing at a party, and out of the corner of your eye, you see someone grab a woman's butt. She looks surprised, angry, or moves away (i.e., it is clearly not consensual).



Intervening in harassment of women

You are attending a talk at a conference. The presenter clicks to the next slide, and you see a pornographic image.

(Pornography is not on-topic for the conference, or it is and the presenter did not follow best practices for their community.)



Educating yourself

You are reading something written by a feminist somewhere on the Internet and see an unfamiliar word like "cis-sexism" or "intersectionality."



Speaking up about advocacy of racism and sexism

Someone says, "There aren't any women coders on the team." There are three women coders on the team, all of whom are women of color from southeast Asia.



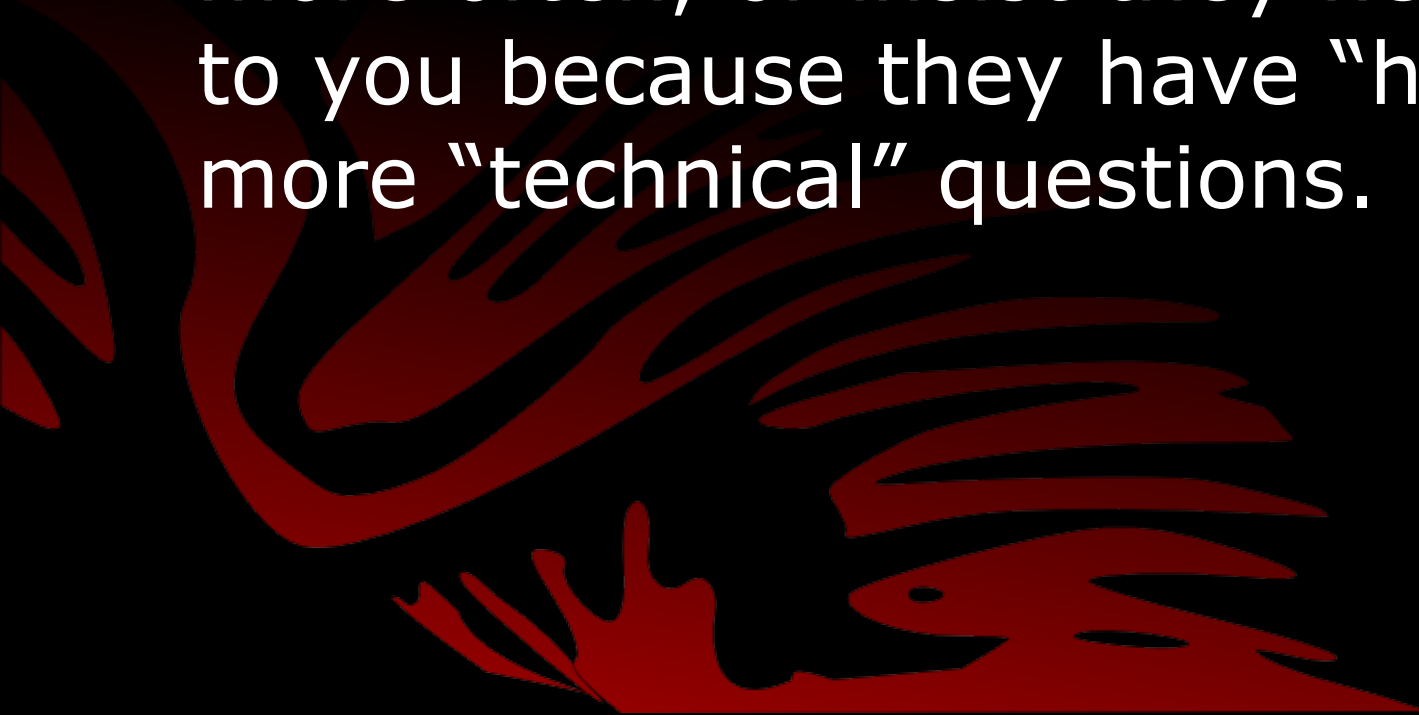
Educating yourself

You read a blog post about a woman being sexually harassed at a meeting, and think "Why didn't she just knee him in the groin?"



Speaking up about casual sexism (and racism)

A colleague who sometimes staffs the reference desk is a young black woman. When you are both on duty, you notice that patrons tend to ask you questions more often, or insist they need to speak to you because they have “harder” or more “technical” questions.

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Intervening in harassment of women

You introduce a woman librarian to another man, who immediately makes a “sexy librarian” joke. The woman smiles and laughs as though she is delighted to hear this original and witty joke.



Speaking up against sexism (and the gender binary)

A cataloging system you use for work requires assigning gender to authors. It only allows "male" and "female" as options and changing the gender of an existing entry is extremely difficult.



Creating a friendly environment

You receive a book to catalogue that has a lot of graphic sexual content which falls within the collection development boundaries of your institution. A summer intern is assisting you with cataloging.




Intervening in harassment of women

You overhear an influential man making sexual advances to a young woman attending her first conference in this field. He keeps pressuring her to have another alcoholic drink.



Speaking up about casual sexism

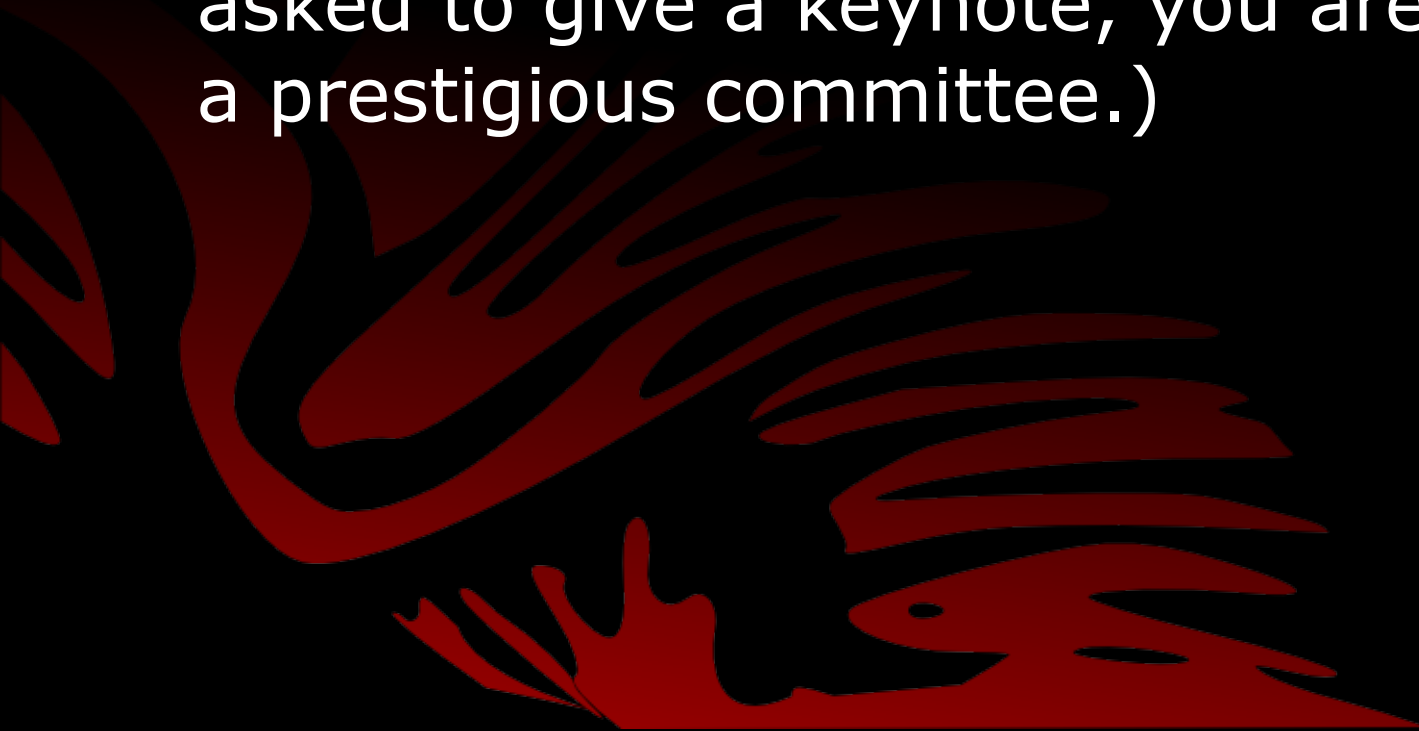
On Facebook, a skeptic frequently makes fun of anti-vaxxers. Their examples are disproportionately women. In particular they emphasize that Jenny McCarthy was a Playboy model, implying that beautiful women can't be intelligent.

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Speaking up about casual sexism

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(Alternate versions: you are all white, you are asked to give a keynote, you are asked to join a prestigious committee.)



Speaking up about casual sexism

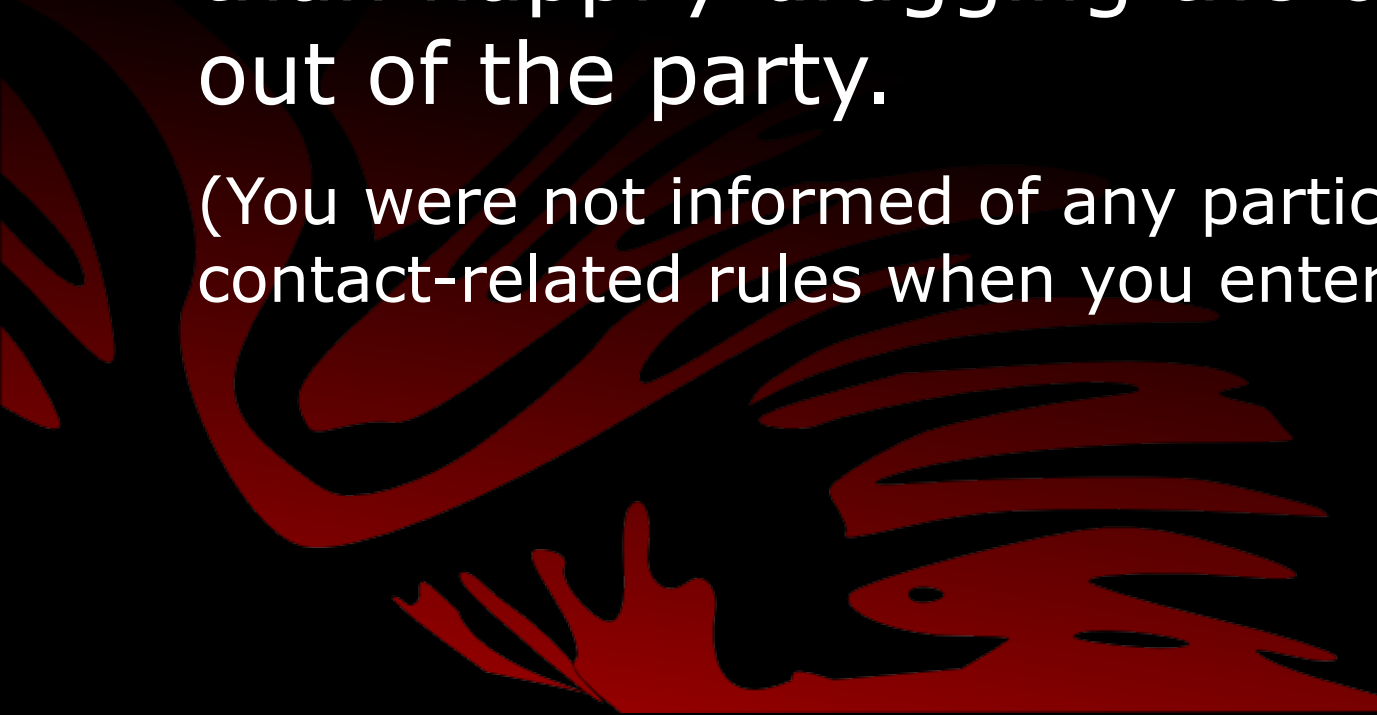
You are at event. Someone is wearing a shirt covered in pictures of women in sexy poses.



Intervening in harassment of women

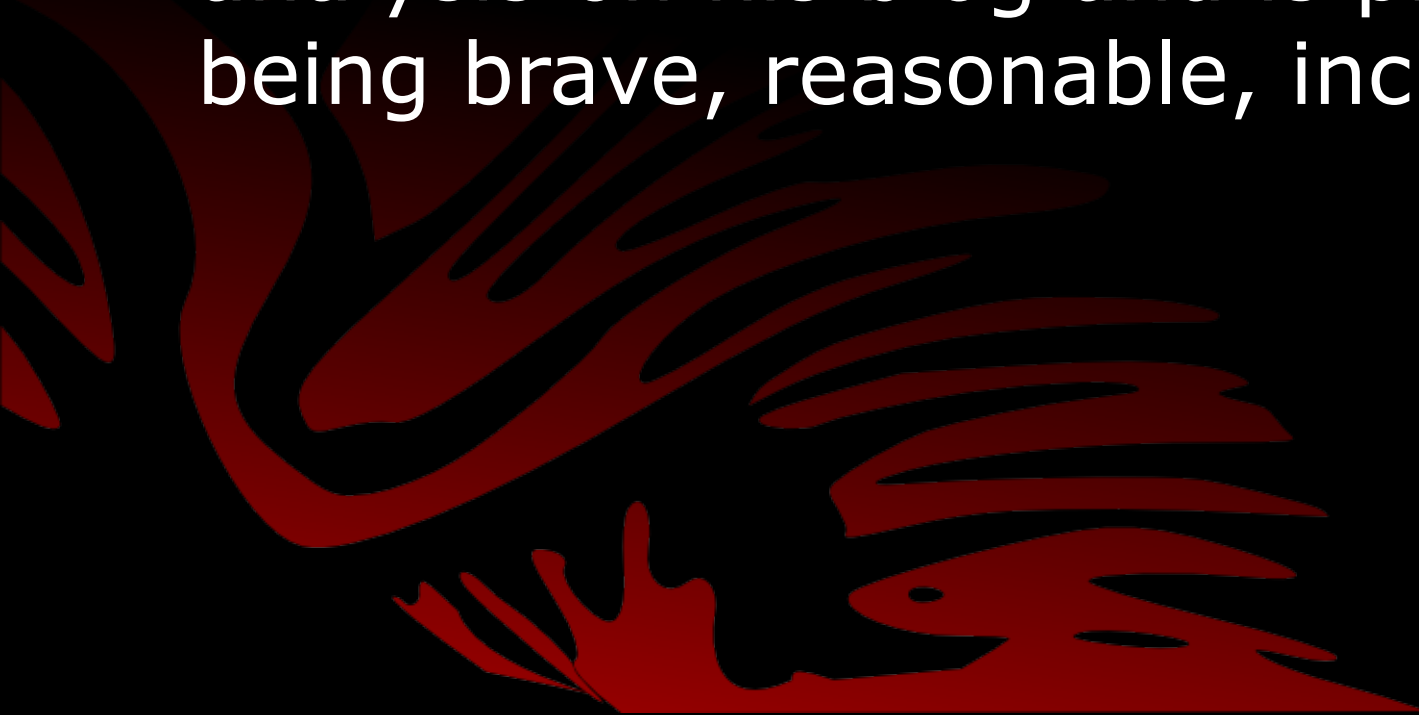
You're at a party at a convention, and out of the corner of your eye, you see someone grab a woman's butt. She responds in a way that is something other than happily dragging the other person out of the party.

(You were not informed of any particular sex or physical contact-related rules when you entered the party.)

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Speaking up about casual sexism

In her blog, a woman writes an analysis of a current topic. Her post is ignored or criticized for being emotional, rude, out-of-line, etc. Later, a man makes the same analysis on his blog and is praised for being brave, reasonable, incisive, etc.

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Avoiding derailment

On an internal company mailing list, people are discussing your company's new code of conduct for open source projects. One or two people argue against it by replying to all with multiple 2,000+ word emails with arguments such as, "The human race will go extinct if flirting is banned."

