

Ally Skills Workshop: Combating Casual Sexism and Transphobia

Presentation and format based on the Ada Initiative's Ally Skills Workshop
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introductions

- Name
- Pronouns you would prefer people use in reference to you. (E.g., she/her, they/their, zie/zir)
- One word on how you're doing today (no repeats!)



format of the workshop

15 minute introduction

40 minutes of discussion of scenarios

5 minute break (change groups)

• 40 minutes of discussion of scenarios

10 minute wrap up

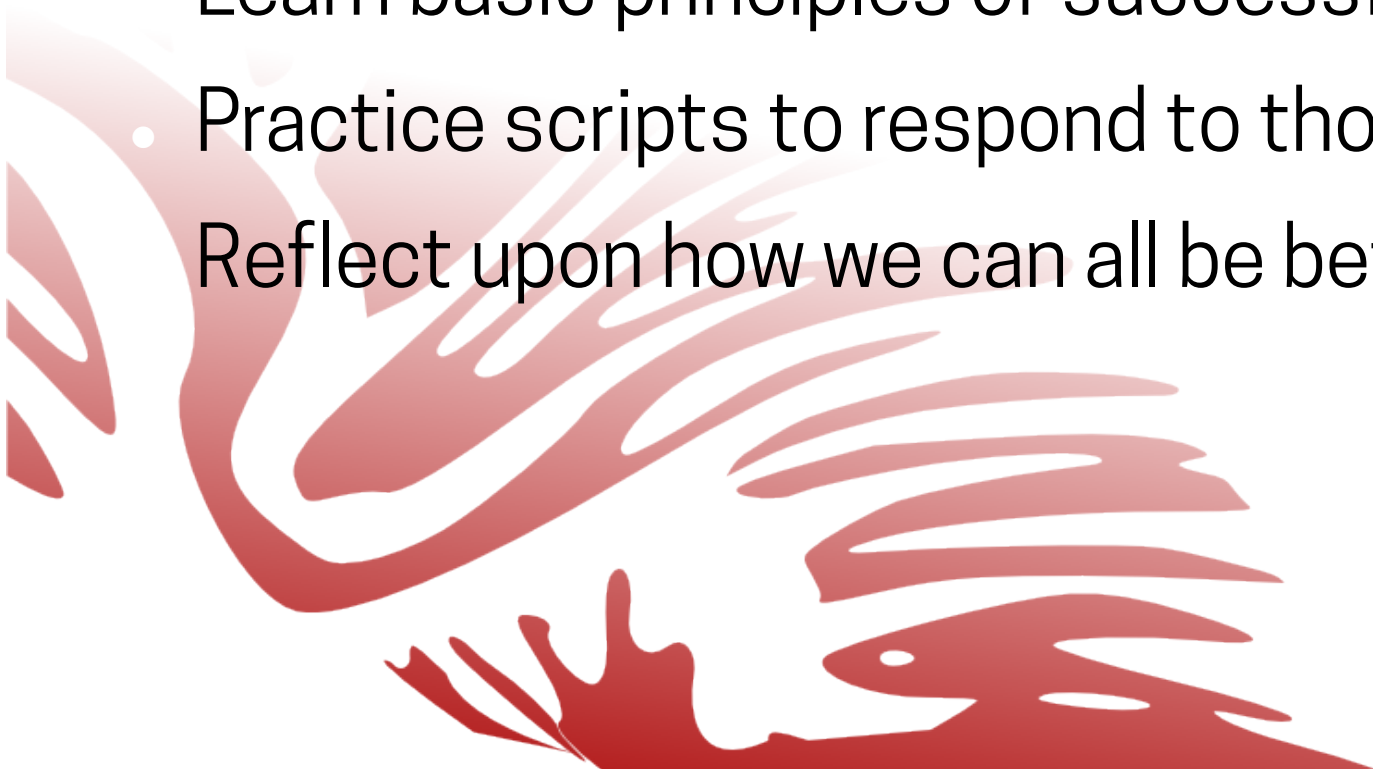


goals of the workshop

Become acquainted with (or unfortunately reminded of) ways in which transphobia and sexism exist in our spaces.

Learn basic principles of successful responses.

- Practice scripts to respond to those scenarios.
- Reflect upon how we can all be better allies.



gender is complicated!

Cis: your gender is the same as the gender you were assigned at birth.

Trans: your gender is different than that assigned at birth.

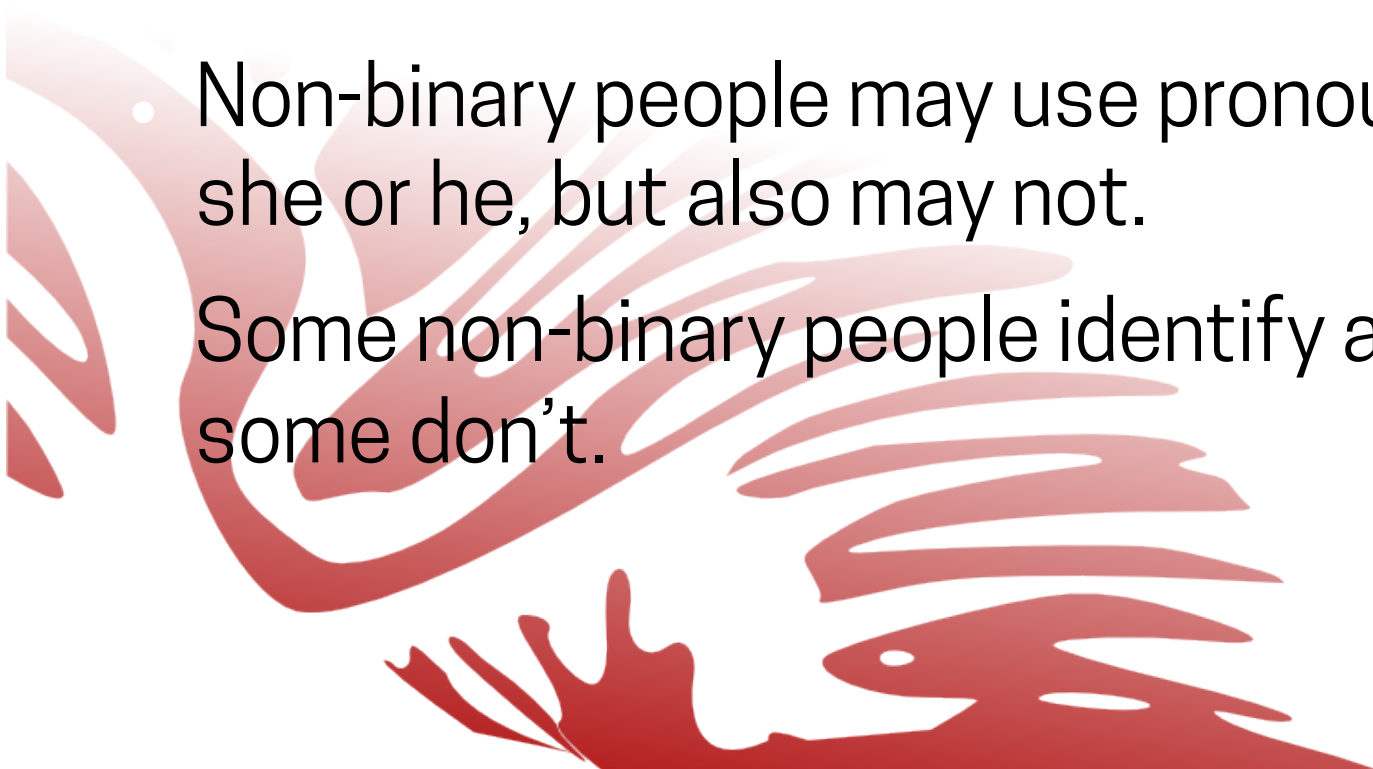


gender is complicated!

Non-binary or **genderqueer** or **agender**: “male” or “female” doesn't describe your gender accurately, or you don't identify with a gender at all.

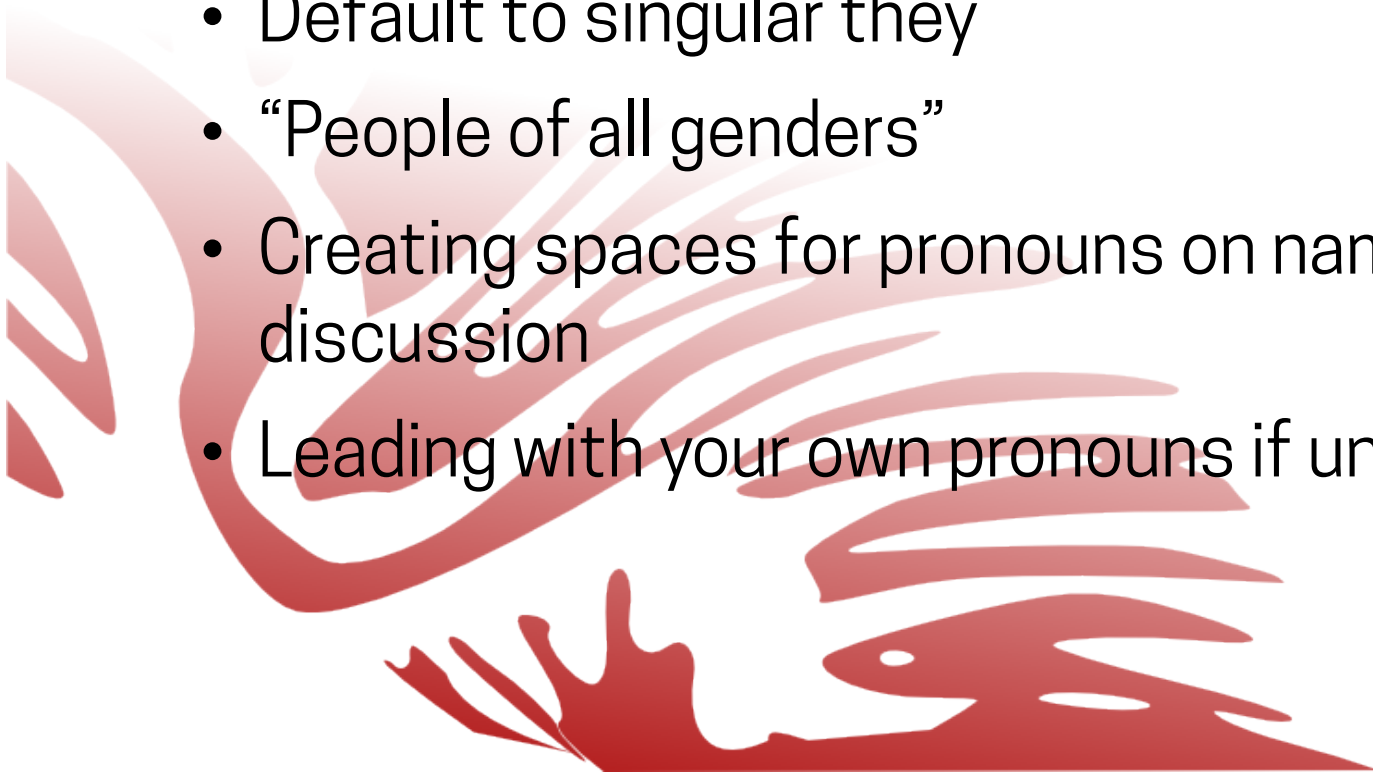
- Non-binary people may use pronouns other than she or he, but also may not.

Some non-binary people identify as trans and some don't.



inclusive language and behavior

- Using inclusive language is a sign of a thoughtful space!
- Some methods (focused on gender):
 - Default to singular they
 - “People of all genders”
 - Creating spaces for pronouns on nametags and in discussion
 - Leading with your own pronouns if unsure.



some tips on language and assumptions in discussion

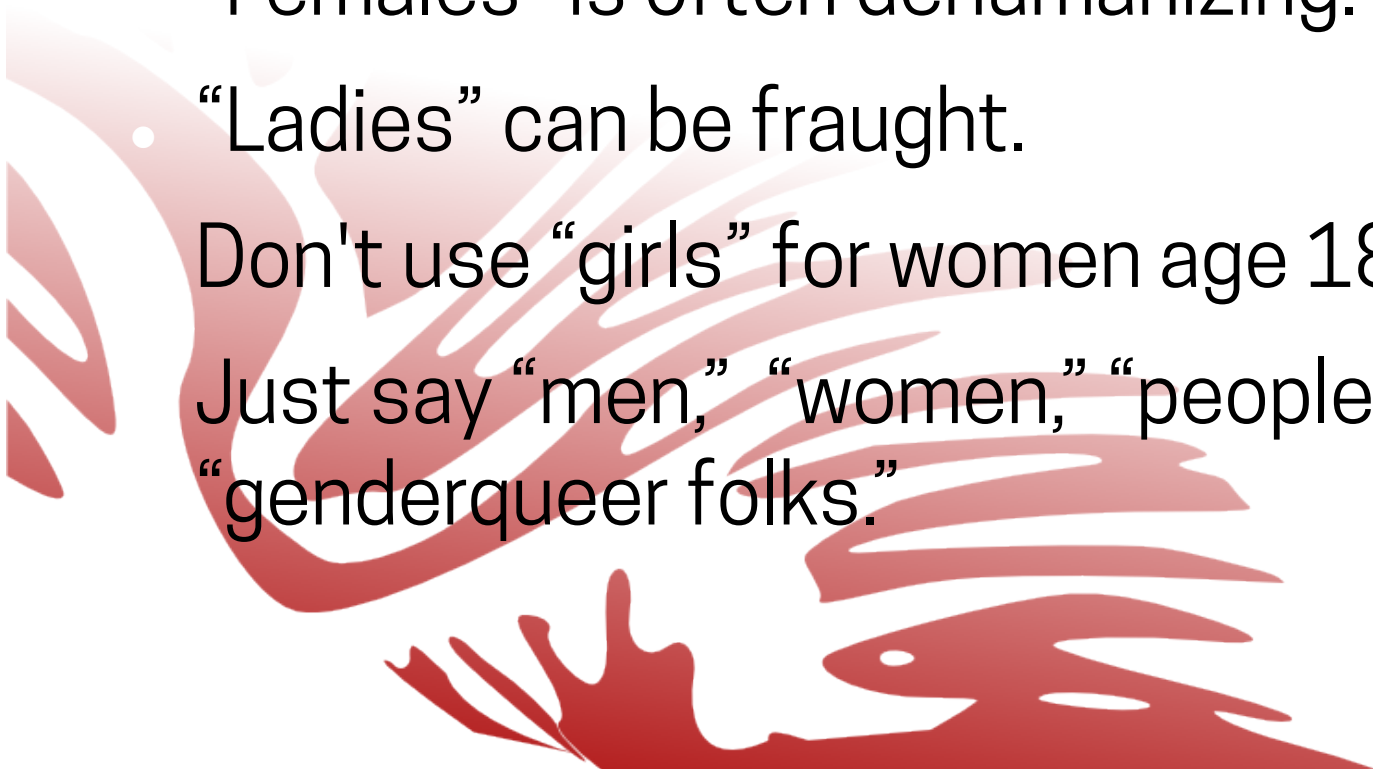
Body parts are not people, and body parts don't define gender. (i.e. – don't say “people with penises” when you mean “men.”)

“Females” is often dehumanizing.

- “Ladies” can be fraught.

Don't use “girls” for women age 18 & up.

Just say “men,” “women,” “people” and/or “genderqueer folks.”

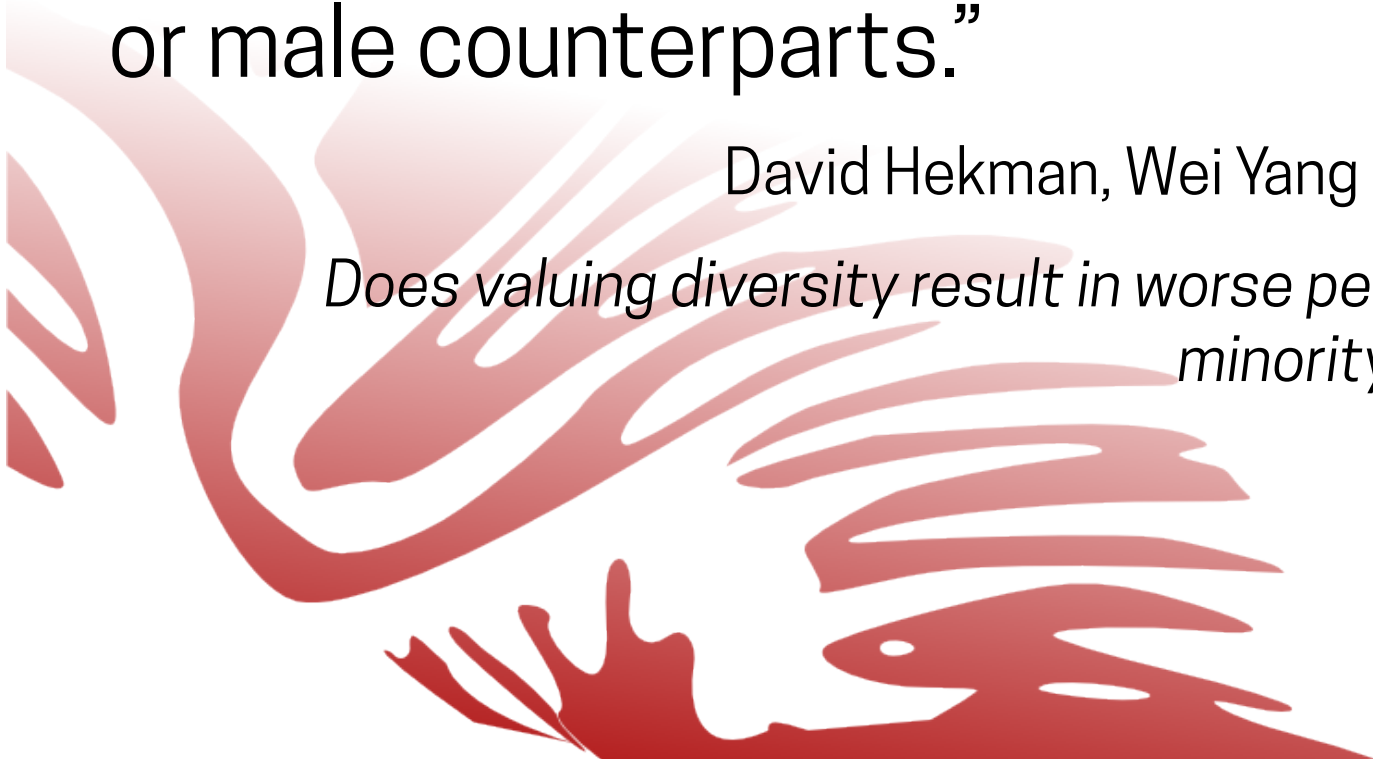


why should allies speak up?

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

David Hekman, Wei Yang & Maw Der Foo, 2014

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



inclusive spaces

Small changes to our language and our framing can make everyone feel more included and valued.

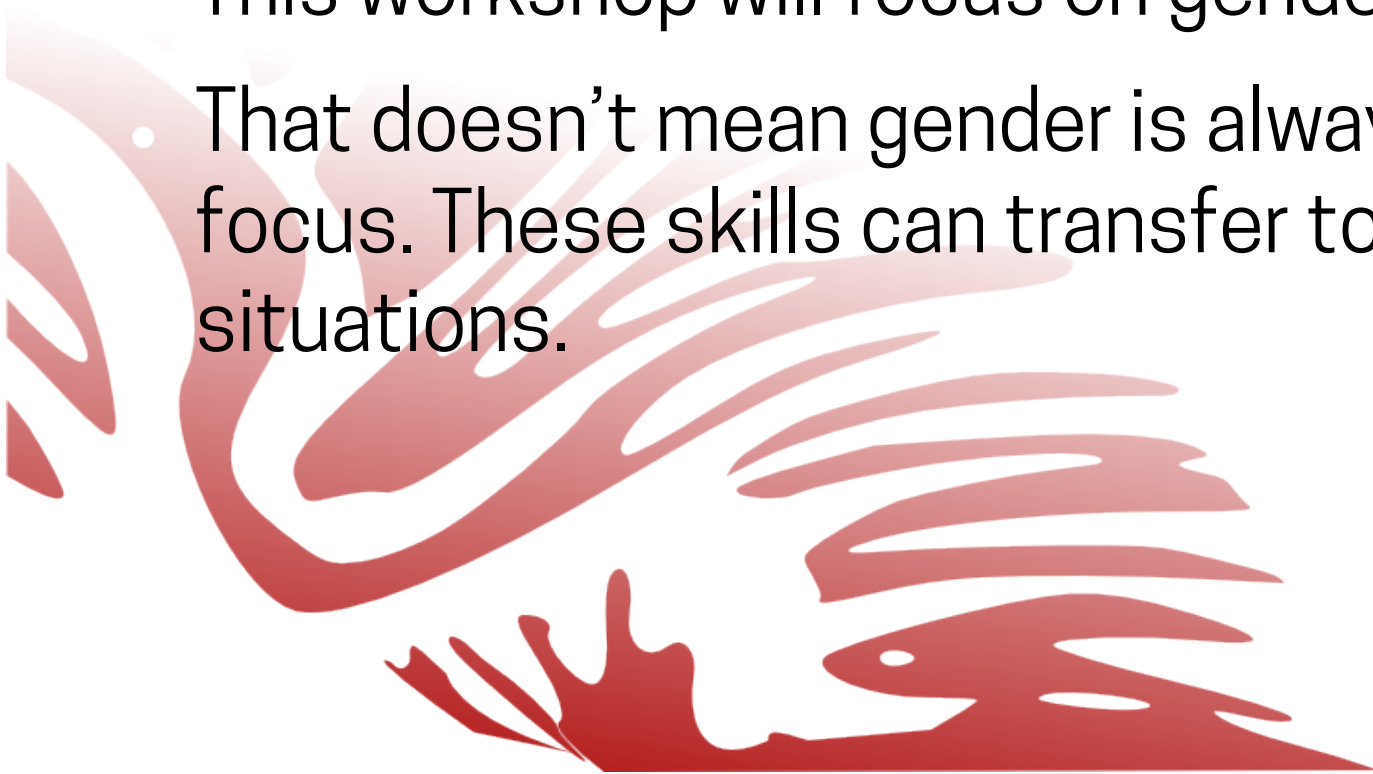


other axes of marginalization

We should also seek to rid our language and spaces of other forms of discrimination, including racism, homophobia, and ableism.

This workshop will focus on gender.

- That doesn't mean gender is always the best focus. These skills can transfer to other situations.



help us create a safer learning space

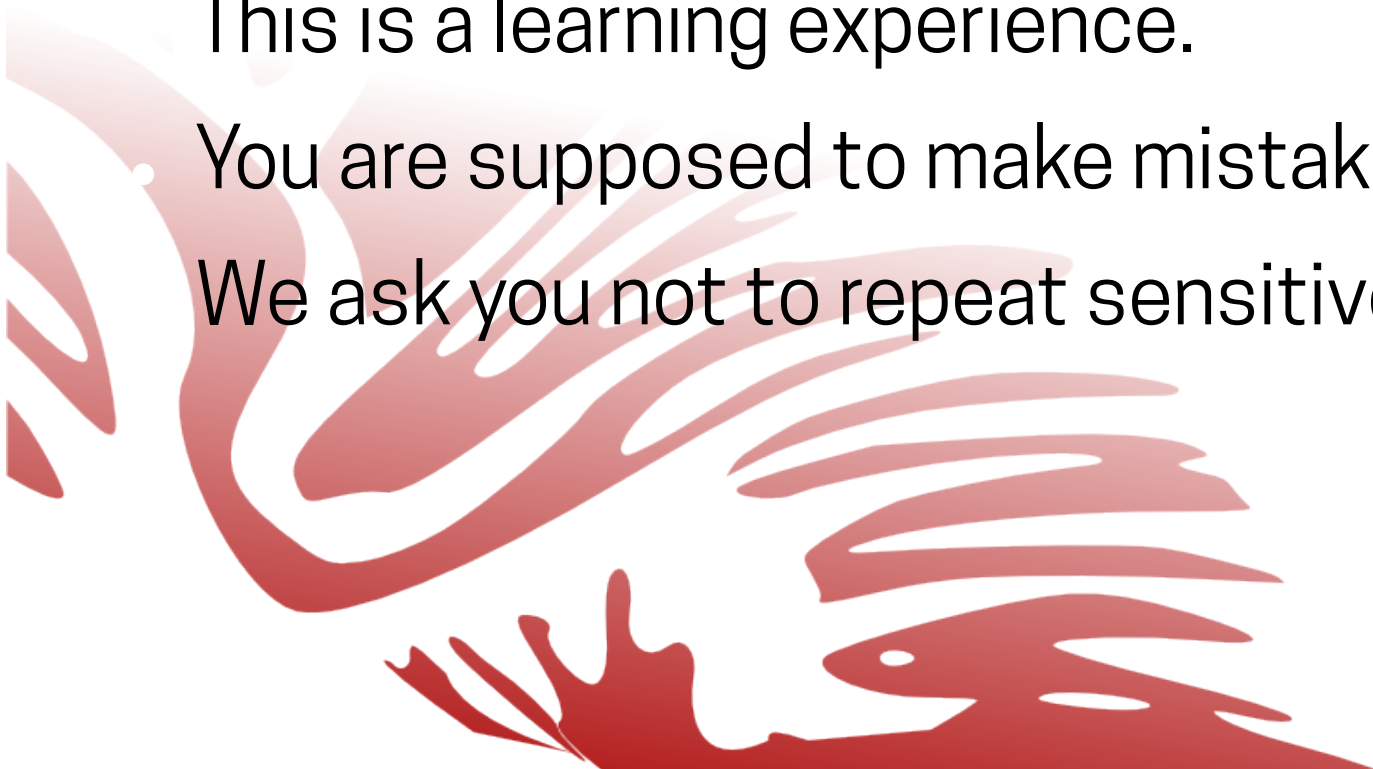
If you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to leave.

This workshop is not recorded.

This is a learning experience.

- You are supposed to make mistakes.

We ask you not to repeat sensitive things.



what if I make a mistake?

Apologize and move on.

We'll talk about this a bit more later.



format of the remainder of this workshop

Review basic principles of responding

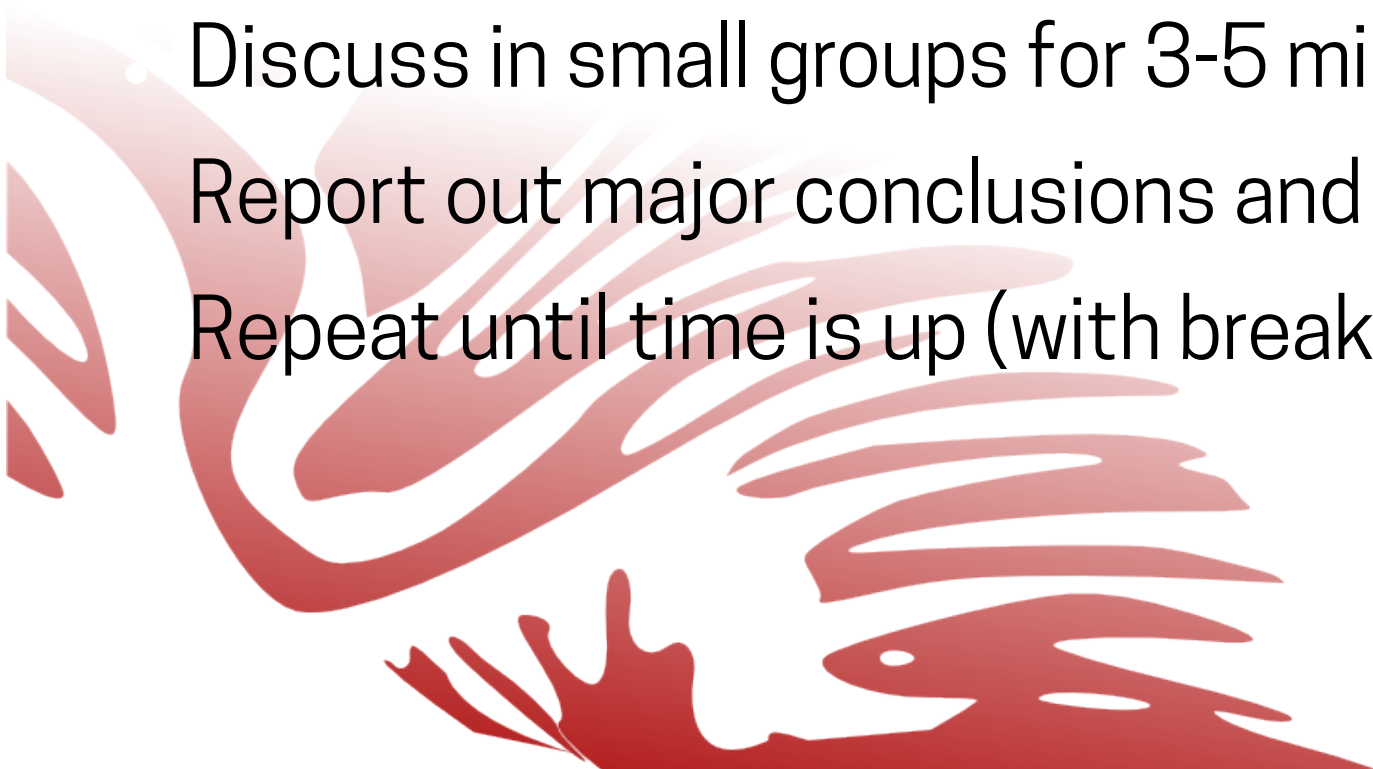
Form discussion groups of 4-6 people

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)



awwwwwkward...

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

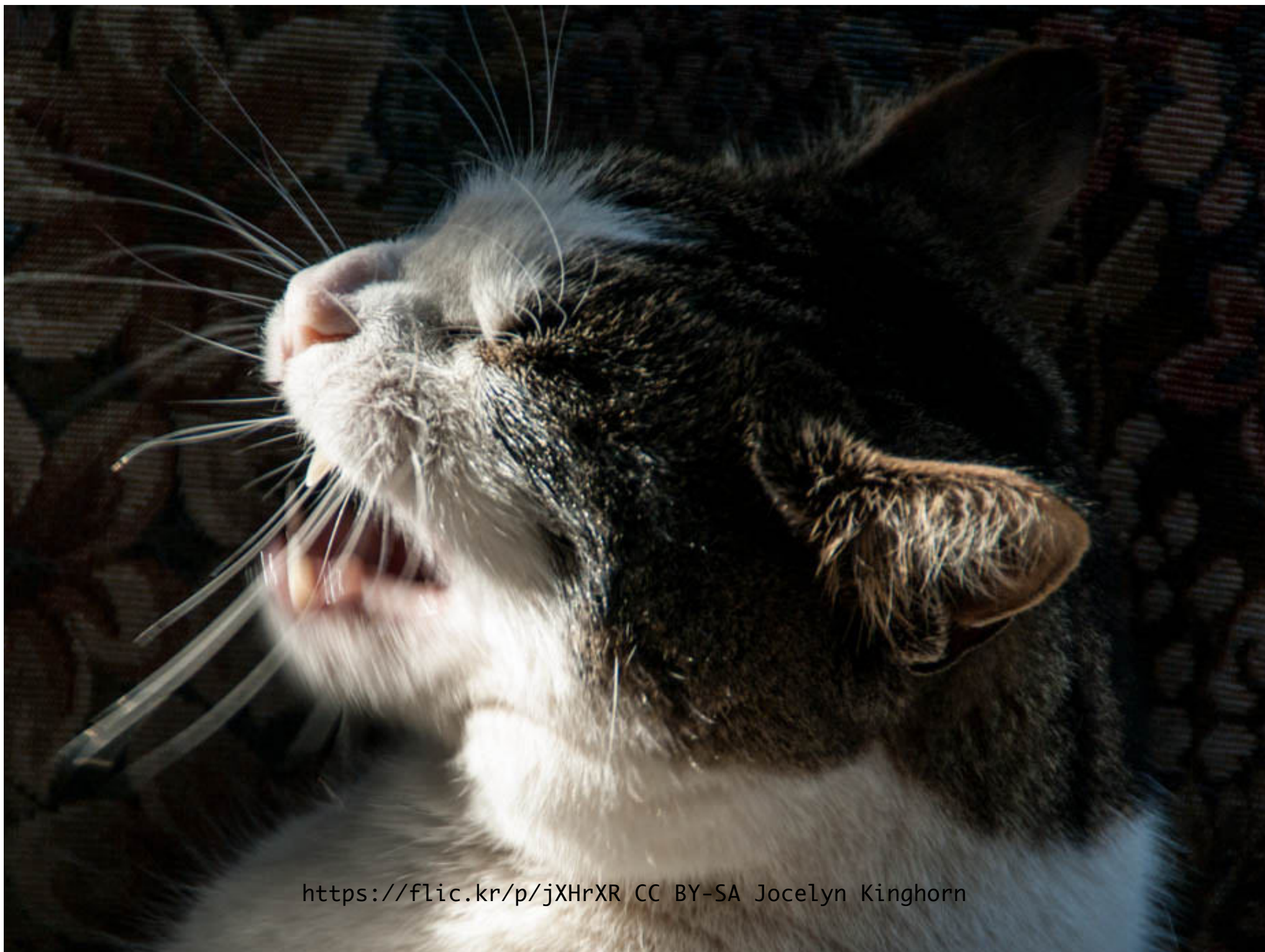




<https://flic.kr/p/4c8Sax> CC-BY Andrew Kuznetzov



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



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

basic principles for responding

Be short, simple, firm.

Humor usually backfires, avoid it.

Pick your battles.

- Play for the audience

Practice simple responses.



basic principles for responding

Most importantly:

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

If possible, pick people you don't know as well

- At the break, please volunteer to change groups



prepping for group discussion

If you don't know one another, take a minute to introduce yourselves to the rest of your group

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

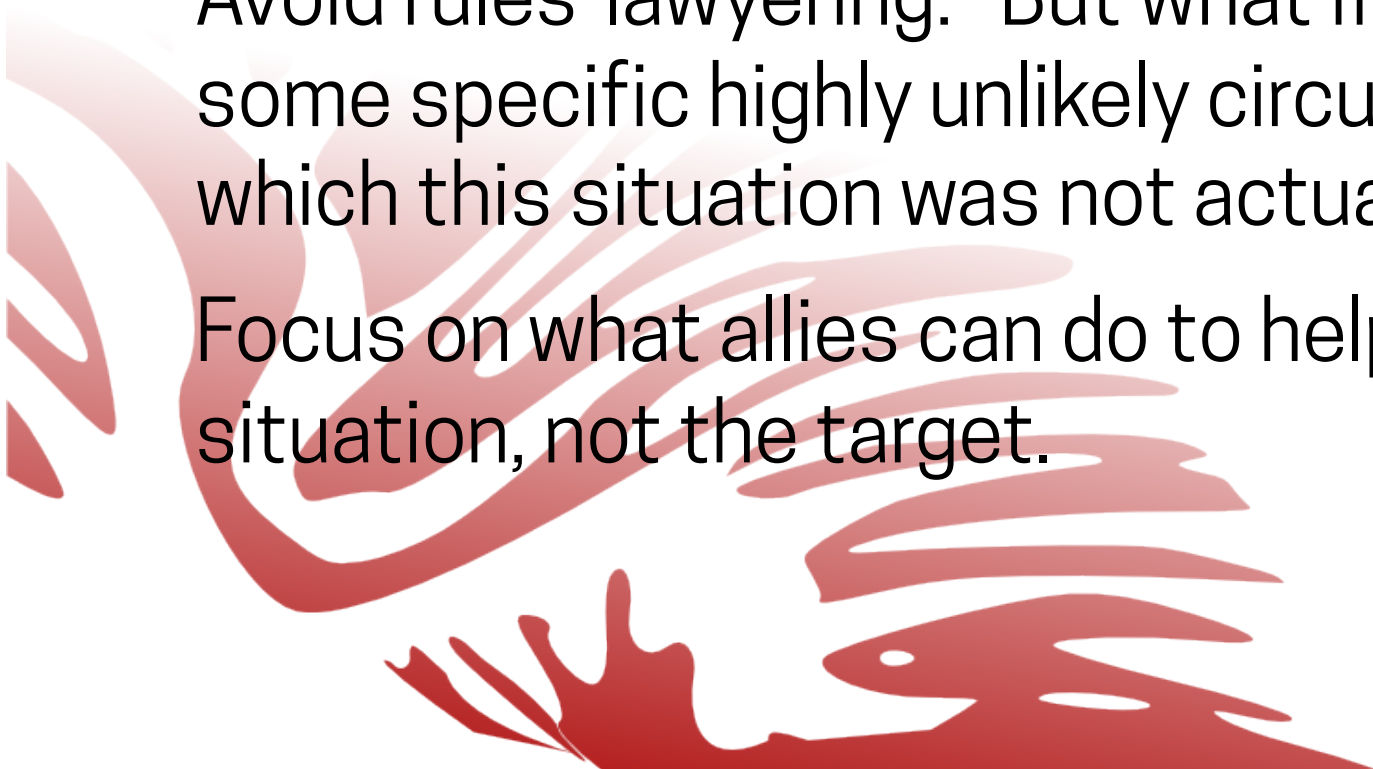


a few more tips for group discussion

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 allies can do to help in this situation, not the target.



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.



things to notice

Who is speaking most in your group?

Is someone having difficulty being heard?

Are there patterns related to gender?

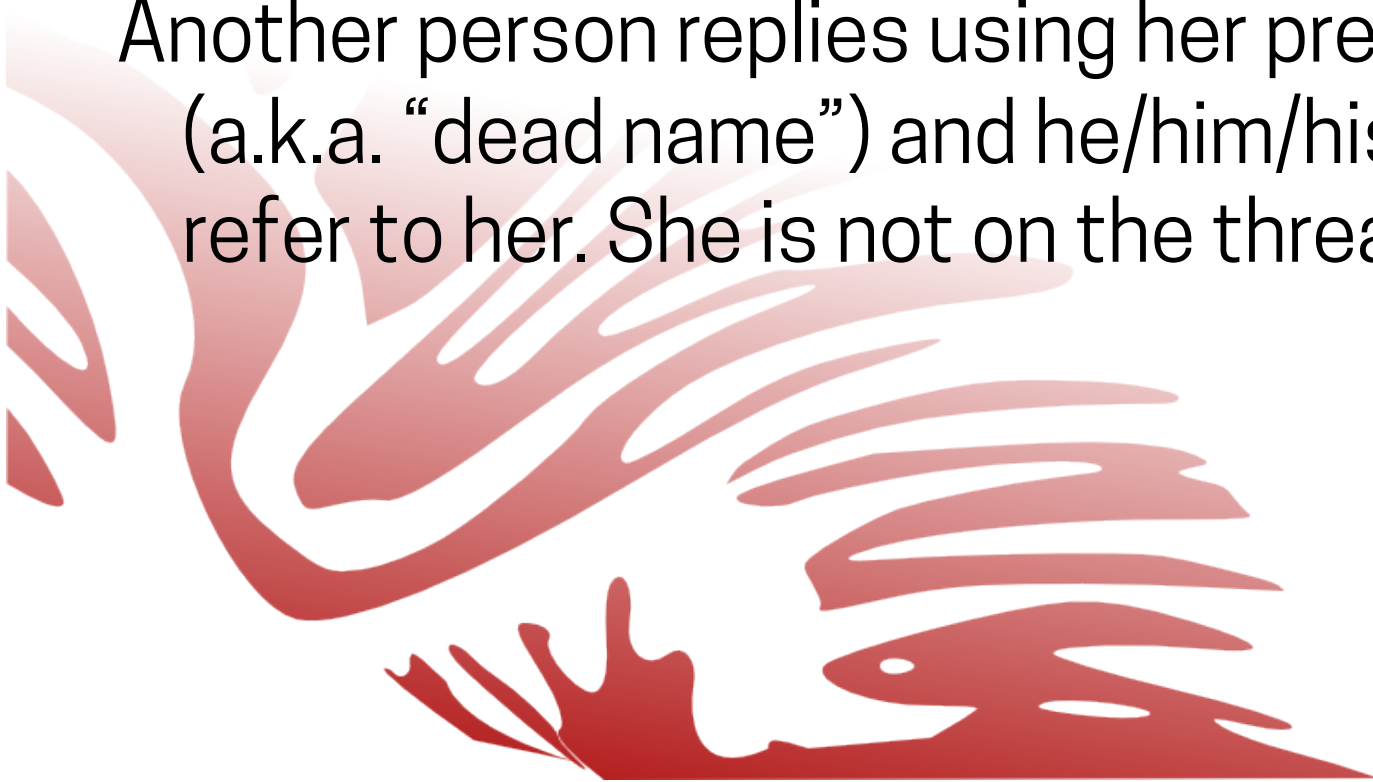
- How do these discussions compare to ones you have in other contexts?



misgendering and deadnames

In an email thread, you refer to a trans woman coworker 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. She is not on the thread.

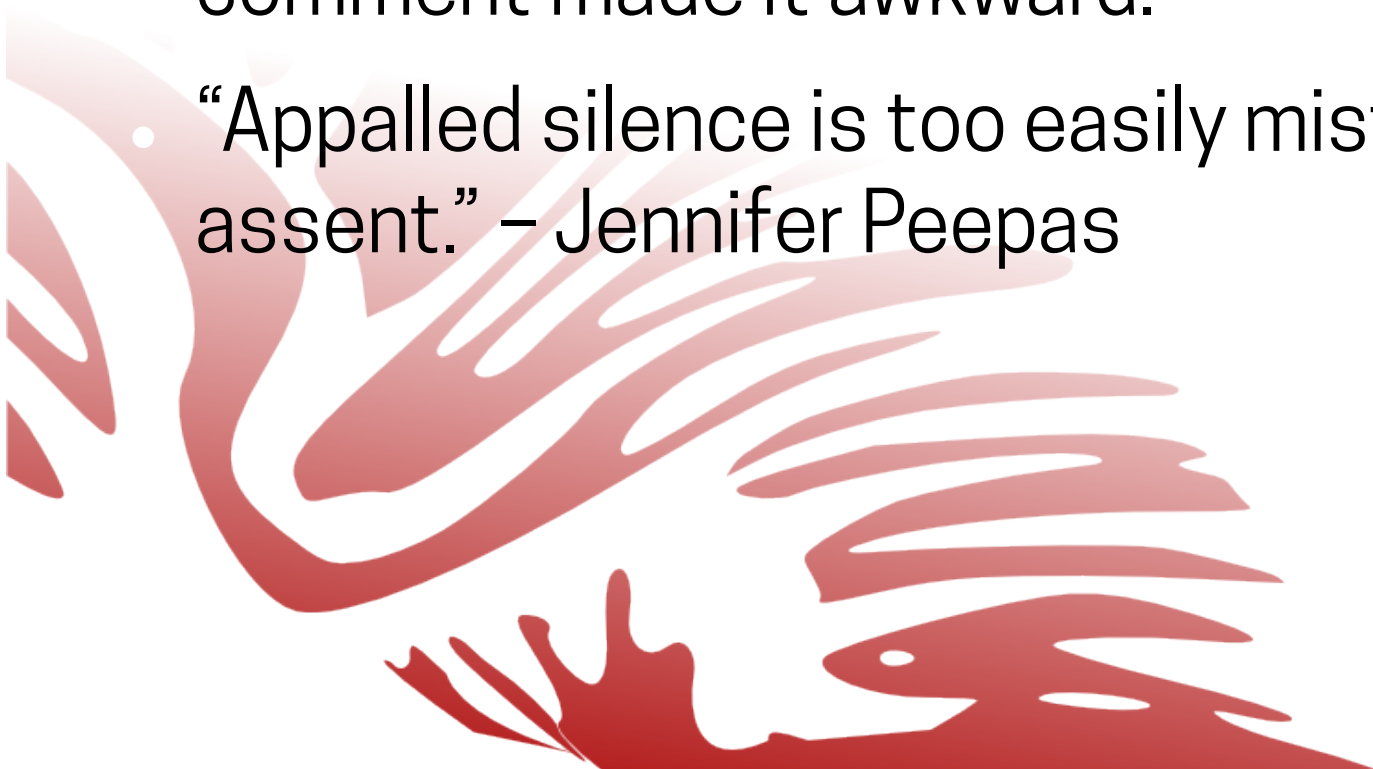


who makes it awkward?

Responders often worry about "making it awkward."

Pro-tip: the person who made the problematic comment made it awkward.

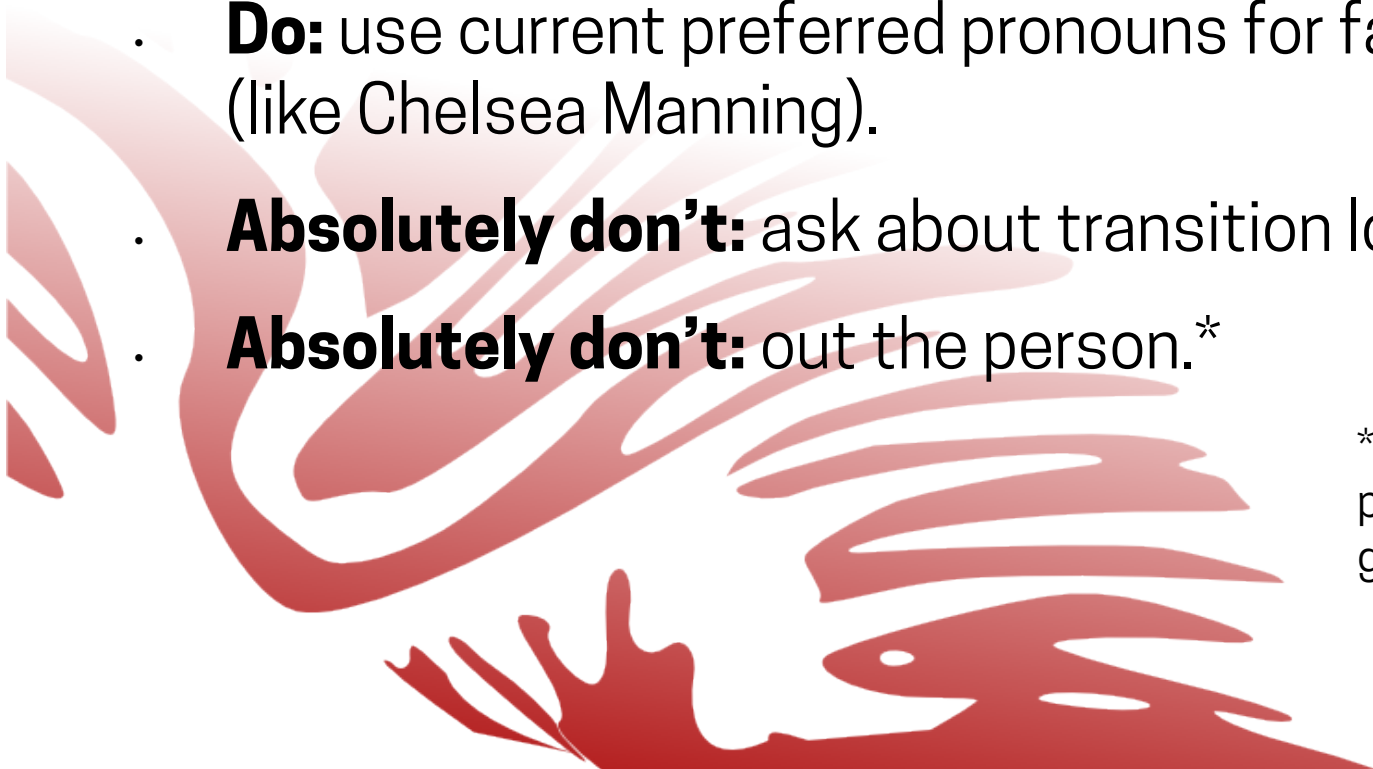
- "Appalled silence is too easily mistaken for assent." – Jennifer Peepas



pronoun and transition dos and don'ts

- **Do:** check in if you're unsure about pronoun use or how to navigate a transition. To be clear, a person's personal wishes override this list or any other advice.
- **Do:** assume retroactivity unless told otherwise.
- **Do:** use current preferred pronouns for famous trans people (like Chelsea Manning).
- **Absolutely don't:** ask about transition logistics or surgery.
- **Absolutely don't:** out the person.*

*Unless they're already publically out or you've been given express permission.



Break Time



Remember: Have A Gatekeeper and
Someone to Report Back



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.

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

Understanding sexism as intersectional

You are part of a yearly performance review process. Several black women's reviews note that they were too career-oriented or too focused on personally getting ahead. None of the other performance reviews have similar critiques.



Understanding sexism as intersectional

Studies have suggested that:

“Black women can use a direct, assertive style, but not to act in ambitious, self-promoting, or power-seeking ways. Black women have license to be assertive in achieving the goals of the group—but not in seeking power for themselves.”

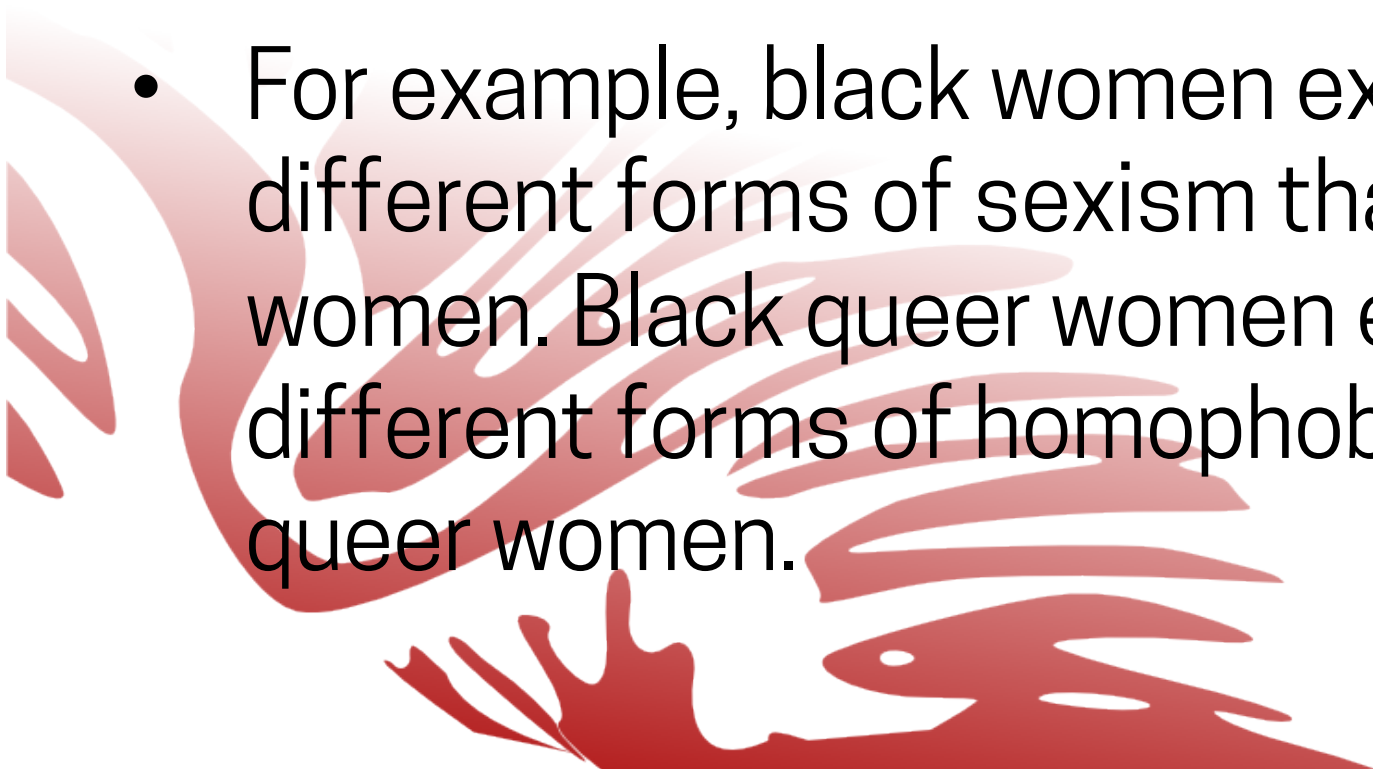
Williams, Joan C.; Dempsey, Rachel (2014-01-17). What Works for Women at Work: Four Patterns Working Women Need to Know (p. 234).



Understanding sexism as intersectional

“intersectionality” –

- most simply: forms of oppression don't act independently of each other
- For example, black women experience different forms of sexism than white women. Black queer women experience different forms of homophobia than Asian queer women.



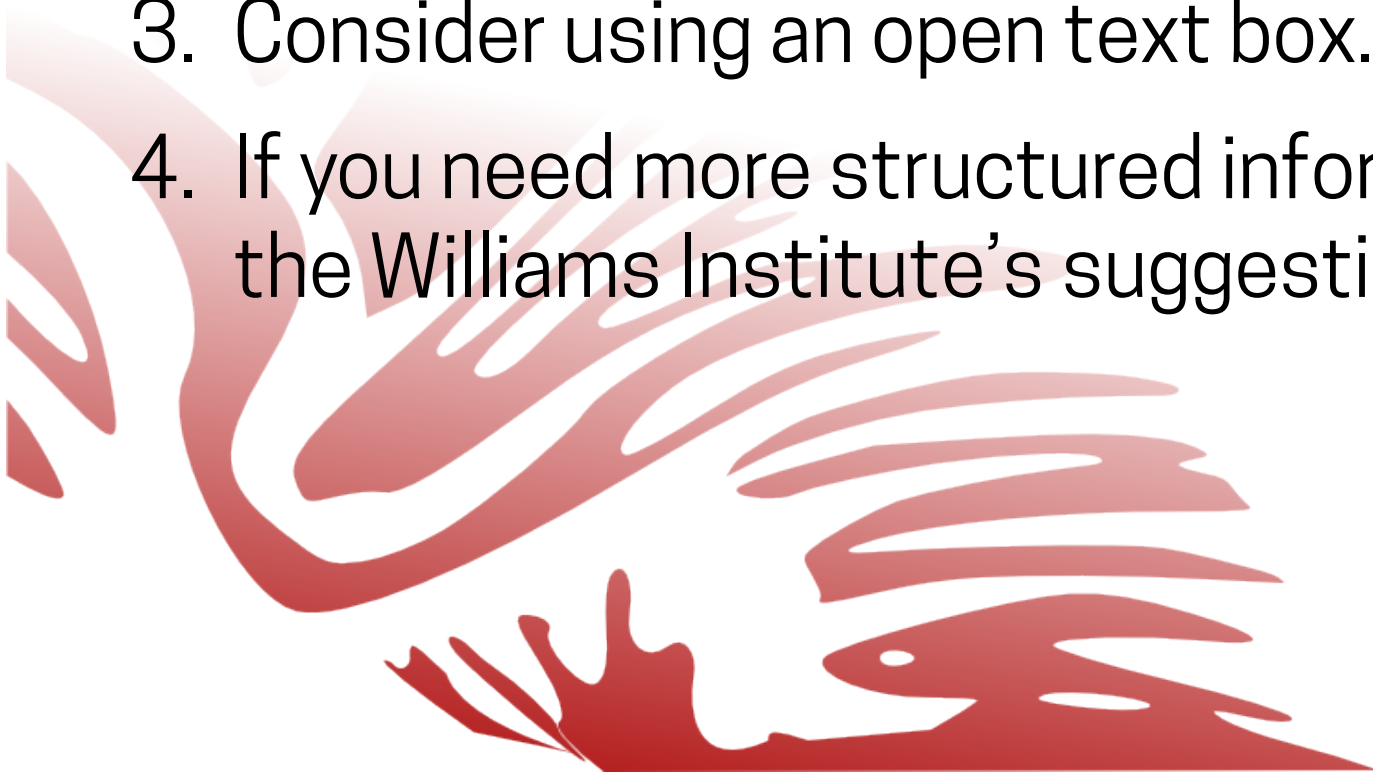
the gender binary

An annual survey that your work is administering to the public only has two options for gender: male and female.



pro-tips for gathering gender info

1. Determine why gender information is important (if it is).
2. Explain what will be done with the information.
3. Consider using an open text box.
4. If you need more structured information, follow the Williams Institute's suggestions.



speaking up about casual sexism

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

(Alternate version: you are helping to organize a panel, and
realize all invited guests are male.)

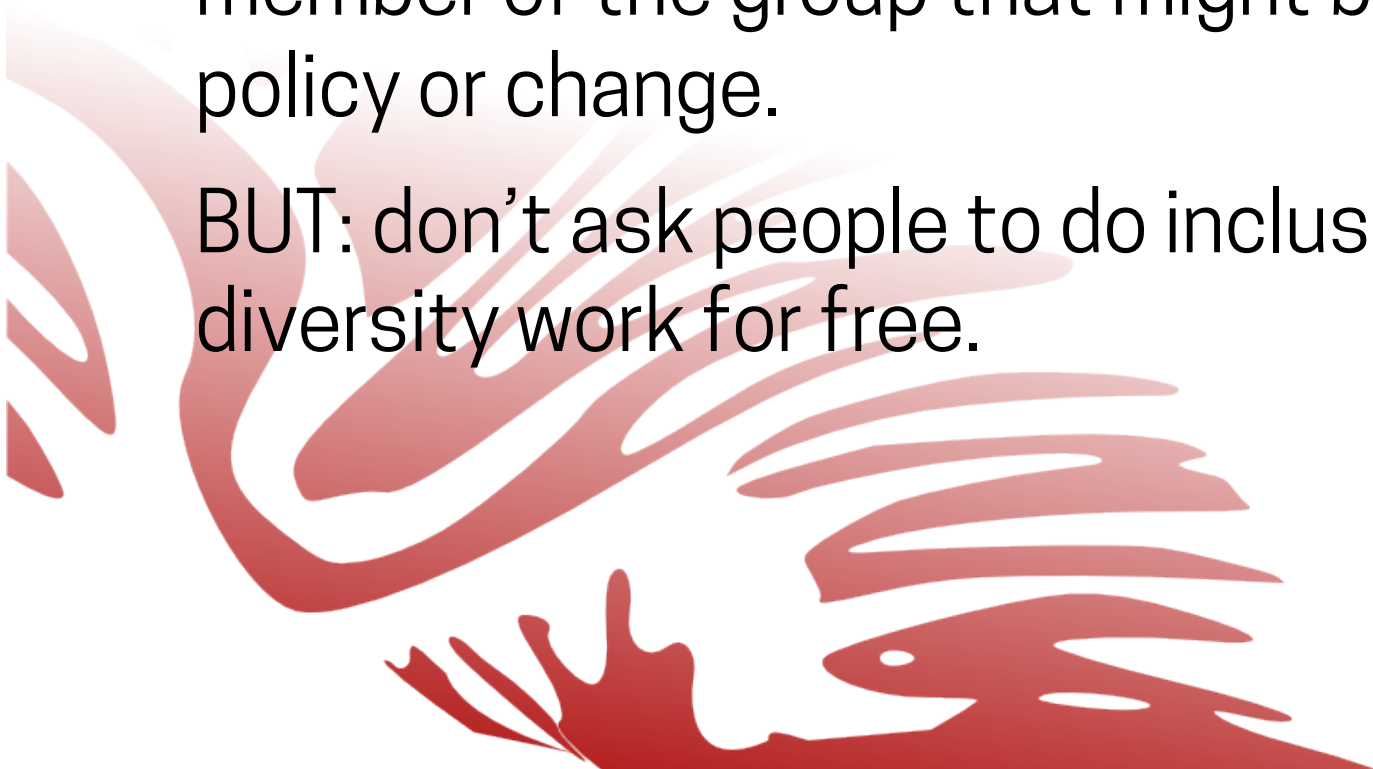


“nothing about us without us”

Being an ally does not mean you are entitled to speak for members of marginalized groups.

You being in the room is not a substitute for a member of the group that might be affected by a policy or change.

BUT: don't ask people to do inclusion and diversity work for free.



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.



educating yourself

Listen to the person.

Validate and apologize. (Apologies cost nothing.)

Don't take it personally.

- Look into how to do better.

If responding on behalf of an organization, emphasize concrete steps taken.



this workshop is not a certification

Don't be Kool Aid Man.

Ally is a thing you do (sometimes), not a thing you are.

We will all continue to make mistakes; **what counts is how you react.**



some more tips

Don't expect praise and credit for using inclusive language, or not being sexist or transphobic.

Assume members of marginalized groups have more knowledge and wait for invitation to help or explain.

Consume media by trans people and women, especially trans people and women of color.



resources

Julie Pagano's "So You Want to Be An Ally"

<http://juliepagano.com/blog/2014/05/10/so-you-want-to-be-an-ally/>

GLAAD's "Tips for Allies of Transgender People"

<http://www.glaad.org/transgender/allies>

Mia McKenzie's "The Difference Between Real Solidarity and Ally Theater"

<http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2015/11/the-difference-between-real-solidarity-and-ally-theatre/>



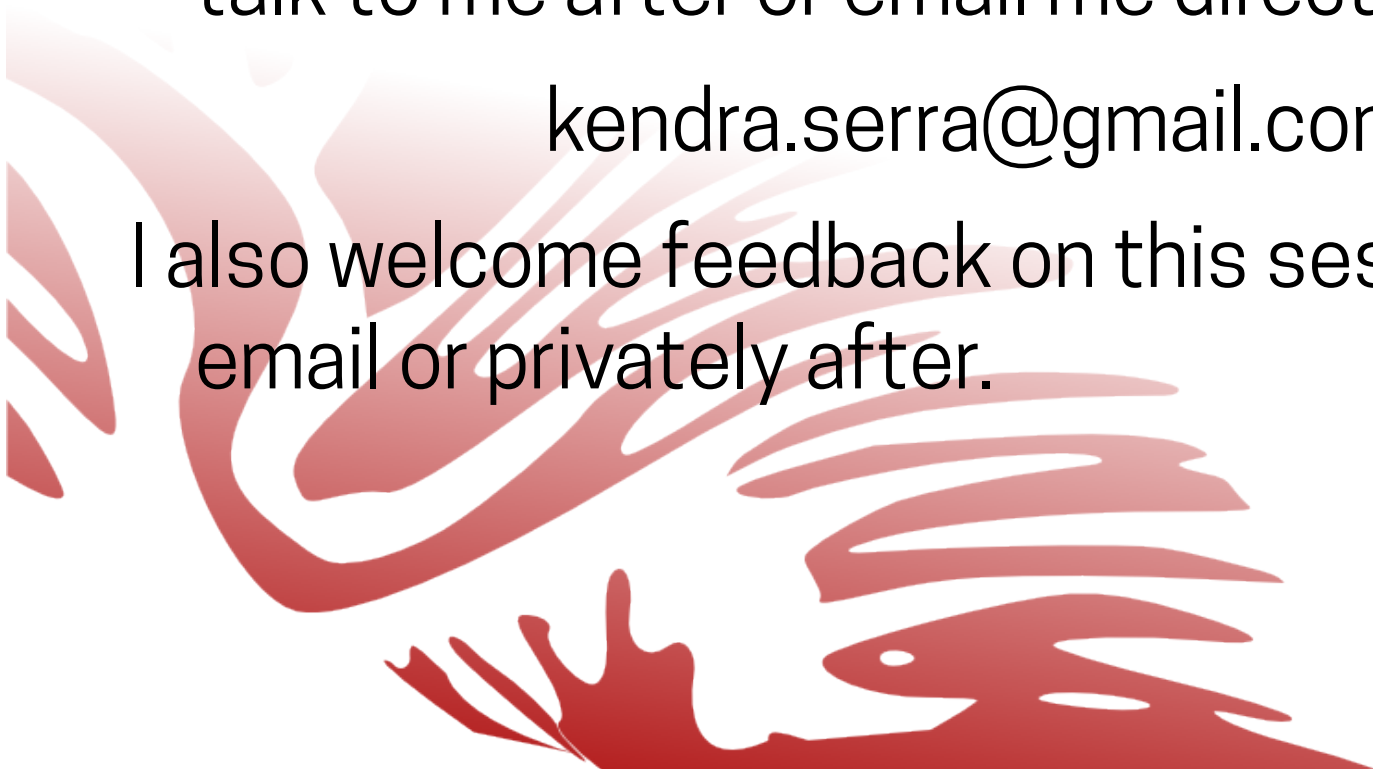
questions and feedback

If you have questions that you feel are group appropriate, I'm happy to take them now.

If you have questions you'd prefer to ask privately, talk to me after or email me directly at:

kendra.serra@gmail.com.

I also welcome feedback on this session to my email or privately after.



speaking up about casual sexism

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and so is everyone else on the panel.

(Alternate version: you are helping to organize a panel, and
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the gender binary

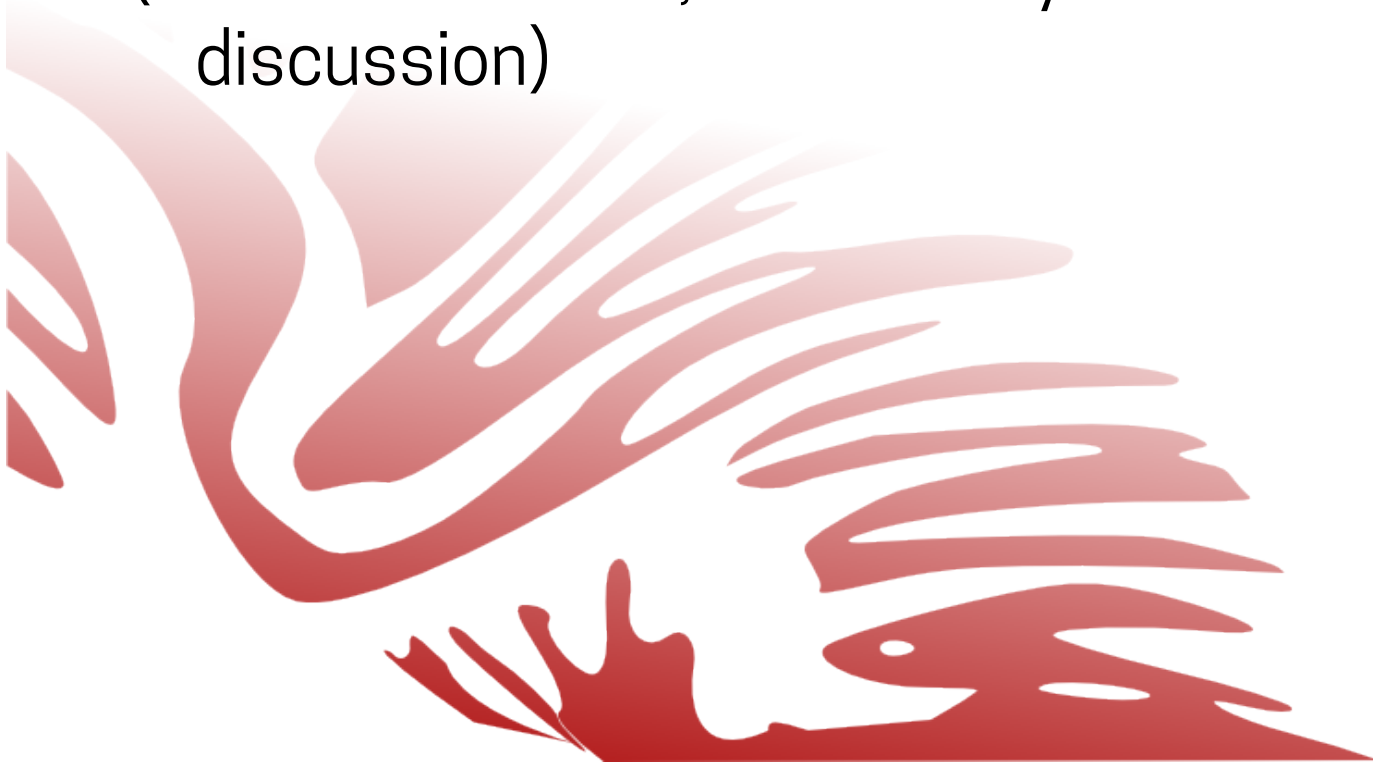
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intervening in harassment of women

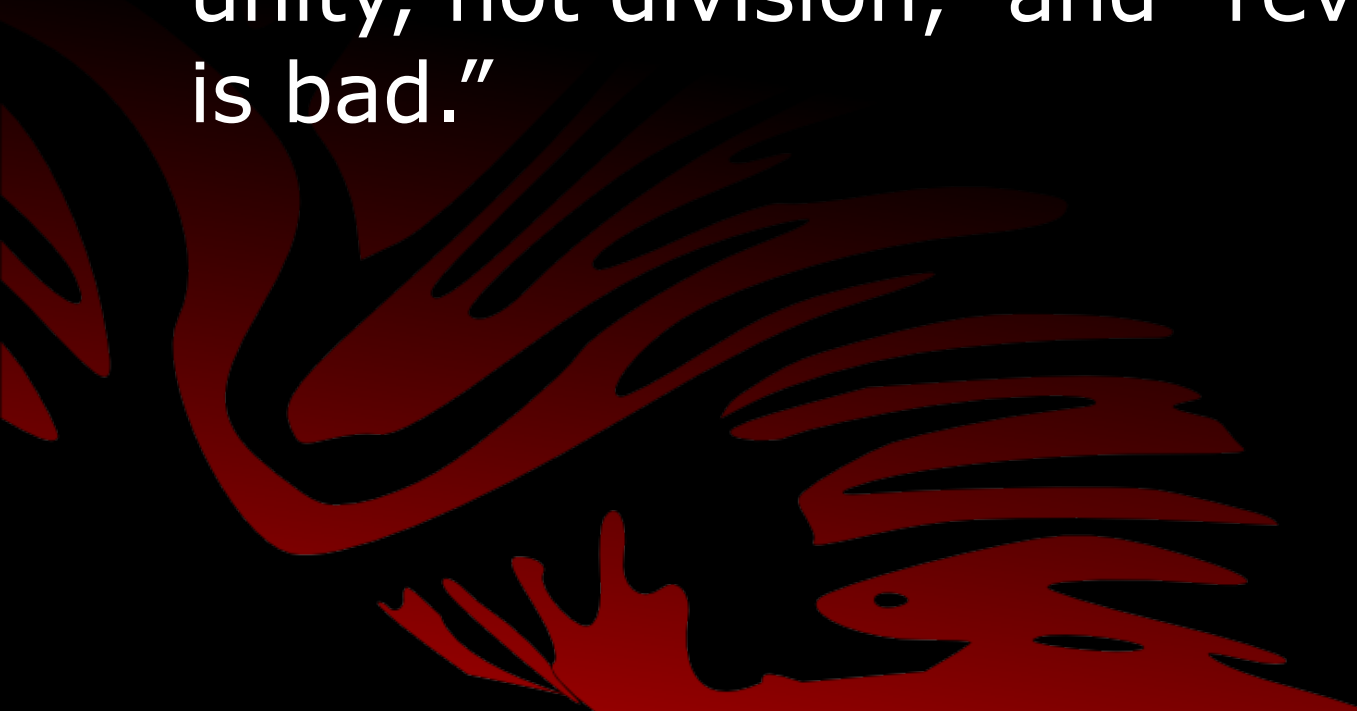
You are in an IRC channel (chat room) when someone says to a person they perceive as female: “Are you single?”

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



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.”

An abstract graphic in the bottom-left corner of the slide. It features bold, flowing red shapes against a black background, resembling stylized flames or a dynamic, organic form. The red shapes have a hand-drawn, expressive quality, with some areas appearing as solid red and others as outlines or gradients.



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Learn more

<http://get>

[http://geektominism.](http://geektominism)

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>

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.

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.



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.)

An abstract graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of flowing, organic shapes in a dark red color against a black background, resembling a stylized flame or a splash of liquid.

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.)

An abstract graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of flowing, organic shapes in a dark red or maroon color against the black background. The shapes resemble stylized waves or perhaps a close-up of a flower or leaf, creating a sense of movement and depth.

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.”


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Intervening in harassment of women

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perceive as female: "Are you single?"

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

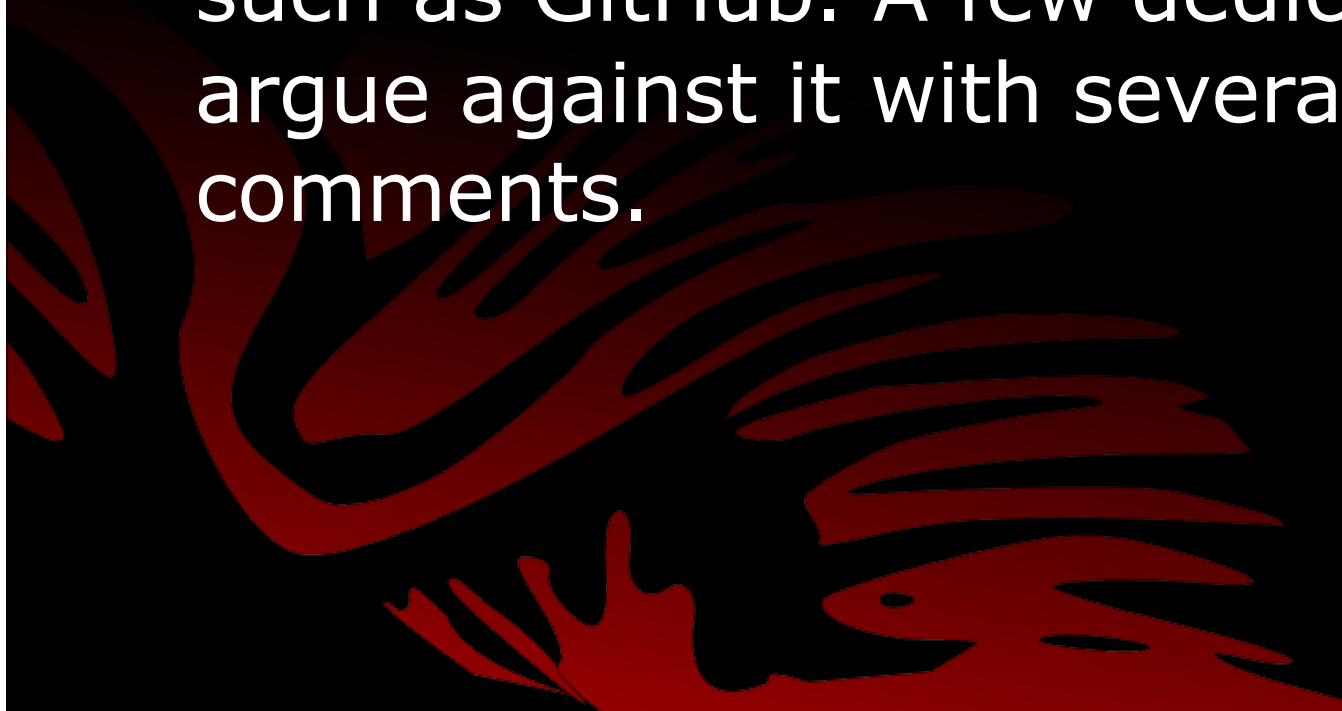
An abstract graphic in the bottom-left corner of the slide. It features bold, dark red, brush-stroke-like shapes against a black background. The shapes are fluid and organic, resembling a stylized flame, a wing, or a splash of paint. The red color is a deep, slightly dark shade, and the black background is a solid, dark charcoal.

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

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.

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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


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.

An abstract graphic in the bottom-left corner of the slide. It features bold, dark red, brush-stroke-like shapes against a black background. The shapes are fluid and organic, resembling a stylized flame or a splash of paint. One large shape curves upwards and to the right, while another smaller shape is positioned below it, pointing towards the bottom-left corner.

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."

An abstract graphic in the bottom left corner of the slide. It features bold, dark red, brush-stroke-like shapes against a black background. The shapes are fluid and organic, resembling a stylized flame or a splash of paint. They extend from the left edge towards the center of the slide.

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.



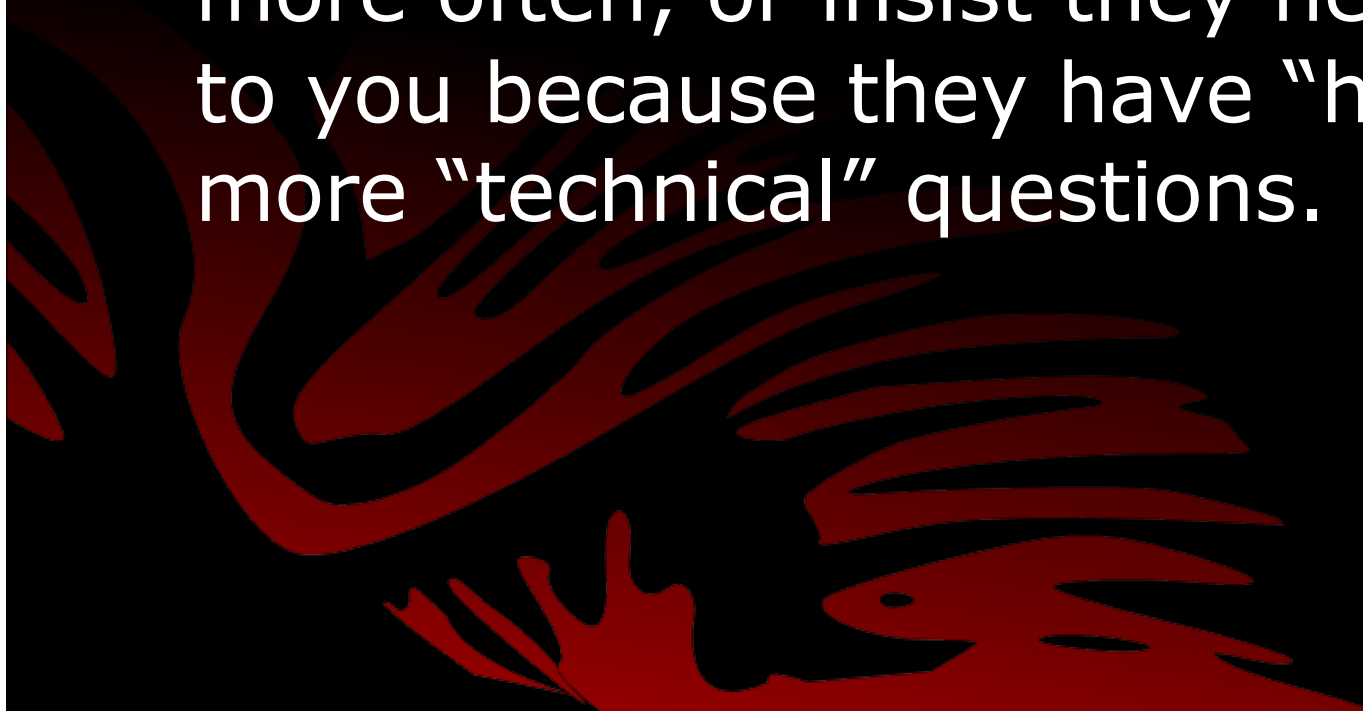
Educating yourself

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.



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.

An abstract graphic design in the bottom left corner of the slide. It features bold, flowing red shapes against a black background, resembling stylized flames or a dynamic, organic form. The red shapes have a gradient, with some areas being a darker maroon and others a brighter red.


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

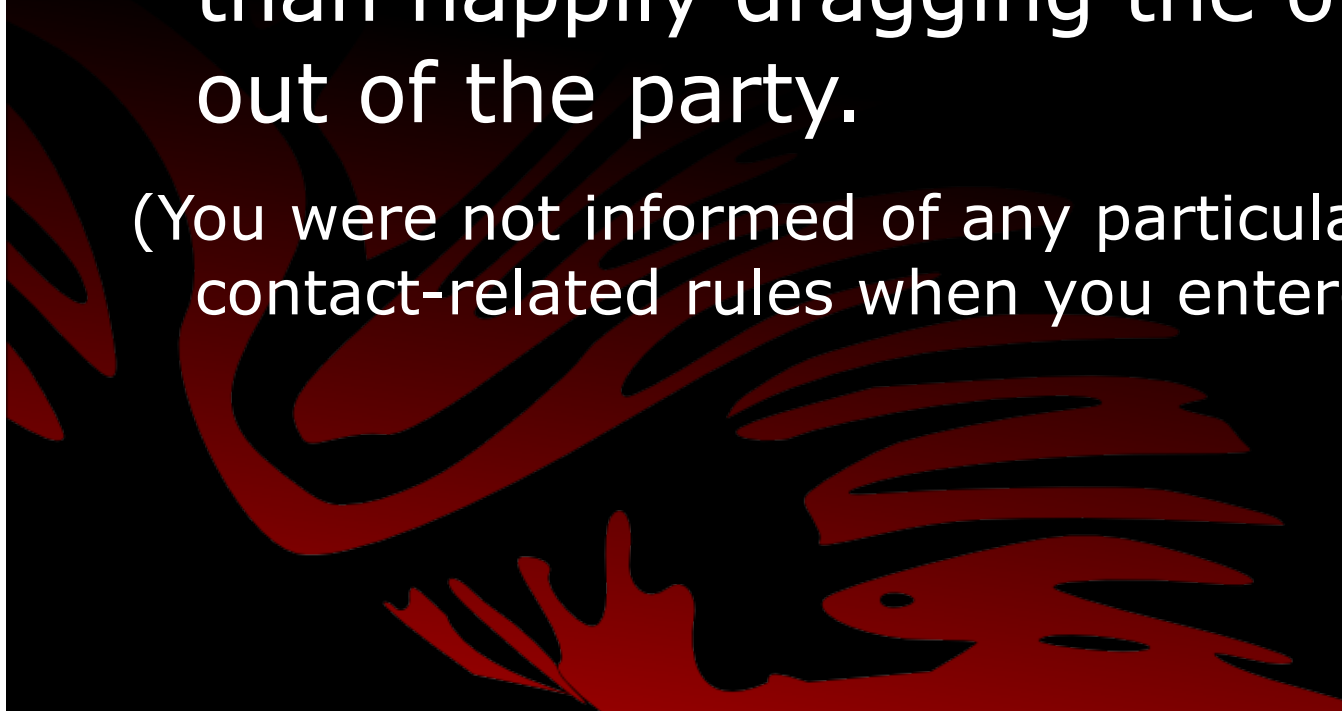
You are at event. Someone is wearing a shirt covered in pictures of women in sexy poses.



Intervening in harassment of women

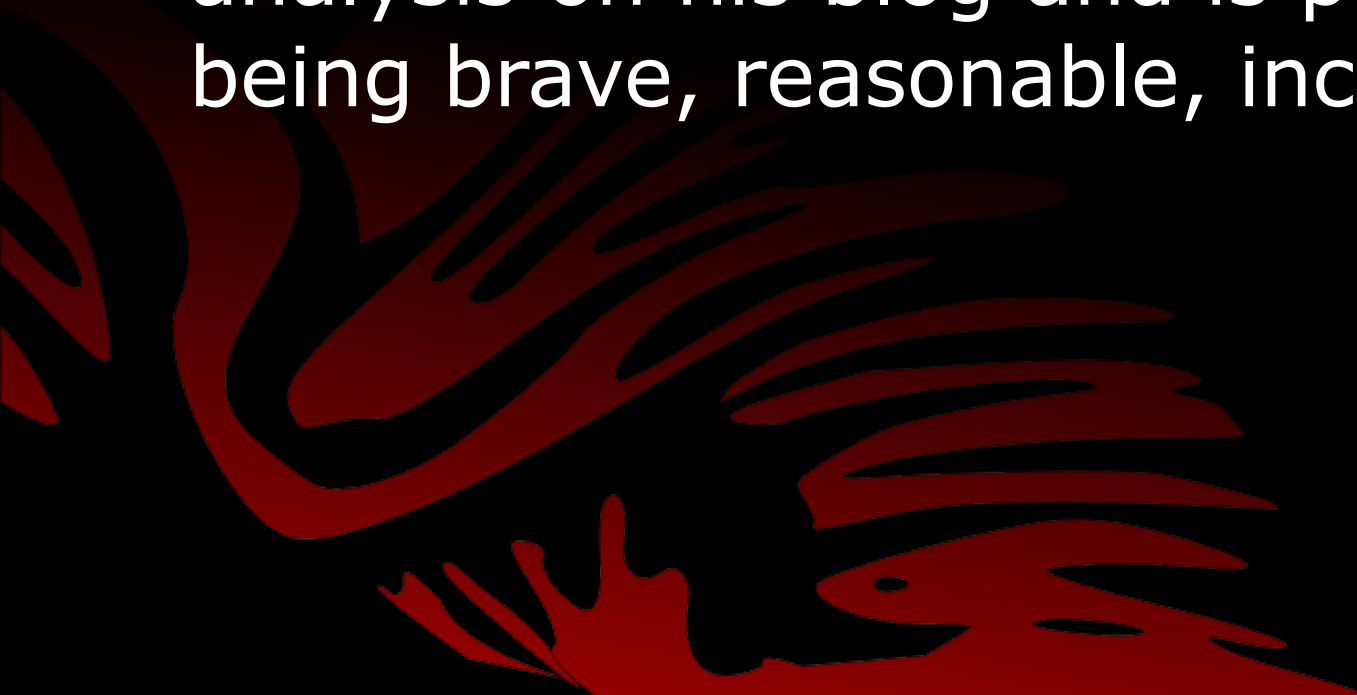
You're at a party at a convention, and out of the corner of your eye, you see someone grab a woman's butt. She responds in a way that is something other than happily dragging the other person out of the party.

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

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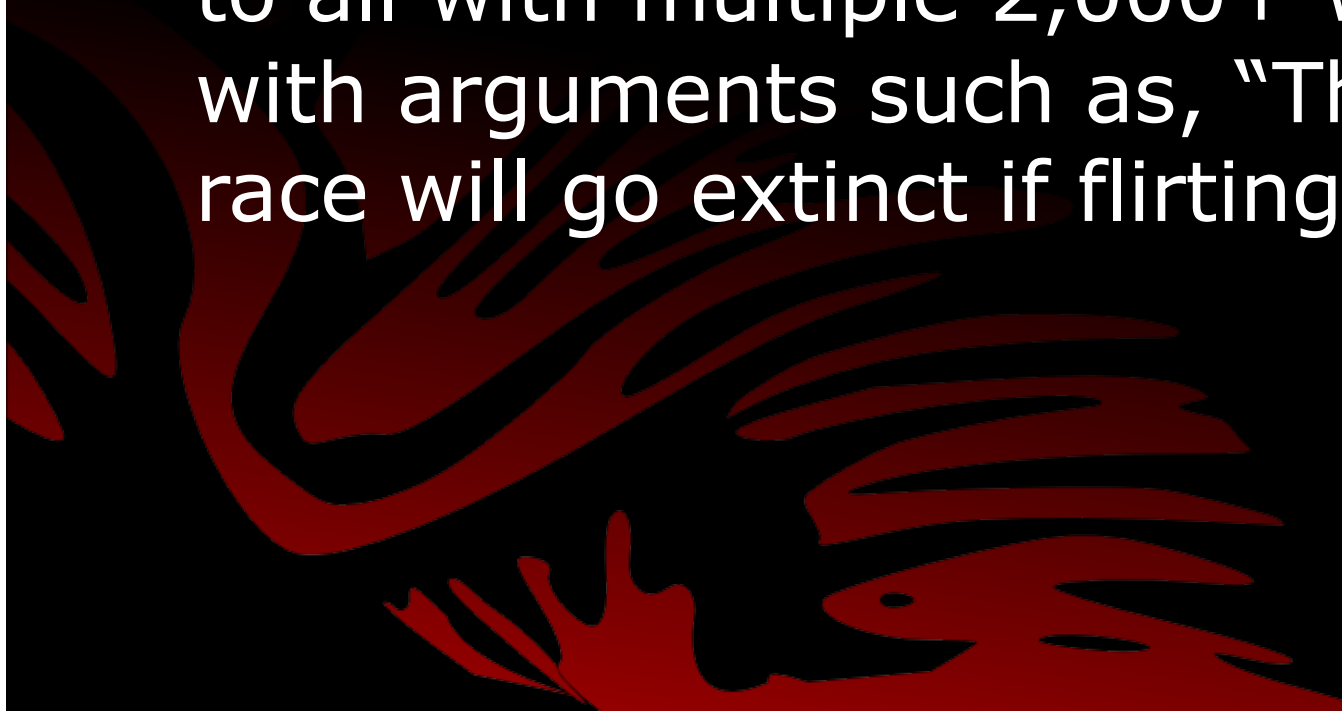
Speaking up about casual sexism

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.

An abstract graphic in the bottom-left corner of the slide. It features bold, dark red, brush-stroke-like shapes against a black background. The shapes are fluid and expressive, resembling a stylized flame or a dynamic, swirling motion. The red color is a deep, slightly dark shade, contrasting sharply with the black background.

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."

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