

To: The GNOME Foundation
Neil McGovern: Executive Director
Rosanna Yuen: Director of Operations
the GNOME Foundation Staff
Anyone Else This May Concern

Date June 22, 2020

Re: Code of Conduct

First I would like to express and acknowledge the great contributions that the GNOME Foundation has made to the Free and Open Source Software Communities and I am personally grateful for the work the development team. I'm a big fan of the GNOME Desktop Environment as well and have used it since GNOME 2, and I like the workflow and extensible features that GNOME 3 offers. I have also supported your work by financial contributions, in the past patent lawsuit, and by promoting the GNOME Desktop Environment on my YouTube Channel Penguin Revolution.

I'm writing this letter to express my concern for the Code of Conduct that the GNOME Foundation has chosen adopt and the effect it could have on the Linux and the Free and Open Source Software communities^[1]. Also you should know that his letter is an open letter and will be publicly available on the internet. I'm also sending a copy to members of the GNOME Foundation Staff.

I understand that there is a need for a Code of Conduct for Communities as they provide rules for members to follow and a structured procedure to deal with those who violate that Code. This applies to online communities as well as community events and conventions. Establishing rules and a procedures to enforce them ensures that conversations remain productive and that events remain orderly. I believe these are necessary in today's world and I don't have a problem with the adoption of a Code of Conduct and I also believe you have good intentions on adopting your Code of Conduct.

I understand that the foundation adopted a Code of Conduct to prevent racism, sexism, bigotry, and other hateful philosophies and statements on community forums and events, at least that I believe this was the Foundation's intention. I'm of the belief that all men are created equal and that discrimination and hate on the basis of race, sex, color, Sexual orientation, etc are wrong and I believe most reasonable people would agree with me on this stance. However I find one part of your Code of Conduct^[1] to be problematic:

“The GNOME community prioritizes marginalized people's safety over privileged people's comfort. The committee will not act on complaints regarding:

- "Reverse"-isms, including "reverse racism," "reverse sexism," and "cisphobia"
- Reasonable communication of boundaries, such as "leave me alone," "go away," or "I'm not discussing this with you."
- Criticizing racist, sexist, cissexist, or otherwise oppressive behavior or assumptions
- Communicating boundaries or criticizing oppressive behavior in a "tone" you don't find congenial”^[1]

The problem I see with this statement is when the foundation states that it will not act on complaints on “reverse-isms” such as “reverse racism” ect. Take a look of the definition “Reverse Racism” which is, “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism on the basis of race directed against a member of a dominant or privileged racial group.” One of the major problems with this statement is which races are “privileged”, now based on the current political climate the “privilege” you are referring to is “white privilege”. So stating that your not going to respond to complaints of “reverse racism” is a nice polite way of stating your not going to respond to racist statements made about white people (or any other race you consider to be “privileged”), effectively allowing such statements to be posted on your community forums without consequences. There is no such thing as “reverse racism” there is only racism and racism against any race is morally wrong and should not be tolerated. The same can be said about “reverse sexism”, there is only sexism or any other -”ism that you consider to be a “reverse-ism”.

The Foundation has also made a statement in the “We Must All Speak Up” article^[2] that raises concern, it reads:

“Historically, free software has failed at engaging with Black, ethnic minorities, and marginalized communities. This is especially a problem when those who could benefit the most from a free and open software stack—to be in control of their own computing—are marginalized in their efforts to contribute towards that computing.”^[2]

However the statement doesn’t go into any detail how the Free Software communities are “failing to engage Black or ethnic minorities.” Seems how the GNOME Foundation is an international organization that influences people all around the world you have to keep in mind that certain racial groups are “ethnic minorities” depending on which country you reside in, for example white people may be the majority in the United States but they would be a minority in many African countries. But also you don’t go into detail on how people of different colors and races are being excluded from the Free Software communities. As I understand the concept of Free Software, it is a non-discriminatory concept as Free Software licenses do not restrict who has access the the software and source code. Just because projects don’t specifically seek out minority developers and participants doesn’t mean they are purposely being excluded from the concept or that they are being denied access to Free Software. As a matter of fact purposely denying anyone access to Free Software would violate the terms of any Free Software License. So I fail to understand what you were trying to accomplish by releasing the “We Must All Speak Up” statement^[2] seems how nobody is being excluded from Free Software.

I don’t like racial division or racism of any kind, allowing any type of discrimination on community is counter productive, as a matter of fact it has proven to cause problems in the past. The Linux Foundation learned of the problems this can cause when one tries pick and choose which philosophies they will allow when Charles Wood was disciplined for posting a picture of himself wearing a MAGA hat when someone was offended by the hat. This picture was taken on his own time, it posted to his personal Twitter account and he didn’t mention Free Software in the post. But because someone was offended by a hat Charles Wood was banned from participating in a convention for a photo that had nothing to do with The Linux Foundation.^[3]

Allowing statements that support concepts like reverse racism does nothing to solve racial prejudices, as a matter of fact it just feeds into racist ideas and encourages that kind of behavior. You cannot state that you are against prejudice and discrimination while allowing certain types of discrimination in your community or by turning a blind eye to certain types of discrimination. If you're against discrimination you have to be against all forms of discrimination or you're not against discrimination at all, if you're against racial prejudice then you have to be against racial prejudice of any kind or you're not against racism at all etc. If you are truly against discrimination, you should rethink your Code of conduct.

Due to the Code of Conduct and the concerning direction the GNOME Foundation is going down, I have made a decision about my future support of the GNOME Foundation. I have decided that I will no longer support the GNOME foundation, this includes any financial support. Also I have decided that I will no longer use the GNOME Desktop, I will be changing my desktop environment as soon as possible. I will also be encouraging people to do that same and to write letters of their own. If necessary I will encourage the free software communities to fork the GNOME desktop and develop it's fork interdependently from the foundation so they can enjoy the desktop without associating themselves with the GNOME Foundation. I will continue with this stance as long as you support discrimination of any kind, as discrimination of any kind is against my personal values. However I will rethink my position if you change your Code of Conduct to reject any form of hatred, bigotry and discrimination or retract your code of conduct all together.

Very Truly Yours

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REFERENCE PAGE

1. GNOME Code of Conduct: <https://wiki.gnome.org/Foundation/CodeOfConduct>
2. We Must All Speak Up: <https://www.gnome.org/news/2020/06/we-must-all-speak-up/>
3. Open Letter to the Linux Foundation:
<https://blog.cleancoder.com/uncle-bob/2019/11/08/OpenLetterLinuxFoundation.html>