



**This was sent to you by Venus Fest**

Dear attendees,

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for sharing this beautiful weekend with us and our return to a live festival. We hope you had fun, loved what you heard and saw, and we hope to see you soon at an upcoming show.

An additional message from our pals who recently launched the CURSES video game:

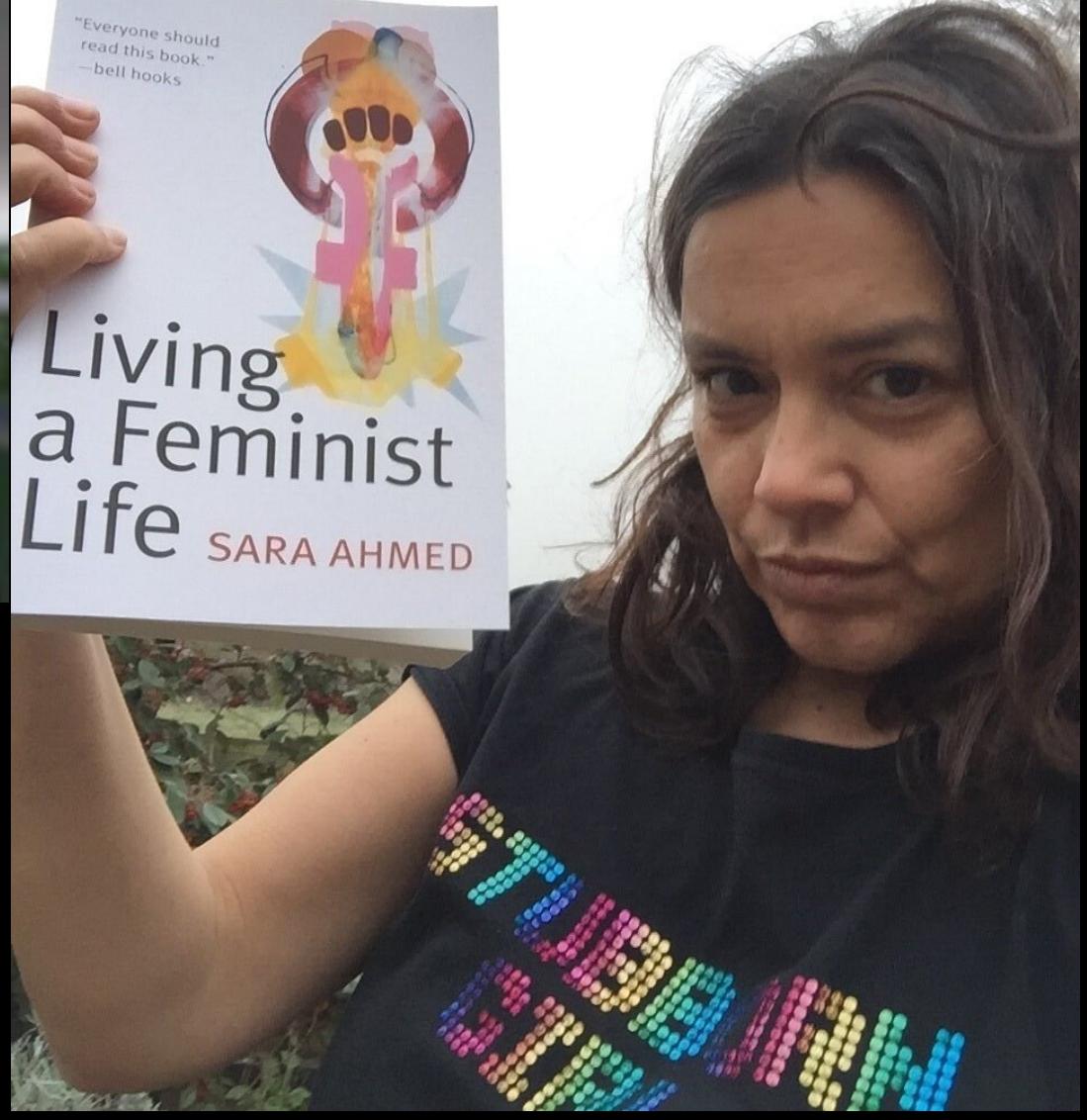
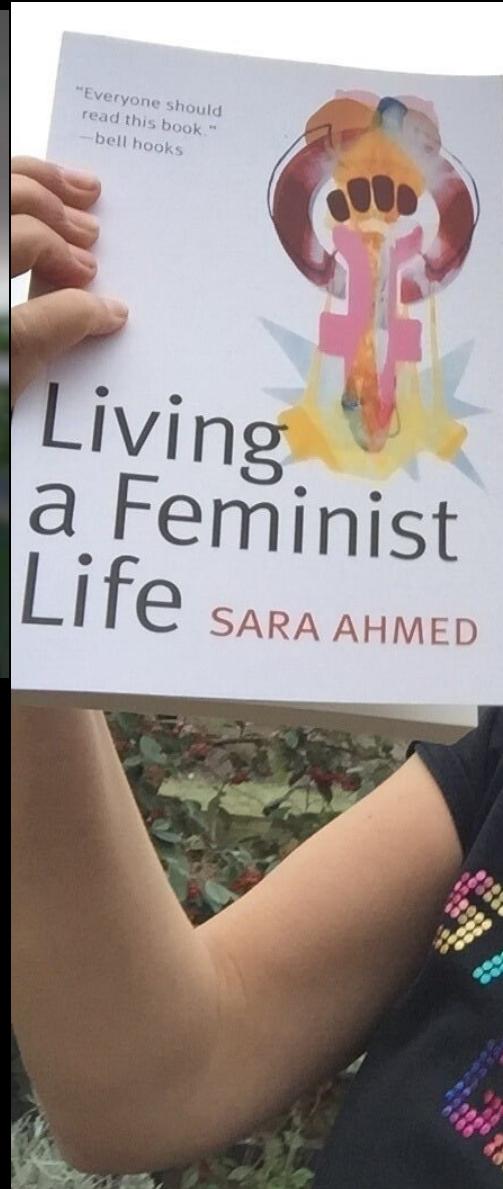
Hello Venus Fest community. We were pumped to sponsor the festival and hope you had a wicked time. We're a wee local femme-crip-queer run game studio and invite all you attendees to get witchy and riotous with our zine game, CURSES. We take you back to the 90s to a girl's emotionally fraught world. You'll explore your feelings, maybe even validate some of your own, and you'll cast spells like teen spirit! We've got a special spooky season sale to help you get in the spirit... or literally commune with them, if that's your jam. Check it out now on [Steam or Itch.io](#).

Hexes & Os,

Killjoy Games



# Killjoy?



*Play like a*



*Feminist.*

*Shira Chess*



- Associate Professor, Entertainment and Media Studies
- Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication
- University of Georgia
- Author of *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity* (2017)



*"I would indeed like to destroy the video game industry, as it is currently known."* (86)

# KEYWORDS

- Feminism
- Jerks
- Reification
- Radical Play
- Intersectionality
- Inclusivity
- Affective Systems
- Queer Narrative
- Agency

# Feminism

“as bell hooks writes, feminism is ‘a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.’ Feminism is not a movement about excluding men but rather about equality for all. Sara Ahmed aptly notes that ‘to live a feminist life is to make everything into something that is questionable.’ As such, this book is meant to call everything into question and challenge our understanding of play as it relates to larger inequalities.” (xii)



# bell hooks

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*For the mixtape, see [Bell Hooks \(mixtape\)](#).*

**Gloria Jean Watkins** (September 25, 1952 – December 15, 2021), better known by her pen name **bell hooks**,<sup>[1]</sup> was an American author and social activist who was Distinguished Professor in Residence at [Berea College](#). She is best known for her writings on race, [feminism](#), and class.<sup>[2][3]</sup> The focus of hooks's writing was to explore the [intersectionality](#) of race, [capitalism](#), gender, and what she described as their ability to produce and perpetuate systems of [oppression](#) and [class domination](#). She published around 40 books, including works that ranged from essays and poetry to children's books. She published numerous scholarly articles, appeared in documentary films, and participated in public lectures. Her work addressed [love](#), [race](#), [class](#), [gender](#), [art](#), [history](#), [sexuality](#), [mass media](#), and [feminism](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

She began her academic career in 1976 teaching English and [ethnic studies](#) at the [University of Southern California](#). She later taught at several institutions including [Stanford University](#), [Yale University](#), and [The City College of New York](#), before joining [Berea College](#) in [Berea, Kentucky](#), in 2004,<sup>[5]</sup> where she founded the bell hooks Institute in 2014.<sup>[6]</sup> Her pen name was borrowed from her maternal great-grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks.<sup>[7]</sup>

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- 1 Early life
- 2 Teaching and writing
- 3 Personal life
- 4 Death
- 5 Filmography
- 6 Awards and nominations
- 7 Select bibliography



bell hooks in October 2014

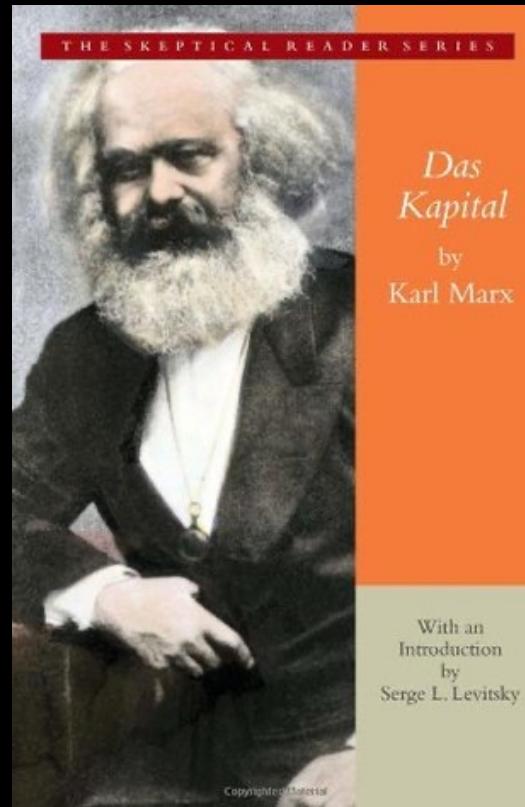
<b>Born</b>	Gloria Jean Watkins September 25, 1952 <a href="#">Hopkinsville, Kentucky</a> , U.S.
<b>Died</b>	December 15, 2021 (aged 69) <a href="#">Berea, Kentucky</a> , U.S.
<b>Education</b>	<a href="#">Stanford University</a> (BA) <a href="#">University of Wisconsin–Madison</a> (MA) <a href="#">University of California, Santa Cruz</a> (PhD)

# Jerks

“GamerGate sits in an impossible position in this book. There is no question that the toxicity of GamerGate is one impetus for its writing. At the same time, by maintaining a on the hashtag movement I would inevitably be reifying it and giving it a central position, which makes my stomach turn. . .In short, there are terrible people everywhere. Or as Adrienne Shaw writes, ‘The Internet is full of jerks, because the world is full of jerks.’ I choose to use the (small) megaphone of this book to focus on cultivating the potential positives, as opposed to nestling myself in the often-noxious realities.” (4)

# Reification

“A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour.”



# Reification

“Video games are a consumable product in a capitalist system. Advocating that feminism play a role in this system requires a delicacy so as to not reify the very things that this book is arguing against.” (5-6)



# Radical Play

“The goal of this book, then, is to convince you— all of you, regardless of your gender orientation, biological sex, ethnicity, ability, social class, or stance toward feminism—to spend more time playing as a tool of radical disruption.” (14)



*Shira Chess*

# Intersectionality

“‘Intersectionality,’ a term originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is meant to reference how systems of oppression such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class should be understood as interdependent phenomena. In other words, questions of oppression in each of these categories do not function in a vacuum, and feminists should not think about gender difference as separate from ethnicity, sexuality, or social class.” (13)

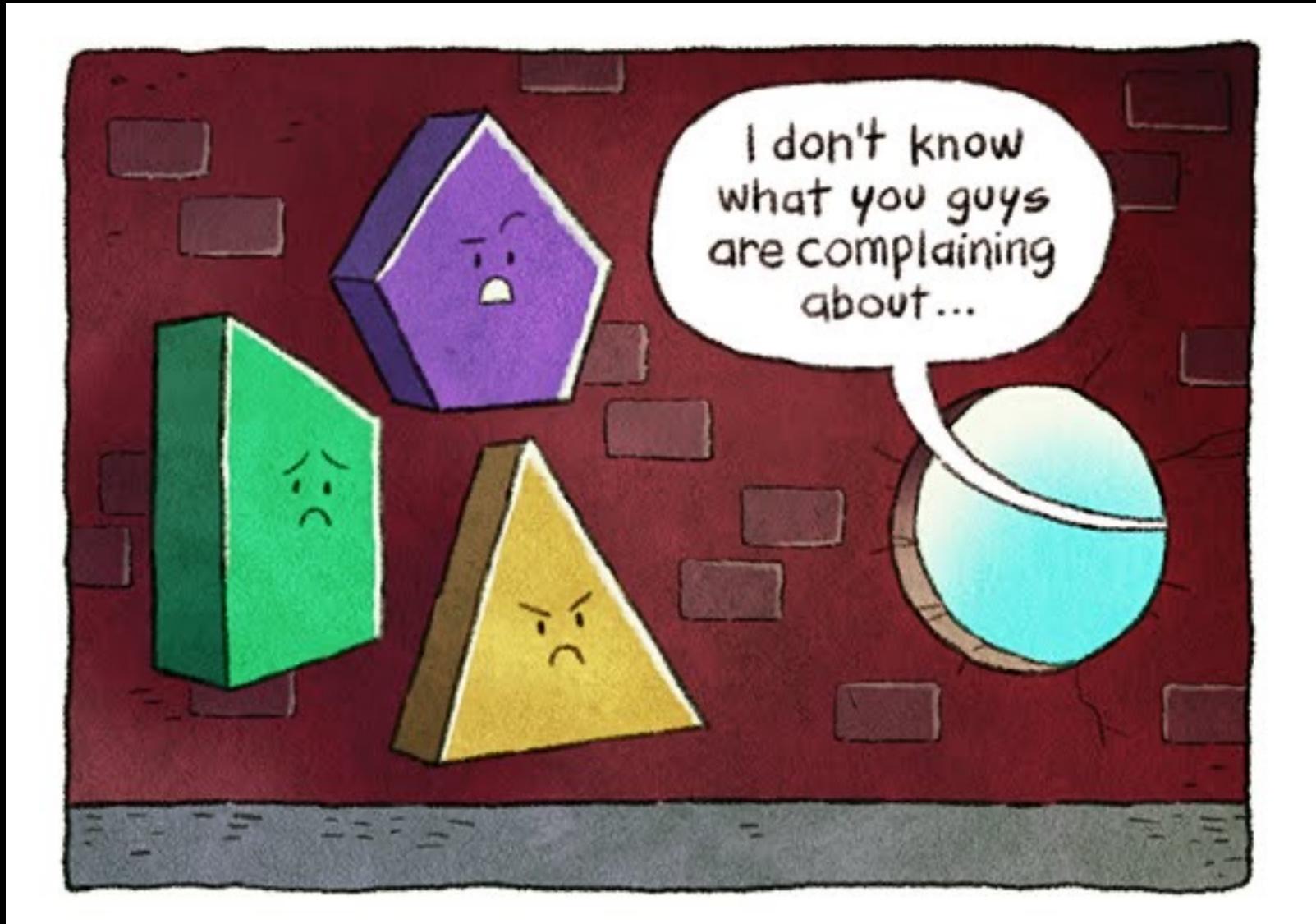
# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



# Inclusivity

“To this end, ‘inclusivity’ is a necessary theme in this book, but with caveats. Amanda Phillips warns that representation is only a small part of this puzzle in the quest toward inclusivity. She writes, ‘Representation and inclusion are important to help us imagine and believe in new spaces of possibility, but they are small steps in a more expansive quest for justice. More often than not, lack of diversity is a symptom of larger systemic problems.’ (15)

“larger systemic problems.” (15)



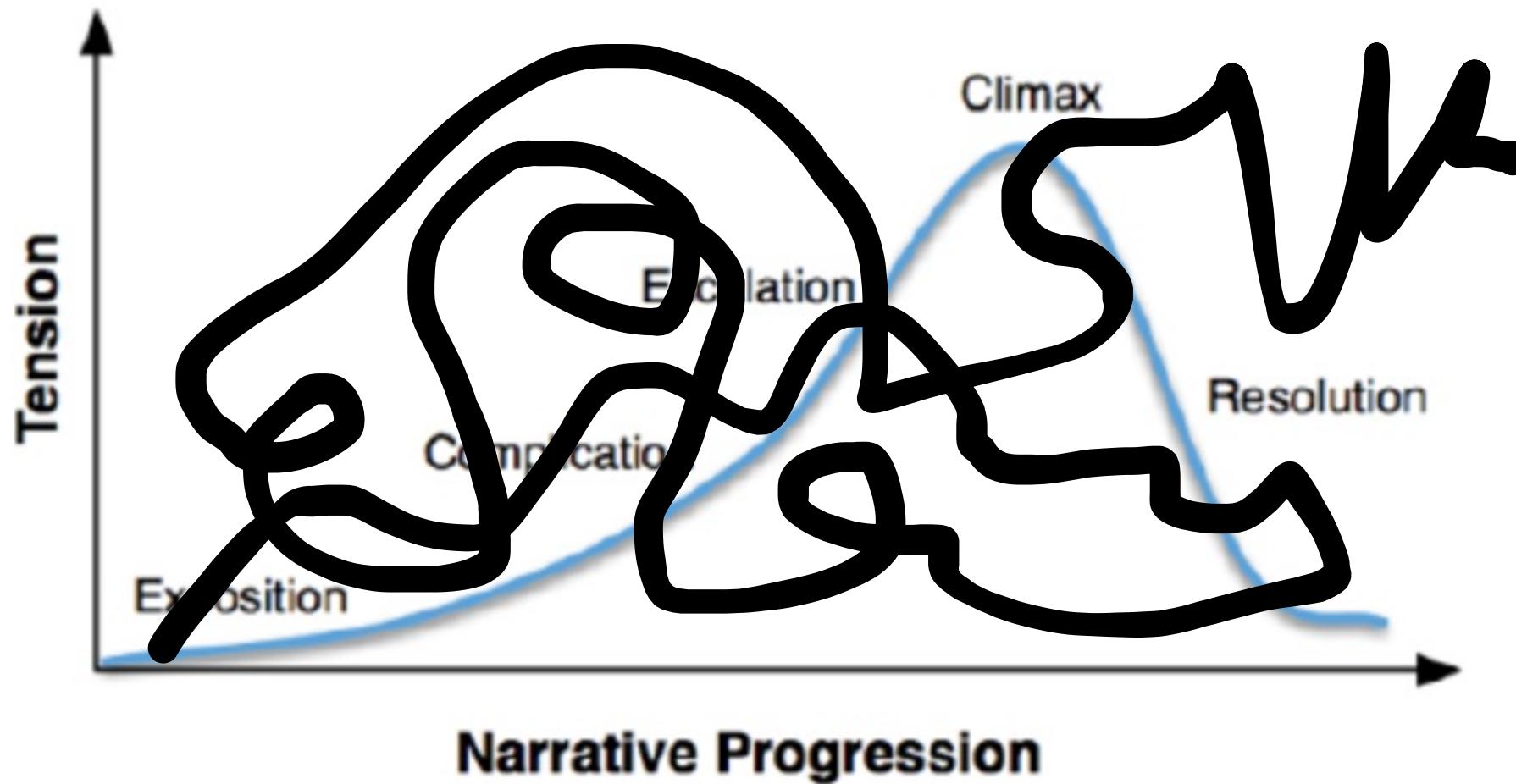
"larger systemic problems." (15)

# PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVITY

- 1.** Acknowledge individuals have unique and particular needs in the learning and work environment.
- 2.** Respect each individual's right to express and present themselves relative to their religion, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender-identity, physical and mental ability.
- 3.** Promote inclusivity by reasonably adjusting procedures, activities and physical environments.
- 4.** Focus on the capability of the individual without assumptions or labels.
- 5.** Be inclusive in all forms of communication.
- 6.** Serve all with sensitivity, respect, and fairness.



# Queer Narrative



Lee, Seung & Mott, Bradford & Lester, James. (2010). Optimizing Story-Based Learning: An Investigation of Student Narrative Profiles. 6095. 155-165. 10.1007/978-3-642-13437-1\_16.

# Agency



REWIND TIME  
TO CONTROL YOUR DESTINY

# Agency

“The reason why *Life Is Strange* is successful at its coming-of-age story, though, is not because it is a flatly told narrative; rather, it is a game. It provides a space where the audience is not passive but instead playing an active part in the retelling of the story. The rewind button forces the player to think about reflection, yet it also gives the player an active opportunity to reflect . I am, of course, talking about not only the game as a kind of storytelling but the game mechanics too.” (100-101)

# Agency

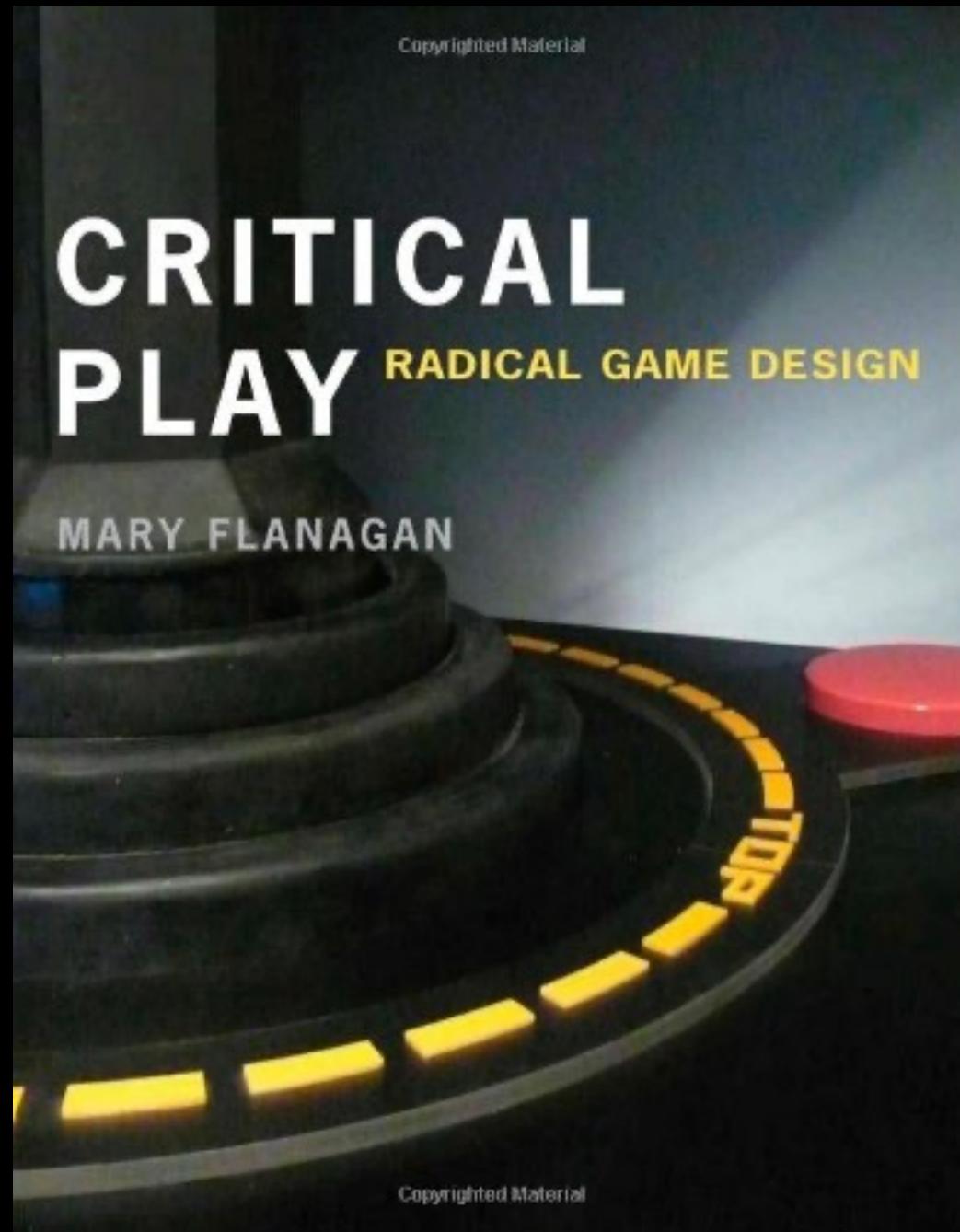
“In a game world, ‘agency’ refers to the will to act—that is, the choices made that make the game unique and distinct to each player. A game mechanic, then, is the space where that action is defined and realized within the game world.

Yet agency is also a concept quite familiar to feminist theory; typically, feminists refer to “agency” as the will to act and gain voice in a system of power. Rather than considering them discursively, interlocking these definitions helps to demonstrate why games (and perhaps video games in particular) can be so vital as an agentic-training tools.” (101)



Mary Flanagan

- Professor, Dartmouth College
- Director, Tilt Factor Lab





| Figure 2.7 |

Victorian-era children playing with Campbell Kids dolls. New York, March 1912. Photographed by Lewis Wickes Hine (1874–1940).

*Redressing, Reskinning, Rewriting*



| Figure 2.22 |

Neferi Chajit, an avatar in *Second Life*. Interviewed June 10, 2008, at <http://www.secondlifeherald.com/>.

The critical practices in games like *The Sims*, in fact, clearly follow the Victorian play practices noted earlier:

*Reskinning*

Altering characters or objects. In *The Sims*, replacing the graphics of household object with other images, which could manifest different values or make no sense in the game;

*Unplaying*

Working or inventing scenarios to trap the characters, set them on fire, or otherwise abuse them;

*Rewriting*

Participation of a player to redefine play from within the writings of fan culture.

*Redressing, Reskinning, Rewriting*

# Activist Games

## What Are Activist Games?

In this book I use the terms *activist game* and *activist game design*. Activist games can be characterized by their emphasis on social issues, education, and, occasionally, intervention. In other words, they are not purely conceptual exercises, but rather, games that engage in a social issue through, most commonly, themes, narratives, roles, settings, goals, and characters; and less commonly, through game mechanics, play paradigms, interactions, or win states to benefit an intended outcome beyond a game's entertainment or experiential value alone. This is not to say that activist games cannot, or should not, be "fun," though this has been a critique of many activist games to date. The term "activist game," however, is meant to specify the game theme and sometimes-desired outcomes for playing the game, and only one of the desired outcomes would be entertainment.

# Activist Games

Activist approaches to media are important to the study of digital culture precisely because of media's inherent imbalances. Indeed, issues of gender, racial, ethnic, language, and class inequities and imbalances are also manifest in the historic imbalances with technology production and use. Take, for example, the fact that women constitute only 10 percent of the computer-game industry workforce, or that less than 10 percent of all programmers in the United States are women. These imbalances extend in a sometimes subtle fashion to who uses these tools and spaces on a daily basis. Even

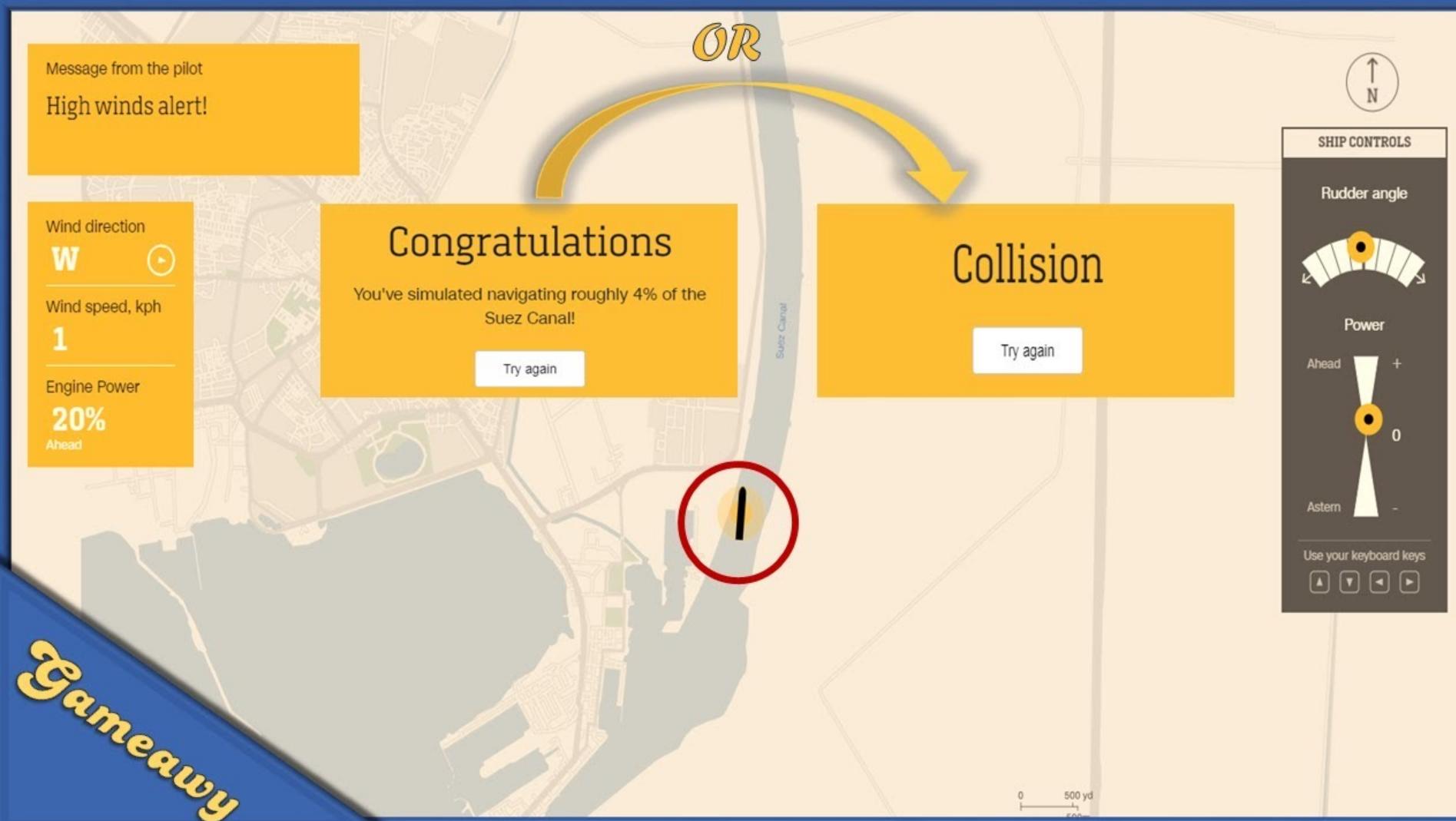
*Critical Play*, p.13

Activist Game?



*Pipe Troublē*, Pop Sandbox, 2012.

# Activist Game?



*Steer through the Suez Canal, CNN, 2021*

Activist Game?



*Phonestory, Molleindustria, 2011*

# Activist Game?

phonestory.org



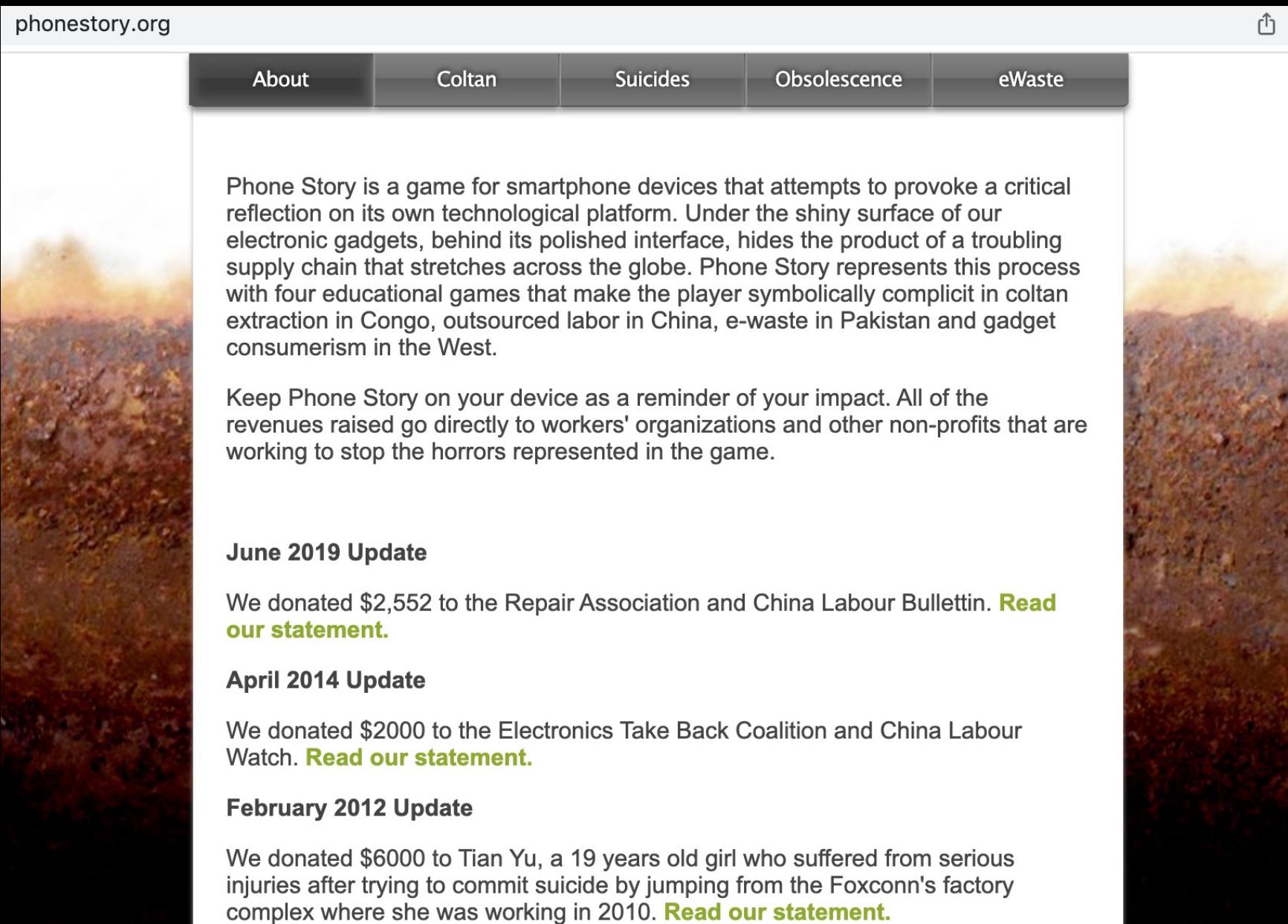
About

Coltan

Suicides

Obsolescence

eWaste



Phone Story is a game for smartphone devices that attempts to provoke a critical reflection on its own technological platform. Under the shiny surface of our electronic gadgets, behind its polished interface, hides the product of a troubling supply chain that stretches across the globe. Phone Story represents this process with four educational games that make the player symbolically complicit in coltan extraction in Congo, outsourced labor in China, e-waste in Pakistan and gadget consumerism in the West.

Keep Phone Story on your device as a reminder of your impact. All of the revenues raised go directly to workers' organizations and other non-profits that are working to stop the horrors represented in the game.

## June 2019 Update

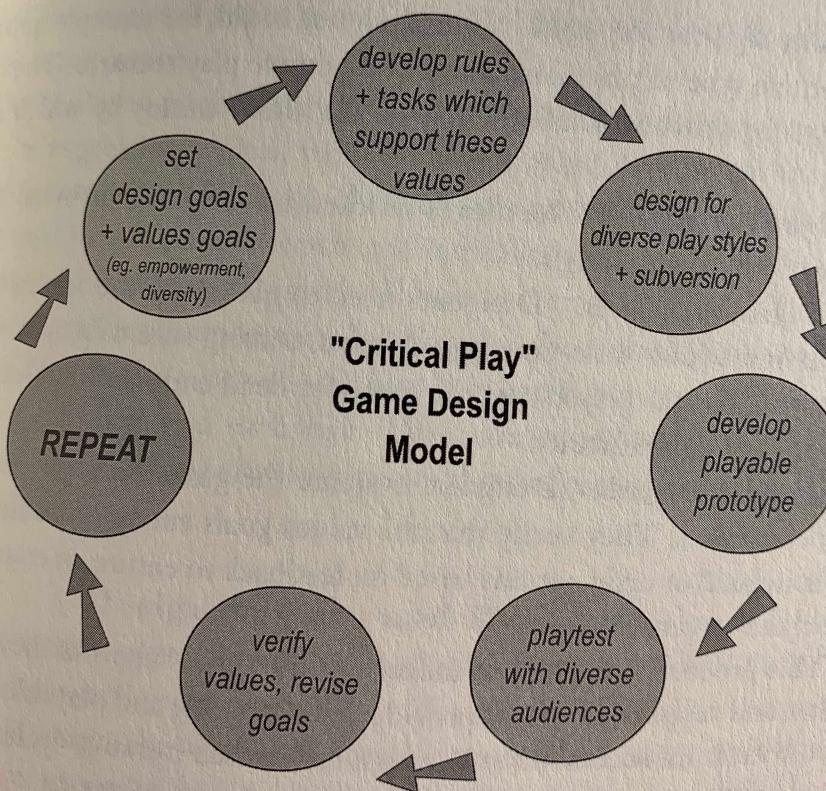
We donated \$2,552 to the Repair Association and China Labour Bulletin. [Read our statement.](#)

## April 2014 Update

We donated \$2000 to the Electronics Take Back Coalition and China Labour Watch. [Read our statement.](#)

## February 2012 Update

We donated \$6000 to Tian Yu, a 19 years old girl who suffered from serious injuries after trying to commit suicide by jumping from the Foxconn's factory complex where she was working in 2010. [Read our statement.](#)



| Figure 8.2 |  
Mary Flanagan, model of critical play method.

*classic edition*

# gro.W a game



Available on the  
**App Store**



# Stand by Your Man: An Examination of Gender Disparity in League of Legends

Rabindra A. Ratan<sup>1</sup>, Nicholas Taylor<sup>2</sup>, Jameson Hogan<sup>2</sup>,  
Tracy Kennedy<sup>3</sup>, and Dmitri Williams<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

Although video gaming is becoming a more widespread activity beyond its historically core demographic of young males, participation in competitive gaming remains largely male dominated. Addressing this issue, this research examines the experience of female players in one of the world's most popular games, *League of Legends*. Two studies—one qualitative (with 15 participants) and the other quantitative (with 16,821 participants)—confirm that although female players accrue skill at the same rate as males, there remains a dearth of female players in this community. Moreover, those females who play with a male partner are less confident in their skills and often focus on supporting their partner's advancement, not their own. This work suggests that one way to address the gender gap in gaming is to better understand and improve the social dynamics within popular games.



# Playful Protest

- The often-cited Barbie Liberation Organization was an excellent example of culture jamming. In 1993, the group replaced voice boxes between Barbie Dolls and GI Joe action figures to protest the gendered stereotypes embedded in children's toys.<sup>10</sup>
- Ian Madrigal has shown up to US congressional hearings dressed as the patriarch from the board game Monopoly (frequently getting themselves into the background of photos) to point out the hypocrisies of late-stage capitalism.<sup>11</sup>
- Starting in 2003, and using a combination of protest and clowning techniques, the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) developed a method that it referred to as “rebel clowning” in order to disorient and laugh at political enemies.<sup>12</sup>
- Similarly, in Columbia in 1995, a group protested corrupt traffic police by replacing them with mimes.<sup>13</sup>
- The Santa Claus Army was a group of santas who, in 1974, went on parade in Copenhagen and consequently took over the General Motors plant that had recently shut down.<sup>14</sup>
- Quebecois in 2001 used a teddy bear catapult to protest a trade agreement and summit, using the catapult as a tool of distraction.<sup>15</sup>
- The Miniskirt March in Zimbabwe in 2014 helped give voice to women against harassment.<sup>16</sup>



Scene from *Mr. Robot*, Episode 1.3



Story

## The Teddy Bear Catapult

The teddy bear catapult and ursine comrades in police custody. Photo: Gareth Lind

[https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/tool/  
the-teddy-bear-catapult/](https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/tool/the-teddy-bear-catapult/)

# Playful Protest

We can see from the above illustrations that while the specifics and results might vary, protest can use playfulness, joy, and laughter to combat things that are offensive, anger inducing, horrific, or otherwise worthy of protest. The power of playful protest is not only one of impact; it is one of explicit community building: a group of people playing together are as powerful as a group of people screaming together.

Beyond community building, playful protest is especially relevant to those in lower-down positions of power. For those who exist on the margins and lack cultural capital, the disruptive potential of play through humor is a safer space than trying to tear down a monolithic machine. Because playful protests still operate within the larger schema of social norms and cultural expectations, yet often call attention to those things, they can potentially create lower-risk opportunities for protesters.

# Playful Protest

LIVE!



# Playful Protest Group Workshop

1. Design an activist intervention for a video game based on a social issue of your choice. Consider whether the intervention critiques the game (Sims example) or simply makes use of the platform to critique something else (Fortnite example).
2. Create a playful protest designed to intervene at a “Freedom Convoy.” Follow principles at [beautifultrouble.org](http://beautifultrouble.org) .





**Say it with props** – Whether it's a giant Earth Mother puppet, a rented woodchipper redecorated into an outsized Enron stock shredder, or a teddy bear catapult, well-chosen larger-than-life props can help create a media spectacle and tell a story. By choosing an absurdist siege engine, DIST neatly exposed the absurdity of the larger situation: democratic leaders forced to meet "under siege" from their constituents when making hugely unpopular decisions.

**Use humour to undermine authority** – To operate, power depends on the aura of authority. The man in the uniform or the business suit has everything under control. He's sober, serious, knows best, and maybe above all, is needed (to protect you). Nothing quite undermines this aura (and the rationale for state violence that goes with it) like laughter, especially in the context of an absurd situation they don't know how to handle. If they react to it according to their normal logic, they look ridiculous and/or paranoid — whether it's [the Polish police deciding whether to arrest a bunch of dwarves for going to a meeting](#) or Canadian police confiscating a teddy bear as a dangerous weapon.

**Use the materials at hand** – As Yogi Berra said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" This action succeeded because those involved responded intelligently and creatively to the unexpected opportunities that presented themselves: first, a serious offer of funding in response to an absurd proposal, and second, a police overreaction that made everything that came before look completely un-absurd and entirely normal.

**Show, don't tell** – The Canadian security establishment justified its unprecedented mobilization by stirring fears of violent protests. But what is less violent than a teddy bear? By building an actual engine of war and choosing to gently fling teddy bears off of it, DIST found a playful and unexpected way to demonstrate their commitment to nonviolence and expose the government's trumped-up fears as ridiculous.