

Women in Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS)

Angela Byron
April 6, 2007



So, who the heck am I?

The boring stuff.

A woman...

Contrary to what my haircut might indicate.

**...involved in open
source...**

Hacker for Drupal



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Submitted by esr on Tue, 2007-03-13 19:38. ::

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Area Man Just Wants To Throw One Good Punch In His Life



12:01AM ET | SACRAMENTO, CA

"I want to make a guy's head snap back like in the"

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Iran Releases British Sailors



"Maritime borders are very difficult to determine. I find myself accidentally drifting into the waters of my neighbor's bathtub all the time."

MORE AMERICAN VOICES



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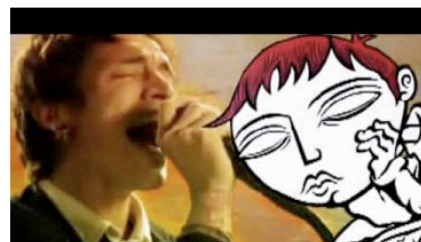
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Yahoo! Answers - Answers from users like you

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- Personalization - 1 month ago
- Why can't I change my signature?



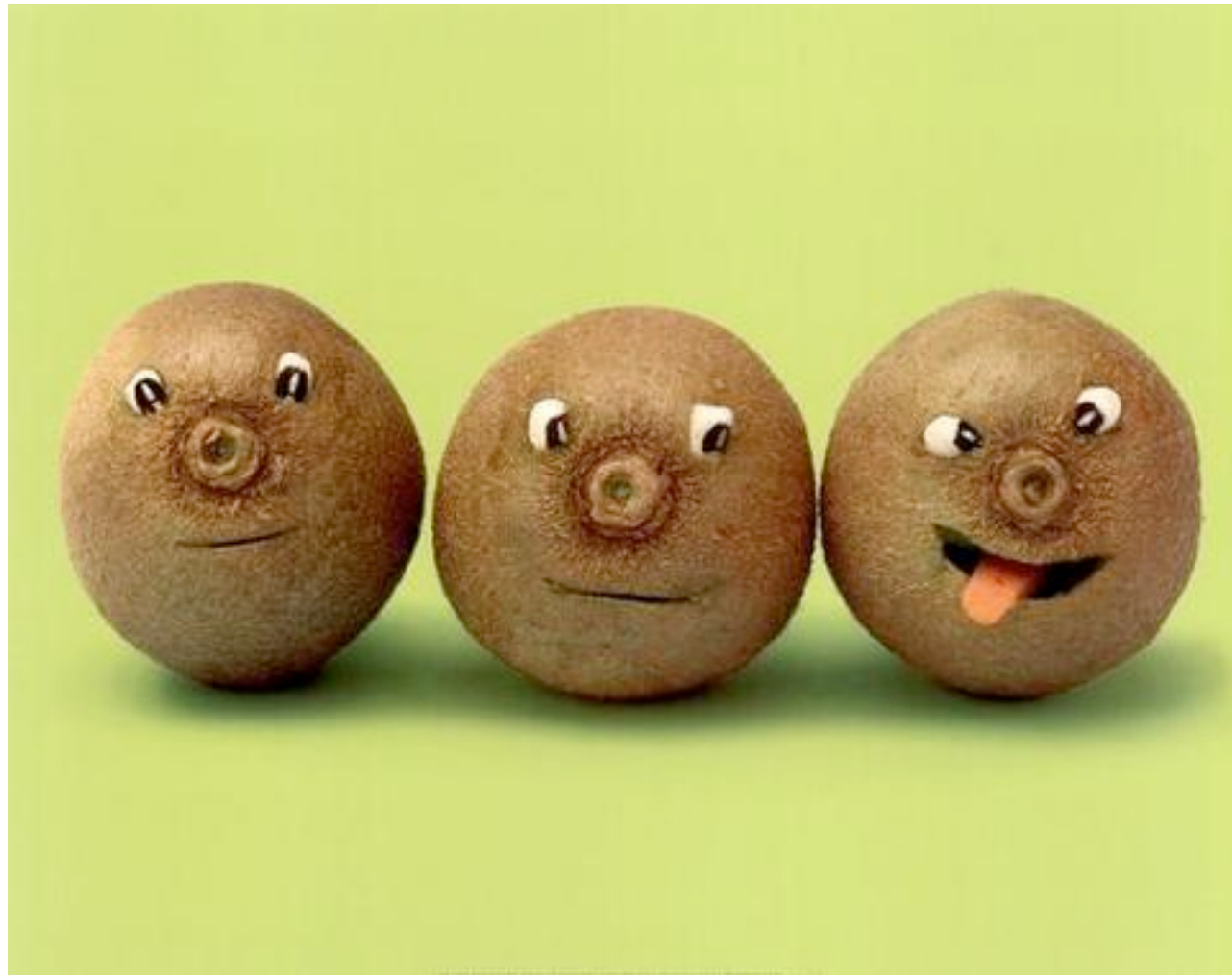
...and a *huge* geek.

I pick out paint colours by hex value.

But not...

...able to speak on behalf of all women.

So, why are we here?



**This topic is a bit silly,
isn't it?**

A quote...

A quote...

“Hackerdom is still predominantly male. However, the percentage of women is clearly higher than the low-single-digit range typical for technical professions, and female hackers are generally respected and dealt with as equals...”

A quote...

“Hackerdom is still predominantly male. However, the percentage of women is clearly higher than the low-single-digit range typical for technical professions, and female hackers are generally respected and dealt with as equals...”

- Eric S. Raymond
The Jargon File

A quote...

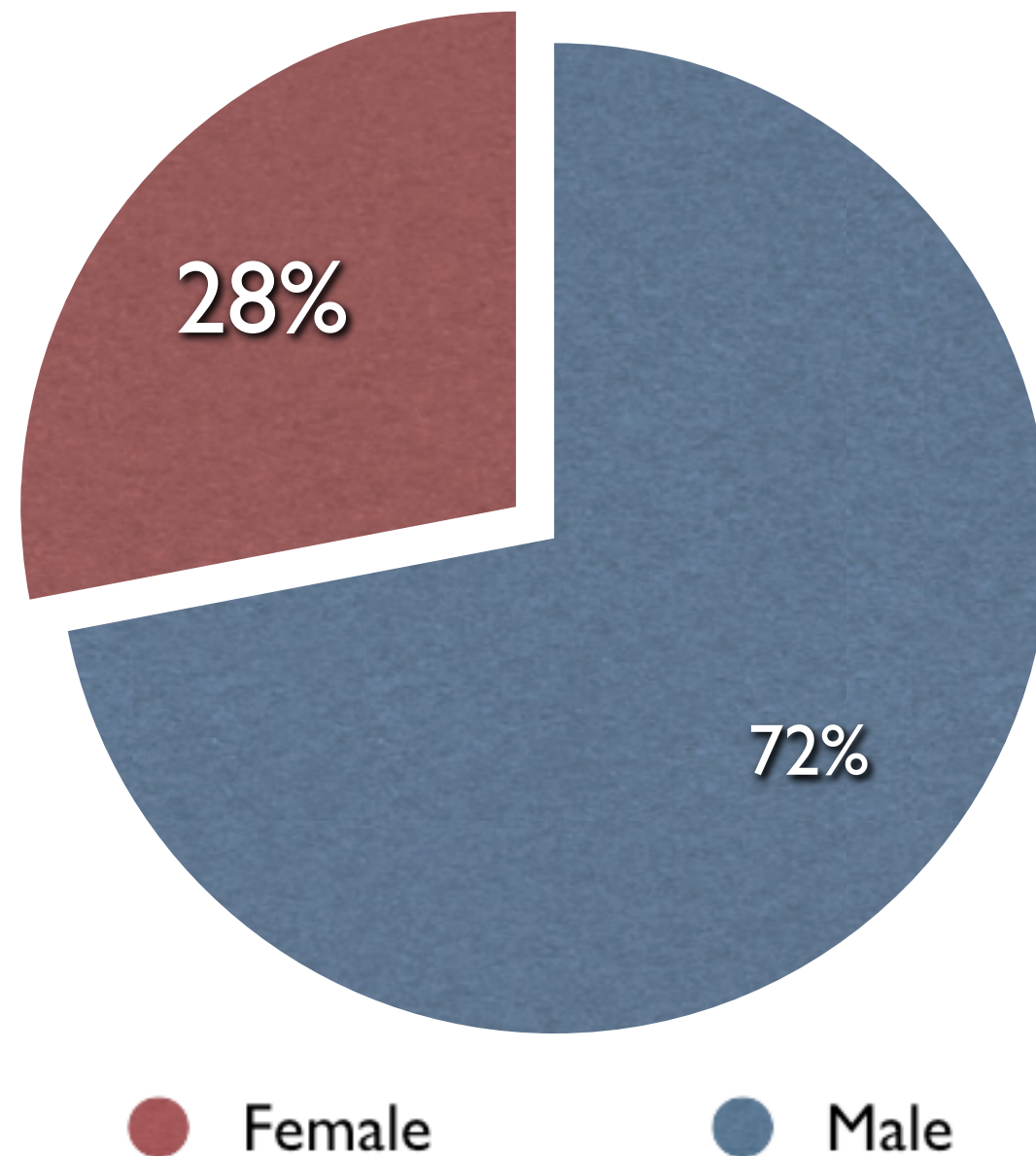
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**Let's compare some
numbers.**

Obligatory pie chart #1

Gender in proprietary software



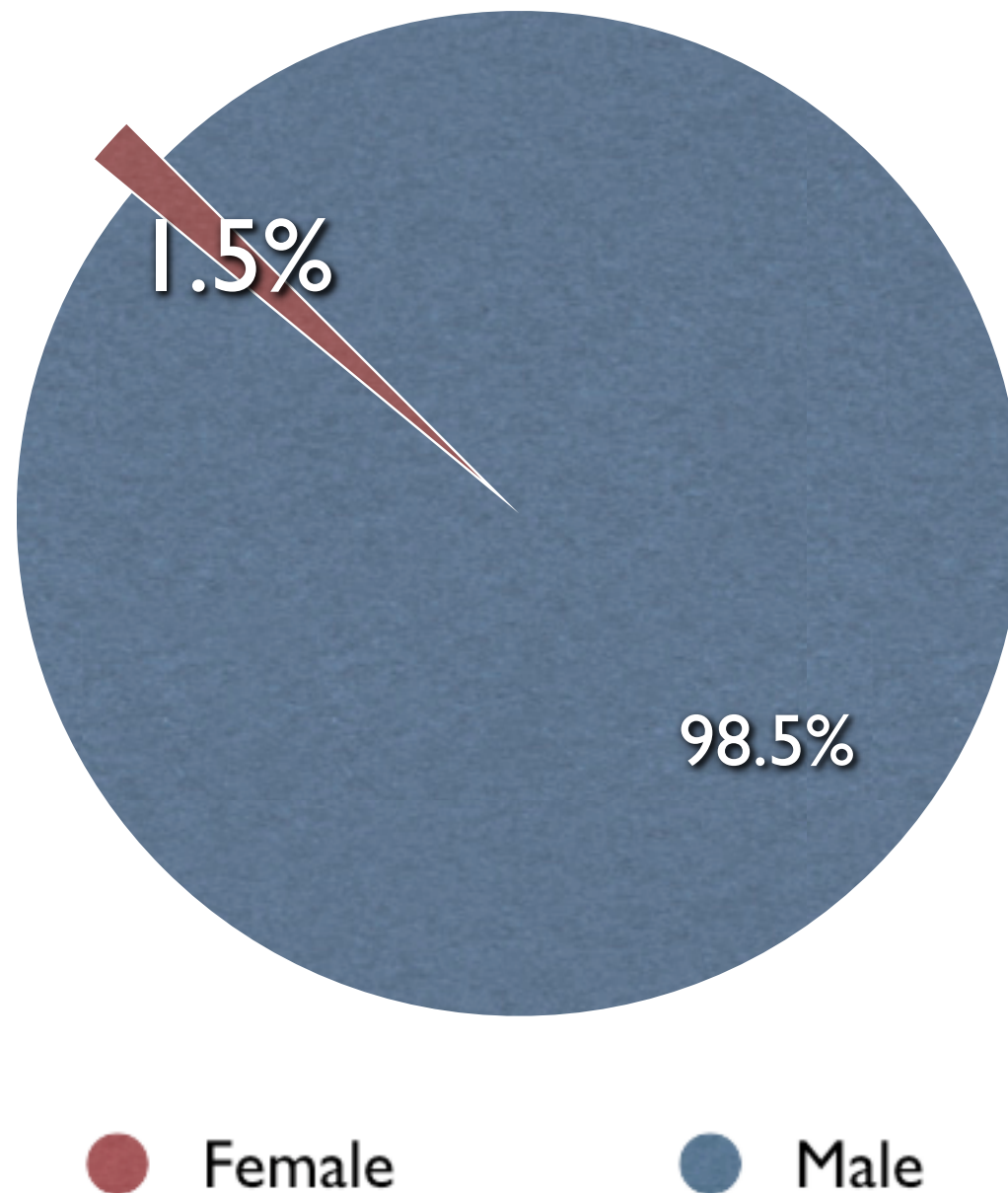


Proprietary software. Feh.



FLOSS is
about *freedom*.

Gender in FLOSS



WTF?

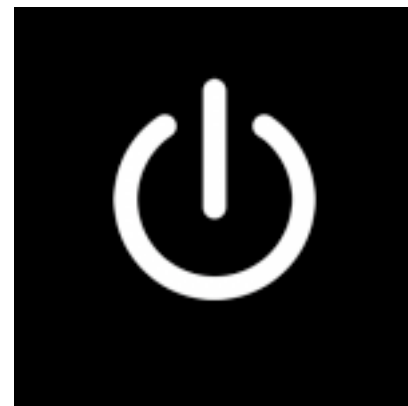


**So, why should you
care?**

Driving away women
means driving away
contributors.

Both women *and* men.

**Diversity makes FLOSS
more powerful.**





Frankly, we kick ass. ;)

So why *aren't* there
more women in
FLOSS?

Social reasons

**Women are discouraged
from technology...**

Women's Studies 101

...in childhood...



...in childhood...



...in childhood...



...in childhood...



...in popular media...



...in popular media...



...in popular media...



...in popular media...



...in social expectations.



...in social expectations.



...in social expectations.



...in social expectations.



Women have access to computers later

	Male	Female
Age of first computer use	12	14.5
Age of first computer possession	15	19

Lack of confidence.





**So, that explains
it, right?**

**So, that explains
it, right?**

Except...

...not.

These are true of *all* women getting into IT.

FLOSS-specific reasons



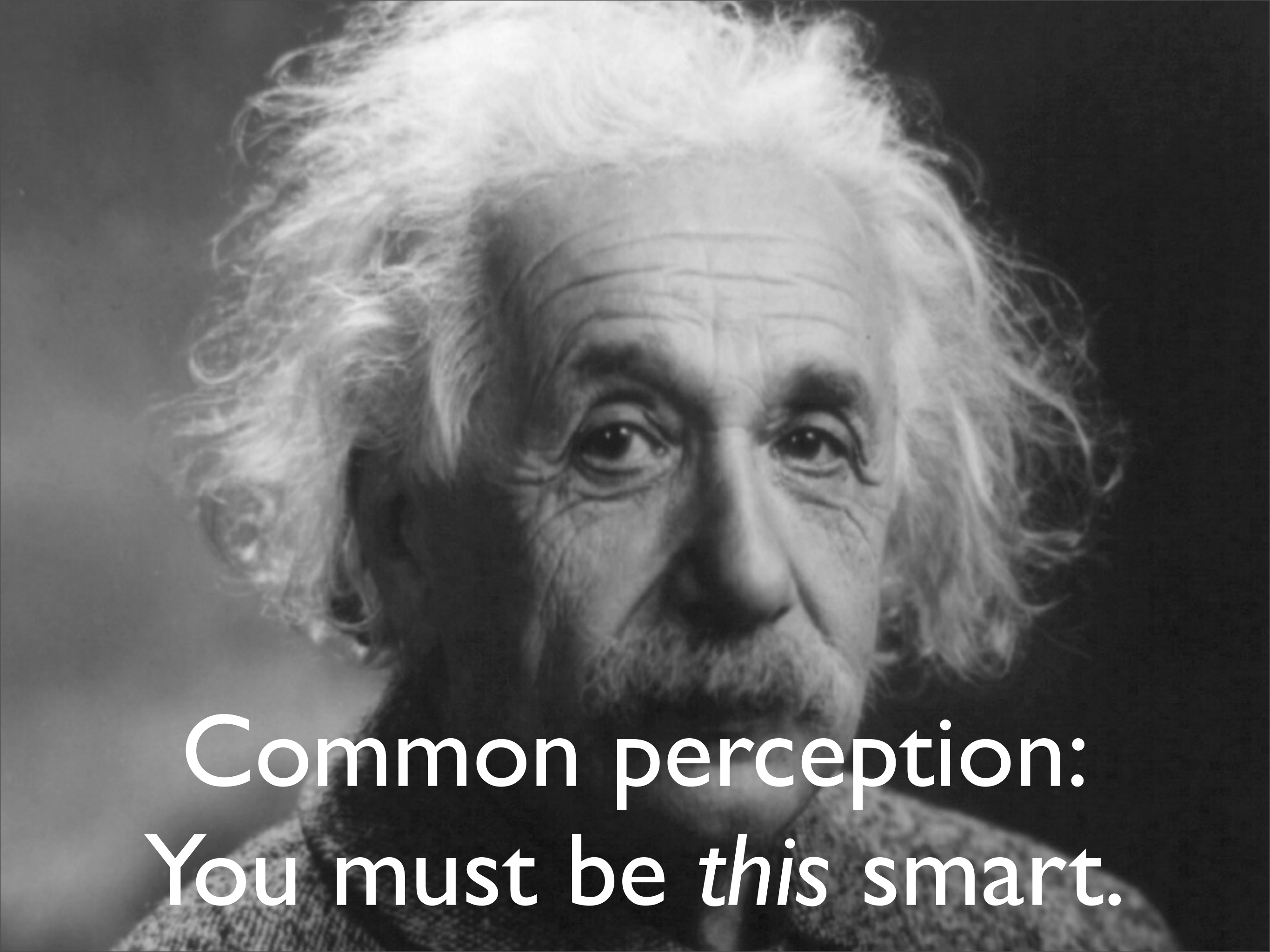
Time to look into
the mirror.



Anonymity

Competitive nature of FLOSS





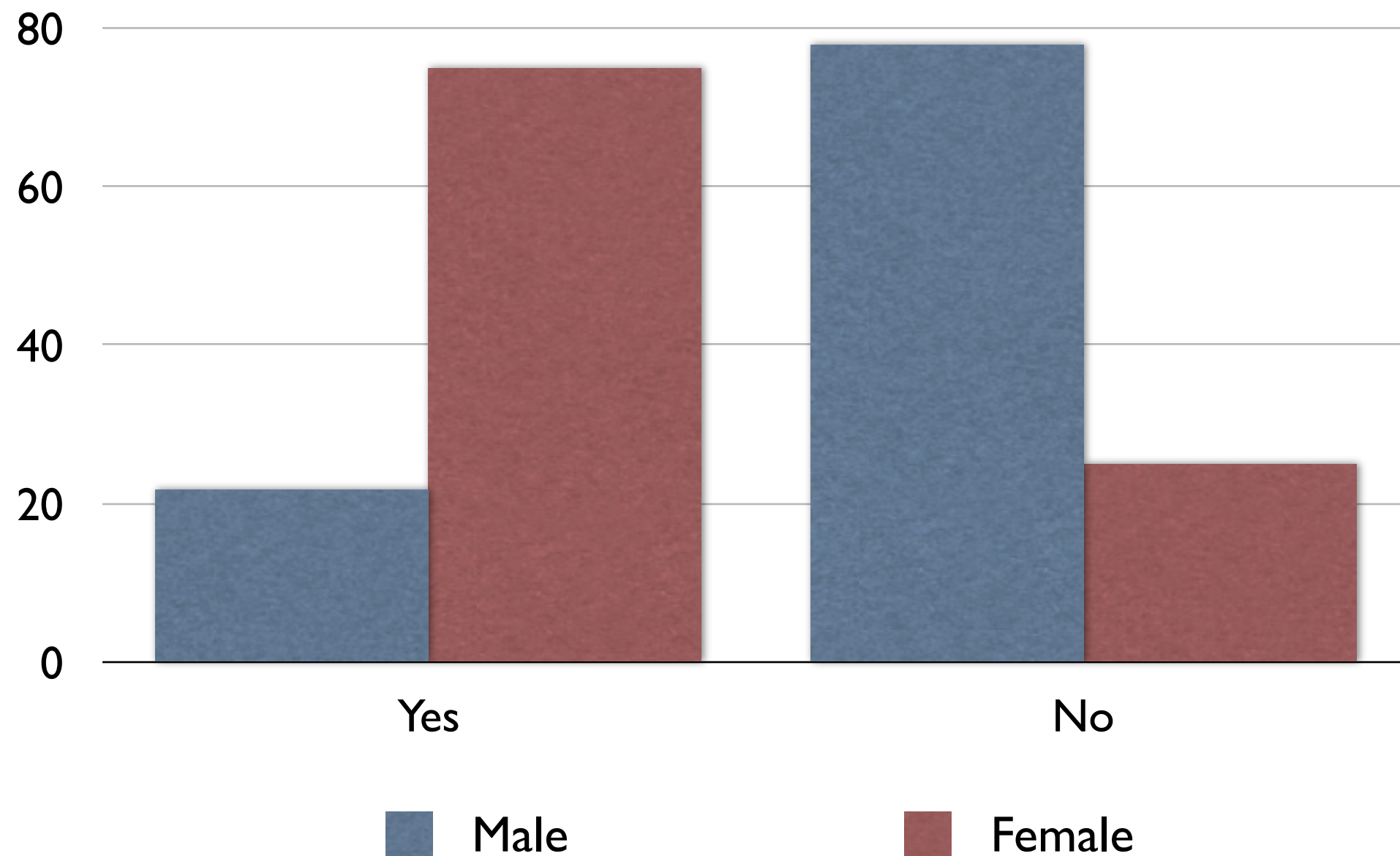
Common perception:
You must be *this* smart.



OMG! A GIRL! I! I

The big blind spot...

Have you ever observed discriminatory behaviour against women in FLOSS?



Some examples

Some examples

- “Jokes”

Some examples

- “Jokes”
- Dates/marriage proposals.

Some examples

- “Jokes”
- Dates/marriage proposals.
- Doubting our intelligence/expertise.

Some examples

- “Jokes”
- Dates/marriage proposals.
- Doubting our intelligence/expertise.
- Insults specific to females (that time of the month...)

Horror stories

One example

From: Bugtraq Security Systems

<research_at_bugtraq.org>

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 15:03:11 -0500 (EST)

Dear Starla,

At Bugtraq Security Systems we pride ourselves in having a keen eye for young and upcoming talent.

Specifically, core members of our Research and

Development team have expressed **continously**

growing feelings of affection

towards your person. Or, as one of our

researchers put it: "hehehe **I'd like to**

research and develop that _all_

night long :D:D:D".

But wait, there's more!

What it boils down to is that we at BSS (Bugtraq Security Systems) would like to offer you.. Starla Pureheart.. **prolific warrior princess** of the great Nuke Wars of 1997... a position at Bugtraq Security Systems. **Preferably on your knees.**

Love,
Bugtraq Security Systems

PS: All kidding aside, get in touch with us Anna -
we need a token femme

Death threats

Death threats

“i hope someone slits your
throat...”

Death threats

“i hope someone slits your
throat...”

“...beat this bitch with a
bat...”

So, what can
people already involved
in FLOSS do?

Be sensitive to
discrimination.

And take **action** when it happens.

Value **all** contributions,
not just code.

Documentation, testing, and user support are often
“gateways” for super-hackers of the future.

Just say “NO” to RTFM.

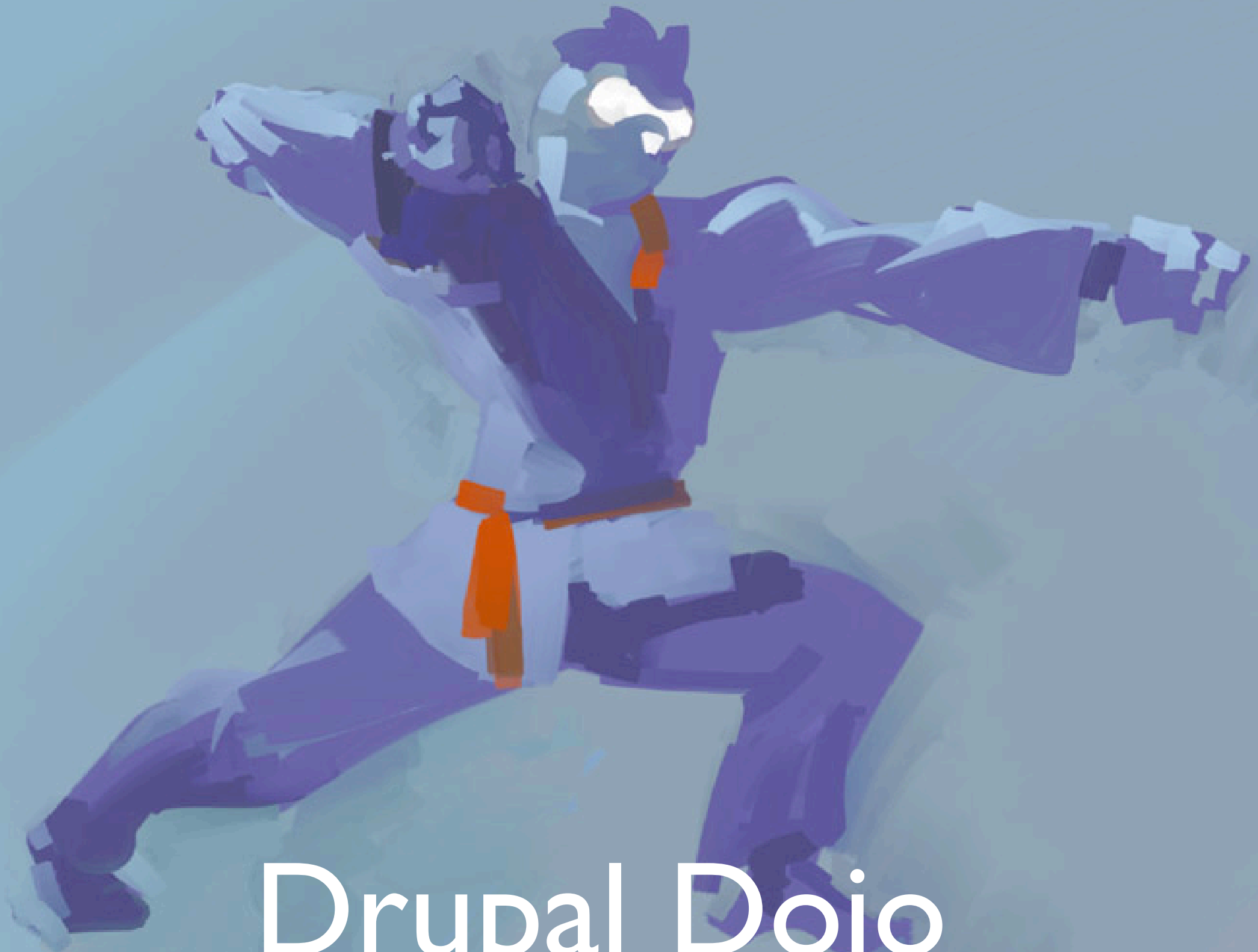
Take an extra 30 seconds to point the way.

Help people who want
to help you.

Better documentation
Mentorship program

GOOGLE™

Summer of Code



Drupal Dojo

**So, how can women get
involved in FLOSS?**

Um. Do we still
want to?



Yes!

Warning: I'm about to get mushy. ;)

FLOSS is...



...fun!



**...a constant source of
new knowledge and
experience.**



**...fundamentally
rewarding.**



**...an excellent
career move.**

**So, how do women get
started in FLOSS?**

Pick a project that
interests you!

Or start one of your own. :)

Find all avenues of information.

IRC, mailing lists, forums, documentation, wiki...



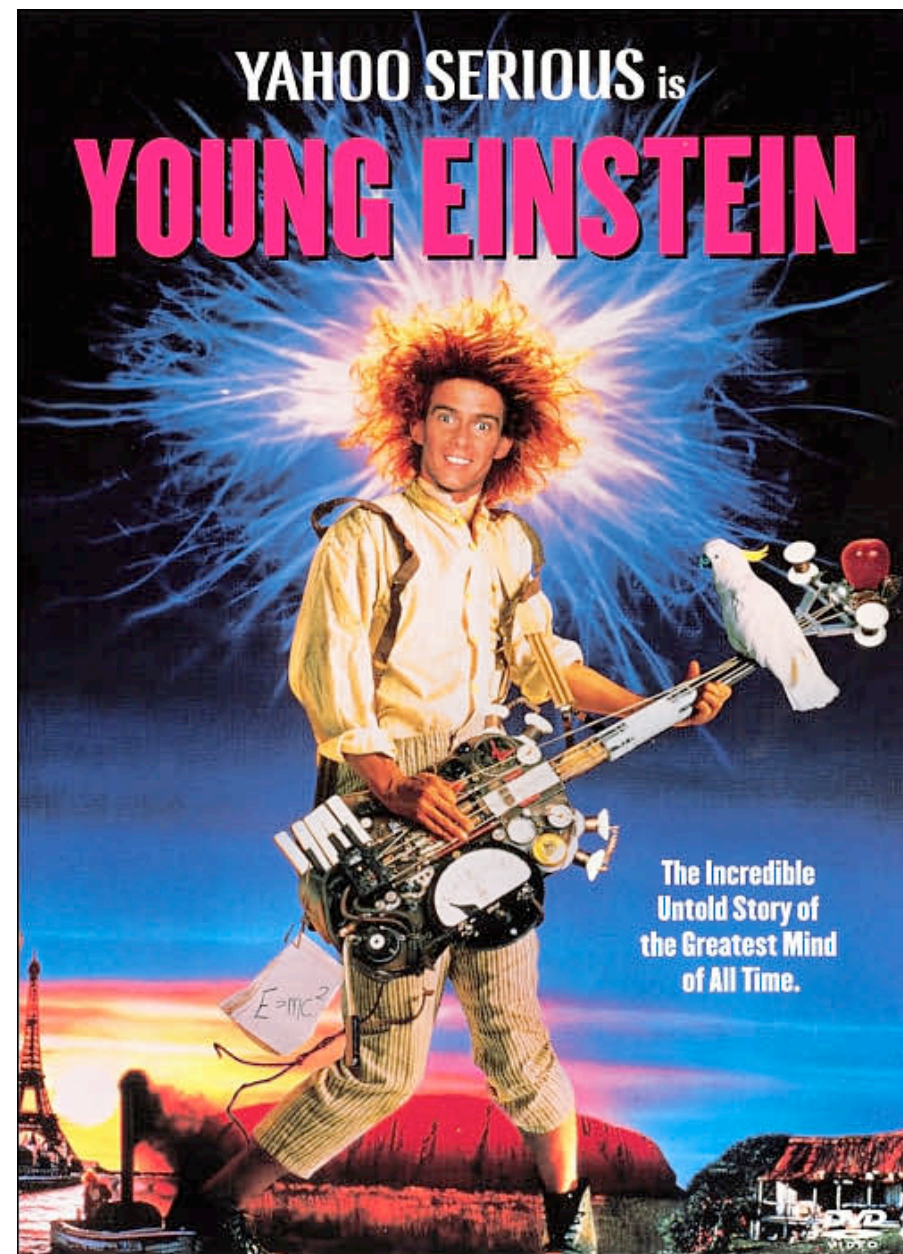
Lurk first.

Evaluate the community. Is it a good fit?

Contribute as early and
often as possible.

Open source is a **meritocracy**.

Don't let the
“intimidation factor”
get you down...



Remember!

Everyone was a n00b at some point.



Don't tolerate BS.



**What to do when faced
with a chauvinistic pig?**





- Choose your battles



- Choose your battles
- Sarcasm can be effective



- Choose your battles
- Sarcasm can be effective
- Object, speak out, then report



- Choose your battles
- Sarcasm can be effective
- Object, speak out, then report
 - Men, you should be doing this too!

Most importantly...

Don't give up on FLOSS!

If a project isn't fun anymore, there are plenty of others who'd love to have you on board.

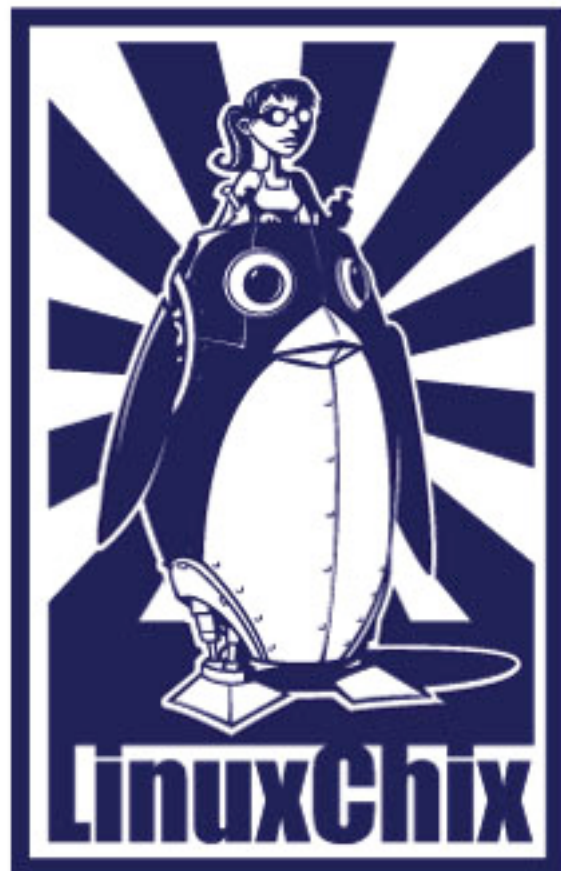
If you're a woman
involved in FLOSS,
be a **role model** to
other women.

If you're not,
seek out other
women in FLOSS.

We *are* out there. :)

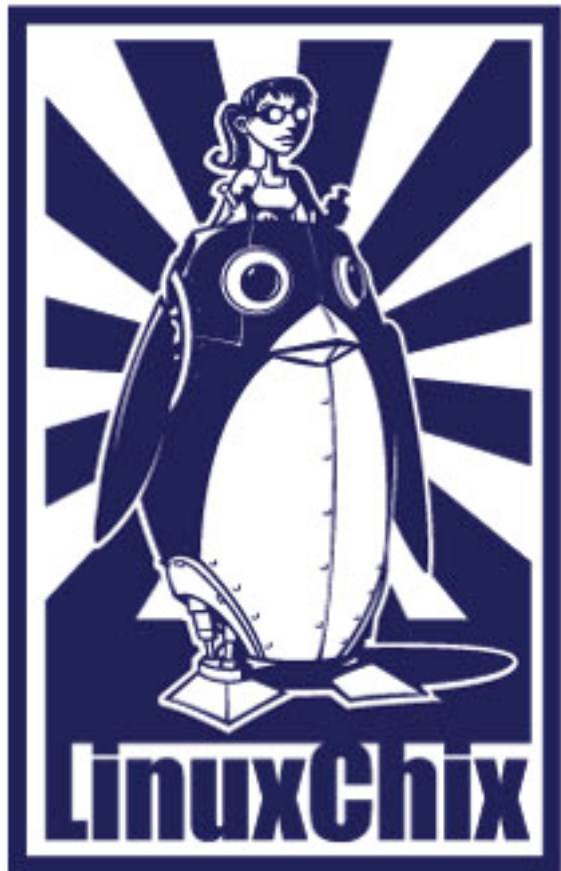
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Conclusion

- Women are massively under-represented in FLOSS. That's bad.
- But we can *all* take steps to change it. That's good!
- FLOSS is truly rewarding, and women can and should take the plunge.

Resources

- <http://flosspols.org/>
- <http://tldp.org/HOWTO/Encourage-Women-Linux-HOWTO/>
- <http://linuxchix.org/>

Thanks...

- Flourish!
- Jacinta Richardson
- My Drupal buddies
- The LinuxChix
- Google Summer of Code
- Mom and Dad :)

Discussion

Ground rules

- Let's encourage women to respond.
- Try to keep each discussion point to 3-5 minutes.
- Be civil - Don't make me +m the room. ;)

Why **aren't** there more
women in FLOSS?

What have been your
experiences?

How to deal with the following situations?

- Sexist jokes
- Posting sexual material (porn, etc.)
- Verbally attacking/dismissing women (time of the month)
- Death threats

What are **strategies** for reversing the trend?