GNOME Foundation relationship with GNU and the FSF

nmcgovern Neil McGovern Foundation Staff   **6d**

Sep 16 **1 /**
23

Today I published this to **my blog** :

> On Saturday, I wrote and email to the FSF asking them to cancel my membership. Other people who I greatly respect are doing the same. This came after the president of the FSF made some **pretty reprehensible remarks** saying that the "most plausible scenario is that [one of Epstein's underage victims] presented themselves as entirely willing" while being trafficked. This isn't the only incident, but it is the straw that broke the camel's back.
>
> In my capacity as the Executive Director of the GNOME Foundation, I have also written to the FSF. One of the most important parts of my role is to think of the well being of our community and the GNOME mission. One of the GNOME Foundation's strategic goals is to be an exemplary community in terms of diversity and inclusion. I feel we can't continue to have a formal association with the FSF or the GNU project when its main voice in the world is saying things that hurt this aim.
>
> I greatly admire the work of FSF staffers and volunteers, but have now reached the point of concluding that the greatest service to the mission of software freedom is for Richard to step down from FSF and GNU and let others continue in his stead. Should this not happen in a timely manner, then I believe that severing the historical ties between GNOME, GNU and the FSF are the only path forward.

Sep 17

2d ago

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sthursfield Sam Thursfield   **5d**

It's sad, but I agree.

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whatabouthisstatemen   **5d**

https://stallman.org/archives/2019-jul-oct.html#14_September_2019_(Statements_about_Epstein)

Please don't read headlines only. Stallman has been targeted many times in the past and this is nothing new. His statements have been taken out of context and a smear campaign has been put on his head. He'll weather it as always, as long as people in the community actually stand up for what is actually said rather than jumping on the latest medium blog rage.

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christopherdavis Chris Davis GNOME Team   **5d**

It's interesting you assume we read headlines only. I read the emails. Stallman's response is lacking in taking responsibility for what he said, instead pushing it to people that "believe" he said something offensive. This is a classic abuser tactic.

Stallman directly said that we should assume the underage victims were entirely willing. Stallman has also advocated for "voluntary pedophelia" in the past. Neither are acceptable, both are related. They show his world view, and it's not compatible with mine. I hope it isn't compatible with the movements he's been representing.

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sthursfield Sam Thursfield **5d**

I read that statement yesterday (although it took 5 minutes of digging to find it). I don't think for a minute that Stallman is a bad person, i'm sure he doesn't deserve much of the vitriol directed at him from people who only read headlines.

But he clearly made a drastic miscommunication here. Is that the sign of a good leader?

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nmcgovern Neil McGovern Foundation Staff **5d**

I'm not reading headlines. That's a verbatim quote from rms' email.

Kazhnuz **5d**

The "context" doesn't really make what he said any better.

The whole part of his posts saying that "maybe the victims presented as willing" in order to nitpick in that Marvin Minksy "assaulted" Eipstein victims, is not only really problematic in the representation of pedophilia, but also a minimization of what Minsky did. And while these message are a problem in itself, a big part of the problem is that it's really not a first for Stallman to say stuff as this, and combined with some past problems around FSF and GNU project (like what happened during the coreboot stuff) make it part of a larger problem around him.

That's not a "smear campain" against Stallman. That's the result of years of problem. And tbh, as Christopher, I'm pretty concerned about how his answer was "I'm sorry that you didn't understand me", a classic "non-apology apology".

So tbh, I really agree with that post. I don't think that kind of behaviour is good for the FOSS movement. And I'm really happy to see people in the movement taking a stand against that.

Federico_Gimenez **5d**

This post was flagged by the community and is temporarily hidden.

View ignored content.

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whatabouthisstatemen **5d**

> christopherdavis:
>
> Stallman directly said that we should assume the underage victims were entirely willing

Stallman did not say this. He said they were presented as willing. These are two different things.

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nmcgovern Neil McGovern Foundation Staff **5d**

This topic is drifting. This is not about the merits or otherwise of the latest issue, but about the position of GNOME given a long history of questionable comments from rms. Debates on the latest comments should happen elsewhere.

Federico_Gimenez **5d**

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View ignored content.

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ptomato Philip Chimento Foundation Director **5d**

> Federico_Gimenez:
>
> Because someone made up things Stallman did not actually say

Excuse me? We are talking about actual emails that Stallman sent, and one can read the entire context in which they occurred in the link above.

YellowDog Josef Vukovic   **5d**

This post was flagged by the community and is temporarily hidden.

View ignored content.

Federico_Gimenez   **5d**

This post was flagged by the community and is temporarily hidden.

View ignored content.

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nmcgovern Neil McGovern Foundation Staff   **5d**

> nmcgovern:
>
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This has failed to happen. Closing this topic for 48h with the hope that it calms down.

CLOSED 4 DAYS AGO

OPENED 2 DAYS AGO

This topic was automatically opened after 2 days.

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afranke Alexandre Franke GNOME Team   **3d**

It was quite frustrating as a member of the community and Foundation not to be able to participate in the discussion (since the comments on the blog have been closed and that thread was locked). Obviously the need to moderate a heated discussion because of outsiders who leave inflammatory comments is understandable, but it would be appreciated if that didn't lock us out as well.

I wanted to counterbalance the ED statement and the comment by Mathieu on the blog. The position is presented as coming from GNOME and being unequivocal. It is however not unanimous. Don't mistake this for a defense of Richard's behaviour. My point here is that regardless of how a person behaves, their employer shouldn't be bullied to fire them and that blog post was not an appropriate response to the events. I'm even more upset considering there have been initiatives (by the FSF, EFF, and others) that unambiguously align with the Software Freedom goals of GNOME and that we haven't properly backed and relayed.

"CSAIL Visiting Scientist RMS makes bad comments on CSAIL mailing list" could reasonably lead to "CSAIL kicks RMS out", but *outsiders* shouldn't pressure *them* into doing it. FSF is not related to that event, and they shouldn't be pressured either.

Quoting from Mathieu's comment:

> For many years RMS has been an embarrassment at best, a toxic bigot at worst, and it is high time we got rid of him from our community.

I am not going to argue how good or bad RMS is or has been, but the response has to be appropriate to the situation. If he behaves badly in a situation where we are involved (our lists, our events, an event in which participate…) then an intervention from us would be appropriate. Not the case for the current event.

To contrast with this, I liked **Molly's post** which focused on encouraging a positive change and steered away from drama.

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gay_ming   **3d**

Federico,
I agree with your comment. It is pretty close to others, f.i. the top comment here

r/linux - Richard Stallman resigns from MIT "due to pressure on MIT and me...

2,862 votes and 1,064 comments so far on Reddit

I really get the impression that a lot of people (including the Gnome Foundation) were jumping to conclusions by simply relying only or mainly on the motherboard/vice article (and/or the article on medium), its misquotation, its lack of context, its inability or unwillingness to carefully read and conclude…

And concerning the reaction of the Gnome Foundation: I am extremely disappointed that this was not handled with enough care. This reaction (top comment of this thread) rather hurts the aim it wants to defend or protect.

K.

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nmcgovern Neil McGovern Foundation Staff   **3d**

> gay_ming:
>
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A lot of people are missing the point, and also jumping to conclusions. This was **not** something that happened just because of some bad reporting. This is a position that has reached this point after decades of issues and problematic behaviour.

My request for FSF to find new leadership was **not** because of the motherboard/vice article. It was that we have tried every other method available to us to adjust these issues and behaviours, and all of these have failed. I spent many hours considering what our response should be, and discussed these with a number of people. A great deal of thought has gone in to this.

> gay_ming:
>
> And concerning the reaction of the Gnome Foundation: I am extremely disappointed that this was not handled with enough care. This reaction (top comment of this thread) rather hurts the aim it wants to defend or protect.

Fortunately, we don't use random comments on Reddit to form our positions, especially when that poster is heavily involved in the main GamerGate community on Reddit. We listen to people who are actually involved in GNOME, and the wider free software community.