

# Richard Stallman

**TRIGGER WARNING** This article discusses child sexual abuse.

**TRIGGER WARNING** This article quotes ableist speech that dehumanizes disabled people.

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This article has not been substantially updated since 2017. This article may reflect many undesirable biases, such as racism and ableism. It may also be missing recent, pertinent information. We are keeping the content available as a community resource, but cannot update it, despite its flaws. You are welcome to fork and update content under the terms of the [wiki's CC license](#).

**Richard Stallman** (also known as **RMS**) is the founder of the **Free Software** Movement, author of **EMACS**, etc.

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## Activism

Among other labels, Stallman identifies as pro-choice, an environmentalist and a "lifelong activist". Stallman often posts on his web site about human rights issues; some of his posts criticize politicians for contributing to **rape culture** and waging what he calls a "war on women".<sup>[1]</sup> However, he seems unconcerned with the human rights of disabled people (see "Incidents").

## Incidents

- Stallman has [made many posts](#) sympathizing with efforts to legalize some forms of child pornography. Among other things, they stated that he was "skeptical of the claim that voluntarily [sic] pedophilia harms children". These comments were [defended by his supporters on Slashdot](#). As of 2016, there are reports of Stallman changing his views on the matter within the previous few years.<sup>[2]</sup>
- For many years, Richard has been doing a schtick about "St. Ignatius" that involves **Sexist humor**. His performance of this shtick in July 2009 sparked the **EMACS virgins joke** incident.
- The "St. Ignatius" routine mentioned above has been performed relatively unchanged since the early 90s, as [a commenter recounts](#) on a blog post about the **EMACS virgins joke**. The commenter writes about seeing the routine when she was only 15, and how RMS singled her out several times during that performance:

He actually pointed to me in the back and proclaimed, into the mic, "A GIRL!" causing the audience to turn and look. Mortifying. Then he proceeded to gesture toward me every time he referred to "EMACS Virgins." (I cannot believe that he is still doing the same talk 10+ years later.)

- Rather than handing out business cards, Richard has "pleasure cards" which describe his personal interests, including "tender embraces". He hands these out to people of any gender, but what may appear whimsical to men who receive them may seem creepy to women. A scan of one of these cards appears in [the epilogue to Free as in Freedom](#).
- In 1993, [he asked for](#) birth announcements to be banned from emacs mailing list, unless they are announcements for seahorses, because then it would be the male that gives birth and therefore interesting.
- In a [2007 interview](#), he said:

I don't have any experience working with women in programming projects; I don't think that any volunteered to work on Emacs or GCC.

A number of women have contributed to GCC, including:

- [Janis Johnson](#) maintains the test suite and has been a contributor since 2001
- [Sandra Loosemore](#) is the lead author of the *GNU Library Reference Manual*,<sup>[3]</sup> RMS is listed as her co-author.
- [Dorit Nuzman](#) made major contributions to loop scheduling and vectorization.
- [Carolyn Tice](#) is also [mentioned](#) as a contributor.
- In September 2016, [he likened people with Down Syndrome](#) to pets:

If you'd like to love and care for a pet that doesn't have normal human mental capacity, don't create a handicapped human being to be your pet. Get a dog or a parrot...

The text has [since been changed](#), but still implies that people with Trisomy 21 should not be born.

## References

- ↑ <https://stallman.org/civillibertiesminute/>
- ↑ [Diff from Wikipedia debate](#)
- ↑ [Loosemore, Sandra](#), Richard M. Stallman (2001). *GNU Library Reference Manual*. Free Software Foundation. ISBN 9781882114559.

## Further reading

- [Interview with Richard Stallman: Women and Free Software](#)

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