



| FEMINIST  
| FREQUENCY

**2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**MISSION STATEMENT..... PAGE 2**

**LETTER FROM ANITA..... PAGE 3**

**YEAR IN REVIEW..... PAGE 6**

- *Games Hotline..... page 6*
- *Podcasts..... page 9*
- *Twitch Streaming..... page 10*
- *Champions..... page 11*
- *Shows and Podcasts..... page 12*
- *Events..... page 13*
- *In the Media..... page 14*
- *Charity and Fundraising..... page 15*

**LOOKING FORWARD..... PAGE 16**

**WHO WE ARE..... PAGE 17**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... PAGE 18**





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# MISSION STATEMENT

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Feminist Frequency believes media has the power to change the world and we have the power to change media. We do this through challenging harmful media representations, questioning who has the opportunities to create the media we love and interrogating the conditions under which creators work and media is created.

Guided by our core values of justice, intersectionality, accessibility, and advocacy, we are dedicated to ending toxicity and abuse in the games industry and gaming spaces at large. We recognize systems and structures that fail to serve and actively harm the most vulnerable among us must be rebuilt on a foundation of justice, accountability, and care.

Feminist Frequency is dedicated to fighting for a games industry free of toxicity and harassment, which treats marginalized groups with fairness and justice. Together, we can make games a better place to work and play.

# LETTER FROM ANITA



It's beginning to feel like these letters always start with some version of, "Wow, this was a hard year." Yet, as I reflect on 2021, the same words come to mind. This was the year of trying to normalize what it means to live in a long-term pandemic, of surviving climate catastrophes, of battling conservative governments who are actively trying to make conditions unsafe and worse for the most marginalized among us. And these struggles don't even begin to touch on the hardships we've been experiencing specifically in the games sphere: from long-term labor exploitation, to abusive workplaces, to hate raids on Twitch and other streaming platforms. I think it's fair to say that this can feel overwhelming, if not at times insurmountable.

So let me share some things to celebrate: 2021 marks the one-year anniversary of the Games and Online Harassment Hotline. It's been incredible to see the growth of our dream to provide emotional support to folks who make and play games. It's been validating and fascinating to see the different ways the Hotline is used by the community, and we've let the community guide how we improve and build the service.

Something that surprised the whole team was when we began to receive messages from users talking about how they have caused harm. While we are a service that is committed to a survivor-centered approach, we also know that harm is cyclical, cultural, and relational. So we've learned how to simultaneously offer support to people who have caused harm while also encouraging accountability.

Our agents are continuously training and learning how to have these nuanced and complex conversations, and we are looking to build more robust resources for people who are genuinely seeking help in making things right, changing behavior, and preventing future harm. It's been really hard; we haven't been perfect; and at the same time, it gives us a lot of hope.



Beyond the Games Hotline, which offers support to individuals, we are also engaging with the systemic side of things. Over and over, we've heard from managers and leaders across games that they did not feel equipped to handle concerns about gender-based harm or discrimination that could be occurring in their workplaces. So, for over a year now, we've been building a workplace training for the games industry. We've officially partnered with Take This, an incredible nonprofit that focuses on mental health in gaming, to build a robust program that can help studios and companies create real, lasting, cultural change. I'm beyond thrilled to be able to bring this much needed resource to the industry and to have the most incredible partners in realizing this endeavor.



After spending so much time hearing about toxic workplaces and strategizing the creation of supportive and respectful working environments, we also had to look at our own workplace to examine our values and whether we were living them. One value that has risen to the surface for us is rest. And I don't just mean napping (although that is nice, too). We want to build a workplace that challenges white supremacist and capitalist notions of labor as much as we can, despite still living within these systems. Honoring this, we're experimenting with different ways to ensure we do not romanticize overworking, take substantial vacations, encourage days off as needed, work less hours when we can, rebel against the belief that everything is on fire all of the time, and challenge notions of urgency and the demand for fast-paced growth.

In a recent strategic planning meeting one of our board members sincerely asked me why I kept pushing to double the hours of the hotline. What if, instead, our goal this year was to be more mindful and intentional in our growth? The comment stunned me. We are so conditioned to move towards endless expansion. Especially when we care so much about the communities we serve. We often sacrifice our own wellbeing in the name of doing more. However, that's actually a detriment to the quality of service, sustainability of work, and ultimately the wellbeing of the community (of which, we are a part, as well). As we set goals for 2021 and beyond, we want our intentions and values for the community to reflect our intentions and values for our own workplace.

These are challenging times we live in, and it is challenging work we do. We are tremendously grateful for all of you who support us in this journey, understanding that it is not always linear or easy. You make it all worthwhile.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anita Sarkeesian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'n'.

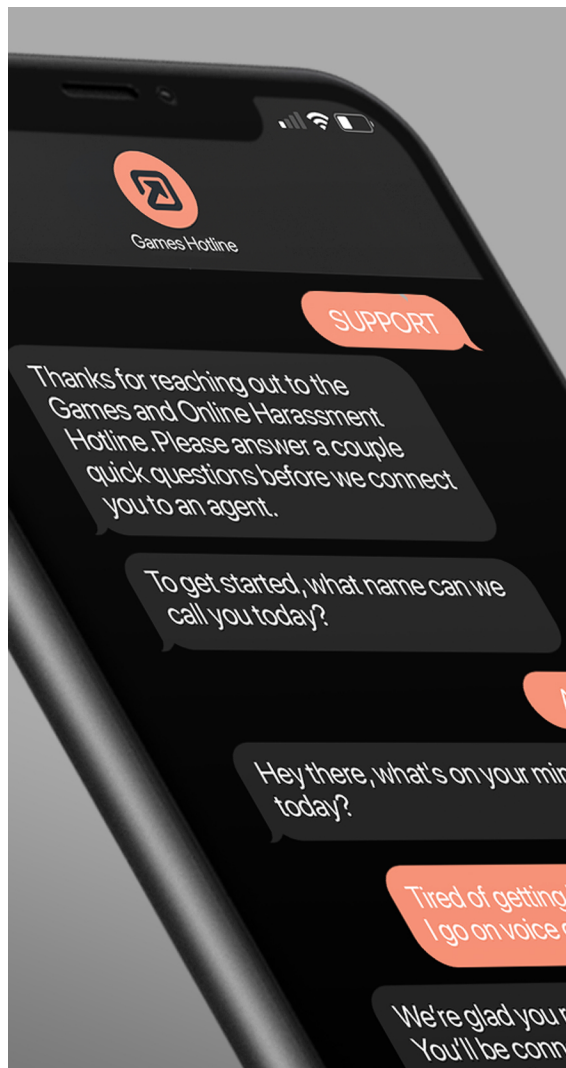
Anita Sarkeesian  
Executive Director



## The Games and Online Harassment Hotline

At this time last year, we had just launched the Games and Online Harassment Hotline. It was an ambitious project, requiring a monumental effort to provide training, prepare infrastructure, and build our own tech platform. This year, we continued to build on that foundation, improving our service, and persistently reacting and responding to the needs of the games community.

In May, we were thrilled to increase our community's access to the Games Hotline by nearly doubling our open hours. We started operating on weekends, and we also opened our lines an hour earlier each day. This expanded the time when the Hotline was open from 15 hours to 28 hours per week. This was based on our findings that folks were wanting to text us earlier in the day and on the weekends. We also adjusted our tech capabilities so that people could text SUPPORT to 23368 at any time of day, with the system then keeping the message in queue, rather than prompting them to text back during open Hotline hours. These adjustments radically improved the accessibility of the Games Hotline and resulted in more community members receiving the support they were seeking.



With these responsive expansions in place, we were ready to support the community when the Activision/Blizzard lawsuit hit the news in July. Our typical traffic increased three-fold that week, and our agents took extra shifts to respond to the need. We heard from so many folks impacted by the headlines and the powerful feelings they stirred: survivors of abuse over the last two decades, people currently experiencing toxic and harmful workplaces, bystanders and others frustrated by this industry they love, as well as new entries to the industry feeling terrified of what they may face.



**2021** has really shown us the necessity of compassionate, survivor-centered, community-responsive resources specific to the games industry and gaming spaces. The Games Hotline is dedicated to continuing to hone our effectiveness in supporting folks experiencing online and in-game harassment, having constructive and nuanced conversations with folks dealing with community and interpersonal conflicts and harmful situations, and bolstering access to mental health resources and care.

## What have folks been texting us about?

At this time last year, we had just launched the Games and Online Harassment Hotline. It was an ambitious project, requiring a monumental effort to provide training, prepare infrastructure, and build our own tech platform. This year, we continued to build on that foundation, improving our service, and persistently reacting and responding to the needs of the games community.

## How have we helped?

It has been really fulfilling to us, seeing all the ways the Hotline really works for the community. Often, folks will express clear gratitude for how helpful it was, having the space to work through their concerns. Some have told us that the Games Hotline really helped pull them out of a spiral. Others found it really useful to have someone present that could offer space in which to untangle their jumbled thoughts, especially during bouts of anxiety and frustration. For others, we gave them the opportunity to just tell someone what was going on, without fear of retaliation or escalation, and that was enough.

Over and over, we heard from people using the Hotline that our specificity to games, and understanding of at least some of the cultural context of their experience, was immensely special. Many left our conversations feeling empowered to decide what the best path to take for themselves moving forward.

## What surprised us?

We did not anticipate that so many people who had caused harm would be reaching out to us, seeking emotional support and safety resources, often after facing consequences, threats, or being kicked out of community or industry spaces. It was a big decision moment for us to determine what path we would pursue: whether to slam the door on these folks, or to extend compassion and resources to people who have caused harm.

Walking down that latter path has been perhaps the more challenging option, but has proven a game-changing decision for us. It felt in line with our understanding that the problem of harassment is not about individual bad apples but a cultural and systemic issue. At the same time, we wanted to make sure we were also holding onto our values of accountability and breaking cycles of harm. You can read more about how we approached this issue and incorporated it into our training and service in our blog post.



## Who texts us?

The majority of folks seeking support are gamers and games industry workers. We also get texts from streamers, influencers, community moderators, and students seeking to enter the industry.

## What have folks been texting us about?

From the number and variety of people we heard from, with different stories and describing many types of toxic situations, what began to stand out to us was just how relational online harassment is. Yes, there are the attacks from strangers—slurs thrown around in game lobbies, or online dogpiling and other similar veins of harassment—but overwhelmingly we heard from people who were in conflict with friends, being bullied by classmates, dealing with fallouts within Discord servers, in fights with roommates, or struggling with colleagues. Within these personal, professional, and parasocial relationships online harassment plays a role and creates the need for a games specific support resource like the Games Hotline

And so we've been working on better ways to respond and support folks in these multi-faceted and nuanced conversations. Yes, we keep our eyes on the way that systemic and cultural factors play their roles in what online harassment looks like, but at the same time we need to remember to center the humanity in these experiences. In a big way, this drives home for us just how interconnected we all are in this community, and how often the challenges we face are about the way we treat each other—especially those closest to us.

## Hotline Testimonials

“This is actually really nice if you are a gamer or any of that sort! They are there to help you and listen. Any time you need an ear or advice, they are there.”

“I have used Games & Online Harassment Hotline and they were super supportive and their advice constructive.”

“The person who messaged me really heard me out. They gave me lots of hope for the future when I felt there was none.”





## | Podcasts

### Feminist Frequency Radio



Can you believe we've been running FFR for four years now!?! Our flagship podcast continues to look at media, new and old, and interrogate it from an intersectional feminist perspective. This year, our co-host Carolyn Petit accepted an amazing opportunity to work at the gaming website Kotaku. Unfortunately that also meant losing her from our long-running co-hosting triad. While we certainly miss her, this loss presented us a different opportunity to engage an exciting variety of guest co-hosts through the rest of the year, resulting in many wonderful episodes full of unique and insightful perspectives. Moving into 2022, we'll be experimenting with some new formats. Keep expecting great things from FFR!

### Feminist Frequency Star Trek Podcast



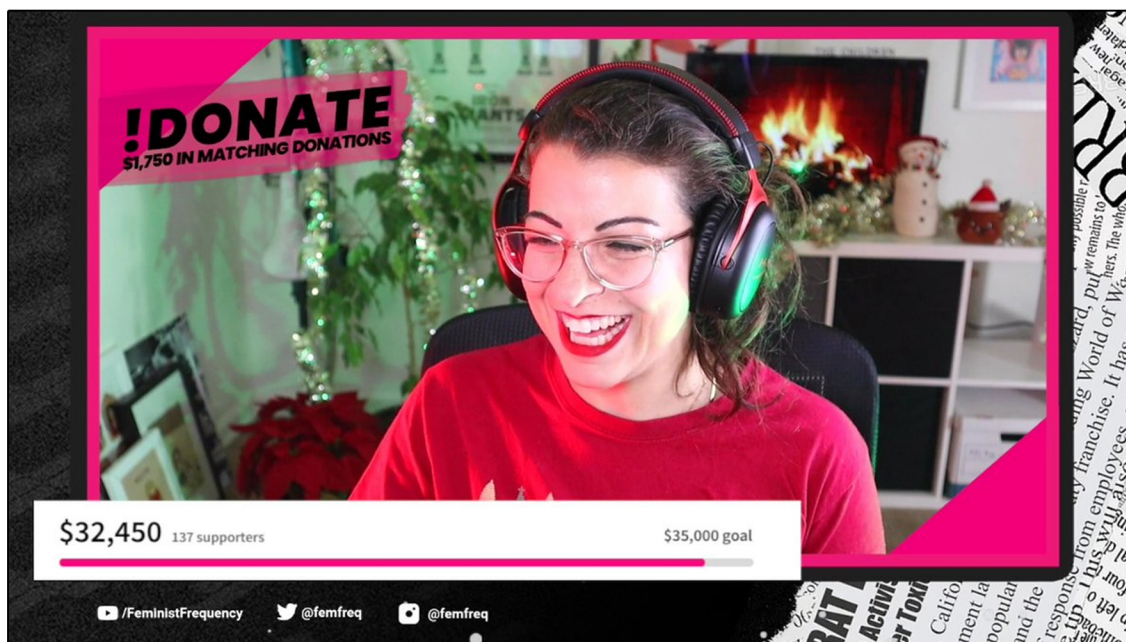
At the end of 2021, Star Trek Discovery came back for a fourth season and so did we! We couldn't resist diving into what it means to have the first Black female captain of a starship, the trans and nonbinary representation baked into the whole show (not just inserted as a b-plot somewhere in one episode), the refreshingly up-front focus and progressive modeling of mental health, and just how much joy Discovery is giving us far, far in the future. Our biweekly podcast recapping the episodes with fantastic guests is such a nerdy pleasure!



## | Twitch Streaming

Twitch is an important platform in the games space where many in the community go to engage with gaming and connect with others. In 2021 we prioritized reestablishing a regular streaming calendar to better engage with our own FemFreq community, as well as to connect with new games community members. The wonderful thing about regularly streaming video games is that you regularly get to play them! We've had a delightful time this year with our Thursday evening streams. We kept the Anita & Friends streams (borne out of the 2020 End of Year campaign) going for the first half of the year. Anita played multiplayer games like Valheim, Don't Starve Together, and Devotion with friends once a month, and delightful antics ensued.

We had a HUGE party for our birthday in May. We invited 12 streamers (for each of Feminist Frequency's 12 years) to stream on our channel for 24 hours, and it was an absolute blast. With so many wonderful faces and friends, new and old, it felt like such a loving celebration of a special year.



In October, we started streaming on a weekly basis. We pulled in other FemFreq team members, including Jae, Asa, Aaron, and Jon, creating an exciting roster of varying games, energy, and personality each week. It's been invigorating and fulfilling in so many ways, and we're greatly appreciative of our lovely Twitch community, which shows up for all of our myriad schemes.



## Games Hotline Champions

Games Hotline Champions are our community representatives, using their unique voice to spread the word about the Games and Online Harassment Hotline in the communities where they work and play. As a Games Hotline Champion, they use their platform to stand up against systemic prejudices, fight stigma against mental health, and push for a games community that is more compassionate and inclusive.



We launched the Champions program in October with Mxiety, a streamer who runs a highly interactive mental health talk show with expert interviews, personal stories, discussions, cozy games, and an amazing community. She's proven a phenomenal inaugural Champion, providing consistent support towards building up this program.



Nikatine is a rock-n-roll roleplayer, variety streamer, and VTuber whose dedication to the trans community and passion for performance has garnered industry recognition across both Twitch and major media publications. She's an official Twitch ambassador, and one of her biggest motivations as a creator is being able to reach other trans people and normalizing the trans experience for cis folks.



Tanya DePass is the founder and director of I Need Diverse Games, a not-for-profit organization based in Chicago. She's part of Rivals of Waterdeep, an actual play D&D show on Twitch. She is also the programming coordinator for OrcaCon and GaymerX, and often speaks on issues of diversity, feminism, race, intersectionality, and other topics at conventions.



With December came our final new Champion for the year: Karim. Better known as KarimCheese, he's a 28-year-old Boston based content creator and variety streamer. Born and raised in Massachusetts, he gave up his dreams of pursuing professional soccer in order to fully invest in a streaming, anime, and content creation career in video games—his true first love.





## | Shows and Podcasts

The Feminist Frequency team found spotlights on a variety of streaming shows and podcasts:





## | Events

Just like 2020, events were tricky in 2021 with the continuing pressure of the pandemic; however, we still had plenty of opportunities to engage in awesome digital events:

Women in Film Laptop Cinema Club: Black Bear Q&A with actor/producer Aubrey Plaza, director Lawrence Michael Levine, and producers Julie Christeas and Jonathan Blitstein, moderated by Anita Sarkeesian  
**January 22, 2021**

Women in Film Laptop Cinema Club: Rebel Q&A with creator/executive producer Krista Vernoff, executive producer Erin Brockovich, and actor Katey Sagal, moderated by Anita Sarkeesian  
**April 6, 2021**

Waffle Games with Jae Lin  
**April 9th, 2021**

Resilience & Safety: Pervasive Online Harassment workshop for the IGDA Foundation's Diverse Game Developers Fund Prototype Fund with Jae Lin and Leigh Honeywell  
**July 6, 2021**

PAX West Am I Geek Enough? People of Marginalized Genders in Gaming with Jae Lin  
**September 15, 2021**

Gaming for a Greater World: A Conversation with Anita Sarkeesian at the St. Norbert College Cassandra Voss Center  
**November 11, 2021**

XBOX Women in Gaming Meet and Greet with Anita Sarkeesian and Jae Lin  
**December 1, 2021**



## | In the Media

Check out these articles that Feminist Frequency and the Games Hotline were featured in:

*Team Liquid Win the First LCS Lock In Tournament 3-2 Over Cloud9*  
by Thomas Baker - **January 31, 2021**

**GamesIndustryBiz:** *Blizzard: "We want women shaping the future"*  
by James Batchelor - **March 22nd 2021**

**IGN:** *Six Days in Fallujah Is Complicated and Painful For Those  
Connected to the Real Events*  
by Rebekah Valentine - **March 31, 2021**

**Industry Gayming:** *The Games and Online Harassment Hotline Wants To Be A  
Supportive Ear For Gamers and Industry Professionals* - **May 25, 2021**

**GamesIndustryBiz:** *Tips from the Games and Online Harassment  
Hotline on stamping out toxicity in the workplace*  
by James Batchelor - **August 6, 2021**

**GamesIndustryBiz:** *Resources for victims of sexual harassment in the workplace*  
by Marie Dealessandri - **August 6th 2021**

**IGN:** *Geoff Keighley Opens The Game Awards With Condemnation of Industry Abuse*  
by Rebekah Valentine - **December 9, 2021**

**Newsweek:** *Why Paul Thomas Anderson's 'Licorice Pizza' Is Being Slammed Online*  
by Soo Kim - **December 14, 2021**



## I Charity and Fundraising

### **Charity Streaming**

We were deeply honored that a number of our community members chose to host charity streams to support us this year. Not only did they raise very impactful funds for us, they also did the crucial work of spreading awareness about the Hotline. With sincere gratitude to: Big Slice Gaming, The Good Batch, Cracker\_Jackd, Thenickluzzi, WoWing for Women, XANwithaplan, and Champria.gg.

### **Team Liquid**

For the inaugural LCS Lock In tournament, Team Liquid came out on top, defeating Cloud9 in a best-of-five League of Legends series in the finals. As victors, Team Liquid won the opportunity to award \$50,000 on behalf of Riot Games to a charity. We are overjoyed that the Games and Online Harassment Hotline was their choice.

### **Take Down Toxicity & Enough Already: Break the Cycles of Abuse in Gaming**

Through the grassroots support of our community and corporate partners, we raised \$80,195.07 this year via two successful crowdfunding campaigns. Thank you to the 594 donors, as well as Landfall Games, Devolver Digital, Double Fine, Krillbite, Panic, and Mighty Yell for supporting these efforts to expand the hotline hours, fund our games industry trainings, and provide resources to our community.

### **Craig Newmark Philanthropies**

Thank you to Craig Newmark Philanthropies for their grant in support of the Games and Online Harassment Hotline. Craig Newmark created this organization with the goal to support and connect people and drive broad civic engagement. Thank you for investing in our work to create a more inclusive games industry!

### **Patreon**

This year we launched our Feminist Frequency Amplifier monthly giving community. So far 160 awesome donors have signed on to boost our anti-abuse signal and help us turn up the volume on just and fair representation in the media. As the sustaining backbone of Feminist Frequency, Amplifiers get special perks and a bit of exclusive behind-the-scenes access to the FemFreq team. Thank you, Amplifiers!

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## Financial Information

As we continued through another difficult year of pandemic-related stress, we were inspired and heartened by the support of our individual donors and corporate partners. The Games and Online Harassment Hotline was able to provide much-needed support to people that make and play games, and our organization was able to set its sights on the future.

As 2022 approaches, thanks to support from generous grants and corporate donors, we have plans for growth, including: increasing the capacity of all of our programs, from podcasts to the Hotline, as well as tackling harassment and gender-based violence through direct corporate training programs alongside our partners at Take This.

We wish to offer the most sincere gratitude to our donors, who empower us to expand the mission and capabilities of our organization. This work would not be possible without you.

**Opening Balance: \$138,985.54**

### Revenue

Corporate Donations	\$82,400.03
Corporate Matching	\$5,165.48
Individual Donations	\$172,408.16
Grant Funding	\$65,000.00
Merch Sales	\$1,139.93
<b>Total Incoming Revenue</b>	<b>\$328,149.34</b>

### Expenditure

Programming	\$202,819.01
Administrative	\$24,184.14
Development	\$52,351.97
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$279,355.12</b>

**Ending Balance: \$176,909.54**



## | 2021 Team

### Team

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<b>Anita Sarkeesian</b> Executive Director	<b>Rob Pera</b> Audio Engineer
<b>Jae Lin</b> Programs Manager and Hotline Director	<b>Kerri Stimson</b> Podcast Support
<b>Asa GreenRiver</b> Marketing Manager	<b>Sarah Gulde</b> Finances
<b>Jon Arteaga</b> Social Media	<b>Aaron Williams</b> Graphic Design
<b>Caroline Rensel</b> Development	<b>Kortney</b> Social Media
<b>Ariel Glassman</b> Development	<b>Nell McKeown</b> Social Media
	<b>Bahar Jeldi</b> Development

### Board of Directors

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<b>Anita Sarkeesian</b> Co-Chair	<b>Ebony Adams</b>
<b>Felix Kramer</b> Co-Chair	<b>Maile Martinez</b>
<b>Mitu Khandaker</b> Secretary	<b>Carolyn Petit</b>
<b>Dave Proctor</b> Treasurer	<b>April Glass</b>
	<b>Kishonna Gray</b>

### Hotline Advisors

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**Kishonna Gray · Kat Lo · Eve Crevoshay**  
**Chris Le · Leigh Honeywell**

The support we've had from incredibly talented volunteers has been tremendous. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, expertise, and time with us.

**Representation Project**  
Data Analysis

**Jason Shapiro**  
Outreach

**Henry Nguyen**  
Outreach

**Johnny Blakesborough**  
Livestream Support

**Joe Trollo**  
Livestream Support

**August Bournique**  
Legal

**Wordpress VIP**  
Website Hosting  
and Development

**All the Games**  
Hotline Agents

Enormous thank you to all our Discord and Twitch Moderators who volunteer countless hours to help make our social spaces welcoming to our community.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Everything we do is lifted up, guided, and sustained by the voices, efforts, and contributions of so many people; none of this is done in a vacuum or alone. As always, we are constantly humbled and grounded by the integral support of all of the people who make our work possible and worthwhile.

Support from our Patreon community, individual donors, corporate supporters, granting bodies, and our monthly Amplifiers enables us to continue working towards an end to abuse in games.

The Games Hotline would not be possible without all of our Hotline agents, supervisors, and expertise advisors, as well as the peers and fellow organizations working with us in tandem to make games a better place to work and play. Y'all inspire us and offer guiding lights to all that we do.

And to all of our Twitch followers and community, to our phenomenal Twitch and Discord moderators, to our Hotline Champions, and to all our supporters who retweet and share our work with those in your circles. Thank you for being our messengers and sharing our work and purpose with an ever-growing community.

We are steeped in genuine gratitude for all of you.

Much obliged,  
The Feminist Frequency Team