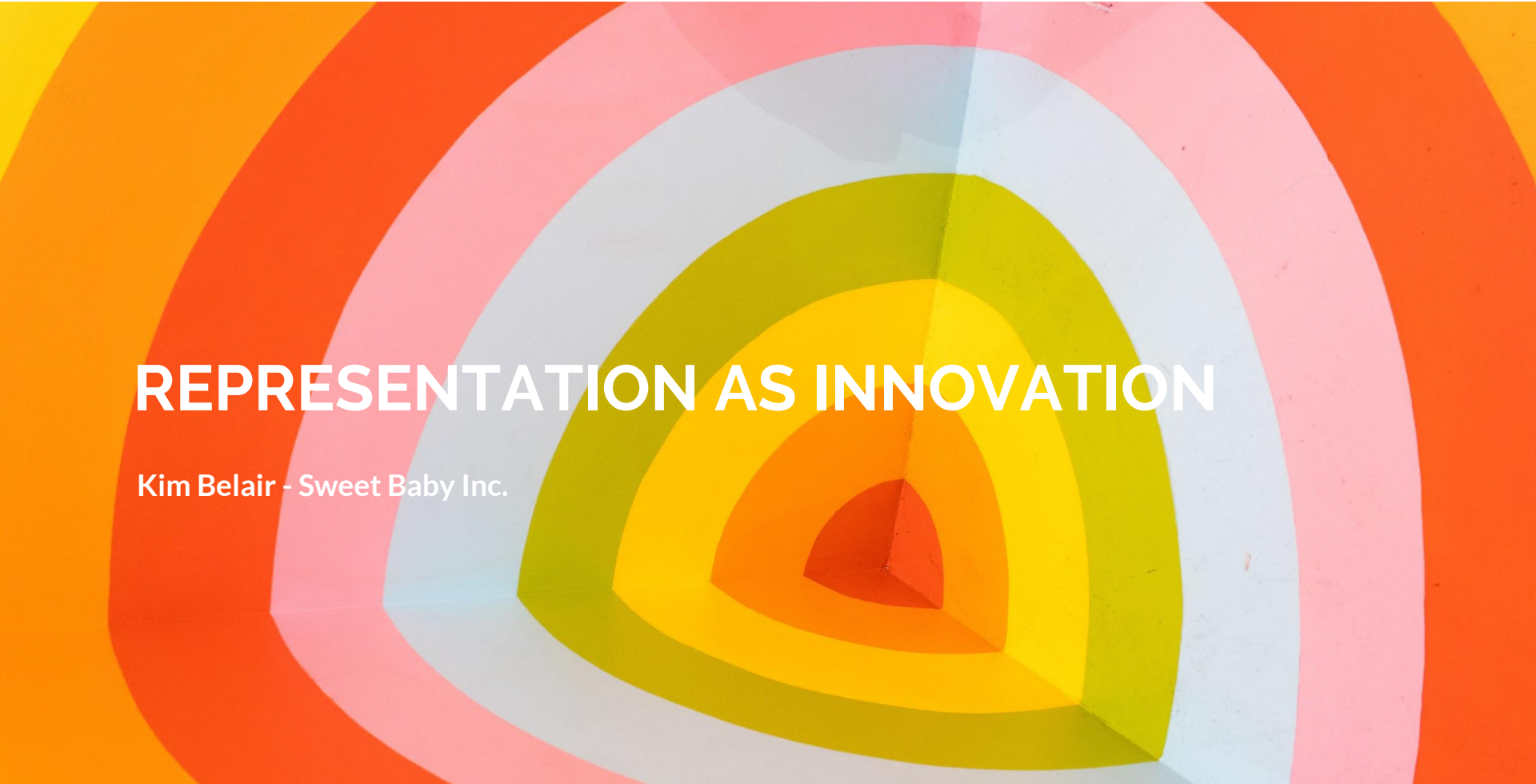
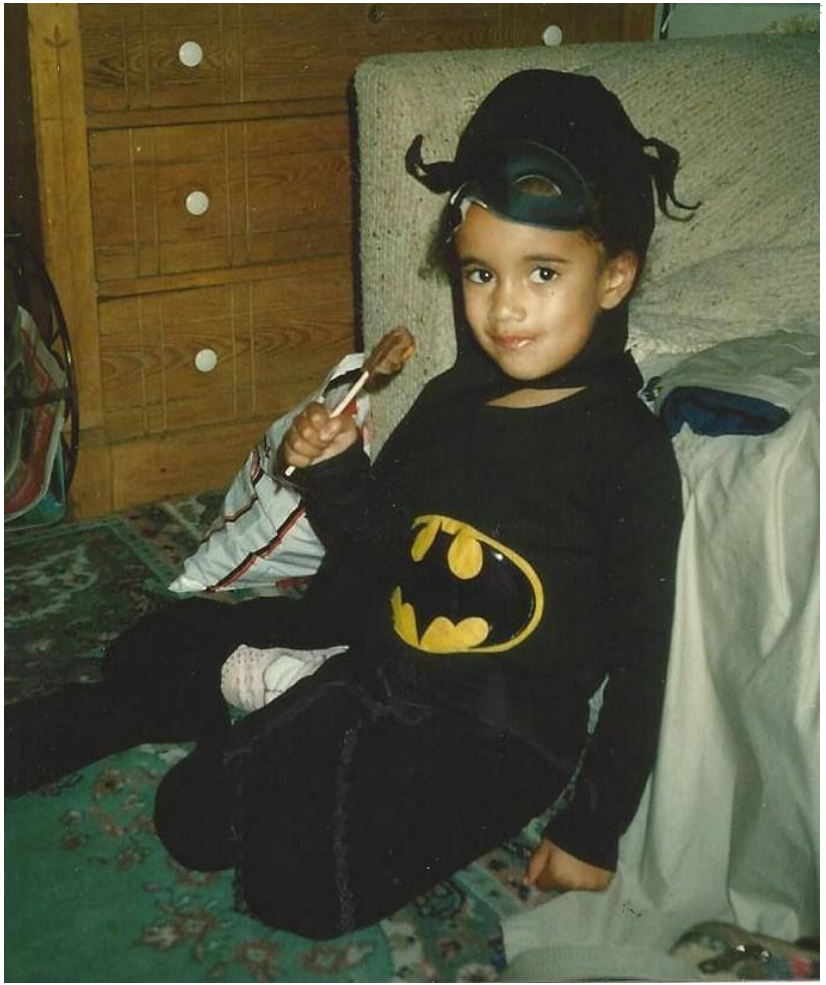


REPRESENTATION AS INNOVATION

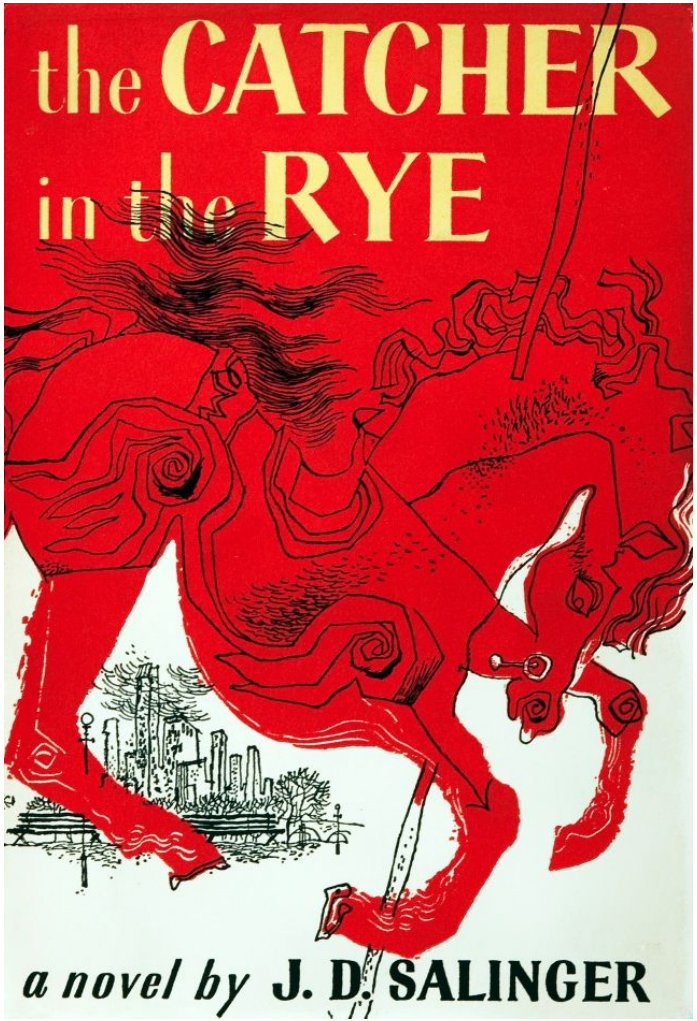
Kim Belair - Sweet Baby Inc.

Background on me



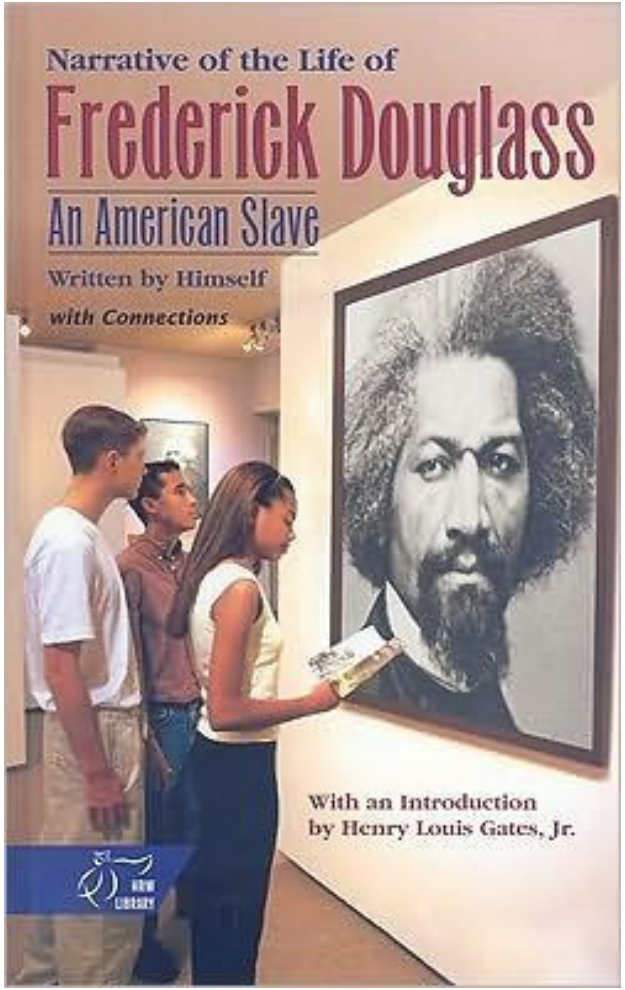
High School

White men = ART

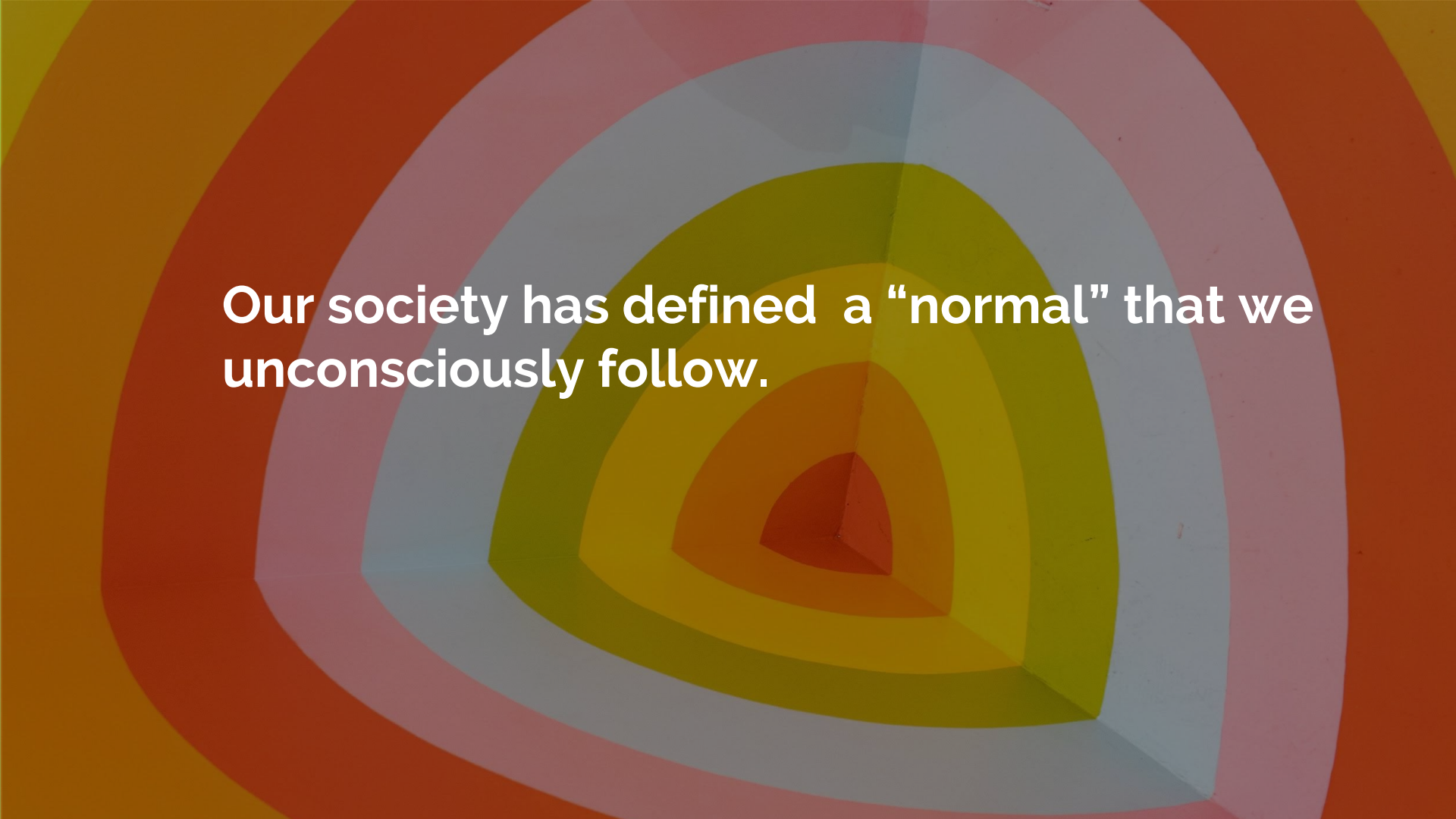


High School

Marginalized Authors = Genre



I'M MAKING ART NOW....??????


Our society has defined a “normal” that we unconsciously follow.

Our society has defined a “normal” that we unconsciously follow.

And so we manage representation as a deviation from what is normal.

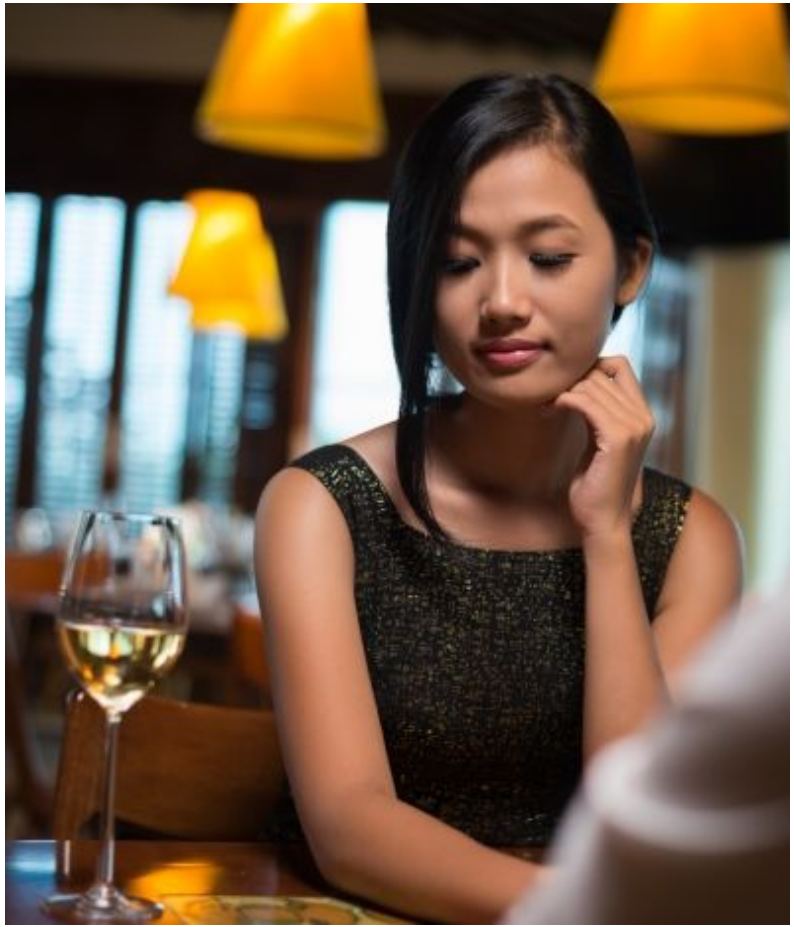
IT SUCKS.

BUT WE CAN DO BETTER.

Let's talk about
VIDEO GAMES!

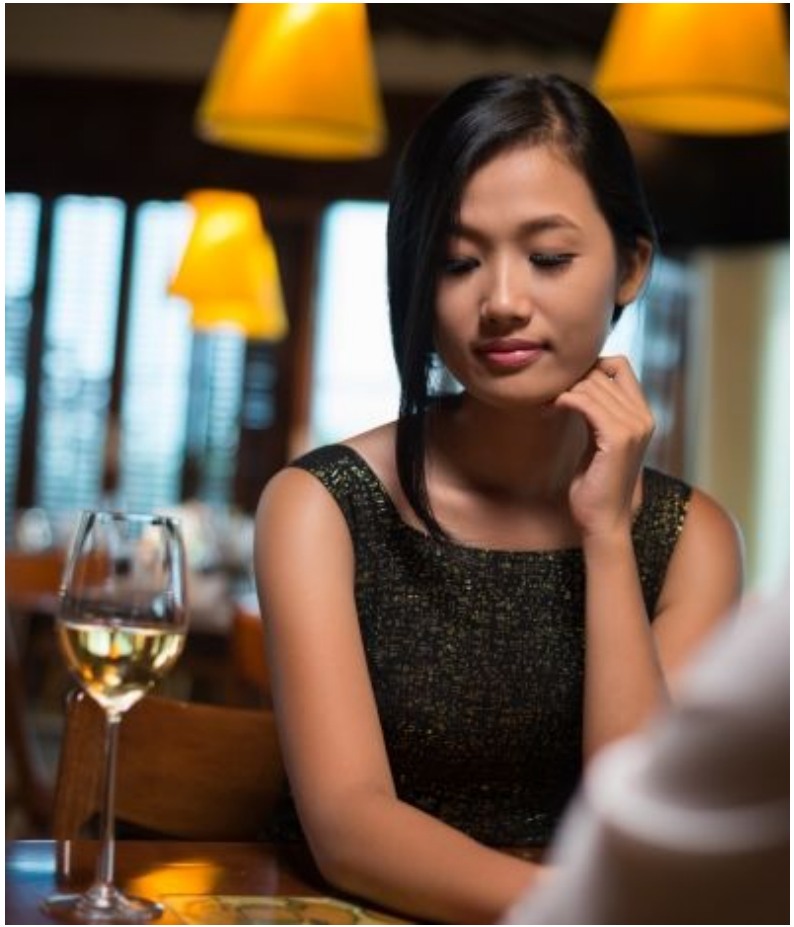
Risk Assessment & Sensitivity Reading

Dating Simulator



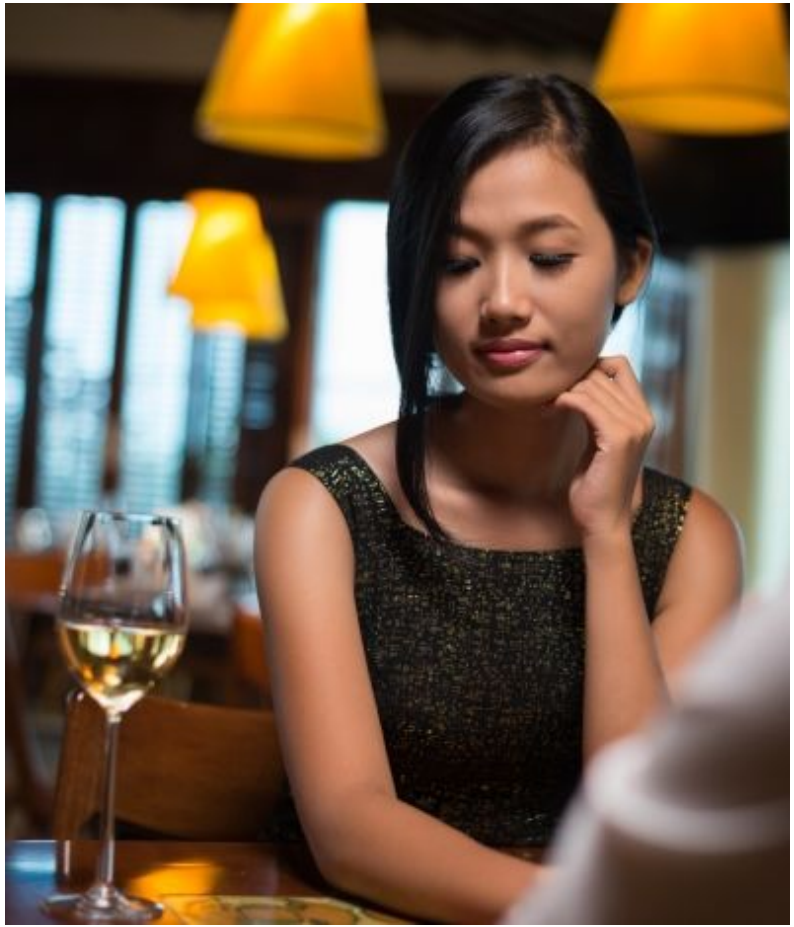
“... What was your ex like?”

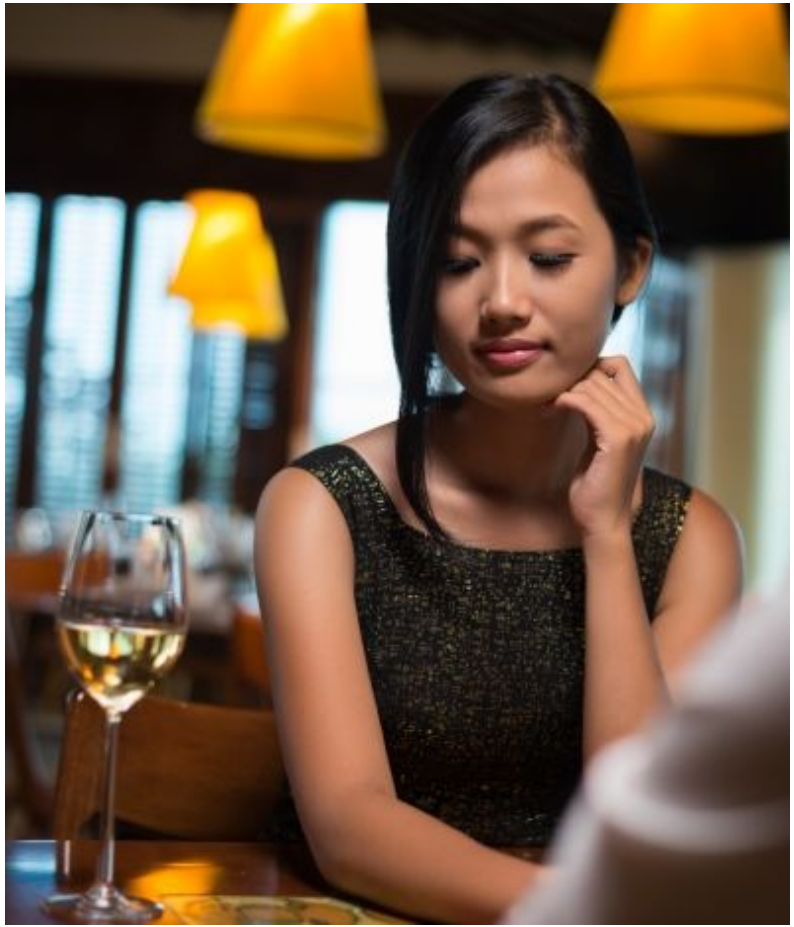
Dating Simulator



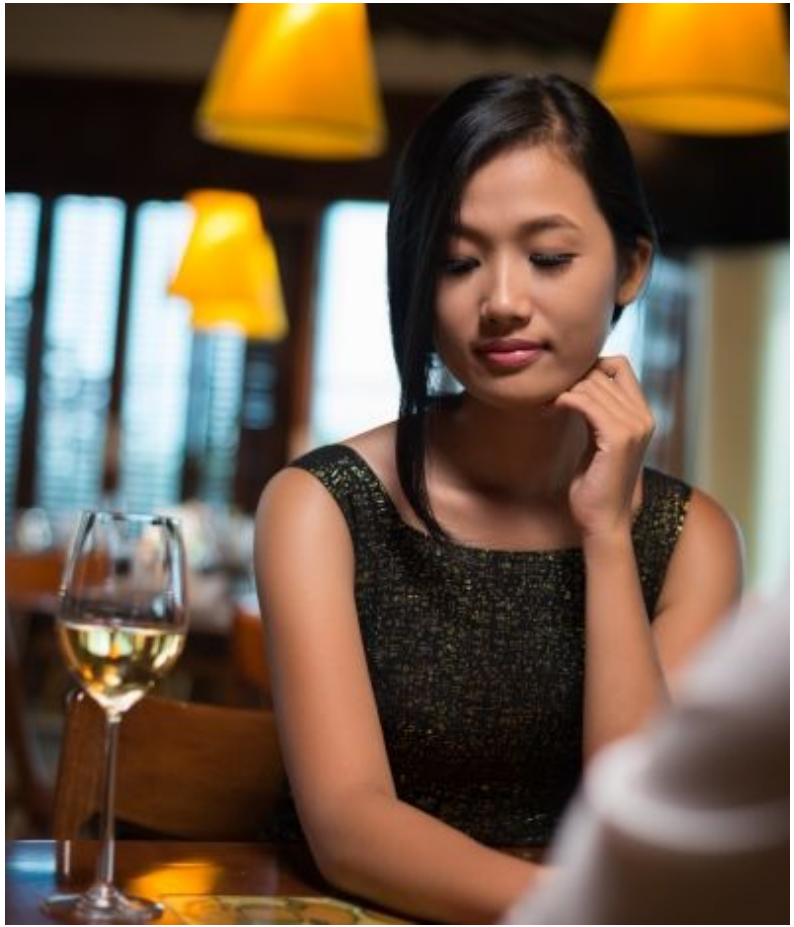
“My ex was a Monster.”

Dating Simulator





SOLVED



We had the chance to make women who have been victimized, see themselves in this game, but pulled back.

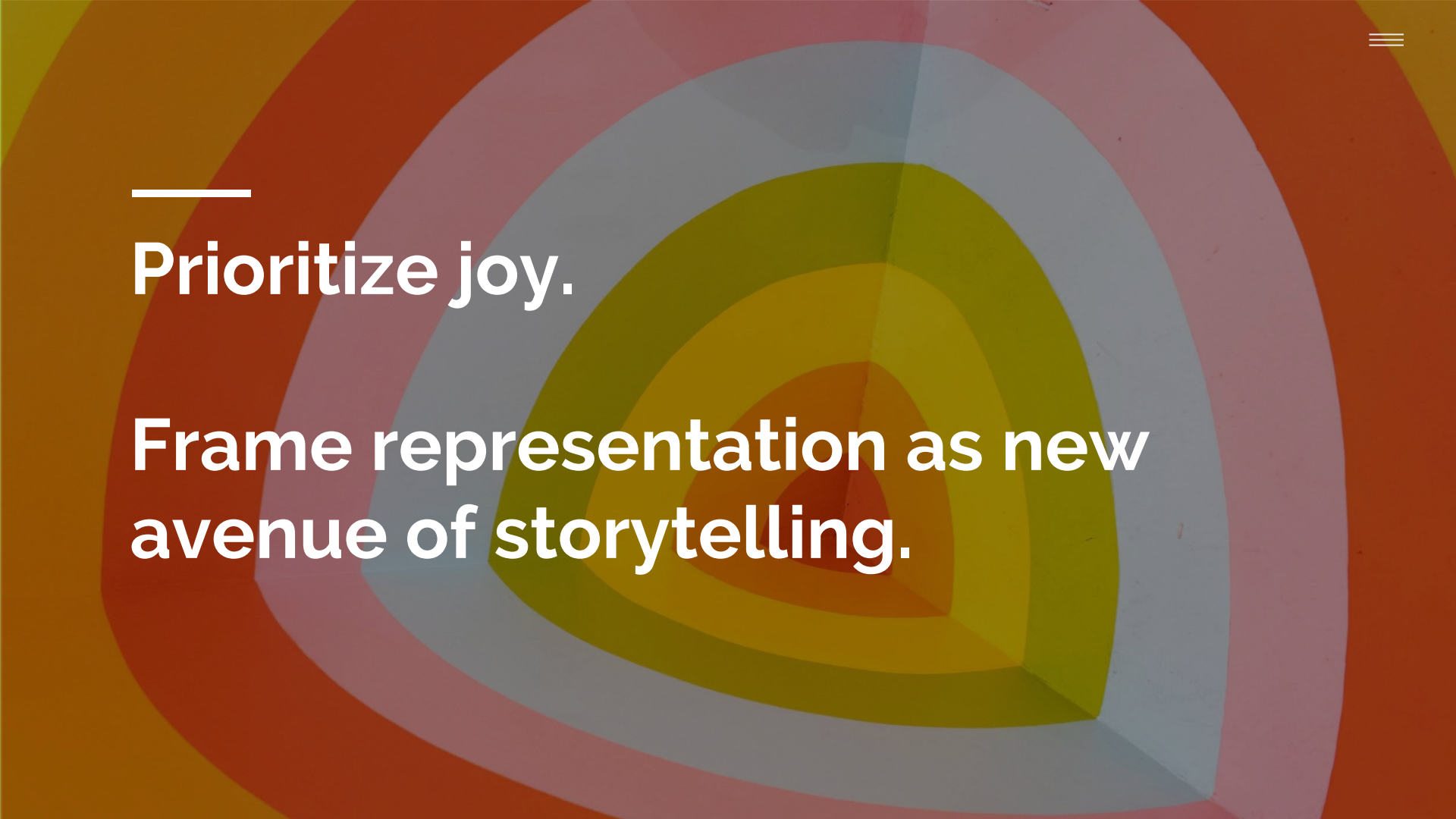
“Sensitivity Reader”

“Risk Assessment”

We sand down rough edges instead of shaping them into something new.

We always talk about mitigating pain.

We never talk about creating joy.

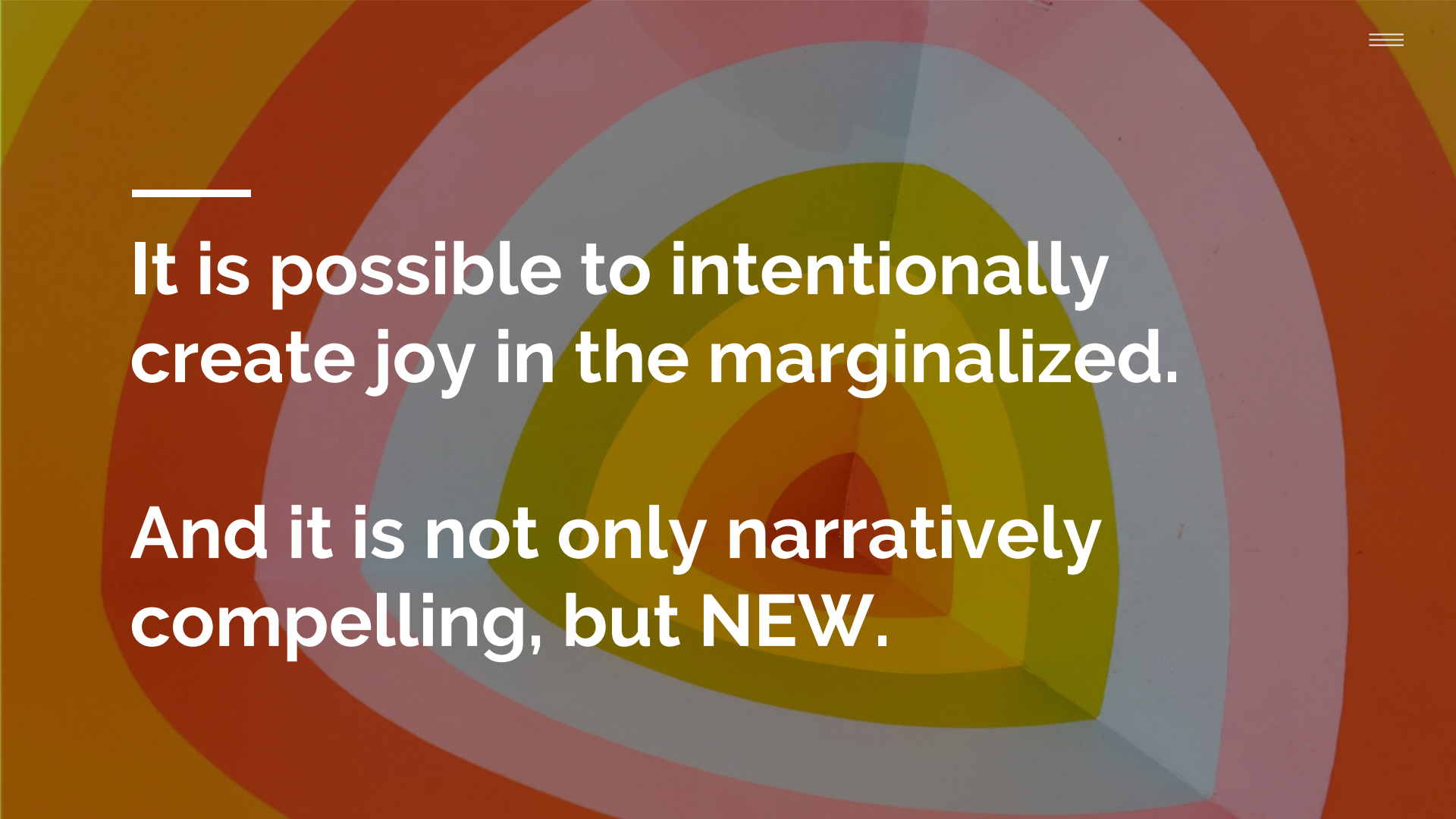

Prioritize joy.
Frame representation as new avenue of storytelling.

Representation as joy

Representation as joy

It was really really nice.

Wouldn’t it be amazing if this was an INTENTION?


It is possible to intentionally create joy in the marginalized.
And it is not only narratively compelling, but NEW.

Why aren’t we doing it?

(I really do have one.)

“This isn’t what players want”

We treat our core demographics like fixed values.

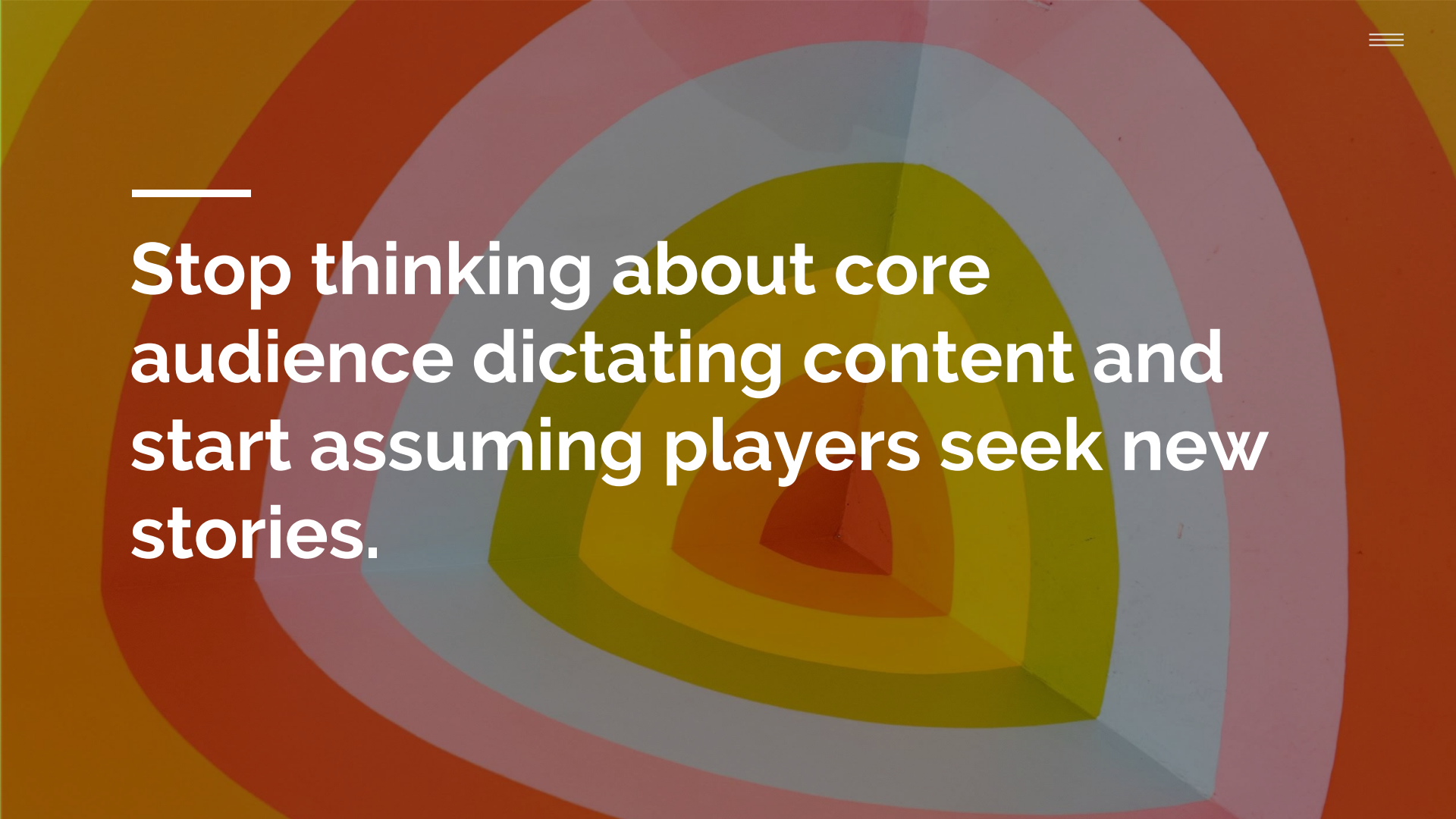
The Core Demographic

I want to do better than this.

We can’t create under a system that bars innovation for fear of a tantrum.

I have empathized with and felt for plenty of white protagonists.

(I love him.)


Stop thinking about core audience dictating content and start assuming players seek new stories.

Let’s take these discussions outside of Advocacy Track.

Let’s bring these discussions to narrative, gameplay, art, marketing and beyond.

What’s old to us can be innovative to someone else.

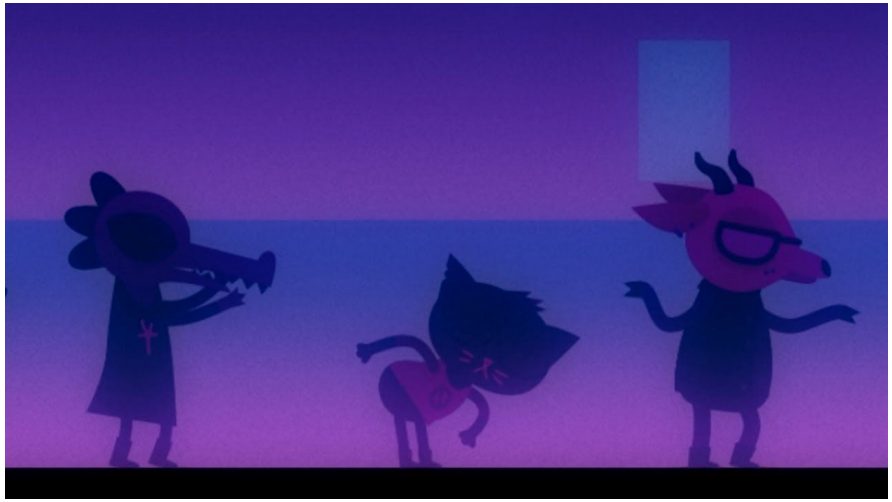
How do we do it?

How do we do it?

Build choices considering marginalized identities

How do we do it?

Telling stories that present rare and representative experiences



How do we do it?

Work on de-tokenizing our minority characters

What about institutionally?

Don’t be afraid to create moments designed to create joy in marginalized groups.

Bring in marginalized collaborators at the beginning and ask them how to make it great rather than less bad.

AAA: Build connections with marketing to express the value of inclusion.

Include diverse collaborators and consultants in your budget from the get-go. They are necessary.

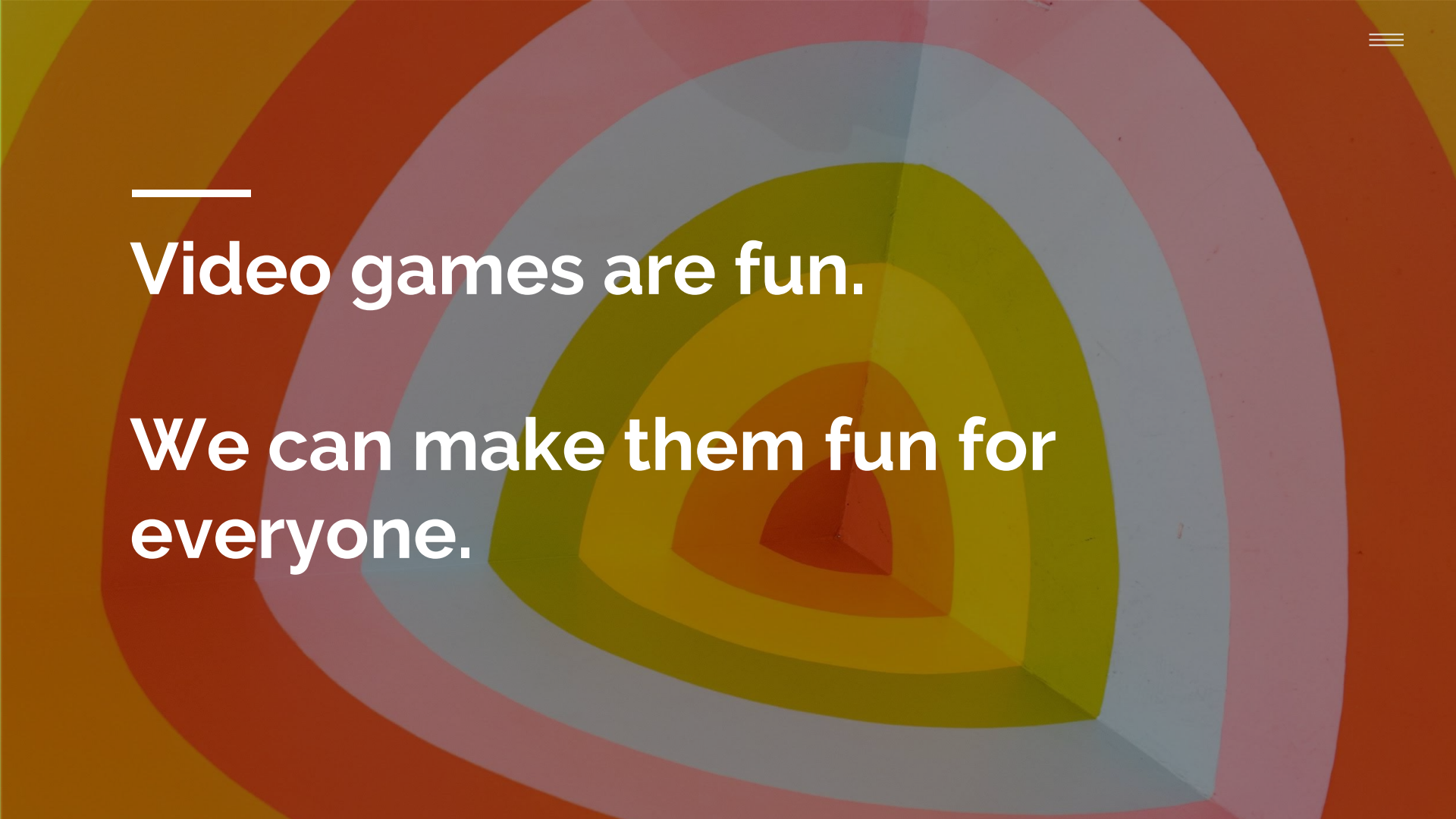
Marketing: Understand representation as a facet of innovation, and leverage it as such.

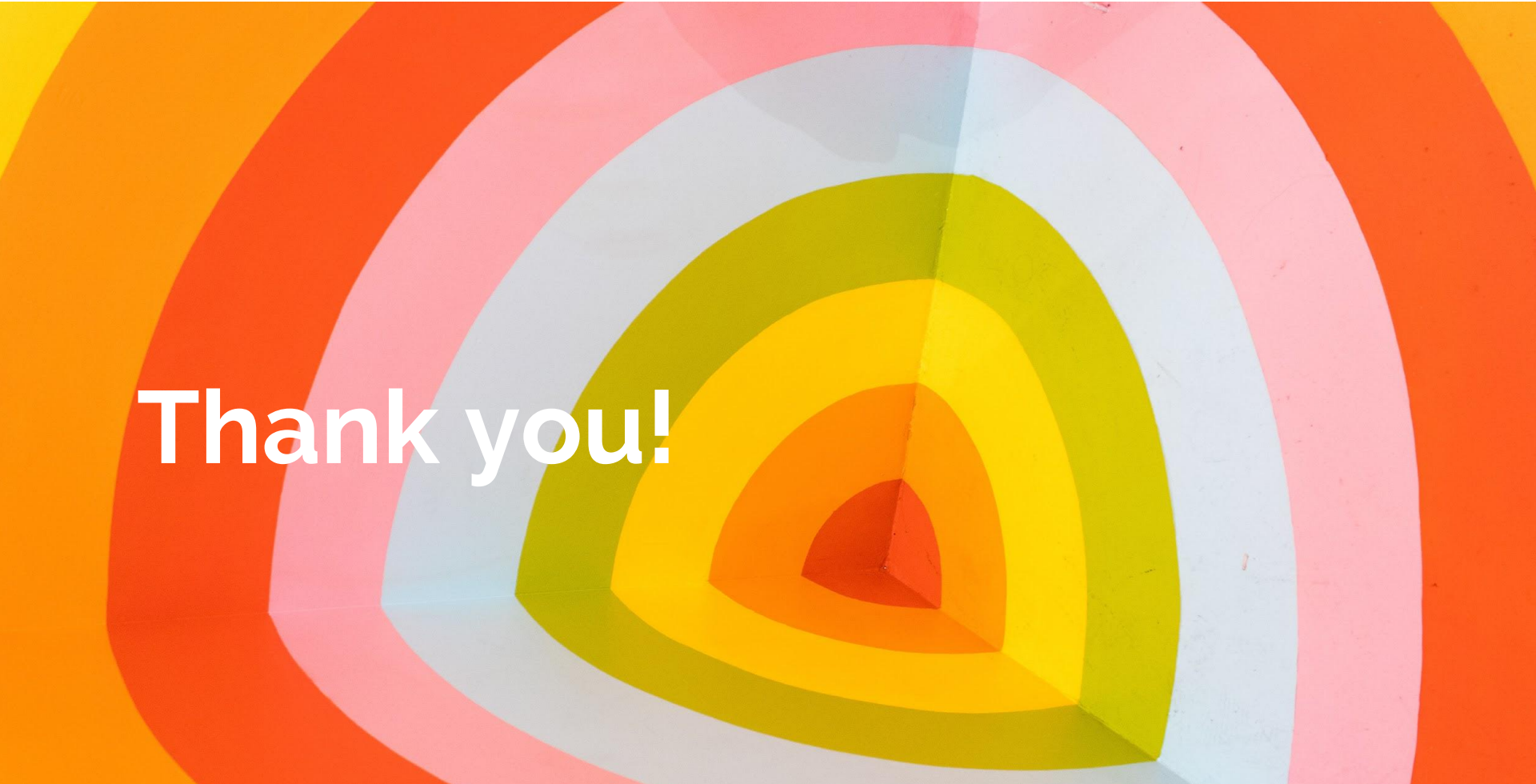
Everyone: Hire diverse creators and PAY THEM.

We actually have to care.

Those who are part of marginalized groups, I hear you and recognize your work.

Those of you who aren't, be brave and empathetic and open yourselves up to voices you don't hear enough.


Video games are fun.
We can make them fun for everyone.


Thank you!