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Removing Racially Charged Language from Technology

Kevin A. McGrail
Principal Evangelist, Dito

Introduction

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Principal Evangelist, Dito

Google Workspace TC, GDE & Ambassador

https://www.linkedin.com/in/kmcgrail

The Apache Software Foundation

The Apache Software Foundation is a 501(c)(3) Charity often referred to as just Apache or the ASF.

501(c)(3) Charity not a 501(c)(6) Trade Organization

We're known for the HTTP server and the Apache Software License (ASLv2)

ASF Mission

To provide software for the public good.

*We do this by providing
services and support for many
diverse software project
communities of individuals AT NO CHARGE.*

Meritocracy

What we are is a Meritocracy. To be able to have a say, you have to prove your worth in a system of merit **as judged by the community.**

Meritocracy is a key part of "The Apache Way" which is our amorphous, ever evolving guiding principles

Inclusion

Merit does NOT depend on Age, Sex, Religion, Ethnicity, Race, Country of Origin, Sexual Preference, Social Status, Income Level, Lineage, and/or Physical / Cultural Traits*.

* Bonus points if you read Terry Pratchett or can code in Iambic Pentameter. Negative points if you like cats more than dogs.

APACHE **MERITOCRACY**   APACHE **APACHE**.org

APACHE **do I.T. like a girl**   APACHE **APACHE**.org

Inclusion is Important

Community Over Code

Racially charged language is a
barrier to inclusion

The Problem: Racially Charged Language

Pervasive & Forgotten

I discovered examples of racially charged language
that I had not given enough thought about:

Cotton-Picking
Gyp
Peanut Gallery
Paddy Wagon
Eenie Meenie Miney Moe
Cretins
Grandfather clause
No can do
Uppity

Apache SpamAssassin

A Scoring Framework, API, & Program to Stop Spam

Uses terms of Whitelist, Blacklist, Master, & Slave
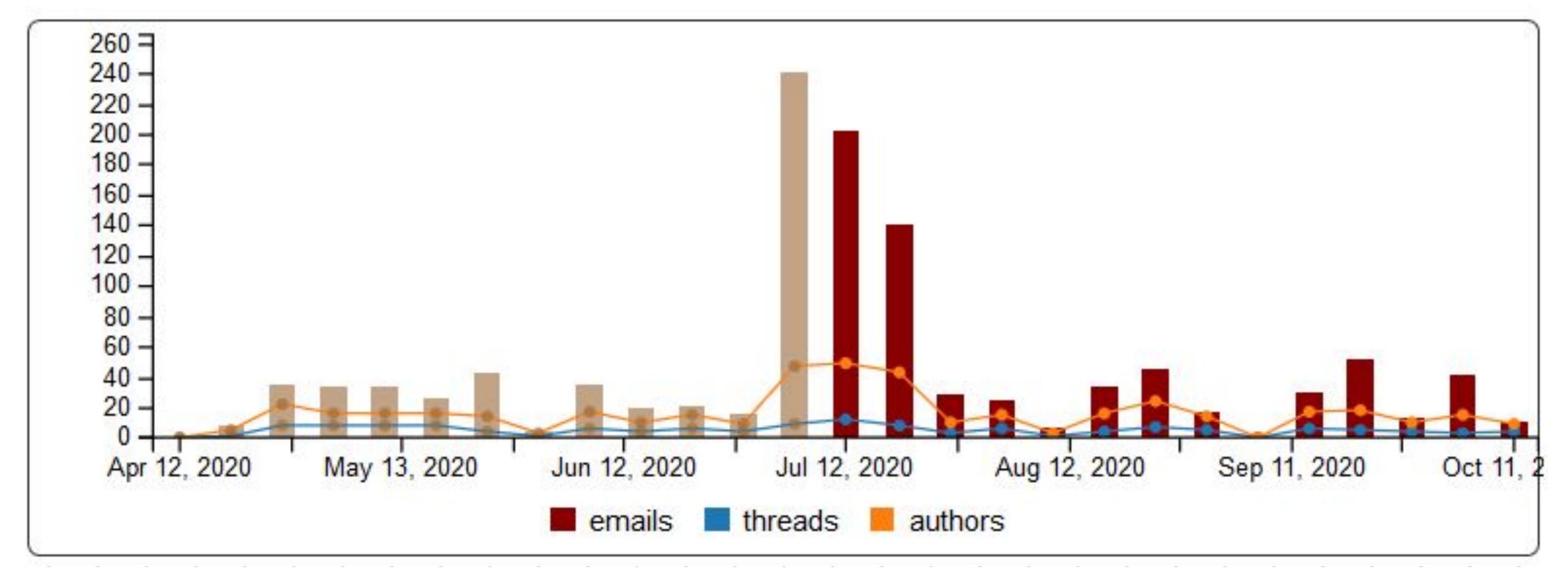
Remastering the Language

The Apache SpamAssassin Project recognized and started remastering our language as early as 2011

https://www.zdnet.com/article/uk-ncsc-to-stop-using-whitelist-and-blacklist-due-to-racial-stereotyping/

Evolve the language with Style: We use block list and welcome list to avoid breaking a billion acronyms.

Merriam Webster added Dumpster Fire to the Dictionary in 2018

Opposed by a Very Vocal Minority

KAM's
Conclusion

DNFTEC

DO NOT FEED
THE ENERGY CREATURE

Source: Tim Freeman, 28 May 1996

http://www.cryonet.org/cgi-bin/dsp.cgi?msg=6284

Break What *IS* Broken

It's never the wrong time
to do the right thing.

by Martin Luther King, Jr

Broke the Break/Fix Cycle

Has taken much more resources than expected because any error in the code makes the naysayers vocal
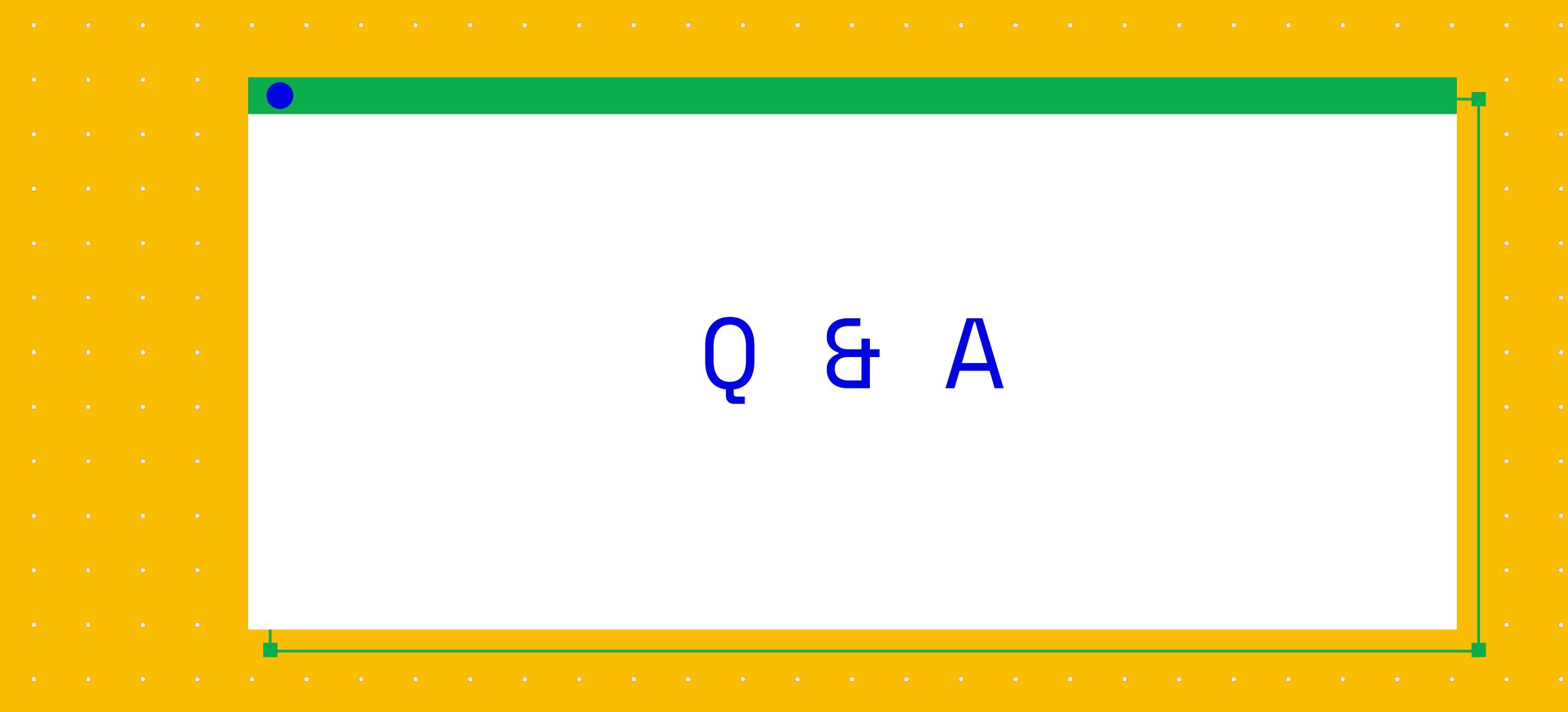
Support is appreciated
https://www.mcgrail.com/

Some Resources

https://guardiandigital.com/blog/apache-spamassassin-leads-a-growing-list-of-open-source-projects-taking-steps-to-correct-instances-of-racism-and-white-privilege

https://www.duncannisbet.co.uk/removing-harmful-language-from-my-lexicon

https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/10/21/239081586/the-racial-history-of-the-grandfather-clause

https://thenewstack.io/words-matter-finally-tech-looks-at-removing-exclusionary-language/

Q & A

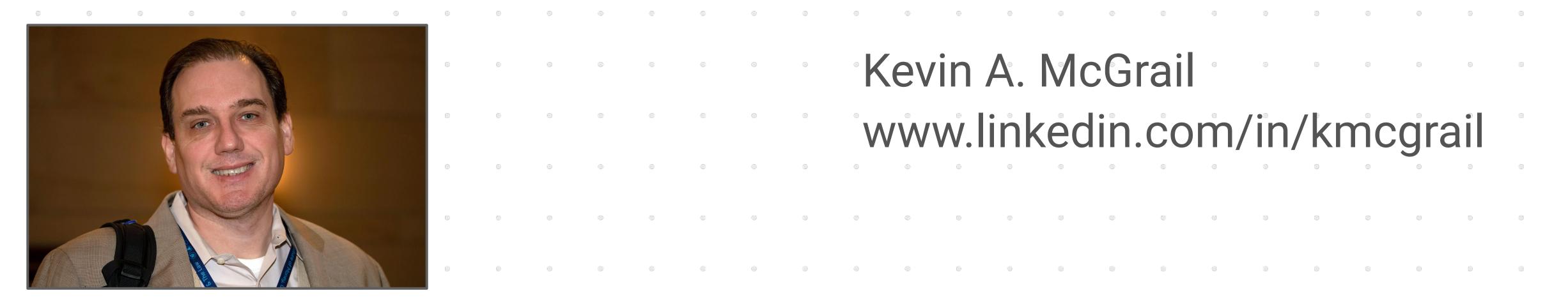# Thanks!

Slides will be on KAM's LinkedIn &
mcgrail.com/downloads

Kevin A. McGrail
www.linkedin.com/in/kmcgrail