

# The Internet IS Political

It's Easy To Be "Apolitical" When  
You're the Default

She/Her

**Kim Crayton**

@KimCrayton1 | [hashtagcauseascene.com](https://hashtagcauseascene.com)

**Let's define terms**

**Privilege Is About**

**Access**



@KimCrayton1

#AntiracistEconomist



**Underrepresented  
Is About**

**Numbers**



**MARGINALIZED**

**Is About**

**Treatment**

The background of the image is a dense, overlapping pattern of numerous paint cans. Each can is filled with a different vibrant color, including shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and pink. The cans are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and variety. Overlaid on this background is a semi-transparent dark blue rectangular area that serves as a backdrop for the text.

**Diversity**  
**Is About**

**Variety**



**Inclusion**

**Is About**

**Experience**

**Inclusion != = Equality**

**Inclusion != = Quotas**

**Inclusion === Lived  
Experience**

#causeascene

# Guiding Principles:

Tech Is Not Neutral, Nor is it Apolitical

Intention Without Strategy Is Chaos

Lack of Inclusion is a Risk/Crisis Management Issue

Prioritize the Most Vulnerable

**Tech Is Not  
Neutral, Nor Is It  
Apolitical**



po·lit·i·cal

/pə'lidək(ə)l/

*adjective*

adjective: **political**

relating to the government or the public affairs of a country.

"a period of political and economic stability"

**Similar:**

governmental

government

local government

ministerial



- relating to the ideas or strategies of a particular party or group in politics.

"a decision taken for purely political reasons"

**Similar:**

activist

active

militant

factional

partisan

party



- interested in or active in politics.

"I'm not very political"

- motivated or caused by a person's beliefs or actions concerning politics.

"a political crime"

- **DEROGATORY**

relating to, affecting, or acting according to the interests of status or authority within an organization rather than matters of principle.

# 1956 Dartmouth Conference: The Founding Fathers of AI



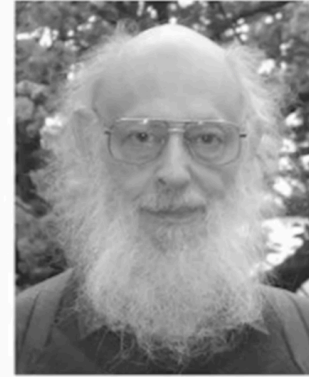
John McCarthy



Marvin Minsky



Claude Shannon



Ray Solomonoff



Alan Newell



Herbert Simon



Arthur Samuel



Oliver Selfridge



Nathaniel Rochester



Trenchard More

**“Our ideas about technology and society, that we think are normal, are actually ideas that come from a very small and homogeneous group of people” ~ Meredith Broussard from the documentary *\*Coded Bias\****

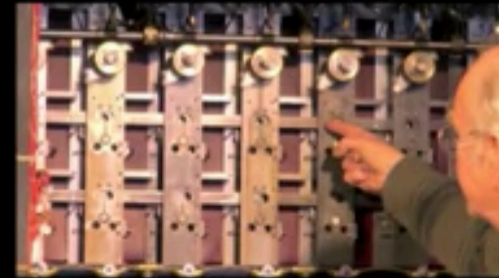
Charles Russell Severance

Internet History, Technology,  
and Security  
University of Michigan

# Alan Turing and Bletchley Park

- Top secret code breaking effort
- 10,000 people at the peak (team effort)
- BOMBE: Mechanical Computer
- Colossus: Electronic Computer

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nK\\_ft0Lf1s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nK_ft0Lf1s)



# Post-War (1940s)

- Alumni of the US and UK codebreaking efforts and other started building general purpose computers
  - Manchester Baby
  - Ferranti Mark I
  - Harvard Mark I
  - US Army ENIAC

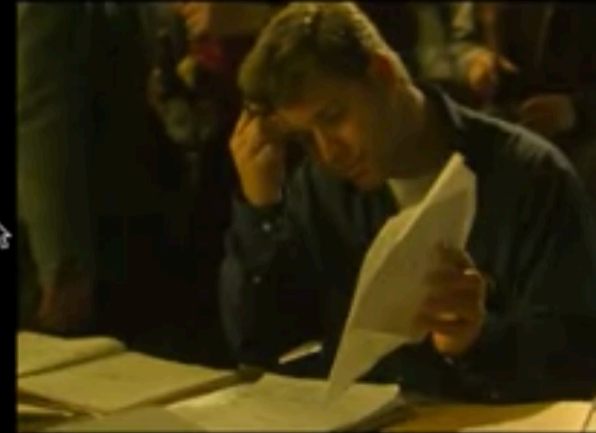


[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/SSEM\\_Manchester\\_museum.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bb/SSEM_Manchester_museum.jpg)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Classic\\_shot\\_of\\_the\\_ENIAC.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Classic_shot_of_the_ENIAC.jpg)

# Post-War (1950s)

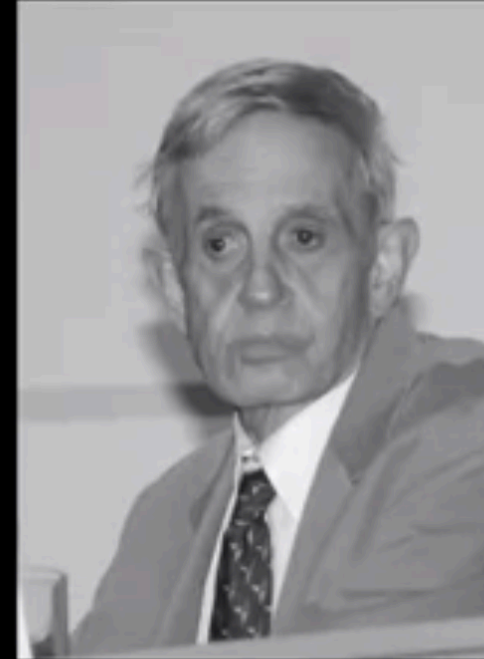
- Math / Science “Won the war”
- Broad-based investment in maintaining the US/West intellectual lead
- Mathematicians were valued, recruited, brilliant, arrogant, and quirky
- "A Beautiful Mind" gives a sense of the culture of the time



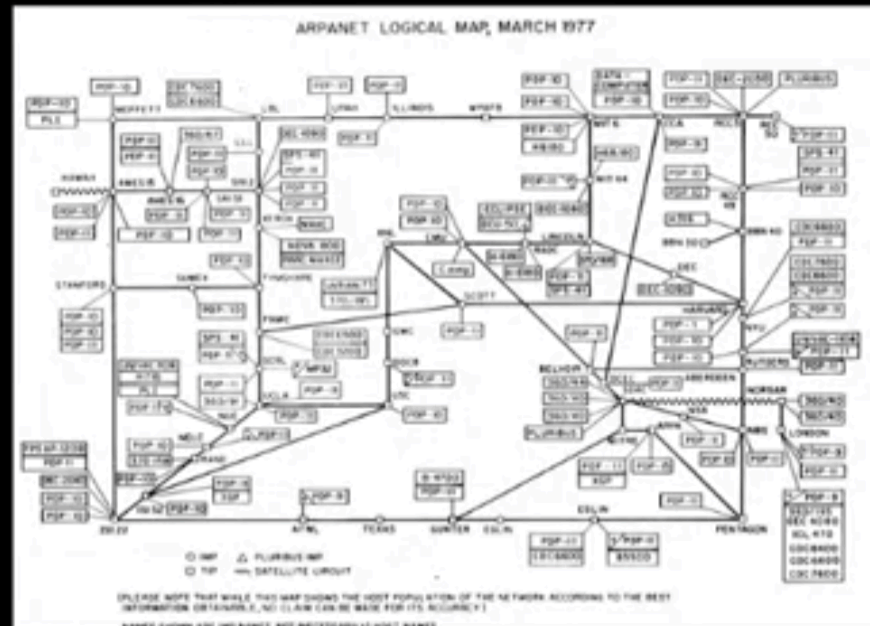
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CemLiSI5ox8>

# John Forbes Nash

- Received his Phd. Mathematics at Princeton in 1950 at 22 years old
- Mathematics faculty at MIT - 1951 - 1958
- Schizophrenia 1959 - 1995
- Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences - 1994



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Forbes\\_Nash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Forbes_Nash)



Heart, F., McKenzie, A., McQuillian, J., and Walden, D., ARPANET Completion Report, Bolt, Beranek and Newman, Burlington, MA, January 4, 1978.  
<http://som.csudh.edu/fac/lpress/history/arpamaps/arpametmar77.jpg>

# NCSA - Innovation

- We now “assume” the Internet and the Web - it was not so easy...
- A number of breakthrough innovations came from the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois
- High Performance Computing and the Internet were deeply linked



<http://www.vimeo.com/6982439>

# NSFNet @ University of Michigan

- University of Michigan did not get a Supercomputer Center
- Proposed a \$55M high-speed network for \$15M
- Partners: University of Michigan, Merit Network, IBM Corporation, MCI, and State of Michigan
- Operated from 1988-1995



<http://www.vimeo.com/11044819>

Leonard Klienrock - The First Two Packets on the Internet



Len Kleinrock  
UCLA

Robert Cailliau - Co-Inventor of the Web



@KimCrayton1

#**Antiracist**Economist

# What Are the Defaults of Early Technologist

- White
- CIS gendered
- Heterosexual
- Able-bodied
- Western
- Christian
- English-speaking
- "Educated"
- Father
- Married
- White male focused [patriarchal]
- Binary thinking
- Etc

# The closest an individual is the default the greater...

- their access to privilege
- their ability to determine and set the status quo
- the chances of being extended the benefit of the doubt
- their feelings are prioritized
- the impact of their behavior is evaluated from an "assume positive intent" perspective
- the expectation of being treated with compassion and empathy

# The furthest an individual is to the default the greater...

- their level of vulnerability related to the decisions and behaviors of others
- the instances of being impacted by “unintended” harm
- the chances of never being extended the benefit of the doubt
- their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives are minimized/dismissed
- the impact that their words and behavior will be evaluated from an “assume negative intent” perspective
- the expectation of extending compassion and empathy to others, even those who’ve caused harm

**Whiteness is  
POLITICAL**

**Why does  
understanding this  
matter...**

**Because systems,  
institutions, and polices  
are developed to  
reenforce the default**

# About GI Bill benefits

GI Bill benefits help you pay for college, graduate school, and training programs. Since 1944, the GI Bill has helped qualifying Veterans and their family members get money to cover all or some of the costs for school or training.

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

A black and white photograph of several Black WWII veterans in military uniforms. They are looking in various directions, some towards the camera and others away. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a historical, archival feel. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

UPDATED: SEP 30, 2019 · ORIGINAL: JUN 21, 2019

# How the GI Bill's Promise Was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans

The sweeping bill promised prosperity to veterans. So why didn't Black Americans benefit?

ERIN BLAKEMORE

<https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits>

## Failure to Receive GI Bill Education Benefits

Black veterans in search of the education they had been guaranteed fared no better. Many Black men returning home from the war didn't even try to take advantage of the bill's educational benefits—they could not afford to spend time in school instead of working. But those who did were at a considerable disadvantage compared to their white counterparts. Public education provided poor preparation for Black students, and many lacked much educational attainment at all due to poverty and social pressures.

As veteran applications flooded universities, Black students often found themselves left out. Northern universities dragged their feet when it came to admitting Black students, and Southern colleges barred Black students entirely. And the VA itself encouraged Black veterans to apply for vocational training instead of university admission and arbitrarily denied educational benefits to some students.

Those students who did try to attend college found doors closed at every turn. A full 95 percent of Black veterans were shunted off to Black colleges—institutions that were underfunded and overwhelmed by the influx of new students. Most were unaccredited, and with a massive influx in applicants, they had to turn away tens of thousands of veterans.

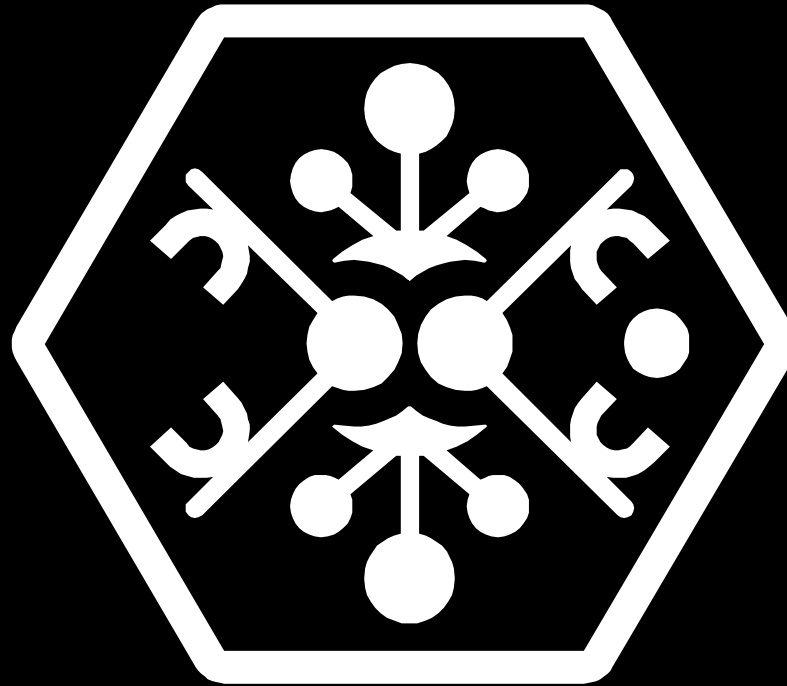
“Though Congress granted all soldiers the same benefits theoretically,” writes historian Hilary Herbold, “the segregationist principles of almost every institution of higher learning effectively disbarred a huge proportion of Black veterans from earning a college degree.”

So...

**Who got to BUILD  
the Internet WAS  
political**

**And since whiteness is  
STILL the default,  
throughout the technology  
ecosystem, the Internet is  
STILL political**

**Thank you!**



**KIM CRAYTON**

@KimCrayton1

#**Antiracist**Economist