

**DESIGN MATTERS 2023**

# **DECOLONIZING YOUR DESIGN SYSTEM**

**UNVEILING BIASES AND REVOLUTIONIZING INCLUSION**

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**X: SOYSAUCECHIN**



# **CONTENT WARNING:**

**Some topics may be triggering: slavery, racism, genocide, white supremacy.**

**Please take the time and space you need to take care of yourself.**

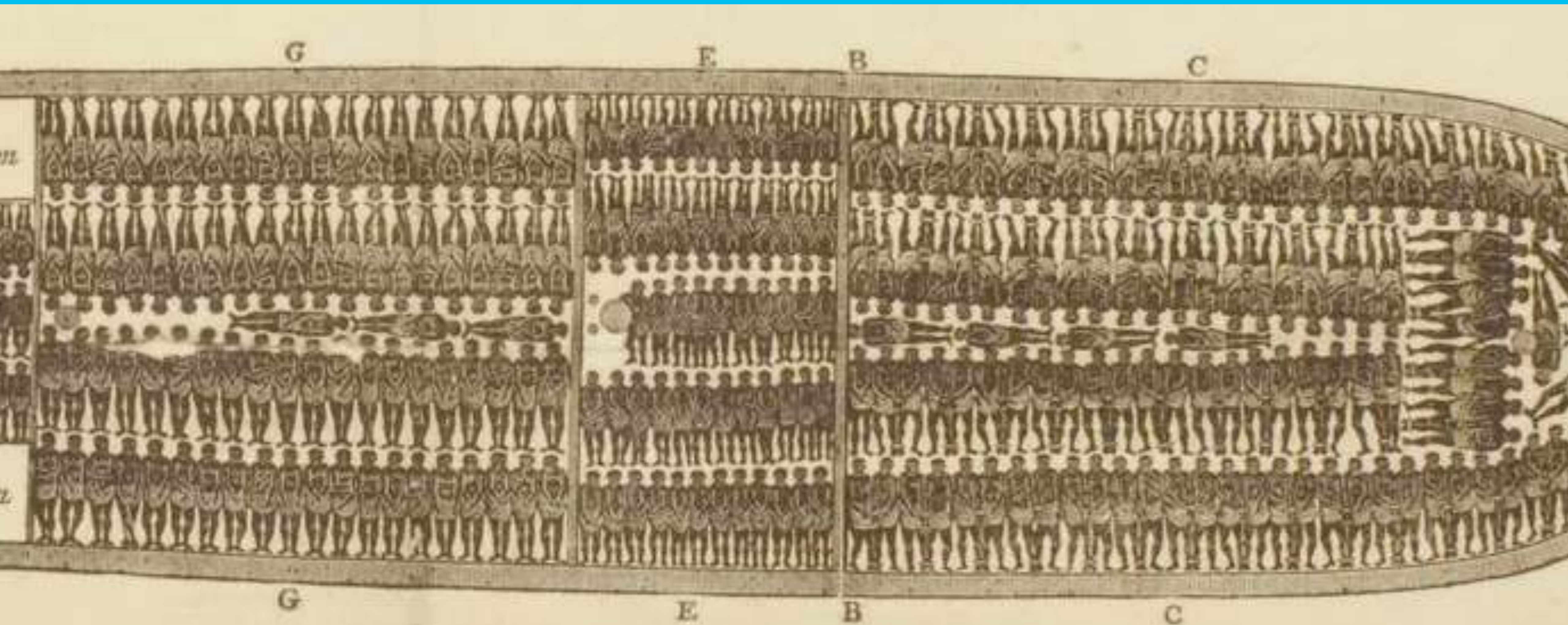
**I'm available to talk; find me at the zeroheight stand.**

## **WHITE SUPREMACY:**

**THE BELIEF THAT WHITE PEOPLE CONSTITUTE A SUPERIOR RACE AND SHOULD THEREFORE DOMINATE SOCIETY, TYPICALLY TO THE EXCLUSION AND DETRIMENT OF OTHER RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS.**

**IT WAS A KEY JUSTIFICATION FOR EUROPEAN COLONIALISM.**

# WHITE SUPREMACY: ENSLAVEMENT OF PEOPLE



# WHITE SUPREMACY: ACTS OF LEGISLATION

## THE Chinese Must Go!

**Mayor Weisbach**

Has called a MASS MEETING for

## ABLE SPEAKERS

Will address the citizens of Tacoma on the Chinese question. Also the Committee on the habits and modes of living of the Chinese will make a full report of their labor, and submit a plan of organization for the action of the citizens.

The time has come for action. Delay is weakness, unpardonable sin against our lives, our families, society and mankind. Action, decided action, redemption, salvation. Therefore come all, come everyone, and protest against this life and soul-destroying curse. This will be the people's meeting, who should not be fiddling whilst Rome is burning.

By order of the

Anti-Chinese Committee.

# WHITE SUPREMACY: CULTURAL GEONOCIDE



# WHITE SUPREMACY: FUELS IMPLICIT BIASES

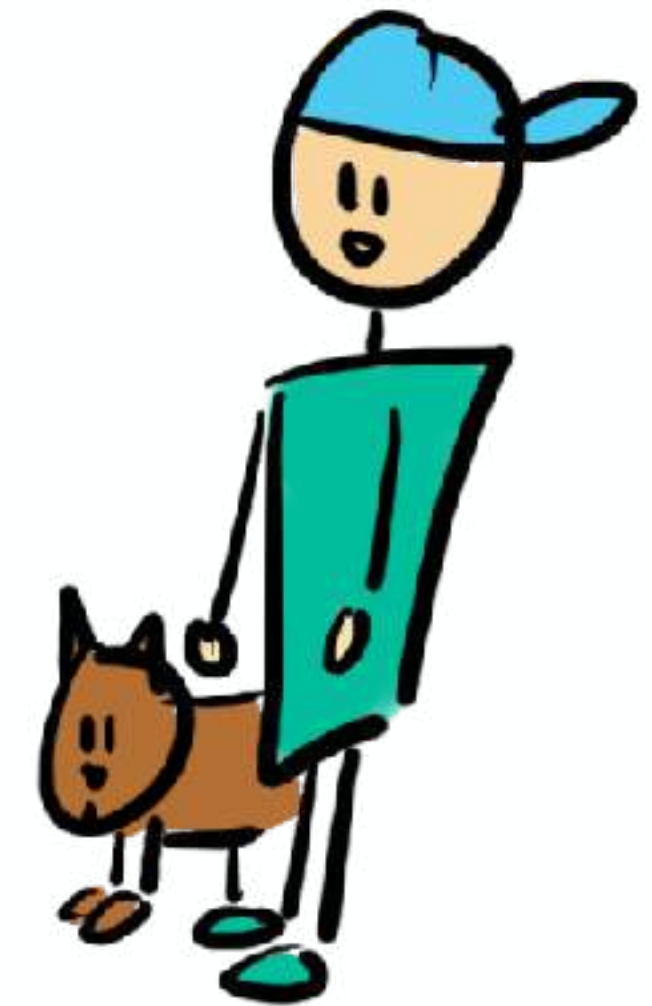
Oh hello! You must be the new owners!



Wow! He's thinks I might be the gardener!



Oh hello! Do you live here?



**CENTURIES OF WHITE SUPREMACY NORMALIZED  
SYSTEMIC RACISM AND IMPLICIT BIASES.**



# IT'S JUST A BUTTON, RIGHT?

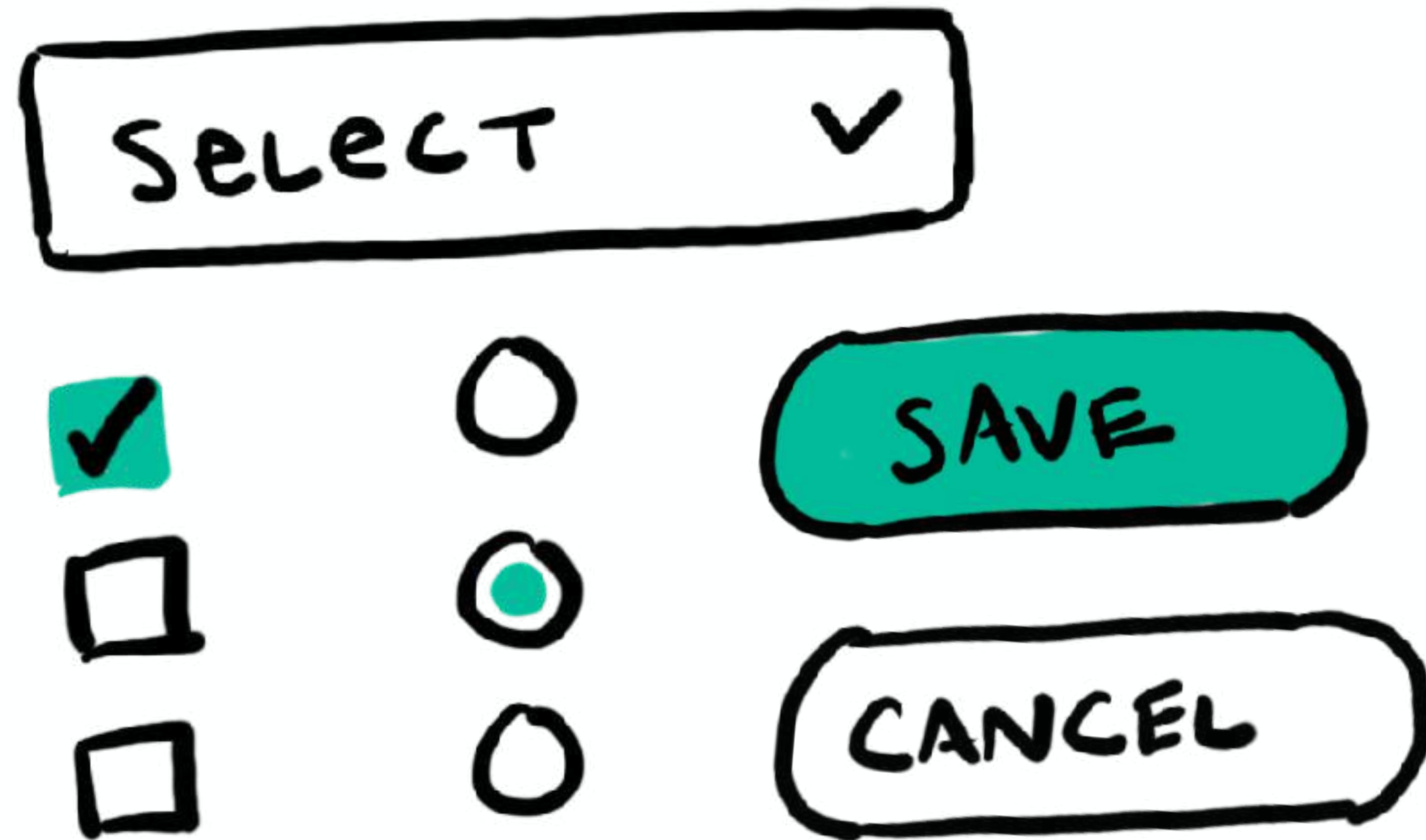


Don't be dramatic

It's not racist.

Everyone needs  
buttons!

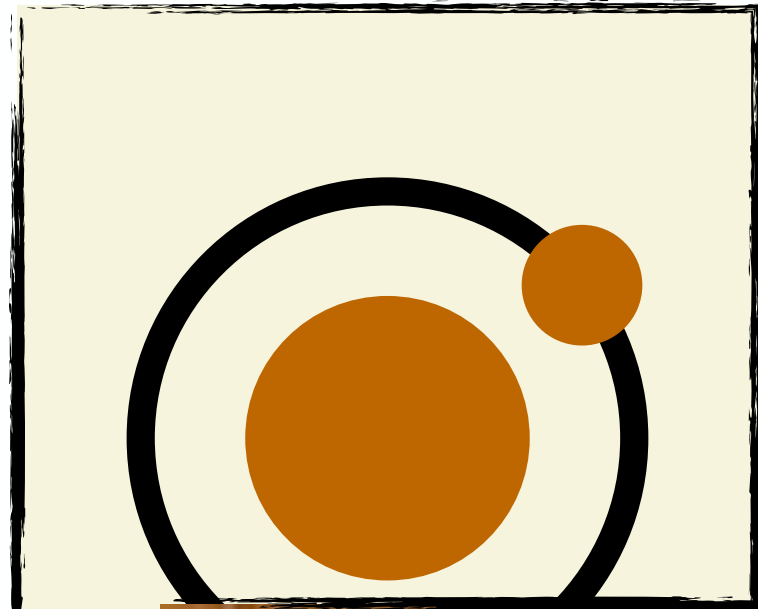
# UI ELEMENTS



- For the most part, they work for everyone.
- So it's not a big deal, right?

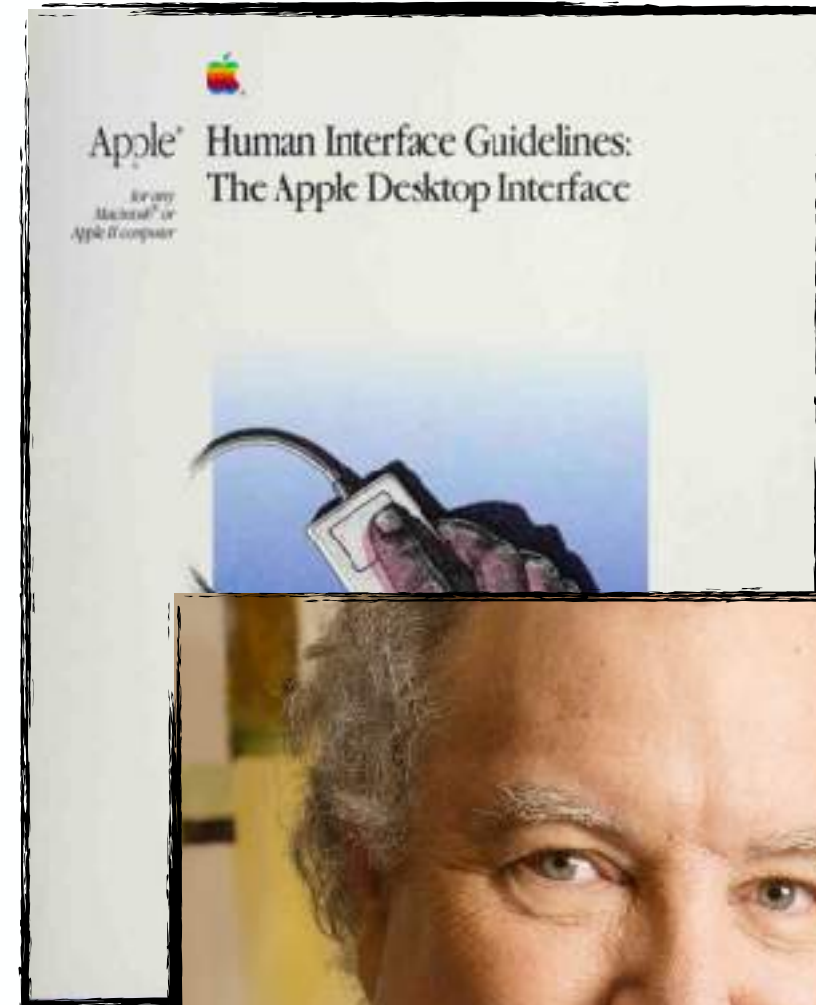
# WHO MADE OUR UI GUIDELINES?

## Atomic Design



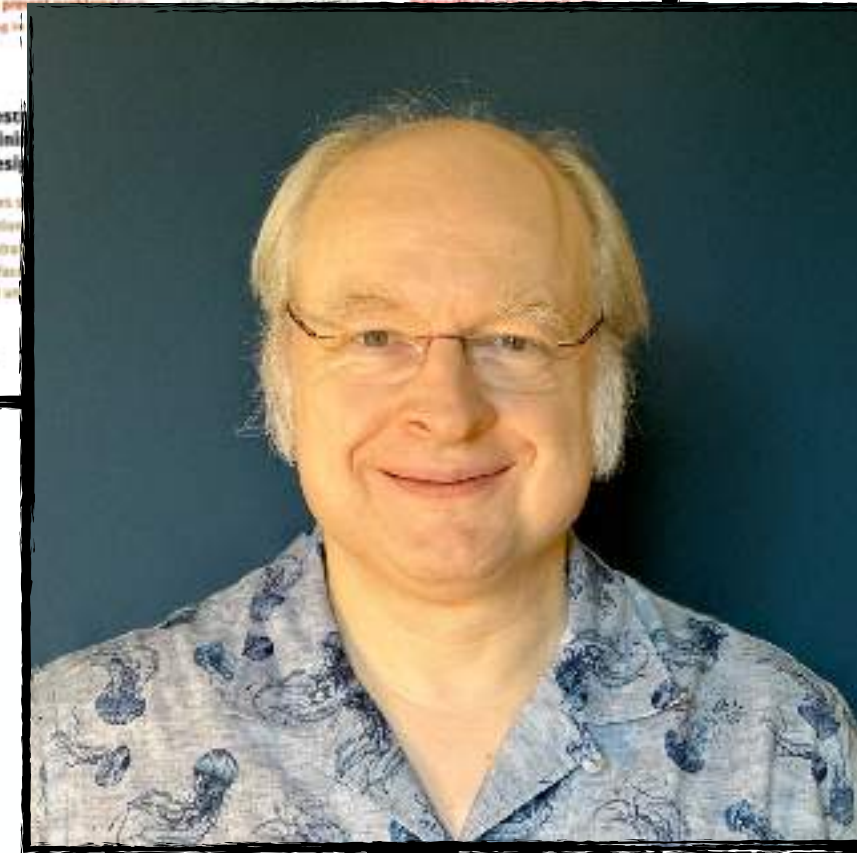
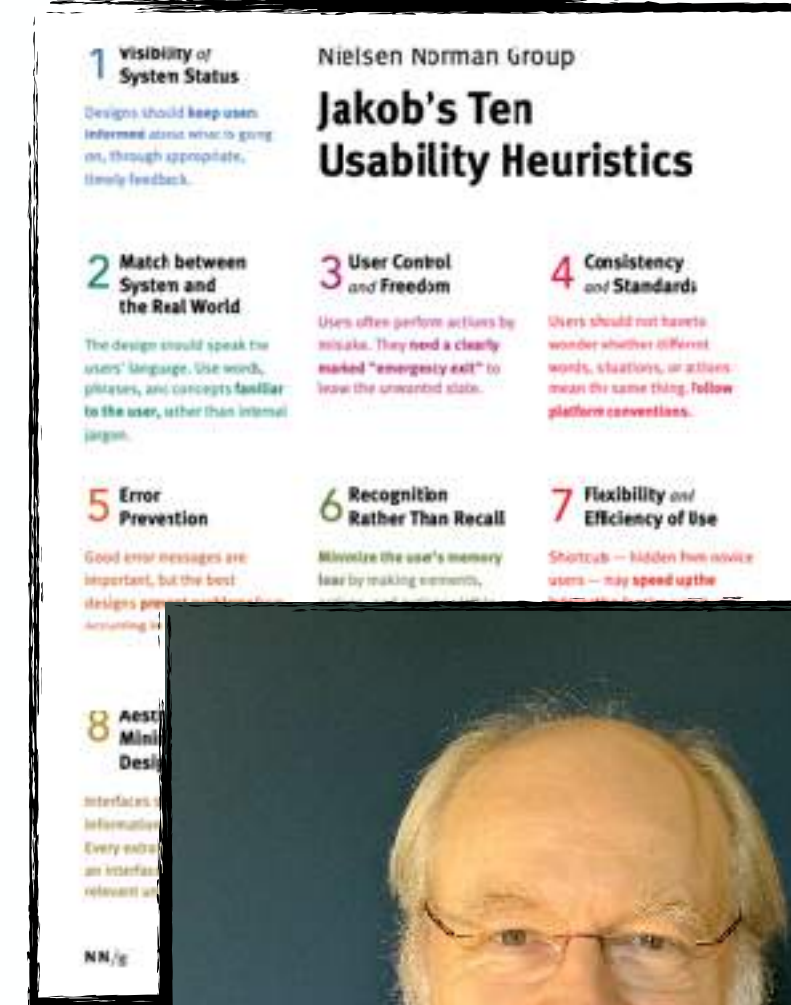
Brad Frost

## Apple's Human Interface Guidelines



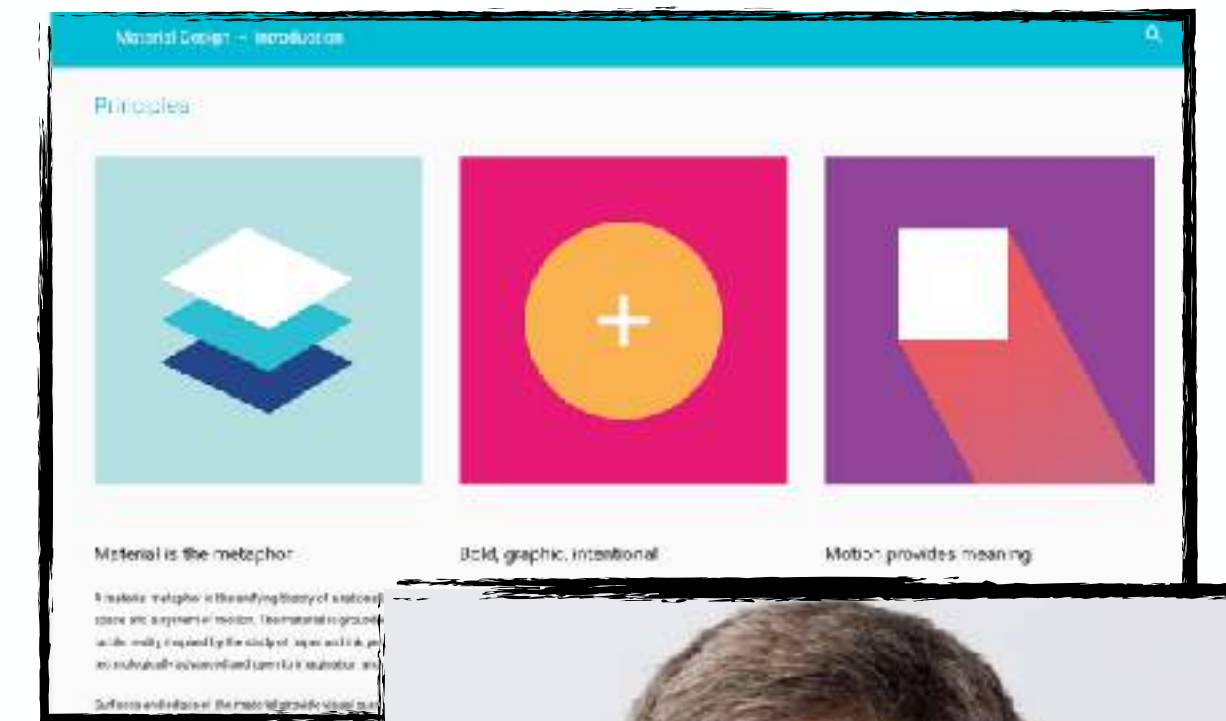
Bruce Tognazzini

## 10 Usability Heuristics for UI Design



Jakob Nielsen

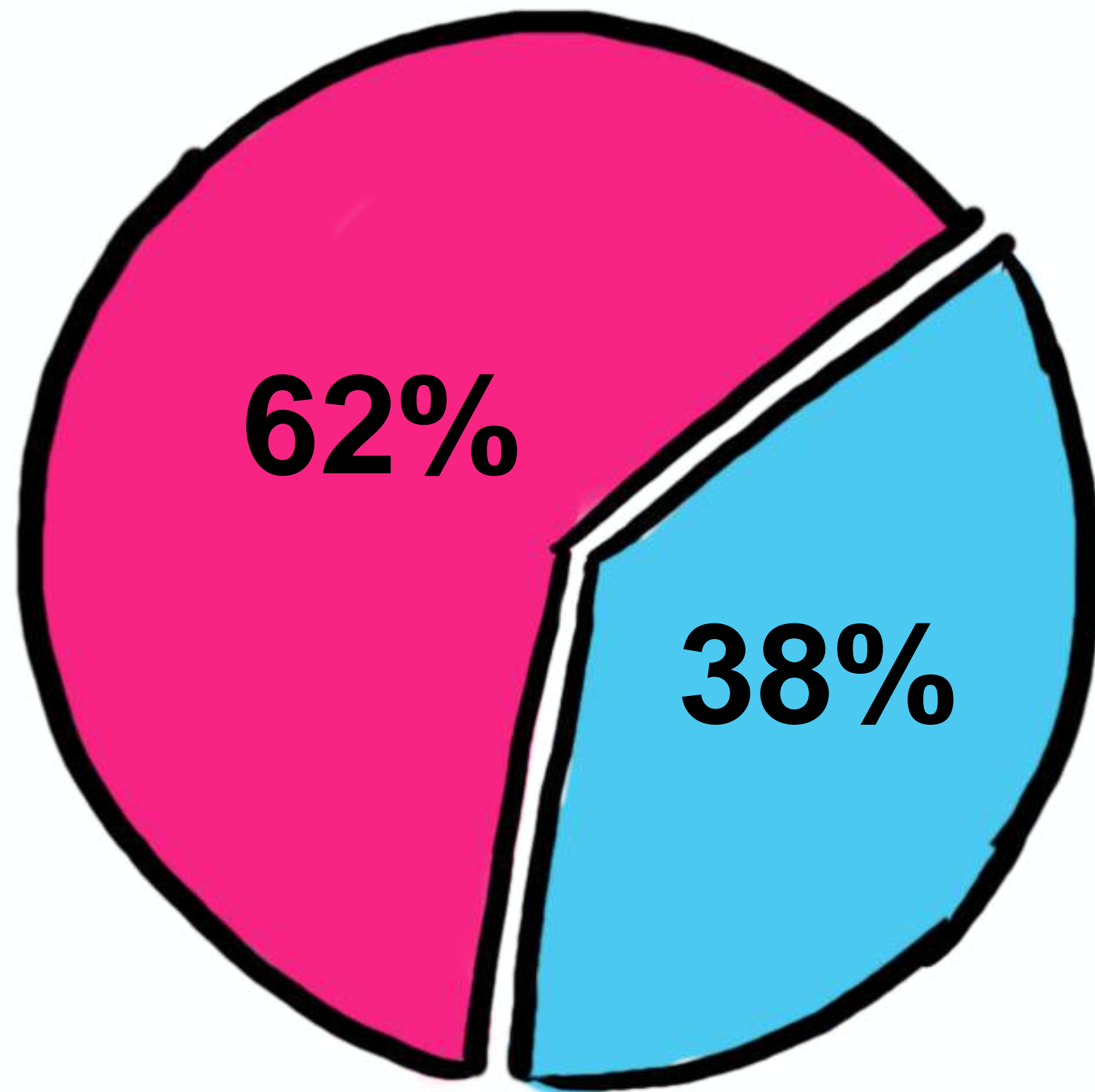
## Material Design



Jon Wiley

# WHO'S ON YOUR DESIGN SYSTEM TEAM?

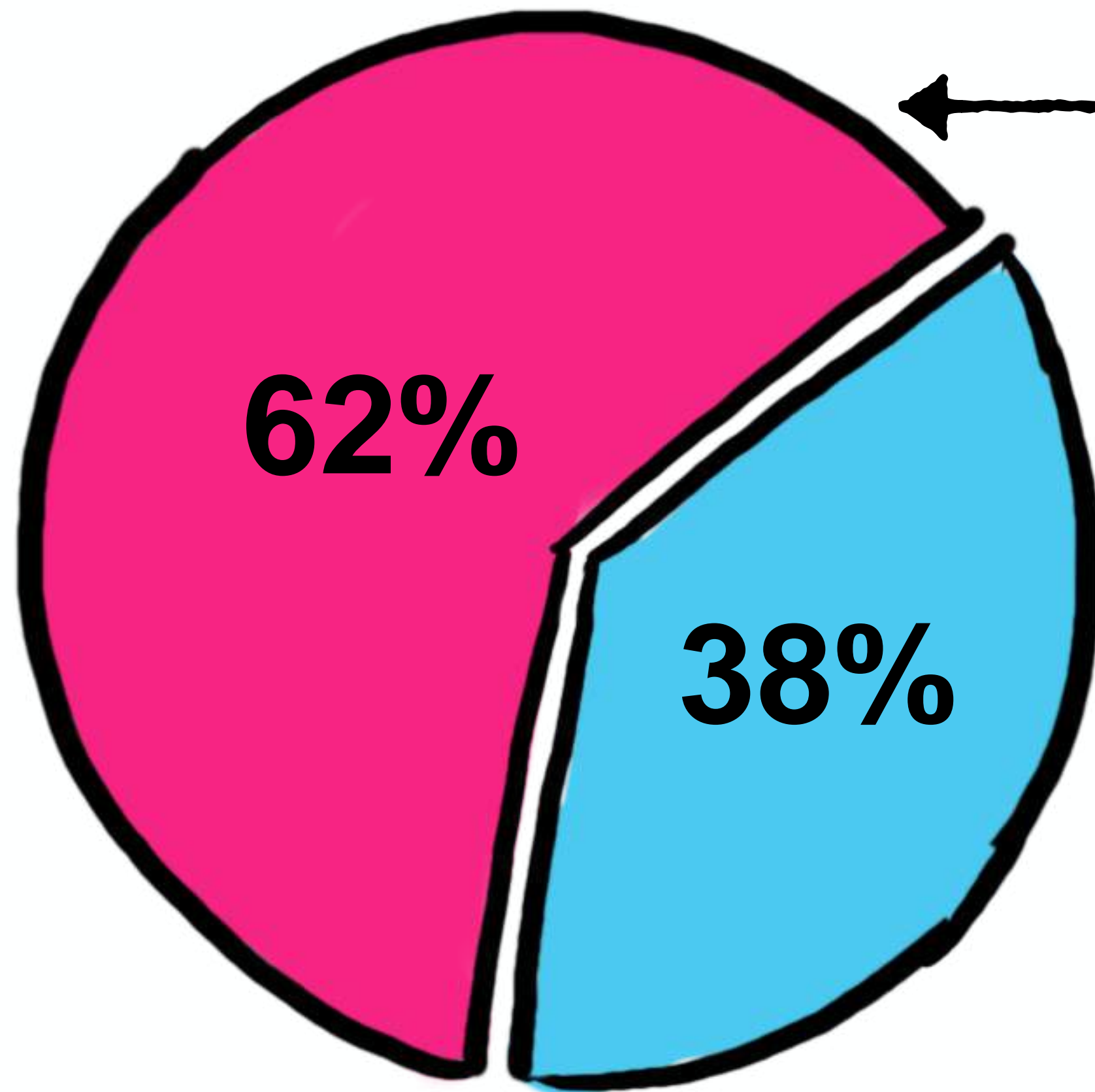
How We Document Report



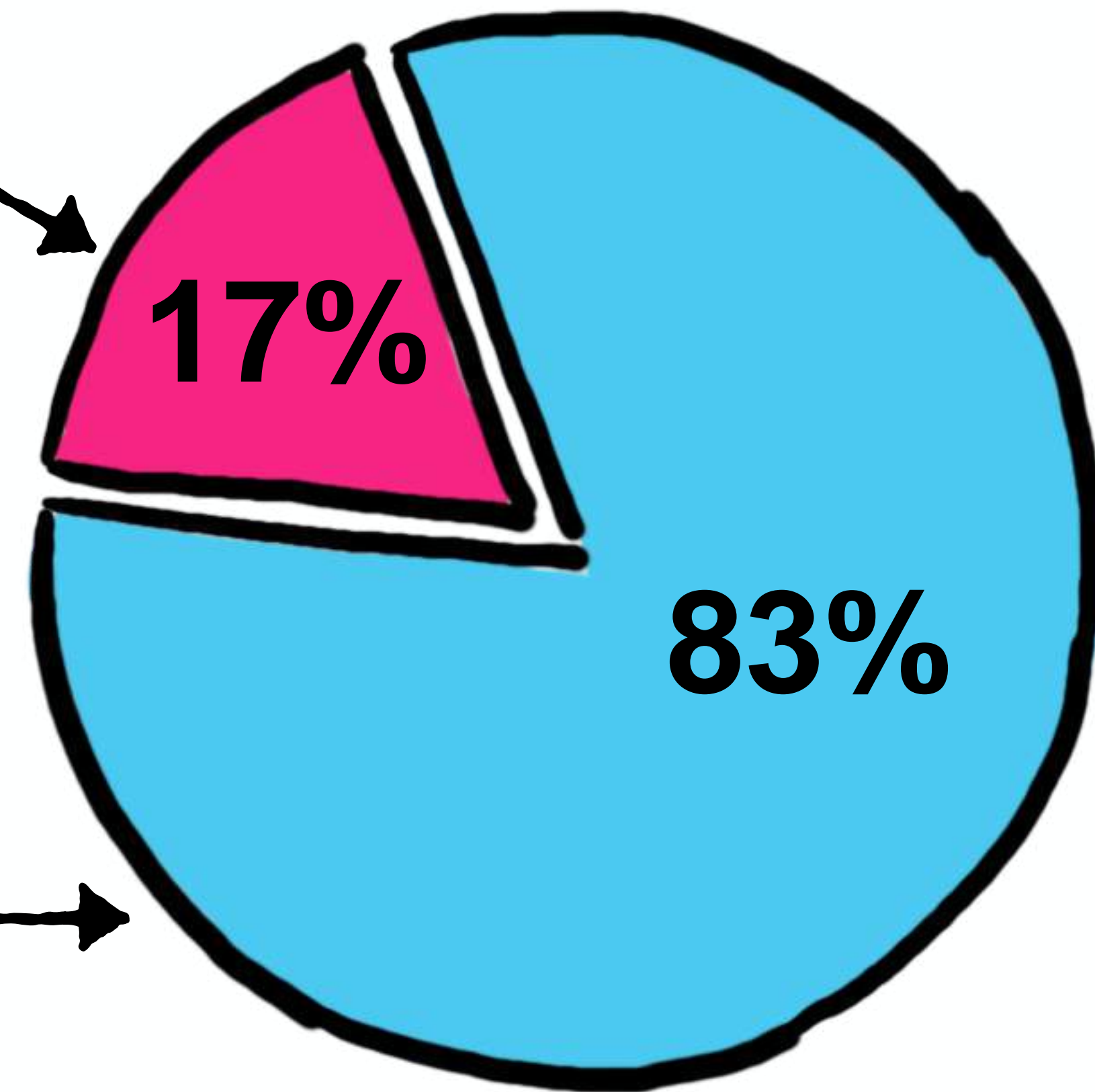
- **Over half of respondents were from Western ethnicities.**
- **Less than half was everyone else.**

# TEAMS DON'T REFLECT THE WORLD

How We Document Report



World population



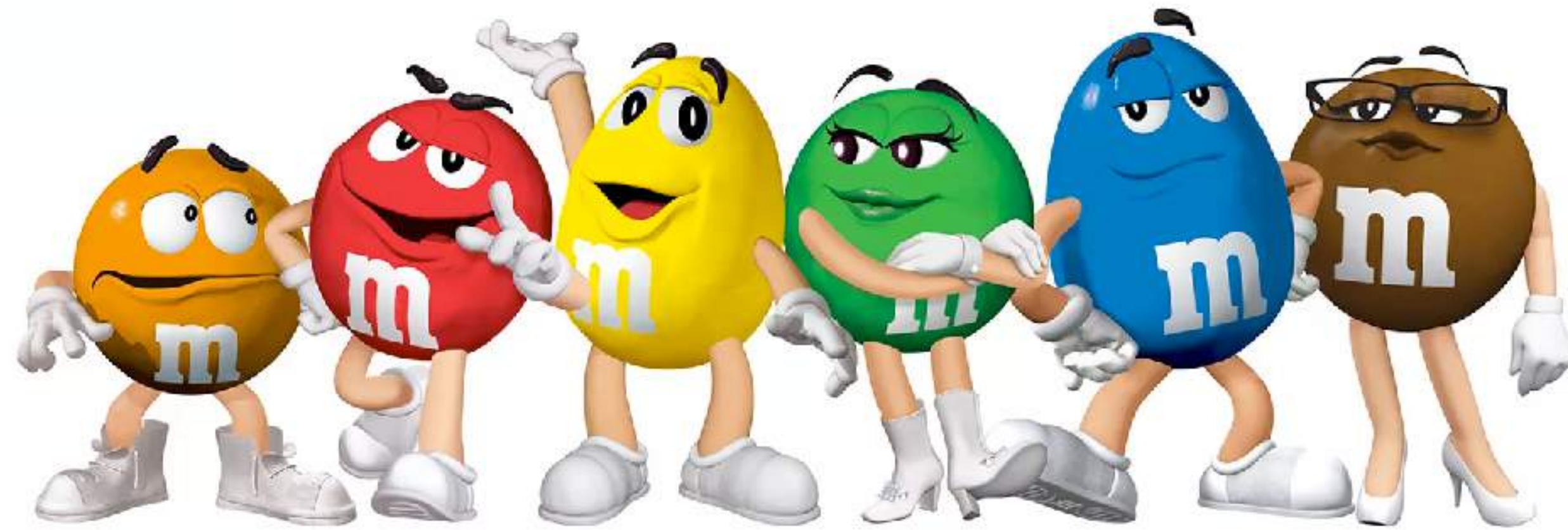
Westerners

Everyone else

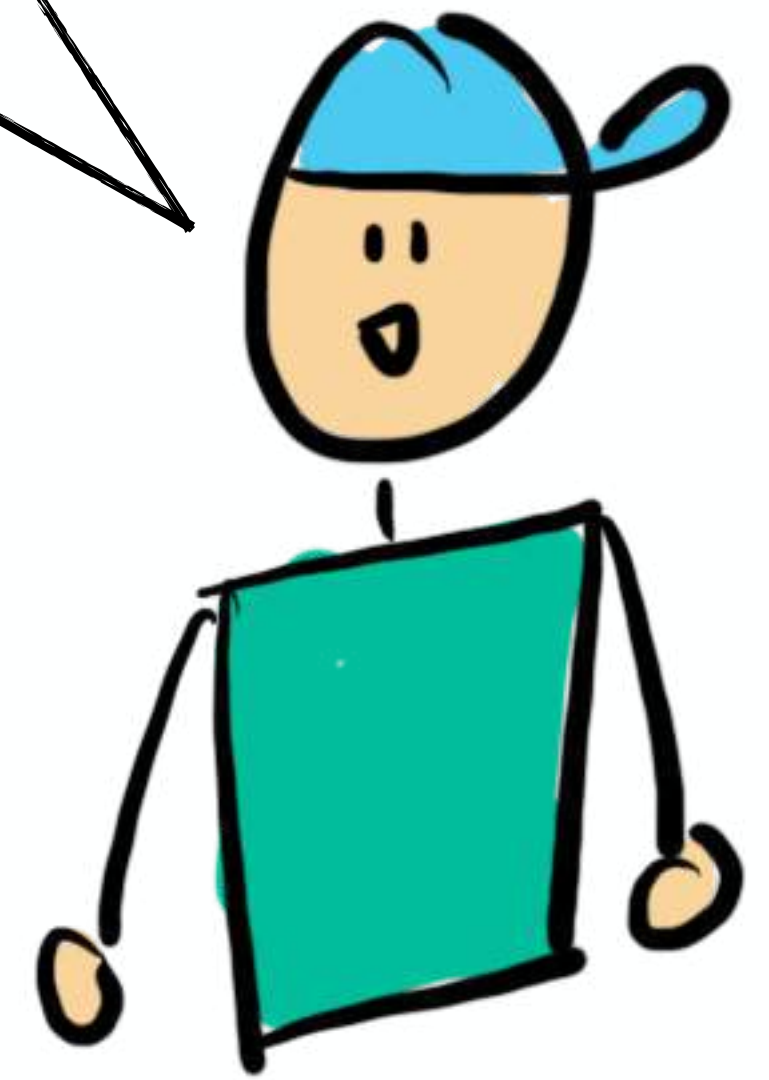
**WE ARE MISSING CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS  
FROM A MAJORITY OF THE WORLD.**

**BUT IT'S NOT ALWAYS INTENTIONAL.**

# WHITE SUPREMACY IS SO COMMON PLACE

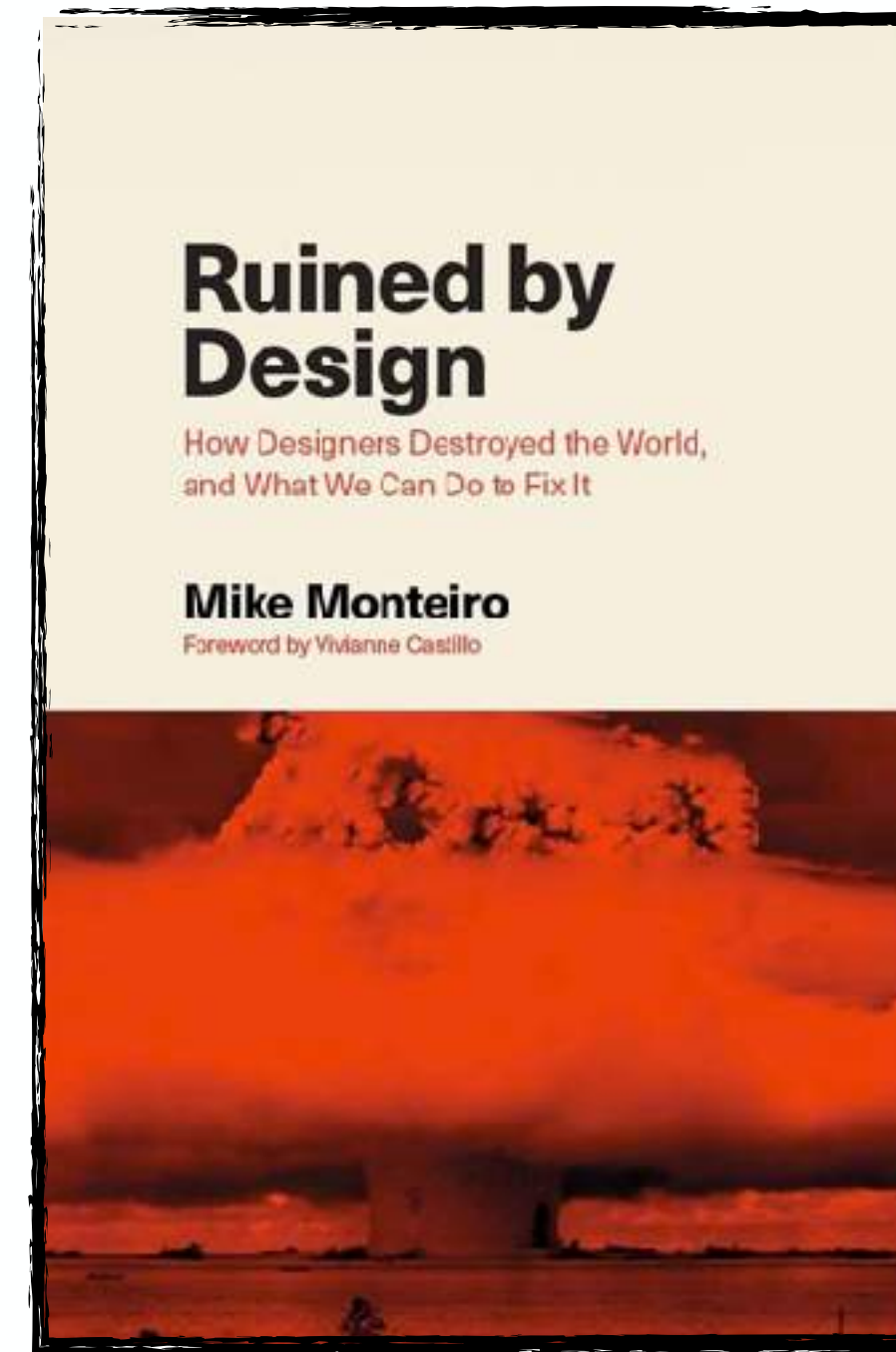


Hmm...  
this never occurred to  
me. I never thought  
about this.



# WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- **Design system teams create the foundations that products are built from.**
- **If there's cultural context missing from the foundations, it will be missing from products.**
- **Designers carry a huge responsibility to serve our users.**



**Everyone should read this book**



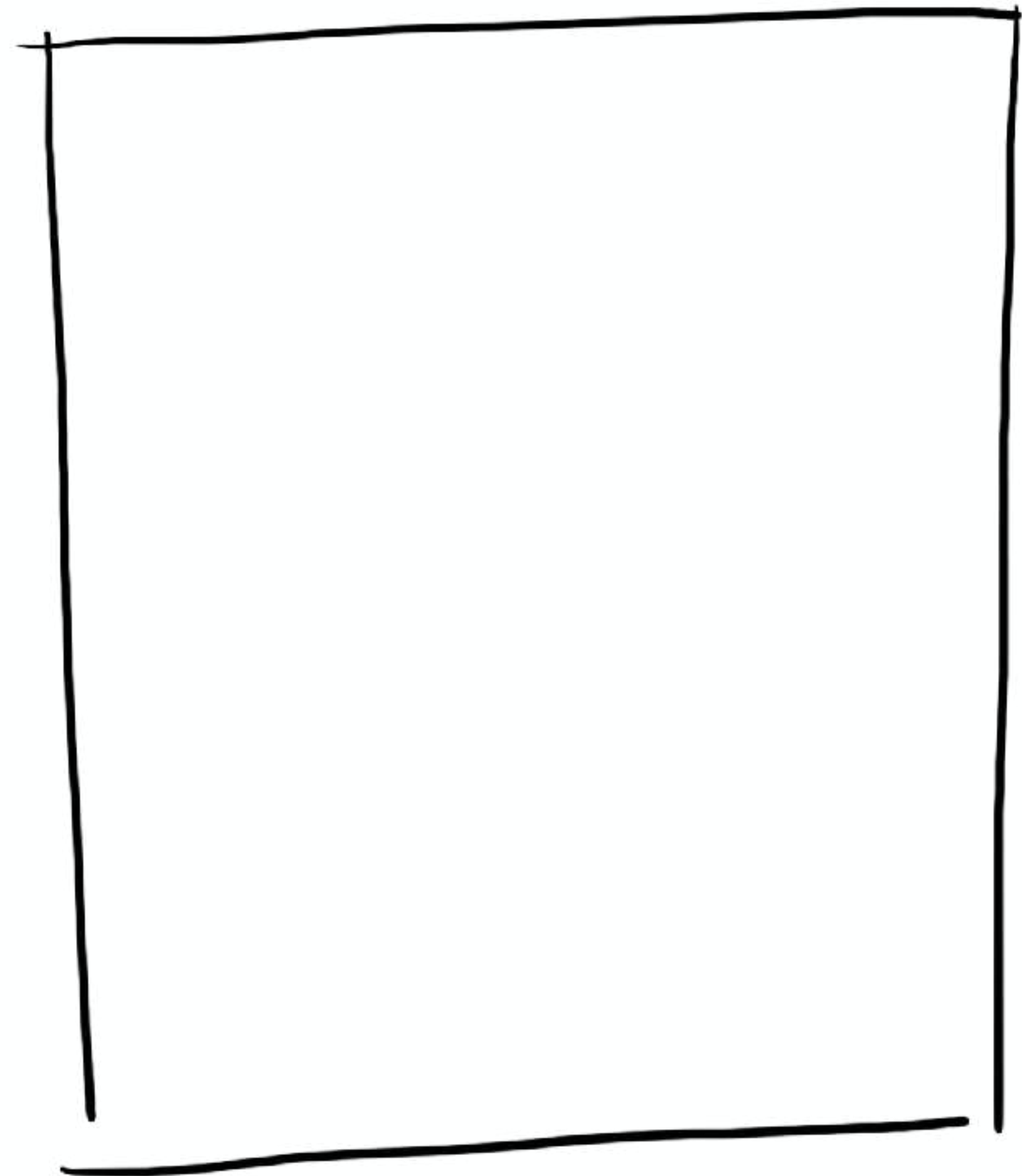
**OMG . . .**

**MY DESIGN SYSTEM *MIGHT* BE RACIST . . .**

**BUT HOW DO YOU DECOLONIZE A BUTTON? . . .**

# SPOILER: IT'S NOT ALWAYS IN THE COMPONENTS

## IT'S IN THE PATTERNS

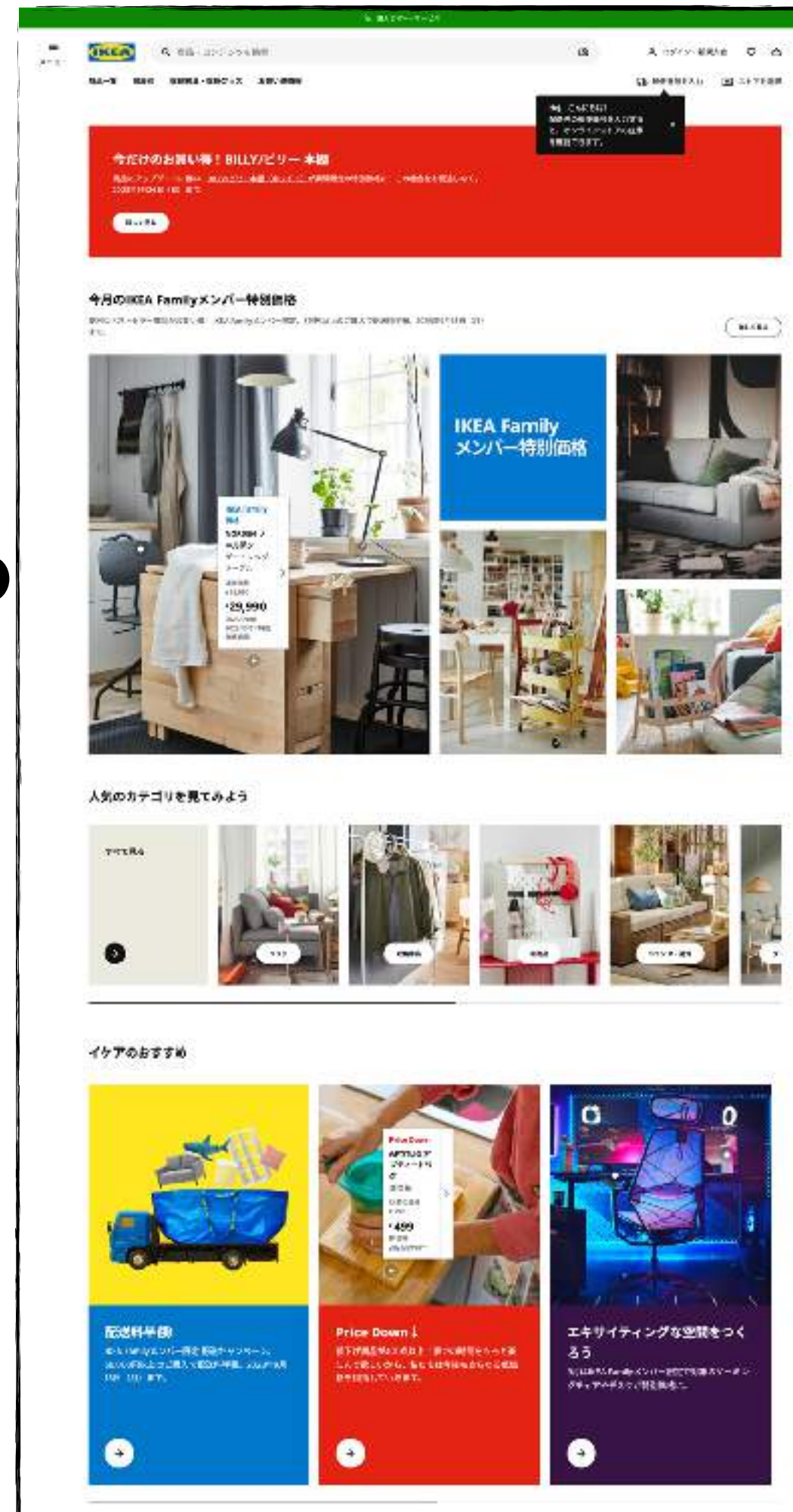


# **PATTERNS:**

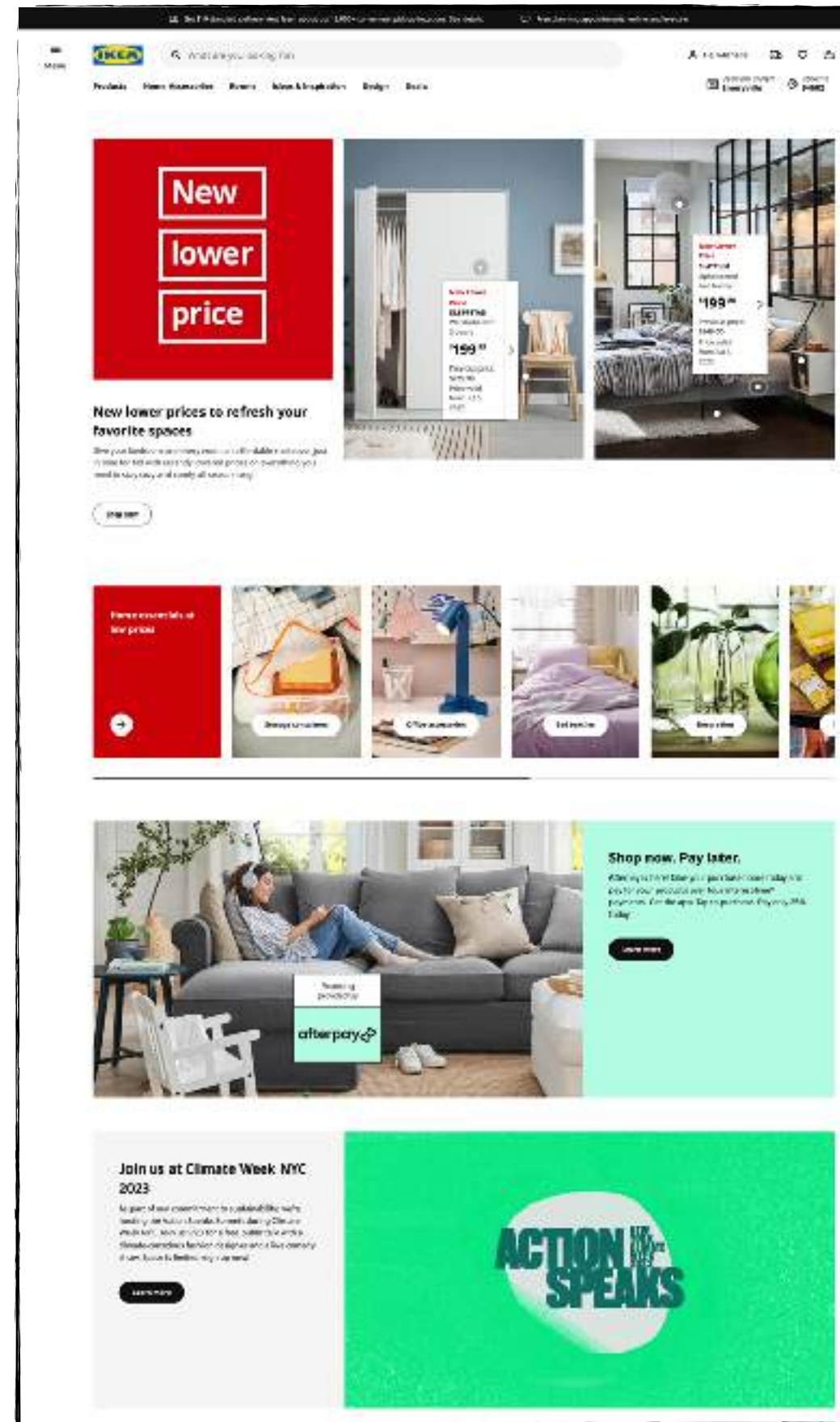
**MODELS FOR MAKING THINGS. IN DESIGN SYSTEMS, THEY CAN HAVE PRESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS BUT ALSO GUIDELINES THAT ALLOW FOR SITUATIONAL FLEXIBILITY AND DECISION-MAKING BY THE DESIGNER.**

**THIS IS WHERE CULTURAL CONTEXT COMES INTO PLAY.**

# JAPAN



# WESTERN



# ARABIC



More info

Right to left design

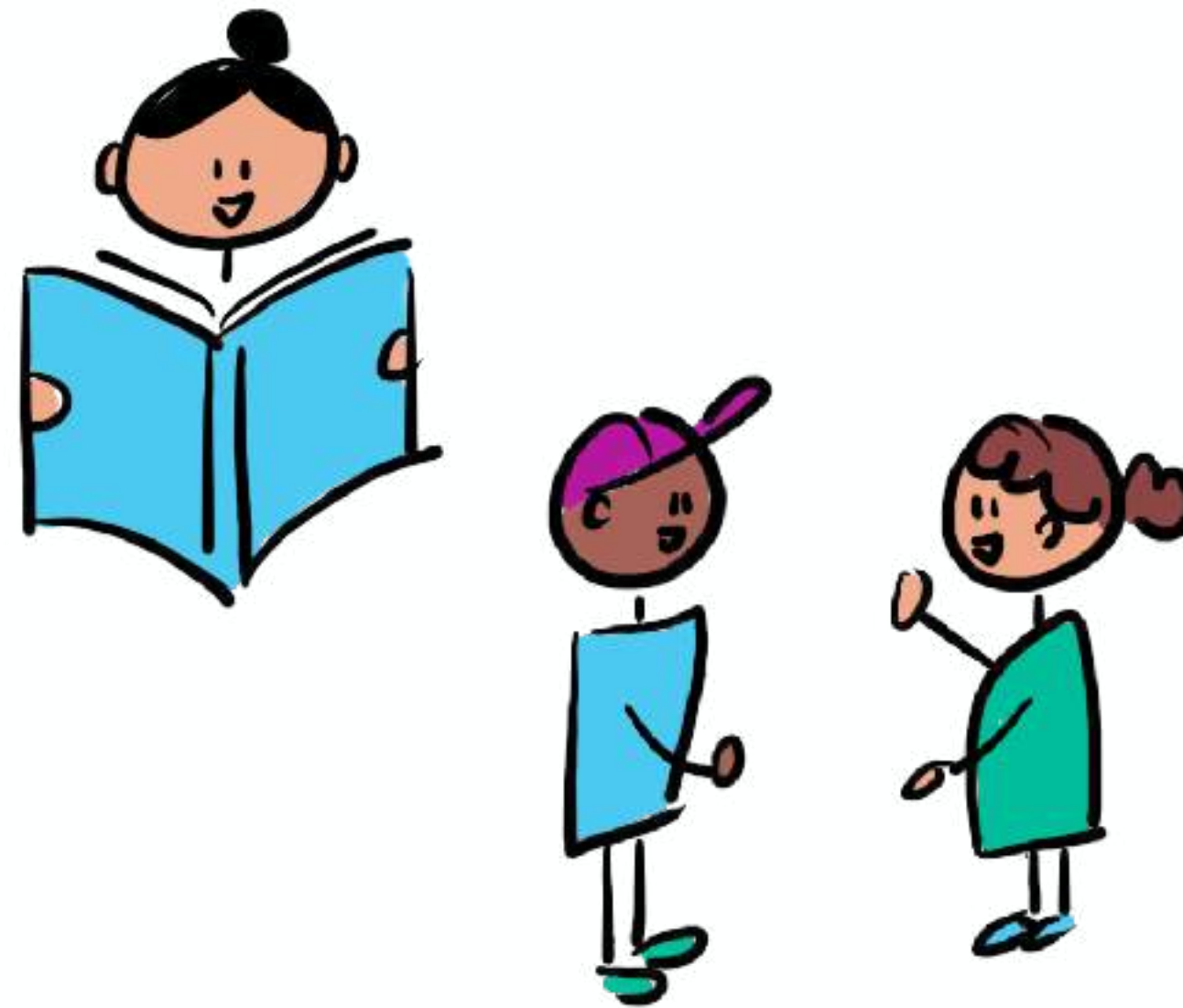
**HOW DO I DECOLONIZE MY DESIGN SYSTEM?**

# HOW DO I DECOLONIZE MY DESIGN SYSTEM?

**HIRE**



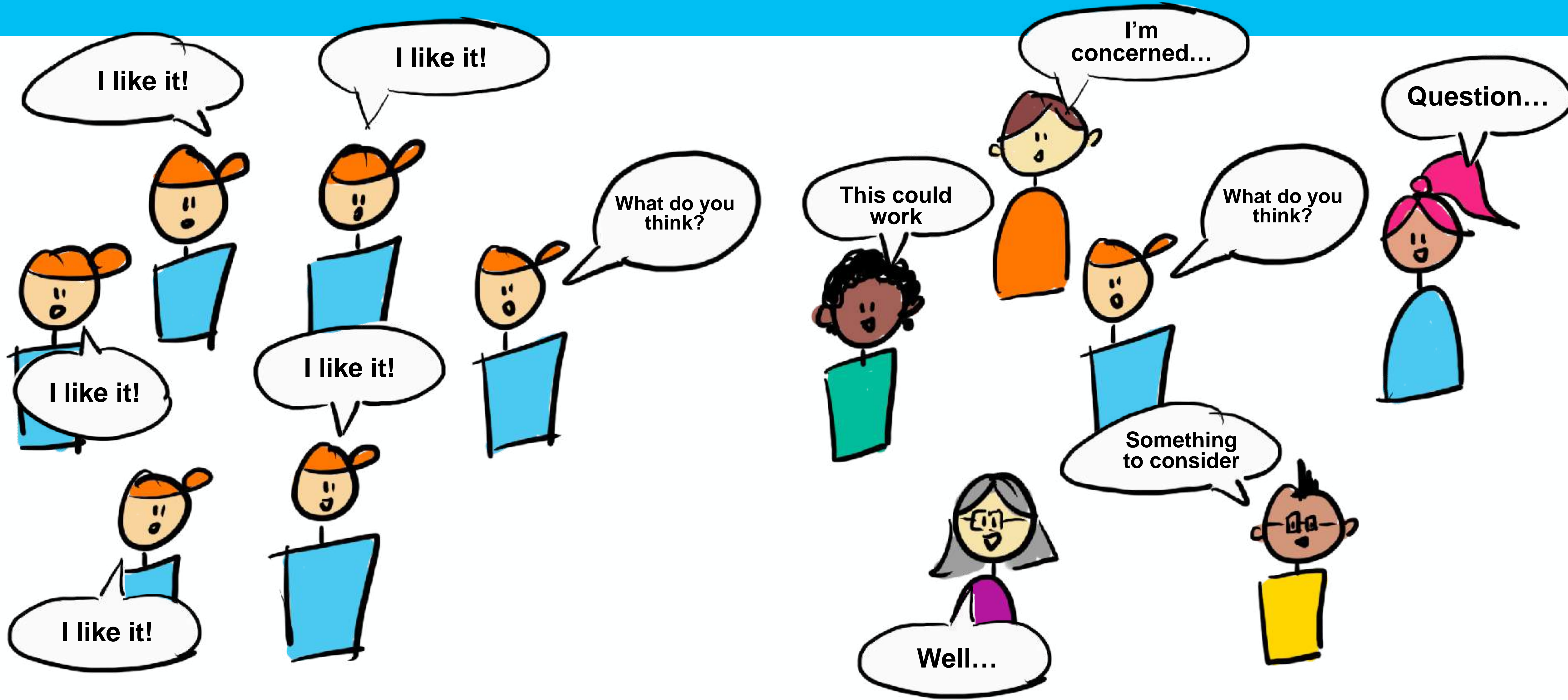
**LEARN**




**CONTRIBUTE**



# HIRE



# HIRE

- Means going out of your way  meetups, outreach events, working with universities
- Be OK with being inconvenienced to make a better team
- Hiring systems in place aren't always accessible to everyone



# LEARN: TRAVEL + OBSERVE

- **See the rest of the world**
- **Observe not just the “what” but the “how” and “why” people are doing what they’re doing.**



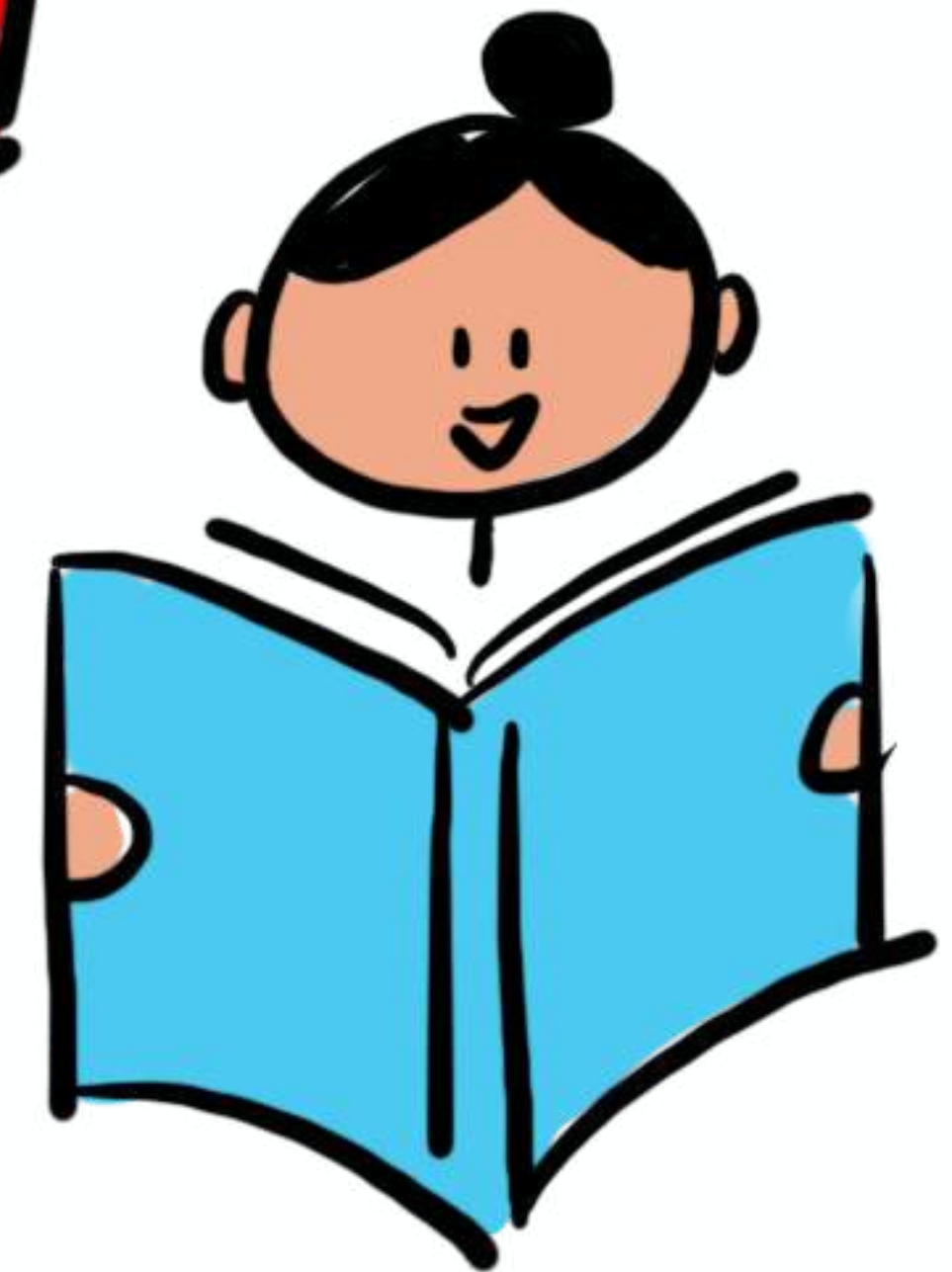
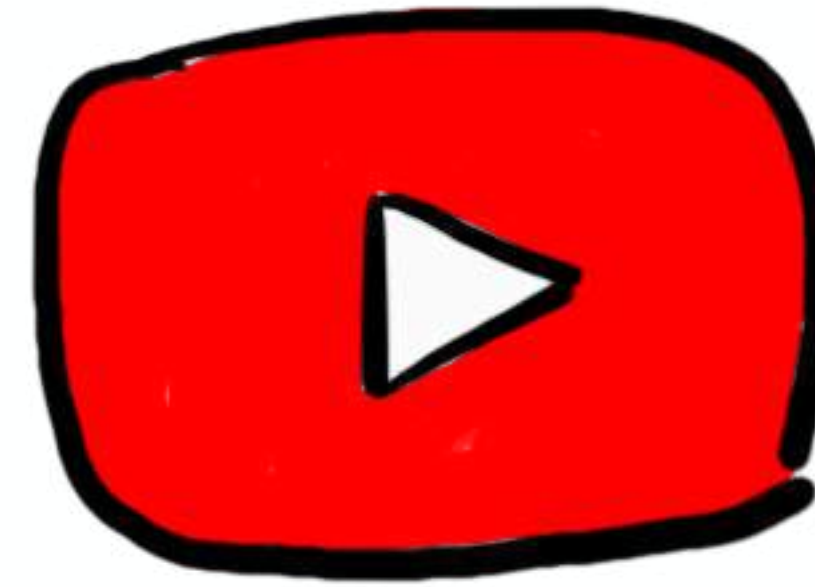
# OBSERVATIONS



- **What:** People are waiting for their train
- **How:** The floor is marked very obviously for each line. People are standing in the appropriate line.
- **Why:** Are train lines confusing? Do they want to ensure no one makes a mistake? Does a lot of info ensure confidence for people?

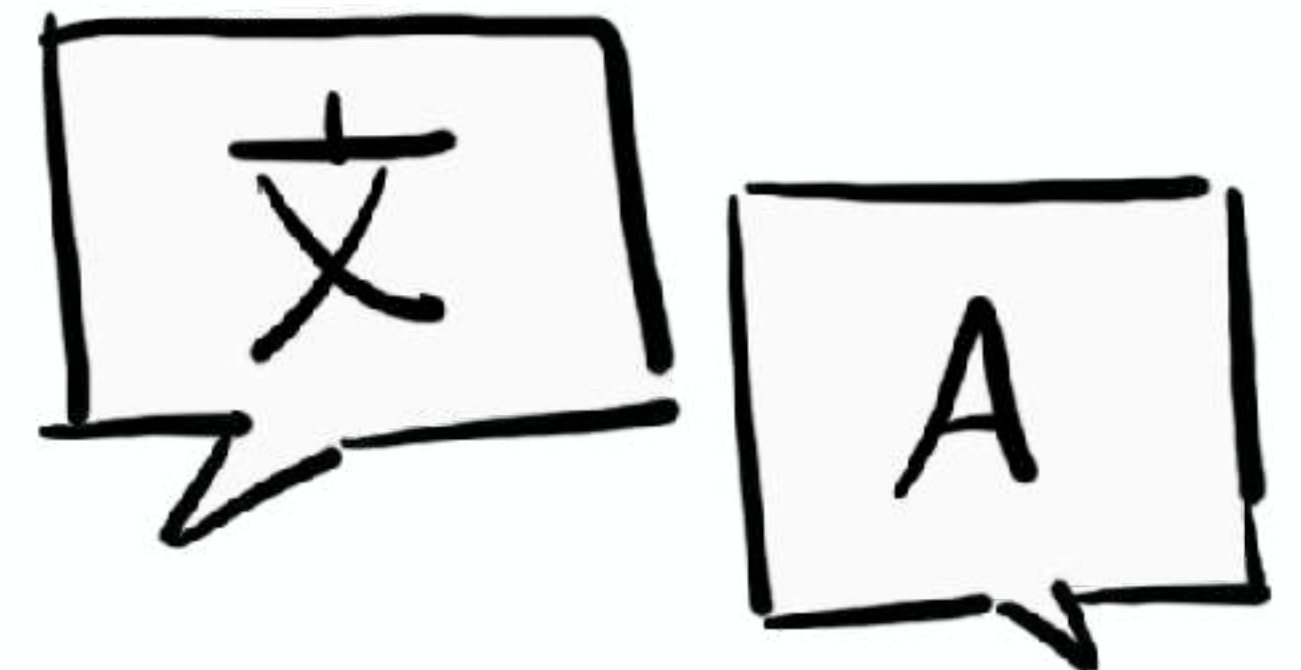
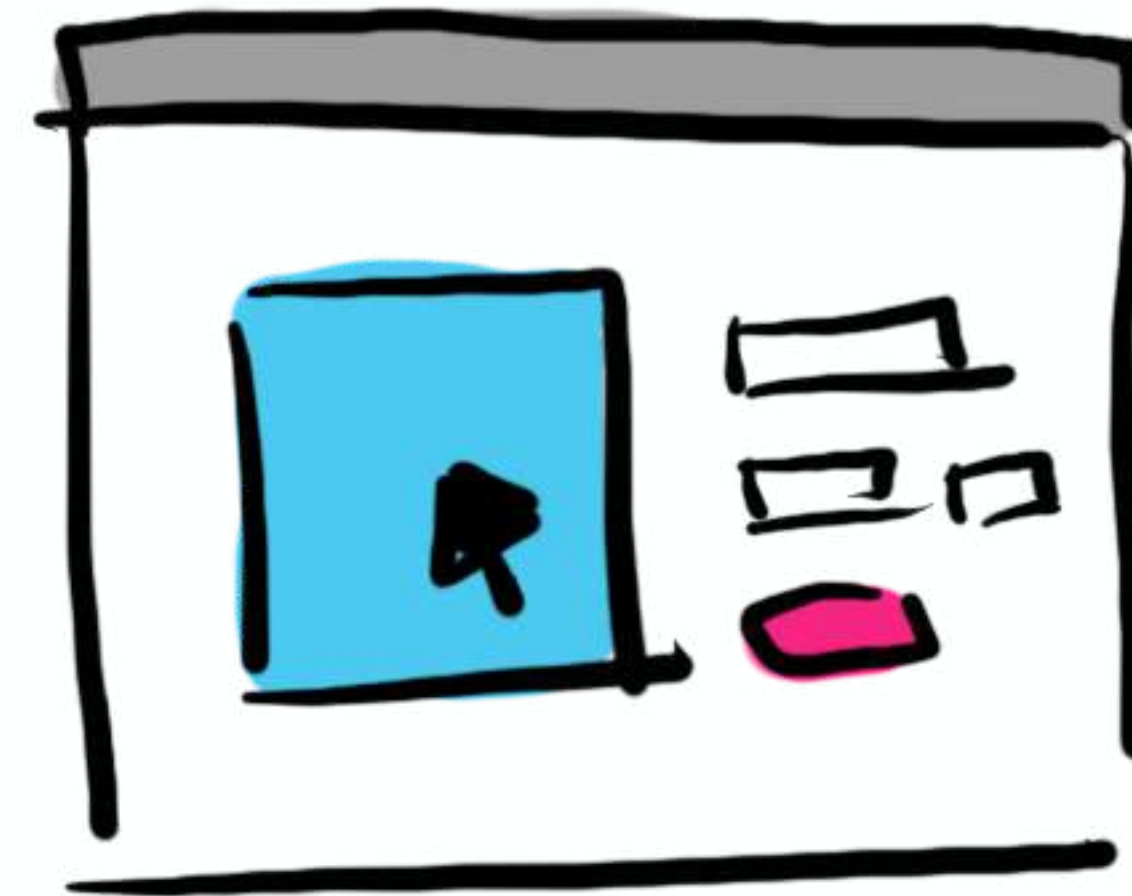
# LEARN: COUGH TRAVEL

- You can still learn so much without leaving your home
- Read travel books, memoirs and think about the “how” and “why”
- Watch videos on YouTube  
✦ travel videos, “a day in the life” videos, and more ✦



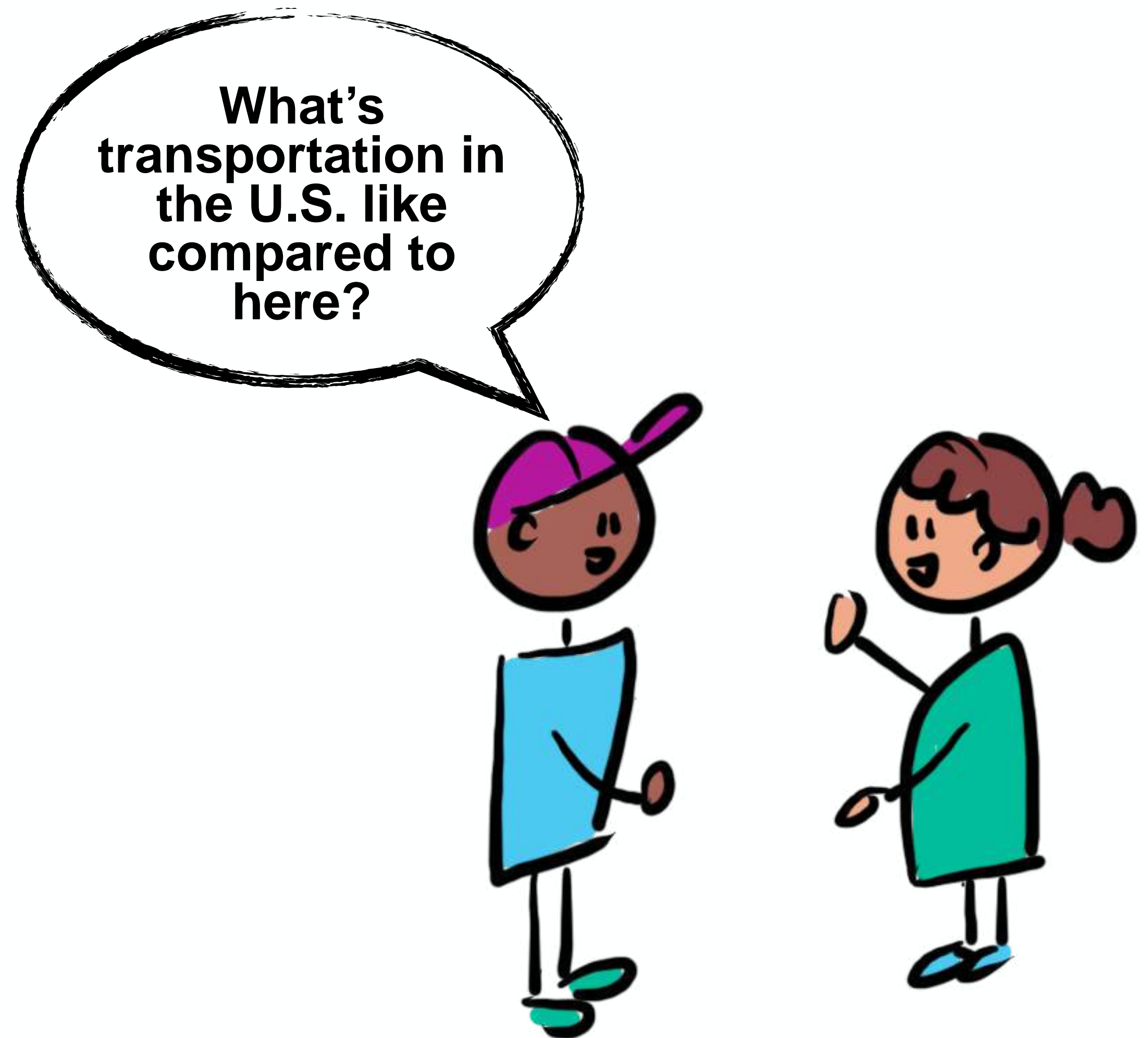
# LEARN: MEET PEOPLE

- Talk with people who are unlike you at conferences and events
- Usability test with a variety of people DEMO especially those not represented in your design team.
- Speak with translation teams for insight

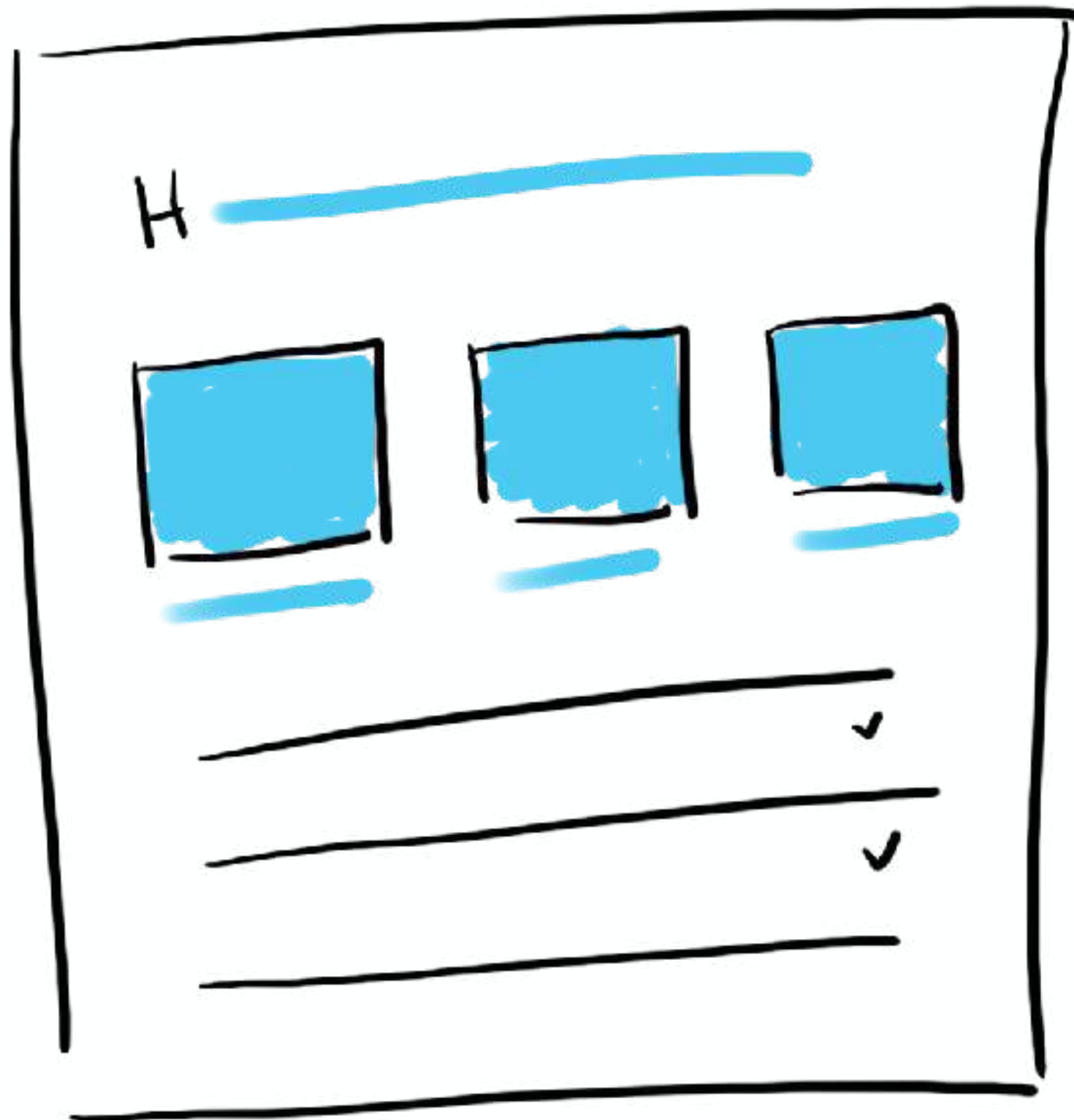


# TIPS FOR ENGAGING IN CONVERSATION

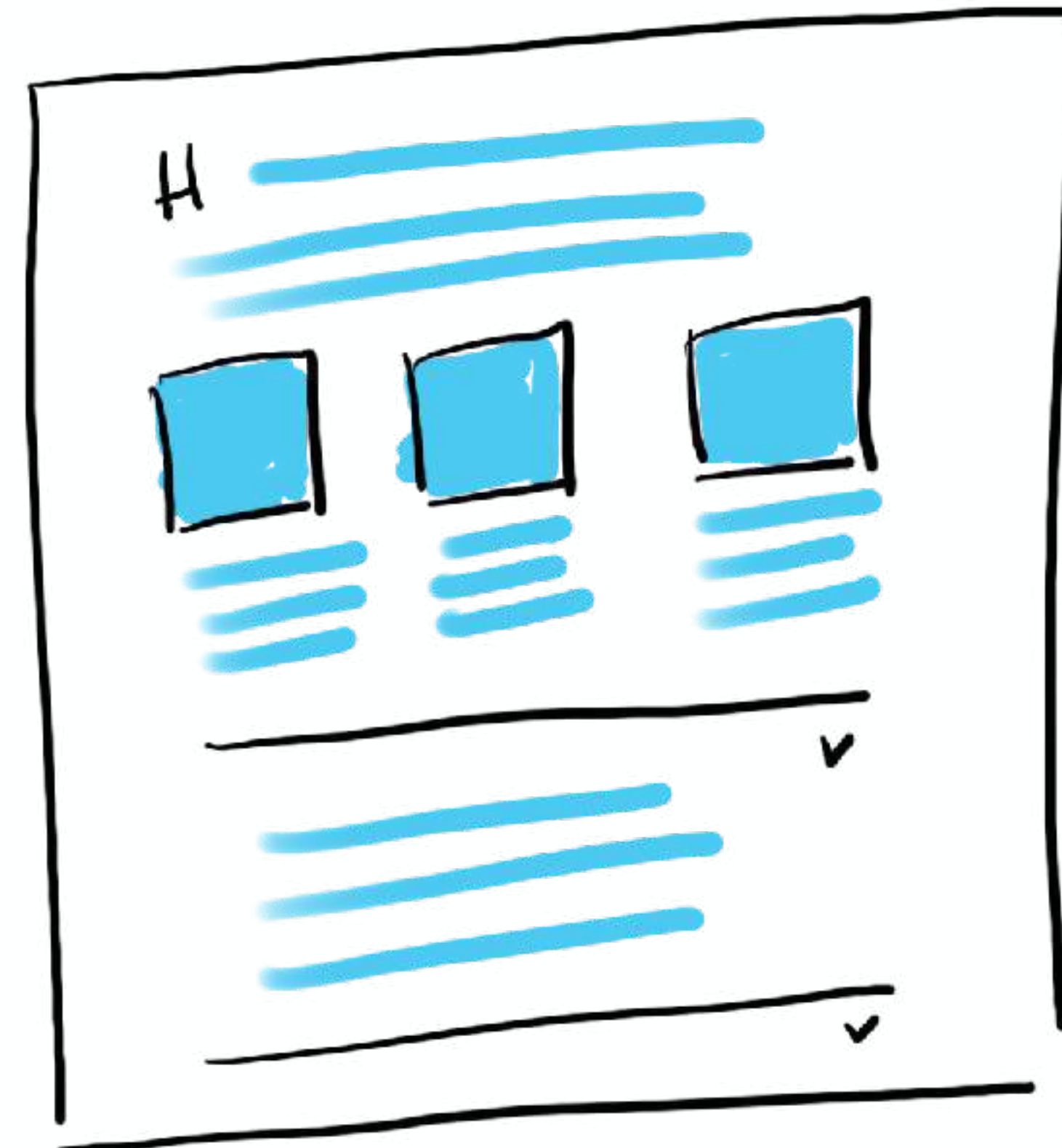
- **Be patient and respectful.**
- **Rather, “Where are you from, like really from?”  
Ask, “Have you always lived in London?”**
- **Avoid stating assumptions in your questions; focus on questions.**



# CONTRIBUTE: CREATE PATTERNS



Pattern that favors  
minimalism



Pattern that favors more  
context


# CONTRIBUTE: CREATE PATTERNS



**We're barely able to get our components figured out.**



**Patterns are confusing; this is even more work.**



**Our focus is only in the US. We don't need patterns for multiple countries just yet.**

**EXCUSES!**

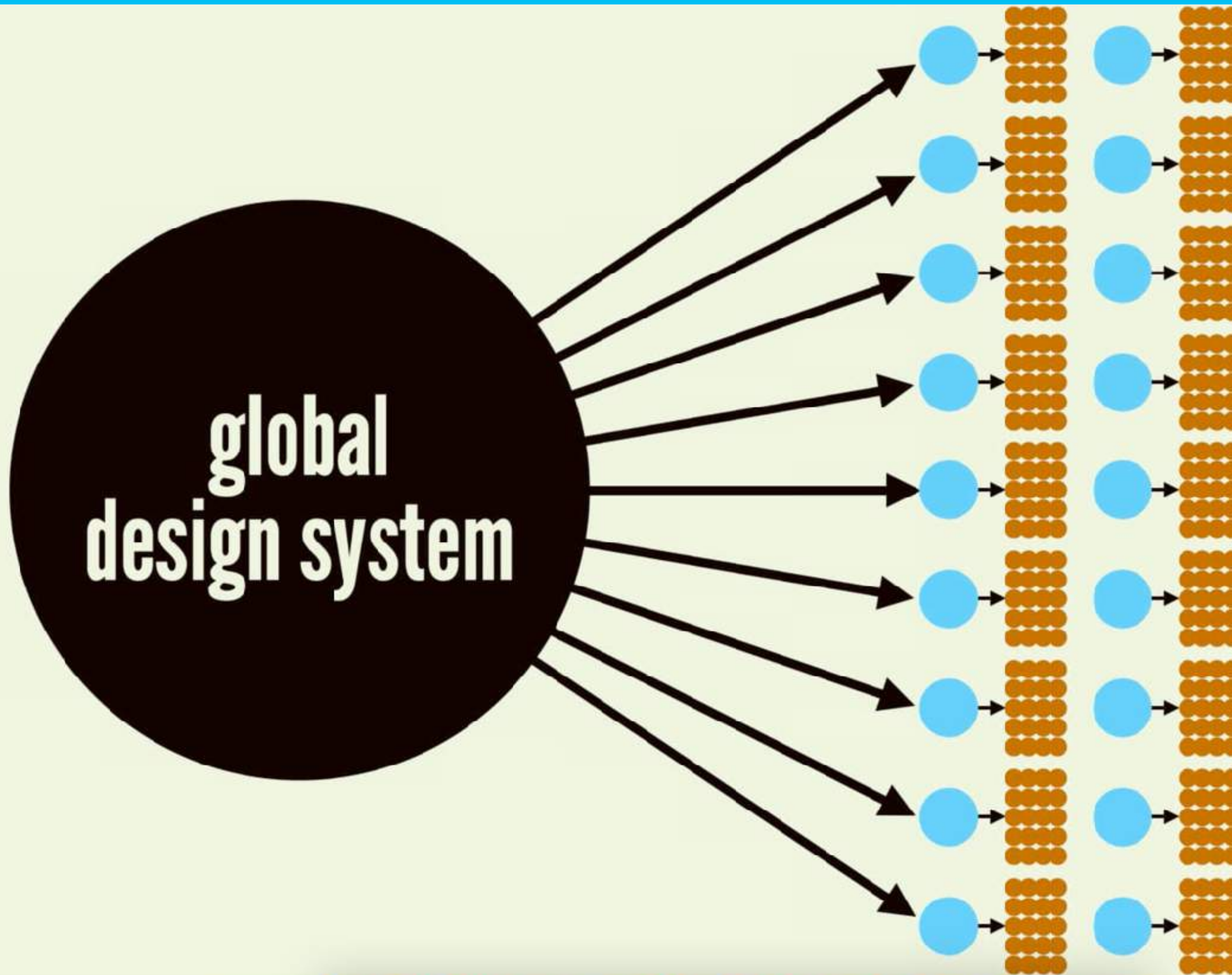


**I NEVER SAID THIS WOULD BE EASY.  
BUT IT'S WORTH IT.**

**WE'RE UNDOING CENTURIES OF  
WHITE SUPREMACY.**

**WE DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE.**

# CONTRIBUTE: GLOBAL DESIGN SYSTEM



# CONTRIBUTE: GLOBAL PATTERN LIBRARY

- **A UI pattern library that considers cultural contexts**
- **Cultural “sketches” to help provide context**
- **An opportunity to leverage design tokens**
- **Come join me in making this happen**

# CONTRIBUTE: CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- **Underrepresented people:**
  - Only contribute if you'd like to
  - Don't feel obligated to undo white supremacy
- **Represented people:**
  - Use this as your motivation to learn
  - Use this as your way of showing active allyship
  - Unburden us by carrying the weight



# THANK YOU!

Let's talk:

- zeroheight stand
- LinkedIn: michelletchin
- X: soysaucechin



[bit.ly/decolonize-your-design-system](https://bit.ly/decolonize-your-design-system)