Back in September, we had the GNU Tools Cauldron in the gorgeous city of Montréal (perhaps I should write a post specifically about it...). One of the sessions we had was the GDB BoF, where we discussed, among other things, how to improve our patch review system.

I have my own personal opinions about the current review system we use (mailing list-based, in a nutshell), and I haven't felt very confident to express it during the discussion. Anyway, the outcome was that at least 3 global maintainers have used or are currently using the Gerrit Code Review system for other projects, are happy with it, and that we should give it a try. Then, when it was time to decide who wanted to configure and set things up for the community, I volunteered. Hey, I'm already running the Buildbot master for GDB, what is the problem to manage yet another service? Oh, well.

Before we dive into the details involved in configuring and running gerrit in a machine, let me first say that I don't totally support the idea of migrating from mailing list to gerrit. I volunteered to set things up because I felt the community (or at least the its most active members) wanted to try it out. I don't necessarily agree with the choice.

Ah, and I'm writing this post mostly because I want to be able to close the 300+ tabs I had to open on my Firefox during these last weeks, when I was searching how to solve the myriad of problems I faced during the set up!

The last 33 days have been unprecedentedly difficult for the software freedom community and for me personally. Folks have been emailing, phoning, texting, tagging me on social media (?
the last of which has been funny, because all my social media accounts are placeholder accounts). But, just about everyone has urged me to comment on the serious issues that the software freedom community now faces. Until now, I have stayed silent regarding all these current topics: from Richard M. Stallman (RMS)'s public statements, to his resignation from the Free Software Foundation (FSF), to the Epstein scandal and its connection to MIT. I've also avoided generally commenting on software freedom organization governance during this period. I did this for good reason, which is explained below. However, in this blog post, I now share my primary comments on the matters that seem to currently be of the utmost attention of the Open Source and Free Software communities.

I have been silent the last month because, until two days ago, I was an at-large member of FSF's Board of Directors, and a Voting Member of the FSF. As a member of FSF's two leadership bodies, I was abiding by a reasonable request from the FSF management and my duty to the organization. Specifically, the FSF asked that all communication during the crisis come directly from FSF officers and not from at-large directors and/or Voting Members. Furthermore, the FSF management asked all Directors and Voting Members to remain silent on this entire matter ? even on issues only tangentially related to the current situation, and even when speaking in our own capacity (e.g., on our own blogs like this one). The FSF is an important organization, and I take any request from the FSF seriously ? so I abided fully with their request.

The situation was further complicated because folks at my employer, Software Freedom Conservancy (where I also serve on the Board of Directors) had strong opinions about this matter as well. Fortunately, the FSF and Conservancy both had already created clear protocols for what I should do if ever there was a disagreement or divergence of views between Conservancy and FSF. I therefore was recused fully from the planning, drafting, and timing of Conservancy's statement on this matter. I thank my colleagues at the Conservancy for working so carefully to keep me entirely outside the loop on their statement and to diligently assure that it was straight-forward for me to manage any potential organizational disagreements. I also thank those at the FSF who outlined clear protocols (ahead of time, back in March 2019) in case a situation like this ever came up. I also know my colleagues at Conservancy care deeply, as I do, about the health and welfare of the FSF and its mission of fighting for universal software freedom for all. None of us want, nor have, any substantive disagreement over software freedom issues.

I take very seriously my duty to the various organizations where I have (or have had) affiliations. More generally, I champion non-profit organizational transparency. Unfortunately, the current crisis left me in a quandary between the overarching goal of community transparency and abiding by FSF management's directives. Now that I've left the FSF Board of Directors, FSF's Voting Membership, and all my FSF volunteer roles (which ends my 22-year uninterrupted affiliation with the FSF), I can now comment on the substantive issues that face not just the FSF, but the Free Software community as a whole, while continuing to adhere to my past duty of acting in FSF's best interest. In other words, my affiliation with the FSF has come to an end for many good and useful reasons. The end to this affiliation allows me to speak directly about the core issues at the heart of the community's current crisis.
On Tuesday, October 15th, the Free Software Foundation (FSF) staff would like to meet you at a social event at Raleigh's Whiskey Kitchen!

Executive director John Sullivan, licensing and compliance manager Donald R. Robertson, III, copyright and licensing associate Craig Topham, and program manager Zoë Kooyman, will all be in Raleigh, NC on October 15th, in anticipation of this year's licensing seminar on GPL Enforcement and Legal Ethics.

We look forward to hosting this informal meetup to show our appreciation for your support of the FSF's work. We'll share some bites and drinks while giving you the opportunity to meet other FSF associate members and supporters while learning about what the FSF is currently working on. We are curious to hear your thoughts, and would love to answer any questions you may have.

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