Designing Morally Difficult Characters, Responsibly

Dan Nagler
Game Designer, Gigantic Mechanic

The Mission

GIGANTIC MECHANIC

EDWARD M. KENNEDY INSTITUTE
FOR THE UNITED STATES SENATE
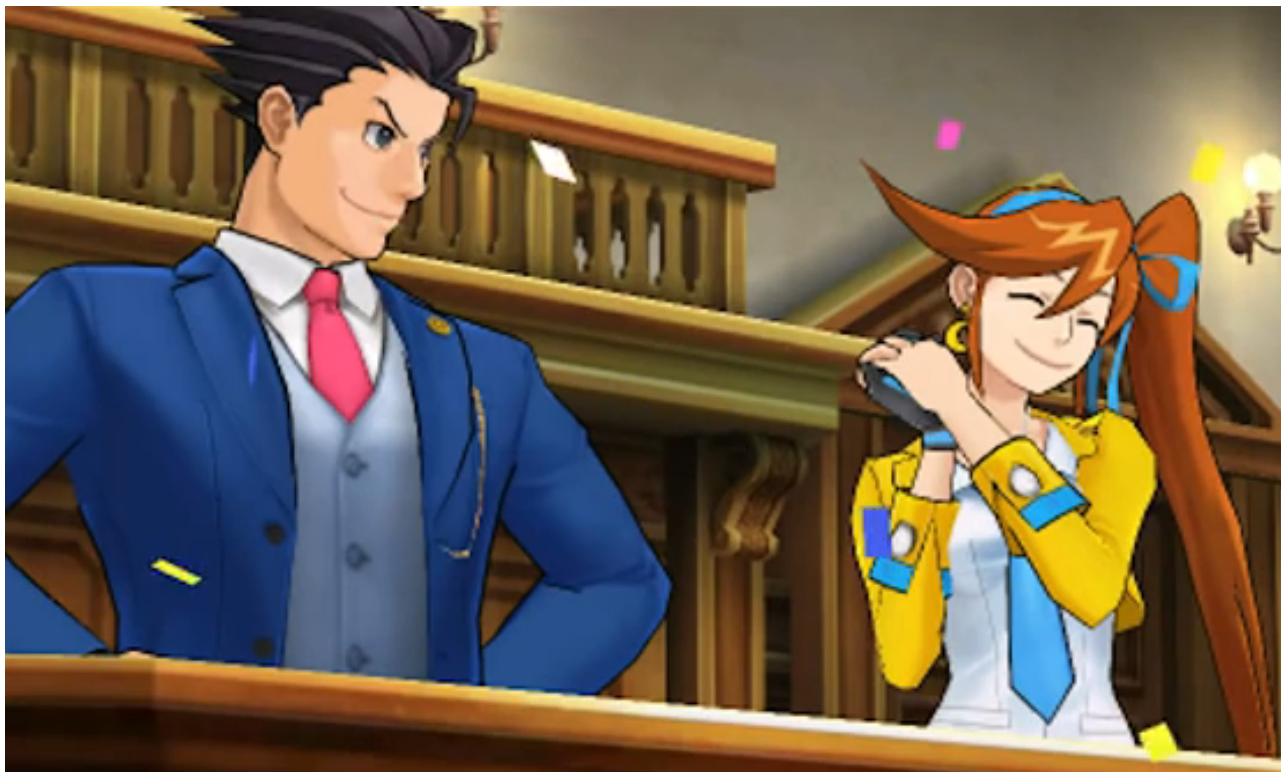
The Mission

The Mission

Why Should You Care?

Before you Start

Before you Start

Step #1:
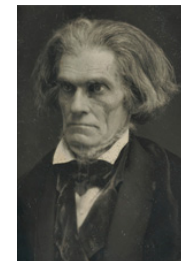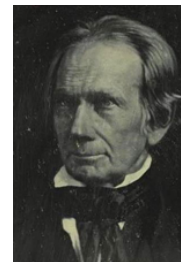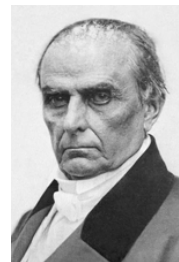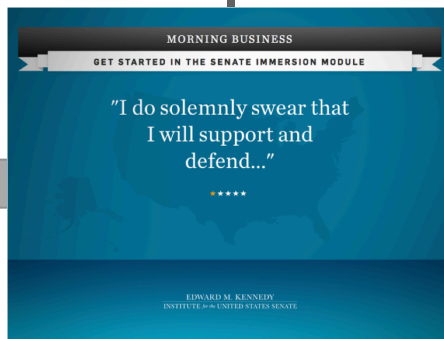# Create a Safe Space

Create a Safe Space
In the SIM

Out of Character

In Character

Create a Safe Space
The Theory

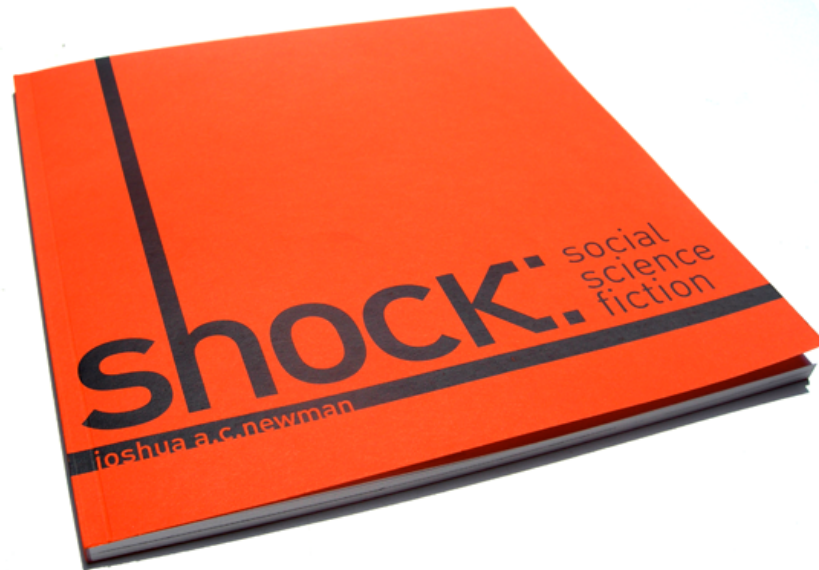**Out of Character**　　　　　　　　　**In Character**
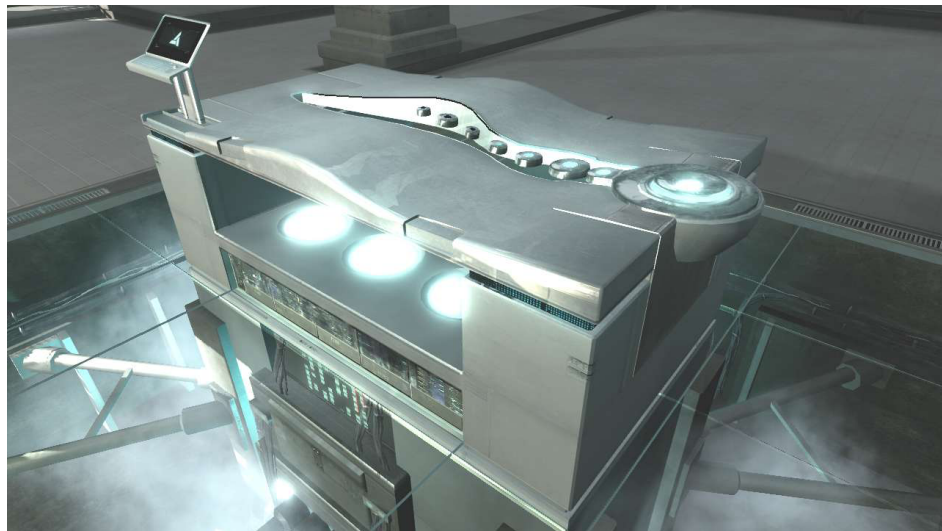

Introduce Safe Space

Create a Safe Space
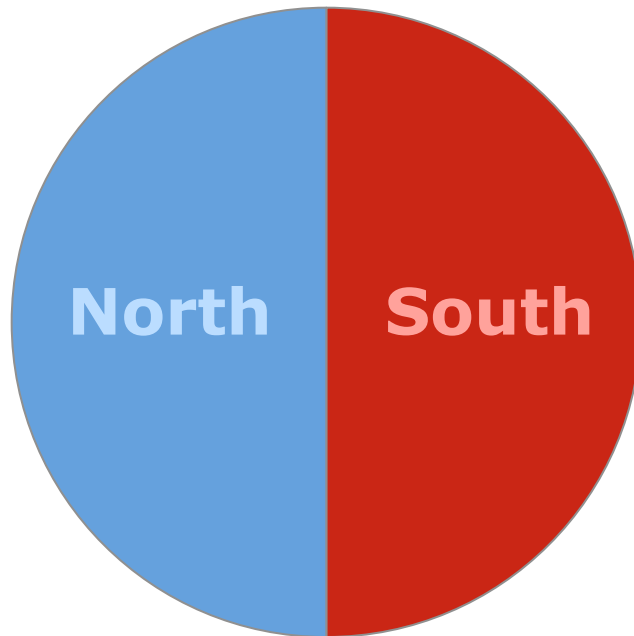*References*

Create a Safe Space
References
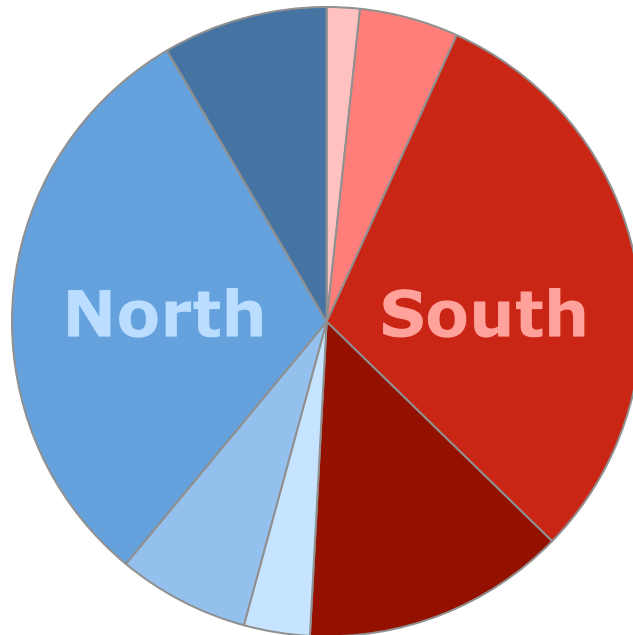
Step #2:
Complex Factions,
Complex Morals

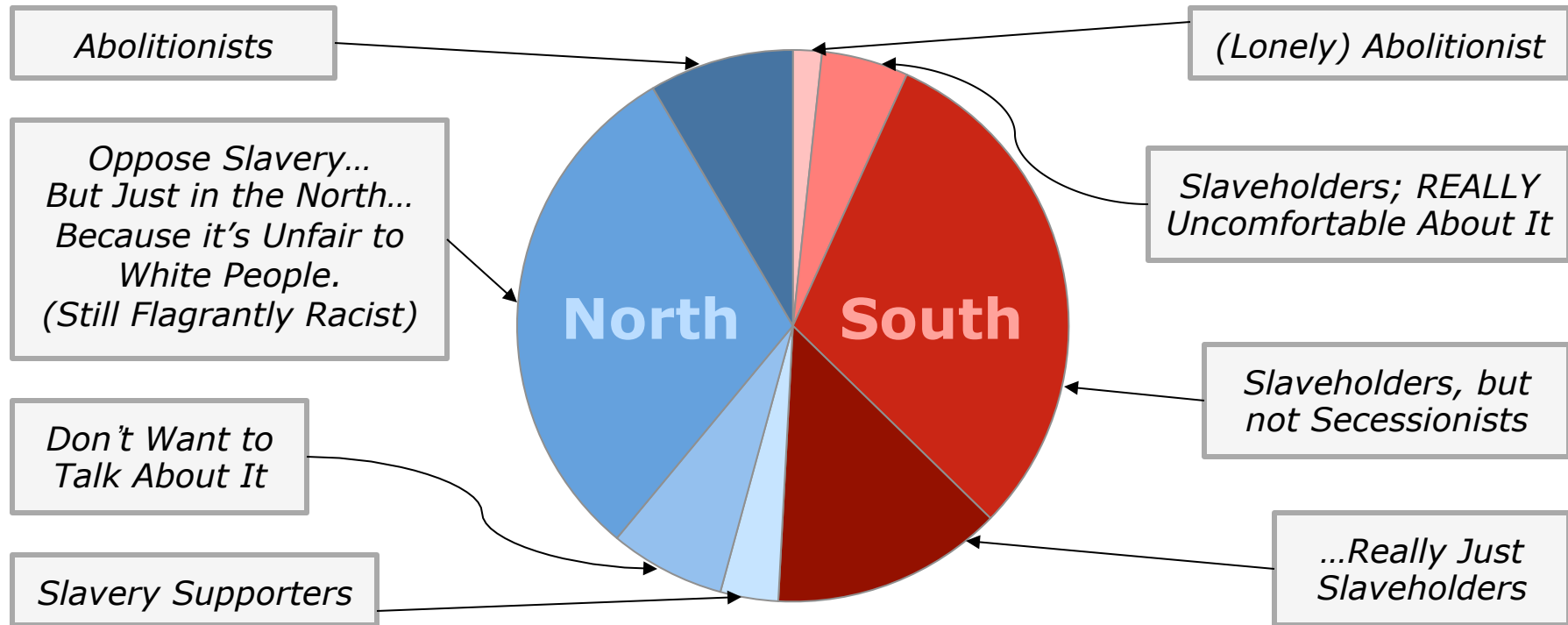# Complex Factions, Complex Morals
In the SIM

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
In the SIM
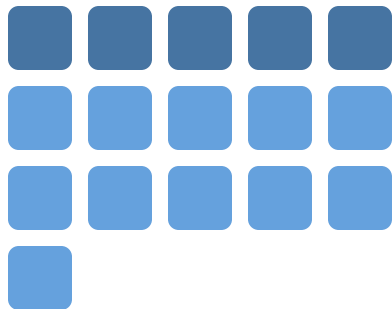
Complex Factions, Complex Morals
In the SIM

Abolitionists

(Lonely) Abolitionist

Oppose Slavery…
But Just in the North…
Because it's Unfair to
White People.
(Still Flagrantly Racist)

Slaveholders; REALLY
Uncomfortable About It

Slaveholders, but
not Secessionists

Don't Want to
Talk About It

Slavery Supporters

…Really Just
Slaveholders

North

South

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
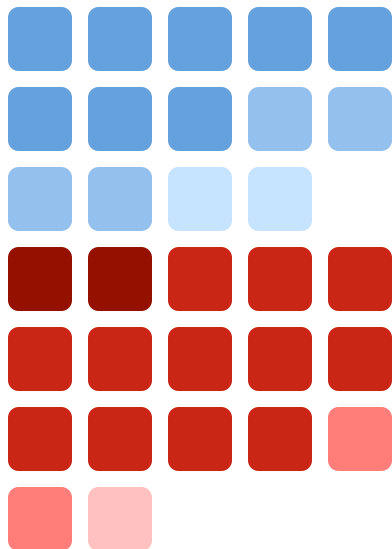*In the SIM*

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
The Theory
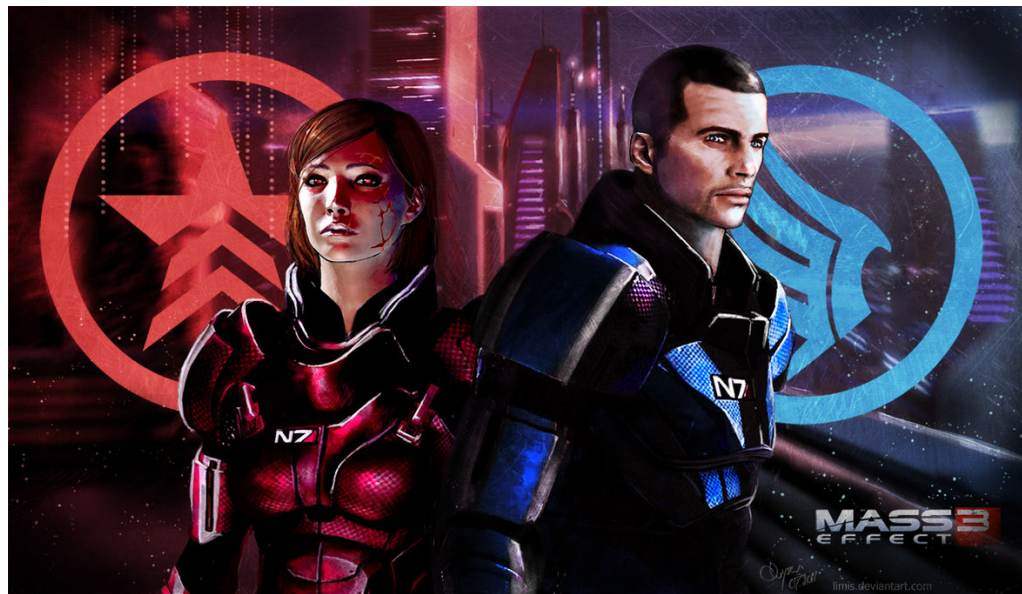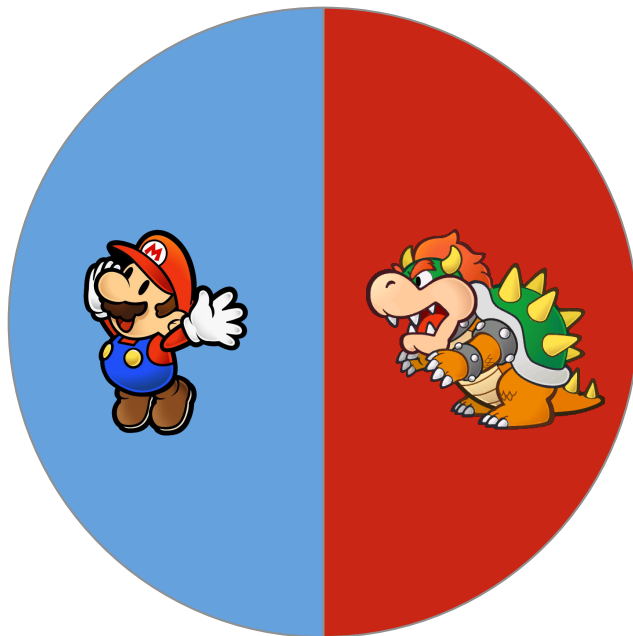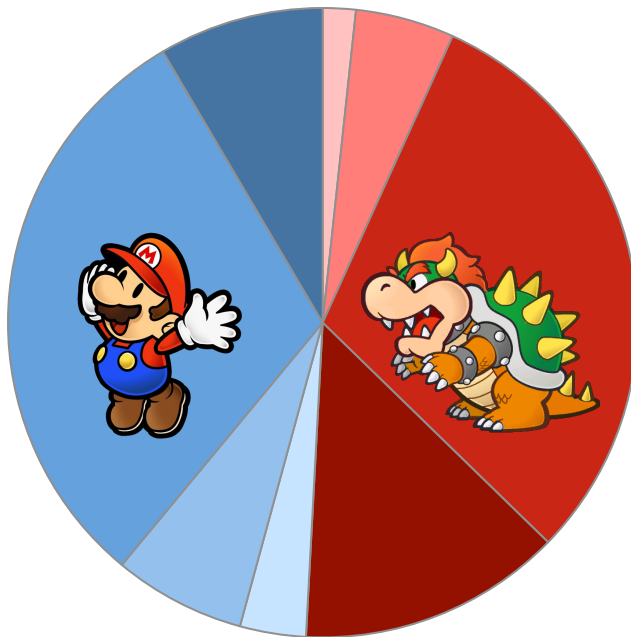
Complex Factions, Complex Morals
The Theory

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
The Theory

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
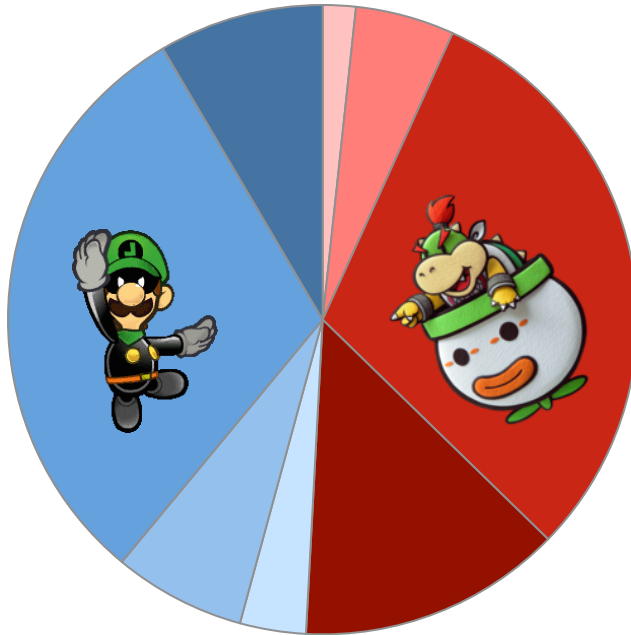*The Theory*

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
The Theory

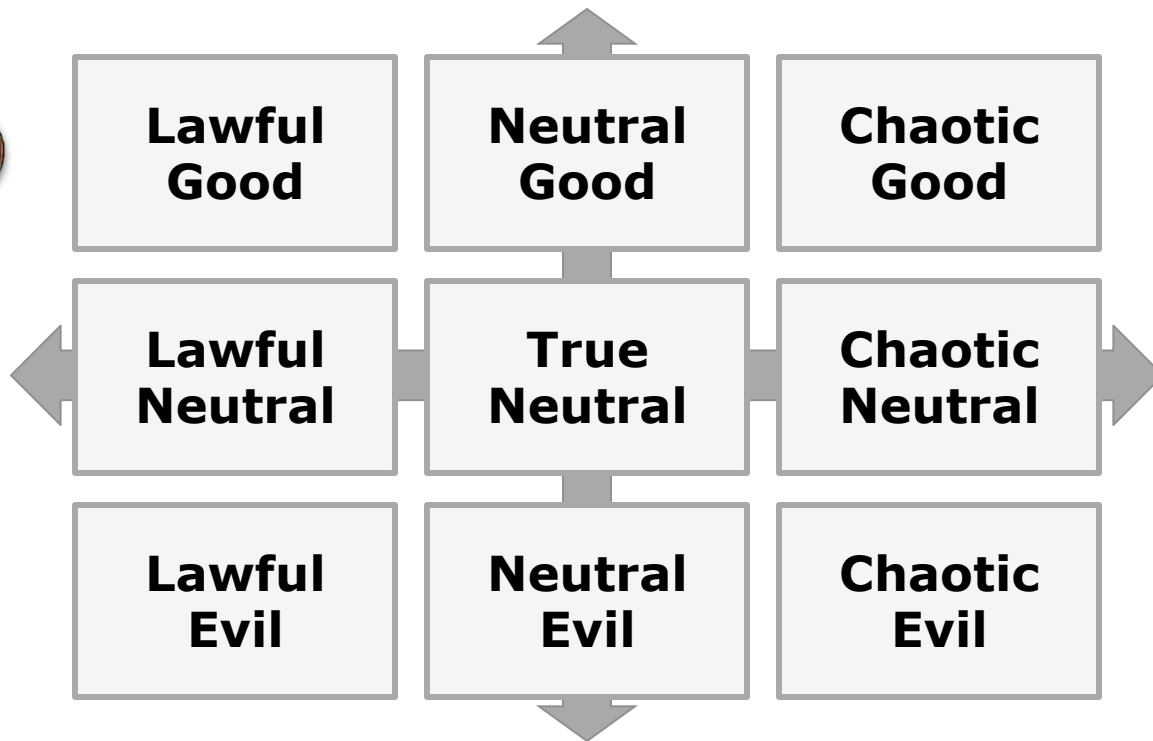| Fully Anti-Bowser | Pro-Compromise | Fully Pro-Bowser |

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
References

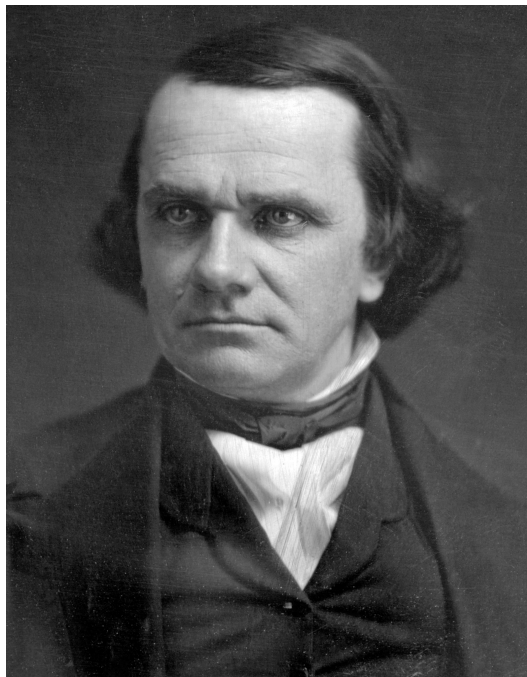| Lawful Good	Neutral Good	Chaotic Good
Lawful Neutral	True Neutral	Chaotic Neutral
Lawful Evil	Neutral Evil	Chaotic Evil

Complex Factions, Complex Morals
References

Step #3:
Link Character Motives to Game Goals

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
In the SIM

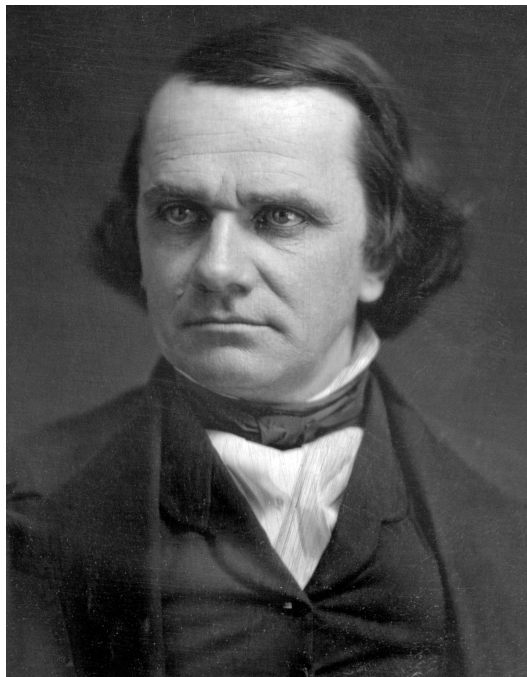**Senator Stephen Douglas**

Democrat

Illinois

Slavery

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
In the SIM

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
In the SIM

Make California a Free State
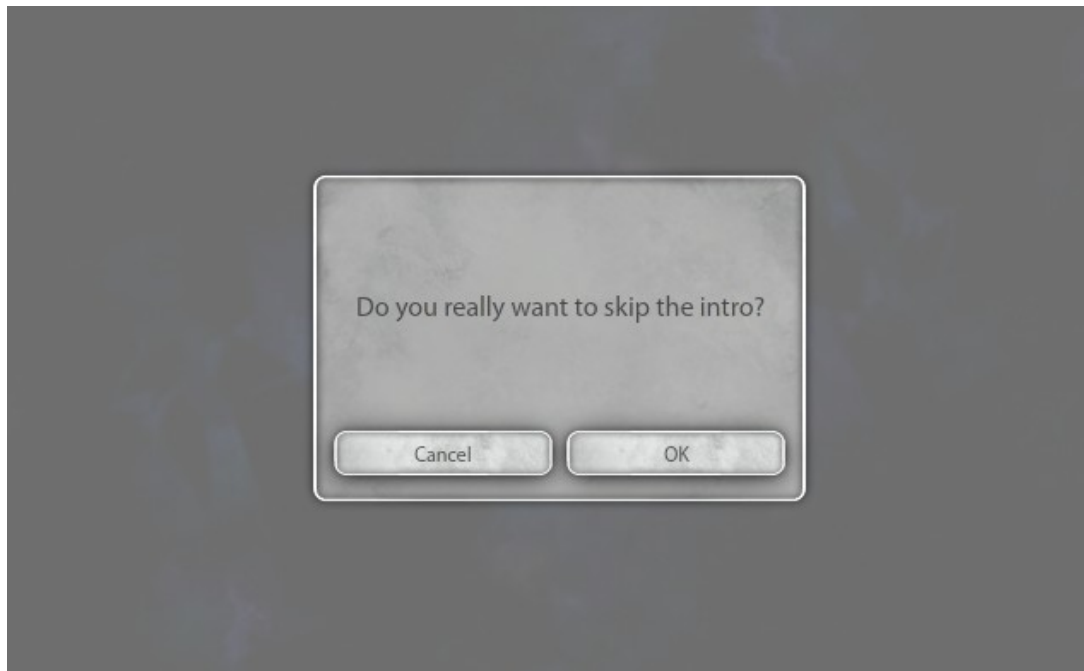
Trade

Industry

Farming

Crime

Slavery

States' Rights

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
The Theory

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
The Theory

Faction

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
The Theory

Honor

Knowledge

Law

Faction

Public Image

Trade

Resolve

Peace

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
The Theory

Honor +1

Knowledge +1

Law +2

Faction +2

Public Image -2

Trade +4

Resolve +3

Peace +1

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
References

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
References

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
More Theory

Honor +1

Knowledge +1

Law +2

Faction +2

Public Image -2

Trade +4

Resolve +3

Peace +1

Link Character Motives to Game Goals
More Theory

VERY Evil +1

Irrelevant +1

Pragmatic +2

Evil +2

Ego-Driven -2
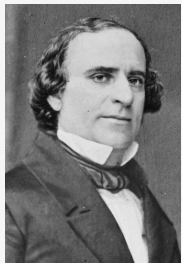
...Okay? +4
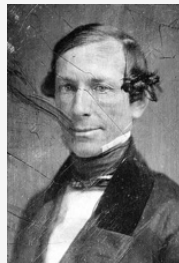
Misguided +1

Also Evil +3

Step #4:
Everyone's Human

Everyone's Human
In the SIM

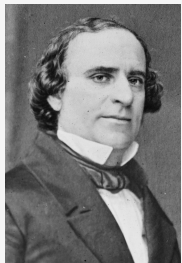**David Yulee**
D-FL

Henry Foote
D-MS

William King
D-AL

Sam Houston
D-TX

Jeff Davis
D-MS

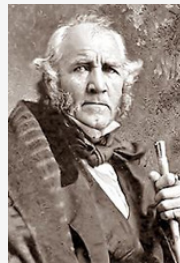# Everyone's Human
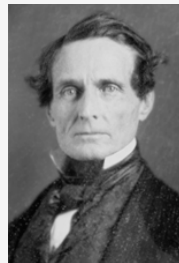## *In the SIM*

First ever senator of Jewish descent

Once threatened to shoot a guy on the Senate floor

Possibly dating future President James Buchanan?

Defeated General Santa Anna in battle…
Two-time President of Texas…
Has a city named after him

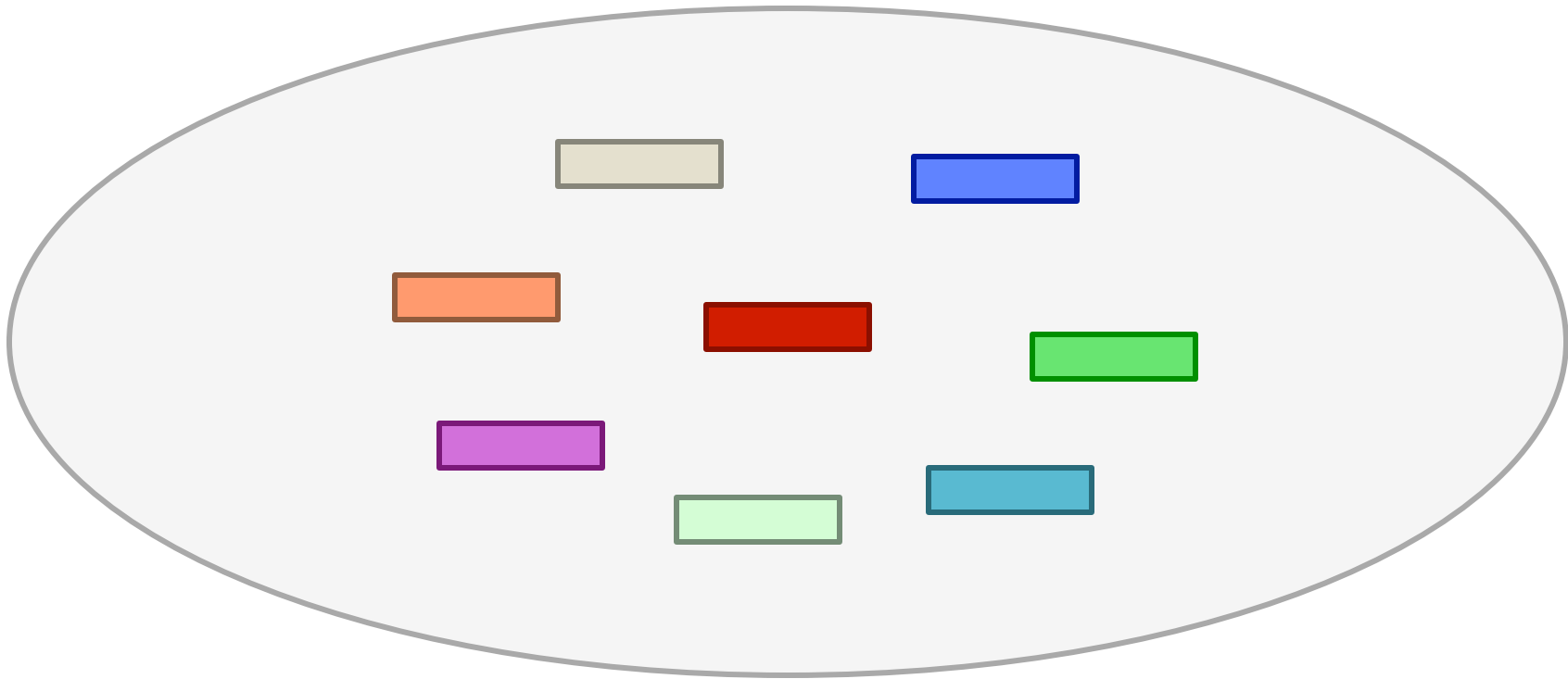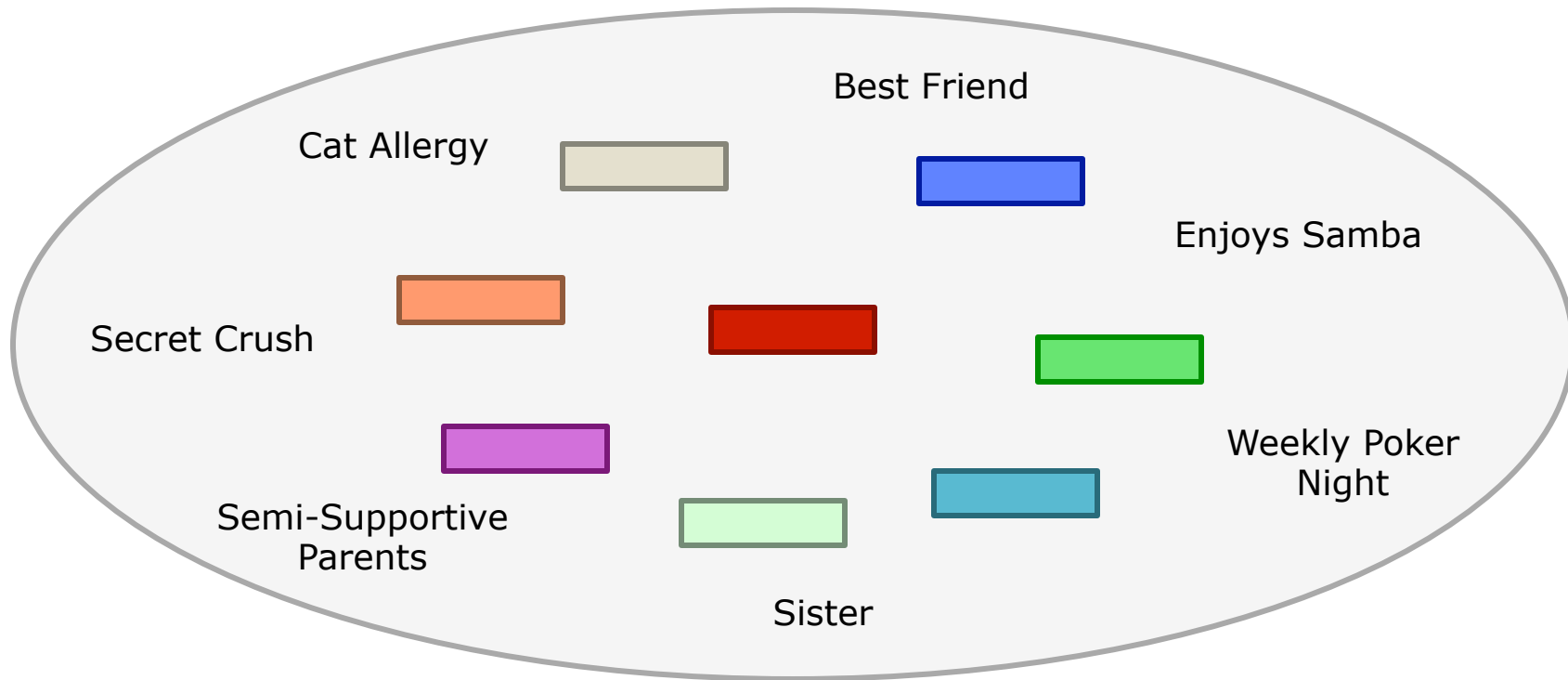Patching things up with his estranged wife

Everyone's Human
The Theory
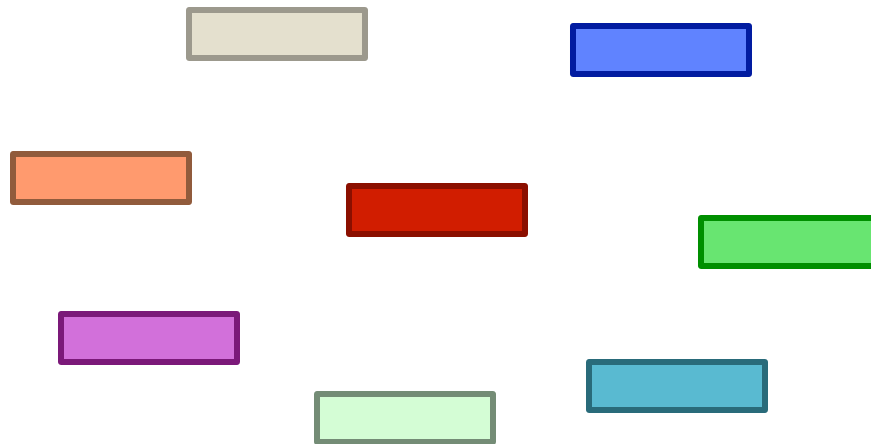
Everyone's Human
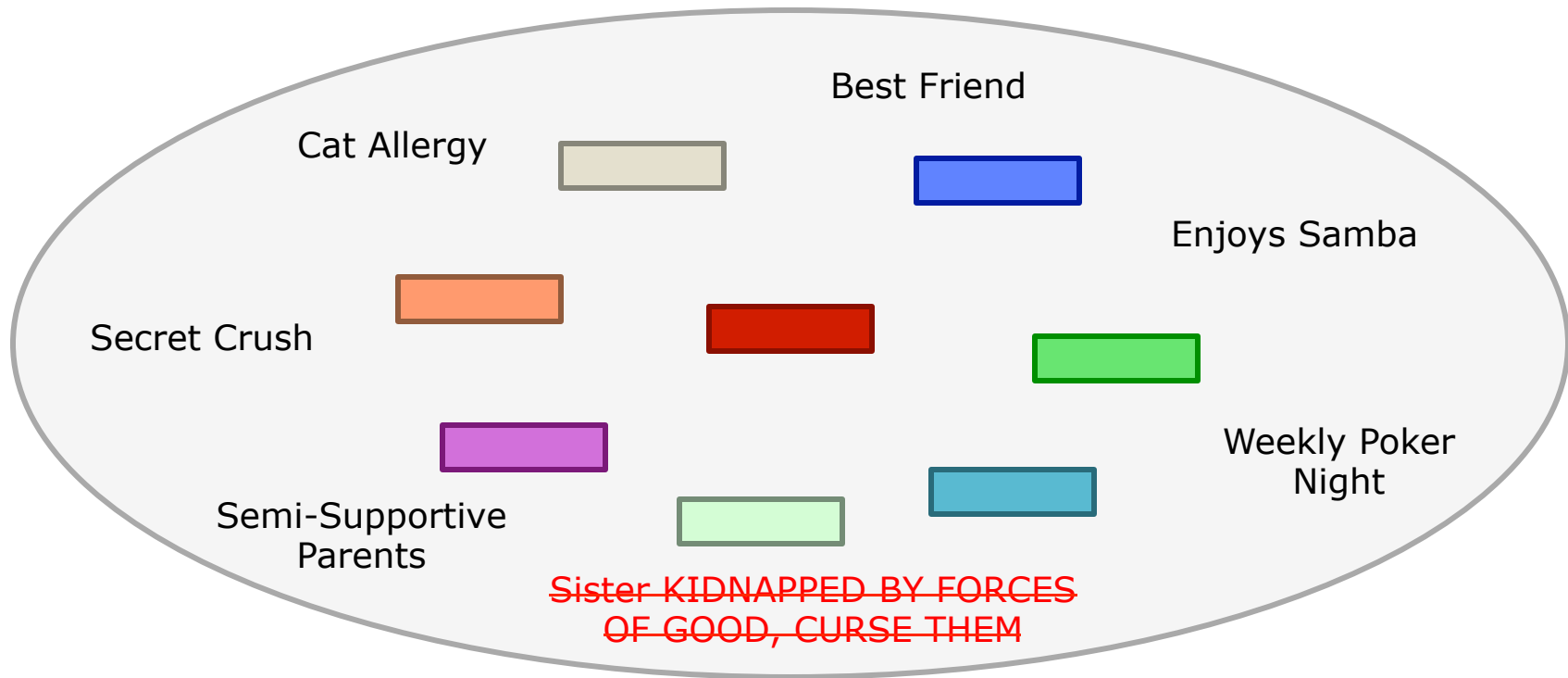## *The Theory*

Everyone's Human
The Theory

Everyone's Human
The Theory

Everyone's Human
The Theory

Best Friend

Cat Allergy

Enjoys Samba

Secret Crush

Weekly Poker Night
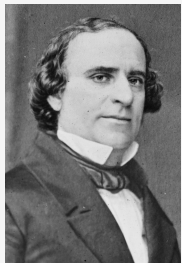
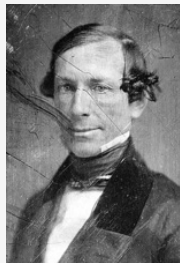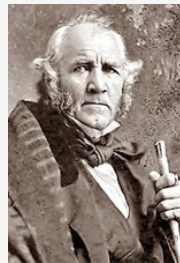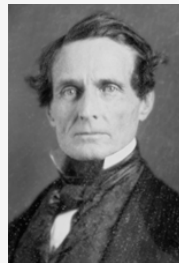Semi-Supportive Parents

Sister KIDNAPPED BY FORCES OF GOOD, CURSE THEM

Everyone's Human
The Theory

SLAVEOWNER

SLAVEOWNER

SLAVEOWNER

SLAVEOWNER

LITERALLY THE FUTURE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERACY

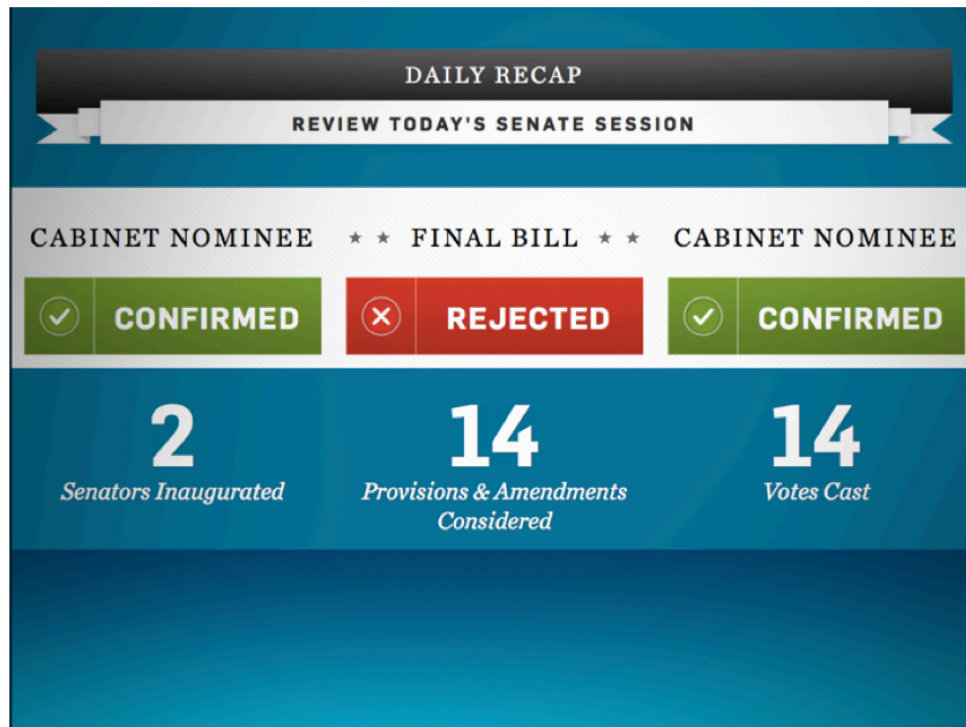# Everyone's Human
References

Everyone's Human
References

Step #5:
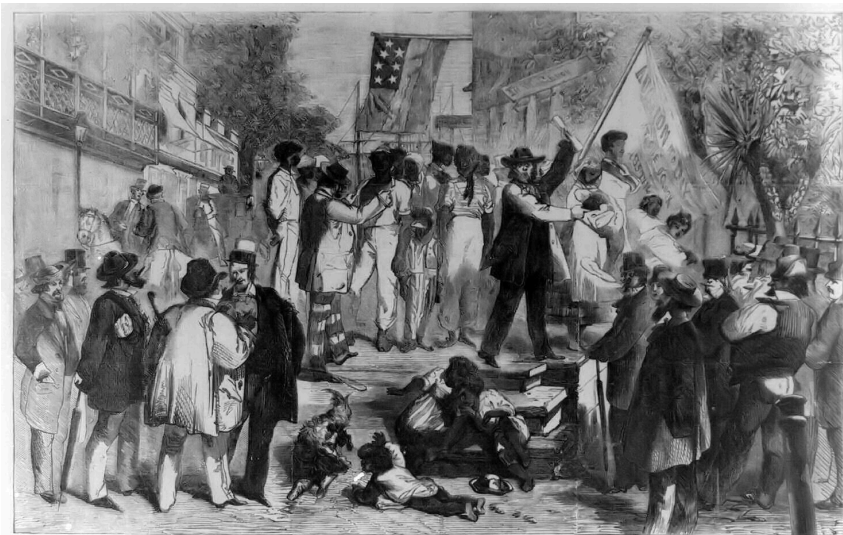# Let them Choose...

Let them Choose…
In the SIM
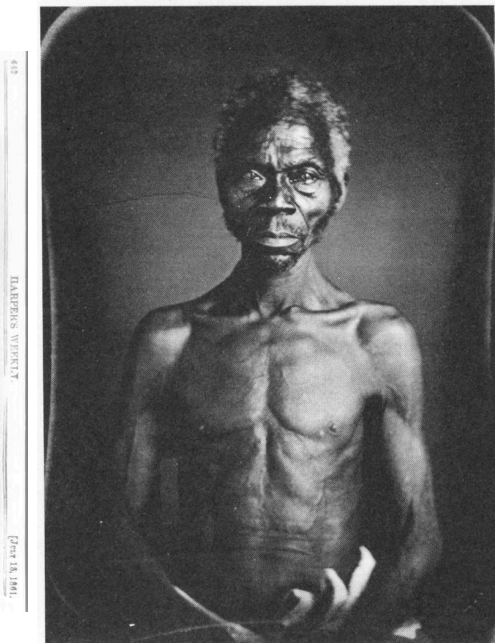
Step #5:
Let them Choose...
then Let them Reflect

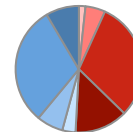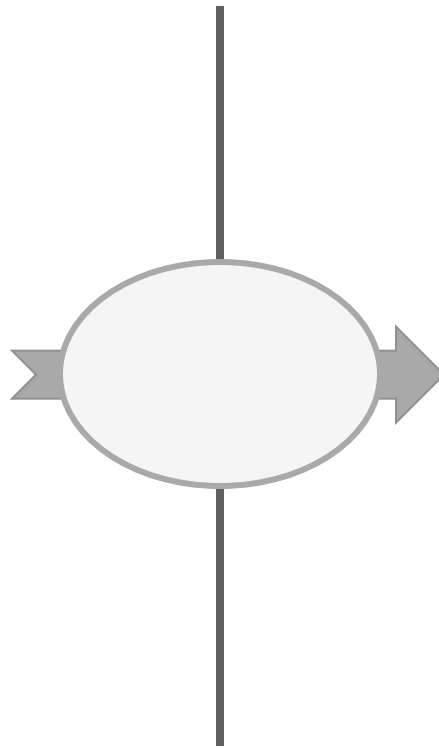# Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
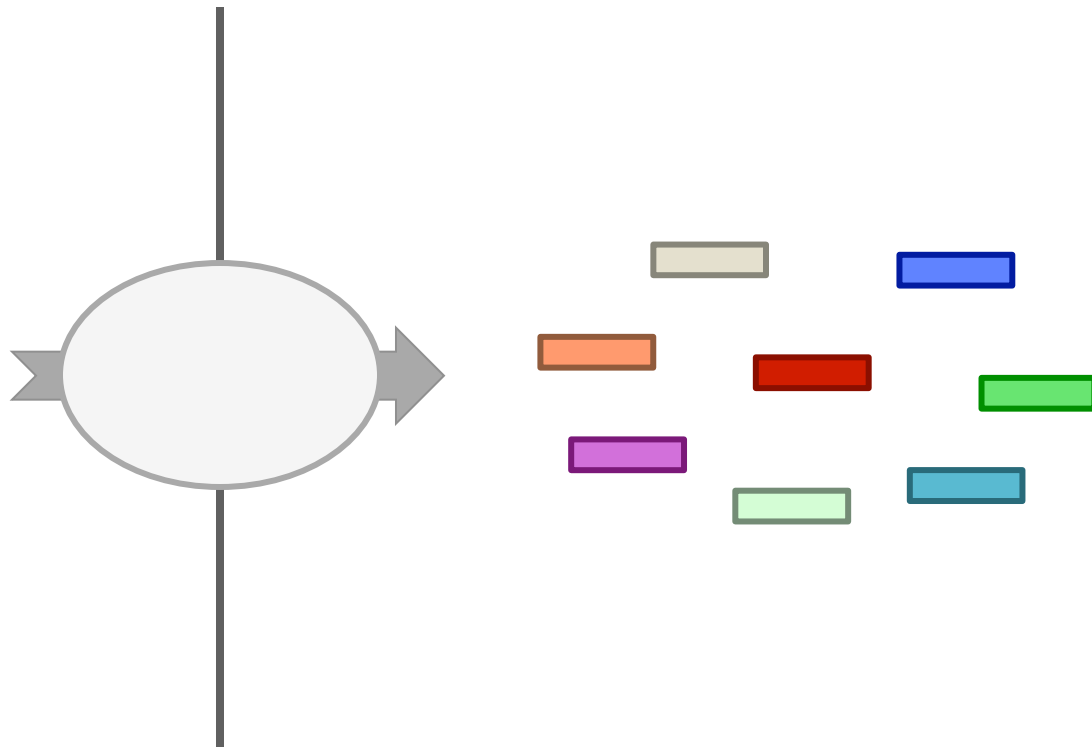## *In the SIM*

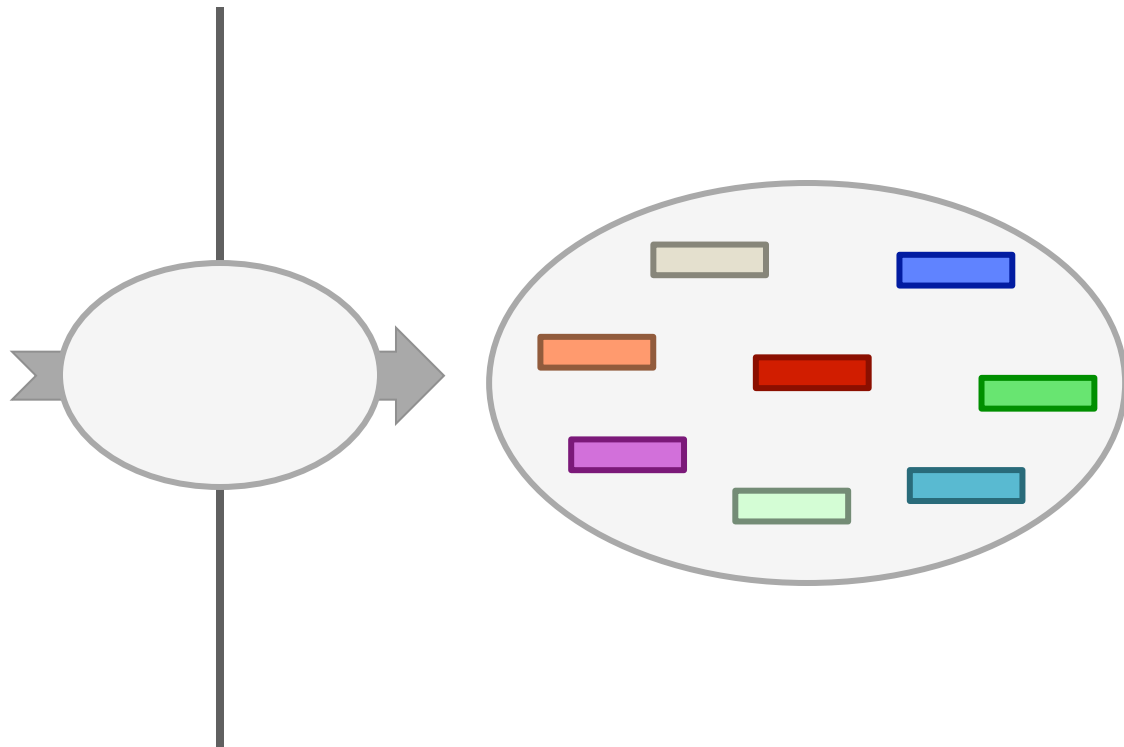# Create a Safe Space

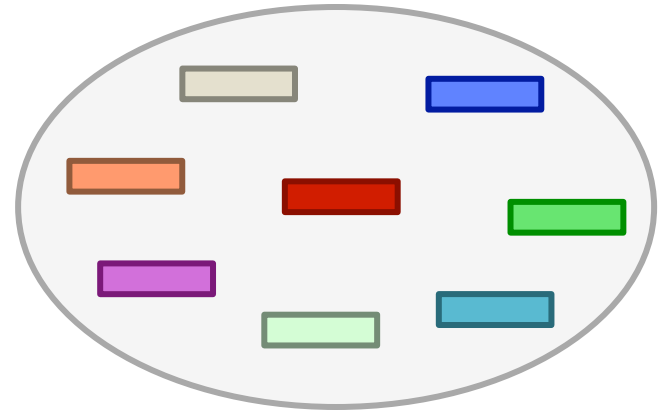# Complex Factions, Complex Morals

Link Character Motives to Game Goals

Everyone's Human

Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
The Theory
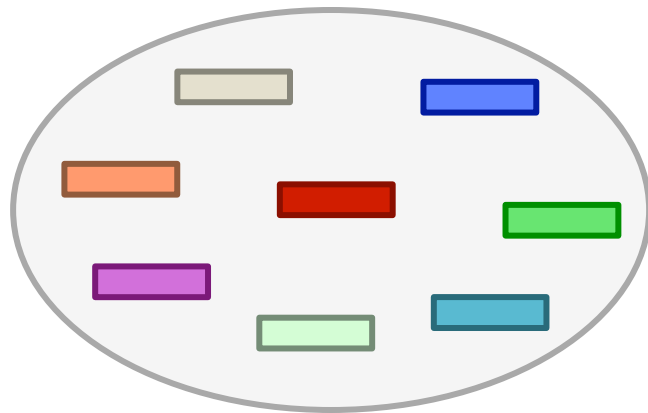
Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
The Theory

Designing Morally Difficult Characters, *RESPONSIBLY*

Dan Nagler
Game Designer, Gigantic Mechanic

Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
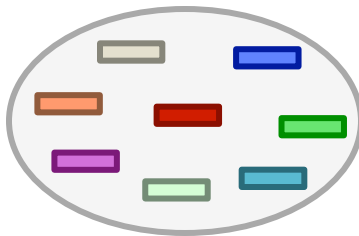## *The Theory*

Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
The Theory

Out of Character

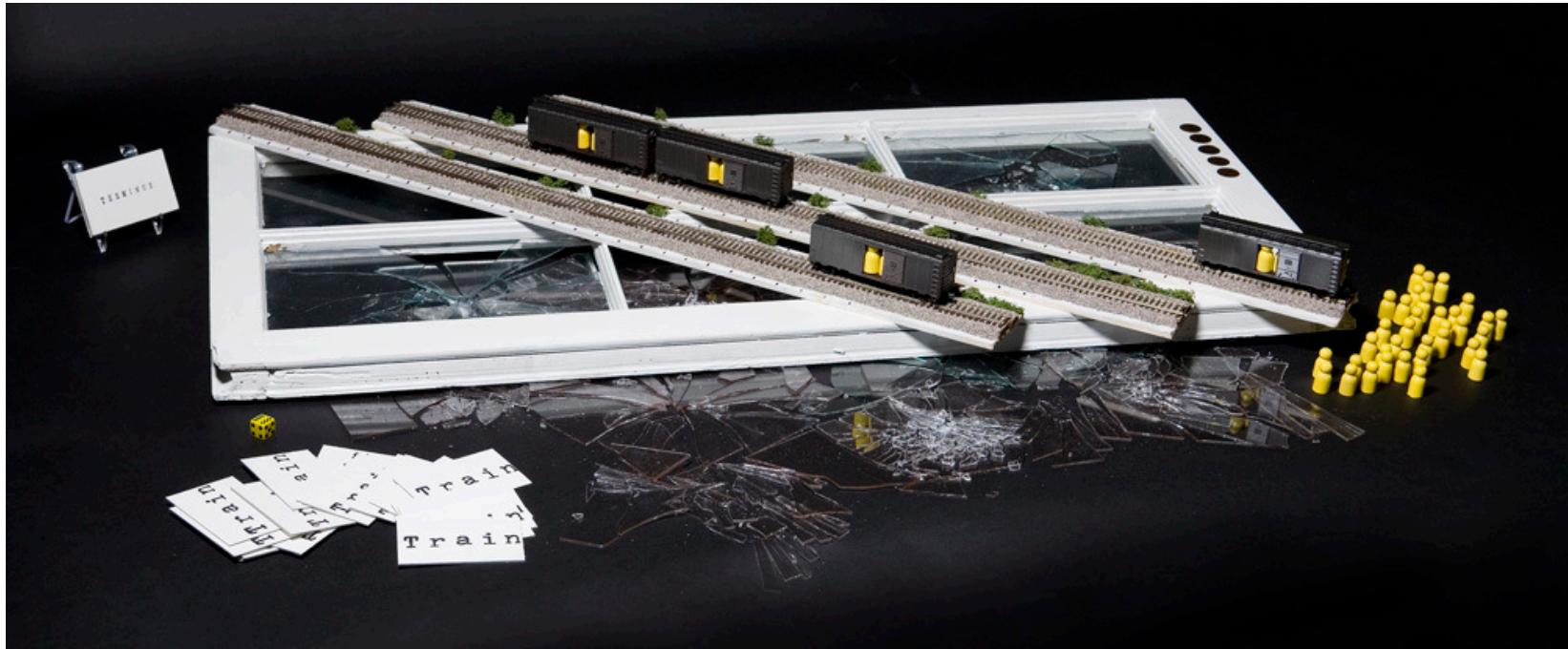**In Character**

Out of Character

Introduce Safe Space

Remove Safe Space

Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
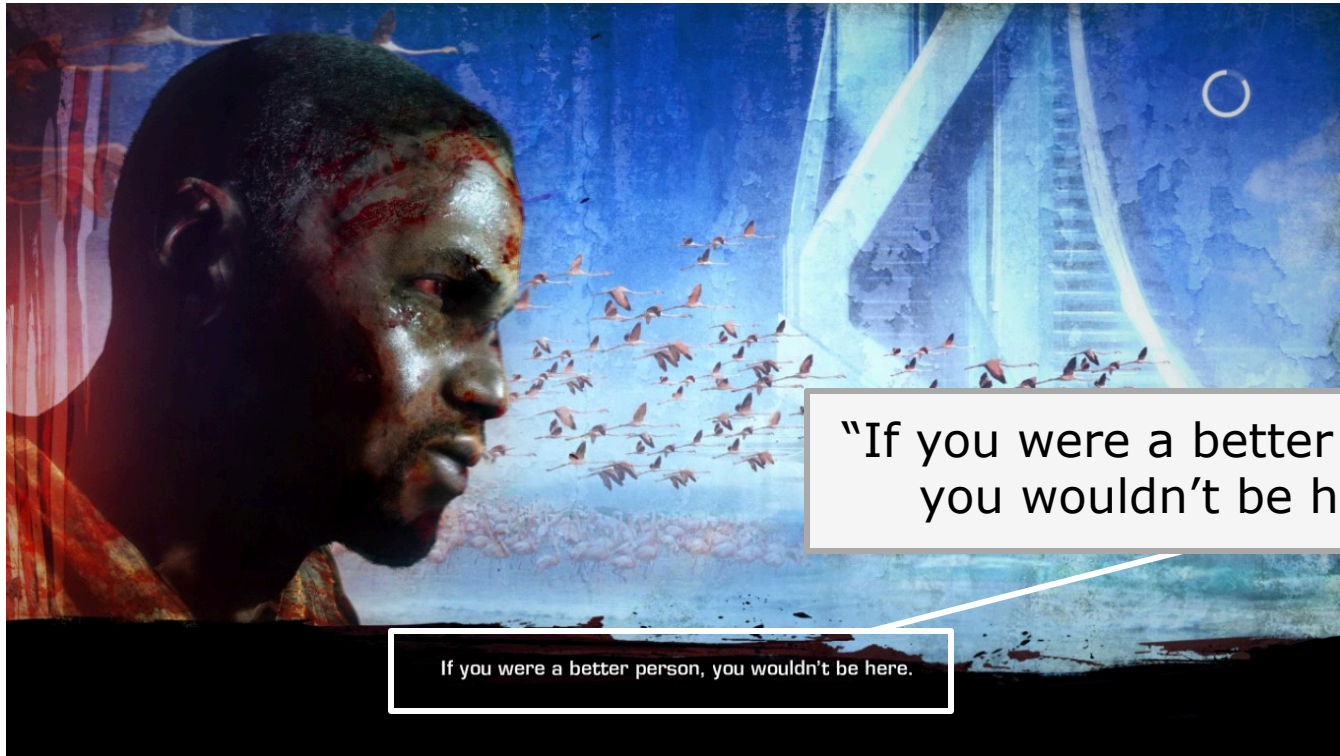## *References*

Let them Choose, then Let them Reflect
References

"If you were a better person, you wouldn't be here."

"It is not enough to know that you are the descendant of slaves--you should also understand how easily you could have been the slave-master… We can approach history denouncing the craziness of others, or we can approach it trying to understand how we might have possibly done the same thing."

-Ta-Nehisi Coates
Senior Editor, *The Atlantic*

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Gigantic Mechanic: www.giganticmechanic.com
The EMK Institute: www.emkinstitute.org
The Compromise of 1850: America's Great Debate,
Fergus M. Bordewich (2012)

Email Dan at: dnagler@giganticmechanic.com
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