
**OFFICIAL STATEMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY
REGARDING GRACE HOPPER CELEBRATION 2023
FROM ANITAB.ORG**

At AnitaB.org, we strive each and every day to make serving you, women and non-binary technologists and the community we have built, our number one priority. Whether by connecting you with each other to network and find mentors, raising our collective voices for equitable policies within both the government and the tech ecosystem, or by hosting a safe and inclusive Grace Hopper Celebration (GHC) – YOU, our community, are at the heart of our mission. You and your needs – your rights – are why we exist.

Together, we seek change. Together, we make progress. And together, unfortunately, we saw the core tenet of who we are weaponized against our organization, our staff, and attendees who trust us to provide a safe space for professional opportunity.

This year in Orlando, many of our attendees had an incredibly positive experience. However, we saw an unprecedented shift in both participation and subsequent behavior in one aspect of GHC. Because of this, many of you had an experience we didn't expect, and understandably, you expressed concerns. The energy of the Expo Hall led some of you to feel unsafe. For those who were present at this area on the promise of our distinctive, inclusionary career event but instead experienced an aggressive environment, please accept our heartfelt apology. This wasn't the experience we wanted for you or for our teams, and you can be sure we're working tirelessly to ensure it never happens again.

Let us be clear, duplicity, aggression, and harassment of any kind, whether physical, verbal, or psychological, will not be tolerated at our events. Our community, which has fought so hard for the type of opportunity GHC curates, has a right to experience respectful behavior in a safe and affirming setting. Now more than ever we see why organizations like AnitaB.org and others are needed. The behavior witnessed in the Expo isn't isolated to our event; that same behavior is seen all over the world and in the tech industry itself. We exist because of this – we exist to stand for and with you against this.

We have launched a full-scale investigation into the events that took place at GHC this year and are taking all appropriate actions against those who sought to disrupt and delegitimize what we have built. To all those who used their voices to call, email, or message us, we are grateful that you trusted us with your feedback and truth. We have read every single comment and email and will continue to do so. Listening and ensuring our members are seen and heard goes to the very heart of who we are as an organization.

We will reject every attempt to cleave the totality of who we are and will not allow any members of our community to be victimized or blamed in the hateful ways we have seen to date. While there is still much work to be done, in the immediate aftermath of GHC, we issued a statement on our website to fully condemn transphobic commentary that has arisen in some segments of the media. Our unity will not be undermined by the agenda of others. We commit to deepening our connection and support for our trans and non-binary communities.

It is clear that we've reached an inflection point and several key realities must be acknowledged. First, that we have built something truly special that successfully challenges problematic culture within the tech industry. To maintain that success, we must fiercely defend our community from the types of behavior that permeated the Expo this year. Second, our organization and offerings have reached a level of prominence that requires additional protections to ensure it remains true to our mission. In the weeks and months to come, we will engage in meaningful dialogue with our community on how best to accomplish that objective.

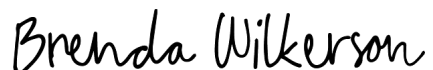
As unsettling as some behavior at the Expo was, it also presents us with an opportunity to dig deep and make thoughtful, sustainable decisions that prevent poor experiences in the future and ensure safety without sacrificing inclusion. As we move forward from GHC 23, we are committed to making intentional change to GHC and other AnitaB.org events, starting with the following:

- Evaluate and improve event registration and badging to protect the integrity of our carefully curated opportunities.
- Evaluate and enhance our crowd control and security protocols to ensure attendee safety at all our events.
- Assess and optimize the GHC Expo and sponsor meeting formats to enhance the attendee and sponsor experience.
- Assess and revise our code of conduct to strengthen enforcement and hold attendees accountable for behavior and actions not in alignment with our mission.

Doing this work will take time so that we are purposeful with any changes, but rest assured we are committed to getting to the bottom of this and updating you on revised measures. This effort allows us to hear your voices and perspectives, be leaders in this space, and advocate for our community as we have always done. Finally, we call on all GHC attendees, alumni, sponsors, and our entire AnitaB.org community to stand with us in this important work.

We can promise you this – we won't be deterred from our mission. This is a moment and an opportunity for AnitaB.org to reaffirm our commitment to all of you. This intrusion on the Expo space is a reminder that we must be bolder in our mission, stronger in our dedication to representation, and fight for our community. There's too much at stake. We are the way forward. You are the way forward.

Yours in Community,



Brenda Darden Wilkerson
President & CEO
AnitaB.org