

There was the young executive of a company valued at \$250 million who got up in front of an audience at a conference billed as diverse and joked about “gang-bang interviews” and how he got his start by sending elusive CEOs whose attention he needed “bikini shots” from a “nudie calendar” he’d made of college women. It’s the sort of place where one of the valley’s “most-eligible bachelors,” Gurbaksh Chahal—an entrepreneur with companies valued at hundreds of millions of dollars—is shown on a home security video beating his girlfriend for half an hour. (He received no jail time, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor and received 25 hours of community service and three years’ probation.) It’s a community in which the porn-inspired, “drading” college tweets of Evan Spiegel, the CEO of Snapchat, go public; where a CEO’s history of domestic violence has no repercussions but female executives get fired for tweeting about sexist jokes they overhear. It’s a place where companies routinely staff conference booths with scantily clad “code-babes” and where women are so routinely sexually harassed at conferences that codes of conduct have become de rigueur—and the subject of endless misogynistic jokes on Twitter.

It is still the kind of place where investors can tweak women who ask them for financing with barbs like “I don’t like the way women think. They haven’t mastered linear thinking.” This was how one investor turned down Kathryn Tucker’s pitch for RedRover, an app that helps parents find kid-friendly things to do, which has since launched in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta.

Three high-profile sexual harassment lawsuits have been filed against Tinder, the virtual town square of hookup culture, and two of the biggest venture capital firms—Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and CMEA Capital. The complaints include a senior CMEA partner harassing a series of executive assistants like a character in *Mad Men*, replete with sexual nicknames, trapping them in his office and frequently referring to porn and pubic hair. At Kleiner Perkins, former partner Ellen Pao says partners countenanced harassment and retaliation from a fellow partner, and excluded women from client dinner parties because they “kill the buzz.” At Tinder, a male co-founder (and ex-boyfriend) sent abusive texts and yanked co-founder Whitney Wolfe’s title because, she alleged, he told her having a woman on a board “makes the company seem like a joke.” Tinder and CMEA settled under confidential terms within months. That CMEA partner is no longer with the firm, and Tinder temporarily suspended the executive involved. The suit filed by Ellen Pao—who is now at Reddit—is headed to trial this spring. Kleiner Perkins has denied the allegations and stated that Pao “twisted facts and events in an attempt to create legal claims where none exist.”

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that a front line, if not the trench of the global gender war, is in Silicon Valley. In that sense, Silicon Valley culture echoes the Wolf of Wall Street culture in the ’80s and ’90s. But while Wall Street today seems tamer—thanks to lawsuits and diversity consultants in every corner—in Silicon Valley the misogyny continues unabated. A combination of that very traditional Wall Street wolfism among Northern California’s venture capital boys’ club and the socially stunted boy-men that the money men like to finance has created a particularly toxic atmosphere for women in Silicon Valley.

This matters for tens of thousands of reasons, but on the broadest level, since digital technology is our era's Industrial Revolution, fortunes being made now and business models and corporate cultures forming today will be with us for a century to come—and women are for the most part sidelined. Zuckerberg, Gates, Thiel, Musk—these are our Carnegies and Morgans and Rockefellers, whose names will be on museum wings and university halls 100 years from now. And there's not a female among them.

Venture capitalists often blame the dearth of women graduating in computing and math and engineering, but that is only part of it. As Jodi Kantor wrote in a New York Times article tracing the fates of the Stanford class of 1994, many women with such degrees simply bailed out, while their male counterparts went on to make fortunes as the Internet exploded.

A recent report on women entrepreneurs by the Kauffman Foundation identified the chief challenges to female entrepreneurship. Researchers interviewed 350 female entrepreneurs, and most cited “lack of available advisers” at the top of their list. Female professional attrition is only one reason for the scarcity of mentors for younger women. Another is that women who stay in the game beyond their late 30s may be less subject to sexual harassment than their younger counterparts, but they are sidelined by virulent ageism in the industry that especially—but not solely—afflicts women.

Younger women, setting out on careers in tech, are furious. One group wrote a scathing “Open Letter to Tech” last year complaining about regular “rape-y emails” and professional exclusion.

Shanley Kane is a young tech industry observer and founder of Model View Culture, an acid-penned, widely read website on which she routinely exposes and excoriates the white programmer establishment. In an interview with MIT Technology Review in December, she said venture capitalists talk about the need to get 10-year-old girls into science in order to bring up the numbers of women they will fund, but don't fund the ones already in the industry. “We are not getting hired, and we are not getting promoted, and we are being systematically driven out of the industry,” she said.

Asked what women should do, Kane wasn't encouraging: “I don't have a lot of advice. There's not a whole lot you can do to keep your career from being crushed by misogyny.”