

**Google, Twitter and Facebook Silicon Valley
Organizers Create Covert Team To Blockade Trump
White House.**

Silicon Valley's rank and file prepare to fight Trump forever

“Do not cede an inch of your power to these people.”

by [Tess Townsend](#)

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“Secret meeting? Secret meeting?” prompted a graying engineer as he waved people clad in hoodies, plaid collars and side-mullets into an office building in the SoMa district of San Francisco Friday night.

Not that the meeting was strictly secret — it had been advertised openly on Twitter.

This was the second gathering of Tech Solidarity, a group of tech employees concerned about President-elect Donald Trump and what his administration may require of Silicon Valley companies, like creating a [Muslim registry](#).

Second Bay Area Tech Solidarity event will be this Friday at 7PM in SF on Mission St., near Powell BART. Email/Signal for an invite! Come!

— TechSolidarity (@TechSolidarity) [January 4, 2017](#)

The rules say all attendees are granted anonymity unless willing to be outed, which made Facebook Chief Security Officer Alex

Stamos's appearance all the more significant. He declined to comment, but did give **Recode** permission to print his name.

The meeting attracted roughly 150 mostly male, largely white 20- and 30-something engineers who mingled with a passel of labor organizers and activists. There were snacks from Trader Joe's, holiday sweets like Peppermint Joe-Joe's, which no one touched until a bathroom break midway through the talk. There was no alcohol.

The meeting looked like a workday affair. People were friendly and social. Many already knew each other. They sat themselves under a disco ball and multi-colored lights staged in the middle of the steel- and concrete-beamed office space, which by day serves the employees of ThoughtWorks, a software development consultancy.

Maciej Ceglowski, 41, a Polish-born developer known for running [bookmarking site Pinboard](#), was the organizer of the event, alongside Heather Gold, 48, a Bay Area [comedian and freelance writer](#).

Ceglowski had been the one flagging people by the street-level entryway of the building. Later on, he took the elevator five floors to ThoughtWorks' office to count people as they came in. Dressed in a sweatshirt over a button-down and jeans, he stood at the front of the auditorium, directing people to empty seats.

"It's a really dangerous time right now, because right now, we're in this trough," Ceglowski said of the presidential election. The room quieted. "It's a very psychologically dangerous thing."

"Do not cede an inch of your power to these people," Gold said.

In a region as liberal as the San Francisco Bay Area, it's no surprise to see people organizing in opposition to a conservative administration. Yet among the rank and file of Silicon Valley, widespread involvement, or any involvement, goes against expectations. The engineers who predominate in the Valley are better known for their [political apathy](#).

But Trump's election has awakened the nerdy set to a kind of inchoate activism. The people in attendance came from companies like Google and Facebook as well as area startups. Still, the smallish group represented just a fraction of the Valley.

They expressed eagerness to effect change in anticipation of pressure from the Trump administration. But that eagerness was paired with anxiety and frustration.

The labor organizers gave a presentation. A young woman with a Commonwealth lilt in her voice raised her hand and asked a question: "I'm on an H-1B. Will I be fired for doing this?"

There were perhaps a handful of foreign workers in the room who, like her, came to the U.S. on an H-1B visa. Google and Facebook and other tech companies have come to rely heavily on this special provision to hire engineering talent. The companies argue that the U.S. doesn't produce enough.

The answer, according to someone else in the room, wasn't a simple yes or no. They described qualifications for labor organizing activity protected by law. The implication: Yes, in some cases, you might be fired.

But the chief frustration: Tech companies might end up serving Trump's interests.

“Raise your hand if you work for a big scary tech company,” Ceglowski asked. Roughly a quarter of hands go up.

Ceglowski, who’s worked in the Valley for a while, brought up the [December meeting](#) between Trump and tech leaders including Apple CEO Tim Cook, Amazon head Jeff Bezos, Alphabet CEO Larry Page and others.

“It was weird, it was really weird,” he said. “What I saw there was weakness — [weakness, weakness, weakness.](#)”

People took off their jackets to deal with heat. The room remained quiet.

“Not only were they weak, but they were afraid,” he continued. “And you know how I know they were afraid was those neckties.”

It was a not-so-subtle jab at the tech CEOs in the room who rarely show up in anything more formal than a turtleneck or a button-down, a longstanding emblem of the Valley’s refusal to adhere to what it considers staid, corporate rituals.

But their presence in jackets and ties at Trump headquarters telegraphed their pandering, according to Ceglowski.

“That’s our leadership. We can’t rely on it,” he said.

The engineers at the meeting knew their potential influence. Since coding talent is notoriously challenging to attract in Silicon Valley, any protest could have an effect.

That possibility became keenly felt last month when 2,800 tech workers signed the so-called [Never Again pledge](#), which states their refusal to cooperate in creating a database of Muslims or

persons of any religious belief, as well as aiding in mass deportations.

One engineer said it was hard to get his employer to publicly state how it protects users' data. A woman seated near him said she suspected that keeping quiet means they wouldn't have to be held to that standard.-Even stating any kind of stance could attract controversy, she added.

Someone else suggested employees could convince their bosses that publicly stating the company's ethical use of data-could serve to attract new talent. People are eager to work for companies that reflect their interests.

Other options were discussed. But ultimately, tech workers do have another key piece of leverage, according to Ceglowski: A strike.

"How long can these tech companies hold up against collective action?" he asked.

Gold said later, as attendees clustered around the snacks on the marble countertop in the open kitchen, that she felt the meeting had more of a "Web 1.0" vibe of engagement than she'd seen among tech workers recently. "It's not easy to replace a ton of engineers really fast," she said.

Google, Twitter and Facebook may have smiled and said "Nice things" at the Trump Tower meeting but it is clear that they SPEAK WITH FORKED TONGUES. Google, Twitter and Facebook intend to create social unrest, confusion and promote Trump-Hate for the next 8 years!

