The Nauseating Irony of Silicon Valley

by [Jared Whitley](#)

Michael Douglas in 'Falling Down' (YouTube screenshot)



In 1993's *[Falling Down](#)*, Michael Douglas plays a Department of Defense engineer who rampages across Los Angeles after he's laid off. When [a cop finally catches him](#), he stammers, "I'm the bad guy? How did that happen? I did everything they told me to. Did you know I build missiles? I help to protect America. You should be rewarded for that," he insists, moments before the cop shoots him dead.

As a conservative on the internet, it's easy to feel a lot like Michael Douglas these days. Despite doing everything we're supposed to, the tech tyrants of Silicon Valley have decided we are public enemy No. 1.

Twitter's "Trust and Safety Council" works overtime to [ban conservatives](#) but not actual dictators or terrorists. YouTube recently [demonetized channels](#) that challenge an acceptable left-wing narrative. Facebook [fired a top executive](#) for donating to Trump. Netflix's original content is all "progressive" propaganda. In June a [Google](#) executive was caught conspiring to [rig the 2020 election](#) against the president. And following that, despite its once high-minded claim as a "[bastion of free speech](#)," Reddit finally "quarantined" its largest conservative forum: [The Donald](#).

This level of coordinated thought suppression isn't going to help *anything*. On the left, it shows that so-called progressives have driven the final nail in the coffin of liberalism. On the right, it proves that we need Donald Trump to survive — which he illustrated with his social media summit last week.

 Beyond all that, the nauseating irony is that the power Silicon Valley's self-righteous elite lord over us didn't come out of nowhere. Conservative institutions made it possible.

**Silicon Valley's military roots**

The Bay Area started supporting the [American military](#) with new tech all the way back in the Spanish-American War. That continued through the two world wars, with Stanford basically becoming [R and D](#) for the NSA and CIA in the 1950s and '60s. The two fathers of Silicon Valley — [Frederick Terman](#) and [William Shockley](#) — both came from military backgrounds.

The area's biggest military boost came during the Reagan administration, when the need to outperform the Soviets drove federal money into defense, and the former California governor "[rejigged the high-tech map](#)" away from the East Coast and to the Golden State. Collaboration between the DoD and local universities created [ARPANET](#), the building block of the internet.

Once the Cold War was won, Washington's attention turned to right-sizing the budget, and many defense engineers in California lost their jobs. For most of them, things turned out better than they did for Michael Douglas: they pivoted from the defense industry to a brand new one — the Internet.

**The Internet's midwife: capitalism**

California (at the time) provided an ideal environment for business. Companies could *not* enforce non-compete clauses so talent was free to move around, as Paul Wesling noted in a [talk at Stanford](), and local "managerial techniques were great at thwarting union organizers." Moreover, the Reagan years had seen a boom in [venture capital firms](), and Baby Boomers who had paid off their mortgages were eager to start investing for retirement. The National Science Foundation opened internet service to commercial companies in [1994]() — alas, *one year* too late for our hero in *Falling Down* — and a [ban on internet taxes]() was formalized in 1998.

So we had a trifecta. Computers had reached a threshold. California had lots of available engineers. The business environment had never been better. The military and Reaganomics had the set stage for a technological revolution.

**Modern dystopia**

In the last 20 years, more wealth has been created, lifting [more people out of poverty](), than at any other point in human history — thanks largely to Silicon Valley. But its current heirs are not gods. They have the privilege to create the technology of the future, but not the right to dictate its use.

While Silicon Valley demands to control the destiny of the world, it can barely run itself. Living there is terrible for people's [physical health]() and worse for their [mental health](). People there don't form [relationships]() or [have babies](). With some of the worst [housing affordability]() in the country, Bay Area cities are full of millionaires, billionaires, and homeless people. San Francisco is literally [covered in feces](). But you won't find any in the Googleplex, because they — wait for it — [built a wall]().

Oh, and while Silicon Valley may reject DoD contracts to help American defense, they are helping [China develop its AI](#) and actual terrorists with [their data needs](#).

There are reasons that innovators and artists tend to be nonconformists. To think "outside the box," as it were, it helps to be out of the box psychologically. But nonconformists aren't very good at maintaining large systems that work for a lot of people, which the conservatively minded *are*.

It is very difficult for conservatives to accept the moral and intellectual authority of brilliant but dysfunctional Silicon Valley dictators, whose contempt reminds one of angsty, ungrateful teenagers screaming "*I hate you*!" at their parents. And to interfere with our basic rights is a violation of Silicon Valley's birth from taxpayer money to *defend* those rights; as one [meme](#) might say, you were supposed to destroy tyrants, not join them.

This all reminds one of another scene in *Falling Down*, where Michael Douglas proclaims to a [fascist he encounters](#), "In America, we have freedom of speech, the right to disagree!" The fascist responds, "F— you and your freedom!"

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