

Tech Stands Up: Silicon Valley rally held against Trump

Tech workers protest against what they call the discriminatory policymaking of US President Donald Trump.

[Massoud Hayoun](#) 14 Mar 2017 22:09 GMT

Hundreds of protesters have attended a demonstration held by Silicon Valley workers against what participants call the discriminatory policymaking of US President [Donald Trump](#) and his administration.

Organisers said Tuesday's rally in Palo Alto was part of a small but growing bid against a White House that is targeting some of the US tech industry's less-seen employees: many of the people of colour and immigrants who either drive innovation or do the blue-collar jobs that keep Silicon Valley business running.

The rally featured more than 20 speakers from both tech companies and civil society groups.

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"A lot of people came to [Silicon Valley](#) because they were sold on that belief that we're doing amazing things," said Brad Taylor, a Silicon Valley software engineer who founded Tech Stands Up, the nonprofit organisation leading the charge for the US tech hub's social justice activism in the time of Trump.

"Trump is enacting policies that are hurting our families and our workers. We are the tech industry, we can stand up for the values we say we believe in," he told Al Jazeera.

Immigration bans

The protest comes amid a wave of civil action against Trump.

In mid-February, US immigrants shuttered their stores in a show of resistance against Trump's pledges to ramp up deportations and bolster the wall separating the US from [Mexico](#).

Tech giants such as ride-share service Lyft have issued statements specifically addressing the Trump administration's immigration bans, which analysts said would adversely affect the companies' ability to hire foreign talent.

Immigrants have [traditionally comprised](#) a healthy proportion of Silicon Valley's lucrative start-up scene.

Foreign employees at [Google](#) reportedly walked out of work in protest at the immigration ban.

But the industry, as a whole, has yet to address the administration head-on.

Silicon Valley giants have been mostly silent on the demonstration for now. Apple, [Twitter](#), Facebook and Google did not respond to emailed requests for comment on the event. LinkedIn, whose vice president of Growth & International, Aatif Awan, was scheduled to speak on "the promise of America" at the event, said it supported its employee.

"Aatif is standing up for something he believes in, representing his own views. We support and encourage all our employees to participate in the causes they believe in," said a LinkedIn spokesperson.

'Values under attack'

In the Tech Stands Up [manifesto](#), published on Medium late last week, Taylor and his co-organiser McKenzie Lock explain that most tech companies are not living up to their values and potential and that their inaction is threatening US democracy.

"Walk into many tech firms, and you are likely to see a set of company values hanging on their walls. Some of those values are inclusion, transparency, innovation, diversity, openness, ownership, and empathy. Today those values are under attack," the manifesto says.

Tuesday's action aimed to have more tech companies assume a more active role in a society in flux, Taylor said.

He also hopes the demonstration will mark a departure from a long-running standoff between the tech community and social justice activists, both locally and nationally.

In nearby Oakland and San Francisco, housing rights advocates have blamed an influx of young, moneyed tech entrepreneurs for rampant gentrification that is driving working-class families further from their home cities.

Taylor argued the urgency of a [US](#) under Trump is waking up his fellow Silicon Valley employees to their civic duty.

"For a while, it was just you didn't talk about politics in Silicon Valley; we talked about what companies were doing and who got a round of funding," he said.

"Right now the pitchforks are pointed towards [Washington] DC ... If we don't stick up for these communities - the pitchforks will be pointed back at us very soon," he added.

Rally participants hope that beyond resisting the Trump administration's policies, Tech Stands Up will help to invigorate the more voiceless among the tech industry's workers.

"We hope the event not only sends a message, but creates new opportunities for the low-wage, largely immigrant subcontracted janitors, security officers, cafeteria workers and shuttle drivers to work together with directly employed workers to urge technology companies to take action," said Derecka Mehrens, co-founder of Silicon Valley Rising - a campaign to build "an inclusive middle class in Silicon Valley".

Mehrens was listed as a speaker at Tuesday's event along with two fellow Silicon Valley Rising members, Maria Gonzalez, a janitor at [Facebook](#), and Jacky Espinoza, a cafeteria worker from Cisco.

"By encouraging companies to use their political and legal muscle to resist discriminatory policy coming from the White House and adopt new wage and benefit standards for subcontracted service workers, workers across the tech sector can press their companies to be responsible corporate citizens in this time of Trump," Mehrens added.

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