

A  READER

**Tech Workers Coalition** created this zine to begin archiving the work tech workers are doing. The wave of organizing at four major tech companies is part of an ongoing fight that strives to unite tech workers across the industry, up and down the supply chain, and at companies of all sizes. We have seen the stain the tech industry has left on our communities, often with its empty promises to transform the world in new and better ways. **Our labor has transformed the lives of technocrats, CEOs, and investors – all at the expense of the most oppressed in society.** In cities where tech companies reign, homelessness and poverty are commonplace. Working in tech has been treated as a necessary life raft to economic security in a world that runs us ragged and becomes increasingly unlivable for everyone else. The inequality and abhorrent conditions we see on our streets might scare some of us into buying into this narrative.

But like many workers in many industries before us, we too have the skills to self-organize, to refuse to do harm, to make demands, to fight for the things our communities so desperately need, and to win. This movement reveals just how many people are outraged about the safety and well being of all families – in our neighborhoods, at our borders, and abroad. It shows how much power tech workers are really capable of wielding when we work together.

**We don't have to be complicit, and we don't have to be silent. Talk to your coworkers, look out for one another, and tell the boss Tech Won't Build It!**



*Editor's note:*

*During the production of this zine, the United States military has issued a contract for tech companies called JEDI (Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure). Before the bidding date on October 9 2018, Google publicly pulled out of the running for this \$10 billion contract, citing its AI Ethics Principles, but conveniently leaving out the role of its employees applying pressure on the company.*

*Microsoft, is still in the running for JEDI, despite the objections of its workers in the form of another letter to Satya Nadella.*

*Meanwhile, Amazon is pushing its facial recognition technology onto ICE, in spite of research that shows it would inflict harm onto communities all over.*

*There is still much work to be done.*



“Google should not  
be in the business  
of war.”

– Google workers to Sundar Pichai,  
on Google’s contract with the  
Pentagon’s Project Maven

**HOW TO  
BE GOOD**

Project Maven was the name of Google's partnership with the US Department of Defense – a multimillion dollar contract to develop artificial intelligence for drone technology. The project intended Maven was a golden opportunity. The contract, which started at \$9 million, was expected to grow to up to a quarter of a billion dollars. Internal emails also revealed that Google intended to develop machine-learning technology that could surveil entire cities. It appears leadership at Google were aware of how this might harm the company's image, which is why the project was kept mostly under wraps until news of the contract broke in March 2018.

The New York Times secured an internal email from Dr. Fei-Fei Li to use machine learning and AI to analyze the DoD's vast library of drone footage. For Google execs, Projit, the chief AI scientist at Google Cloud, who wrote:

**“Avoid at ALL COSTS any mention or implication of AI. Weaponized AI is probably one of the most sensitized topics of AI – if not THE most. This is red meat to the media to find all ways to damage Google.”**

In April, workers began circulating a letter to CEO Sundar Pichai, and within months of the news, a dozen employees resigned in protest of the company's involvement in military work. Google responded to objections with the flimsy excuse that its technology was not being used directly to harm people. But it was easy enough to read between the lines – Google only cared about being in the same ring as its biggest competitors, Microsoft and Amazon, and it was willing to do anything to get paid, even contribute to the American imperialist machine. The letter collected thousands of signatures, including those of senior engineers, to protest the contract and demand immediate cancellation.

A group of influential software engineers in Google's cloud division withheld their labor and refused to work on "air gap," the tech that would have been key to winning sensitive military contracts. The boycotting engineers became known as the "Group of Nine." This was the final nail in the coffin for Project Maven. In June, workers achieved what we hope is the first of many victories to come: Google announced that it would not be renewing its contract with the DoD.



*Dear Sundar,*

*We believe that Google should not be in the business of war. Therefore we ask that Project Maven be cancelled, and that Google draft, publicize and enforce a clear policy stating that neither Google nor its contractors will ever build warfare technology.*

*Google is implementing Project Maven, a customized AI surveillance engine that uses "Wide Area Motion Imagery" data captured by US Government drones to detect vehicles and other objects, track their motions, and provide results to the Department of Defense.*

*Recently, Googlers voiced concerns about Maven internally. Diane Greene responded, assuring them that the technology will not "operate or fly drones" and "will not be used to launch weapons." While this eliminates a narrow set of direct applications, the technology is being built for the military, and once it's delivered it could easily be used to assist in these tasks.*

*This plan will irreparably damage Google's brand and its ability to compete for talent. Amid growing fears of biased and weaponized AI, Google is already struggling to keep the public's trust. By entering into this contract, Google will join the ranks of companies like Palantir, Raytheon, and General Dynamics. The argument that other firms, like Microsoft and Amazon, are also participating doesn't make this any less risky for Google. Google's unique history, its motto Don't Be Evil, and its direct reach into the lives of billions of users set it apart.*

*We cannot outsource the moral responsibility of our technologies to third parties. Google's stated values make this clear:*


*Every one of our users is trusting us. Never jeopardize that. Ever.*

*This contract puts Google's reputation at risk and stands in direct opposition to our core values. Building this technology to assist the US Government in military surveillance – and potentially lethal outcomes – is not acceptable.*

*Recognizing Google's moral and ethical responsibility, and the threat to Google's reputation, we request that you:*

- 1. Cancel this project immediately*
- 2. Draft, publicize, and enforce a clear policy stating that neither Google nor its contractors will ever build warfare technology*

WHEN  
MICROSOFT  
                  OPENS  
          A WINDOW  
IT LOCKS  
A CAGE



**“Those creating powerful  
technology have to ensure  
what they build is used for  
good, and not for harm.”**

– Microsoft workers to Satya Nadella,  
on Microsoft’s contract with ICE/DHS

Determined to one-up his predecessor who was nicknamed the “deporter-in-chief,” Donald Trump announced a new “zero tolerance” policy at the US southern border for migrants and asylum seekers (many of whom are parents fleeing gangs that try to recruit their children). The new policy led to an overflow of migrants thrown in detention centers as they awaited prosecution. The ACLU obtained over 30,000 pages of documents with accounts of violence and human rights abuses against migrant children that dated all the way back to 2009. Locked in overcrowded, windowless cells for days at a time, children and families were growing sick from lack of proper medical care, suffering from stress and trauma, and even dying.

Following the emergence of disturbing footage of Immigration and Customs Enforcement separating families at the border, more than 100 workers at Microsoft swiftly took action over the company's \$19.4 million standing contract with ICE.

Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella was quick to downplay the company's involvement, saying that the contract only provided support for documents, email, and calendars. However, employees dug up a January blog post from the company, which bragged that they had committed to much more than Office 365. The post was deleted, but it was too late. Microsoft had already shown their cards, and its workers made the next move.

In an internal company Q&A with Satya in July, a group of interns pressed the issue of Microsoft's accountability toward immigrant families. The questions stunned Satya who could not provide a satisfactory answer. As he was still collecting himself, the next line of questions from other employees asked Satya what Hogwarts house he would be sorted into (flustered, he replied "all of them"), and whether he thinks pineapple belongs on pizza.

*Dear Satya,*

*We believe that Microsoft must take an ethical stand, and put children and families above profits. Therefore, we ask that Microsoft cancel its contracts with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immediately, including contracts with clients who support ICE. We also call on Microsoft to draft, publicize and enforce a clear policy stating that neither Microsoft nor its contractors will work with clients who violate international human rights law.*

*We were dismayed to learn that Microsoft has a standing \$19.4M contract with ICE.*

*In a clear abdication of ethical responsibility, Microsoft went as far as boasting that its services “support the core [ICE] agency functions” and enable ICE agents to “process data on edge devices” and “utilize deep learning capabilities to accelerate facial recognition and identification.” These are powerful capabilities, in the hands of an agency that has shown repeated willingness to enact inhumane and cruel policies.*

*In response to questions, Brad Smith published a statement saying that Microsoft is “not aware of Azure products or services being used for the purpose of separating families.” This does not go far enough. We are providing the technical undergirding in support of an agency that is actively enforcing this inhumane policy.*

*We request that Microsoft cancel its contracts with ICE, and with other clients who directly enable ICE. As the people who build the technologies that Microsoft profits from, we refuse to be complicit. We are part of a growing movement, comprised of many across the industry who recognize the grave responsibility that those creating powerful technology have to ensure what they build is used for good, and not for harm.*

*Acknowledging this responsibility, we request that you:*

- 1. Cancel the existing Azure Government contract with ICE immediately.*
- 2. Draft, publicize, and enforce a clear policy stating that neither Microsoft nor its contractors will work with clients who violate international human rights law.*
- 3. Commit to transparency and review regarding contracts between Microsoft and government agencies, in the US and beyond.*





**“We refuse to contribute  
to tools that violate  
human rights.”**

– Amazon workers to Jeff Bezos, on  
Amazon’s surveillance technology  
contracts with ICE and law enforcement

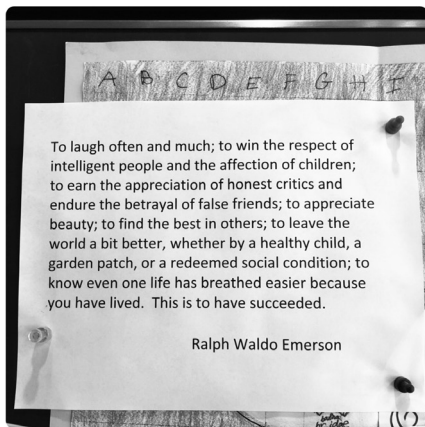
**SMILE**

**YOU'RE ON  
REKOGNITION**

In May, Jeff Bezos halted construction on a new building, threatening 7000 jobs, in response to a proposal that would have forced Amazon to pay an employee-hours tax. Days later, Jeff blithely tweeted a picture of an inspirational quote printed on a sheet on paper he claimed had been tacked to his refrigerator "for years." The printout looked crisp as a newly-printed dollar bill, and prompted a wave of angry users telling him to pay taxes.



Love this quote. It's been on my fridge for years, and I see it every time I open the door.  
#Emerson



7:00 AM - 5 May 2018

12,292 Retweets 35,993 Likes



Amazon workers were the next to mobilize and join the groundswell of activism within tech companies. Just days after the release of the Microsoft letter, workers called on CEO Jeff to end sales of its facial recognition product to law enforcement, and to terminate its cloud computing contract with ICE. This call was different from the others – it was the first time workers demanded their company pull a product from the shelf entirely.

Rekognition is powerful software capable of tracking and analyzing faces in real time, but it's also seriously unreliable. When the ACLU put it to the test, Rekognition matched 28 members of Congress with existing mugshots. In a time of "predictive policing" (known more commonly as "profiling"), it's clear software like this should not exist, let alone be heavily marketed to law enforcement agencies across the country. In July, Theresa Carlson, VP of Amazon Web Services, responded to employee concerns, saying that Amazon was "unwaveringly in support" of the pigs and the state.

*Dear Jeff,*

*We are troubled by the recent report from the ACLU exposing our company's practice of selling AWS Rekognition, a powerful facial recognition technology, to police departments and government agencies. We don't have to wait to find out how these technologies will be used. We already know that in the midst of historic militarization of police, renewed targeting of Black activists, and the growth of a federal deportation force currently engaged in human rights abuses – this will be another powerful tool for the surveillance state, and ultimately serve to harm the most marginalized. We are not alone in this view: over 40 civil rights organizations signed an open letter in opposition to the governmental use of facial recognition, while over 150,000 individuals signed another petition delivered by the ACLU.*

*We also know that Palantir runs on AWS. And we know that ICE relies on Palantir to power its detention and deportation programs. Along with much of the world we watched in horror recently as U.S. authorities tore children away from their parents. Since April 19, 2018 the Department of Homeland Security has sent nearly 2,000 children to mass detention centers. This treatment goes against U.N. Refugee Agency guidelines that say children have the right to remain united with their parents, and that asylum-seekers have a legal right to claim asylum. In the face of this immoral U.S. policy, and the U.S.'s increasingly inhumane treatment of refugees and immigrants beyond this specific policy, we are deeply concerned that Amazon is implicated, providing infrastructure and services that enable ICE and DHS.*

*Technology like ours is playing an increasingly critical role across many sectors of society. What is clear to us is that our development and sales practices have yet to acknowledge the obligation that comes with this. Focusing solely on shareholder value is a race to the bottom, and one that we will not participate in.*

*We refuse to build the platform that powers ICE, and we refuse to contribute to tools that violate human rights. As ethically concerned Amazonians, we demand a choice in what we build, and a say in how it is used. We learn from history, and we understand how IBM's systems were employed in the 1940s to help Hitler. IBM did not take responsibility then, and by the time their role was understood, it was too late. We will not let that happen again. The time to act is now.*

*We call on you to:*

- Stop selling facial recognition services to law enforcement*
- Stop providing infrastructure to Palantir and any other Amazon partners who enable ICE.*
- Implement strong transparency and accountability measures, that include enumerating which law enforcement agencies and companies supporting law enforcement agencies are using Amazon services, and how.*

*Our company should not be in the surveillance business; we should not be in the policing business; we should not be in the business of supporting those who monitor and oppress marginalized populations.*

# A WORKFORCE AGAINST SALESFORCE



“We cannot cede  
responsibility for the use of  
the technology we create.”

– Salesforce workers to Marc Benioff,  
on Salesforce’s CRM contract with  
Customs and Border Protection



By mid-June, Marc Benioff, who had worked so hard to cultivate a progressive image for Salesforce, was left to answer to workers who had penned their own letter, when it came out that Salesforce had its very own contract with US Customs and Border Protection. The letter demanded that the company take a hard look at the objectionable uses of its products.

A spokesperson from Salesforce responded saying that they were “not aware” of Salesforce’s tech being used to separate families at the US-Mexico border. Like Microsoft, Salesforce tried hard to downplay its role in contributing to ongoing human rights abuses. But at \$848 million, this contract was one of the fattest in revenue. If anyone could see through attempts to whitewash the contract, it was Salesforce workers. A company doesn’t have a contract that large for off-the-shelf technology.

**Salesforce marketing to the US government can be found on its own website, advertising software that “supports tomorrow’s warfighter today.”**

The letter that circulated among Salesforce employees gathered over 650 signatures. In a last-ditch attempt to preserve the company’s image, Marc sent \$250,000 to the immigration rights and refugee aid organization, RAICES. However, the nonprofit was not eager to be another prop in someone else’s PR plan, and refused the quarter million. Benioff could not exonerate himself by pledging a small portion of the profits which Salesforce makes from its contract. The workers were right: It’s not about how much you give away, it’s about how culpable you are in the first place.

*Dear Marc,*

*It has come to our attention as Salesforce employees that our products and tools (Einstein Analytics, Analytics Cloud, Community Cloud, and Service Cloud) are being used by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to modernize its staff recruiting process, manage border activities, and engage with citizens.*

*We are particularly concerned about the use of Service Cloud to manage border activities. Given the inhumane separation of children from their parents currently taking place at the border, we believe that our core value of Equality is at stake and that Salesforce should re-examine our contractual relationship with CBP and speak out against its practices.*

*We cannot cede responsibility for the use of the technology we create—particularly when we have reason to believe that it is being used to aid practices so irreconcilable to our values. Those values often feel abstract, and it is easier to uphold them when they are not being tested. They are being tested now.*

*Many of us choose to work at Salesforce because of Salesforce's reputation as a company that stands up against injustice. We agree that the business of business is to improve the state of the world. We want our work at Salesforce to have a positive impact on our friends and neighbors, not to make us complicit in the inhumane treatment of vulnerable people.*

*As members of the Salesforce Ohana, we believe that Salesforce must stand with the families facing irrevocable and unimaginable harm at the hands of CBP. We believe that the moral and ethical emergency that CBP's practices have created and in which we have become complicit compel us as an Ohana and you as our CEO to take action by re-examining our contractual relationship with CBP and speaking out against its current practices.*

*We recognize the explicit policy of separating children at the border has been stopped, but that simply returns us to a status quo of detaining children with their parents at the border. We believe it is vital for Salesforce to stand up against both the practice that inspired this letter and any future attempts to merely make this destructive state of affairs more palatable.*

*We believe that we must craft a plan for examining the use of all our products, and the extent to which they are being used for harm. We feel this is necessary to make good on our promise of being in the business of improving the world. Dismantling the structures of inequity is every bit as crucial as building foundations of care if those improvements are to last.*

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## A WORKFORCE AGAINST SALESFORCE

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