

# Lefties, Techies Long at Odds in SF, Team Up Against Trump

The city has been roiled by gentrification and dissent over income inequality amid tech boom – but tech companies and activists are looking for common ground

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI**  
*Associated Press*

SAN FRANCISCO — Before Donald Trump’s election, Laurence Berland viewed political protest as a sort of curiosity. He was in a good place to see it: San Francisco’s Mission District, once an immigrant enclave in the country’s heartland of radicalism that is increasingly populated by people like him — successful tech workers driving up rents while enjoying a daily commute to Silicon Valley on luxury motor coaches.

Berland regarded the activism of his adopted city with a mix of empathy and bemusement, checking out Occupy Wall Street demonstrations and protests against the gentrification of his own neighborhood. But now there is less distance between him and activists on the street. On a recent day Berland stood with about 100 others — from software engineers like himself to those who work in tech company cafeterias — outside a downtown museum



Members of the Orchard City Indivisible Group recite the pledge of allegiance during a city council meeting where they would speak against the policies of President Trump Tuesday, March 7, 2017, in Campbell, Calif. Old-school, anti-capitalist activists and new-school, free-enterprise techies are pushing aside their differences to take on a common foe.

a bullhorn pressed to her lips. The crowd closed in around a banner reading “Workers in Tech Say No Ban No

In the place that fought against the Vietnam War and for gay rights and, more recently, has been roiled by dissent over the technology industry’s impact on economic inequality, an unlikely alliance has formed in the left’s resistance against Trump. Old-school, anti-capitalist activists and new-school, free-enterprise techies are pushing aside their differences to take on a common foe.

For years, these two strands of liberal America have been at each other’s throats. There’ve been protests against

evictions of those who can’t afford the Bay Area’s ever-soaring rents. And think back, not so long ago, to the raucous rallies to block those fancy buses shuttling tech workers from city neighborhoods to the Silicon Valley campuses of Yahoo, Facebook, Apple and Google, where Berland once worked.

Cat Brooks, a Black Lives Matter activist in Oakland, has seen the toll the tech industry has taken on some. Her daughter’s elementary school teacher just moved to a distant suburb after her rent skyrocketed, and Brooks thinks more tech money must find its way into local communities. She nevertheless welcomes the infusion of new energy to the protest arena.

“It’s not about the business of we were here first,” Brooks said. “We’re about the business of how can we support? Division at this time is not helpful.”

Such improbable partnerships scramble the historical protest model that used to pit working-class people against everyone else, said Rory McVeigh, director of the Center for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Notre Dame.

“There are new cleavages that can produce alliances that weren’t possible before,” McVeigh said. “When you feel all of you are being threatened but in different ways ... trade-offs are minimized. You realize at times such as that that you need allies more than ever be-

See JUMP on page 11

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for a rally against President Trump.

“Everyone come closer! We’re going to practice some chanting, and we’re going to get to know each other,” called a woman wearing a union T-shirt with

Wall.” A clipboard-carrying organizer approached Berland to ask if he wanted to join a network of grassroots activists, but Berland waved him away. He had already signed up.



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