

The Scouring of the Shire: a letter from concerned Palantir alumni to the tech workers of Silicon Valley

“I have a foreboding of an America in my children’s or grandchildren’s time — when the United States is a service and information economy... when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority... unable to distinguish between what feels good and what’s true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness.”

Carl Sagan, The Demon-Haunted World

I. The Myth of the Palantír Stones

When J.R.R. Tolkien passed, he left the story of the *palantíri*, the all-seeing stones of Middle Earth, unfinished. In a sense, the story is still being written.

The myth of the powerful seeing stones warned of great dangers when wielded by those without wisdom or a moral compass, as they could be used to distort truth and present selective visions of reality. Similarly, Palantir Technologies’ platform grants immense power to its users, helping control the data, decisions, and outcomes that determine the future of governments, businesses, and institutions — and by extension, all of us.

Early Palantirians understood the ethical weight of building these technologies. A Code of Conduct was crafted to uphold democracy, preserve the spirit of free scientific inquiry, and ensure responsible AI development. Guardrails were set to prevent discrimination, disinformation, and abuses of power.

These principles have now been violated, and are rapidly being dismantled at Palantir Technologies and across Silicon Valley.

II. Democracy vs. Big Data

Palantir’s leadership has abandoned its founding ideals. Public statements have grown hostile to diversity, equity, and inclusion, principles that — despite corporate misuse — remain essential for critiquing power and ensuring ethical applications of technology. Instead, executives now employ inflammatory language, sow confusion, and invite controversy — going as far as threatening critics with violence.

Meanwhile, democracy faces escalating threats: biometric data collection on immigrant children, journalists being targeted, science programs defunded, and key U.S. allies, like Ukraine, sidelined. Trump's administration has sought to greatly expand executive powers while alluding to monarchy. Recently, Trump's Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, removed distinguished military leaders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for discriminatory reasons, replacing them with unqualified loyalists.

Big Tech, including Palantir, is increasingly complicit, normalizing authoritarianism under the guise of a "revolution" led by oligarchs. We must resist this trend.

III. Shared & Signed Statement

The undersigned former employees of Palantir endorse a message warning against the increasingly violent rhetoric which the company is employing today and the actions to which it might become complicit in the future. In the spirit of communicative action and rationality, they endorse the following statements in this section:

Whereas we, former employees of Palantir, once believed in the company's commitment to:

- Transparency, free speech, and rigorous debate on the impact of technology
- Defending democracy through collaboration with American and Allied forces
- Ethical data practices, privacy protections, and accountability in AI deployment
- Egalitarianism, rule of law, and freedom from authoritarian rule

We no longer believe Palantir's executives are upholding these values. By supporting Trump's administration, Elon Musk's DOGE initiative, and dangerous expansions of executive power, they have abandoned their responsibility and are in violation of Palantir's Code of Conduct.

Signed,

Juan Sebastián Pinto
Carl Myers
Ari Geshner
Silas Stafford
Courtney Wong-McGuire
Casey Ketterling
Erion Malaj
Margret Williams
Linda Xia
Jason Ma
Aditya Arolkar
Paul Mustière
Magnus Hagmar

IV. A Call to Action

Tech workers must resist complicity. As Musk's DOGE operation dismantles U.S. government institutions under the guise of exposing corruption, opposition remains silent. Companies are placating Trump's administration, suppressing dissent, and aligning with his xenophobic, sexist, and oligarchic agenda. Government databases are already erasing references to transgender people and gender-affirming care. These injustices could be facilitated by the very software infrastructure we help build.

DOGE's attempted recruitment of Palantir alumni reveals our industry's pivotal role in shaping world events. We must leverage internal networks, social platforms, and algorithmic tools to counteract disinformation. We must organize, take political action, and demand accountability.

This is a critical moment — Democratic and Republican representatives must refuse to cooperate with the Trump Administration unless illegal initiatives (like DOGE) are ended. Call your representative today and demand they hold the line.

We hope this message, like the recent mass departure of federal technology staffers at DOGE, helps trigger a domino effect and encourages tech workers in other firms that are enabling and legitimizing this administration to take action. To speak out while we still can, and to work against the dangerous path in the history of technology we are currently heading down towards — one which is central to the allegory and legend of the *palantír* stones.

“The palantíri were no doubt never matters of common use or common knowledge... They were kept in guarded rooms, high in strong towers, where only kings and rulers, and their appointed wardens, had access to them, and they were never consulted, nor exhibited, publicly.”

—J.R.R. Tolkien, The Palantíri, Unfinished Works