



Oligarch Overload: How Ultra-Rich Donors Have Flooded American Politics With Cash Since Citizens United Ruling

Twenty Five Ultra-Rich Individual Donors Pumped \$1.4 Billion Into super PACs Since 2010, while political donors in top majority white zip codes gave ten times as much as donors in top majority-minority zip codes, highlighting extraordinary influence of elite donors on politics

By Alan Zibel, Research Director, Public Citizen's Corporate Presidency Project

January 15, 2020 – Just 25 ultra-rich individual political donors, including numerous billionaires, have poured nearly \$1.4 billion into super PACs in the decade since the U.S. Supreme Court opened the doors to a massive influx of big money in politics.

A Public Citizen analysis found that the political donations of these 25 people and their spouses amounted to nearly half of nearly \$3 billion in total individual super PAC donations from 2010-2020, demonstrating the surging influence of mega-donors on American politics over the past decade.

Public Citizen also analyzed super PAC and campaign donations in more than 16,700 zip codes and found that top political donors in the top 10 majority white zip codes gave \$1.85 billion from 2010 through 2018, while top political donors in the top 10 majority-minority zip codes gave \$179 million in the same time period.

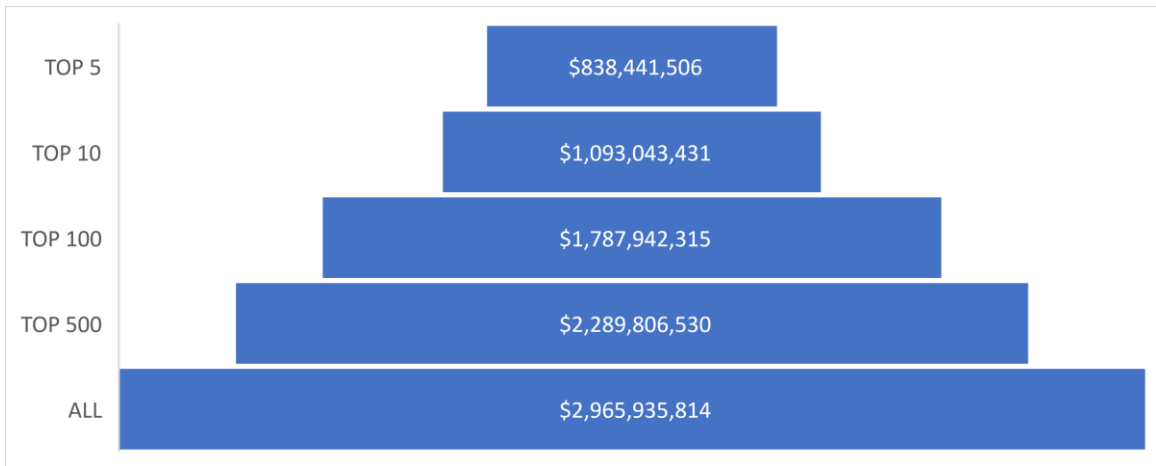
Super PACs are political action groups that can take unlimited donations and make unlimited election expenditures so long as they do not directly coordinate with candidates' campaigns. Their growth of Super PACs comes in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision. That decision allowed unlimited contributions from corporations and wealthy individuals to influence elections. Individual donors are the primary funders of super PACs, which are required to disclose their donors, unlike "dark money" nonprofits, which are not required to do so.

Public Citizen's analysis of Federal Election Commission data on more than 150,000 individual contributors to super PACs since 2020 found that:

- Just 25 ultra-wealthy donors have made up nearly half (47 percent) of all contributions by individuals to super PACs since 2010, providing about \$1.4 billion in super PAC contributions out of nearly \$3 billion in super PAC contributions from individuals.
- The five largest individual super PAC contributors donated a combined \$838 million to super PACs, or 28 percent of all donations.

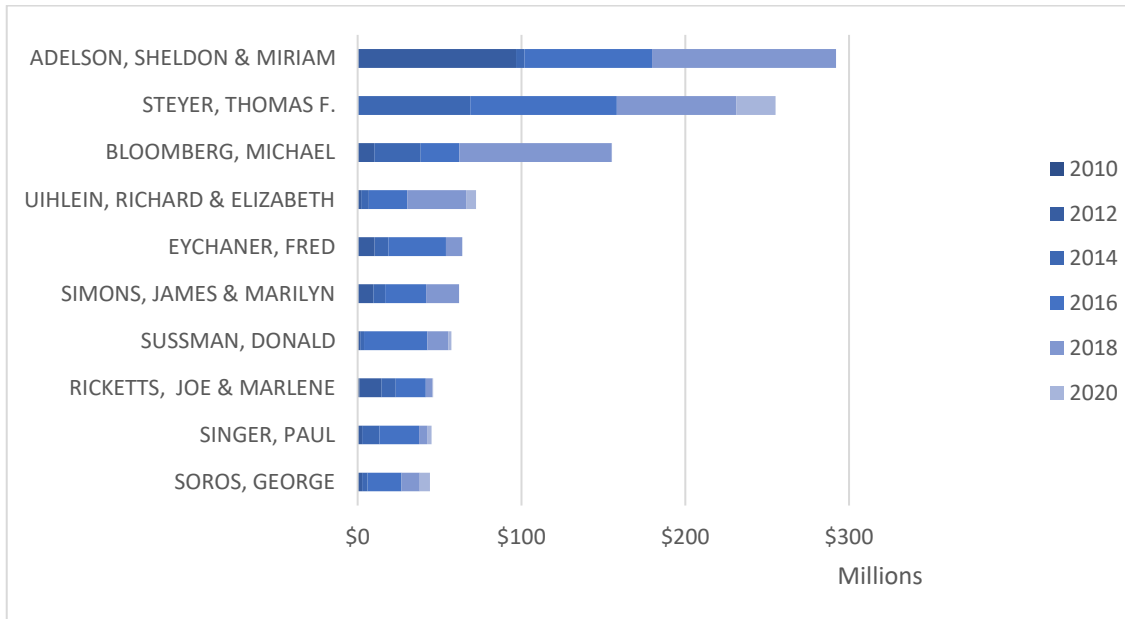
- The top 100 individual donors represented 60 percent of individual contributions to super PACs, or \$1.8 billion, while the top 500 super PAC donors represented more than 75 percent.
- Republican casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam were by far the largest super PAC donors, contributing \$292 million since 2010, or 9.8% of all super PAC contributions.
- Hedge fund billionaire Tom Steyer and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, both 2020 Democratic presidential candidates, were the second and third-largest donors, followed by Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein, Republican donors and president of a packaging company and Fred Eychaner, a Democratic donor who owns a printing and media company.

Chart 1: Breakdown of Individual Super PAC Contributions (2010-2020)



Source: Public Citizen analysis of Federal Election Commission data

Chart 2: 10 Largest Individual Super PAC Contributors (2010-2020)



Source: Public Citizen analysis of Federal Election Commission data

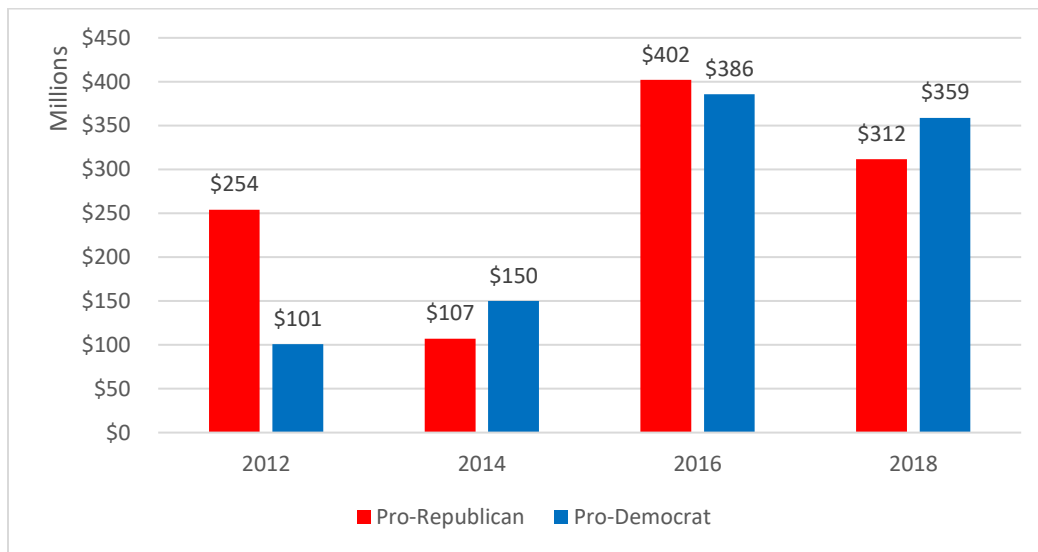
Table 1: Top 25 Individual SuperPAC Contributors (2010-2020)

Row Labels	Grand Total	Cumulative Total	Pct of Total SuperPAC Contrib	Cumulative Pct of Total Super PAC
ADELSON, SHELDON & MIRIAM	\$292,005,000	\$292,005,000	9.8%	10%
STEYER, THOMAS F.	\$255,067,382	\$547,072,382	8.6%	18%
BLOOMBERG, MICHAEL	\$155,180,624	\$702,253,006	5.2%	24%
UIHLEIN, RICHARD & ELIZABETH	\$72,288,500	\$774,541,506	2.4%	26%
EYCHANER, FRED	\$63,900,000	\$838,441,506	2.2%	28%
SIMONS, JAMES & MARILYN	\$61,925,000	\$900,366,506	2.1%	30%
SUSSMAN, DONALD	\$57,315,000	\$957,681,506	1.9%	32%
RICKETTS, JOE & MARLENE	\$46,055,000	\$1,003,736,506	1.6%	34%
SINGER, PAUL	\$45,191,676	\$1,048,928,181	1.5%	35%
SOROS, GEORGE	\$44,115,250	\$1,093,043,431	1.5%	37%
GRIFFIN, KENNETH	\$34,375,000	\$1,127,418,431	1.2%	38%
PERRY, BOB	\$32,300,000	\$1,159,718,431	1.1%	39%
MERCER, ROBERT AND DIANA	\$27,201,204	\$1,186,919,636	0.9%	40%
SIMMONS, HAROLD C.	\$25,865,000	\$1,212,784,636	0.9%	41%
MOSKOVITZ, DUSTIN & TUNA, CARI	\$22,509,250	\$1,235,293,886	0.8%	42%
MARCUS, BERNARD	\$21,679,600	\$1,256,973,486	0.7%	42%
SABAN, HAIM & CHERYL	\$18,510,853	\$1,275,484,339	0.6%	43%
PRITZKER, JAY ROBERT & MARY KATHRYN	\$18,305,848	\$1,293,790,187	0.6%	44%
SCHWARZMAN, STEPHEN A.	\$15,650,000	\$1,309,440,187	0.5%	44%
MARCUS, GEORGE M.	\$15,510,250	\$1,324,950,437	0.5%	45%
PALMER, GEOFF	\$12,900,000	\$1,337,850,437	0.4%	45%
STEPHENS, WARREN A.	\$12,675,000	\$1,350,525,437	0.4%	46%
CAMERON, RONALD M.	\$12,650,000	\$1,363,175,437	0.4%	46%
YASS, JEFF	\$11,318,000	\$1,374,493,437	0.4%	46%
BEZOS, JEFF	\$10,129,170	\$1,384,622,607	0.3%	47%
Grand Total	\$2,965,935,814	\$2,965,935,814	100%	100%

Source: Public Citizen analysis of Federal Election Commission data

In the early years of the post-*Citizens United* era, the amount of money donated to outside spending groups was heavily tilted in favor of Republicans. But Democrats have become increasingly reliant on super PAC funding from hedge fund managers, bankers and other financial executives supplied. The financial industry represented 74% of funding for pro-Democrat outside spending efforts in the 2017-2018 cycle compared with 25% of funding for pro-Republican efforts, a 2019 Public Citizen [analysis](#) found. In the 2017-2018 cycle the top individual donors gave \$359 million, or 52 percent, to outside spending groups benefiting Democrats and \$312 million, or 45 percent, to benefiting Republicans.

Chart 3: Contributions by Top 100 Individuals to Outside Spending Groups Since 2012 (\$ Millions)



Source: Public Citizen analysis of Center for Responsive Politics data

Even before the rise of Super PACs and unlimited donations, low-income, majority-minority districts were highly under-represented among campaign contributions. The biggest donors traditionally have been highly concentrated in New York, Washington D.C., Chicago and other big cities.

For example, the top contributing zip code to presidential campaigns during the 2004 election cycle was 10021, on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Contributors in that one exclusive zip code sent \$4.2 million to presidential candidates that year, according to a [report](#) on donations of over \$200 by Public Campaign, the Fannie Lou Hamer Project and the William C. Velasquez Institute. That one zip code provided more presidential campaign money than the 377 zip codes with the largest proportion of African Americans and the 365 zip codes with the largest proportion of Latino or Hispanic Americans, according to the report. Public Campaign also [analyzed](#) the 2000 and 2002 election cycles found that nearly 90 percent of \$2 billion in contributions of more than \$200 came from zip codes that were majority non-Hispanic white. By comparison, under 2 percent of all campaign funds came from majority Latino zip codes and 3 percent from majority African American zip codes.

Another released in 2016 by Demos, found that, among donors to presidential campaigns that year, 91 percent were white. White men made up nearly half of donors that year, even though they are only 35 percent

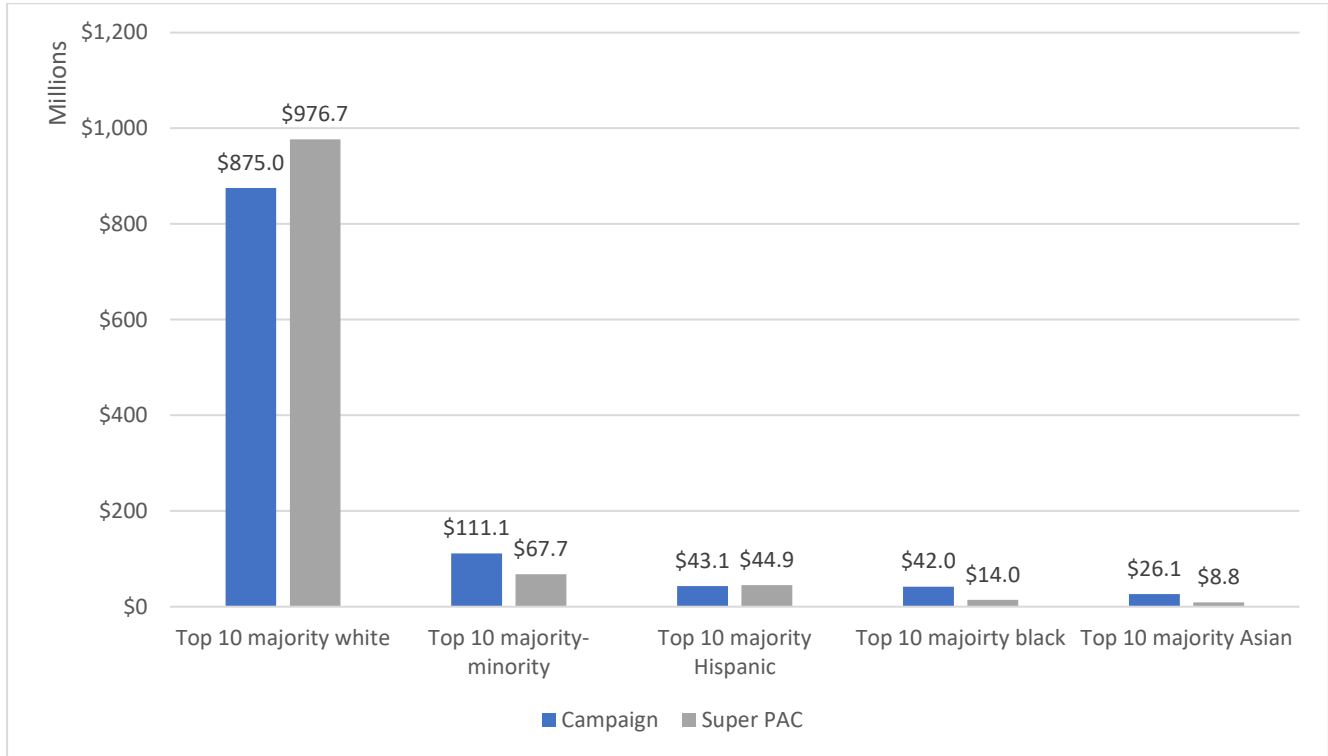
of the adult population. Whites made up more than 90 percent of federal election donors in the 2012 and 2014 election cycles, and 94 percent of donors giving more than \$5,000 in the 2014 election cycle. White men were [64 percent of Trump's donors](#) but only 33 percent of Hillary Clinton's donors. Both candidates relied on the wealthy for funding: Clinton raised 42 percent of her money from millionaires, who represent 3 percent of the adult population, while Trump raised 27 percent from millionaires, the report found.

Taken together, this research highlights the extraordinary influence of the wealthiest, most powerful elements of American society on our campaign finance system. While the country has become more diverse over the past 15 years, the gap in political influence between majority-white areas remains extraordinary. In a new analysis, Public Citizen examined the geographic concentration of both individual and Super PAC donors from 2010-2018 and matched that data to U.S. Census demographic information. Even controlling for the much larger size the white population in America, households in majority-white zip codes donate far more money than black or Hispanic political donors.

The analysis of political donations from 16,752 zip codes found that from 2010 through 2018:

- Political donors in the top 10 majority white zip codes for campaign donations gave \$874 million to candidates, while the top 10 majority-white zip codes for super PAC donations gave \$977 million, for a total of \$1.85 billion.
- Political donors in the top 10 majority-minority zip codes for campaign donations gave \$111 million to candidates, while the top 10 majority minority zip codes for super PAC donations gave \$68 million, for a total of \$179 million.
- Political donors in all 15,411 majority-white zip codes analyzed gave about \$7 billion, or \$84 per household, to political campaigns and nearly \$2.8 billion, or \$33 per household, to super PACs.
- Political donors in all 1,341 majority-minority zip codes analyzed gave \$352 million, or \$28 per household, to political campaigns and more than \$100 million, or \$8 per household, to super PACs.

Chart 4: Donations from Top 10 Zip Codes for Political Contributions By Majority Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2018



Source: Public Citizen analysis of 2010-2018 data from Maplight (campaign contributions over \$200) Federal Election Commission (Super PAC contributions)

Table 2: Top 10 Zip Codes For Contributions By Majority Race of ZIP Code, 2010-2018

	Campaign	Super PAC	Total
Top 10 Majority white	\$874,976,785	\$976,680,605	\$1,851,657,390
Top 10 Majority-minority	\$111,137,191	\$67,681,906	\$178,819,097
Top 10 Majority Hispanic	\$43,073,614	\$44,897,506	\$87,971,120
Top 10 Majority black	\$41,984,809	\$14,013,788	\$55,998,597
Top 10 Majority Asian	\$26,078,768	\$8,770,612	\$34,849,380

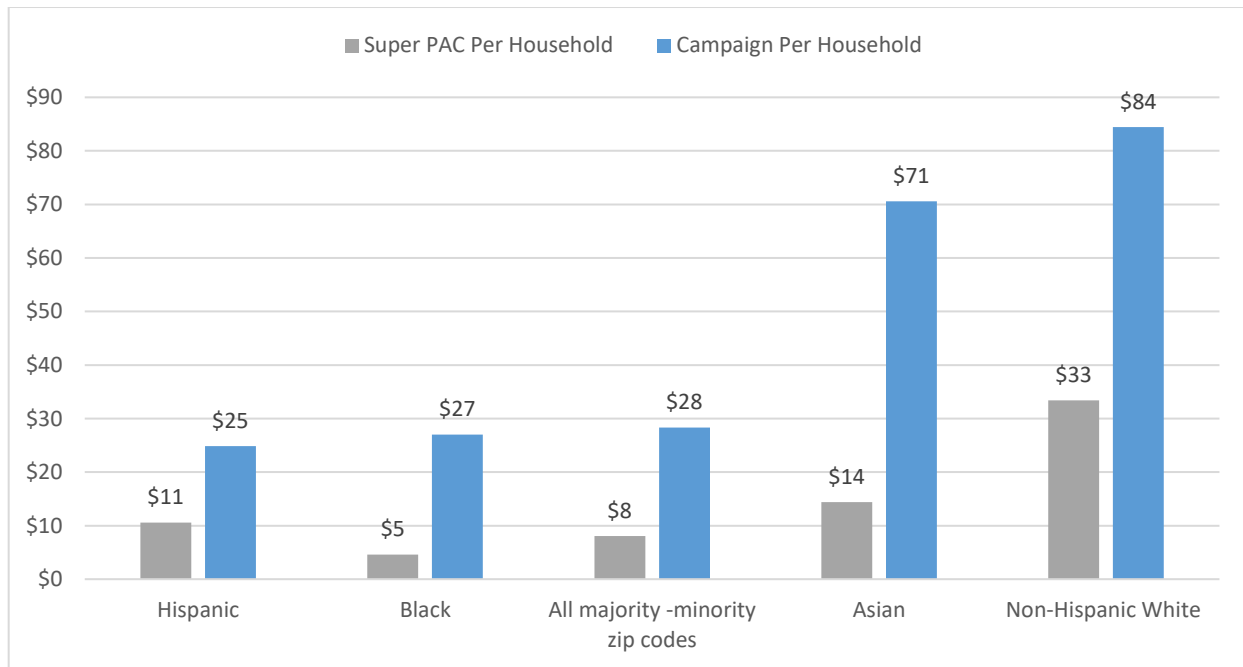
Source: Public Citizen analysis of 2010-2018 data from Maplight (campaign contributions over \$200) Federal Election Commission (Super PAC contributions)

Table 3: Political Contributions By Majority Race of ZIP Code, 2010-2018

Majority race of zip code	Number of zip codes analyzed	Campaign	SuperPAC	Number of Households	Campaign Per Household	Super PAC Per Household
Non-Hispanic White	15,411	\$7,057,341,809	\$2,788,882,483	83,564,644	\$84	\$33
Asian	54	\$47,641,981	\$9,737,909	675,134	\$71	\$14
Black	649	\$153,370,323	\$26,221,941	5,680,634	\$27	\$5
Hispanic	638	\$151,260,598	\$64,398,270	6,090,430	\$25	\$11
All majority - minority zip codes	1,341	\$352,272,902	\$100,358,120	12,446,198	\$28	\$8

Source: Public Citizen analysis of 2010-2018 data from Maplight (campaign contributions over \$200) Federal Election Commission (Super PAC contributions)

Chart 5: Average Household Campaign Contributions By Majority Race of Zip Code 2010-2018



Source: Public Citizen analysis of 2010-2018 data from Maplight (campaign contributions over \$200) Federal Election Commission (Super PAC contributions)

Appendix: Data Tables

Source for all of the below tables: Public Citizen analysis of 2010-2018 data from Maplight (campaign contributions over \$200) Federal Election Commission (Super PAC contributions)

Appendix Table 1: Top Majority NonHispanic White Top Campaign Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	Campaign 2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Non Hispanic White
20005	Washington	DC	\$232,095,563	8172	\$94,506	56.2%
20004	Washington	DC	\$163,742,226	1163	\$144,583	73.1%
20036	Washington	DC	\$138,287,162	4171	\$80,977	72.8%
22314	Alexandria	VA	\$111,721,751	17096	\$122,689	76.8%
20003	Washington	DC	\$65,782,614	12394	\$118,607	68.4%
60611	Chicago	IL	\$36,245,855	20487	\$96,040	75.8%
22102	McLean	VA	\$34,087,905	10400	\$114,310	63.4%
22209	Arlington	VA	\$32,156,215	7183	\$106,424	65.2%
10021	New York	NY	\$30,571,736	24912	\$123,842	81.5%
10024	New York	NY	\$30,285,758	28418	\$126,107	80.0%
Top 10			\$874,976,785	134,396		
All			\$7,057,341,809	83564644		

Appendix Table 2: Top Majority NonHispanic White Super PAC Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	SuperPAC2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Non Hispanic White
89109	Las Vegas	NV	\$197,587,825	3972	\$46,875	52.5%
10022	New York	NY	\$169,620,382	17873	\$133,208	83.4%
20036	Washington	DC	\$111,941,268	4171	\$80,977	72.8%
89145	Las Vegas	NV	\$100,494,072	9614	\$56,424	63.3%
20005	Washington	DC	\$94,261,730	8172	\$94,506	56.2%
10019	New York	NY	\$76,129,783	24512	\$99,063	64.5%
60614	Chicago	IL	\$69,166,610	33591	\$100,116	81.6%
60045	Lake Forest	IL	\$63,766,938	7317	\$176,108	91.7%
10010	New York	NY	\$47,066,514	15972	\$115,084	68.9%
60611	Chicago	IL	\$46,645,483	20487	\$96,040	75.8%
Top 10			\$976,680,605	145681		
All			\$2,788,882,483	83564644		

Appendix Table 3: Top Majority Black or African-American Origin Campaign Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	Campaign 2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Black or African American
20772	Upper Marlboro	MD	\$10,691,261	16054	\$104,743	79.2%
48214	Detroit	MI	\$7,325,103	9849	\$26,223	82.2%
07102	Newark	NJ	\$5,146,142	4762	\$24,353	54.0%
19119	Philadelphia	PA	\$3,253,025	11859	\$56,018	61.0%
30313	Atlanta	GA	\$3,192,118	2103	\$50,172	64.7%
20746	Suitland	MD	\$2,802,398	11135	\$64,762	87.0%
15219	Pittsburgh	PA	\$2,655,813	5327	\$22,799	66.7%
35203	Birmingham	AL	\$2,507,094	1596	\$16,295	55.4%
60615	Chicago	IL	\$2,278,476	20470	\$41,679	60.4%
20011	Washington	DC	\$2,133,379	24288	\$65,327	64.9%
Top 10			\$41,984,809	107,443		
All			\$153,370,323	5,680,634		

Appendix Table 4: Top Majority Black or African-American Origin Super PAC Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	SuperPAC2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Black or African American
21201	Baltimore	MD	\$3,460,400	9164	\$33,877	50.6%
72114	North Little Rock	AR	\$2,010,000	5012	\$19,043	72.2%
45402	Dayton	OH	\$1,863,467	4365	\$24,797	69.3%
48214	Detroit	MI	\$1,676,663	9849	\$26,223	82.2%
33407	West Palm Beach	FL	\$1,204,665	10659	\$37,102	56.0%
40202	Louisville	KY	\$1,075,941	2689	\$17,372	59.1%
21218	Baltimore	MD	\$787,692	18536	\$43,352	59.6%
19801	Wilmington	DE	\$703,400	5992	\$25,097	72.6%
37402	Chattanooga	TN	\$626,550	2181	\$13,204	66.5%
15219	Pittsburgh	PA	\$605,010	5327	\$22,799	66.7%
Top 10			\$14,013,788	73,774		
All			\$26,221,941	5,680,634		

Appendix Table 5: Top Majority Asian Top Campaign Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	Campaign2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Asian
96813	Honolulu	HI	\$3,580,445	9986	\$70,110	51.7%
90010	Los Angeles	CA	\$3,533,211	1986	\$47,115	63.7%
02111	Boston	MA	\$3,035,796	3202	\$39,329	51.5%
96821	Honolulu	HI	\$2,969,722	6418	\$129,713	60.9%
91108	San Marino	CA	\$2,858,109	4684	\$152,553	51.1%
96816	Honolulu	HI	\$2,617,653	17397	\$82,742	56.5%
95014	Cupertino	CA	\$2,184,751	21489	\$150,529	60.6%
96822	Honolulu	HI	\$2,015,953	18478	\$69,223	53.2%
90020	Los Angeles	CA	\$1,683,703	16364	\$42,407	51.1%
94539	Fremont	CA	\$1,599,425	16274	\$160,542	70.8%
Top 10			\$26,078,768	106,292		
All			\$47,641,981	675,134		

Appendix Table 6: Top Majority Asian Top Super PAC Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	SuperPAC2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Asian
90010	Los Angeles	CA	\$3,923,958	1986	\$47,115	63.7%
02111	Boston	MA	\$1,338,150	3202	\$39,329	51.5%
94134	San Francisco	CA	\$1,301,540	12204	\$71,352	51.6%
95014	Cupertino	CA	\$914,618	21489	\$150,529	60.6%
91108	San Marino	CA	\$309,349	4684	\$152,553	51.1%
96819	Honolulu	HI	\$252,907	12137	\$77,389	61.1%
91006	Arcadia	CA	\$217,900	10590	\$99,360	56.1%
91007	Arcadia	CA	\$204,725	11627	\$79,964	56.2%
94108	San Francisco	CA	\$166,505	8063	\$55,341	50.3%
96826	Honolulu	HI	\$140,960	14723	\$47,926	59.8%
Top 10			\$8,770,612	100,705		
All			\$9,737,909	675,134		

Appendix Table 7: Top Majority Hispanic or Latino Top Campaign Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	Campaign 2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Hispanic or Latino origin
33133	Miami	FL	\$7,121,649	13,377	\$63,428	53%
33134	Miami	FL	\$6,977,491	16,251	\$65,197	75%
33143	Miami	FL	\$5,052,753	11,962	\$65,581	57%
33131	Miami	FL	\$4,032,624	9,158	\$80,539	50%
78504	McAllen	TX	\$3,834,301	17,107	\$63,158	74%
33146	Miami	FL	\$3,718,912	4,018	\$116,536	53%
75220	Dallas	TX	\$3,657,941	14,324	\$43,001	64%
78212	San Antonio	TX	\$3,373,235	10,784	\$42,789	60%
79701	Midland	TX	\$2,853,641	9,587	\$57,758	56%
33149	Key Biscayne	FL	\$2,451,067	4,602	\$128,563	62%
Top 10			\$43,073,614	111,170		
All			\$151,260,598	6,090,430		

Appendix Table 8: Top Majority Hispanic or Latino Super PAC Contribution Zip Codes

ZIP	City	State	SuperPAC2010-2018	Households	Median household income	Hispanic or Latino origin
00646	Dorado	PR	\$10,301,000	12,075	\$29,160	98.4%
33134	Miami	FL	\$8,384,127	16,251	\$65,197	75.4%
33137	Miami	FL	\$8,024,010	9,559	\$57,690	51.4%
79901	El Paso	TX	\$4,354,045	3,929	\$13,087	93.3%
33126	Miami	FL	\$3,722,500	17,988	\$34,088	95.5%
33165	Miami	FL	\$3,510,305	16,410	\$46,844	90.8%
33130	Miami	FL	\$2,505,735	11,596	\$27,033	81.1%
33014	Hialeah	FL	\$1,502,986	13,800	\$36,257	88.3%
33016	Hialeah	FL	\$1,355,985	14,680	\$43,579	95.5%
33131	Miami	FL	\$1,236,813	9,158	\$80,539	50.0%
Top 10			\$44,897,506	125,446		
All			\$64,398,270	6,090,430		