



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 10, 2021

## Founder of Zuckerberg Election Org Served at ChiCom-Funded Center

Tiana Epps-Johnson, founder of the Center for Tech and Civic Life — the election group heavily supported by Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg — is a [former fellow](#) at the Chinese state-funded Ash Center, which has advised officials of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) who have been sanctioned for human-rights abuses by the U.S. government.

The Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) received hundreds of millions of dollars from the Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative (an organization established and owned by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan with an investment of 99 percent of the couple’s wealth from their Facebook shares over their lifetime) with the ostensible aim of “modernizing” America’s voting system.



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The Amistad Project, an election-watchdog group, [alleged](#) that CTCL “used the money to illegally inflate turnout in key Democratic swing states as part of this effort.”

CTCL worked almost exclusively in Democrat districts, where leaders from the organization overruled local election authorities and accessed mail-in ballots ahead of the election.

Johnson founded the CTCL in 2012 with co-workers from the New Organizing Institute (NOI), which the *Washington Post* described as “the Democratic Party’s Hogwarts for digital wizardry.”

As the National Pulse revealed, Johnson has ties to Harvard University’s Ash Center, which, in turn, has extensive financial and personnel links to China’s ruling regime.

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, housed within the Harvard Kennedy School, is funded by several Chinese Communist Party-backed entities. One donor to the Ash Center is China Southern Power Grid Corp, which has a management board directly appointed by China’s central government.

Another source of funding for the Ash Center is New World China Enterprises Project, a Chinese firm with a board made up almost entirely of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members. In fact, the company’s chairman and executive director, Cheng Kar-Shun, served as a standing committee member of China’s Political Consultative Conference, an arm of the regime that conducts Chinese influence operations.

The Ash Center has regularly published studies amplified by Chinese state-run media outlets and government officials. One report from July of 2020, “Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese



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Public Opinion Through Time,” asserts that the Chinese Communist Party is “as strong as ever” and that “Chinese citizen satisfaction with the government has increased virtually across the board.”

Over the last two decades, the center has hosted the “China’s Leaders in Development Program,” which describes itself as being “widely recognized by the Chinese government as one of the best overseas training programs for government officials.”

“Taught both at Tsinghua University, China, and Harvard Kennedy School, this multi weeks training program is specifically designed to help prepare senior local and central Chinese government officials to more effectively address the ongoing challenges of China’s national reforms,” the program’s summary states.

The National Pulse further reported on the Ash Center’s ties to China’s regime and Johnson’s involvement:

Beyond collaborating with a university that has attempted to hack the U.S. government, the program brings Harvard professors’ prestigious advice to senior leaders from the brutal Chinese Communist Party, handpicked by the party’s own Organization Department of the Central Committee. Several ... members of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corp, which has been identified as an “instrument of repression” against Uighurs by the Washington Post and accordingly sanctioned by former President Donald Trump, have joined the delegation.

Despite these ties, Johnson served as a Technology and Democracy Fellow at the Ash Center from 2015 to 2016. While at the center, Johnson participated in several discussions on the use of technology in American elections including a workshop titled “Rebuilding The Cornerstone of American Democracy: Leveraging Digital Tools to Reach Today’s Voter.”

Another Johnson creation, Election Toolkit, is billed as an “online clearinghouse of resources” for local officials administering elections across America.

Johnson’s involvement with the Ash Center goes back to at least 2018, when she participated in the institute’s “Getting to Eighty Percent: A Symposium Advancing Voter Participation” in her capacity as CTCL founder.

*The New American* [previously reported](#) on how the Fulton County, Georgia, board of commissioners voted to accept a \$6.3 million grant as part of CTCL’s “Safe Elections” project. The commission did not ask any questions about the name of the group providing the funding, the money’s origin, or the details of what the funding would be used for.



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