



Major Obama Donor Charged With \$675K in Fraud

Allegations of fraud surrounding an Obama campaign donor have ignited further controversy for the president's reelection effort, as another prominent supporter has purportedly engaged in illegal activity. Abake Assongba and her husband, Anthony J.W. DeRosa, doled out [more than \\$50,000](#) to Obama's reelection campaign this year, government records show. Assongba is also facing a lawsuit in Florida, where she allegedly stole \$657,000 to help finance a multimillion-dollar home in the state.

Assongba and DeRosa own and operate a charity that allegedly dispenses food and school supplies to children and families in the West African nation of Benin. The charity built a school and launched a host of philanthropic campaigns in the small country, DeRosa wrote on his Facebook page. "Our Accomplishments in West Africa are our micro loan program, motor taxi program, the construction of a school/clinic for urban children, and sustainable small livestock husbandry program," DeRosa's Facebook profile reads.

However, when a reporter from the *Washington Post* visited the foundation's listed Benin headquarters, the office was closed. The charity's African coordinator conceded that the office had been shut down for some time, while he refrained from disclosing the address of the school that Abake's foundation allegedly built.

In fact, diplomatic officials at the Benin embassy said they had never heard of the charity, and they generally monitor all charities doing work in the Benin area. "About this group we are not informed," said Hector Posset, the minister counselor at the Washington, D.C.-based embassy. Further, he cautioned, "We want people to know they should be careful where they are putting their money. Not everything is done for Benin people. Some are spending that money for their own good, or bad."

In an ongoing lawsuit, Swiss businessman Klaus-Werner Pusch accused Assongba of luring him into an e-mail scam — by impersonating a bank official — to purchase the couple's multimillion-dollar home in Florida. Moreover, the defendant has left behind a trail of debts, including \$5,000 in back rent as well as \$10,000 in rent and damages for a previous apartment.

Assongba's former landlady, Haley Davey, said she was astounded that Assongba was a presidential fundraiser, because she was continuously late on her rent payments, and moved out after failing to pay five months' worth of rent. "Knowing what I know about her," Davey [asserted](#) in an interview, "I wouldn't have anything to do with her."

Over recent years, Assongba has contributed more than \$70,000 to Democratic candidates, according to Federal Election Commission data. Included among her larger donations is \$15,000 to the Democratic National Committee and \$35,000 to the Obama Victory fund, a joint committee administered between Obama's reelection campaign and the Democratic Party.

Responding to questions from the press, campaign officials acknowledged that probing all of the president's bundlers is a challenge, and that they plan to investigate Assongba's background to determine whether her contributions should be returned. "More than 1.3 million Americans have donated to the campaign, and we constantly review those contributions for any issues," Campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt averred. "Some issues are easy to identify, others more difficult, but once an issue has been raised, we address it promptly, as we will do in this case."

Campaign employees purportedly scan the backgrounds of volunteer fundraisers for legal and publicity issues, through Internet searches and other public records to reveal any potential problems. Evidently,



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on April 2, 2012

they skipped past Assongba's records, or her financial debts and half-million-dollar lawsuit were not perceived as a threat.

Obama recently released a list of donors and campaign "bundlers" — major fundraisers who bundle together large donations from other parties — which has already led to a host of questions. One recent controversy involved a legal debacle that prompted the campaign to return \$200,000 to Carlos and Alberto Cardona, who — as [reported](#) in February by *The New American* — are two brothers of a fugitive Mexican casino mogul who escaped the United States to avoid a myriad of criminal charges, including drug trafficking and fraud. Carlos and Alberto each forked out tens of thousands of dollars to the Democratic National Committee, while becoming top bundlers for the president's reelection campaign.

Indeed, Obama's decision to release a list of his donors and fundraisers has seemingly backfired, as a recent Associated Press investigation showed dozens of bundlers and top super PAC donors [visiting the White House](#) on multiple occasions. The president's past criticisms of Washington's insider privileges has spurred claims of hypocrisy, as more than 60 prominent campaign donors have been granted access to the White House more than once for state dinners, holiday events, and meetings with top administration officials.



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