**Draft:** In his book titled *The Givers*, David Callahan examines the habits of the super-rich…individuals with billions, not millions to their name. Turns out, today’s super-rich are lining up to give much of their fortunes away. However, Callahan warns that the giving while living movement might threaten our democracy.

“Not only do philanthropists have more power than ever before, but that influence is likely to grow far greater in coming decades. Philanthropy is becoming a much stronger power center and, in some areas, is set up to surpass government in its ability to shape society’s agenda. To put things differently, we face a future in which private donors – who are accountable to no one – may often wield more influence than elected public officials, who (in theory, anyway) are accountable to no one.”

Callahan notes several distributing trends:

* ↑ inequality post recession -> ↑ scrutiny of super-rich -> ↑ in philanthropy
* ↑ in philanthropy coincides with inability of government to get things done
* ↑ in philanthropy coincides with ↓in Americans believing that their voice matters
* Public sector vilified and stepping back. Philanthropy praised and stepping forward.

These trends result in inequality:

* Tax avoidance is motivator for some philanthropists.
* Some philanthropists give to right or left wing think tanks. IRS makes no distinction between charity and think tank. Therefore, money not taxed. Social programs to help low income individuals go unfunded.
* Voice of ordinary citizens is lost when powerful givers push agenda (i.e. Columbia University)
* IRS makes no distinction between funding minority voter suppression and charity.
* Philanthropists tend to target diseases affecting white people (cystic fibrosis, melanoma, ovarian cancer). Meanwhile hospitals in poor neighborhoods lack philanthropic support.
* Rich schools get richer. Harvard brought in $3.1 million/day in 2015. Legacy slots for kids of donors. Meanwhile, community colleges struggle to find support.
* Foundations employ 100s or 1000+ to advance the vision of 1 person.

Democracy at risk: Gates and common core; Walton and charter schools; Should 1 person be able to impose their views on 50 million students in the nation’s public schools?

Reforms: More transparency; Limited Politicized Philanthropy; Greater accountability…demand a stop to the abuse of the tax code

**Revision:**

In 2017, there were 565 billionaires in the United States. More than 170 of them have taken the Giving Pledge…promising to give away at least half of their wealth before they die. To the uncritical masses, this seemed like a great idea. After all, nobody cares for people like Ebenezer Scrooge who are greedy, selfish, and self-centered. One by one, America’s wealthiest took the pledge including Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, and Mark Zuckerberg. In his book titled *The Givers*, David Callahan explores the rise of these mega-givers and the impact they are having on our democracy. According to Callahan, “we face a future in which private donors who are accountable to no one, may often wield more influence than elected public officials, who are accountable to all of us.” Turns out, many billionaires are making tax free donations to political think tanks and other causes that work to increase inequality between the rich and the poor. If you don’t think the wealthy few should determine what’s good for the rest of us, read this book to find out what can be done to stop them and save our democracy.