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### Ron Paul is Not A Bigot: Refuting the New Republic Charges

By James W. Harris

I am a supporter of Ron Paul. I have followed his career since the 1980s, and I have often referred to him as "the greatest Congressman since the days of the Founding Fathers." Though I live outside Texas, I have always considered him my true representative in Congress because of his brave, lonely, and remarkably consistent stands for peace, civil liberties and limited government.

(I should point out that I do paid and volunteer work for the Advocates for Self-Government, a non-partisan libertarian educational organization that Ron Paul has praised; similarly, the Advocates, like most libertarian organizations, has praised, in a non-partisan way, Paul's work. My thoughts in this article are my own; I do not speak for the Advocates. Nor am I associated in any way with Paul's campaign.)

In a campaign of sleazy, flip-flopping presidential candidates loaded down with ugly personal and political baggage, Paul has been a shining exception. A ten-term congressman of incredibly consistent views, praised by ideological friends and foes alike for his character, integrity and friendliness. A devout Christian reluctant to inject public declarations of his faith into politics; a devoted family man, married to his high school sweetheart for over fifty years. A doctor who has delivered literally thousands of babies and provided pro bono medical care for the poor; a student who paid for his first year at college by delivering newspapers, selling lemonade, and mowing lawns. No skeletons, no scandals. A squeaky-clean straight-talking Mr. Paul Goes To Washington.

Until... now? Recently the liberal weekly The New Republic (TNR) published [excerpts](#) from a newsletter published under Paul's name from the late 1970s through the 1990s. The worst of these excerpts are racist, anti-gay, and hateful in tone.

According to TNR and others, these excerpts reveal an ugly, secret, hidden part of Paul -- that he is racist, homophobic, conspiracy-obsessed, and anti-Semitic.

I believe that is utterly false. I believe that many of TNR's charges against Paul are unfair and dishonest -- deliberate distortions and misrepresentations.

Far more importantly, I believe that Ron Paul did not write the bigoted material that TNR quotes.

Third, because the other candidates are supporting POLICIES that are infinitely worse than the worst words in those old newsletters published under his name. Criminal wars that have killed hundreds of thousands of innocents and may at any moment metastasize into global and nuclear devastation. Security measures and laws that threaten to turn America into a full-fledged police state. A vile foreign policy that has soiled America's name. Economic policies that subsidize wealthy corporations while robbing hardworking ordinary Americans. A federal death penalty that disproportionately affects the poor and minorities.

Consider two of those policies in particular.

- The San Francisco Chronicle [notes](#) that "Republican Paul is the only one in either party calling for an immediate troop withdrawal" from the obscene War in Iraq. As an American I feel an obligation to the world to vote for the candidate who would most quickly end this abomination.
- The misbegotten War on Drugs is, in practice, a holocaust against minority America. [According to the ACLU](#), 183,200 blacks and Latinos are in state prisons for nonviolent drug charges -- they make up 70% of those imprisoned for such charges. Paul is not only campaigning to end the racist Drug War -- he is promising to pardon all convicted of non-violent drug offenses. Justice demands I cast my vote to free these voiceless victims.

Finally, I will continue to support Ron Paul because I deeply, strongly believe that he is a good and decent man.

#### Final Note

While finishing this article, I found this comment about the TNR articles on a forum from an anonymous Ron Paul supporter:

"Dear Ron, We all make mistakes and do stupid things. Luckily, yours didn't include voting for an illegal and unconstitutional war, the erosion of our civil liberties and the growth of a corrupt government.

"I still love you. Give 'em hell!! This ain't over yet!"

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## TNR Over-Reaches

Before examining the offensive material in the Ron Paul newsletters cited by TNR, it should be pointed out that the TNR article wildly over-reaches in its all-out attempt to condemn Paul. TNR uses some genuinely ugly material in the newsletters as a launching pad for a wider set of unjust and unsupported smears. The article was an obvious hit piece, published on the day of the New Hampshire primaries, when Paul's hopes for a breakthrough vote were high, and without time for Paul to undo the damage. It is puffed up and padded with innuendo, exaggerations, and unsupported claims.

The TNR article is thick with McCarthyite guilt-by-association smears. For example, TNR breathlessly notes that Paul has appeared on the Alex Jones radio show and given interviews to the John Birch Society. But this, of course, hardly indicates Paul shares their beliefs (many of which, incidentally, are quite unremarkable). TNR supplies no damning quotes from these, or any other, interviews -- because, quite simply, there aren't any damning quotes. Paul's message of peace, tolerance and liberty is the same, whatever the venue.

Similarly, the fact that a few tin-pot would-be fuehrers have announced they support Paul says no more about Paul than the Communist Party USA's quasi-endorsement of John Kerry in 2004, or the Klan's endorsement of Ronald Reagan in 1980, said about those candidates.

While I strongly believe that Paul did not write the newsletter material quoted in the TNR article, for reasons I will discuss below, it should nonetheless be noted that a good bit of what TNR holds up as oh-my-God!-shocking actually is... not. For example, criticism of Israeli policies, or concern about the influence of the Israeli lobby upon U.S. foreign policy, is not anti-Semitic. Nor is opposition to foreign aid to Israel, especially in the context of Paul's opposition to *all* foreign aid.

Similarly, criticism of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and Yale's sordid Skull and Bones society is surely not outside the bounds of respectable discourse. And concern about an "industrial-banking-political elite" is hardly sinister; jeez, what intelligent non-Establishment political observer *doesn't* worry about some variant or other of this? Isn't that essentially what Eisenhower was warning about in his famous "military-industrial complex" speech?

And when did it become "paranoia" to oppose the Federal Reserve System and to support a gold standard instead of easily-inflated paper currency?

In the same way, it is just laughable for TNR to criticize a 1986 newsletter for describing conservatives Jeanne Kirkpatrick and George Will as "two of our enemies" and noting they had joined the Trilateral Commission. They were, in fact, inducted into that august organization, joining a gaggle of other suspicious characters; and no doubt both of them are viewed as enemies even by some of TNR's staunchest readers.

Similarly, attacking The New Republic for failing to defend the free speech rights of Holocaust revisionists (as one 1989 newsletter did) is not, of course, an endorsement

Paul has repeatedly denounced racism. In 2002 he wrote: "Racism is simply an ugly form of collectivism, the mindset that views humans only as members of groups and never as individuals. Racists believe that all individual who share superficial physical characteristics are alike; as collectivists, racists think only in terms of groups."

Paul's congressional voting record has been completely consistent with the above statement. So has his campaign, which has brought support from all races and from across the political spectrum.

- In 1993, when the worst of the newsletters were being published, Ron Paul very publicly endorsed the Virginia General Assembly campaign of Rick Sincere, an openly gay Libertarian. [Says Sincere](#): "Ron Paul issued a letter on my behalf, soliciting funds from libertarians and votes from constituents. ... Dr. Paul (then a former congressman) was aware I was running as an openly-gay candidate and he raised no questions, concerns, or objections. I hardly think a homophobic bigot would have sent out a fundraising letter over his own signature, endorsing (as the Washington Times stylebook would have it) an 'avowed homosexual' for public office."

- In Congress, on April 20, 1999, [Paul declared](#): "I rise in great respect for the courage and high ideals of Rosa Parks, who stood steadfastly for the rights of individuals against unjust laws and oppressive governmental policies."

- Again in Congress, on Jan 17, 2007, [he praised Mohammed Ali](#) as "a man of great courage... he practiced what Martin Luther King made popular, civil disobedience, because he disagreed with the [Vietnam] war... what Muhammad Ali did eventually led to getting rid of the draft... I see what Muhammad Ali did as being very great."

These are unlikely words, and unlikely heroes, for a bigot.

## Should We Continue to Support Ron Paul?

It is predictable that many who opposed Paul's campaign from the beginning, for other reasons, would now jump on this and trumpet it. It is, despite TNR's distortions and smears, a legitimate news story. And Paul's campaign has been tarnished.

The Paul campaign will have to deal with the TNR charges. I hope, for the ideals Paul stands for, and for the sake of all the people who have poured their hearts and money into his heroic and exhilarating campaign, they do so effectively.

I will continue to support Ron Paul. First and foremost, because I very strongly believe that the fifteen-year-old newsletter garbage is not his words or his beliefs.

Second, because he is the only candidate who has the wisdom and courage to denounce American imperialism, to ferociously defend the civil rights of all Americans, to call for the restoration of the Bill of Rights, to oppose the wretched War on Drugs, and to take other bold pro-freedom positions. He is the only voice for liberty in this presidential race on many, many vital issues. He and he alone is the candidate of peace, non-intervention, and limited government. And Ron Paul has inspired a thrilling, utterly unforeseen, mass grassroots movement fired with enthusiasm for these grand ideals.

It is fair to accuse Paul of sloppy management and bad judgment in this affair; indeed, he says so himself. Paul may also be simply saying, "The buck stops here." It is possible, as some claim, he is protecting friends and advisors who have gone on to other careers. Perhaps Paul believes his public record and his decades of utterly spotless behavior are enough to make it clear to all reasonable people that charges of bigotry are groundless.

Regardless, what is most important is that Paul has strongly and repeatedly denounced and repudiated the offensive content of the newsletters. He has also convincingly denied his authorship. And clearly they don't match either his style or his views.

Immediately responding to the TNR article, [Paul said](#): "The quotations in The New Republic article are not mine and do not represent what I believe or have ever believed. I have never uttered such words and denounce such small-minded thoughts. In fact, I have always agreed with Martin Luther King, Jr. that we should only be concerned with the content of a person's character, not the color of their skin. ... For over a decade, I have publicly taken moral responsibility for not paying closer attention to what went out under my name."

Paul deserves -- and accepts -- blame for allowing such trash to go out under his name. He has apologized profusely for this. Unfortunately, there is no time machine to let him go back fifteen years and undo the unwise decision to turn his newsletter over to those who wrote these words. There really isn't much more he can do, short of perhaps naming names or crafting a clearer explanation of the exact process by which this happened (and there is no guarantee this would satisfy critics). Wisely or not, he has thus far decided not to do this.

### **The Newsletters Are Extreme Anomalies**

In evaluating this issue, it is vital to consider the following points.

No one has EVER heard Ron Paul, in ten congressional terms, two presidential races, and endless public speeches, interviews and appearances, utter one racist or bigoted comment.

In decades of public service and a very public life, there are no damning video or audio clips, no damning quotes, absolutely nothing -- except this small, very specific handful of quotes from these newsletters. Zero. Nothing else. The newsletters are extreme anomalies. Not only do they not sound like him -- they are obviously extraordinarily inconsistent with the man's entire life and worldview.

Ron Paul is always described by those who know him, or have encountered him, as a gentleman free from racial prejudice and truly concerned about peace, liberty, and equal justice for all, a man of the highest moral character. There is no hint of bigotry in his personal or professional associations. While it is a cliché, it is nonetheless true that some of his closest associates and personal heroes are blacks and Jews. He delivered babies free of charge to impoverished minority women.

of the revisionists' views; it is the proper stance of First Amendment absolutists like Paul.

TNR claims [one article](#) "had kind words" for Klan nutball David Duke. Upon actually reading it, however, one finds no "kind words" for Duke (though the short article is somewhat obnoxious). Rather, the article -- written immediately after Duke's shocking 44 percent showing in the 1990 Louisiana Senate primary -- examines Duke's strategy of building a populist movement against high taxes, big government, and welfare, as a viable model for other candidates without Duke's nasty background and racist views. Tellingly, TNR fails to quote [a later newsletter](#) at their site that [denounces](#) Duke as "an adherent of the violent philosophy of the KKK" and wonders why the media spends so much time attacking the politically impotent Duke and tiny bands of skinheads instead of going after the likes of Oliver North "who has done much more damage to America than a few scattered fascists." TNR, in full smear mode, ignores such nuances.

To point out such misrepresentations and exaggerations -- and there is much more -- is not mere nitpicking, nor is it an attempt to excuse the genuinely vile stuff that TNR has uncovered. It is important because TNR pads the article with such material to back up its claim that the newsletters show "decades worth of obsession with conspiracies ... and deeply held bigotry against blacks, Jews, and gays." However, all the nasty, damning quotes TNR gives -- the legitimate meat of their article -- appeared sporadically over a narrow, specific time-period: about fifteen issues from very late 1989 to 1993 -- about three years, not "decades." (Comments sympathetic to the militia movement, none bigoted, appear in a couple of 1994 and 1995 issues.)

And this, as we shall see, fits in well with Paul's claim that he did not write the newsletters or oversee their content.

### **The Ugly Core**

There remains that core of writings -- again, in about fifteen issues, from very late 1989 to 1993 as best I can tell -- that are truly repellant in tone and substance.

It is important to put even this trash in some context. They are mostly short pieces and do not seem to be the focus of the newsletters (with the exception of one ugly "Special Issue on Racial Terrorism"), and even the worst do not make anything remotely like white supremacist arguments, or call for repressive government action against minorities.

But they are loathsome. They engage in nasty baiting and stereotyping of blacks and gays. They are unquestionably ugly and bigoted, deliberately crafted to pander to racists, homophobes and nuts. This core of writings is utterly indefensible.

People are right to be alarmed when confronted with them, as they should be about any similar statements from a presidential candidate's past. No candidate who uttered or believed such things would be worthy of support.

I believe Paul when [he says he did not write them](#), and that he is angry, hurt, and embarrassed that they have been attributed to him. Let me explain why.

## Alien to Paul

The controversy over these newsletters is not new. They first surfaced as an issue in Paul's 1996 congressional race. In 2001, Sam Gwynne, executive editor of the prominent progressive magazine Texas Monthly, noted in [a lengthy profile of Paul](#): "What made the statements in the publication even more puzzling was that, in four terms as a U. S. congressman and one presidential race, Paul had never uttered anything remotely like this."

Similarly, in early 2007, New York Times Magazine writer Christopher Caldwell [wrote](#) that Paul had disowned the comments "quite believably, since the style diverges widely from his own..."

Former TNR editor Andrew Sullivan, who had endorsed Paul prior to the TNR article, [calls the material](#) "ugly, vile, despicable tracts," but notes: "I've listened to him speak a great deal these past few months and either he has had a personality transplant or he didn't write this."

They are correct. The offensive newsletter articles are indeed wildly, ludicrously, grotesquely out of synch with Paul's lifetime writing style, voting record, public statements, and personal conduct. They are, to those who are familiar with him and his record, very clearly not his own. Few if any in the mainstream media believe he actually wrote them.

Even the TNR article doesn't seriously argue they are his words. According to Berin M. Szoka of Gays and Lesbians for Ron Paul, a few weeks before the TNR hit piece was published, the author, Jamie Kirchick, [emailed Szoka](#): "I don't think Ron Paul is a homophobe; I'm just cynical and enjoy getting supporters of political candidates riled up."

The obvious question, then: If, as Paul claims, he did not write them, how did they appear in a newsletter with his name on it?

## Paul's Defense

[Paul's defense](#), while understandably unsatisfying to some, seems entirely plausible to me: "When I was out of Congress and practicing medicine full-time, a newsletter was published under my name that I did not edit. Several writers contributed to the product. For over a decade, I have publicly taken moral responsibility for not paying closer attention to what went out under my name."

When those issues were published, Paul was a full-time medical doctor and a busy family man, as well as an in-demand speaker and a student of politics and current events -- in short, a man with tremendous demands on his time and energy. He had recently ended an exhaustive presidential race, returned to private practice, and was not in Congress or involved in electoral politics. He had given up control of his newsletter business; he kept only a minority share in the newsletter that bore his name. He made an ill-advised decision to turn the newsletter over to others, to let others write it and edit it and publish unsigned articles in this newsletter with his name in the title. He apparently failed to closely monitor it.

That turned out to be a ghastly error. His good name was dragged in the mud by the newsletter ghostwriters he entrusted.

This is consistent with [the observations](#) of long-time libertarian writer Jesse Walker: "The race- and gay-baiting quotes in the New Republic piece -- and, even more so, the documents' general gestalt of an impending apocalypse -- sound like the sort of material that often appeared in far-right direct-mail packages in that era. My suspicion is that someone who wrote such packages also picked up a job writing the Ron Paul Survival Report."

Ironically, The New Republic article itself makes Paul's argument believable. TNR claims the newsletters published offensive material "over the course of decades" -- even though this is false; the genuinely offensive material TNR presents dates only from very late 1989 to 1993. Then TNR says that Paul's claim -- that he did not write the material and is guilty only of poor oversight -- "might be more believable if extremist views had cropped up in the newsletters only sporadically -- or if the newsletters had just been published for a short time." Well... that is exactly the point. It was a fairly short time period (judging from what TNR shows us), and the articles were short pieces in only some of those issues, certainly not the focus of the publication. This backs up what Paul is claiming. By TNR's own argument, that boosts Paul's believability.

## Why Didn't He Denounce Them At Once?

If that was the case, though, why didn't Paul denounce them earlier, when he eventually did become aware of how bad it was? And why hasn't he subsequently named names? Clearly, in retrospect, that seems like it would have been the best response. This is the biggest riddle in the whole mess, and there is no fully satisfying answer so far.

Sam Gwynne, in his 2001 Texas Monthly profile, pondered this, too. Gwynne [wrote](#): "His reasons for keeping this a secret are harder to understand: [Paul says] 'They were never my words, but I had some moral responsibility for them . . . I actually really wanted to try to explain that it doesn't come from me directly, but they [campaign aides] said that's too confusing. It appeared in your letter and your name was on that letter and therefore you have to live with it.'"

In retrospect, this was very bad advice.

Concludes Gwynne in Texas Monthly: "It is a measure of his stubbornness, determination, and ultimately his contrarian nature that, until this surprising volte-face in our interview, he had never shared this secret. It seems, in retrospect, that it would have been far, far easier to have told the truth at the time."

Similarly, in his 2007 New York Times Magazine profile, Christopher Caldwell puzzled over why Paul did not simply identify those who wrote the offensive lines. [Caldwell's conclusion](#): "What is interesting is Paul's idea that the identity of the person who did write those lines is 'of no importance.' Paul never deals in disavowals or renunciations or distancings, as other politicians do."