

The Anniston Star

HOT BLAST: Who or what exactly is being avenged?

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This story may say as much about Rand Paul's perceived chances in a 2016 race for president and an ideological battle among conservatives as it does about views of the South and neo-Confederates. Yet, the Southern twang at the heart of the story has animated plenty of folks.

We begin with a story published yesterday by the Washington Free Beacon, a conservative publication that describes itself as being "dedicated to uncovering the stories that the professional left hopes will never see the light of day."

Alana Goodman's story posted at the Free Beacon begins:

"A close aide to Sen. Rand Paul (R., Ky.) who co-wrote the senator's 2011 book spent years working as a pro-secessionist radio pundit and neo-Confederate activist, raising questions about whether Paul will be able to transcend the same fringe-figure associations that dogged his father's political career.

"Paul hired Jack Hunter, 39, to help write his book *The Tea Party Goes to Washington* during his 2010 Senate run. Hunter joined Paul's office as his social media director in August 2012.

"From 1999 to 2012, Hunter was a South Carolina radio shock jock known as the 'Southern Avenger.' He has weighed in on issues such as racial pride and Hispanic immigration, and stated his support for the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln."

Jonathan Chait of New York magazine reacted, "Very, very few Rand Paul fans are glad Abraham Lincoln was shot. At the same time, the logic of southern white supremacy and the logic of libertarianism run along very similar lines. They both express themselves in terms of opposition to federal power and support for states' rights."

Jason Kuznicki, a research fellow at the Cato Institute, responded, "All friends of the Confederacy are my enemies. Wherever they appear. They're your enemies too — they are the enemies of the entire human race — and the only remaining question is whether you face up to your responsibility as a human being and disown them."

Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, said of Hunter, "This guy makes Paula Dean look like the chair of the NAACP."

The American Conservative rides in with a defense of Hunter: "More conservatives should be like him—not media personalities or provocateurs, but thinkers who apply conservatism to uniting a country riven by ideological, economic, and yes racial divides"

For his part, Hunter issued a statement reading the revelations do not "accurately reflect me."

“Years ago, I was a radio host whose job was to provoke and inflame,” he said. “I abhor racism and I have never advocated anything other than equal protection under the law for all people.”