



## No One Left to Lie To

JAN 27 2012, 11:42 AM ET

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The Republican presidential candidate has denied writing inflammatory passages in the pamphlets from the 1990s and said recently that he did not read them at the time or for years afterward. Numerous colleagues said he does not hold racist views.

But people close to Paul's operations said he was deeply involved in the company that produced the newsletters, Ron Paul & Associates, and closely monitored its operations, signing off on articles and speaking to staff members virtually every day.

"It was his newsletter, and it was under his name, so he always got to see the final product. . . . He would proof it," said Renae Hathway, a former secretary in Paul's company and a supporter of the Texas congressman.

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A person involved in Paul's businesses, who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid criticizing a former employer, said Paul and his associates decided in the late 1980s to try to increase sales by making the newsletters more provocative. They discussed adding controversial material, including racial statements, to help the business, the person said.

"It was playing on a growing racial tension, economic tension, fear of government," said the person, who supports Paul's economic policies but is not backing him for president. "I'm not saying Ron believed this stuff. It was good copy. Ron Paul is a shrewd businessman."

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Ed Crane, the longtime president of the libertarian Cato Institute, said he met Paul for lunch during this period, and the two men discussed direct-mail solicitations, which Paul was sending out to interest people in his newsletters.

They agreed that "people who have extreme views" are more likely than others to respond. Crane said Paul reported getting his best response when he used a mailing list from the now-defunct newspaper Spotlight, which was widely considered anti-Semitic and racist.

Benton, Paul's spokesman, said that Crane's account "sounds odd" and that Paul did not recall the conversation.

At the time, Paul's investment letter was languishing. According to the person involved with his businesses, Paul and others hit upon a solution: to "morph" the content to capitalize on a growing fear among some on the political right about the nation's changing demographics and threats to economic liberty.

The investment letter became the Ron Paul Survival Report -- a name designed to intrigue readers, the company secretary said. It cost subscribers about \$100 a year. The tone of that and other Paul publications changed, becoming increasingly controversial. In 1992, for example, the Ron Paul Political Report defended chess champion Bobby Fischer, who became known as an anti-Semitic Holocaust denier, for his stance on "Jewish questions."

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Paul "had to walk a very fine line," said Eric Dondero Rittberg, a former longtime Paul aide who says Paul allowed the controversial material in his newsletter as a way to make money. Dondero Rittberg said he witnessed Paul proofing, editing and signing off on his newsletters in the mid-1990s.

"The real big money came from some of that racially tinged stuff, but he also had to keep his libertarian supporters, and they weren't at all comfortable with that," he said.

Dondero Rittberg is no longer a Paul supporter, and officials with Paul's presidential campaign have said he was fired. Dondero Rittberg disputed that, saying he resigned in 2003 because he opposed Paul's views on Iraq.

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In 1996, as Paul ran for Congress again, his business success turned into a potential political liability when his newsletters surfaced in the Texas media. Paul was quoted in the Dallas Morning News that year as defending a newsletter line from 1992 that said 95 percent of black men in the District are "semi-criminal or entirely criminal" and that black teenagers can be "unbelievably fleet of foot."

"If you try to catch someone that has stolen a purse from you, there is no chance to catch them," the newspaper quoted Paul as saying.

All parties agree that Ron Paul is not, personally, racist and that he didn't write the passages. This is comforting. I am not an anti-Semite. But give me a check to tell Harlem the Jews invented AIDS, and I'll do it.

As I've said before, we all must make our calculus in supporting a candidate or even claiming he is "good" for the debate. But it must be an honest calculus.

If you believe that a character who would conspire to profit off of white supremacy, anti-gay bigotry, and anti-Semitism is the best vehicle for convincing the country to end the drug war, to end our romance with interventionism, to encourage serious scrutiny of state violence, at every level, then you should be honest enough to defend that proposition.

What you should not do is claim that Ron Paul "legislated" for Martin Luther King Day, or claim to have intricate knowledge of Ron Paul's heart, and thus by the harsh accumulation of evidence, be made to look ridiculous.