



Historian Brian Doherty examines the unprecedented Ron Paul phenomenon

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Journalist and historian Brian Doherty is a chronicler of the libertarian movement. [His 2006 book, *Radicals for Capitalism*](#), traces the history of American libertarianism from its roots to the 21st century.

It was in that capacity, as someone who has observed trends and events among libertarians, he told the [Charlottesville Libertarian Examiner](#), that he recognized the power of the revolution launched through Ron Paul's 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns.

Doherty had just finished making a presentation at the Cato Institute, with a response by Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, when he sat down for a brief interview.

'Completely quixotic'?

"When the Ron Paul phenomenon as a presidential candidate arose in 2007," Doherty said, "I think like many libertarians, I had very little hope for it. I thought it was going to be completely quixotic and nothing would come of it, though I was still glad he was doing it."

Every step that Paul has taken since announcing his presidential bid in January 2007, he explained, "has surprised and impressed me."

Ron Paul's successes since then, he said, "is both the most interesting libertarian story going on right now" and it will be "one of the most interesting stories of American political history."

With that as his subject matter, Doherty sought out a publisher and "was lucky enough to convince HarperCollins to agree and got to write this book," called [Ron Paul's *rEVOLution: The Man and the Movement He Inspired*](#).

'Deep and emotional attachment'

Doherty identifies a few basic features of the Ron Paul phenomenon, but the most important may be its decentralization.

The movement, he said, has “a deep and emotional attachment to individual liberty in all of its manifestations, even some of the complicated manifestations that aren’t always clear to people,” such as “how it applies to American foreign policy.”

The Paul movement also “is rooted in decentralized communication and bottom-up doing,” Doherty said.

“It is not just a political campaign and in fact the political campaign, per se, the people who are paid to run the Ron Paul for president effort, are often at odds with the grassroots activists who make up the revolution. The revolution wants to [put a blimp in the air](#) telling people to ‘Google Ron Paul.’ The campaign would rather they all be working phone banks and calling voters.”

Doherty notes his “ecumenical belief” that while the professional campaign and the grassroots supporters “seem to like to claw at each other,” they really deserve to encourage each other.

‘Hippies in blimps’

The reason is that, he explained, “in a multipurpose political/social change movement, you need the people working the phones, you need the politicians in the ties, you need the crazy hippies in the blimps because our culture is filled with different kinds of people and you are never going to appeal to them in just one way,”

This multifaceted approach, he continued, means that “without central planning, the Ron Paul revolution has recognized that you need to work every angle, you need to work every walk of life, you need to work the Internet, you need to work street corner sign waves, you need to work phone calls from a political campaign, you need to work the Republican party, you need to work the Green Party, you need to work Occupy Wall Street -- and the Ron Paul revolutionaries are working every avenue of social and political change.”

In part two of this interview, Doherty predicts what the political world will look like after Ron Paul leaves the scene.

Another [excerpt from this conversation](#) with Brian Doherty focuses on Ron Paul’s mixed record on gay-rights issues.