

Exhibit E

The New York Times<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/31/nyregion/richard-luthmann-staten-island-facebook-posts.html>**ABOUT NEW YORK**

A Troll in Staten Island Politics

By Jim Dwyer

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Richard A. Luthmann neither denies nor admits creating phony Facebook pages of candidates.

No, no, no, says Richard A. Luthmann, a lawyer who practices politics on Staten Island with a blunt-edged hatchet.

It is not trolling, Mr. Luthmann said, to set up phony Facebook pages to embarrass candidates — such as one in which a Republican Assembly candidate in a conservative district calls for more housing projects, or another, in which a liberal Democrat City Council member “welcomes” a welfare hotel for drug addicts and criminals.

While Mr. Luthmann neither denies nor admits creating the pages, he insists that there would be absolutely nothing unusual if he had.

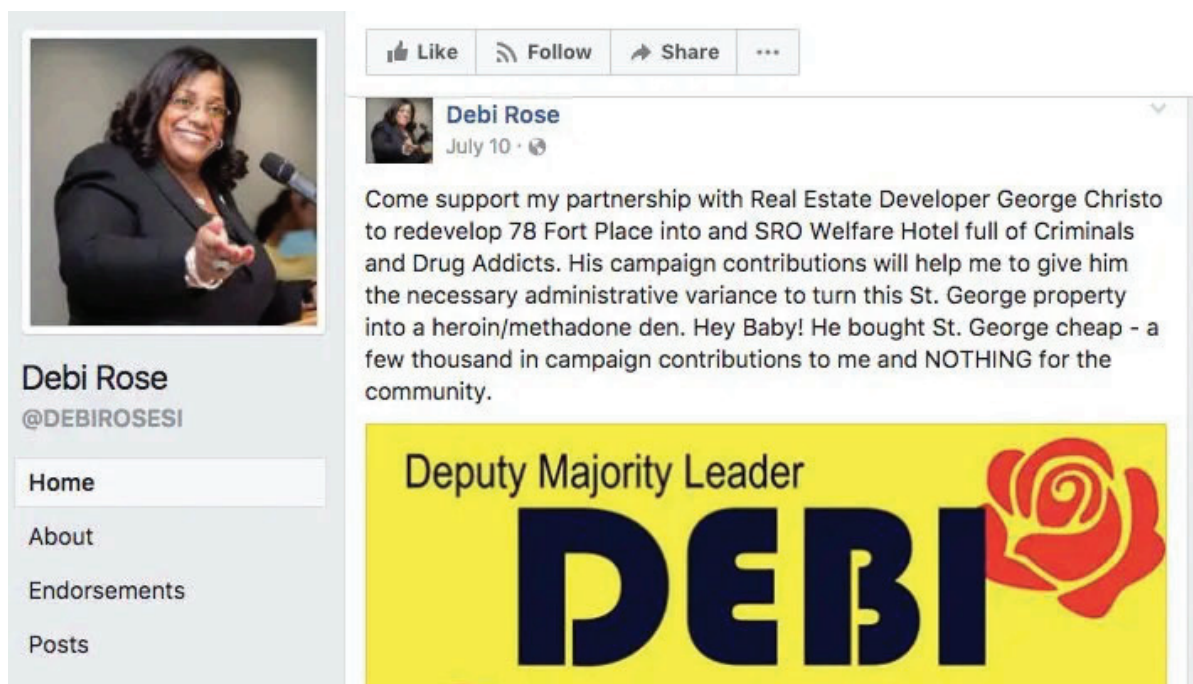
Moreover, he said, *trolling* is the wrong term for such tactics.

“It’s what is called a dirty trick,” Mr. Luthmann said, who misappropriated a term from Plato to deem Facebook spoofing a form of “noble lie.”

Thanks to an expose by reporter Amanda Farinacci of Spectrum News NY1, there is scant doubt about Mr. Luthmann’s role in creating a string of bogus pages to cause trouble for candidates running for district attorney; the assembly; the City Council; and the mayoralty.

Were candidates he was aligned with glad to have him doing the dirty work?

In private Facebook Messenger exchanges obtained by NY1, Mr. Luthmann wrote to Ron Castorina Jr., a Republican member of the Assembly, when they learned of a challenge from another Republican, Janine Materna, in the September 2016 primary.



A fake Facebook page in which City Councilwoman Deborah Rose is endorsing welfare hotels.

“Time for a fake Janine Materna site,” Mr. Luthmann wrote, according to the report. “Is there a picture of her with Hillary?”

“I’m looking for one,” Mr. Castorina replied.

Soon enough, a doctored photograph of Ms. Materna and Mrs. Clinton appeared on a Facebook page that, at first glance, looked as if it were Ms. Materna's, but it included a subtle clue that it wasn't authentic in the form of a slogan that, if abbreviated, would spell out a vile word to describe a woman.

In another exchange, Mr. Luthmann sent Mr. Castorina images of Ms. Materna with Eric H. Holder Jr., the former United States attorney general, and Mayor Bill de Blasio, adding, "In a news feed near you very soon."

Mr. Castorina replied: "Good. She's a vicious animal."

Besides serving in the Assembly, Mr. Castorina is the chairman of the Republican county committee on Staten Island. He acknowledged having the exchanges with Mr. Luthmann, but said he did not intend to encourage the creation of the false pages.

"Any conversations I had with Mr. Luthmann were merely to placate him and to kind of move the conversation along," Mr. Castorina said. "Mr. Luthmann is a very eccentric individual. I'm not going to say anything bad about him."

The campaign had been exceptionally nasty, Mr. Castorina said, and he said he "despises" his former opponent for what he believed were dirty tricks by her side.

"I'm certainly not the first elected official to say crude or nasty things about my opponent during a very vicious campaign cycle," Mr. Castorina said. "It just so happens that my commentary in the course of a private conversation was hacked."

He added, "I think what has been lost here in many respects is that Mr. Luthmann is the victim of a crime."



Tammy Greer Brown, a Staten Island resident and civic activist, said, “I’ve never seen this kind of dirt and grime in a campaign for the North Shore.” Nicole Craine for The New York Times

Ms. Materna said she sought to upend an old-boys club in Staten Island politics by running against Mr. Castorina, who took office in a special election, and then defeated her in the primary. “They stole my identity, stole pictures from my real Facebook page, and they misrepresented my views,” Ms. Materna said on Thursday. “Voters saw that and people said, ‘Oh my God, she wants homeless shelters next to a million dollar home.’”

Mr. Castorina scoffed at the idea that the Facebook page had been decisive in the election. “I won this race by 40 points,” he said.

While Mr. Luthmann also cited the big margin of victory, he did say fake pages were useful. “If it wasn’t effective, it wouldn’t be a practice that is engaged in on the national and local level,” Mr. Luthmann said. He put them in a category of political satire protected by the First Amendment, no different than Alec Baldwin’s impersonations of Donald Trump on Saturday Night Live.

Records show that Mr. Luthmann was paid \$1,650 for petitioning expenses by the campaign of Kamillah Hanks, who is trying to replace Deborah Rose in the City Council. A fake Facebook page has Ms. Rose endorsing welfare hotels. Mr.

Luthmann is not on the campaign staff, a spokeswoman for Ms. Hanks said.

The spectacle disgusted Tammy Greer Brown, a civic activist in the district.

“I’ve never seen this kind of dirt and grime in a campaign for the North Shore,” Ms. Greer Brown said.

Mr. Luthmann was unperturbed. “From Plato to Machiavelli to Hannah Arendt, the aim of politics isn’t truth, the aim of politics is distributive justice,” he said, adding that the Facebook pages are “right out of the Roger Stone playbook.”

So: Roger Stone, a contemporary conspiracy monger and Trump political consultant; Plato, an ancient Greek philosopher; Niccolò Machiavelli, a Renaissance Italian political scientist and public official; and Hannah Arendt, a 20th century political theorist who coined the phrase, “the banality of evil.”

One of these things is not like the others.

A correction was made on Sept. 1, 2017: An earlier version of this article misspelled the first name of the Renaissance Italian political scientist Machiavelli. It is Niccolò not Nicollò.

When we learn of a mistake, we acknowledge it with a correction. If you spot an error, please let us know at nytnews@nytimes.com. [Learn more](#)

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