



**THE TALENTED MR. SANTOS** | FEB. 21, 2023

## Here's Every Single Lie Told by George Santos

*By Matt Stieb, Intelligencer staff writer*



Photo: Win McNamee/Getty Images

Since the New York *Times* revealed that George Santos was not quite the man he sold himself as to voters, it's been hard to track down exactly what is true about the incoming representative's life story. Is he broke or rich? Is he Jewish or Catholic? Did his family members really die in the Holocaust or September 11? Most often, it's best to assume what the Republican from Long Island has said about his life is bogus, but in case you need to double-check, here is the guide to everything he has made up about himself — and the few things that actually appear to be true.

## He lied about where he went to high school ...

Santos, whose parents emigrated from Brazil, says he attended the Horace Mann School in the Bronx during his first years of high school but had to leave the prestigious private academy in his senior year because “my parents fell on hard times, which was something that would later become known as the depression of 2008.” But a spokesperson for the school told CNN in December that there was no evidence he attended Horace Mann. Later, he obtained a high-school equivalency diploma.

## ... and college.

Santos claims he graduated with a degree in economics and finance from Baruch College in 2010, which suggests he would have made it through a four-year program in just two years if he actually graduated from Horace Mann in 2008. But a Baruch representative told the Times there was no record of Santos being in the class of 2010. (Nor is there a record of Santos being a “star” on the Baruch volleyball team, as he claimed to Nassau County GOP chair Joseph Cairo.) A biography of Santos on the National Republican Congressional Committee states Santos also spent time at New York University, a claim NYU could not corroborate. Later, he told the New York Post that he “didn’t graduate from any institution of higher learning.”

## He never worked on Wall Street either.

His campaign bio states he worked at Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, but representatives for both companies told the Times they had no record of his employment. The lies weren't that hard to figure out: Santos said he worked in Citi's real-estate wing in the 2010s, though the bank sold off its asset-management operations when he was in high school. After Santos was sworn into Congress, the Times obtained a copy of his inflated resumé claiming that he graduated in the top one percent of his class at Baruch, earned an M.B.A. at NYU, and was able to double the revenue on the project he worked on at Goldman:

You can read George Santos's résumé for yourself, courtesy of reporting by the NYT:<https://t.co/g5kCsz2brZ>  
[pic.twitter.com/XQlndmfk0M](https://pic.twitter.com/XQlndmfk0M)

— Nicholas Fandos (@npfandos) January 11, 2023

## So where did his money come from?

When Santos first ran for Congress in 2020, he filed a disclosure showing a salary of \$55,000 working as a vice-president at a business-development company called LinkBridge Investors, where he says he introduced investors to hedge-fund managers, claiming once that he brought in \$1 million in revenue in just six months on the job. Even there, however, he was inflating his value: Newsday reports that the company's founder testified under oath in a 2019 lawsuit that Santos was just a "freelancer" who sold sponsorships for events and worked on commission.

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Soon after that failed Congressional run, he started working at a Florida investment firm called Harbor City Capital. When he was employed there in 2020, Santos said he managed a \$1.5 billion fund and bragged of "record returns" of 12 to 26 percent, depending on the type of investment. That year, according to CNN, a customer told Santos that the company's promise that they had a full bank guarantee on investments was bogus: "Deutsche Bank claims [it] is a complete fraud and not signed by the bank officer on the document," they wrote. Santos replied that they were "100% legitimate."

But in April 2021, the Securities and Exchange Commission accused Harbor City of being a Ponzi scheme that stole \$17 million from investors. The company's assets are currently in mediation with an independent receiver appointed to manage them.

Santos wasn't accused of wrongdoing by authorities, and the next month he incorporated his own company called Devolder. In an interview with Semafor, he said he helped rich people buy the expensive toys they wanted. If a client wanted to sell a plane or a boat, Santos would "go look out there within my Rolodex and be like: 'Hey, are you looking for a plane?' 'Are you looking for a boat?' I just put that feeler out there." Within six months, he claims to have "landed a couple of million-dollar contracts." Financial disclosures from his 2022

congressional campaign show he claimed to have made between \$3.5 million and \$11 million from the company before it was dissolved last year.

## Is the money legit?

Not everyone is buying the story that Santos earned his money how he says he did. As the *Times* notes, Devolder had no public website or LinkedIn page, and on his campaign financial disclosure, he did not list any clients. In a campaign bio, Santos once described Devolder as his “family’s firm” and said it was managing \$80 million in assets. At times, Santos would even go by the name Anthony Devolder.

“Where did that money come from?” asked Representative Dan Goldman of Brooklyn, referring to the \$700,000 Santos lent his own campaign.

When asked about the money during an appearance on Stephen Bannon’s show “War Room,” Santos dodged the question, instead quipping, “Well, I’ll tell you where it didn’t come from. It didn’t come from China, Ukraine or Burisma.”

On January 24, Santos admitted in a new filing that \$500,000 of that sum was not actually a personal loan, but he did not reveal the source of the money. Santos filed another amended report stating that a \$125,000 loan Santos gave his campaign also was not a personal loan. “I have never been this confused looking at an F.E.C. filing,” Jordan Libowitz, a spokesman for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics, told the New York *Times*.

There are other concerns about campaign donations, like the \$25,000 Santos received from a group called RedStone Strategies — which never registered with the Federal Election Commission as a political group. Santos also had a habit of spending \$199 or \$199.99 at restaurants and hotels, just shy of the threshold for expenses that campaigns are legally required to track. And loads of so-called donations come from people who don’t actually exist or claim not to have sent him any money, like Santos’s cousin who was “dumbfounded” by their alleged \$5,800 pledge.

Any skepticism about Santos’s finances has been amplified by his alleged fraud. In 2008, when Santos was 19 and living in Brazil, court records show he was charged with stealing the checkbook of a man his mother was caring for and wrote \$700 in fraudulent checks, including for a pair of shoes. (It’s not the only theft allegedly on his record: Two former roommates claim he stole a Burberry scarf from one of them and wore it a year later to the Stop the Steal rally.) Santos’s lawyer in the fraud case in Brazil was reportedly convicted in connection to a paid execution and was studying law on house arrest when he defended Santos.

He also appears to have made up a history as a landlord, claiming in a campaign bio that he and his family ran a real-estate portfolio of 13 properties. The *Times* found no evidence of the buildings, and they were not listed on required campaign financial disclosures. Santos, who decried New York's eviction moratorium during the pandemic, has been evicted twice.

## He also lied about founding an animal charity.

Santos's campaign bio claimed he ran a foundation called Friends of Pets United, saving 2,500 dogs and cats between 2013 and 2018. But there were no social-media accounts for the organization, no IRS records, and no evidence of the charity being registered in New York or New Jersey, where Santos claimed to have operated. The *Times* found that Friends of Pets United held one fundraiser with a rescue group in New Jersey in 2017, for which he charged \$50 entry. But the group that threw the event said that it never received any funds and that Santos made up several excuses for why he didn't have the money. According to the *Times*, Santos would take checks written to his charity and cash them out under his pseudonym, Anthony Devolder.

## He allegedly swindled a disabled vet whose dog was dying.

Santos also allegedly stole money from a disabled veteran who came to him for help fund a life-saving surgery for his dog, according to Patch. In May 2016, Richard Osthoff, who was living in a tent in central New Jersey, learned that his pit mix would need a \$3,000 surgery. A veterinary technician told him that a man named Anthony Devolder could help him raise the funds. After Friends of Pets United put together a GoFundMe that got the money for the surgery, Santos then refused to give the money to Osthoff, whose dog died less than a year later. Santos has denied the story, though the FBI is reportedly investigating the matter. "I was worried that what happened to me was too long ago to be prosecuted," Osthoff told Politico.

## Did he rip off an Amish dog breeder with a bad check?

Politico reports that in late 2017, a checking account in Santos's name wrote nine canceled checks to eight different accounts owned by dog breeders, writing in the memo section: "puppy" and "puppies." That November, he was charged in Pennsylvania with theft by deception for the alleged crime. Santos claims that his checkbook was stolen and the charge was expunged in November 2021 after an old friend helped him out.

Whether or not Santos wrote the bad checks, the report also reveals another angle of the congressman's scams. With his charity Friends of Animals United, Santos would hold adoption

events for dogs, pawing off the animals for a fee to people who thought they were adopting an animal in need, not a puppy straight from the breeder.

## What's the deal with his marriage(s)?

When Santos flipped New York's Third Congressional District in November, he became the first openly gay nonincumbent Republican elected to Congress. His campaign bio discussed his husband, with whom he lives in Long Island along with four dogs. But Santos never appeared on the campaign trail with his partner, and the Daily Beast could not find a marriage record in New York. (When he arrived at the House in January, he was not wearing a wedding ring.)

In 2019, however, Santos did divorce a woman in Queens. "I'm very much gay," he told the *New York Post* in December. "I'm OK with my sexuality. People change. I'm one of those people who change."

The Daily Beast soon uncovered more on that first marriage, which lasted from 2012 to 2019, according to their marriage license and divorce records. In 2014 — five years before his divorce from the woman — Santos sent Facebook invites to friends celebrating an "engagement dinner" with his boyfriend at the time. Santos's former boyfriend said the party never happened because he did not say yes to the proposal.

## It's unclear if his mother's death was related to 9/11.

In July 2021, Santos wrote on Twitter that the September 11 attacks "claimed my mother's life." On December 23, 2021, he said it was the fifth anniversary of his mother's passing, a loss confirmed by her obituary. On his campaign website, Santos claimed his mother, Fatima Devolder, "was in her office in the South Tower on September 11" and that she "passed away a few years later when she lost her battle to cancer." Aside from the fact that people rarely refer to 15 years as a "few years," there is no record of Santos's mother suffering from the well-documented health problems caused by toxic debris following the attacks. There is no evidence she was at the World Trade Center on 9/11, and though Santos has claimed she was a finance executive, public employment records obtained by NBC News list her only known employer as an imports business in Queens that folded in 1994. The *Times* reported that she once worked as a nurse in Brazil.

Weeks after Santos's lies were made public, two genealogists found documents showing that his mother was in Brazil in September 2001. In 2003, Fatima Devolder applied for a visa to enter the U.S. In the document, she wrote that she had not been in the country since 1999.

## His grandmother was definitely not a Holocaust victim.

In an interview with a conservative podcast in May 2022, Santos said his “grandparents survived the Holocaust,” and his campaign bio claimed that they “fled persecution during WWII.”

“For a lot of people who are descendants of World War II refugees or survivors of the Holocaust, a lot of names and paperwork were changed in name of survival,” Santos told Fox News last year, claiming he had Ukrainian heritage on his mother’s side.

Apparently according to genealogy records reviewed by CNN and the Forward, this did not apply to his family. “There’s no sign of Jewish and/or Ukrainian heritage and no indication of name changes along the way,” genealogist Megan Smolenyak told CNN. Multiple family records show that Santos’s maternal grandparents were born in Brazil. The name is common among Catholic families in Brazil.

Santos’s lies about his family’s connections to the Holocaust did not stop him from delivering remarks on the House floor on January 27 to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day.

## And he did not have employees who died in the Pulse shooting.

In an interview with WNYC following his election, Santos said he “lost four employees” in the Pulse nightclub shooting in 2016. But the *Times* found that he lied about yet another historic tragedy: None of the 49 victims at the Orlando club worked at any of the companies he has named in his biographies.

## “Jew-ish” or Jewish?

Putting aside Santos’s Holocaust fabrications, the representative has also said a few times over the years that he’s a “conservative Roman Catholic.” On Facebook, his mother posted Catholic prayers and discussed the Virgin Mary. And a priest in Long Island City said that he knows the Santos family well and that they occasionally attended Catholic mass.

“I never claimed to be Jewish,” Santos said in an interview with the Post in which he also copped to his lies about his education. “I am Catholic. Because I learned my maternal family had a Jewish background I said I was ‘Jew-ish.’”

In January, Patch also unearthed a Facebook post from Santos from 2011 in which he wrote “hiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiigh hiiiiiiiiiiitlerrrrrrrrrr.” A former roommate said that Santos would

frequently make anti-Semitic jokes: “He’d always say that it was okay for him to make those jokes because he was Jewish.”

## Was he a drag queen in Brazil?

As Santos’s bizarre scandal unfurled, more figures from Santos’s past came forward revealing details about his life — like Brazilian drag queen Eula Rochard, who claims she was friends with Santos in 2005 when he was also performing as a drag queen in the Rio de Janeiro area. According to Reuters, another friend said Santos aspired to be Miss Gay Rio de Janeiro and that he was regularly participating in drag pageants.

NEW: I just spoke by phone with Eula Rochard, a Brazilian drag queen who was friends with George Santos when he lived near Rio. She said everyone knew him as Anthony (\*never\* George), or by his drag name, Kitara, and confirms this photo is from a 2008 drag show at Icarai Beach.

[pic.twitter.com/1MeeDR1O2O](https://pic.twitter.com/1MeeDR1O2O)

— Marisa Kabas (@MarisaKabas) January 18, 2023

Santos, the first openly gay Republican to win a House seat as a non-incumbent, initially denied the story on Twitter, saying the story was “categorically false.” Later, as people identified the story was one of the few relatable things Santos has ever done, he stopped contesting it, saying “I had fun at a festival. Sue me for having a life.”

There’s another twist in the drag queen plot line. According to a friend at the time who spoke with Insider, Santos was a supporter of leftist politician Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was just elected president of Brazil.

## Was George Santos on *Hannah Montana*?

Santos’s resumé inflation keeps getting more absurd: A Wikipedia bio for a user named Anthony Devolder claims that, following a successful drag career, he landed roles on Disney Channel shows such as *Hannah Montana* and *Suite Life of Zack & Cody*. After his stint in TV, the Santos bio then states that he hit the big screen with a role in a movie called *The Invasion* starring Uma Thurman — even though Thurman never appeared in a movie under that name.

## Was he a Broadway producer?



During his 2022 congressional bid, Santos claimed to some donors that he helped produce *Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark*, a 2011 rock musical revisiting the plot of the first two movies starring Tobey Maguire. As usual with Santos, the timeline doesn't really make sense: If we were to take his word for it, this would have been at the same time that he was a volleyball star at Baruch College.

The real producers of the play deny the representative's involvement. But Santos picked a strange play to stake his name on: *Turn Off the Dark* was a notorious flop that was severely delayed, lost millions of dollars, and resulted in several serious injuries to actors.

## And was he really a journalist in Brazil?

In an interview with Curbed, a former roommate said when he lived with the now-congressman back in 2013, Santos would was "at home all day on his computer, just browsing the web, probably chatting with people." At the time, he said he was a reporter for the Brazilian media giant *Globo*. Another former roommate told the Columbia Journalism Review that Santos even claimed to be an "executive" there, which *Globo's* director-general of journalism said was a "lie, pure and simple."

## His campaign has reportedly caused a lot of trouble.

After Santos was sworn in, CNBC reported that a campaign staff member named Sam Miele impersonated the chief of staff of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy during the 2020 and 2022 cycles to raise money.

Further reporting from TalkingPointsMemo showed that Santos campaign staffers charged a credit card on file for donors without their permission and racked up huge unexplained expenses and payments to "anonymous" as well as payments to themselves.

## Was he the target of an 'assassination' in December?

One month after he was elected, Santos went on the Brazilian podcast "Radio Novelo Apresenta," informing the hosts in Portuguese that "we have already suffered an attempt on my life, an assassination attempt." Santos also described a mugging in the summer of 2021, when an assailant allegedly took his shoes, briefcase, and watch off him on Fifth Avenue in broad daylight. MSNBC translated the interview and aired it on January 23 and when the network contacted Santos's office for police records of the incidents, they did not receive a response.

## What has Santos said about his life that is actually true? How has he explained himself?

As he has claimed, Santos is a 34-year-old Republican born in Queens who will represent New York's wealthiest congressional district. Other than that, pretty much everything is under scrutiny.

Since his life story was first-exposed as a massive lie, Santos has apologized several times. But his most detailed conversation about his past took place in an interview Piers Morgan, to whom he admitted that he "didn't think" he would get caught. "I ran in 2020 for the same exact seat for Congress and I got away with it then," he added, before doubling down on his false claim that his mother worked in the World Trade Center on 9/11.

## What sort of investigations is he facing?

The representative's many fabrications are now being investigated by the Nassau County district attorney, the New York State Attorney General's office, and federal prosecutors in the Eastern District of New York. The focuses of the first two inquiries are not publicly known, but NBC News reports that Eastern District prosecutors are looking into Santos's finances, including his unusual financial disclosures and the loans he made himself while running for the House.

Days after he was sworn in, the non-profit Campaign Legal Center also filed an official complaint with the Federal Election Commission, accusing Santos of illegally using campaign funds for personal expenses like rent. On February 9, the FEC formally ordered Santos to officially declare a run in 2024 because he has reached the fundraising threshold to do so. Otherwise he must "disavow" any fundraising coming his way.

Representatives Daniel Goldman and Ritchie Torres also filed an official complaint with the House Ethics Committee. The two New York Democrats requested an inquiry to determine if the incomplete picture of Santos's finances on his financial disclosures violates a post-Watergate law on corruption. After a prospective staffer accused Santos of sexual harassment — claiming Santos touched his groin while in Santos's office — he could be facing an Ethics inquiry as well. In early February, Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia also announced a bill to expel Santos from the House.

Brazilian law officials are also reopening a case against Santos regarding his alleged fraudulent checks from 2008 and intend to seek a formal response. If he does not hire a local defense

attorney, he could be tried in absentia; if found guilty, he could face up to five years in prison.

A watchdog group has encouraged the House Ethics Committee to investigate Santos's 2012 marriage to a Brazilian woman — during which he appeared to date other people — to determine if he entered into the marriage solely to obtain citizenship for his wife, a crime for which he could spend up to five years in prison.

The FBI is also reportedly investigating his alleged scheme to swindle a veteran out of \$3,000 raised for his dying dog.

## Many Republicans don't want him around.

The week after he joined the House, Nassau County Republican leaders called on Santos to resign. “He has no place in the Nassau County Republican Committee, nor should he serve in public service or as an elected official,” county GOP chair Joe Cairo said in a press conference.

In the House, New York Reps Anthony D’Esposito, Nick LaLota, Nick Langworthy, and Brandon Williams have urged him on January 11 to step down. Santos has resisted these calls, and Kevin McCarthy — who clearly needs every GOP representative he can get — has not yet weighed in aside from stating he will not be on any major committees. “Look, the voters decide,” McCarthy told reporters, before deciding to give him two committee assignments. On January 31, Santos stepped down from his positions on the House Small Business and Science committees amid the investigations into his campaign finances.

After the State of the Union, Senator Mitt Romney told Santos off, confronting him about being the center of attention. “He should be sitting in the back row and staying quiet, instead of parading in front of the president and people coming into the room,” Romney said to reporters after the exchange. Santos wasn't phased, tweeting at Romney a “reminder” that he “will NEVER be PRESIDENT!” Days later, Santos said he got a warmer reception from Romney's friend, Senator Kyrsten Sinema, who he claims told him to “hang in there, buddy.” Sinema's spokesperson is now calling that a “lie,” and that the two never spoke.

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120 COMMENTS