

The return of the Epstein scandal and the criminality of the US ruling class

Patrick Martin
17 July 2025

The scandal over billionaire sex-trafficker Jeffrey Epstein and his ties to a wide range of figures in the American ruling class, including Donald Trump, has erupted into a major political crisis.

Nearly six years after Epstein's dubious "suicide" in a Manhattan jail cell, the White House is being assailed by demands to release investigative files which could implicate hundreds of top political and business figures, Republicans and Democrats, bankers and CEOs. Even though more than a thousand victims have been identified, the US government has refused to name even a single one of the wealthy and well-connected men who availed themselves of Epstein's services as a procurer of underage girls for sexual exploitation.

Attorney General Pam Bondi touched off a political explosion last week by releasing a two-page report declaring that no "client list" had been found in Epstein's files, that there was no suspicion of foul play in his death, and that there would be no further information released about Epstein's crimes. This statement was issued only three months after Bondi appeared on Fox News, just after her confirmation by the Senate, boasting that the list of Epstein's clients was "on my desk" and would soon be made public.

Fascist supporters of Trump—including former White House aide Steve Bannon, Representative Lauren Boebert and social media pundits Tucker Carlson, Alex Jones and Laura Loomer—all denounced Bondi. They cited Trump's claims during last year's election campaign that the Democrats were covering up the Epstein case because so many prominent Democrats were implicated in it, particularly former president Bill Clinton, who reportedly rode on Epstein's private plane, dubbed the "Lolita Express," on 27 occasions. Epstein was a financial supporter of Clinton's election campaigns and visited the White House at least four times during his presidency.

Trump, however, fired back in defense of Bondi, and declared that the Epstein files had actually been created by the Democrats, including Presidents Obama and Biden, to attack him. As is well known, Trump had a 15-year association with Epstein, a Palm Beach neighbor, fellow billionaire and frequent guest at Mar-a-Lago. He wrote on Truth Social Wednesday morning that his former supporters had fallen for a Democratic Party plot: "Their new SCAM is what we will forever call the Jeffrey Epstein Hoax, and my PAST supporters have bought into this "bullshit," hook, line, and sinker..."

Trump's bizarre somersault caught some of his most slavish supporters by surprise. House Speaker Mike Johnson called for full disclosure of the Epstein files only hours before Trump's Truth Social post, then tried to downplay the conflict. The next day, he moved to block consideration of legislation, introduced by the Democrats, to require the Justice Department to release the files.

The political crisis exploded to a new level Thursday evening with the publication by the *Wall Street Journal* of a lengthy front-page article detailing Trump's relationship with Epstein, which included Trump sending Epstein a letter for his 50th birthday (January 20, 2003), described as follows:

The letter bearing Trump's name, which was reviewed by the *Journal*, is bawdy—like others in the album. It contains several lines of typewritten text framed by the outline of a naked woman, which appears to be hand-drawn with a heavy marker. A pair of small arcs denotes the woman's breasts, and the future president's signature is a squiggly "Donald" below her waist, mimicking pubic hair.

The letter concludes: "Happy Birthday—and may every day be another wonderful secret."

Trump claimed Tuesday in an interview with the *Journal* that the letter was a fake and said he would sue if the article was published. It nevertheless appeared on the *Journal's* website early Thursday evening, with a large photo of Epstein and Trump standing together looking like the best of friends.

The article also reproduced portions of a profile of the Trump-Epstein relationship published by *New York* magazine in 2002, in which Trump indicates familiarity with Epstein's sexual practices. "I've known Jeff for 15 years. Terrific guy." Trump told the magazine, "He's a lot of fun to be with. It is even said that he likes beautiful women as much as I do, and many of them are on the younger side. No doubt about it—Jeffrey enjoys his social life."

The intervention of the *Journal* indicates that the very real criminality involved in the Epstein scandal, involving significant sections of the political and financial establishment, is intersecting with divisions within the ruling class itself. The newspaper is owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, who has long backed Trump as a spearhead for imposing reactionary pro-corporate policies, and which has fully supported his attacks on democratic rights and social programs.

The *Journal* has been highly critical, however, of Trump's economic policies, particularly the tariff war he began in April, and his threats to remove Federal Reserve Board chairman Jerome Powell. Last week Trump set an August 1 deadline for the imposition of massive tariffs on dozens of US trading partners, which would raise prices dramatically and slash global trade.

The basic outline of the Epstein scandal is well-established. From

humble beginnings in Brooklyn, Epstein found wealthy patrons, first the CEO of Bear Stearns, Andrew Greenberg, and then the founder-owner of The Limited, Leslie Wexner, who valued his combination of skill, moral depravity and ruthlessness in the early years of the financialization of the US economy. Epstein became known as a man who could make money from cleverly crafted swindling, first as a securities trader, then as the personal financial manager for Wexner's billion-dollar fortune.

Epstein built his own fortune in the process, ultimately buying the largest mansion in Manhattan—sold to him by Wexner—as well as a Palm Beach estate, a huge ranch in New Mexico, and a private island in the US Virgin Islands. He hosted parties that attracted billionaires, bankers, CEOs, former presidents, senators and governors. His connections extended through both capitalist parties, Republicans as well as Democrats.

In gaining access to these layers, he also learned their sordid proclivities, particularly those which coincided with his own: the sexual abuse of underage girls. His (literal) partner in crime Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of British media billionaire Robert Maxwell, served as his chief recruiting officer, luring young girls, particularly from the poorest sections of the working class, with promises of money, clothes, shoes and perfume.

One victim told the *Miami Herald*, “Jeffrey preyed on girls who were in a bad way, girls who were basically homeless. He went after girls who he thought no one would listen to and he was right.” The newspaper, which published the first major exposure of Epstein, added, “Most of the girls came from disadvantaged families, single-parent homes or foster care. Some had experienced troubles that belied their ages: They had parents and friends who committed suicide; mothers abused by husbands and boyfriends; fathers who molested and beat them.”

Epstein's sex-trafficking enterprise served the psycho-sexual demands of wealthy and powerful men, who in turn protected his operations and blocked any serious criminal investigation. Even in 2007, when Epstein pled guilty to soliciting the prostitution of a minor—a serious felony for which anyone else would have been locked up for years—the US attorney for South Florida, Alexander Acosta, made a backroom deal that allowed him to freely manage his business ventures from a luxury jail wing that Epstein paid for himself. The plea agreement assured that none of Epstein's clients, who were not named, would be prosecuted for their use of his sex-trafficking services.

Ten years later, Donald Trump would appoint Acosta to head the Department of Labor in his first term, a position from which he was forced to resign when Epstein was again arrested in July 2019 on sex-trafficking charges. FBI reports identified more than 1,000 young women and girls as victims of Epstein. Yet not a single American client of Epstein has been named, let alone prosecuted. Only one foreign client, Britain's Prince Andrew, was compelled to sign a civil settlement with Virginia Giuffre, whom Epstein procured for him at age 17 (while she was working at Mar-a-Lago). Giuffre, who named other men as abusers who were never prosecuted, committed suicide in April of this year.

When Epstein was found dead in his prison cell in Manhattan in August 2019, supposedly having hanged himself while prison guards failed to check on him for hours, it was not just Donald Trump who could breathe a sigh of relief. There were hundreds of powerful figures in the US ruling class who felt the same way. There was a universal desire to cover up both Epstein's sordid enterprise and the

circumstances of his death.

This sentiment found expression in the pages of the *New York Times*. The leading US newspaper assiduously promoted uncorroborated and generally baseless charges of sexual abuse in the #MeToo campaign, which became a means of witch-hunting actors, musicians and other cultural figures. But in the case of Epstein, the *Times* now denounced “conspiracy theories” about his murder and showed no interest in tracing his clientele in the ruling class.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has long maintained that the Epstein case exposed the blatant corruption of the US financial oligarchy and its political servants. We wrote after Epstein's death:

There is a social logic to the circling of the wagons in the Epstein case. The US financial oligarchy feels itself under siege. It senses the tremendous hostility that exists within the population. If millions suspect that Epstein was murdered, it is because they know instinctively that the US ruling elite is fully capable of such a crime. It is not the peculiar properties of the internet and social media that account for such suspicions, but the entirely justified sentiments among millions of working people, who see the criminal character of the class that controls all wealth and power in America...

Every great revolution in history has been preceded by similar scandals, in which the criminal and reactionary character of the old ruling class reveals itself, and that class is exposed for what it is: a cancer on the body politic.

Six years later, the “cancer on the body politic” has produced the second Trump administration, which is seeking to establish a presidential dictatorship while waging war on every social right of the working class. Meanwhile, not 1 percent of the facts about the depraved criminal enterprise that is the Epstein scandal has yet come out. Workers have every right to demand that all the files in the Epstein case should be made public, with only the names of the victims protected, not the names of the perpetrators and accomplices.

Particular attention should be given to the reports that Epstein had connections to the intelligence agencies of the United States or Israel, or both, and that information he gathered from his sex-trafficking operation was used for the purposes of blackmail in the interest of these agencies.

It is most important to recognize the connection between the rekindling of the Epstein scandal and the deeper crisis of American and world capitalism. The working class must intervene independently against the gangsterism of the Trump administration and go on the political offensive against the capitalist system, the financial oligarchy and all its political agents.



To contact the WWSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact