

F. President Trump with Jeffrey Epstein sometime in the 2000s. Source: DOJ
G. Representatives Ro Khanna (D-CA), Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) present a law to release the Epstein files. Source: Heute.at, CC BY 4.0
H. Multiple pages of the Epstein files printed out and arranged on a floor. Source: Heute.at

OPINIONS

LOST IN REDACTION

The Trump administration's panicked mishandling of the Epstein files shows its unprofessionalism

BY CAMILLE WELSH
 staff



THE RELEASE OF THE EPSTEIN files has been one of the most mishandled moments of President Trump's current term. The release of these files has been long awaited since they were brought to attention in 2019. Since then, the commotion grew into conspiracies that floated through social media as Americans predicted which celebrities, politicians and other public figures would make an appearance. On his campaign trail, Trump expressed willingness to declassify the Epstein files. When asked about the subject in a 2024 podcast with Lex Fridman, he said that he would "certainly take a look at it" and that he would "be inclined to do the Epstein [files]." Since Attorney General Pam

Bondi reminded Trump that he himself appeared in the files, however, the president's relaxed demeanor quickly shifted into panic for what would become a long stretch of coverups, workarounds and lies.

After Epstein's conviction in 2019, Trump repeatedly assured the public that he had little to no association with the sex offender. He even claimed to dislike him and insisted that they hadn't been on good terms for years. This definitely contradicts Trump's own words in a New York Magazine story from 2002: "Terrific guy. 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." There is a striking difference between Trump's stance before Epstein's conviction and after. Unfortunately for the president, plausible deniability doesn't work when you've been on the record for decades.

In an attempt to defend himself, Trump approached the Epstein controversy with aggression. He released tirades on X (formerly Twitter) and Truth Social, his own social media platform, referring to the entire subject as a Democratic hoax. He brushed it off as "boring" and avoided probing questions from reporters.

By November, Trump had signed off on releasing the files, which he seemed to take pride in... yet he continued to identify them as a hoax. The Trump administration gave occasional reassurances that they were handling things step-by-step. Feb. 27, the White House claimed to have declassified the first phase of files, a way of breadcrumbing the public. It was revealed later that the information in this phase had already been declassified. The Department of Justice withheld content about the underage victims, claiming to respect their privacy, but illegally redacted information that protected perpetrators as well.

Overall, the sloppy cover-up and unfinished release of the Epstein files has been historically unprofessional. Less than half of the files have been declassified, and 200,000 of those files have been blacked out or withheld. Not to mention, these redactions were able to be uncovered with a few easy clicks by TikTok users, showing the DOJ's negligence. Looking at how the Trump administration has handled this matter, it's difficult to maintain hope for our country. Society has criticized past presidents for failures that would be mild by today's standards. The Trump administration lacks many professional factors, and their handling of the Epstein files proves that accountability is one of them. **P**

THE TANK'S TAKE

The label "conspiracy theorist" is weaponized and overused



BY FRANK CHEN
 opinions editor

JEFFREY EPSTEIN. THAT got your attention, didn't it? A private island, unspeakable crimes and America's most powerful politicians — Epstein's horrors are clearly a generational scandal, and both parties will likely be marred by the fallout. It's almost dizzying to reflect on how quickly it exploded onto the national scene — up until recently, no one had known about it.

Well, that's not quite true. Questions about the case — *How did a high school math teacher befriend multiple world leaders and buy a private island? How did such a large child abuse ring go unnoticed for so long? And why have none of his powerful friends been investigated?* — have floated around since Epstein died before facing trial in 2019. Even so, these questions were never answered; instead, people were mocked, ostracized, deplatformed, banned and arguably censored for daring to question official narratives.

They were "conspiracy theorists." Originally coined after JFK's assassination in 1967, the term "conspiracy theorist" has ballooned in use — disturbingly so. Once reserved for people who'd blame climate change on space lasers, it's now used to shut down anyone who goes off-script on foreign wars, internet surveillance or even the national debt — pressing, realistic issues that directly affect us all.

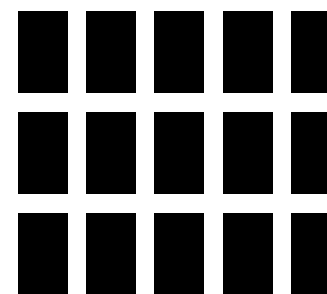
In *Cultish: The Language of Faticism*, cult expert Amanda Montell describes "thought-terminating clichés" — insults used to squash independent thinking. If "conspiracy theorists" really are what we call them, why are we afraid? **P**

CAN YOU READ THIS?

The DOJ was allowed to redact victim information. That's not all they did — and we have examples.

"Grand Jury-NY"

EFTA00005586, also known as "Grand Jury-NY," is a record of the case brought against Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell in 2019. The first fifteen pages of that document look like this:



...and they just keep going. All 119 pages of the jury proceedings are completely blacked out from margin to margin.

"The Missing 16"

Dec. 19, 2025, the Department of Justice began uploading troves of declassified photos to its website. Just one day later, however, 16 of those photos looked like this:

Error_404: PageNotFound

When questioned, the DOJ claimed that the deletions were to protect victims. "The 16" were known to have depicted several former Presidents and a pope.

1218-12.pdf

In 2016, Epstein victim Virginia Giuffre was called to testify against Alan Dershowitz, one of Epstein's friends. Her testimony, released in 1218-12.pdf, reads like this:

Q: What other powerful business executives were you sexually trafficked to?

...
McCawley (Giuffre's lawyer): Take your time. Take a deep breath.

A: [REDACTED]
Q: Who else?
McCawley: To the extent you recall.

A: I'm just trying to think. This is all very confronting for me. So at the same token I'm just trying to recollect everybody... [REDACTED]

Who these "powerful business executives" were — and why they were never prosecuted — remain concealed to this day. Giuffre was found dead in 2025, and her death was ruled a suicide.

READ MORE

Scan here to read the Epstein files for yourself

