

Jeffrey Epstein Fallout Shows How Little Trust Americans Have in Media and Government

The reaction to the news Saturday morning that sex-trafficker-to-the-stars Jeffrey Epstein reportedly had committed suicide while in federal custody was nearly universal: No one was buying the “official” story.

Hashtags about the Clintons’ suspected culpability in Epstein’s death immediately dominated social media. People who had predicted Epstein would be [dead](#) before he faced trial felt vindicated. Suspicions about the “official line” on Epstein’s suicide were bipartisan. Trump foes on the Left, eager to pin the death on the president and his attorney general, proffered their own skepticism about what happened Saturday at a federal prison in Manhattan: “You don’t have to be a conspiracy theorist to see an evil coverup to protect lots of powerful men here. You’d have to be bizarrely naive not to,” [tweeted](#) Harvard law professor and Trump hater Laurence Tribe.

Politicians from both sides of the political aisle, from Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) to Senator Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), demanded an investigation into what happened. The convoluted tale of how Epstein got away with his vile crimes took another final, dark twist.

Independent-minded pundits along with millions of American posed the same questions: Why was Epstein not on suicide watch? How did such a high-profile accused criminal who had attempted to kill himself a few weeks ago have access to any contraband that would facilitate his suicide wish? Did someone get to him in prison, or was someone bought off to turn the other way while Epstein tried to end his own life?

In another time, these questions and more would have been

raised by investigative reporters working at the country's elite news organizations. Editors and publishers would have dispatched their most dogged journalists to the prison and the hospital where Epstein was pronounced dead. Opinion writers would have been outraged that the day after court documents implicated two Democratic Party elders in his case, Epstein was found dead, taking his sick stories with him to the grave.

But there was little to no interest by major news outlets or opinion websites to counter the sketchy details that were emerging throughout the weekend. [Cassandra Fairbanks](#), a reporter for *Gateway Pundit*, waited for six hours on Saturday outside the Metropolitan Correctional Center where Epstein had been incarcerated and only came in contact with two other reporters: One from the *New York Post* and one from the *Daily Mail*. A few photographers and videographers stopped by occasionally for footage.

Suddenly, rather than focus its attention on the alleged suicide of one of the most notorious and politically connected sex traffickers in history, the media instead targeted those malicious "conspiracy theorists" who refused to accept as fact the questionable circumstances around Epstein's death. The media's collective attitude is best summed up with this [tweet](#) posted by *Politico* early Sunday morning: "Jeffrey Epstein's death has brought conspiracy theories into the political mainstream, with some influential people unable to take the details at face value."

In the accompanying [article](#), without irony or a shred of self-reflection, *Politico* editor-in-chief John Harris lamented that "the signature of American politics in the Trump era is a conviction—shared initially by many people who backed Trump but now embraced with similar fervor by many who loathe him—that things are not what they seem, that the official version of events is sustained by lies, that the institutions of American life are not on the level."

But Harris doesn't explore the reasons why this is the dim lens through which millions of his fellow countrymen now view our country's most powerful institutions. Harris doesn't wonder aloud why people distrust the government, our political leadership and our national news media *so much* that they actually believe the Clintons or some other shadowy figures might be responsible for Epstein's death.

Harris doesn't raise the possibility that perhaps a litany of ongoing embarrassments for the news media coupled with the fact that the previous administration weaponized the country's law enforcement and intelligence apparatus to sabotage a rival political campaign and then tried to cover it up are contributing to a general climate of hostility, rage, and doubt.

Harris has good reason to eschew any such quest for insight: Because it would lead him straight to a mirror. Harris' own website and his media colleagues in general have lost all credibility with the American public. From assuring us the Trump campaign [colluded](#) with the Russians to influence the outcome of the 2016 election to reporting every unproven allegation of rape against Brett Kavanaugh, *Politico* and its brethren have fueled this crisis of confidence. (Harris [authored](#) an article in September 2018 with the headline, "Why God is Laughing at Brett Kavanaugh.")

Pro-life high schoolers wearing Make America Great Again hats were "mocking" and "laughing at" a Native American elder, the [media](#) told us. Hillary Clinton will [win](#) the presidency. The stock market will [tank](#) after Trump is elected. Donald Trump [won't](#) serve a full term. White supremacy is on the rise and [poses](#) a greater threat to national security than Islamic extremism because Trump and Republicans are using special "code words" to fan the flames of racism. There is no [national emergency](#) at the southern border. The Trump Administration is the [first](#) to lock migrant children "in cages."

That is only a partial list of falsehoods, flat-out lies and legitimate conspiracies that the untrustworthy folks who populate our once respected institutions have told us in the past three years.

Meanwhile, the media continue to ignore or to justify what many Republicans see as the biggest political scandal in our history, which is the way in which the Obama Administration sought to destroy the candidacy and then the presidency of Donald Trump by using the most powerful government methods—including secret surveillance tools—to do it.

One of the men responsible for the “Russiagate” scandal, former Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, [tweeted](#) out a *New York Times* [piece](#) on Sunday that claimed Epstein’s “suicide conspiracies show how our information system is poisoned.”

Rosenstein, taking a cue from his Russiagate collaborators, former FBI Director James Comey and former CIA Director John Brennan, regularly opines on Twitter in this vein. Rosenstein was also the man who accused Trump campaign aide, Carter Page, of being a foreign agent who was conspiring with the Russians to influence the 2016 election. In a government warrant. To a secret court. Using a dossier filled with rumors and innuendo as proof. Sourced by a political British operative.

(Page never was charged with any crime.)

The reason why conspiracies now can take root so quickly is explained by recent poll numbers: A July 2019 Pew Research [survey](#) showed that “about two-thirds (69%) of Americans say the federal government intentionally withholds important information from the public that it could safely release, and 61% say the news media intentionally ignores stories that are important to the public.”

That indicates a massive failure not of the public, but by the very institutions we fund and have entrusted to promote the nation’s safety, well-being and prosperity. In a separate [poll](#)

from early August, 57 percent of all voters said the media has done more to divide the country since Trump took office; only 16 percent said the media is trying to unite us.

Unfortunately, as this weekend proves once again, those in charge of our institutions are unwilling to own their culpability and continue to delay the comeuppance they deserve. The Epstein “conspiracies” are the symptom, not the cause.

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