

The Heart of Darkness: The Sexual Predators Within America's Power Elite

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"As political and economic freedom diminishes, sexual freedom tends compensating to increase. And the dictator (unless he needs cannon fodder and families with which to colonize empty or conquered territories) will do well to encourage that freedom."—Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

Power corrupts.

Anyone who believes differently hasn't been paying attention.

Politics, religion, sports, government, entertainment, business, armed forces: it doesn't matter what arena you're talking about, they are all riddled with the kind of seedy, sleazy, decadent, dodgy, depraved, immoral, corrupt behavior that somehow gets a free pass when it involves the wealthy and powerful elite in America.

In this age of partisan politics and a deeply polarized populace, corruption—especially when it involves sexual debauchery, depravity and predatory behavior—has become the great equalizer.

Take Jeffrey Epstein, the hedge fund billionaire / convicted serial pedophile [recently arrested on charges of molesting, raping and sex trafficking dozens of young girls](#).

It is believed that Epstein operated his own personal sex

trafficking ring not only for his personal pleasure but also [for the pleasure of his friends and business associates](#). According to *The Washington Post*, “several of the young women...say they were [offered to the rich and famous as sex partners](#) at Epstein’s parties.” At various times, Epstein ferried his friends about on his private plane, [nicknamed the “Lolita Express.”](#)

This is part of America’s seedy underbelly.

As I documented in the [in-depth piece](#) I wrote earlier this year, child sex trafficking—the buying and selling of women, young girls and boys for sex, [some as young as 9 years old](#)—has become big business in America. It is the [fastest growing business](#) in organized crime and the [second most-lucrative commodity traded](#) illegally after drugs and guns.

[Adults purchase children for sex at least 2.5 million times a year](#) in the United States.

It’s not just young girls who are vulnerable to these predators, either.

According to a 2016 investigative report, “[boys make up about 36% of children caught up in the U.S. sex industry](#) (about 60% are female and less than 5% are transgender males and females).”

Who buys a child for sex?

[Otherwise ordinary men](#) from all walks of life. “[They could be your co-worker, doctor, pastor or spouse](#),” writes journalist Tim Swarens, who spent more than a year investigating the sex trade in America.

Ordinary men, yes.

But then there are the *extra-ordinary* men, such as Jeffrey Epstein, who belong to a [powerful, wealthy, elite segment of society](#) that operates according to their own rules or, rather,

who are allowed to sidestep the rules that are used like a bludgeon on the rest of us.

These men skate free of accountability by taking advantage of a [criminal justice system that panders to the powerful, the wealthy and the elite](#).

Over a decade ago, when Epstein was first charged with raping and molesting young girls, he was gifted a secret plea deal with then-U.S. Attorney Alexander Acosta, President Trump's current Labor Secretary, that [allowed him to evade federal charges and be given the equivalent of a slap on the wrist: allowed to "work" at home six days a week](#) before returning to jail to sleep. That secret plea deal has [since been ruled illegal](#) by a federal judge.

Yet here's the thing: Epstein [did not act alone](#).

I refer not only to Epstein's accomplices, [who recruited and groomed the young girls](#) he is accused of raping and molesting, many of them homeless or vulnerable, but his [circle of influential friends and colleagues](#) that at one time included Bill Clinton and Donald Trump. Both Clinton and Trump, renowned womanizers who have also been accused of sexual impropriety by a significant number of women, [were at one time passengers on the Lolita Express](#).

As the Associated Press points out, "The arrest of the billionaire financier on child sex trafficking charges is raising questions about how much his high-powered associates knew about the hedge fund manager's interactions with underage girls, and [whether they turned a blind eye to potentially illegal conduct](#)."

In fact, a recent decision by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals allowing a 2,000-page document linked to the Epstein case to be unsealed references allegations of sexual abuse involving [numerous prominent American politicians, powerful business executives, foreign presidents, a well-known Prime](#)

[Minister, and other world leaders."](#)

This is [not a minor incident involving minor players](#).

This is the heart of darkness.

Sex slaves. [Sex trafficking](#). Secret societies. Powerful elites. Government corruption. Judicial cover-ups.

Once again, fact and fiction mirror each other.

Twenty years ago, [Stanley Kubrick's final film Eyes Wide Shut](#) provided viewing audiences with a sordid glimpse into a secret sex society that indulged the basest urges of its affluent members while preying on vulnerable young women. It is not so different from the real world, where [powerful men, insulated from accountability, indulge their base urges](#).

These [secret societies flourish, implied Kubrick, because the rest of us are content to navigate life with our eyes wide shut](#), in denial about the ugly, obvious truths in our midst.

In so doing, we become accomplices to abusive behavior in our midst.

This is how corruption by the power elite flourishes.

For every Epstein who is—finally—called to account for his illegal sexual exploits after [years of being given a free pass by those in power](#), there are hundreds (perhaps thousands) more in the halls of power and wealth whose [predation of those most vulnerable among us continues](#) unabated.

While Epstein's [alleged crimes are heinous](#) enough on their own, he is part of a larger narrative of how a culture of entitlement becomes [a cesspool and a breeding ground for despots and predators](#).

Remember the ["DC Madam" who was charged with operating a phone-order sex business](#)? Her clients included [thousands of](#)

[White House officials, lobbyists, and Pentagon, FBI, and IRS employees, as well as prominent lawyers](#), none of whom were ever exposed or held accountable.

Power corrupts.

Worse, as 19th-century historian Lord Acton concluded, [absolute power corrupts absolutely](#).

It doesn't matter whether you're talking about a politician, an entertainment mogul, a [corporate CEO](#) or a police officer: give any one person (or government agency) too much power and allow him or her or it to believe that they are entitled, untouchable and will not be held accountable for their actions, and those powers will eventually be abused.

We're seeing this dynamic play out every day in communities across America.

A cop shoots an unarmed citizen for no credible reason and gets away with it. A president employs executive orders to sidestep the Constitution and gets away with it. A government agency spies on its citizens' communications and gets away with it. An entertainment mogul sexually harasses aspiring actresses and gets away with it. The U.S. military bombs a civilian hospital and gets away with it.

Abuse of power—and the ambition-fueled hypocrisy and deliberate disregard for misconduct that make those abuses possible—works the same whether you're talking about sex crimes, government corruption, or the rule of law.

It's the same old story all over again: man rises to power, man abuses power abominably, man intimidates and threatens anyone who challenges him with retaliation or worse, and man gets away with it because of [a culture of compliance](#) in which no one speaks up because they don't want to lose their job or their money or their place among the elite.

It's not just sexual predators that we have to worry about.

For every Jeffrey Epstein (or Bill Clinton or Harvey Weinstein or Roger Ailes or Bill Cosby or Donald Trump) who eventually gets called out for his sexual misbehavior, there are hundreds—thousands—of others in the American police state who are getting away with murder—in many cases, literally—simply because they can.

The cop who shoots the unarmed citizen first and asks questions later might get put on paid leave for a while or take a job with another police department, but that's just a slap on the wrist. The shootings and SWAT team raids and excessive use of force will continue, because the police unions and the politicians and the courts won't do a thing to stop it.

The war hawks who are making a profit by waging endless wars abroad, killing innocent civilians in hospitals and schools, and turning the American homeland into a domestic battlefield will continue to do so because neither the president nor the politicians will dare to challenge the military industrial complex.

The National Security Agency that carries out warrantless surveillance on Americans' internet and phone communications will continue to do so, because the government doesn't want to relinquish any of its ill-gotten powers and its total control of the populace.

Unless something changes in the way we deal with these ongoing, egregious abuses of power, the predators of the police state will continue to wreak havoc on our freedoms, our communities, and our lives.

Police officers will continue to shoot and kill unarmed citizens. Government agents—including local police—will continue to dress and act like soldiers on a battlefield. Bloated government agencies will continue to fleece taxpayers

while eroding our liberties. Government technicians will continue to spy on our emails and phone calls. Government contractors will continue to make a killing by waging endless wars abroad.

And powerful men (and women) will continue to abuse the powers of their office by treating those around them as underlings and second-class citizens who are unworthy of dignity and respect and undeserving of the legal rights and protections that should be afforded to all Americans.

As Dacher Keltner, professor of psychology at the at the University of California, Berkeley, observed in the *Harvard Business Review*, “While people usually gain power through traits and actions that advance the interests of others, such as empathy, collaboration, openness, fairness, and sharing; when they start to feel powerful or enjoy a position of privilege, those qualities begin to fade. [The powerful are more likely than other people to engage in rude, selfish, and unethical behavior.](#)”

After conducting a series of experiments into the phenomenon of how power corrupts, Keltner concluded: “Just the random assignment of power, and all kinds of mischief ensues, and people will become impulsive. They eat more resources than is their fair share. They take more money. [People become more unethical.](#) They think unethical behavior is okay if they engage in it. People are more likely to stereotype. They’re more likely to stop attending to other people carefully.”

Power corrupts.

And absolute power corrupts absolutely.

However, it takes a culture of entitlement and a nation of compliant, willfully ignorant, politically divided citizens to provide the foundations of tyranny.

As researchers Joris Lammers and Adam Galinsky found, those in

power not only tend to abuse that power but they also feel *entitled* to abuse it: "People with power that they think is justified break rules not only because they can get away with it, but also because they feel at some intuitive level that they are entitled to take what they want."

As I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, for too long now, Americans have tolerated an oligarchy in which a powerful, elite group of wealthy donors is calling the shots. They have paid homage to patriotism while allowing the military industrial complex to spread death and destruction abroad. And they have turned a blind eye to all manner of wrongdoing when it was politically expedient.

We need to restore the rule of law for *all* people, no exceptions.

Here's what the rule of law means in a nutshell: it means that everyone is treated the same under the law, everyone is held equally accountable to abiding by the law, and no one is given a free pass based on their politics, their connections, their wealth, their status or any other bright line test used to confer special treatment on the elite.

This culture of compliance must stop.

The empowerment of petty tyrants and political gods must end.

The state of denial must cease.

Let's not allow this Epstein sex scandal to become just another blip in the news cycle that goes away all too soon, only to be forgotten when another titillating news headline takes its place.

Sex trafficking, like so many of the evils in our midst, is a cultural disease that is rooted in the American police state's heart of darkness. It speaks to a far-reaching corruption that stretches from the highest seats of power down to the most

hidden corners and relies on our silence and our complicity to turn a blind eye to wrongdoing.

If we want to put an end to these wrongs, we must keep our eyes wide open.