

Daily

Opinion

The Daily Campus

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Karla Perez

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Tomas Hinckley

OPINION EDITOR

Patrick Minnerly

ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

Gianna Cassino

WEEKLY COLUMNIST

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by individual writers in the opinion section do not reflect the views and opinions of The Daily Campus or other staff members. Only articles labeled "Editorial" are the official opinions of The Daily Campus.

Patrick's Politics

WILL ANYONE BE HELD ACCOUNT-
ABLE FOR THE EPSTEIN FILES?

by Patrick Minnerly
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR
HE/HIM/HIS
patrick.minnerly@uconn.edu

The subject of Jeffrey Epstein has dogged the second Trump administration since it began in 2025. When Congress passed the Epstein Files Transparency Act in November of last year, ordering the Justice Department to release all files related to Epstein's activities and prosecution, there was hope that justice would be served for Epstein's victims. The result, however, was deeply unsatisfactory. Since then, almost no accountability has been forthcoming in the U.S. for those implicated in Epstein's crimes. Of course, the man at the center of it all is Donald Trump, whose name appears in the files more times than God's name appears in the Bible. The question then remains: will the release of the files result in justice? As long as Trump is in power, the answer appears to be a resounding no.

Trump and his administration have made every effort to shift attention away from the Epstein files and any mention of the president's involvement. In an interview Feb. 4, Trump said that the country should move on from the files. Fortunately, he doesn't get to decide that. On Feb. 11, Attorney General Pam Bondi was called to testify before the House Judiciary Committee. When pressed on Trump's involvement in the files, Bondi called him "the greatest president in American history" and tried to shame the Democratic lawmakers, declaring "you should all be apologizing to Trump" for their treatment of him. Bondi's fantastical defense of Trump, combined with her personal attacks against many representatives, underscored the administration's attempts to flip the narrative around, turning fire on the accusers. Her blatant hostility reflected the mentality of victim-blaming and unaccountability that has defined governance in the Trump era.

This lack of accountability is even more apparent in the Justice Department's choices regarding the Epstein files. The DOJ was given 30 days by Congress to fully release all of their documents. They ended up taking far longer than that, and there were significant irregularities with the redactions. A recent investigation from NPR found that the DOJ withheld several documents related to Trump from public view, including three FBI interviews with a minor who accused both Trump and Epstein of sexual assault. At the same time, the names of many victims went unredacted. At Bondi's hearing, lawmakers invited several survivors of

Epstein's crimes. All of them said that despite reaching out to the DOJ to provide evidence, they had not received a response.

This lack of action in the face of credible accusations is frankly unconscionable. It is the exact opposite of what should be expected of a credible process. The Justice Department's real concern is clear: rather than care about the survivors of sexual assault and trafficking, they are focused on protecting their own. It's therefore not surprising that Bondi refused to turn around and apologize to the survivors for mishandling the files. She – and the entire administration – doesn't care at all. Instead, the government's goal is covering up the extent of their entanglements with Epstein.

Even more concerning is the extent to which America cares or even has the power to hold implicated individuals accountable. In other countries, government officials have been charged or arrested for their involvement with Epstein; one such case is Peter Mandelson, former British ambassador to the US. But anything he has done pales in comparison with the extent of Trump's involvement, and still the president remains safe. Even though Republican congressmembers nearly unanimously voted for the release of the files, they don't seem very interested in dealing with the aftermath. Only one Republican on the House Oversight Committee, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, seriously pressured Bondi for answers on Epstein during her hearing. The American right, despite initially clamoring



LOGO BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

last year to prosecute Democrats for being in the files, has failed to apply the same standard to Trump.

The hypocrisy from Republicans is not surprising, but it is still a massive moral failure. The huge volume of evidence and accusations against Trump, who has already been held civilly liable for sexual abuse, should have ignited a firestorm in both parties. The subsequent coverup by ad-

ministration officials should have only added to the scandal, but that would imply our moral standards are still in place. If only one half of the country can agree that having a documented sexual predator in office is untenable, it is no wonder that accountability has not been forthcoming. If we cannot draw this line in the sand, there may never be a line Trump's government won't cross.



New York financier Jeffrey Epstein posing with Donald Trump. Epstein was a bad person.
PHOTO COURTESY OF BBC