

UNSEALED

Innocent Bystanders

Epstein settled his lawsuits for one reason: to keep his famous friends out of the witness chair.

Unsealed Research Team

2026-03-25

Here is Jeffrey Epstein, in his own words, explaining why he settled the civil lawsuits against him:

“They contacted Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, David Copperfield; innocent bystanders with no knowledge of any of my actions whatsoever. I settled the cases rather than forcing both the women and others to be subject to a public questioning of their lives.”¹

Read that carefully. A convicted sex offender just told you he spent millions of dollars to prevent Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, and David Copperfield from sitting in a witness chair. And he called it mercy.

The Question Nobody Answered

On September 16, 2010, victims’ attorney Brad Edwards filed a formal Request for Admissions in Palm Beach County Circuit Court. Item number seven asked Epstein to admit or deny a specific fact:

7. You socialized with minor females in the presence of Donald Trump, Alan Dershowitz, Bill Clinton, Tommy Manta, David Copperfield, and Bill Richardson.²

Under Florida civil procedure, Epstein was required to answer — admit, deny, or explain. This wasn’t a journalist asking a gotcha question at a press conference. This was a court filing carrying the weight of perjury.

The same document asked Epstein to admit that he had engaged in sexual activity with more than forty minors, that he had transported minors on his aircraft for sex, and that he had filed a “frivolous lawsuit” against Edwards specifically to deter prosecution of claims against him.

Epstein’s response to item seven — the one naming Trump, Clinton, Dershowitz, Copperfield, and Richardson — does not appear in the released documents.

We don’t know what he said. We know what he did instead.

174 Names

In May 2010, Edwards filed a witness list for a trial scheduled July 19–30 in the Southern District of Florida. Case number 08-CV-80893. *Jane Doe v. Jeffrey Epstein*.

The list ran to 174 names.³

The first sixty-five were witnesses expected to testify. They included Epstein himself, household staff, police detectives, FBI agents, and victims. Then came a second category: witnesses whose testimony would be presented by deposition. Ghislaine Maxwell. Mark Epstein. Alfredo Rodriguez.

Then a third category: **witnesses which may be called if need arises.**

Number 66: Leslie Wexner. Number 67: **Donald Trump.**

Further down: Lawrence Krauss at 79. Ronald Baron at 90. Glenn Dubin at 91. Lynne de Rothschild at 103. Bill Clinton at 120. Prince Andrew at 121. Alan Dershowitz at 146.

Edwards was building a case that would put the most powerful men in Epstein's orbit on the stand. Every one of them would have faced questions — under oath, on the record — about what they saw, what they knew, and when they knew it.

None of them were ever deposed.

The Counterattack

Instead of allowing the legal process to reach his associates, Epstein went on offense. He sued Brad Edwards.

The claim: Edwards had conspired with Scott Rothstein — the disgraced Ponzi schemer who was by then serving a fifty-year federal sentence — to inflate sexual assault cases against Epstein and pump them to investors. In Epstein's telling, the victims' lawsuits were part of a fraud, and Edwards was the co-conspirator.

Edwards' own law firm called it what it was:

“Despite the total absence of competent evidence to demonstrate that Bradley Edwards participated in any fraud against Jeffrey Epstein... Epstein sued Bradley Edwards. Epstein sexually abused three clients of Edwards — L.M., E.W., and Jane Doe — and Edwards properly and successfully represented them in a civil action against Epstein. Nothing in Edwards's capable and competent representation of his clients provided any basis for a civil lawsuit against him, but the facts did not deter Epstein from engaging in what was **a blatant effort to extort Bradley Edwards, utilizing the nearly limitless resources of a vengeful opponent.**”⁴

In his opposition brief, Edwards explained why he had sought depositions from Trump, Clinton, and the others:

“Edwards had a sound legal basis for believing that Donald Trump, Allen Dershowitz, Bill Clinton, Tommy Mattola, David Copperfield and Governor Bill Richardson had relevant and discoverable information.”⁵

A sound legal basis. Not a fishing expedition. Not tabloid opportunism. A licensed attorney, representing child sexual assault victims, who believed these men had information relevant to the case. And Epstein’s response was to sue the attorney.

The Settlement Machine

This is where Epstein’s self-defense statement becomes extraordinary — not for what it hides, but for what it admits.

Epstein wrote thousands of words minimizing his crimes. He called himself “a john.” He blamed the victims. He attacked prosecutors. He accused his own defense attorneys of overbilling him. The document reads like a man rehearsing his excuses for an audience that doesn’t exist.

But buried in the middle, Epstein described exactly how he handled the civil litigation:

“The attorney for the women, aware that I would be loathe to involve innocent friends in problems that were strictly of my own making, subpoenaed names and tried to smear any friend of mine whose name appeared in print previously. They contacted Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, David Copperfield; innocent bystanders with no knowledge of any of my actions whatsoever. I settled the cases rather than forcing both the women and others to be subject to a public questioning of their lives.”¹

There it is. In one paragraph, Epstein:

1. **Acknowledged** that Edwards subpoenaed his famous associates
2. **Confirmed** that Clinton, Trump, and Copperfield were contacted in connection with the lawsuits
3. **Admitted** he settled specifically to prevent those associates from facing “public questioning”
4. **Framed** the settlements as protecting both victims and “innocent bystanders” — collapsing the interests of sexually abused minors with the reputations of billionaires and presidents

The word “innocent” is doing extraordinary work in that sentence. Epstein declared his friends innocent of involvement in the same document where he minimized the sexual

abuse of children. He positioned himself as the protector — the man who fell on his sword so that better men wouldn't be embarrassed.

But the mechanism tells a different story. Settlements come with confidentiality agreements. Sealed records. Nondisclosure clauses. When Epstein settled, the depositions didn't happen. The questions didn't get asked. The testimony was never recorded.

What the Depositions Would Have Asked

Brad Edwards had a list. We know this because his Request for Admissions tells us what he believed and what he intended to prove.

He believed Epstein socialized with minors in the presence of Trump, Clinton, Dershowitz, Copperfield, and Richardson. He believed Epstein transported minors on his aircraft. He believed Epstein had engaged in sexual activity with more than forty minors between 2002 and 2006. And he believed the people on that 174-name witness list had “relevant and discoverable information.”⁵

If Donald Trump had been deposed, he would have been asked — under oath — what he witnessed at Epstein's residences and when he stopped socializing with him. If Bill Clinton had been deposed, he would have faced questions about his twenty-six documented flights on Epstein's aircraft. If Alan Dershowitz had been deposed, he would have answered questions about accusations that would later become public.

Every one of those depositions would have been taken before a court reporter. Every answer would have been transcribed, filed, and available to federal investigators.

None of it happened.

The Pattern

This wasn't a one-time decision. It was a system.

Epstein's approach to civil litigation was strategic and consistent: allow lawsuits to be filed, countersue the attorneys to create legal chaos, then settle before discovery reached anyone important. The settlements bought silence. The countersuit against Edwards bought time. And the framing — *I'm protecting my innocent friends from a shakedown* — bought the narrative.

The people on that witness list never had to explain themselves. Not Trump. Not Clinton. Not Prince Andrew. Not Dershowitz. Not Copperfield. Not Richardson. Not a single one.

Epstein told us why. He wasn't hiding it. He was *proud* of it. In his telling, this was loyalty

— a man of means protecting his friends from the consequences of knowing him. He called them “innocent bystanders.” He said their questioning would be unfair.

But here’s what Epstein’s framing leaves out: the people who didn’t get to ask their questions were the victims. The same girls Edwards was representing — L.M., E.W., Jane Doe — lost their chance to confront the men who surrounded Epstein. The settlements paid them money. But money isn’t testimony. Money doesn’t create a record. Money doesn’t answer the question that was sitting right there in item number seven of Brad Edwards’ filing, waiting for someone to answer it under oath.

You socialized with minor females in the presence of Donald Trump.

Admit or deny.

This article is part of the [Trump in the Epstein Documents](#) series — a systematic review of every Trump reference across nine Epstein databases. Previously: [The Speakerphone Call and Recruited at Mar-a-Lago](#).

Sources & Documents

1. **HOUSE_OVERSIGHT_025540** — Jeffrey Epstein, undated self-defense statement. “Innocent bystanders with no knowledge of any of my actions whatsoever.” [View](#) □
2. **EFTA00722353** — Defendant/Counterplaintiff Bradley J. Edwards’ Request for Admissions, September 16, 2010. Item #7: “You socialized with minor females in the presence of Donald Trump...” [View](#) □
3. **EFTA00725731** — Plaintiff Jane Doe’s Witness List, May 2010. 174 potential witnesses including Trump (#67), Clinton (#120), Prince Andrew (#121). [View](#) □
4. **HOUSE_OVERSIGHT_029315** — Searcy Denney Scarola Barnhart & Shipley letter, October 1, 2013. Edwards v. Epstein mediation summary: “a blatant effort to extort Bradley Edwards.” [View](#) □
5. **HOUSE_OVERSIGHT_013304** — Edwards’ Opposition to Epstein’s Motion for Summary Judgment. “Sound legal basis” for deposing Trump, Clinton, Dershowitz, Copperfield, Richardson. [View](#) □