

UNSEALED

Recruited at Mar-a-Lago

A 16-year-old was reading a book about massage therapy in the spa. Ghislaine Maxwell sat down next to her.

Unsealed Research Team

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She was sixteen years old, working the spa at Mar-a-Lago, when a woman she'd never met sat down next to her.

Virginia Roberts — later Virginia Giuffre — was a teenager from a rough background who'd landed a job at Donald Trump's Palm Beach resort. Ghislaine Maxwell, the daughter of a dead media baron and the girlfriend of a convicted sex offender, walked into that spa and changed the trajectory of her life.

This is not a story about what Donald Trump did. Virginia Giuffre herself settled that question years ago. This is a story about what his property was used for — and what the documents show about how long it stayed in Epstein's orbit.

The Spa Attendant

The recruitment is described in court filings and confirmed across multiple sources. James Patterson's *Filthy Rich*, drawing on legal depositions, identifies her plainly:

▮ *Jane Doe 3 is Virginia Roberts, the girl who says that Ghislaine Maxwell recruited her for Epstein at Trump's resort, Mar-a-Lago.*¹

Giuffre was working as a spa attendant — a teenage employee at a luxury resort. Maxwell approached her there. What followed was years of sexual trafficking across Epstein's network of properties in New York, Palm Beach, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and abroad.

In her own words, from a 2011 interview:

▮ *"Donald Trump was also a good friend of Jeffrey's. He didn't partake in sex with any of us but he flirted with me."*²

Two sentences that do a lot of work. She names Trump as Epstein's friend. She exonerates him from sexual conduct with Epstein's victims. And she places herself — a trafficked minor — in proximity to Trump, recruited from his own resort, comfortable enough around him to note that he flirted.

Giuffre has never contradicted this statement in any subsequent deposition or filing.

What the Staff Saw

It wasn't just Giuffre who placed Trump in Epstein's world. The household staff confirmed it under oath.

Juan Alessi managed Epstein's Palm Beach house for a decade, from roughly 1992 to 2002. In a videotaped deposition, he listed the prominent visitors:

█ *Visiting celebrities included Prince Andrew, Sarah Ferguson, Alan Dershowitz, **Trump**, George Mitchell, Glen Dubin.*³

Note the direction of travel. This isn't Epstein visiting Mar-a-Lago. This is Trump visiting Epstein's house.

Janusz Banasiak, Epstein's Palm Beach property manager from 2005 to 2017, was interviewed by the FBI in September 2021. He described Epstein's contact books — small, square, black-covered, about six inches across:

█ *"It was a square black book for people he has contact with, famous people too, CLINTON, TRUMP and others."*⁴

The books sat on desks next to phones, next to beds. Multiple copies across multiple houses. Banasiak saw them in Palm Beach and New York. Inside were the numbers for Epstein's powerful friends — and, on the same pages, the numbers for the girls who came for "massages."

A Palm Beach victim, interviewed by the FBI in December 2018, saw the same book:

█ *"BILL CLINTON and DONALD TRUMP's telephone numbers were in the book as well as many others."*⁵

"Photos of Donald and Girls in Bikinis"

On December 8, 2015 — the same month Trump was surging in Republican primary polls — Jeffrey Epstein sent an email to Landon Thomas Jr., a financial reporter at the *New York Times*:

█ *"would you like photso of donald and girls in bikinis in my kitchen."*⁶

Ten minutes later, a follow-up:

█ *"hawain tropic girl. lauren petrella"*⁶

Then, after Thomas pushed him to release damaging material about Trump "for the good

of the nation,” Epstein sent a link to a profile of Celina Midelfart — a Norwegian businesswoman — and wrote:

“my 20 year old girlfriend in 93,, that after two years i gave to donald”⁶

There it is. Epstein claiming he “gave” his girlfriend to Trump. The language of transfer. Of possession. The same language pattern that runs through every aspect of the Epstein operation — people as things to be moved between powerful men.

Thomas, for his part, was pressing Epstein to leak the material: “I am serious man — for the good of the nation why not try to get some of this out there.” Epstein’s response was to offer photos and claim personal credit for one of Trump’s relationships.

In the same thread, Thomas quoted Trump’s own words back at Epstein — the famous 2002 quote:

“I’ve known Jeff for fifteen years. 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.”⁶

Thomas’s assessment: “That story will never die.”

He was right.

The Calendar

By Trump’s own campaign’s telling, the Trump-Epstein relationship ended around 2004. But Epstein’s emails tell a different story about the resort.

On September 28, 2012, a Google Calendar reminder fired in an inbox linked to Epstein:

“Reminder: what does JE think of going to Mar-a-Lago after xmas instead of his island?”⁷

The same day, someone in Epstein’s circle forwarded an email from Kathryn Sigismund — Woody Allen’s personal assistant — about Mar-a-Lago plans:

“Re your response to Mar-a-Lago after Xmas... Woody said he’d give him a call.”⁸

Epstein. Woody Allen. Mar-a-Lago. Christmas 2012. The social orbit was still active — eight years after Trump’s team would later claim the friendship ended.

Then came Election Night 2016. Trump won. And within hours, someone emailed Epstein's account:

▮ *"By the way - do you think my long ago invitation to come to Mar a Lago 'whenever you want' still stands?? Hee hee"*⁹

The preceding messages in the thread capture the mood. November 9, 2016, 8:24 AM: "Holy hell! Is this good or bad??" Then, 9:04 AM: "And - if you are in the US then you are awake really early!!!" Then the Mar-a-Lago question, with a laugh.

"Long ago invitation." That phrase concedes the access had lapsed. But it also reveals the access had existed — an open, standing invitation to Mar-a-Lago, extended to someone in Epstein's circle, that was once considered permanent enough to reference years later.

The Subpoena

In September 2021, the Southern District of New York served a federal subpoena on Mar-a-Lago in connection with the Epstein investigation.¹⁰

The response from the Trump Organization's legal apparatus reveals how seriously — or not — the resort took its role in the case. Patricia Anne Pileggi, a Trump Organization lawyer, reported back to the SDNY:

▮ *"I have not been able to locate anyone who recalls working at Mar a Lago in 2000."*¹⁰

The year Virginia Giuffre was recruited there.

The investigators pushed for more access. Pileggi told them Mar-a-Lago didn't have in-house counsel. The Trump Organization's compliance counsel said there were "a number of different attorneys" responsible for the property. The SDNY asked for direct contact. More back-and-forth. More bureaucratic dead ends.

A document that was provided didn't qualify as a business record — "it was not a record that was prepared on a regular basis." Nobody could find anyone who remembered working at Mar-a-Lago two decades earlier. The investigators kept following up. The lawyers kept redirecting.

Compare this to what Trump's general counsel told BuzzFeed in 2015, when the connection first surfaced publicly:

▮ *"Mr. Trump's only connection with Mr. Epstein was that Mr. Epstein was one of thousands of people who has visited Mar-a-Lago. That's it."*⁶

One of thousands of visitors. That's the official line. But Epstein's household staff saw Trump at *Epstein's* house, not the other way around. Epstein's contact books held Trump's number alongside the massage girls'. Epstein offered photos of Trump with bikini-clad women in his kitchen. And Mar-a-Lago was the place where a sixteen-year-old spa attendant was recruited into a trafficking operation that would span continents and decades.

What the Documents Show

Here is what the documents establish:

Mar-a-Lago was the site where Virginia Giuffre was recruited into the Epstein operation. Epstein's social circle discussed visiting Mar-a-Lago through at least 2012. Someone in Epstein's orbit still thought of the resort as accessible on Election Night 2016. Federal investigators subpoenaed Mar-a-Lago's records in 2021. The Trump Organization could not locate a single employee who remembered working there when the recruitment occurred.

Here is what the documents do not establish:

That Donald Trump knew about or facilitated the recruitment. That Trump was aware Maxwell was using his resort as a hunting ground. That Trump directed, participated in, or benefited from the trafficking operation that began on his property.

Virginia Giuffre — the victim who was actually recruited there — said Trump “didn't partake.” That statement has held for fifteen years.

But his property did partake. Mar-a-Lago was infrastructure. Not the only piece, not the most important piece, but a documented, subpoenaed, legally contested piece of the machine that turned a teenage spa attendant into an international trafficking victim.

Trump's lawyer called Epstein “one of thousands of visitors.” The FBI called Mar-a-Lago important enough to subpoena.

Someone was wrong.

This article draws on the [Trump in the Epstein Documents](#) investigation. Read the full report for every primary source, including the FBI's own case assessment, legal filings, and Epstein's political intelligence operations.

Previously in this series: [The Speakerphone Call](#) — an FBI document describes a sexual assault in progress. Donald Trump was on the line.

Sources & Documents

1. **HOUSE_OVERSIGHT_022049** — James Patterson, *Filthy Rich* (identifying Giuffre's recruitment at Mar-a-Lago). [View](#) □
2. **435-06** — Virginia Roberts Giuffre, Daily Mail interview, March 5, 2011. [View](#) □
3. **055-12** — Juan Alessi videotaped deposition, September 8, 2009. [View](#) □
4. **EFTA00158450** — FBI FD-302, interview of Janusz Banasiak, September 27, 2021. [View](#) □
5. **EFTA01250590** — FBI victim interview, December 4, 2018. [View](#) □
6. **HOUSE_OVERSIGHT_031454** — Email thread: Jeffrey Epstein and Landon Thomas Jr. (NYT), December 8, 2015. [View](#) □
7. **EFTA02158325** — Google Calendar reminder re: Mar-a-Lago, September 28, 2012. [View](#) □
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9. **EFTA01738492** — Email re: Mar-a-Lago invitation, November 10, 2016. [View](#) □
10. **vol00009-efta00087613-pdf** — Federal subpoena correspondence, Mar-a-Lago, September–October 2021. [View](#) □