

Glenn's Thoughts on Chomsky & Epstein's Baffling Relationship

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Glenn Greenwald: I've talked about it before and I think anybody who knows my work knows that I have a great deal of respect and admiration for Noam Chomsky and his work. It has influenced me quite a bit, especially early in my journalism career. I certainly have differences with him on a lot of things that we've talked about over the years and that I've talked about, but I consider him a major intellectual and political figure of the 20th century and into the 21st century as well. Anybody who has a critique of American foreign policy that's worth making has been influenced directly or indirectly by Noam Chomsky. That's the regard in which I hold him. I've also had a very close personal friendship with him, not over the past few years, but certainly before, say, 2021, 2022. His wife of many decades died in 2008. He remarried in 2011. And the woman he remarried, Valeria Chomsky, is Brazilian, so he spent a lot of time in Brazil as a result, so we were able to meet here, we met a lot of times in the United States. I feel like I know him very well, I've known him for a long time.

And this relationship that he has with Jeffrey Epstein, I find so baffling. It's an intense cognitive dissonance for me. I really can't reconcile what I know about Noam Chomsky, personally and publicly, with this. Now, I don't think Noam Chomsky is a sex offender. I don't think his interest in Jeffrey Epstein had anything to do with the abuse of underage people or the sexual abuse of children. I'm not suggesting that. I don't believe that either. As I said, all the people with whom Jeffrey Epstein was meeting in that prior email, I don't necessarily assume at all that those people are – you know, he had a very close relation with Peter Thiel. Peter Thiel is gay. That by itself would sort of impede this notion that whoever was cultivating a relationship with Jeffrey Epstein had an interest in underage girls. We have to be very careful to make clear that just because someone had an association with Jeffrey Epstein doesn't in any way implicate or is incriminating about their sexual activities. You could be a sexual Puritan in your private life.

But still, as I said, the fact that somebody is so willing to become so closely aligned with Jeffrey Epstein, such close friends with him, notwithstanding their knowledge, which everyone had, that he was convicted of soliciting a minor for prostitution, indicates to me that

within this world of mega elites, there's just no mores that apply to them. They consider themselves exempt. But that's what I'm saying. This is something that is so alien to my understanding of Noam Chomsky that this is not a way that he thinks for so many different reasons. On top of which as I just said Jeffrey Epstein had a very close working relationship with the Israeli government. He was basically an arm of or an asset of Israeli intelligence. And Noam Chomsky is one of the most vocal and virulent critics of Israel and has been for many decades. Would I form a relationship with someone who I knew was an actual agent of the Israeli government? I might professionally or journalistically, to obtain knowledge or understanding, but that would certainly be a massive impediment to my willingness to consider myself friends with that person, let alone to intermingle on so many deep and personal levels the way Chomsky and Epstein did.

We've known for a few years now that Chomsky had a relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, although we didn't really know the full extent to it until these emails started emerging this week. The Wall Street Journal in May of 2023 reported: *Jeffrey Epstein moved \$270,000 for Noam Chomsky and paid \$150,000 to Leon Botstein.* "Academics acknowledged the financial transactions with the late convicted sex offender". There's another Wall Street Journal article, I don't know if we have it – do we have the other Wall Street journal article that reports on the nature of their relationship? Alright, so I'll just summarize that for you. This is the first Wall Street article that really described the nature of Chomsky's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. And it basically outlined how, beginning in 2015 and in 2016, Noam Chomsky and his wife Valeria Chomsky met multiple times on numerous occasions for social events with Jeffrey Epstein. Noam and Valeria Chomsky flew on Jeffrey Epstein's plane in order to go and have dinner with Woody Allen and his wife, who was his stepdaughter. And they engaged in other kinds of social interactions as well, on top of the financial involvement that apparently Chomsky was using Jeffrey Epstein for managing his finances of some kind.

And when asked about the relationship that Noam Chomsky had with Jeffrey Epstein, Chomsky was extremely defiant, as is his right, and he basically said, "it's none of your business. I don't have to account to you for who I'm friends with". He said, when asked about the Woody Allen dinner, he said, "I'm not aware of the principle that compels me to tell the Wall Street Journal when I have a dinner with a great artist", meaning Woody Allen. And then he cited that principle I described earlier, which of course is embedded in law, that once somebody is convicted of a crime and serves their sentence, they get what Chomsky called a, quote, "clean slate", meaning that doesn't factor in at all to the calculus of how he judges Jeffrey Epstein.

Among the emails that were released were emails that were quite friendly and chatty between Chomsky's wife, Valeria Chomsky, and Epstein. Here from the two of them, November 13th, 2016. This is just after Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton. And here you have Valeria saying to Jeffrey Epstein, quote: "I knew even before the primaries announced in meetings, lunches and dinners just to receive a look of contempt and disbelief. Now I want my position as a political analyst, preferably in the White House". Which I presume is a joke referring to the fact that she claims she anticipated Trump's victory. And then she adds: "Yeah, once you

asked me who I would like to see talking to Noam, here's a guy, can you arrange it? He can make good use of Noam's advices". And then Epstein: "We called it, please note". So there's clearly a friendly social relationship.

Here is a letter that Chomsky wrote to – it's unclear to whom he wrote it. It's basically a letter vouching for Jeffrey Epstein's character. And although there's no date on it, it's signed by Noam Chomsky as on the faculty of the University of Arizona. As you probably know, he spent most of his career at MIT. Only in 2017 did he take a position at the University of Arizona. He wanted to live in Arizona when he got older. Massachusetts winters are very harsh. It's a nice place to retire. Chomsky would never retire, but he went down to the University of Arizona, so we know it's after 2017. It sounds like it could be a letter as part of a court process vouching for Jeffrey Epstein's character. The context is unclear, but it emerged as part of the emails and documents released from Jeffrey Epstein's estate.

And here's what it says, presumably in Chomsky's own words, quote: "I met Jeffrey Epstein half a dozen years ago. We have been in regular contact since with many long and often in-depth discussions about a very wide range of topics including our own specialties in professional work, but a host of others where we have shared interests. It has been a most valuable experience for me. In the area of his own direct engagements, I have learned a great deal from him about the intricacies of the global financial system, about complex technical issues that arise in the often arcane world of finance, and about specific cases in which I have a particular interest, such as the financial situation in Saudi Arabia and current economic planning and prospects there. Jeffrey invariably turns out to be a highly reliable source with intimate knowledge and perceptive analysis, commonly going well beyond what I can find in the business press and professional journals."

And I can just say this all sounds like Chomsky, how he writes, how he speaks. "Given the range and depth of his concerns, I suppose I should not have been surprised to discover that Jeffrey has repeatedly been able to arrange sometimes on the spot very productive meetings with leading figures. On another occasion, Jeffrey arranged a meeting with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, whose record I had studied carefully and written about. We have our disagreements, but had a very fruitful discussion about a number of controversial matters, including one that was of particular interest to me: the Taba negotiations of January 2001 in the framework of President Clinton's 'parameters', events that remain obscure and controversial because the diplomatic record is still mostly secret. Barak's discussion of the background was illuminating, also surprising in some ways. More lively interchanges, in which Jeffrey was once again an active participant, often an effective gadfly. The impact of Jeffrey's limitless curiosity, extensive knowledge, penetrating insights, and thoughtful appraisals is only heightened by his easy informality without a trace of pretentiousness. He quickly became a valued friend and a regular source of intellectual exchange and stimulation".

You know, honestly, it's painful for me to read that. I have to admit, and again, it is because of my admiration for Chomsky, the influence he's had on me and my friendship with him. I don't

know what to make of that. Now, it should be said that Jeffrey Epstein did purposely cultivate huge numbers of close relationships in the Boston area academic scene. He donated massive amounts to Harvard University when Larry Summers was its president. And these emails show an extremely close and often warped and even demented relationship and discourse he had with Larry Summers throughout the years. Larry Summers being a very high ranking Clinton official and Democratic Party advisor, formerly the president of Harvard, who maintained a very close relationship with Jeffrey Epstein. He funded academics at MIT and Harvard, including Bill Ackman's wife. He funded a project for her. And he was pouring a ton of money into MIT. And it would naturally be someone, I guess, of interest to Epstein to kind of cultivate the way he kind of collected famous and influential people to cultivate a relationship with Chomsky.

So I don't really question or fail to understand why Jeffrey Epstein might have had an interest in Noam Chomsky and adding him to his repertoire of people that he could show off as someone he knew, kind of like being the matchmaker. You know, hey, Chomsky, I can put you in touch with the former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak. And Barak, I could put you in touch with Noam Chomsky. And then here, you two are together, I'm here with you, let's have a conversation. He definitely likes doing those things. But Jeffrey Epstein was a pig on every level, even leaving aside the conviction. Which, OK, if you're Chomsky, he is a civil libertarian. I have some empathy for the notion that if somebody is a convict and they serve their time, you don't hold that against them forever. Although certain crimes, I do think you probably would, especially as I said, if they're not really repentant. But, just the Israel question alone – would I meet with Ehud Barak, or any Israeli Prime Minister... I guess, journalistically? But would I consider it some great social evening that I really enjoyed where we exchanged ideas and got to understand and talk about things. I mean, I could see myself doing that more than Chomsky. Chomsky is very dogmatic.

In fact, Chomsky, because of his perception of my politics over the last few years, basically stopped talking to me. He once publicly – I wouldn't say maligned me. He went really out of his way not to malign me, but he was being pushed to malign me – like, what about Glenn Greenwald and his seeming sympathy for Trump? I would never in a million years have said anything negative about Chomsky. I would criticize him or disagree with his views, but he said something like, "look, he's a close friend of mine. I have a lot of respect for what his work was. I don't want to have to say anything about him, but I don't understand what's going on with him, and I just hope he figures it out and changes". And it was kind of a personal comment. And then in the last few years, they did stop talking to me, clearly over political differences.

So I say that only to make clear that it's not like Chomsky is a person who just will socialize with anybody or cultivate a friendship with anyone independent of their politics, to the extent that he was even willing to cut off a friendship with me that was quite a long one and quite an in-depth one. But not Jeffrey Epstein? That wasn't a bridge too far? Somebody who actually did constant work for the Israeli government, who was an agent of the Mossad? That's not somebody who's disqualified because of their political views? Or Ehud Barak? That's what I

find so difficult to reconcile. And it must just be – you know, I mean, Chomsky's human, and we all have these temptations of money and power and the allure that it presents. It's not the case that Chomsky is typically sought after by members of this global elite. I mean, again, he's certainly someone very influential. He has a lot of friends who are, you know, like Lula da Silva, the Brazilian President. But not this kind of global money elite.

So maybe he was dazzled by Jeffrey Epstein's interest in him, or he had a lot of institutional loyalty to MIT. Maybe Jeffrey Epstein's pouring money into MIT. Who knows? I don't know what to make of it. I'm just saying it must be the case that Jeffrey Epstein had some sort of interpersonal skills that were quite exceptional given the number of extremely influential people who you wouldn't think would need anything from Jeffrey Epstein. I talked before about how people behave around billionaires. It's shocking, people who you wouldn't would do this. I'm not talking about people who work for them. It's like that level of wealth and power becomes so captivating to human beings. It's one of the reasons why I think a lot of billionaires go crazy because they can't be around people who treat them in a normal way. Everything is just constant, sycophantic affirmation.

But if you ever listen to Chomsky talk about oligarchs and powerful and wealthy people, he does so with this scorn and contempt that would make you think that he would be immune to that kind of courtship. Apparently not, there's no doubt he was very close friends with Jeffrey Epstein and had a great deal of respect and admiration for him. And because I can't figure it out, and I'm going out of my way not to be ungenerous in my interpretation, I started off by saying, and I will once again affirm that Chomsky is and will always be a kind of intellectual and personal hero to me, notwithstanding disagreements I've had. He says some terrible things about COVID, which I give him license for, if you're 92, I think it's understandable to have some irrational fear of COVID. And if you're in public life for six decades talking about the most controversial issues in the most free thinking independent way, you're going to have some bad moments. We all are going to. I don't hold those against him at all. This, though, I just find fascinating. And the whole Epstein debacle among so many interesting aspects of it really is about the ability of this global elite to create their own world where no rules and no laws and no mores apply. They just see themselves as part of this "behind the wall of Versailles, aristocratic elite", they impose laws and rules and limitations on everybody else and completely exempt themselves. And obviously there's a lot more to the Epstein case than that, but that definitely is one of the things most interesting to me.

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