

Email #1

From: [A]
Date: Tue, 10 Sep 2019 14:20:54 -0400
To: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Subject: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

While we're talking about what the ethics of our profession should be (and the ethics of discussing the ethics of our profession on csail-related@), there's an upcoming protest on *Friday outside the Student Center (W20) from 4 PM - 6 PM* about MIT's handling of the Epstein scandal.

In particular, given the most recent revelations in the Globe:
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/09/09/top-mit-officials-knew-epstein-ties-media-lab-mails-show/OFEzFtD0mgic2zzXOSPe9J/story.html>
, it appears that MIT administrative officials aided the anonymization of Epstein's donations. I have also attached a text version for people who are pay-walled.

According to the e-mails, in July 2014, after Epstein made a \$50,000 gift > to MIT, Richard MacMillan, then a senior director for large individual > domestic gifts for the university, alerted the Media Lab to the problems > associated with the donation.

“Recall we are not taking gifts from him,” MacMillan wrote to Peter Cohen, > who was then the Media Lab’s director of development and strategy.

Cohen responded that he had spoken to Ito and that Epstein had an account > that allowed him to make small gifts anonymously.

> In a July 28, 2014, e-mail exchange, Cohen relayed that Ito had told him > that the recording secretary who helped the university track gifts > “maintains this account and knows the drill.”

Then, another person, who is not identified in the e-mails obtained by the > Globe, explains to several people on the e-mail chain that the recording > secretary “should be reminded of Epstein’s anonymous status. There must be > some kind of note they can add to his record to assure that all these gifts > continue to get recorded as such.”

MacMillan then responded: “No it’s all set. She is taking care of it.”

The Facebook event is here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/687098025098336/>
For those who don't want to access Facebook, I have copied the event description below.

Hope you can join me on Friday.

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CW: child abuse, sex-trafficking.

Top MIT officials covered up Epstein's donations to the Institute. MIT Professors and officials visited him in prison, flew on his "Lolita Express," invited him to campus, and gave him awards. MIT CANNOT be trusted to investigate itself through an "independent" law firm that they themselves hire and that reports to the MIT Corporation. WE, students, staff, faculty, and Boston-area community members MUST hold MIT accountable for this and more!! What happens next is on us!

Background:

Jeffery Epstein was a multimillionaire serial child abuser and sex trafficker who eluded serious justice for many years (his 18-month sentence from 2008, of which he served 13 months, was a slap on the wrist [1]) by surrounding himself with powerful men and powerful institutions. He maintained these networks of powerful men by writing them big checks through his "philanthropic" activities, including philanthropic activities to MIT. He cultivated very close relationships with several MIT figures, including Media Lab founder Nicholas Negroponte, former Media Lab director Joi Ito, deceased AI "pioneer" Marvin Minsky (who is accused of assaulting one of Epstein's victims [2]), and Professor Seth Lloyd, who visited Epstein during his prison term and accepted grants afterwards, per his own public apology. MIT had internally "disqualified" Epstein as a donor. That meant MIT officially would not take Epstein's money. But Joi Ito wanted Epstein's money anyway, and so Media Lab officials and other top MIT officials, such as MIT's VP of Resource Development Julie Lucas as well as Richard MacMillan (a senior director under Lucas), worked together to cover up Epstein's donations by anonymizing them. This is what the latest article on the MIT-Epstein scandal reveals.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/09/09/top-mit-officials-knew-epstein-ties-media-lab-mails-show/OFEzFtD0mgic2zzXOSP9J/story.html>
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/09/09/top-mit-officials-knew-epstein-ties-media-lab-mails-show/OFEzFtD0mgic2zzXOSP9J/story.html?fbclid=IwAR04n-kBSnHCnpAzrkRslcJVJyDMdlycevTcsjYqacj-toftwKL_8k5blZc>

Accepting money linked to Jeffrey Epstein wasn't just disgusting and immoral. It violated MIT's own donor policies. All senior administrators who knew about these donations MUST RESIGN IMMEDIATELY.

But individual resignations aren't enough. The Epstein scandal demonstrates a rot at the heart of the Media Lab [3] and MIT as a whole. It gets at more profound issues regarding how MIT finances its activities and who it partners with to perform research. We demand an end to dark money. We demand an end to the pernicious influence that millionaire pedophiles, genocidal crown princes, billionaire climate change deniers, and giant corporations profiting from wars, deportations, and concentration camps at the border hold over MIT and academia generally. MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD!

[1] <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article219494920.html>
<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article219494920.html?fbclid=IwAR1e6oMSiZXz99LKWimNsPFe6jkjA5QhK116OKsg8_tFSu5ws8YnPL2R-BI>
[2]

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed>
<[https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed?](https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed?fbclid=IwAR3oNYfrRaVWwLYyKb17FYnWbVvc2nmsNcqOKcEZMeqSnjeHNFwqIuHg4U)
[fbclid=IwAR3oNYfrRaVWwLYyKb17FYnWbVvc2nmsNcqOKcEZMeqSnjeHNFwqIuHg4U](https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed?fbclid=IwAR3oNYfrRaVWwLYyKb17FYnWbVvc2nmsNcqOKcEZMeqSnjeHNFwqIuHg4U)>
[3]
<https://slate.com/technology/2019/09/mit-media-lab-jeffrey-epstein-joi-ito-moral-rot.html>
<[https://slate.com/technology/2019/09/mit-media-lab-jeffrey-epstein-joi-ito-moral-rot.html?](https://slate.com/technology/2019/09/mit-media-lab-jeffrey-epstein-joi-ito-moral-rot.html?fbclid=IwAR2A1C4Ry2KVI4RLkpbCI5ylQah3VjcY4D73DHUXm45FPOis9KUE7G0uQvg)
[fbclid=IwAR2A1C4Ry2KVI4RLkpbCI5ylQah3VjcY4D73DHUXm45FPOis9KUE7G0uQvg](https://slate.com/technology/2019/09/mit-media-lab-jeffrey-epstein-joi-ito-moral-rot.html?fbclid=IwAR2A1C4Ry2KVI4RLkpbCI5ylQah3VjcY4D73DHUXm45FPOis9KUE7G0uQvg)>

Email #2

From: Richard Stallman
To: [A]
Cc: csail-related@mit.edu
Date: Wed Sep 11, 2019 1:03 AM
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

[[[To any NSA and FBI agents reading my email: please consider]]]
[[[whether defending the US Constitution against all enemies,]]]
[[[foreign or domestic, requires you to follow Snowden's example.]]]

The announcement of the Friday event does an injustice to Marvin Minsky:

deceased AI “pioneer” Marvin Minsky (who is accused of assaulting one of Epstein’s victims [2])

The injustice is in the word "assaulting". The term "sexual assault" is so vague and slippery that it facilitates accusation inflation: taking claims that someone did X and leading people to think of it as Y, which is much worse than X.

The accusation quoted is a clear example of inflation. The reference reports the claim that Minsky had sex with one of Epstein's harem. (See <https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed>.)

Let's presume that was true (I see no reason to disbelieve it).

The word "assaulting" presumes that he applied force or violence, in some unspecified way, but the article itself says no such thing. Only that they had sex.

We can imagine many scenarios, but the most plausible scenario is that she presented herself to him as entirely willing. Assuming she was being coerced by Epstein, he would have had every reason to tell her to conceal that from most of his associates.

I've concluded from various examples of accusation inflation that it is absolutely wrong to use the term "sexual assault" in an accusation.

Whatever conduct you want to criticize, you should describe it with a specific term that avoids moral vagueness about the nature of the criticism.

--

Dr Richard Stallman
President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)
Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)

Email #3

From: [B]
Date: Wed, 11 Sep 2019 01:44:27 -0400
To: Richard Stallman
Cc: [A], csail-related@mit.edu
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

For the record, a witness denies this, saying that Minsky turned her down:
<https://pjmedia.com/instapundit/339725/>

Email #4

From: [C]
To: [B], Richard Stallman
CC: [A], csail-related@mit.edu
Date: Wed, 11 Sep 2019 12:21:19 +0000
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

Giuffre was 17 at the time; this makes it ___rape___ in the Virgin Islands.

The witness (who was not named as someone present by Giuffre) claims that the deposition never directly accuses Minsky of participating, based off a convoluted sentence from the New York Times. The Verge article includes the deposition snippet, which is not ambiguous at all: Giuffre directly says she was forced to have sex with Minsky.

Let's stop grasping at straws to defend our friends, and instead listen to the women who were harmed.

Email #5

From: [D]

Date: Wed, 11 Sep 2019 10:38:17 -0400

To: csail-related@lists.csail.mit.edu

Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

The NYT misused ambiguity, but so did the Verge. I give credence to Giuffre. But as far as I can see in the deposition she only states that she was *directed* to have sex with Minsky, and that she *did* have sex with various people. She does not explicitly state that Minsky was one of the people she had sex with. After asking how she was directed to have sex with Minsky, the lawyer does ask a followup question "where did you go to have sex with Minsky" but having been deposed I know it is easy to answer what you *think* the lawyer is asking instead of what they *actually* asked, and she may have been responding to the part of his followup question about location without realizing that the language had shifted from "directed to have sex" to "actually did".

Email #6

From: [E]

Date: Wed, 11 Sep 2019 10:40:20 -0400

To: [C]

Cc: [B], [A], Richard Stallman, csail-related@mit.edu

Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

On Wed, Sep 11, 2019 at 12:21:19PM +0000, [C] wrote:

:Let's stop grasping at straws to defend our friends, and instead listen to the women who were harmed.

^ exactly that.

The legal presumption of innocence does not mean you presume the accuser is a liar.

Email #7

From: Richard Stallman

To: [C]

Cc: [B], [A], csail-related@mit.edu

Date: Thu, Sep 12, 2019, 1:28 AM

Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

[[[To any NSA and FBI agents reading my email: please consider]]]

[[[whether defending the US Constitution against all enemies,]]]

[[[foreign or domestic, requires you to follow Snowden's example.]]]

> Giuffre was 17 at the time; this makes it ___rape___ in the Virgin Islands.

Does it really? I think it is morally absurd to define "rape" in a way that depends on minor details such as which country it was in or whether the victim was 18 years old or 17.

I think the existence of a dispute about that supports my point that the term "sexual assault" is slippery, so we ought to use more concrete terms when accusing anyone.

> The Verge article includes the deposition snippet, which is not
> ambiguous at all: Giuffre directly says she was forced to have sex
> with Minsky.

I don't see any quotation from the deposition in the article, but it says, "Giuffre says she was directed to have sex with Minsky." Given the circumstances, that implies she was coerced by Epstein into doing so.

The article I know of, and have a copy of, is

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/9/20798900/marvin-minsky-jeffrey-epstein-sex-trafficking-island-court-records-unsealed>.

Are you talking of some other Verge article? If so, would you like to tell me its URL?

> Let's stop grasping at straws to defend our friends, and instead
> listen to the women who were harmed.

We can listen only to what is said to us.

All I know she said about Minsky is that Epstein directed her to have sex with Minsky. That does not say whether Minsky knew that she was coerced. It does not report what each said and did during their sexual encounter. We can imagine various scenarios.

We know that Giuffre was being coerced into sex -- by Epstein. She was being harmed. But the details do affect whether, and to what extent, Minsky was responsible for that.

Looking through the article again carefully, I found a link that

reportedly points to the deposition itself. I visited that URL and got a blank window. It is on Google Drive, which demands running nonfree software in order to see it. See <https://gnu.org/philosophy/javascript-trap.html>.

Would you (not anyone else!) like to email me a copy of the part that pertains to Minsky? I say "not anyone else" to avoid getting 20 copies.

--

Dr Richard Stallman
President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)
Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)

Email #8

From: [F]
Date: Thu, 12 Sep 2019 06:40:52 -0400
To: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

Dr. Stallman -

If we're debating the definitions of "rape" and "sexual assault," perhaps it's better to accept that this conversation isn't productive.

When this email chain inevitably finds its way into the press, the seeming insensitivity of some will reflect poorly on the entire CSAIL community. Regardless of intent, this thread reads as "grasping at straws to defend our friends" around potential involvement with Epstein, and that isn't a reputation I would like attached to my CSAIL affiliation.

Email #9

From: [G]
Date: Thu, 12 Sep 2019 09:01:29 -0400
To: [F], csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

No one on this thread has accused Giuffre of lying. Rather, the discussion has been of whether Giuffre actually accused Minsky of sexual assault or not. I will not step into that discussion, but will instead ask the following meta question: "If someone in csail says in this discussion group that Minsky was accused of sexual assault, a very serious accusation, and someone else in csail thinks that he was not, should the latter person refrain from saying so in this same discussion group out of concern that the conversation will leak and be misconstrued by the press?"

The "s" in CSAIL stands for "science". The job of scientists is to evaluate evidence and seek truth. We have a social responsibility to do that as well. I hope that we scientists will never evade our social responsibility to seek and defend the truth out of fear that the press will misconstrue our search. That would not be a reputation I would like attached to my CSAIL affiliation.

Email #10

From: [H]

Date: Thu, 12 Sep 2019 08:35:20 -0400

To: csail-related@csail.mit.edu

Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

On Thu, 12 Sep 2019 01:26:14 -0400

Richard Stallman wrote:

> > Giuffre was 17 at the time; this makes it ___rape___ in the

> > Virgin Islands.

>

> Does it really? I think it is morally absurd to define "rape" in a

Yes, it does. Different jurisdictions use different terms in their laws but they all fall under the umbrella of statutory rape: sexual activity with a minor.

If there was sexual activity and she was under the age of consent then it was rape. That's the law.

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\m/ (--)\m/

Email #11

From: Richard Stallman

To: [C], [A], csail-related@mit.edu

Date: Fri, 13 Sep 2019 04:17:45 -0400

Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

[[[To any NSA and FBI agents reading my email: please consider]]]

[[[whether defending the US Constitution against all enemies,]]]

[[[foreign or domestic, requires you to follow Snowden's example.]]]

After looking at what Gregory Benford wrote, and the analysis of Giuffre's deposition that was posted here, it seems that it isn't clear whether she said she had sex with Minsky.

I will believe her either way, if she says it explicitly.

--

Dr Richard Stallman

President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)

Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)

Email #12

From: Richard Stallman
To: [H]
Cc: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Date: Fri, 13 Sep 2019 04:23:43 -0400
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

[[[To any NSA and FBI agents reading my email: please consider]]]
[[[whether defending the US Constitution against all enemies,]]]
[[[foreign or domestic, requires you to follow Snowden's example.]]]

>> > Giuffre was 17 at the time; this makes it ___rape___ in the
>> > Virgin Islands.
>>
>> Does it really? I think it is morally absurd to define "rape" in a

> Yes, it does.

I think you are treating laws as an unquestionable moral authority.
My ideas of right and wrong are based on empathy and moral thought,
not on the decisions of legislatures. Empathy and moral thought
are the reasons I think rape is wrong.

I think I've made my position clear, so this should be enough.

--

Dr Richard Stallman
President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)
Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)

Email #13

From: [H]
Date: Fri, 13 Sep 2019 09:46:26 -0400
To: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

On Fri, 13 Sep 2019 04:23:43 -0400
Richard Stallman wrote:

> I think you are treating laws as an unquestionable moral authority.
> My ideas of right and wrong are based on empathy and moral thought,
> not on the decisions of legislatures. Empathy and moral thought
> are the reasons I think rape is wrong.
>
> I think I've made my position clear, so this should be enough.

No, I'm treating laws as laws, and the law says a minor is a person who is incapable of giving legal, willing consent due to age.

Sex without legal, willing consent is rape.

It's not a slippery slope. Rape is rape. Sexual assault is sexual assault. These are clearly defined legal terms, and yes, sexual assault of a minor *is* a more serious crime than rape of an adult. If you honestly think "empathy and moral thought" make rape somehow not rape, if you genuinely think your ideas of right and wrong make sexual assault somehow not sexual assault, then I agree with Selam G.: you need to be removed from MIT immediately.

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\m/ (--)\m/

Email #14

From: Richard Stallman
To: [H]
Cc: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Date: Sunday, September 15, 2019 12:31 AM
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

[[[To any NSA and FBI agents reading my email: please consider]]]
[[[whether defending the US Constitution against all enemies,]]]
[[[foreign or domestic, requires you to follow Snowden's example.]]]

Your position is simple and consistent: if something is illegal then it is wrong. I disagree with you at that basic level. I do not consider that laws dictate what is right and wrong. I think we have to do our own thinking about each moral question.

--

Dr Richard Stallman
President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)
Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)

Email #15

From: [I]
Date: Sat, 14 Sep 2019 10:33:47 -0700
To: [H]
Cc: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Subject: Re: [csail-related] Protest against MIT involvement with Epstein

If Epstein had been running the operation in Alaska, where the age of consent is 16, I doubt anyone would agree that makes it more ok. And if Epstein had specifically been targeting 18 year olds, I also don't think that makes it ok. This is getting a little far afield of the original topic

(definitely agree that the Marvin Minsky issue has no bearing on how we should view the MIT/Epstein issue) but I actually agree that laws aren't the best lens through which to view this.

I do think it's inappropriate to call for a colleague's dismissal on a public list; let's be civil and raise concerns through the appropriate channels. Happy to talk off list with anyone who wants to discuss further.

Email #16

From: Richard Stallman
To: csail-related@csail.mit.edu
Date: Sat, Sep 14, 2019 1:59 PM
Subject: I'm sorry

I want to respond to the misleading media coverage of messages I posted about Marvin Minsky's association with Jeffrey Epstein. The coverage totally mischaracterised my statements.

Headlines say that I defended Epstein. Nothing could be further from the truth. I've called him a "serial rapist", and said he deserved to be imprisoned. But many people now believe I defended him -- and other inaccurate claims -- and feel a real hurt because of what they believe I said.

I'm sorry for that hurt. I wish I could have prevented the misunderstanding.

--

Dr Richard Stallman
President, Free Software Foundation (<https://gnu.org>, <https://fsf.org>)
Internet Hall-of-Famer (<https://internethalloffame.org>)
