

# Sneering at “Conspiracy Theories” is a Lazy Substitute for Seeking the Truth

On the morning of August 10, a wealthy sex crimes defendant was reportedly found dead in his cell at New York’s Metropolitan Correctional Center.

“New York City’s chief medical examiner,” the *New York Times* reported on August 11, “is confident Jeffrey Epstein died by hanging himself in the jail cell where he was being held without bail on sex-trafficking charges, but is awaiting more information before releasing her determination ...”

That same day, the *Times* published an op-ed by Charlie Warzel complaining that “[e]ven on an internet bursting at the seams with conspiracy theories and hyperpartisanship, Saturday marked a new chapter in our post-truth, ‘choose your own reality’ crisis story.”

After three years of continuously beating the drum for its own now-discredited conspiracy theory — that the President of the United States conspired with Vladimir Putin’s regime to rig the 2016 presidential election — the *Times* doesn’t have much standing to whine about, or sneer at, “conspiracy theories and hyperpartisanship.”

Is Jeffrey Epstein really dead? If so, did he kill himself or was he murdered? If he was murdered, whodunit and why?

Those are legitimate questions. Calling everyone who asks them, or proposes possible answers to them, a “conspiracy theorist” isn’t an argument, it’s intellectual laziness.

Yes, some theories fit the available evidence better than others. And yes, some theories just sound crazy. If someone says a UFO beamed Epstein up, or that Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump posed as corrections officers and personally strangled him, I suggest setting those claims aside absent very strong evidence.

But there are plenty of good reasons to question the “official account.”

Yes, prisoners have committed suicide at federal jails and prisons. But prisoners have also escaped from, and been killed at, such facilities. In fact, notorious Boston gangster Whitey Bulger was murdered in a federal prison just last year.

Given Epstein’s wealth and power, the wealth and power of persons accused of serious crimes in recently unsealed court documents, the claim of one of his prosecutors that Epstein “belonged to” the US intelligence community, the well-established inability of the federal government to secure its facilities or prevent criminal activity inside those facilities (including the corruption of its own personnel), the equally well-established unreliability of

claims made by government agencies and officials in general, and the already flowing stream of admissions that the Metropolitan Correctional Center's procedures weren't followed where Jeffrey Epstein was concerned, the question is not why "conspiracy theories" are circulating — it's why on earth they WOULDN'T be.

No, I'm not saying that Epstein is alive and living it up in "witness protection," or that he was murdered by a hit team on behalf of one of his "Lolita Express" cronies. I just don't know. Neither, probably, do you. Nor do those screaming "conspiracy theory!" at every musing contrary to the suicide theory.

Maybe we'll find out the truth someday. Maybe we won't. Pretending we already have, and shouting down those who suggest we haven't, isn't a method of seeking knowledge. It's a method of avoiding knowledge.