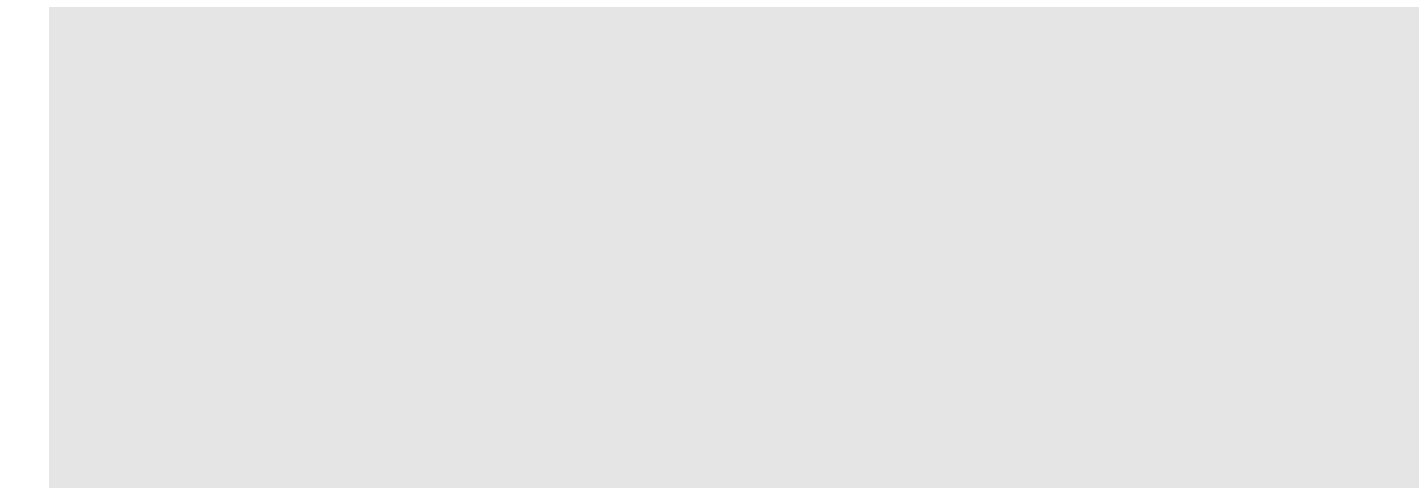**VICE**

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Famed Computer Scientist Richard Stallman Described Epstein Victims As 'Entirely Willing'

Stallman, a pioneer of the free software movement, argued about the definition of "sexual assault" on an MIT email listserv about the university's connections to Jeffrey Epstein.

By **Edward Ongweso Jr**

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FRANCOIS GUILLOT / STAFF

Richard Stallman, the computer scientist best known for his role in the free software movement, has joined the list of MIT men going out of their way to defend the university's relationships with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Selam Jie Gano, an MIT alum, posted on Medium about an email thread in which Stallman argued that the late Marvin Minsky—an AI pioneer accused of assaulting one of Epstein's victims, Virginia Giuffre—had not actually assaulted anyone.

Early in the thread, Stallman insists that the "most plausible scenario" is that Epstein's underage victims were "entirely willing" while being trafficked. Stallman goes on to argue about the definition of "sexual assault," "rape," and whether they apply to Minsky and Giuffre's deposition statement that she was forced to have sex with him.

In response to a student pointing out that Giuffre was 17 when she was forced to have sex with Minsky in the Virgin Islands, Stallman said "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."

The thread, on MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) listerv was started to promote a protest Friday afternoon urging MIT students to speak out against the university's relationship with Epstein and the culture it had of covering that up. MIT Media Lab Director Joi Ito resigned from his post earlier this week after Signe Swenson revealed his extensive cover-up of Epstein's direct donations, visits, and donations Epstein facilitated.

> **Do you know more about MIT's connections with Jeffrey Epstein or abuse in the open source community? You can contact reporter Edward Ongweso Jr at edward.ongweso@vice.com or securely via Signal at 413-225-2938.**

Before Ito's resignation, multiple professors and public figures came to his defense. MIT Media Lab founder Nicholas Negroponte shocked attendees of a closed meeting when he said "emphatically" defended Ito's decision to take the money "given what we knew then." Lawrence Lessig, a Harvard Law professor and close friend of Joi Ito, wrote a long post revealing he knew all along about Epstein's donations and tried to rationalize them. Linkedin founder Reid Hoffman came to Ito's defense and refused to oust him from MIT's Disobedience Award.

Supporters also signed a letter after Ito's initial apology for allowing Epstein to not only donate to MIT, but personally enrich Ito by letting Epstein invest in the former director's tech investment funds.

In the CSAIL thread, one person wrote "when this email chain inevitably finds its way into the press, the seeming insensitivity of some will reflect

poorly on the entire CSAIL community," they wrote. "Regardless of intent, this reads as 'grasping at straws to defend our friends.'"

Motherboard has obtained a copy of the email thread, but has censored the names of its participants besides Stallman. The thread starts at the bottom and continues up:

TAGGED: **MIT**, **JEFFREY EPSTEIN**, **RICHARD STALLMAN**, **MIT MEDIA LAB**, **MARVIN MINSKY**