



EXCERPT

Is America's Pizza Capital Buffalo, New York?

In his new book, 'Buffalo Everything,' Arthur Bovino makes the case that the Nickel City is the ultimate pizza destination.



Arthur Bovino 08.13.18 5:10 AM ET



Courtesy Arthur Bovino

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I've eaten pizza at many of the most well-respected pizzerias in America. For starters, Di Fara in Brooklyn, Pizzeria Bianco in Phoenix, Frank Pepe in New Haven, Pizzeria Beddia in Philadelphia, and Great Lake in Chicago before it closed. They and so many other great places have their merits. But I'm going out on the line and putting a decade of pizza cred built by writing about and visiting hundreds of pizzerias in New York City and across America to say that Buffalo-style pizza is America's most underappreciated regional style.

There, I said it. I'm in love. Buffalo serves some awesome pizza.

Let's be clear: you can, to a lesser degree, get New York-style pizza in Buffalo. The Neapolitan-style wave has landed in the city, too. Pizzaiolo Jay Langfelder's pizza-truck-turned brick-and-mortar restaurant, Jay's Artisan Pizzeria, could be put up against well-regarded masters of the genre in America's other great pizza cities. Roost, chef Martin Danilowic's restaurant in the Crescendo building on Niagara Street on the West Side, serves a tidy menu of pizzas that would cause as much of a stir in New York City as some of its trendier new places, where they plate their pizza in one of the most unique ways I've ever seen. They and a handful of other non-Buffalo-style pizzerias are worth checking out, but you *can* get those *styles* of pizza elsewhere.



 Courtesy Arthur Bovino

You can't really find Buffalo-style pizza in other cities. The dough has the lightness of a focaccia, there's always lots of cheese, and while the sauce does happen to be slightly sweet, that ends up being a nice contrast to the spicy oil pooled in the copious charred, meaty pepperoni.

Buffalo-style pizza has been described as a hybrid of Chicago deep-dish and New York, or somewhere between Detroit's airy, high-lipped cheesy crust and New York City's traditionally thin-crust pies. It's also been compared to a circular version of Sicilian-style pizza, but there's less structure to the undercarriage of Buffalo-style pizza and its signature sweet sauce is nothing like what you get at places that make the best Sicilian slices.

I'd flip the description. Buffalo-style pizza is typically a cup-and-char pepperoni pizza, one with a slim, sometimes non-existent crust coastline with ingredients out to, and sometimes even over the edges, a thick, airy undercarriage with little to no structural integrity that's topped by a sweet sauce and enough cheese to nearly always guarantee a cheese pull. If you were going to use other regional styles to describe it, I'd say it's a Detroit amount of cheese with a Motor City trim, a Maine undercarriage (think Portland's Micucci's or Slab), and a New York City soul.

One of my favorite pizza experts, a *Buffalonian* pizza expert who has anonymously reviewed about 100 of the city's pizzas (he's shooting to have reviewed 150 by the end of 2018), and who goes by the handle SexySlices, defines Buffalo-style pizza thusly:

"It has to have cup-and-char pepperoni with grease in the center of each cup and blackening on the top along the rim. A hefty portion of cheese with good browning (some places make it super-dark). Buffalo-style is traditionally an overdone pie, and ordering 'well-done' on top of that is common. The sauce is rich, ladled generously, and a little sweet. It has a thick dough that fluffs up consistently to the edge of a crispy, buttery crust that's typically charred and caked in excess with a super intense, oven-dried sauce."

Buffalonians love their pizza as much as Angelenos love doughnuts (have you seen how many doughnut shops they have?). "You're naturally eating pizza at least once a week," SexySlices told me. "You're not even counting. Pizza and wings—there's no such thing as just getting pizza."

According to *The Buffalo News*, the number of pizzerias went from 62 in 1969 to 274 by 1989 to 360 in 1998. Keep in mind that over that period of time, according to the census, the population went from 462,768 to 292,819. Today? There are fewer people (256,902). But, at least according to Buffalo's local tourism agency Visit Buffalo Niagara, at last count there were more than 600 pizzerias in Buffalo and its immediate surrounding urban area. That means if we're conservative and say just 600, there's at least one pizzeria for every 428 people in the Nickel City. Compare that to New York City, whose some estimated 1,600 pizzerias serve 8.538 million people. That's right, New York City, which has 33 times the number of people as Buffalo, per capita, has less than four times the number of pizzerias. And *you* thought you loved pizza.

And no, they're not national chains. Sure, you'll see a few here and there. I counted 13 Pizza Huts, six each of Domino's and Little Caesar's, and one Papa John's and Jet's. For the most part, the 600 seem to be independently owned pizzerias. That leaves some 573 independently owned and operated pizzerias.

"I was a nervous wreck when Domino's was going to open 27 units," Bocce Club owner Jim Pacciotti told me. "The ones they opened didn't really take off. People are used to what they're used to."

For the pizza-lover uninitiated in the Nickel City, Buffalo should be a pizza destination, though because of a pizza culture largely based on takeout, it's one of the country's great cities for pizza while eating it straight from the box in the parking lot on the hood of your car, or with the box warming your lap with the smell of hot cardboard, melted cheese, and cup-and-char pepperoni on a cold winter day. And that is the move for pizza nerds, because the truth is that Buffalo pizza isn't a style that I'd say improves as it sits. There's something about the excess of cheese, pepperoni grease, and cup-and-char that really exists at its peak perfection when it's fresh from the oven.

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America's pizza culture is generally traced back to Lombardi's in New York City in 1905. Buffalo's pizza culture goes all the way back to 1927, when Fioravanti Santora started selling pizza by the slice out of his homemade ice cream shop. That means Buffalo's oldest pizzeria preceded New York City icons like Patsy's (1933) and John's of Blecker Street (1929). Frank Pepe of New Haven, generally regarded as one of America's best pizzerias, was founded just two years before Santora's, in 1925.

Outside Buffalo, the city's probably most well-known as being represented by Bocce Club Pizza. But articles written by folks who sweep in and out of town after a few days get an incomplete picture of the pizza scene. Bocce Club is a great pie, and it's a great Buffalo-style pizza, but Buffalo-style pizza is not Bocce Club Pizza. Sure, it has cup-and-char, a thick but airy crust, and a sweet sauce, but if you look at it side by side with some of the city's other pizzas, you'll see the difference. Nobody else does toppings that go out past the crust. And in Buffalo, the distinction of best-known pizza is shared with La Nova. Wherever you go in Buffalo, prepare yourself for some of the cheesiest, most pepperoni-topped, and indulgent pies you've ever had. This is hibernation pizza. Prepare for a pie that isn't a gut-bomb, but that probably doubles or triples the caloric intake enjoyed in a New York City slice. You probably *could* go outside and shovel, but wouldn't it be more fun to just stay inside and have a few drinks?

Right about now, some of my fellow Manhattan pizza-loving friends are shaking their heads in disbelief. "You think *this* is good pizza?" I'm Long Island born (Queens, actually), so my hyper-regional style is technically geographically the grandma pie if we're talking anything beyond New York thin-crust style. And when it comes to that, I'm generally a fan of the thinnest thin crust New York City slices I can find. I've had flashes where I see the merits of Chicago deep-dish and will even call that casserole a pizza on days that I'm feeling generous. So believe me, I get the skepticism. In addition, I've heard the frustration from Buffalo expats who have bemoaned to me their inability to persuade friends and significant others on the merits of Buffalo pizza, heard locals talk about the snobby Long Island kids who attend Buffalo's universities and say, "that's not pizza."

But I've also heard the local pizza pride. Sitting in Duff's and waiting for an order of wings, I overheard the kids at the next table discussing one of the most recent online lists put out by *Travel + Leisure*, "These Are the Cities with America's Favorite Pizza." Buffalo, it seems, much to some people's surprise, is at number three on the list just below Detroit, and somewhat dubiously, Phoenix (Does one amazing spot make it the best city for pizza in America)? "I was in Miami and they didn't have charred pepperoni, you had to ask for it as extra," one kid says. "It makes you realize how spoiled we are for good pizza."

Pepperoni as a baseline? I can get behind that. And I'd argue that in an era where pizza lovers are falling in love again with America's regional styles—the Emmy Squareds of the world popularizing Detroit-style pizza, Speedy Romeo drawing attention to aspects of St. Louis-style, Slice pizza blogger turned pizzaiolo Adam Kuban demonstrating the appeal of bar pizza—Buffalo pizza could be the next big thing. In fact, I'd argue we're already eating it: Domino's and Papa John's sweet sauces and lack of structural integrity have more in common with Buffalo-style pizza than a slice at Joe's. And while I'm doing a disservice to Buffalo pizza by mentioning both of those national chains, my point is to draw a line of comparison to the financial and nationwide success those qualities have already exhibited.

Before we get back to all the great places in Buffalo, I'll go one step further. There's a slice shop in New York City's NoLita neighborhood called Prince Street Pizza that replaced the original Ray's Pizza. Before it opens, there's usually a line out the door for the Spicy Spring square slice, a light, airy pock-bottomed crust weighed down with a copious cheese coating and a healthy ladling of fra diavolo sauce. There's little structural integrity and the slice is known for being topped with so many small curled up slices of spicy-oil-filled, black-edged pepperoni that they spill off the sides onto the plate. Sure, it's a

square and yes that sauce is a little spicy, but that Instagram darling, that super popular Spicy Spring slice, *that's* pretty much Buffalo pizza.

Get your copy of Arthur Bovino's Buffalo Everything tomorrow!

Excerpted from Buffalo Everything by Arthur Bovino.

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MONEY MAN

Billionaire Pedophile Jeffrey Epstein Has a Secret Charity. Here's Who It Gave Money To.

Billionaire pedophile [Jeffrey Epstein](#) may have stopped trumpeting his million-dollar donations to charities in light of accusations he [molested dozens of underage girls](#). But he continues to quietly distribute his wealth—including to the nonprofits of Deepak Chopra, Elton John and a doctor linked to President Trump—through a shadowy private foundation called “Gratitude America, Ltd.,” The Daily Beast has learned.

Gratitude America, Ltd. was launched in 2012 to back “organizations around the world that seek to celebrate the United States of America and the American Ideals,” the group stated in its application for tax-exempt status. Those ideals, the nonprofit added, include “liberty, equality, democracy, individualism, unity, and diversity.” At the time, Epstein was three years out of jail, but disturbing allegations from his alleged victims, including one who claimed Epstein kept her as a [“sex slave” for his famous friends](#), continued to hound him.

Epstein apparently needed some favorable news to change the narrative and embarked on a public relations crusade that depicted him as a renowned “science philanthropist,” rather than a convicted sex offender.

Not to be confused with [GratitudeAmerica, Inc.](#), a Florida nonprofit for veterans, Epstein's latest private foundation doesn't appear to have a website or online presence. The only traces of the group lie in tax returns, a fundraising site for multiple sclerosis, and a book of abstracts from a 2017 academic conference in California.

In 2016 and 2017, Gratitude America Ltd. funded an all-girls school in Manhattan, a youth tennis program, cancer charities, Harvard's famous theater troupe, posh New York arts societies at Lincoln Center and the Met, and a nonprofit linked to the wife of a former Harvard president who flew on Epstein's private jet, dubbed the “Lolita Express” by the press.

Indeed, a review of tax returns reveals Epstein's foundation donated at least \$1.84 million to host of causes, including \$15,000 to the Hewitt School, the elite private girls school on the Upper East Side; \$30,000 to the O'Gorman Garden, a

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Harlem preschool; and \$25,000 to the Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Maryland.

Gratitude America's biggest donations included a \$375,000 payout to the International Peace Institute Inc., a New York think tank staffed by former United Nations officials and run by Norwegian diplomat Terje Rød-Larsen, and \$225,000 to the Melanoma Research Alliance—both of which Epstein boasted of supporting financially in years past.

ABUSERS

How a Billionaire Predator and Trump Pal Escaped #MeToo

Kate Briquélet



As The Daily Beast previously reported, Epstein once cultivated a web presence that portrayed a multi-hyphenate superhero: an “armistice activist” with the peace institute; one of the largest funders of scientists around the world” who helped to curb ivory poaching; and an “education activist” who delivered the Virgin Islands its first Head Start program.

Yet the 66-year-old financier’s philanthropy has failed to repair his reputation.

In the early Aughts, Epstein was known to rub elbows with the likes of Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, Woody Allen and Kevin Spacey. His enigmatic rise from Dalton physics teacher to “international moneyman of mystery” who palled around with Prince Andrew and British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell was chronicled by the tabloids and *New York* magazine and *Vanity Fair*, which in 2003 reported, “Epstein is known about town as a man who loves women—lots of them, mostly young.”

“He’s reckless, and he’s gotten more so,” one former business associate told *Vanity Fair* of Epstein, who owns mansions in Palm Beach, Florida and Manhattan’s Upper East Side, along with a ranch in New Mexico. “Money does that to you. He’s breaking the oath he made to himself—that he would never do anything that would expose him in the media.”

Trump, too, once alluded to Epstein’s penchant for younger women. “I’ve known Jeff for fifteen years. Terrific guy,” Trump told *New York* in 2002. “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. No doubt about it—Jeffrey enjoys his social life.”

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Four years later, Epstein was arrested after this “social life” became the subject of a 13-month investigation by Palm Beach detectives.

Police say Epstein was sexually abusing girls as young as 13, many of them from poor families and broken homes. And, according to [lawsuits filed by victims](#), [Epstein loaned](#) them out to his famous friends. Epstein also allegedly paid girls to recruit other teen victims, telling one recruiter, “The younger, the better.” (The money manager [denied trafficking girls to his friends](#), saying in one court filing that he and his pals were “the subject of the most outlandish and offensive attacks, allegations, and plain inventions.”)

Authorities had enough evidence to send Epstein to prison for life. But under a suspiciously sweet plea deal inked with former U.S. Attorney and current Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, Epstein served only 13 months of an 18-month sentence inside a private wing of the county stockade, mostly on “work release” for 16 hours a day, six days a week.

Epstein pleaded guilty to two state charges: solicitation of prostitution and procurement of minors for prostitution. Now the [Department of Justice is investigating](#) that secret plea agreement, which a federal [judge ruled violated the law](#), and whether Acosta and other prosecutors “committed professional misconduct.”

[In the #MeToo era](#), calls for justice for Epstein’s alleged victims are growing louder. *The Miami Herald* and Epstein accuser Virginia Roberts Giuffre, who claims Epstein forced her to have sex with Prince Andrew and Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz (allegations all three men vehemently deny), [are fighting to unseal court records](#) in a defamation lawsuit Giuffre filed against Epstein’s friend, Ghislaine Maxwell. Lawyers for Epstein’s alleged victims say records will show Epstein and Maxwell trafficked girls for the benefit of their high-flying friends. Maxwell, who has denied Giuffre’s claims, settled the case on the eve of trial in 2017.

Last week, the *New York Post* revealed that the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office had [“graphic and detailed evidence”](#) of Epstein’s assault of minor girls before it argued for leniency during a 2011 sex-offender registration hearing. At the time, a judge balked at the DA’s request to register Epstein as a “low risk” offender, saying, “I have to tell you, I’m a little overwhelmed because I have never seen the prosecutor’s office do anything like this.”

The constant trickle of bad press has resulted in some charities and political candidates keeping their distance from the perverted hedge-funder.

In 2006, former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson said he'd distribute Epstein's \$50,000 campaign donation to charities throughout the state, while New York's gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer and attorney general hopeful Mark Green returned donations of \$50,000 and \$10,000, respectively, from the billionaire.

In 2015, nonprofits including Florida's Ballet Palm Beach told Reuters they'd no longer accept Epstein's money following Giuffre's headline-grabbing allegations. "The further I can keep myself from anything like that the better," the ballet's founder said.

When Epstein tried donating to House Democrats last October, they quickly returned a \$10,000 offering from the political pariah. One spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee told The Daily Beast, "Without second thought, the DCCC immediately refunded this unsolicited donation."

Still, others have quietly welcomed Epstein's cash. His former charity, the C.O.U.Q. Foundation, donated \$25,000 to Bill and Hillary Clinton's charity, according to C.O.U.Q.'s 2006 tax return. The group is listed among past and present donors on the Clinton Foundation's website.

Harvard also kept a \$6.5-million check from Epstein to fund the university's Program for Evolutionary Dynamics, the Harvard Crimson reported in 2006.

In March of this year, The Daily Beast revealed Epstein had funded the nonprofit of a Russian model who advocates for women entrepreneurs.

And Harvard's Hasty Pudding Institute of 1770, which includes the university's historic theater troupe, noted Epstein among its top donors in 2018, under the category "The Guardians of the Sphinx."

Dirty Money

In the year leading up to Gratitude America's creation, Epstein's connections with his prominent friends were under scrutiny. One of his alleged victims, Virginia Roberts, came forward to the Daily Mail in February 2011, to say she was only 15 when Epstein recruited her "to be a prostitute for him and his friends," including Prince Andrew.

The same month, Epstein downplayed his Florida conviction, telling the New York Post, "I'm not a sexual predator, I'm an 'offender'. It's the difference between a murderer and a person

who steals a bagel.” These comments followed a New York judge’s ruling that Epstein must register as a Level 3 sex offender, which meant he’s at “high risk of repeat offense and a threat to public safety exists.”

The shocking allegations didn’t stop Epstein, however, from issuing a flurry of press releases heralding his support of the sciences. In January 2012, “The Jeffrey Epstein Foundation” announced its sponsorship of a conference organized by MIT’s Marvin Minsky, under the headline, “Top Scientists Meet to Discuss Greatest Threats to the Earth.”

In March 2012, another announcement declared, “Science Philanthropist, Jeffrey Epstein, Convenes a Conference of Nobel Laureates to Define Gravity.” It was followed days later with a different bulletin: “Jeffrey Epstein, Science Philanthropist, Organizes a Global Doomsday Conference.”

One month later, Gratitude America Ltd. was formed in the Virgin Islands “to support the expression of gratitude for the ideals of America,” according to a tax-exempt application filed with the Internal Revenue Service. (Epstein has specified the Virgin Islands, where he owns a private isle, as his permanent address in annual sex-offender registrations.)

“Fundraising, if any, will take place via personal solicitation by the Members of the Board,” the group’s IRS application stated. “The initial contribution to the organization will be from the primary donor, Mr. Epstein.”

The group said it would “carry out its purpose through the direct funding of celebrations and other planned events, including symposiums, lectures, and galas, both within the United States and abroad planned by third parties and other non-profit organizations and governmental entities,” via “private donations from individuals.”

The disgraced financier’s group, however, didn’t list any revenues until 2015 or any contributions to charities until the 2016 and 2017 tax years.

Gratitude America Ltd. donated \$150,000 each in 2017 to MIT and the Kuhn Foundation, run by writer Robert Lawrence Kuhn, who hosts a TV program called “Closer to Truth.” (One biography on the Chopra Foundation’s site says Kuhn is “an international corporate strategist, investment banker and expert on China” and has “a doctorate in brain research.”)

Rather than listing Gratitude America Ltd. as a donor in its own 990 tax form in 2017, Kuhn recorded a \$150,000 donation from the “Jeffrey Epstein Foundation” in care of “Richard Kahn KBRK Associates 57,” which appears to be a misspelling of Kahn’s business, HBRK. Kahn, who served on Epstein’s previous nonprofit ventures, is the president of Gratitude America, according to tax returns. He runs a corporation called

HBRK Associates, Inc., New York state corporation filings show.

SCANDAL

Silenced by the Sleaziest Billionaire

Vicky Ward



Epstein also funded a nonprofit that produces a TV show hosted by the wife of Larry Summers, a Harvard economist and Treasury secretary under former President Clinton.

In 2016, Gratitude America Ltd. shelled out \$110,000 to Verse Video Education. The Cambridge, Massachusetts-based nonprofit produces the PBS show *Poetry in America*, whose creator and host is Harvard professor Elisa New. Verse's 2016 tax return named New as the group's president but doesn't include specific donors for its \$1.38 million in total contributions.

New is married to Summers, Harvard University's former president, who hobnobbed with Epstein in elite international relations groups and, like Bill Clinton, flew on Epstein's private jet. *Vanity Fair's* 2003 feature mentions Epstein proudly displaying Summers' letter of commitment to "the Epstein Program for Mathematical Biology and Evolutionary Dynamics" at Harvard. Epstein "says he was reluctant to have his name attached to the program, but Summers persuaded him," the article said.

Summers came up again during an October 2015 deposition of Alan Dershowitz, who faced a now-settled defamation suit from two attorneys for Epstein's victims. Dershowitz testified that Epstein's former assistant, Sarah Kellen, worked "at the Harvard office" where Epstein held meetings with university brass including Summers.

Asked about the women in Epstein's entourage, Dershowitz said they served coffee or took notes during academic meetings. "And these people were seen not only by me. They were seen by Larry Summers, they were seen by [genetics professor George] Church, they were seen by Marvin Minsky, they were seen by some of the most eminent academics and scholars in the world. There was no hint or suggestion of anything sexual or improper in the presence of these people."

Epstein's largesse has likewise extended to Harvard's storied theater troupe. The Hasty Pudding Institute of 1770, one of Epstein's past beneficiaries, received \$50,000 from Gratitude America Ltd. in 2016. The Institute includes the Hasty Pudding Club, the country's oldest social club, and Hasty Pudding

Theatricals, the oldest theatrical organization in the U.S., and the Harvard Krokodilos a capella group.

On The Hasty Pudding Institute's website, Epstein's name tops a roster of 2018 donors called "the Guardians of the Sphinx" for their donations of \$50,000 or more, while Kahn's business, HBRK Associates, is listed under a "sponsors" page for a \$50,000-plus donation.

Meanwhile, Gratitude America Ltd. has also supported one of President Trump's allies for two straight years, a review of tax returns shows.

The Bruce and Marsha Moskowitz Foundation received \$100,000 in 2016 and \$50,000 in 2017, Gratitude America Ltd.'s filings state. Bruce Moskowitz, a Palm Beach doctor, was revealed by ProPublica as one of President Trump's Mar-a-Lago cronies secretly influencing policies within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

But in its own 990 tax returns, Moskowitz's nonprofit says it received money from Jeffrey Epstein, not Gratitude America.

Moskowitz—whose name was found in Epstein's "little black book" alongside other doctors, under the category "medical"—listed two donations worth \$50,000 in 2016 and 2017 from "Jeffrey Epstein/HBRK Assoc., Inc."

It's unclear why Gratitude America Ltd. registered a \$100,000 donation in its tax filings for 2017, while Moskowitz recorded a donation for half that amount.

The Crohn's Colitis Foundation of America, which Epstein has repeatedly funded since at least 2012, received a total of \$20,000 in 2016 and 2017.

Epstein also donated \$10,000 in 2016 to the Women Global Cancer Initiative Inc., a nonprofit run by Next modeling agency founder Faith Kates. And he gave \$10,000 to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai and \$5,000 to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

In 2017, Epstein gave \$75,000 to the Cancer Research Wellness Institute, a California nonprofit created by a grandson of alternative-cancer treatment doctor Max Gerson, and \$25,000 to Nautilus Think, a New York nonprofit that publishes a science magazine. Epstein additionally contributed \$50,000 to the University of Arizona Foundation, and the Tucson research university listed Gratitude America Ltd. as a sponsor of its 2017 Science of Consciousness conference inside a book of abstracts.

He donated more money in 2017, with \$15,000 going to "Friends of Elton John," which appears to be the the Elton John AIDS Foundation, a charity Epstein announced funding for years before.

Gratitude America listed a donation of \$50,000 to the Chopra Foundation; \$60,000 to a group labeled as "Association Mind Education" in Rome, Italy; and \$50,000 to the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) Federation of New York.

Epstein appears to have provided all of the funding for the International Police & Fire Chaplains Association in 2017 with a \$50,000 donation. The group, based in Taylor, Michigan, reported gross receipts of \$50,000 or less in 2017, and for the last several years, IRS records show.

The billionaire has supported a slew of New York nonprofits dedicated to the arts, too.

He gave \$25,000 to the Film Society of Lincoln Center and \$50,000 to MET Orchestra Musicians in 2017. He also donated \$10,000 to a Brooklyn-based group, the Independent Filmmaker Project (Gratitude America appears to have miscalled them "Independent Feature Project" in its tax return but used IFP's same address).

Gratitude America said it donated \$50,000 to the New York Concert Artists Association in 2016, but the Association denied receiving any funds from Epstein or his foundation.

This year, Gratitude America Ltd. apparently donated to prominent litigator Stephen Susman's fundraising page for Bike MS, a cycling event that raises money for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Epstein's donation of \$10,000 was the highest contribution on the website, next to another \$10,000 from Susman's wife, Ellen. (In 2017, Gratitude America noted a \$5,000 donation to "Walk MS" in New Jersey that appears to be unrelated to Susman's payout.)

Epstein and Susman were acquainted as early as 2010, when Epstein was on probation for his Florida sex crimes. Epstein traveled to New York several times to meet Susman, who, according to a letter in Epstein's probation file, said their meetings were to discuss "potential claims against D.B. Zwirn," a hedge fund that collapsed in 2008 and reportedly cost Epstein millions, according to the *Palm Beach Post*.

The Daily Beast left messages for all the schools and charities that Epstein's group listed as beneficiaries. Some representatives said they didn't know who operated Gratitude America Ltd. Others said they never received any such donations.

In an email, Howard Straus, president of the Cancer Research Wellness Institute, said his group has "NEVER received a donation of that magnitude from ANYONE."

"I would know," Straus continued. "We are perennially short of funds, and would love to be the recipient of such largesse, but not from sexual predators."

Jennifer Park of New York Concert Artists said her group never received a donation from Gratitude America. "I am sorry but you have completely wrong information," she said in an email, adding that her nonprofit was perhaps confused with another group.

After reviewing Gratitude America's tax return, Park again stated her group shouldn't be listed among the foundation's recipients. "This is false, and whoever put our organization name must be responsible for any consequences," Park added. "We have never received any donation from what you describe."

Lisa Thomas, director of publicity for the Film Society of Lincoln Center, said Gratitude America's \$25,000 donation "was an anonymous gift for our 44th Chaplin Award Gala," which honored actor Robert De Niro in May 2017.

"Mr. Epstein did not attend the event and has not been a patron of ours before or since," Thomas said in an email.

Epstein's \$50,000 donation to the University of Arizona's Center for Consciousness Studies in 2017 "was a one-time anonymous gift," said Chris Sigurdson, the university's vice president for communications.

John Steele, the publisher of Nautilus Think, told The Daily Beast he met Epstein in 2017 but he couldn't recall under what circumstances. Steele said Epstein, who's supported many scientific causes, liked his magazine.

"He made a one-time donation and that was the extent of it," Steele said.

The Same Players

Gratitude America, Ltd. is run by a trio of Epstein operatives who were also involved in his previous nonprofits. Indeed, they were the only officers of the following now-shuttered groups: the C.O.U.Q. Foundation; J. Epstein Virgin Islands Foundation; and Epstein Interests.

Darren K. Indyke—a longtime Epstein lawyer—is vice president of Gratitude America, per the 2017 tax return. In the years prior, he was treasurer.

Indyke was active in all three of Epstein's former foundations, as a trustee of Epstein Interests and vice president of both the C.O.U.Q. Foundation (also known as the Florida Science Foundation) and J. Epstein Virgin Islands Foundation (which went by Enhanced Education).

It was Indyke whom New York authorities contacted in March 2015 for information on why one of Epstein's charities, the Virgin Islands-based Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation, should be

exempt from state law, [Reuters reported](#). Months later, Indyke was present for the deposition of Dershowitz, and is currently representing [Lana Pozhidaeva](#), the model whose nonprofit Epstein bankrolled in 2017, in a [trademark application](#) for her company.

Erika Kellerhals, a Virgin Islands tax attorney, is Gratitude America's secretary and treasurer. She was also secretary, treasurer and trustee of the J. Epstein Virgin Islands Foundation, according to a 2015 registration statement filed with the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau.

Kellerhals declined to comment when reached by The Daily Beast. Indyke and Kahn, reached by phone before hanging up, did not return further messages.

JUSTICE

Trump's Labor Secretary Broke the Law in Epstein Case: Judge

Pilar Melendez



Epstein was president of Gratitude America, Ltd. from 2012 until 2015, when one of his associates, Richard D. Kahn, assumed the role. That year, Gratitude America, Ltd. recorded revenues for the first time, with a single \$10 million donation from a mysterious company called BV70 LLC, according to a review of tax returns.

Once a licensed CPA and former treasurer of the C.O.U.Q. Foundation, Kahn wasn't mentioned as a Gratitude America officer until 2015. The 2015 registration statement for Gratitude America lists Richard Kahn as president and Jeffrey Epstein as director.

In the document, the group said it wouldn't solicit donations in Florida, New York and the Virgin Islands as initially planned.

The C.O.U.Q. Foundation filed tax returns in New York as early as 1999 and disbanded in 2012, according to records filed with the state Charities Bureau.

Epstein Interests was active from 1992 to 2012, tax returns reveal, while the J. Epstein Virgin Islands Foundation appears to have been largely inactive. The latter was incorporated in 2000, but The Daily Beast could only find a tax return for 2002, despite the group filing a registration statement in New York for 2015.

Some of Epstein's groups appeared to shuffle money to each other. In 2008, Epstein Interests noted a \$100,000 grant to the C.O.U.Q. Foundation. During the 2009 tax year, C.O.U.Q.

listed Epstein's charity, "Enhanced Education," as a contributor of \$200,000.

Aside from participating in Epstein's charities, the trio of nonprofit operatives also made donations to political candidates backed by Epstein, according to a review of state and federal election records.

On July 23, 2018, Epstein, Indyke and Kahn each donated \$2,700—the federal limit for individual donations—to the primary campaign of Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett of the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Kellerhals and partners at her law firm have been frequent donors to Plaskett, records show.)

In an itemized receipt of one donation, Kahn listed his occupation as "attorney" and the name of his employer as "self." But according to New York's Office of Court Administration, the 46-year-old Kahn was never registered as a lawyer in the state.

The trio of Epstein, Indyke and Kahn also donated to Plaskett on Aug. 4, 2016, each for a total of \$5,400 toward her general and primary campaigns. On July 25, 2016, Kellerhals sent Plaskett \$2,200 for the primaries and \$1,350 for the general election.

On July 3, 2014, both Kahn and Indyke donated \$2,600 to Plaskett's primary campaign, while Kellerhals donated a total of \$1,000 in July 2013 and January 2014.

Meanwhile, Indyke, listing his occupation as "attorney," donated \$5,200 to New Mexico gubernatorial candidate Gary King's campaign on June 17, 2014. Six days later, Kahn's business, HBRK Associates Inc., gave King \$5,200.

In the weeks that followed, businesses connected to Epstein's St. Thomas, Virgin Islands address donated more than \$35,000 to King's campaign.

JEGE, LLC, which appears to own Epstein's private jet, donated \$5,200 in September 2014, while "JEGE, Inc" donated \$5,000 in July 2014. Companies called "FT RealEstate," "Laurel, Inc.," and "Nautilus, Inc." each contributed \$5,000, and "Maple, Inc." and "Neptune LLC" gave \$5,200 apiece.

King told the Santa Fe New Mexican he would return the money, saying, "My campaign has had an ongoing rule that I would not accept any contributions directly from Mr. Epstein and upon further review, we have learned that he has an interest in the companies in question."

Epstein had also donated to King's 2006 run for attorney general. At the time, King said he would return a \$15,000 donation from Epstein "to avoid any appearance of impropriety," the Santa Fe New Mexican reported.

"I don't think I've ever met him personally. He knows other members of my family better," said King, whose father, former Gov. Bruce King, sold Epstein his 10,000-acre Zorro Ranch in Stanley, New Mexico.

Bruce King and former Gov. Bill Richardson were listed side by side in Epstein's [little black book](#), which was snatched by Epstein's former house manager, Alfredo Rodriguez, who worked for the financier in 2004 and 2005.

The address book, [obtained by Gawker in 2015](#), contained the names of suspected Epstein victims, as well as boldfaced names including Courtney Love, David Blaine, Alec Baldwin and Donald, Ivana and Ivanka Trump.

Records show that in 2007, a year after Richardson returned Epstein's money for his gubernatorial run, Kahn and his wife each donated \$2,300 to Richardson's presidential campaign. Indyke and his wife each donated \$2,300 days later.

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