

I Worked With Michael Cohen And Covered Donald Trump. Guess Which Man I Trust?

By Brian Karem **salon** 18 May 2024 (@ 0545 Hrs EDT)

From Brian Karem: For The Record, I Spent Four Years In Relative Close Proximity To **Trump** On A Daily Basis. I Heard Him Scream At Staff Two Rooms Away In The White House. I Saw Him Lie Continuously. I Witnessed His Demeanor, His Anger, His Frustration And His Bully-Like Antics With All Of Those Around Him. I Heard Him Dismiss Some Of His Supporters At A Rally As “Suckers” And Know From My Interaction With Him That He Cares Little What Others Think. His Only Relations Are Purely Transactional And The Only Person On This Planet He Cares About Is Himself.

To Listen To The Pundits Inside And Outside Of The Courtroom, The Manhattan Felony Case Against Former **President Trump** Rests On The Testimony And Cross-Examination Of Former Trump Fixer Michael Cohen. I Disagree.

Cohen, Once **Trump's** Personal Attorney, Closest Employee And Greatest Ally, Left Trump's Inner Circle After Being Convicted Of Lying On **Trump's** Behalf And Has Since Become One Of The Former President's Greatest Tormentors After Spending Time In A Federal Prison.

His Vituperative Ad Hominem Rants Against **Trump** Are Well Known. Many Have Gone Viral. Cohen, For Example, Is Singularly Responsible For The Popular Term “*Vonshitzinpants*” As Applied To **Trump**, Which Has Led To Many A Social Media Meme.

Trump's Defense Team Has Tried To Capture That Anger And Encourage Cohen To Encourage To Engage In That Bombast Inside The Courtroom But Has So Far Failed. According To Reporters Inside The Courtroom, Cohen Has Remained Calm, Admitting His Anger But Showing None Of It From The Stand.

Defense Attorney Todd Blanche Upped The Ante On Thursday, Purposely Raising His Voice As He Engaged In Cross-Examination Of Cohen. Blanche Painted Cohen As A Prolific Liar With A Bone To Pick Against His Former Boss And Tried To Get Him To Show His Anger As He “Undertook An Aggressive Bid To Undermine Former **Trump** Lawyer Michael Cohen’s Credibility,” ABC News Reported.

All Of That Could Be True, But It Doesn’t Prove Cohen Wasn’t Telling The Truth About **Donald Trump**. And That’s The Conundrum. Fortunately, As Norm Ornstein, Emeritus Scholar At The American Enterprise Institute, Said On Mary Trump’s Podcast Thursday, We Don’t Have To Rely On Just Cohen’s Word. “I Believe Him Because Of The Receipts, The Tapes And The Hard Evidence,” Ornstein Explained. Jen Taub, Professor At Western New England University School Of Law, Also Speaking On Mary Trump’s Podcast Said She Believes Cohen’s Testimony. She Once Had Him As A Guest Speaker In A College Course She Teaches And Found Him To Be Credible — And Forthcoming About His Past Indiscretions.

On The Stand, Blanche Tried To Cross-Up Cohen On Discrepancies Between His Testimony And What Previous Witnesses Said About His Desire For A Cooperation Agreement, A Presidential Pardon, A Job In The White House And A Phone Call That

May Or May Not Have Been About Paying Off Former Adult Film Actress Stormy Daniels.

“You Told People You Would Like To Be Attorney General?” Blanche Asked Cohen.

“I Don’t Recall That,” Cohen Responded.

According To Those In The Courtroom, Blanche’s Voice Rose As He Interrogated Cohen With Phone Records And Text Messages Over Cohen’s Claim That He Spoke By Phone To Trump About Stormy Daniels’ Hush Money Payment. It Was, According To Many, The Toughest Moment For Cohen And The Best For **Trump** During The Entire Trial.

The Theory, Spoken By Others And Intimated In The Exchange That It Was *Cohen’s* Idea To Pay Off The Adult Film Star For Trump And That He Lied About Speaking To Trump About It. Whose Ever Idea It Was, The Fact Is That There Is A Paper Trail **Proving** That Trump *Repaid* Cohen, And That Is A *Huge Factor* In At Least One Felony Charge Related To The IRS Reporting Of That Repayment.

CNN’s Anderson Cooper, However, Apparently Wasn’t Impressed With Cohen’s Performance In The Cross-Examination Thursday, Calling It “Severely Damaging” To The Prosecution’s Case. “If I Was A Juror In This Case Watching That, I Would Think ‘This Guy’s Making This Up As He’s Going Along, Or He’s Making Up This Particular Story Up,” Cooper Added.

Stephen Collinson Agreed, Writing For CNN Digital Said “Donald Trump Finally Had A Good Day In Court,” After Cohen’s Cross-Examination On Thursday.

Longtime Republican Lawyer George Conway, On The Other Hand, An Eyewitness In The Courtroom, Posted On X (Formerly Twitter) That, *“This Cross Is Remarkable Today Because It Has Not Addressed At All Cohen’s Testimony In This Case Or Any Of The Facts In This Case. It’s An Overlong And Ineffective Examination On Everything *But* This Case.”*

Finally, Former White House Ethics Czar Norm Eisen, Also An Eyewitness In The Courtroom Wrote In His Courtroom Diary, “Like In A Heavyweight Boxing Match, Blows Were Landed And The Defense Scored Points — But In My View, Cohen Stayed On His Feet. He Was Rocked By One Blow On The Chin But There Was No Knockout Punch.”

At The End Of The Day The Only Opinions That Matter Will Be Those Of The Members Of The Jury. So, I Don’t Care That Cooper Wasn’t Impressed By Cohen’s Performance And Find It Completely Asinine To Tell Me What He Would Think “If I Was A Juror.”
He Isn’t One.

When I Managed A Reporting Staff, It Was My Standing Rule For Reporters To *Observe* The Jury And *Report* Their Reactions To Key Testimony. Only Eisen Offered Me That Regarding Blanche’s Cross-Examination Of Cohen. “I Was Watching The Jury Throughout The Day,” Eisen Said, “And In Particular When The Cross-Examination Was At Its Most Intense, As On This Point. Their Scrutiny Of Cohen And Blanche Was As Intense As The Questioning Itself, At Least At Its Hotter Moments. Unlike Prior Points

When Their Attitudes Appeared More Transparent — Such As When Cohen Candidly Spoke Directly To Jurors For Things He Did Out Of Loyalty To Trump — I Could Not Read What They Thought Today.

Apparently The Jury, Like The Rest Of The World, Wonders Who We Should Believe: Donald Trump Or Michael Cohen. Unlike The Rest Of Us, They Will Also Be Able To Review All Of The Evidence Before Reaching A Decision.

For The Record, I Spent Four Years In Relative Close Proximity To Trump On A Daily Basis. I Heard Him Scream At Staff From Two Rooms Away In The White House. I Saw Him Lie Continuously. I Witnessed His Demeanor, His Anger, His Frustration And His Bully-Like Antics With All Of Those Around Him. I Heard Him Dismiss Some Of His Supporters At A Rally As “Suckers” And Know From My Interaction With Him That He Cares Little What Others Think. His Only Relations Are Purely Transactional And The Only Person On This Planet He Cares About Is Himself.

As For Cohen, I Spent A Good Part Of A Year In Close Proximity With Him Researching And Writing His Latest Book, “Revenge,” Which Has Been Referenced In The Current Trial Against **Donald Trump**.

One Of The First Times I Spoke With Michael Cohen I Asked Him A Very Pointed Question: *If **Donald Trump** Hadn't Abandoned Him, Would Cohen Still Be Inside Trump's Circle?*

“Absolutely,” He Said.

Cohen Didn't Cut Corners. He Didn't Equivocate And He Did Not Lie To Me To Make Himself Look Better. He Also Told Me His Dream Job Wasn't Attorney General, But He Wanted To Have The Job Of Counsel To The President Without Being Inside The White House. “That Would Be The Best Of Both Worlds, He Explained. When I Asked Him About Other Jobs At The White House, He Was Candid About That As Well. “I May Have Thought About Them, Even Maybe Thought I Wanted Them, But I Would Be Best In A Hybrid Role,” He Explained. That's Exactly What He Told The Court When Blanche Asked Him In Court Thursday — Nearly Two Years After He Said The Same Thing To Me. His Story Has Remained Consistent.

As I Got To Know Him, I Found That Cohen Was A Complicated Man. He Was Haunted By His Past And Was Determined, In Light Of What He Went Through, To Make Amends. He Knew What He Was Up Against From His Angry Former Boss And A Skeptical Press.

I Know Reporters, Some Of Them Friends, And A Few Close Friends Who Say When Cohen Was With **Trump** He Treated The Press Harshly. “He Did Me Dirty,” One Friend Said Of Cohen. Another Said Cohen Recorded Him Without His Knowledge On An Occasion. [Ed. Note: Perhaps That's Where Hari-Kari Lake Got The Idea To Do Such.] I Don't Know If Cohen Recorded Any Of Our Conversations And I Don't Care. I Do Know That Michael Cohen Has Never Lied To Me Since I Met Him.

I Was Not Part Of The Manhattan Reporting Crowd, So I Cannot Speak To What Michael Cohen Was About Before He Went To Prison. I Can, However, Tell You From Personal Experience That Any Time Spent Behind Bars Is A Humbling Experience. It Will Change You. I Have No Doubt That It Changed Michael Cohen.

Cohen Told Me That Working For **Donald Trump** Was A Dream Come True For Him. It “Was Never About The Money,” He Explained. He Had Ample Opportunity To Make A Lot Of Money Without **Donald Trump**. His Attraction, He Said, Was The Aura Of Celebrity; The Ability To Go Backstage At A Broadway Show And Meet People He Never Thought He’d Be Able To Meet.

Cohen Paid A High Price For That Opportunity. **DONALD TRUMP HAS NEVER PAID THE PRICE FOR ANYTHING HE’S DONE HIS ENTIRE LIFE.**

Cohen Is Playing A Part In Trying To Rectify That. Blanche, Doing His Level Best As A Defense Attorney, Is Trying To Ward Off The Day Of Reckoning For **Trump**. Both Men Are Doing Their Job. I Harbor No Ill Will Against The Defense, And I Applaud Cohen’s Efforts As He Continues To Try To Make Amends For His Past Indiscretions. “That’s All I Can Do,” He Told Me On Numerous Occasions.

Donald Trump, Has Never Had To Make Amends And Everyone Who’s Ever Been In His Inner Circle Has Paid Dearly For Being That Close To His Venomous And Conniving Personality.

It Doesn't Matter What Anderson Cooper, George Conway, Norm Eisen Or Anyone Else, Including Myself, Think About The Testimony Offered By Cohen In The Current Trial.

The Only People Who Matter Are Those On The Jury Who've Heard The Evidence And Will Deliberate Trump's Fate. There Are Some, Notably Financier Anthony Scaramucci Who Spent A (Very) Brief Amount Of Time As Trump's Communication Director, Who Believe There Might Be One Sympathizer On The Jury Who Could Bring About A Hung Jury.

That May Well Be. But This A Manhattan Jury. Donald Trump Has A History Of Deception Well Known To Many In New York. **NEW YORKERS ARE USED TO CON ARTISTS.** [Yar, They Are.] IT IS PART OF THE PATINA OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN MANHATTAN.

I Have Faith In The Jury And That They Won't Be Fooled By Trump. I Believe Michael Cohen. [Ed. Note: As Do I.] Like Ornstein And Mary Trump, I Also Believe The Evidence Is Conclusive Even If You Doubt Cohen, And I Sincerely Hope Donald Trump DECIDES TO TESTIFY. [Ed. Note: Me Pfuckin' Too, Dude!] IT WILL BE HIS UNDOING.

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Brian Karem Is The Former Senior White House Correspondent For Playboy. He Has Covered Every Presidential Administration Since Ronald Reagan, Sued Donald Trump Three Times Successfully To Keep His Press Pass, Spent Time In Jail To Protect A Confidential Source, Covered Wars In The Middle East And Is The Author Of Seven Books. His Latest Is "Free The Press."