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# Nxivm Trial Witness: We Hacked Billionaire Edgar Bronfman Sr.'s Email



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Billionaires



Clare Bronfman, an heiress to the Seagram's liquor fortune, allegedly installed spyware onto her father's computer so Nxivm could monitor him, a witness testified at Raniere's trial this week. AP PHOTO/MARY ALTAFFER

Clare Bronfman and other followers of Keith Raniere, who cofounded and ran the alleged cult Nxivm, hacked into her father's email—the late billionaire Edgar Bronfman Sr.—to monitor him after he told *Forbes* in 2003 that he thought Nxivm was a “cult,” a person involved in the spying campaign testified Tuesday.

A witness, identified only as “Daniela,” testified during the racketeering and sex trafficking trial against Raniere in federal court in Brooklyn that she and other members sent emails to Bronfman Sr. that contained malware, the *New York Times* reports. When the email phishing campaign didn't work, Clare installed the spyware directly onto her father's computer, Daniela said.

The installation was a success.

“I would read all of his correspondence,” Daniela testified, as the *Times* reports. “I would methodically check email by email.”

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The hacking of Edgar Sr. and other people the group believed to be their enemies, started after *Forbes* published a [cover story](#) about Raniere in 2003 questioning the legitimacy of what he claimed was a self-help and executive coaching class. *Forbes* reported that “some people see a darker and more manipulative side” to Raniere, saying he ran “a cult-like program aimed at breaking down his subjects psychologically” while “inducting them into a bizarre world of messianic pretensions, idiosyncratic language and ritualistic practices.”

Frank Parlato, who worked for Nxivm as a PR consultant before revealing the group’s salacious practices on his own blog, says Raniere used the fact that Edgar Sr. called Nxivm a cult as leverage against Clare. Raniere, according to Parlato, told Clare that her father was funding the group’s detractors, including Rick Ross, a cult deprogrammer.

In an email exchange between Edgar and Clare in 2011, which was submitted as evidence in Raniere’s trial, Edgar tried to convince his daughter that he was not funding a conspiracy to take down Nxivm.

“Whether or not you want to believe me, I do not lie,” Edgar wrote to Clare.

Raniere, who started Nxivm with Nancy Salzman, claimed to be one of the smartest and most ethical people in the world. According to prosecutors, he compared himself to Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Einstein. When Daniela asked how hacking, which is against the law, squared with the group’s teachings, Mr. Raniere explained how they’re “going to do unethical things ethically,” she said in court.

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