

Gaslit Nation
American Carnage

Andrea Chalupa
Sarah Kendzior

Congresswoman Tlaib: People love you! And you win! And when your son looks at you and says Momma look you won, bullies don't win. And I said, "baby, they don't because we're gonna go in there and we're gonna impeach the motherf*****."

Theme Music

Sarah Kendzior: I'm Sarah Kendzior, a journalist and scholar of authoritarian states and the author of the book *The View From Flyover Country*.

Andrea Chalupa: I'm Andrea Chalupa a writer, activist, and filmmaker focused on Ukraine and Russia.

Sarah Kendzior: And this is Gaslit Nation, the podcast examining corruption in the Trump Administration and the rise of authoritarianism around the world. And so we are back we recorded, last about a week ago we had no functioning government, and we still have no government and it is causing a disaster nationwide. We've been hearing a lot of talk from pundits saying that Trump in his wisdom couldn't have possibly foreseen the circumstances and that what we're experiencing is

the result of mere partisan disputes and incompetence. They are wrong. This is an accelerationist move where the Trump team can torpedo the economy, cause social unrest, destroy and plunder national landmarks, ostensibly delay their own prosecution and have no oversight while doing so due to the combination of the shutdown and the many new resignations in the cabinet that have led to temporary acting hires — and I recommend that you listen to last week's episode, “Cabinet of Horrors”, to find out more about who's, well, not in charge. And so one thing I want to emphasize is that this is not surprising this was always their intent and I'd warned that this was coming in 2016 right after the election in an article called, "We're Heading into Dark Times" I'm going to read a passage from it published on November 18th, 2016.

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"You can look to the president-elect himself for a vision of what is to come. He has told you his plans all along, though most chose to downplay or deny them. You can even look back to before his candidacy, when in February 2014, he went on Fox News to defend Russia. Why a reality TV host was on Fox News defending Russia is its own story, but here is what Trump said about his desired outcome for the United States:

"You know what solves it? When the economy crashes, when the country goes to total hell and everything is a disaster. Then you'll have a [chuckles], you know, you'll have riots to go back to where we used to be when we were great."

This is what "Make America Great Again" means to Donald Trump. It is how he has operated his businesses, taking advantage of economic disasters like the housing market crash for personal gain. It is why, during a long and painful recession, he made "You're fired" a national catchphrase because he understands that sometimes it feels good to know that the person getting fired, for once, is not you. He said he could shoot someone on 5th Avenue and people would still vote for him, and he said he could grab women "by the pussy" because "When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything."

He is right about that last part. No one holds Trump accountable, because he is exactly what he claimed to be railing against: an elite billionaire with no concern for the average person, a kleptocrat who enjoys taunting people less powerful than him with threats. When you have that kind of money, which Trump was given in birth and further gained through fraud, there are few limitations to the ways you can hurt people.

He is right that the system is rigged: it is rigged in his favor. And now it is rigged against you unless we find a way to stop it.

Trump's vision for the United States is echoed in that of his chief strategist, Steve Bannon, a man who even the very right-wing Glenn Beck describes as a dangerous, sociopathic racist. In 2016, a reporter from the Daily Beast recalled this conversation with Bannon:

"I'm a Leninist," Bannon proudly proclaimed.

Shocked, I asked him what he meant.

"Lenin," he answered, "wanted to destroy the state, and that's my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and

destroy all of today's establishment."

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Sarah Kendzior: So basically all of this that you're seeing — the shutdown, the economic crash, the collusion with hostile states, this is planned chaos, this is not naïveté. And honestly, the only thing that's surprises me is that we didn't see them pull this sooner. So what are your thoughts, Andrea?

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, well I think it's — Bannon is getting what he wanted. I think even though he's gone from the White House, it's his shadow that's over all of this. Even when he left, I know there was an exciting moment as we felt some sense of control as the public when he was finally pushed out, which I think just served the interests at the time of the families' power struggle, Jared and Ivanka notoriously hated him, and he hated them, so even Bannon leaving was a win for this kleptocratic family to tighten its reins, its control, on our government and then, of course, enriching himself. But Bannon never really left, like his damage was already done by installing Trump in the first place, and now you're seeing this very perverse hostage situation. Not just the hostage situation, what Trump is doing by shutting down the government, but Trump himself seems to be a hostage to far-right pundits to far-right media, to that whole Bannon echo chamber, and that's really interesting. And you said you wonder why is it that the far-right media has such a hold on him, versus the credible media that's running story after story exposing him and his family so why does he say — he swats, he

swats the credible media way almost like King Kong clinging on to the Empire State Building, but it's the far-right media that he's a slave to, almost like this *Mean Girls* high school peer-pressure immaturity where he's really desperate to please them. It's infamous now that there was an agreement made on border security, and as soon as the far-right pundits started criticizing it, Trump panicked and is now doing this ridiculous display of his power and abuse-of-power to please these far-right pundits at Fox News and others. I don't know that the deep psychological need he has, why he's doing that, but I think part of it is, as we always say on this show, television created Donald Trump. And so he understands its power because he knows he's a crook, he knows he's a liar, he's had to worm his way through life to dodge investigations to cheat people out of money. And what gave him any sheen of respectability was Mark Burnett of course, *The Apprentice*, as we talked about in "Cabinet of Horrors". We're talking about it again because at the route of the shutdown is Trump understands how powerful this medium is and I think he fears that if it could create him, it could also destroy him, and that's maybe partly why we have a hostage situation within a hostage situation.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah no that's really interesting and especially — you know, we should clarify for audience we're recording this on Monday, it was just announced that Trump plans to give a prime-time speech about the wall and about the shutdown tomorrow night, so, you know, you should be hearing this on Wednesday. We don't know whether that's going to happen or

not. There's a lot of talk about the irresponsibility of the networks airing something like that, very Leni Riefenstahl style you know, because what it's going to do is put forward, you know, his lies, his hate rhetoric, a total lack of facts, in order to continue the strip down of the United States, you know, a shut down that's causing mass suffering, and justify it with false claims, you know, if everything that you said so far is an example or everything that Sarah Huckabee Sanders is saying so far. And to do this in primetime TV, is in a very — it's it's a very effective way to do it, it's his natural habitat. But I agree that there is something to this, you know, I think that Trump understands, you know, how to profit from crisis, he understands how to pray on pain and that's how he's always made his money, he exalted in 9/11, he exulted in the recession, and I think he sees this as another way to, you know, build a kleptocratic product in the wall and also get away with whatever he wants to with no oversight and of course, you know, the key thing is it's not just him it's Trump it's the GOP it's his foreign partners that are in hostile States, you know, a lot of people have goals and they're profiting off of the situation and we still don't fully understand the relationship, you know, with Fox News with people like Sean Hannity who are linked to, to Michael Cohen and others in the administration you know, I think it's interesting that fox hasn't tweeted in something like two months? I think it's been since November 8th? You know there's some strange stuff going on. People say sometimes casually that Fox is Trump's propaganda outlet and that's accurate, but I think it might be that in a more formal organized capacity with, you know, quite

possibly a lot of illegally garnered money floating around, than we generally, you know, discuss it as such, but what are your thoughts about like the speech and and what might be coming?

Andrea Chalupa: I think it's just more good TV in his eyes, I think he's going to be all American carnage in the speech and just blaming everybody else. Fox News just needs to hire him already, like pull him out of the White House and give him his own slot on television. Like he can be like the Stephen Colbert of Fox News like he can just have — be like a talk show host that, I think that's deeply what he wants, I don't think he wants to be president of the United States. I don't think he wants to read anything. He doesn't read, he doesn't think, he just loves to create conflict and tell lies so he would make a perfect talk show host for Fox news, and I think deeply that's his — that's his Rosebud if this were like Citizen Kane.

Sarah Kendzior: That might have been what he wanted until I think all these criminal acts caught up with him and they've certainly caught up with him now

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah now he's stuck, he'll never be able to achieve his dream — it, it's a tragedy.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah all he can do is be president for life like that's the only solution is --

Andrea Chalupa: He'll try, he'll try.

Sarah Kendzior: Or have his family be presidents for life, have like Ivanka or Jared and ensure that whoever comes in after will make him immune from any kind of consequences or any criminal charges and at this point I don't think the satisfaction of just reverting to mere, you know, punditry or reviving *The Apprentice* or whatever, you know, or doing like a Steven Seagal Russia situation. Like none of that's going to have its own appeal to him anymore because of, you know, he's the president. So it's it's scary, you know, I feel like we're at this point that we've been talking about on the show and in our own work for years of just sort of the ultimate crisis, you know, that if he's going to go down he's going to take the country with him, he's going to take the world with him and I think we're seeing Trump boxed in and using whatever resources are at his disposal, you know, we're now talking about the prospect of him declaring a national emergency and invoking executive powers that a lot of people don't really seem to be aware that he has, you know, there's this new article in the Atlantic that lays some of those out like the ability to do, you know, pull a kill-switch on the internet, the ability to deploy troops within the US, the ability to economically sanction individual Americans for really no particular reason, we're already seeing crises, you know, which I can kind of briefly run through here. We're seeing, of course, an economic crisis with federal workers not getting paid, people not being able to to survive, you know, meanwhile Trump and Pence just gave themselves a raise. We're seeing incredible environmental crises with the National Parks which are being

destroyed and it's not just a matter of the, you know, the overflowing trash cans in toilets and trespassing, it's serious destruction that the national park system has said may take years to fix if ever, and it is also causing them to have to reallocate fees at the used to not use for upkeep which I think ultimately is going to lead Trump and the GOP to say, you know, hey these parks are mismanaged, we don't really need them let's sell them off let's drill in them let's use them for oil and that's so upsetting, like it's a tremendous loss of for — for our environment, for our National Heritage, particularly for Native Americans a lot of these are sacred sites. We also have a national security crisis, we have planes flying with minimal TSA, we have a mass off unpaid TSA workers saying that they're sick so we don't have airport security. They've also furloughed almost everybody who does cybersecurity — meanwhile you have, you know, the 911 system going down and in 37 out of 50 states and you know, no one being quite sure how that happened, you have hacks carried out in Germany on a massive scale, you have the FBI not being paid which, you know, if there is a desperate agent in there that's a great time to approach that agent and see if he'll, you know, break the law and sell you some intel I'm not saying that would happen, but what's basically happening, my point is that are our vulnerabilities are deep and they are on display and any hostile, foreign actor, or domestic actor, is going to look at the situation and they're going to ask how can I capitalize on it and so this is a very vulnerable time. Trump does not care, you know, like having a show of strength here? The only strength is about himself. it's only about his own protection, the protection of his

own people and he sees himself as in opposition to the United States, you know, they are not one entity — it is the US or it is Trump and he's going to take us all down in this process and I'm almost like — I mean I might sound alarmed, but I'm honestly trying to like restrain the alarm in my voice and how worried I am about this situation because I do feel like we're on the precipice of something that was predictable that we've been waiting for for a long time and that has been traditionally in other settings how dictators have consolidated their powers by fabricating a massive crisis and exploiting it with a show of force.

[ad break]

Andrea Chalupa: We've seen this coming for a very long time I mean we knew who this guy was and we knew what he was bringing with him. And this, of course, is what we've been warning people about it's going to get worse before it gets better and right now Trump is cornered, Trump is panicked. To your point, it is terrible for morale and some people may take desperate measures to deal with it including undermining our national security, 'cause what has our country done for them? Essentially the country's been — our country is betraying them abandoning them and their family so who knows what sort of horrible decisions will be — people feel forced to make now because of this, so it's incredibly dangerous and the shutdown is absolutely abysmal for the morale of hundreds of thousands of federal workers and it's such a gross abuse of power that we're

witnessing. And, what else would we expect with somebody that has had so many bankruptcies and just who is the majority of the organizations that he was in control over now investigation, like what else should we expect? The television, the cable news, it's all countdown clocks of the shutdown, like let's see how long it has been going on while Trump has been in office for nearly two years now so it's one year after 32 days 5 hours 30 minutes there's a website that's counting down how long he's been in office. That's almost like America's countdown clock for when is this guy finally going to leave — and also it's it serves as well as a countdown clock for when are Don Jr and Jared finally going to be indicted? That's really where we are headed next because dozens of people have been indicted that helped bring Donald Trump to power and he knows that he is next, he knows that his family is next, and so what you're seeing is a very panicked move by a cornered criminal whose only ally in all this is, of course, Mitch McConnell, but also the far-right media so he's serving the far right media, because he needs that pressure of that propaganda against his enemies to try to help him get out of this. He's got the guaranteed protection of Mitch McConnell for reasons I think are under-examined. I know there's been a lot of excellent investigative journalism coming out of these Legacy newspapers like the Washington Post, but what's really striking is that not enough has been done to root out who is Mitch McConnell really? Who surrounds Mitch McConnell? And why is he the greatest ally of the most corrupt president in history of our country? To the point where even during the election, even during the election Obama sat Mitch McConnell down and said,

“Here is all the analysis looking at how Russia is hacking our election to help elect Donald Trump, and this is a matter that unites us as patriots,” and Mitch McConnell refused to go public with that. ‘Cause if you go public with this we will politicize it, and so Obama stayed quiet which was stupid of Obama because again as you're always saying Democrats don't know how to fight for their values, they don't know how to make those tough decisions and have courage in their convictions. They're too apologetic about who they are and Mitch McConnell won the bad guys win if you don't stand up for your values and so I think the big question at the center of all of this is who is Mitch McConnell and why is he protecting the president? How does that serve him? How does that serve his wife Elaine Chao who's a Cabinet member in this president's administration so who are — who are Elaine Chao and Mitch McConnell? who are the people that surround them? How are they profiting? Where has their money come from? Who are they connected to? And I think all those questions are as big as the Mueller investigation itself which the media, of course, has rightfully been deeply digging into so now it's time to include Mitch McConnell into the largest investigation into the undermining of our national security.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah no I completely agree I think he's both underestimated and over-respected, I never have understood the rationale with Obama and people saying oh the reason the Obama administration didn't come forward in a more forthright way about the Russian threat is because Mitch McConnell will

politicize it or he'll be mean, and I'm like where have you been? That's just who he is, that's what he does no matter what there's literally nothing Obama could have done that Mitch McConnell would not try to destroy, nothing he would say that he would try to twist and smear, so just say it, you know, why be so deferential? Why bow down to him? As you said this should have been a major point of investigation 'cause one, you know, he wields inordinate influence and two he's not being fought, you know, on moral terms on political term, in legal terms, we don't know why he's doing exactly what he's doing. We know that he's a leader in corralling the GOP into complicity and into this kind of blind obedience. You know you and I saw a lot of things coming, but one thing that, you know, we didn't fully see was just how totally the GOP was corrupted, you know, when Trump first won we were like okay well there may be people — you know, they'll accept some things, you know, we are going to go for a typical Republican destructive policies like Paul Ryan was exalting about taking away everyone's Healthcare all those sorts of things, you know, the environment was screwed, traditional things —

Andrea Chalupa: They got excited about allowing the hunting of hibernating bears which represented everything about their blackened soul.

Sarah Kendzior: Right, exactly so like, you know, typical Republican shit, but what we didn't see is that they would all just fall in line, you know, uniformly over time because Lindsey

Graham and others who are strongly against this turned as well to protect a Russian asset who wants to destroy the country from the inside. I thought at least careerism opportunism would win out. I thought that they would see the long-term picture involves us losing our country them losing their jobs and their wealth and they would at least fight on purely selfish grounds for that not to happen, and that isn't the way it's happened, and McConnell is at the center of this and it's incredibly frustrating 'cause I do feel like as much as we, you know, we don't accept any of this, you know, there's a difference between expecting it and accepting it, we have gotten used to the GOP corruption and obstruction headed by McConnell in a way that we really weren't before, you know, to the point that we're now having this kind of nationwide semi discussion about impeachment because if you want to know how to make this stop and this is, of course, the point you and I raised over and over again between November 2016 and January 2017 you have to stop it early, you have to get these people out, you should have never let them in because once there and they don't leave, they stay, they build, they corrupt. It's insidious and we are at the point where we need to impeach the motherfucker, you know, Gaslight Nation stands in favor of impeaching the motherfucker, but that apparently is a controversial policy because, of course, of the choice of language. I'm thinking about all the things we just went through and how the punditry of America are locked on the word motherfucker like as if there weren't kids in camps dying, as if our infrastructure, our economy, if it all wasn't being destroyed, like we're just going to hang on the fact that a Palestinian

American congresswoman, you know, said motherfucker instead of the fact that we have a, you know, sociopathic Russian asset at the helm of executive office shutting the country down like I'm just like —

Andrea Chalupa: Now would be a good time to remind everyone that a university study at the University of Rochester found that highly intelligent people are more likely to swear.

Sarah Kendzior: Fuck yeah!

Andrea Chalupa: Exactly. So it makes total sense that this congresswoman would just call it like she sees it. And, of course, the white male dominated media — if you think we're being matriarchal mercenaries by pointing that out it's just a fact, we did an entire episode called *The Media is Complicit and Good Journalists Pay the Price* breaking down the economics of newsrooms today how there's been a deep decline because the whole digital disruption putting primarily local news out of business, investigative news units which are very costly and out of business and so, you even have a major layoffs in Dallas as we speak that were just announced, newsroom jobs being slashed, so there's far less people today than 20 years ago that are employed by media outlets across America and those who are left standing, the research has shown, are primarily white men so we're getting our filter all of — you're getting, your getting all of your presidential hopefuls filtered through a privileged white male lens, so never lose sight of that, so of

course a woman of color congresswoman using a swear word which is her right, which is tame compared to what we've been subjected to by this horrible psychological abuse by this monster, “grab them by the pussy” monster. “I moved on her like a bitch” monster. A man who's associated with multiple pedophiles and there's been investigations looking at how he's gone to tons of these sort of parties with underage girls we've been subjected to that as our President of the United States and yet the white male dominated media you see a lot of these white male pundits coming out with these really lame pieces that are going to not aged well and future historians -- if we have a free society in the future -- are going to be scratching their heads looking at them thinking wow, what morons, they actually put their name on these articles really chastising her for saying that word and it's sort of like stop being so desperate to find Hillary Clinton's emails going into a big — another big presidential election after this feels like. They're so desperate to find a whataboutism, you know, try to find something else to try to even the scales against the fascist we have in the White House, you're just not going to find it 'cause it's — we're living in incredibly extreme times right now, the Republican party of today is nothing like the Republican party of say, Eisenhower, who had a platform that is incredibly liberal by today's standards. Eisenhower as a Republican he's a Republican president he had a party platform that advocated having a strong social safety net. Today's Republican party has been taken over by greed and what you have now it's not a Republican party anymore, it's essentially dark money fascism. They've allowed

all these loopholes to come where mysterious money coming from anywhere from abroad as we've — as one investigation showed coming from Russia, swirling among Republican candidates helping them get elected we can't trace that money. So the Republican Party ceases to exist and what we have now are Americans from across the political Spectrum desperate to save their country desperate to take their country back fighting tirelessly running for office forcing themselves to go through major transformation to try to save their country. We have whistleblowers sticking their necks out going to jail for as we saw this recent BuzzFeed investigation of a woman who went through the channels to alert everyone about the treason going on in the treasury, and she was arrested for it, so we have regular Americans doing extraordinary things to try to take back their country, being Patriots, trying to protect our national interests, our sovereignty, their children's future and what are we up against? Dark money fascism, that's what it is now that's taken over our country and it's got all these guardians in the form of Mitch McConnell, Trump, Jared, Ivanka and yet the white male dominated media they're clutching their pearls over a staunch advocate for human rights for basic decency for a living wage emphatically just using a swear word which would be here all the time in popular culture. And so it's going to be a another depressing presidential election thanks to a media that has failed to learn and self-examine and really have any humility for its contribution to getting Trump elected in 2016.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah it's terrible, and, you know, I've been

encouraging people given that there's been such little improvement and so little reflection since 2016 to look directly to the candidates when you're deciding who to vote for or trying to figure out what they stand for, you know, listen to them, read their platform, wait for debate because otherwise, you're going to get it through this filter that continues unencumbered and that's also I think, you know, it's powered by fear of the Trump Administration which of course, you know, attacks journalists threatens journalists. It's powered by a desire for access, you know, you've seen the problem of nepotism, which I've raised in, you know, previous episodes where if you have the children of the rich and powerful hired into journalism which has become a rarefied profession, you know, that's a white-collar profession that pays —

Andrea Chalupa: Like Anderson Cooper who is a Vanderbilt pushing AOC on how is she going to pay for all the great programs that she wants and he was looking shocked when she dared to call Trump a racist? Never forget when you see Anderson Cooper, Anderson Cooper who by the way when we had Kathy Griffin on the holiday Halloween special, Kathy Griffin was sharing her heartbreaking story on how the US government, the DOJ, the FBI relentlessly targeted her for that infamous Trump photo that she thought was artistic, like a Charlie Hebdo cover, type of thing which divided people, of course, and that she's paid dearly for psychologically, her career has greatly suffered, and nobody broke her heart more, and you can tell when we were interviewing her, than Anderson Cooper

and how he turned his back on her and completely abandoned her and made her persona non grata so never forget when you see Anderson Cooper interviewing these, these women who are daring to fight for their country and take it back and and just seeing how Anderson Cooper, ugh like... “do you really think Trump's a racist?” Like that's how he was in that interview. Never forget he's a Vanderbilt.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah and you see this across the board, you see this with Chris Cuomo, you see it sometimes with Mika Brzezinski. Even though she's been attacked, You certainly see this with Maggie Haberman. I mean there you have a situation of a “reporter”, quote unquote, going to work at the at the paper where her father works which is owned by a dynasty covering another dynasty in the form of Ivanka and Jared, you know, and then the Trump, of course, is a product of a dynasty himself with Fred Trump and I think that maybe even just on a subconscious level although in some cases I think it's more overt, they see this as normal, they see it as normal that Jared and Ivanka are in this administration they see the promoting and hiring of wealthy the untalented, unqualified, and usually corrupt people into positions of power as normal because those are viewed as inherited rights and so they're completely startled when somebody like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, or is Rashida Tlaib comes out and just fights for people and says what they think and tries to do their jobs because that's so outside the parameters of the only political game that they've ever known because they have grown up in this rarefied social circle, you know, they've grown up with

this set of entitlements and expectations. They're really divorced from the average American person, and so I think they're terrified they're terrified of women, particularly, you know, in our age bracket, you know, because we've never seen a normal functioning America, you know, it has been downhill since the days that, you know, we were born. Like in the seventies and eighties, you know, it's in terms of wage decline in terms of opportunity hoarding, our entire adult lives have been spent with an endless war on terror with a recession that never ended, our expectations of life as just regular people, people who don't come from fancy family, who don't come from privileged dynasties, it's that it's not gonna be good, that we're not going to get anything unless we fight for it, but that we do have constitutional rights, and we do have as much of a right to opportunity and to freedom and to a good way of life as anyone else. They're just so shocked to hear somebody say that and I think that, you know, I'm glad that there's this new generation of women in office and I hope that they have the time and the ability to get done what they want to get done and at least keep speaking their mind and normalizing that like we, you know, as female podcasters, journalists, we're outliers, you know, other people are too. *Mueller She Wrote*, that's another outlier show the majority of these shows are by men, you know. I have a book out it's in the political opinion section. I think me and like Judge Jeanne are the only women in the top 25, it's like totally weird and strange for women, especially women who do not come from political backgrounds or from journalistic, you know, kind of dynasties to have a role in this and I think that's the tide

is starting to turn and, you know, we're just doing what we think is normal which is, you know, researching, writing, stating our opinions people like Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez or Congresswoman Tlaib are just stating their opinions and they're just I think that this comes naturally to them as well and the people who don't find it natural or right is this white, rich, male class of journalists and politicians who have been fucking everything up for the last, I mean God only knows how long, but especially since 2016.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah no it's funny because obviously the nepotism in the media these are people who aren't going to be impacted by the brutality of the policies coming out of this White House and they don't have to live with the generations of damage the consequences of these horrible policies, and I think on top of that everything about the position of trying to fight them and save lives, save communities, that's what is considered a radical in their world, you know, women especially women of color taking back their power and inspiring communities by saying we're going to take moonshots now to rebuild America stronger than before that's all considered radical and threatening and upsetting to the status quo and so there is this youthquake or earthquake, political earthquake is going on right now that is very unsettling and you're going to see a lot of bad takes by lot of so-called credible people in the process. We just have to keep working at it and everybody needs to keep standing up and doing their part to rebuild our country and we did this podcast because this was a huge election year in 2018 and we felt that

we had to make some space for people so they didn't turn away and keep people keep ourselves engaged keep people engaged so we can get through what was going to be a vicious here together and doing that and opening up our conversations to the world, what was really striking to me is we created this new show right and we would have these conversations that people weren't used to hearing and I got so used to hearing them in this new show format 'cause our conversations are a lot more f-bomb laced 'cause we're least intelligent people —

Sarah Kendzior: Yes, that's why.

Andrea Chalupa: — as research shows. and so what was was really funny was I would go out into the greater world and I would consume a variety of different media and be reminded by all these really numbing bad takes of people skirting around the issue. I'd be reminded oh right, as women we're second-class citizens, oh right there is this corporate media that keeps the discussion rather tame and controlled and they're not going to — they're not focusing on the root of the issue, they're not giving platform to really really smart credible brave people on the front lines of communities that are being hit the hardest, communities that are that are essentially canaries in the coal mine that we should be hearing from right now because in all of our interests and so what you have is a very bland overproduced safe corporate media where a guy like Ken Vogel who's now at the New York Times, Ken Vogel who is responsible for the two hit pieces on the two individuals, my sister and the investigative —

Ukrainian investigative journalist Sergei Lascenko who were the biggest opponents of Manafort, biggest threats to Manafort in 2016 whose research essentially helped take down Manafort in 2016 the two, sort of like retributions like hit pieces against those two individuals have to be done by the same reporter Ken Vogel who's a regular on MSNBC, even MSNBC gives platform to people like Ken Vogel. it is disturbing that we do have a media — and there's a lot of great stuff in the media —, but there are — it is power, and with power comes abuse of power, and so we still haven't, we're still vulnerable to a media that that is going to lack self-awareness lack humility and refuse to put on the diverse voices that we need to call it like it is in these incredibly extreme times because things are not going to get better or go back to normal anytime soon. In fact, if you have a problem with a congresswoman saying "motherfucker", you know, that you what you're essentially doing is denying her right to her own humanity of expressing herself, of having a very human reaction in a time where things are incredibly extreme, and guess what? Things are just going to get more extreme 'cause the crisis of income inequalities only going to get worse, automation is going to continue to put more people out of business, online shopping is going to continue to make more retailers disappear, more jobs will disappear, so income inequality is just going to — it's going to be like a bomb going off even larger than right now. Global warming's coming for us all of it so the so the opportunity to swear is going to grow greater, so people have to start getting their heads out of the sand and report on these extreme times and what's coming next as

they act — as though they can actually see what's happening 'cause I'm tired of a sort of all the sort of willful ignorance and the bizarre sort of tea party on the deck of the Titanic.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah absolutely and to sort of bring home that point, I want to stress the reasons why Rashida Tlaib said “to impeach the motherfucker” I mean it wasn't just pure passion and rage, you know, she wrote an op-ed for the Detroit Free Press I believe, I'll just read like a little a couple paragraphs of it where she says,

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"We already have overwhelming evidence that the president has committed impeachable offenses, including, just to name a few: obstructing justice; violating the emoluments clause; abusing the pardon power; directing or seeking to direct law enforcement to prosecute political adversaries for improper purposes; advocating illegal violence and undermining equal protection of the laws; ordering the cruel and unconstitutional imprisonment of children and their families at the southern border; and conspiring to illegally influence the 2016 election through a series of hush money payments."

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Sarah Kendzior: I mean, those are enormous, incredible crimes and, you know, I think in future episodes we're going to be

dealing with the impeachment issue in more depth, but that alone yeah say motherfucker I mean for God's sake, you know, those are concrete things. And then one just one last thing she goes on to say:

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"Whether the president was directly involved in a conspiracy with the Russian government to interfere with the 2016 election remains the subject of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. But we do not need to wait on the outcome of that criminal investigation before moving forward now with an inquiry in the U.S. House of Representatives on whether the president has committed impeachable "high crimes and misdemeanors" against the state: abuse of power and abuse of the public trust."

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Sarah Kendzior: I mean this is what people should be talking about. All of this is an enormous crisis that's just being exacerbated by the shutdown, but that has existed the entire time that Trump has been in office, you know, this is why articles of impeachment have already been filed on high crimes and misdemeanors, on obstruction, on emoluments, I mean she's bringing us back to what we need to be talking about and asking why aren't we acting and I'm sorry, but I'm so tired of all of these people who sometimes appear to be bots 'cause their excuses are

so wrote, just being like "wait for Mueller, wait for Mueller," , you know, like he's Godot and we're this hapless nation of like Vladimir and Estragons, like it's the most ridiculous things you don't need to wait for Mueller to bring about impeachment hearings and impeachment is not the sort of, you know, snap your fingers process because God knows if it was we would have enacted it by now. Although that would not be good, you know, what we want is deliberation, we want a presentation of evidence, we want the public to be informed to be able to make up its own mind, we want Congress to be able to debate, and as a representative of Congress, you know, that is what Rashida Tlaib is asking for is for this process which has been delayed by the GOP nomination of both the house and the Senate to finally commence, you know, it's long overdue, you know, and it's incredibly frustrating I hope that they do continue to move forward and I hope they hear the actual reasons behind her profanity instead of just the profanity itself because it's just it's weakness it's like white coddled men reverting into their little cocoons and not wanting to confront the fact that a fellow, you know, powerful white man is a severe existential threat and the only way to protect ourselves from him, and this goes not just for people who dislike Trump, but anyone including Trump's own voters, they are threatened by him and this Administration and its lawlessness and its cruelty and he needs to go, he needs to go now you need to impeach the motherfucker so yeah, go Rashida Tlaib, don't back down.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, we love you. In the last episode, we said

that Trump will just let the Trump shut down go as long as he wants it to go indefinitely. He's panicked, he loves this, this is the destruction the chaos that Bannon dreamed of that's what we're watching. so Bannon has now turned his attention to Europe so let's go to Europe now. We have the yellow vest movement in Paris, it's a far-right movement posing as a populist uprising. The protests have sometimes been violent and destructive so the yellow vest movement is spreading to other European countries. The Italian Deputy PM supports it. There have been yellow vest protests in London recently where an EU flag was set on fire and spit on. People were chanting demanding Brexit now and a no deal Brexit. A smoke bomb was set off on Downing Street. There have been yellow vests protest all across UK not just in London. So all of this is, of course, not about economic justice, anybody who's trying to tell you that it is just gaslighting you. The Yellow Vests are nothing more than of course Marie Le Pen foot soldiers, Putin's foot soldiers and Bannon's foot soldiers. Bannon's Shadow, Putin's Shadow is growing across Europe. If you think that the EU's going to be around forever will look at Brexit, look at Trump. If Brexit and Trump can happen, it is foreseeable that the EU could break apart because that is what this well organized and well-funded international far-right movement is working towards, and a great example of that is Steve Bannon and his far-right allies are opening up an academy in an old monastery in Italy to train the next generation of Steve Bannons. They call it a quote "Gladiator School for Culture Warriors. It's going to be officially called The Academy for the Judeo Christian West so basically

it's going to be this fascist playground to train foot soldiers and declare war on gay people, women, people of color, Islam, immigrants, Jewish communities, the environment — Bannon is going to teach a class on the applied arts of the new media, that's what it's called, so basically Bannon is going to be teaching how to produce fake news and spreading hateful destructive propaganda so that's what we have to look forward to is more Bannon all the time and again the good people out there it — it is, now is the time to stand up and be a patriot for your country, for your sovereignty and not take anything for granted and don't think the worst can't happen because it can Trump is an example of that Brexit which is incredibly destructive is an example of that. People with values need to now fight for them and fight with conviction.

Sarah Kendzior: I think it's one thing to point is that it's not just Europe, you know, Bannon went to Brazil, you know, shortly before their right-wing extremist president was elected and he helped in that campaign and I think another under-examined quality of Bannon is that he did his time in the White House, you know, then the Michael Wolf book came out and I think everyone's forgotten about that I always thought that that book was advantageous to Trump to because it covered up crime with scandal, and among the scandals was, you know, Bannon trash-talking the administration and then Trump suddenly deciding like he has to go which seemed very kind of staged to me, you know, my impression to me was basically Bannon had gotten what he needed out of this position, he had gotten access to

National Intelligence, he had solidified relationships internationally that he had already been working on building in all the years before through Breitbart, through other, you know, white nationalist movements, through Kleptocratic ties and now he's going to take the information that he had obtained, his knowledge on the inner structure of the government, what it's like to actually work in there, and bring it around the world, so that he could help install Trump's in all of these different countries, and again this is why it blows my mind so much of the media treats Bannon like a partner. I mean he literally partnered with the New York Times he was collaborating with them based on the book Clinton Cash to put propaganda in that paper. He's invited to headline conferences and forums and there's this sort of weird justification of oh, we need to hear his side we need to hear that side, but there's no real populism behind it, you know, I mentioned this in previous episodes that when Bannon actually ventures out of these elite circles when he likes shows up in, you know, rural Kansas or something like he can't get an audience like normal people are just not interested in him because he's an asshole, and, you know, regular folks just don't want to deal with that, but he's enormously powerful as an operative and he's continuing the exact same tactics that have led to Brexit led to Trump, led to you know the rise of fascist movements worldwide. It's frightening because this is again it's a national security matter and I don't think it's really considered that as much people talk about it in terms of, you know, they call identity politics it's basically civil rights it's all the things you named, it's attacks on marginalized communities and we should

talk about that, but there's this other component that he is going around, you know, gathering information from people that feel no loyalty to their country, you know, they may be fascists, but they're not fascists with the traditional kind of loyalty to the nation state, you know, they're kleptocrats, they're people who are transnational and they want to build something that's global, you know, a new alliance of powers that's formed in a different way than, you know, previous fascist regimes like of the 1930s or something, in part because technology has changed digital communications have changed, but also just their goals are different, you know, they want to strip apart these different states for parts and just benefit themselves which is a little bit different than the sort of fascism you saw in previous eras and people should prepare for that. It's frightening stuff and, of course, when you have countries literally falling apart as ours is during the shutdown it opens up even more opportunities for them to capitalize on that kind of planned chaos.

Andrea Chalupa: Well, you know, obviously the more things change the more they stay the same and even when during Hitler's rise to power you had a media that was perversely morbidly intrigued by him and would give Hitler a platform and attention just like the media today is morbidly intrigued by Bannon and fetishizes Bannon and his movement and if you look at start of this whole Bannon chaos, this mob driven chaos of a yellow vest protests in and the Proud Boys and it and all of this threat of violence and intimidation that, that Bannon and Trump and all of Bannon's other creations like to insight — look

back to Hannah Arendt, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism*, like she warned that the elite get a perverse delight in seeing the mob's destruction and capitalizing on the mob's destruction, and that's what's happening, you know, Bannon who is of the elite, who was funded at Breitbart by the Mercers, who are the elite. He called Trump, who incites this mob violence, he calls him a blunt instrument. They need these mobs to terrorize our political opponents into submission they want us to — they want us to stay home, they want us not to vote they want us to feel like we're being overpowered, they want to create that whole mystique and so all of this is so they can destroy and rebuild the world based on their hateful genocidal ideology. The problem is that the far-right, they're very good at destroying, but they don't know how to build, they don't know how to create they only know how to destroy, so revolution, of course, is easy, but governing as we're seeing with Trump, as we're seeing with Brexit is harder. So when you see these movements come in and making all sorts of promises, lying about what Brexit is going to do, all the money that Brexit is going to bring back into the UK, look at the far-right for who they are, look at any movement that comes with genocidal mobs that went to kick out anybody who's a scape — who's a scapegoat, who wants to declare war on the entire religions. Anybody who has followers like that you cannot trust any of their promises and you absolutely cannot give them a platform because all they know how to do is destroy. They cannot create anything. Even Hitler, he created an efficient killing machine, a war machine that did nothing, but destroy Europe and so there's no legacy of any of these far-right clowns

ever, and the media is complicit in this in their rise by giving them any sort of platform and having any sort of morbid fascination with them in the first place.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, I agree, and deplatforming some of these extremists especially the ones explicitly calling, you know, for physical violence for genocide has proven effective. You know, but one thing I worry about in terms of this destruction is that they have a very zero-sum view of human life that I think is kind of uniquely powered by the threat of climate change which I do think they understand, I don't think that they are actual denialist, I think that they are just people who realize that we're coming to a crisis, there are people who have always capitalized on a crisis and they want to make sure, you know, that they can do so in the best way possible, you know, that's why you see all these, you know, fossil fuel-based dictatorships, you know, Saudi Arabia, Russia, you know, aligning at this time and I think I mean this is going to like scare the shit out of everybody, but I think people know, they don't care if broad masses of the Earth's population die out, you know, they are — they're neo-nazis, they're social Darwinists, they think that certain groups don't deserve to live.

Andrea Chalupa: They see that as a cleansing and that's why they're in bed with the evangelicals who also see it as a cleansing. I mean this isn't by accident that the Neo-Nazis and the and the evangelicals are in bed together. What they want is to bring about the destruction of the world and they want to bring about a superior race, a Judeo Christian world and — it's

chilling that the 1930s which were just 85 years ago, we had the rise of Hitler 85 years ago, and it's so striking how people really believed Hitler doesn't mean the things he says Hitler is going to pivot and — oh look at all the great economic reforms and end all the economic growth that Hitler is bringing Germany. We're still living with the damage and the trauma and the destruction that Hitler wrought. The big difference is that too many of Hitler's ideological errors are in power now and helping others like them coming to power. This was only eight five years ago, that's a lifetime, people are alive that lived through the Holocaust. We have direct descendants who lived through that, it's sort of like how are we forgetting already, that this is real and we take all these Nazis by their word.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah and it's — I mean I feel like what makes it unique is that we have this like an actual limited timeline, you know, we have like a 10 to 15 year window in which to turn climate change around, you know, not even turn it around in which to try to nullify the absolute worst effects of it, you know, restructure how we treat our environment, restructure to some degree how our economy functions all these big sweeping political social economic changes and decisions need to be made, you know, and they are aware of that and kind of working it's not just about ideology in a sort of like oh yeah, you know, now is a good time for the Rapture — I think they really see this as like this is the time like all of these different forces in politics and religion in science have come to a head, have connected now, and of course in technology I mean that's — that's one of

the main ones, that's what makes I think this moment of his history so distinct from the previous eras of fascism and they are seeing this as their big opportunity. And the part that, you know, I do think that people can fight authoritarian States, you know, they can overpower that they can take them down, people are always asking us and our answer is always yes and, you know, you've seen it in the US with sanctioned authoritarian legal policies, you know, slavery, Jim Crow laws those were brought down, you know, and it took a long time and it took a lot of hard work and it's not some sort of magical thing that happens overnight and you need to be continually vigilant and resolute and moral and you need to fight very very hard, but it can be done. The thing that brings me, you know, more worry than it would have been a previous era is what's happening to our environment and also things like what's happening with technology the extent that surveillance technology can be used, you know, the start of fantastical ideas of like Foucault and the panopticon all this kind of stuff that people used to, you know, they'd study in grad school as kind of an abstract construct, like this is something that exists now, you know, this is our smartphones this is social media like we voluntarily walked into the panopticon and we're like yeah things will be cool, we have trust, we have a social contract, we don't! It has been torn apart, it's been eroded on its own and then we have terrible people in power like Trump like Bannon that are purposely tearing it down as furiously and as fast as they can and we are left in the position of having to be reactive and fight back, but I mean I guess, you know, to sum it up, in the midst of this we need to think about

what our values are, you know, why we're fighting, how to fight effectively, and we don't have time to spare. So when people hear you know, a sense of urgency, when you hear some profanity, when you hear some anger, it's out of that sense of alarm which is based in compassion it's not wanting more people to die. It's not wanting more people to suffer and knowing that this is preventable, you know, if we do work together to stop it.

Andrea Chalupa: It's a human reaction to an inhumane time and what they're trying to do is just chip away at us and we just can't let them and our country has always moved forward through bravery, through hard work and organization and we're doing it again and that's what the Blue Wave was about that brought in this new progressive class in the Congress and that's where our hope lies, that's where — that's going to give birth to so many other great candidates and leaders that we desperately need right now. I also fully believe that we are going to get through this, it's just going to require us to continually fact check the abuse of power in the media and fact check the abuse of power in Congress and, of course, the kleptocrats in the White House and we all just have to stay engaged and vigilant and united in our own communities of knowledge and Civic service to really fight our way out of this 'cause there's no other way, there's just — being on the sidelines is what contributed to getting us here so now it's an all-hands-on-deck moment for at least a generation because as we keep saying it's multiple crises hitting us at the same time from the nuclear bomb of income inequality to global

warming it's — it's all going to hit at the same time and all the far-right movements sort of capitalizing on these disasters and Mueller's report is not going to solve anything we are signed up for this now for life. This our lifestyle now guys and so on a happy note I think we could end it with a Christmas greeting to are Orthodox listeners people of the Orthodox Faith who listen to show. Today is January 7th, which is Christmas according to old Julian calendar as recognized by the Orthodox in Eastern churches, my mother's family is from Eastern Ukraine which is predominantly Orthodox so we would celebrate what we called Ukrainian Christmas at home. My father's family is from the predominantly Catholic Western Ukraine which may we also celebrate Christmas on December 25th so my family had two Christmases

Sarah Kendzior: Nice.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah I know I'm so a lot of eating, a lot of eating. This Orthodox Christmas is incredibly historic. Like epically historic. So what happened this year — Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was finally granted self-governing status by the Orthodox Authority of Constantinople. So what that means is that you Ukraine since the sixteen hundreds was always stuck with, the church was always stuck under the authority of Moscow. That's no more. That Is massive, massive, massive, massive news. Even Ukrainians who are non-believers are — one Ukrainian activist wrote on Twitter that her father isn't even a believer, but he was weeping because this is such a

massive moment of Ukraine achieving an important independence from Russia and of course the Kremlin absolutely hates it. The propaganda is incredibly aggressive against the story and trying to discredit it and fight back and Ukrainians are of course celebrating and what this really means for Ukraine is the Russian Orthodox Church historically — so when the Bolsheviks first took over they of course liquidated thousands they killed thousands of Orthodox church leaders, and then they repressed their followers to force them into submission to give up their faith, and what ultimately happened was they drove people of faith underground into what became known as catacomb churches so even the most repressive periods of the Soviet regime people practice their faith underground. In my family, we have a wooden icon, a religious icon that survived for many decades from the Soviet period because it was kept in the floorboards of people's homes. The Kremlin during the Soviet period, just like today, it's biggest fear is the people, and so they don't like the idea of people organizing underground so what they did was they granted the Orthodox Church relative freedom inside the Soviet Union, and they infiltrated the the Church, of course, with KGB agents and they forced people of Faith to become informants and so that the Russian Orthodox Church was historically used as an extension of the KGB to control and spy on people. And also the KGB agents within the Orthodox Church could travel abroad and spy while posing as priests and other members of the flock so it was very convenient to grant some relative freedom for the church. And so within Ukraine the Russian Orthodox Church was always seen as a symbol of

oppression and corruption and the KGB to just having this freedom from Moscow finally is like breaking off the shackles again of the Kremlin. I can't emphasize enough how significant it is and how deeply this trauma runs of the abuse of power that went on under the Russian Orthodox Church. I even have friends here in New York City who are Russian and there's one church, in particular, they refuse to go to because they suspect that it has ties to the Kremlin like that's how deep this trauma goes. In totalitarian regimes one of the First casualties is, of course, trust and that's all done deliberately so we're not united, so we're broken apart, the social fabric is destroyed and people are more easy to control and terrorize so all of this is incredibly significant and fortunately what it also means is we're going to see this pattern continued where every time Ukraine wins a major victory in its independence from breaking away from the Kremlin's orbit what then happens is Russia escalates its attacks against Ukraine so expect to see some very scary escalation of Russia's war on Ukraine in punishment for achieving this great moment of independence, of having a now independent Ukrainian Orthodox church as blessed by Constantinople. So now is the time to celebrate, but of course the war is coming in terms of a very serious escalation certainly and unfortunately, Europe is too divided and weak at the moment to really stand up to any escalation of Putin's aggression. Putin wasn't even sanctioned for openly attacking Ukraine in international waters back in November. The lights aren't on in the White House probably literally the lights won't be on White House because the government shutdown soon so yeah so right now is — 2019

is a year for Putin to really try to go in deeper in Ukraine grab more land and create more casualties and refugee so it's going to be very scary time to watch Ukraine as events continue to unfold there.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah so Merry Christmas everyone, eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you will die. So yeah, I guess that ends Gaslit Nation.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah thats great Sarah, let's end on that note.

Sarah Kendzior: Sorry everybody, I told you we were an unlikable show, unlikeable women with an unlikable show.

Gaslit Nation is produced by Andrea Chalupa and Sarah Kendzior. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes -- it helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon -- it keeps us going.