

Gaslit Nation Transcript

29 April 2020

“Hiding in Plain Sight: How We Got Here”

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best-selling books, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the upcoming journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration, rising autocracy around the world and a global pandemic.

Andrea Chalupa:

Today, we have a special interview with Sarah Kendzior, the author of *Hiding in Plain Sight: The Invention of Donald Trump and the Erosion of America*. Welcome to *Gaslit Nation*, Sarah.

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh, thank you. Thank you so much for having me. I should say that to explain the situation-

Andrea Chalupa:

Do you listen to the podcast? Are you a fan?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, I've heard it's excellent, two incredibly attractive hosts.

Andrea Chalupa:

Of unusual genius. Yeah.

Sarah Kendzior:

For those who don't know, obviously, my book came out on April 7th. Originally, on April 9th, I believe, Andrea and I were going to do an event together in New York City because I was going to have a book tour, all of which was canceled. And so, our plan was always for Andrea to interview me live, hopefully, get to meet some of our listeners face to face and then air that as an episode on *Gaslit Nation*. Then, of course, coronavirus emerged, and our plans, like everybody's plans, were destroyed.

Sarah Kendzior:

We are doing it the old-fashioned *Gaslit Nation* way. Andrea is going to ask me some questions. Then, I will be answering your questions that you've been submitting to us online.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes. It's going to be a fun free-for-all of questions starting now. Okay, Sarah. Sarah Kendzior, American bard, blues singer, welcome. Let's get going now. I'm going to be reading off of the questions that you provided me for this interview. [crosstalk 00:02:09] I'm just kidding. Sorry. I'll stop. I'll stop. Let's cut to the chase here.

Andrea Chalupa:

You wrote this book. That's a huge achievement. I mean you know all this stuff because I tell you. {laughs} Sorry. We're going to take this very seriously because it's a very serious book. It outlines all of the crimes that led us here, all of the conditions that led us here.

Andrea Chalupa:

What's unique about this compared to your other book that outlined the social inequalities that led to a fake populist like Trump, all the deep unhealed pain and rifts and the deepening income inequality in America and putting a face to that and showing not only the workers that are impacted, the so called essential workers that were always essential workers whether there's a pandemic or not, and also the new face of poverty which is what we would normally consider to be white-collar, let's say, and also white people, and industries where poverty is more easier to hide because it's become more acceptable.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm talking about adjunct professors living in their car, adjunct professors as some reports have shown turning to prostitution to help pay their bills, people being pushed out of academia generally and also being pushed out of media. That new face of poverty, of people that never imagined themselves of ever being a statistic, what that looks like, you covered that in your first book, *The View From Flyover Country*. Also, you touched on it again in *Hiding in Plain Sight* because it's all part of the perfect storm that gave us Donald Trump and authoritarianism.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's that deep wound of pain that the fake populists, the wannabe autocrats, take advantage of. Why don't we start there?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Absolutely. In some senses, *Hiding in Plain Sight* is a continuation of *The View From Flyover Country* because it does touch on these same themes of opportunity hoarding by elites, the loss of trust in institutions—a merited loss of trust in institutions—but it's more of a history, chronologically laid out, of the last 40 years. Because I know that my work can be intense and overwhelming, I structured each chapter around a particular decade or a particular part of a decade, and it can stand on its own. You can take a break. You can go get a drink or do whatever you need to do to get you through the book.

Sarah Kendzior:

But one of the things that I've been saying this whole time, including before Trump took office, is that Trump is the culmination of broader social and political and economic trends. His rise to power wasn't something that happened instantaneously. It was made possible by the internal collapse of the US combined with external forces from abroad, combined with Trump's own ambition.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, the industries of power, the ones that tend to control things like the path to the presidency, have also changed dramatically in the last 20 years, but I think as kind of a continuation of, really, policies that have been around since you and I were born during the Reagan era.

Sarah Kendzior:

But what you mentioned—academia, journalism—I would also add policy, politics, the entertainment industry, all these industries that are avenues of power have become increasingly dominated by nepotistic elites, in pathways of nepotism and people inserting their children into positions of power, and purchased merit—needing to have a fancy expensive degree from a school like Harvard, being able to do things like unpaid internships, unpaid work, low paid work, in very expensive cities.

Sarah Kendzior:

All of this created the conditions for not just Trump to rise, but his heirs—Ivanka and Jared and our generation's culture of nepotistic elites—to rise to power in the White House. That's the system that they've constructed. You see it mirrored throughout the world. You see it in Russia. You see it in the UK. I get emails and tweets from people in so many different countries who are basically saying, "Your system is identical to ours. We are also priced out of opportunities. We are also suffering seemingly indefinitely in our countries with our government and our officials paying no real mind to the structural barriers to just survival."

Sarah Kendzior:

That's certainly clear during the coronavirus crisis. So, yeah. This is a book that some people are like, "Oh, it's a book about Trump." But as you know, it's not exactly. It's a book about America, and Trump, despite being an anti-American president is, in many ways, a quintessentially American phenomenon.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. No. If there was a time capsule of this moment, sort of like a fruit basket that we could give future historians to be like, "We're sorry," this should go into that gift basket to future historians. Hiding in Plain Sight should most definitely go into the time capsule for this moment, these dangerous crossroads of history that we're currently living, because it so perfectly summarizes through these specific phases and stories all woven together how we got here and what's going to happen to us if we don't stop it. It's so clear.

Andrea Chalupa:

I have to point out that your book, action-packed as it is, the pages and pages of notes and footnotes that you provide of this deeply researched essential reading book, it's only 220 pages, which I love, by the way. I hate how agents and publishers think that you get more bang for your buck the more words that you provide. That's simply not true. It's because you're such a powerful storyteller. You're such a powerful writer. You have this great economy with words where you can say so much in just a few paragraphs. It just punches you in the gut.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's why I think your book on a practical level is so valuable because it packs it all in, in a heartbreaking engaging way. It's a quick read. I read it in two days which is really fast for me because I'm a bit of a slow reader. I think anybody who is on the fence and thinks that the authoritarian lens that we use to understand where we are is shocking, it's so dark, it must not be true, we're conspiracy theorists,

how could this be true even though it's played out again and again in countries around the world and around history? It's just the same playbook.

Andrea Chalupa:

I think to anybody that's on the fence about where we are now, your book is essential reading to open their eyes. That goes doubly for anybody that leans Republican or is conservative because you open up and share your own story which is a universal story of Americans living today. You let us into your own struggles of living in poverty and the insecurity and being left behind.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Absolutely. People sometimes wonder like, "Who is the audience for a book like this?" or an audience for my work in general. I always say, "My audience is whoever will read. It's whoever will listen." I've worked in a variety of fields. I worked in academia. I worked in journalism. I've written policy papers. I always try to write in a way that's easy for folks to understand, that does away with jargon and that tells a story.

Sarah Kendzior:

So far, it is a best-seller. It is popular despite being the story of a mobbed-up Russian asset linked to a kleptocracy and all of these dark and horrifying people—Trump and Mogilevich and Epstein and Kushner. The whole gang is in there. But, yeah. It's an American story. It is fairly short for a book like this. As Elmore Leonard likes to say, "I left the boring parts out."

Sarah Kendzior:

One of the things I think is most frightening about the book is actually the endnotes section because it is incredibly lengthy. I didn't arrive at the conclusions in *Hiding in Plain Sight* alone. It required an incredible amount of research of archival material going back sometimes before the 1970s, but basically from the 1970s up until the present moment, a lot of it focusing on the crimes and illicit dealings of people like Trump and the criminal circles in which he was involved.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is the thing that, of course, frustrated me in real-time from 2015 onwards when he announced his campaign. I would bring up things. I would bring up his ties to Russia. I would bring up his history of bankruptcy. I would bring up his history of sexual assault. I would bring up the 13-year-old girl who accused him of rape. People would say "this is crazy, like, you're making things up where are you getting this information from?"

Sarah Kendzior:

I'd be like, "I'm getting it from you, from your publication back when you actually did journalism," because that's the thing is in regards to the components of the *Hiding in Plain Sight* that are explicitly about Trump and his crimes, this was documented in real time. It was documented by people like Wayne Barrett, like David Cay Johnston in terms of the Russian mafia. It was documented by Robert I. Friedman.

Sarah Kendzior:

I also dug pretty deep and found kind of scattershot articles elucidating various illicit connections and dirty dealings stretching back 40 years. Now, if I was able to do this and you were able to do this and

there are some others who are able to do this, obviously, everybody I cited was able to do this in terms of their own specific facet of investigation, where's our government? Where is the FBI? Where are those officials? Why were they not able to pull this story together into a coherent narrative?

Sarah Kendzior:

Why didn't they share this coherent narrative during, for example, the impeachment hearings? Why is this story that is, as I say, Hiding in Plain Sight, still being buried? I'm glad my book exists. There were many moments during the time I wrote it which is really the first half of 2019 where I wondered if it would actually come out. There are a variety of reasons for that.

Sarah Kendzior:

Some of that was just the general political chaos that we were living in. There's a line in the last chapter of the book where I said, "We still had freedom to travel, and there is so much to see." My editor was like, "Those tenses don't match." I said, "Just trust me on this. By April 2020, it's going to make sense."

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm not saying I knew coronavirus specifically was coming in advance, but I had the feeling that by April 2020, we will have lost our freedom of mobility. We will have lost quite a lot of freedoms. We would be living in a much more consolidated autocracy. I had reasonable beliefs to back that up. Having just lived through the government shutdown in early 2019, I saw how far this could go. That was followed by the appointment of Bill Barr. That was followed by Pelosi refusing to impeach and a general weakness of accountability in the Democratic Party, obviously, the corruption and complicity of the Republican Party, the weakness of the courts.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, yeah. I was worried about that. I was worried about the fact that in the book, I describe these prior authors who investigated some of the same things that I investigate in this book. During 2015 and 2016 when Trump was running for office, these authors were censored. I described, for example, David Cay Johnston who has written multiple Trump biographies discussing his censorship, Wayne Barrett discussing his censorship, Harry Hurt III who wrote an incredibly damning book about Trump in 1993.

Sarah Kendzior:

That book was pulled from the shelves by Trump's goon squad. He had to publish it on Kindle as a Kindle book because he felt this pressing need to get the truth out there. All of these sources are in there. They're in my book. The court documents from the Epstein-related preteen rape allegation are in my book. All the stuff that people don't want to talk about, the names that folks won't stay on TV like Semion Mogilevich, they're in my book.

Sarah Kendzior:

I was like, "Well, there's no way in hell this is going to make it out. There's no way in hell this thing is going to actually make it to publication". There were some internal battles, some rephrasing of things. Obviously, I'm nervous on a personal safety level that I've written this and it's in the public domain. It is a bestseller, but I don't know what that's all going to mean. This is a book that, frankly, Congress should read.

Sarah Kendzior:

Our elected officials should read it. I suspect they already know this story. I don't know how you can be in a position of authority in American political life and not already know the things that I've laid out in here, in part because you and I and so many others have been very loud about bringing Trump's long history of criminality to light, but also it's literally their job to know that.

Sarah Kendzior:

Some of the mystery surrounding this is you can't keep feigning ignorance forever. You can't say you didn't know or that you were deceived again. We're now four years into this administration. I've now created a very readable, accessible literary guide for everybody who would like to see justice and accountability back in American life. I'm really hoping somebody does something with it.

Andrea Chalupa:

Right. Exactly. The information is out there already. It's always been out there. That's what's so disturbing. It's like your book says, *Hiding in Plain Sight*. George Orwell, whom I compared you to the last time you and I sat down for an interview, saw himself as a pamphleteer. He was a pamphleteer, which was popular in his day. It was like blogging before there was blogging.

Andrea Chalupa:

You'd write up a pamphlet with all your political views speaking truth to power, and you'd distribute it. That's how Orwell saw himself. That's why your concise action-packed book, a very tight read, I just think of Orwell again. It's like, you're a pamphleteer. You're like, "Here are all the connections. Here's the giant web of corruption. Here are how the elites across industries were complicit and bringing us to this breaking point. This is how they cash in on it. Here you go. It's all neatly tied up for you." It's really a document for Congressional hearings if our representatives are brave enough to call them.

Andrea Chalupa:

Back to the personal angle which is different from your last book, it has a memoir thread to it. You show a lot of restraint there. You're not like navel-gazing by any means. You open up into your own story by giving us a bit of a biography of Missouri, the state that you call home. Why is Missouri essential to this story of American democracy being hijacked?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. That's the first main chapter of the book. It's called "The Bellwether of American Decline". It is a capsule history of Missouri, but in that respect, it's a capsule history of the United States because Missouri always has been a bellwether for the United States. It was the state that was most reliably predicting who would be the president.

Sarah Kendzior:

You could always look at Missouri and know where general American political trends would go, where cultural trends would go. It's the home of so many people who are seminal figures in American life and just imagining the idea of America, people like Walt Disney or Mark Twain or Chuck Berry, they came from Missouri. America is, in a sense, a Missouri invention.

Sarah Kendzior:

Of course, Missouri is a crossroads, like an angry, bitter, divisive crossroads and a deeply corrupt one these days. It's where north meets south. It's where east meets west. It was a focal point of the Civil War. The thing though most kind of, I don't know... powerful institutes or elite organizations, they ignore Missouri. This is an irrelevant history to them. Life begins and ends in New York, DC, San Francisco.

Sarah Kendzior:

They see Missouri as inconsequential, but one of the reasons for that is that Missouri, for the last 50 or so years but in particular since 2008, was the bellwether of extremely negative conditions of American life, of dark money, unfettered in elections, of deep corruption, of fractious hyper-partisan movements, the Tea Party in particular, but it was also a civil rights landmark spot.

Sarah Kendzior:

Ferguson began in Missouri and, of course, deep economic decline, a recession that was really a restructuring. That is exemplified by life in Missouri as well. I think because I live here, I have a particular perspective. I'm working outside of the mainstream media. In later chapters, I described this very insular network in New York media, a network where PR and "journalism" and politics and organized crime are deeply intersected.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think it's fortunate that I don't live there. I am kind of a complete outsider in that respect. I could look upon that culture as an anthropologist which I am, by training—that's what my PhD was in—and look at America through Missouri's eyes, inside out. But, yeah, there's definitely... beyond just analyzing Missouri as a lens into American political decline. It is the story of my life.

Sarah Kendzior:

I was born into an era where Donald Trump was beginning to rise. For people our age, we have no memory of a time before this. We have no memory of a time before American decline, of a time before this crime spree that this cohort of criminals, of white collar elitist criminals, have been going on for our entire lives.

Sarah Kendzior:

What I tried to do was weave in Trump's rise, the broader social, economic and political decline of the United States that's been going on since the 1980s, and my own life story together because none of this is abstract. I know you know this intimately, that problems like the Russian mafia takeover of executive power in the US, this is not some abstract foreign policy concern. It's not something that, for example, a mom of two in Missouri can just distance herself from and think, "Well, this won't affect me in any way," because this all trickles down to the ordinary citizen, and it's ordinary citizens who suffer as a result of elite criminal impunity.

Sarah Kendzior:

We have seen that over and over for 40 years through all of these controversies going back to Watergate, to Iran-Contra, to the 9/11 aftermath which was never properly investigated, to the War in Iraq based on false circumstances, to the 2008 financial collapse. None of the perpetrators of those crimes were ever held accountable, so they recur over and over again in our lives. We've had to grow up in their shadow.

Sarah Kendzior:

That causes just an incredible emotional toll, especially if you're a parent, especially if you're trying to struggle and find a way to bring your children up in a world that is chaotic and cruel and seems designed to just pound you down because that truly is their design. These are people who don't have the most baseline respect for humanity. There's also not a strong and organized opposition to stop them.

Sarah Kendzior:

So I wanted to explore that kind of emotional terrain. I think a lot of times, journalists are reluctant to do that. They're reluctant to call Trump a liar or a racist or a criminal, all of which he is. There's a tendency to kind of tiptoe around him. But beyond that, I think there's a reluctance to acknowledge just the emotional hardship of growing up in this era. But I think that that's what's important. We have to live our lives in this. It's not something to be analyzed from above, but to be experienced in real time from below. We don't have that choice. We're not in the oligarch class floating above everything.

Sarah Kendzior:

We are the people... I'm trying to remember the phrase that you used from Ukraine. The people are the shit-

Andrea Chalupa:

The people are the shit that the oligarchs grow their money in.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Exactly. Quite honestly, I felt it was necessary to write a book from that perspective, from the perspective of an ordinary person growing up in this situation, a story that I think, at least judging by my email and the responses I've got to it, a lot of people especially in our generation relate to, a story of lost opportunity, of dead dreams, but also of fighting to persevere and to imagine a better future because we don't have a choice about that.

Sarah Kendzior:

You have to continue to fight even in the hardest of circumstances, but what I think has led to pre-emptive defeats in this regard is the refusal to acknowledge the severity and the breadth and the history of the crisis. So with this book, I tried to bring that history to light. I tried to put it together in a way that was emotionally resonant, and that was also practical in terms of the sort of details and information that it provides.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I hope people find it useful. I've had a very positive response so far, but I hope it circulates far and wide because I think that people need to know this story.

Andrea Chalupa:

No, without question. I know from our conversations over the phone that Elijah Lovejoy is deeply personal to you and is a big inspiration. Could you talk a little bit about who he was and what his contribution meant not only for you personally, but also for America?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Elijah Lovejoy was an abolitionist and a journalist who lived in St. Louis in the 1830s. He was constantly writing editorials about the need to end slavery immediately, condemning white supremacy, and as a result was ceaselessly targeted by white supremacist mobs. This, of course, is the era of Andrew Jackson and other racist presidents and of racist demagogues.

Sarah Kendzior:

As a result of this, Elijah Lovejoy had to flee St. Louis. He moved across the river to Alton, Illinois and he set up his newspaper again. He continued to print editorial after editorial until finally, the white mob hunted him down. They crossed the river. After multiple attempts of throwing his printing press into the Mississippi—he kept fishing it out and starting over—they set fire to where he lived and worked, and he died.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was in his late 30s. One thing that struck me back in 2016 was that Elijah Lovejoy's death was right around the time of the US election. I believe he died on November 9th, and Trump was on November 8th. Sometimes, I would drive to Alton and there's this graveyard that's on the top of the hill there. I would just sit by his grave, and I'd think about what he went through and what so many other journalists in American life have gone through and also in autocratic states because I'd spent so much of my life covering places like Uzbekistan or Azerbaijan or Russia where journalists just faced immense political and just local prosecution.

Sarah Kendzior:

I knew that we were headed into a very dark era. I knew that basically all of the social and economic trends I'd been documenting for the prior decades were at a breaking point. I obviously don't want to meet the fate of Elijah Lovejoy. I mentioned other journalists who have met this kind of fate—Anna Politkovskaya, for example, is in the introduction of the book—but I think that there's an obligation where, regardless of how it's going to turn out for you, the journalist, in the end (we all know that in societies like this, the ending is almost never good), you have to tell the truth.

Sarah Kendzior:

You have to continue fighting. You have to stand up for what you value morally and not buy into this timidity or careerism or a complicity or whatever it is that's preventing other journalists from telling the full truth at the moment.

Sarah Kendzior:

I've been keenly aware since Trump won, since the death threats to me and you and to others began to mount up, I don't know, that life is a fleeting thing. One thing I wanted to do with this book, and I think it shows through, is leave a record of why did I bother to explore any of this, investigate any of this, research this in case I'm not around later.

Sarah Kendzior:

I wanted something for my children to know who I was and why I put myself at risk at certain points. I don't want to overstate any of this because there are people who put themselves at much greater risk

than me. But you're my friend, so you know a lot more than even what's laid out in the books in terms of threats to my life, my personal safety and so forth.

Sarah Kendzior:

It hasn't been an easy four years, but I do feel like words are a potent weapon. That's why people fight so hard to suppress them. The same is true of facts. The same is true of the truth itself. If it didn't matter, they wouldn't try so hard to keep us from telling it. So that's what I resolved to do. I don't want to compare myself to Elijah Lovejoy or to people who met a very tragic end or just more time-tested writers than I am.

Sarah Kendzior:

But, certainly, I admire figures like that. I admire people who are willing to risk their lives for the truth and for the greater good. One thing to remember about Elijah Lovejoy is that even though he died in his late 30s, plenty of people went on to read him, including Abraham Lincoln on whom his works and his thoughts were very influential. There is always a benefit in telling the truth. You might not live to see it, but eventually, that benefit will be there for future generations.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. That was what was so, for me personally, heartbreaking to read in your book. It was the thread throughout. This was very clearly a book written by somebody who knew they're taking great personal risk to put all this information out there, and the theme throughout, the sort of underlying dark current throughout is examples of people that came before you, many examples, including people that wrote about the Russian mafia and so forth, all the examples that you give of all this stunning information and the sources, a journalist, a writer who's taken from us too soon. That's the theme throughout.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's very clear that this is a book written by somebody who clearly recognizes the great personal risk she is taking by even putting this information out there. That's again and again and again the theme throughout. That, for me, was very difficult as your friend. Even though we do the show every week, it's so heartbreaking to read. Like you said, when you have so many healthcare workers working on the frontlines right now and at great personal risk and needlessly dying and their families being put at risk because they're trying to keep us all safe right now... I don't want to, like you said, overblow the risk you're taking.

Andrea Chalupa:

But it is something that you just live with. You make the decision at one point, as I know you did. You just set your convictions firm in the ground. You stand on your truth, and you know that, ultimately, in some way, shape, or form, maybe you won't be around to see it, but the truth will ultimately protect you because the truth cannot be killed.

Andrea Chalupa:

That was hard for me because I know that on such a deep level with you. As a friend, it was heartbreaking. It was at the part where I wanted to cry in the book. Then, as somebody that appreciates good writing, I have to say as like a literary critique or whatever, it was beautifully done because it's a dark undercurrent throughout. You understand that you're holding in your hand decades of research, decades of evidence collected by so many great people that came before you that risked it all to get us

this truth and how dare Jeff Zucker and CNN not make this the center of their coverage instead of Trump's reality show of terror, instead of Trump's cat laser pointer? I just think your book is so essential for all those reasons.

Sarah Kendzior:

Thank you.

Andrea Chalupa:

Let's go into the crimes themselves. Jeffrey Epstein. That is your chapter three on Jeffrey Epstein and his pedophile network with powerful people. Just the entire chapter three, if we had the rights, I would love to just run your entire chapter three as an episode of Gaslit Nation because it is the most damning chapter in a book of damning chapters.

Andrea Chalupa:

I know that you were working on the Epstein research when all of that was coming out, but you were screaming to the high heavens about Ghislaine Maxwell, her Mossad spy father, Robert Maxwell and Epstein, long before this was front-page news. You sounded so in the weeds on Epstein for so long and then, finally, got vindicated thanks to the brilliant reporting coming out of the Miami Herald. Could you talk a little bit about working on the Epstein chapters as that news was so fresh and breaking?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. That was the most difficult chapter to write. As I've always said, this is a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government. It's never been as simple as just Putin or the Kremlin hijacked our electoral system. It's always been a vast international network full of the absolute worst kind of people riddled with the Mafia, with spies, with sex traffickers, drug traffickers, and pedophiles.

Sarah Kendzior:

That is an enormous part of the Trump world going from Roy Cohn through multiple other contacts or a list in the book up to Epstein. I do think that Epstein is a key player in this network and in this operation and that one of the reasons Trump has not been deposed and the people around him have not been indicted is because of the kind of blackmail and the general network of connections that Epstein has.

Sarah Kendzior:

I started writing this on Epstein in early 2019. I had been researching him for several years. Julie K. Brown at the Miami Herald began publishing her exposes about him in late 2018, and I'm profoundly grateful she did that. What that did, ultimately, was force the court cases back into existence.

Sarah Kendzior:

Women began to come forward when they saw other victims of Epstein and of Ghislaine Maxwell and of their sex trafficking operation network. A lot of powerful people by mid-2019 looked like they may be facing trouble, including Alan Dershowitz and Prince Andrew and potentially Trump.

Sarah Kendzior:

When I started writing this chapter, Epstein had not been arrested. He had not, as they say, committed suicide. I do not believe for a minute that he committed suicide. There was kind of a little bit of

confusion on the editorial end of like, "Well, why is this so important?" Obviously, there's a tie to Trump because in 1994, Trump allegedly raped a 13-year-old girl that was procured for him by Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell.

Sarah Kendzior:

Then, when she grew up, she went on to sue him. There are multiple court documents about this. These documents were around in 2016, but no one would cover them until, like, one week before the election when the victim was going to hold a press conference. Her lawyer was Lisa Bloom, whose own role in this sort of Me Too situation is ambiguous given her initial sympathies to Harvey Weinstein.

Sarah Kendzior:

Nonetheless, she was her lawyer. They were going to have this press conference. They were both threatened, the victim and Bloom. Then, it just disappeared. One thing that was amazing was the utter refusal of the media to cover it even though the Access Hollywood video had opened up this door to the history of Trump's sexual assault and even though Epstein himself, the web of connections he had, it was yet another very alarming aspect of Trump's circle of criminal ties. First, you have his ties to the Kremlin and to all of these oligarchs, but through Epstein, you have yet another connection to the head of the Russian mafia, Semion Mogilevich who—I lay this out in the book.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mogilevich was a contact of Robert Maxwell. Robert Maxwell is the father, was the father, of Ghislaine Maxwell. He was known in his time, in the 80s in particular, as this publishing tycoon in the UK. In reality, he was a Mossad operative. He died in 1991. He mysteriously fell off a yacht. There's a lot of, you know, yacht accidents in this book.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was given this elaborate state funeral in Israel. None of this is like a conspiracy theory or a mystery. That's who Robert Maxwell was. He worked for Mossad. So after his death, his daughter Ghislaine, at some point in the early 90s, hooked up with Jeffrey Epstein who—in the book I describe how he came into prominence which is through the family of Bill Barr. Bill Barr's father hired Epstein to teach at Dalton even though Epstein was 20-years-old and didn't have a college degree. Meanwhile, Bill Barr-

Andrea Chalupa:

And Dalton is a fancy high school in New York for the elite.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Girls high school, fancy girls high school. Epstein, of course, was accused of having, I don't know if assaulted, but having improper interactions with students at that school during that time. But meanwhile—this is like 1974—Bill Barr is working in intelligence, and his father is hiring Epstein. Then, Epstein goes on to work for Bear Stearns and to work in basically the most elite financial circles in New York, but no one is ever really sure where he's amassing this enormous fortune, and why so many wealthy and powerful people are associating with him, hanging out with him, and so forth.

Sarah Kendzior:

Eventually, of course, what it turns out he was doing was running a pedophile sex trafficking network for the world's wealthiest and most powerful people. The fact that this isn't covered, I mean, the fact that

Epstein now has become like a meme and a joke, it's just one of the most horrifying and just baffling things of our time because, first of all, you have real victims here. You have teenage girls and preteen girls who suffered, who are still suffering, as a result of the fundamental depravity and horror of these crimes.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was a sex criminal and everyone knew this by about 2008. He was arrested for this operation, and some kind of deal was struck with the FBI that he was given just the lightest sentence, barely under house arrest. Later on, Donald Trump's Department of Labor Secretary, Alex Acosta—who had been involved in the initial Epstein arrest—he was asked about this in 2019.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was told he had to be hands-off because Epstein belonged to intelligence. He never specified whose intelligence. I think that that's the question. If Robert Maxwell was working for Mossad and was connected to the Russian mafia and connected to other unsavory characters—another one who pops up is Adnan Khashoggi, the uncle of Jamal Khashoggi, the murdered Washington Post journalist. Adnan Khashoggi was involved in Iran-Contra.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was an arms trader. You get Bill Barr again as the Iran-Contra cleanup guy. It's absolutely crazy. It's the same names over and over again, this tight circle of criminal elites that seems to really congeal in the late 80s. It also includes people like Manafort and Stone and others in the Republican Party at the periphery. Then, there's stuff I didn't even include in the book that people should really explore like the Craig Spence similar Epstein-ish sex trafficking operation that was done out of George H. W. Bush's White House. That was documented by the Washington Post, but also buried.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, you should really read the books because I laid this out much better in print, but my point is that you have this enormous group of complicit actors working to basically infiltrate governments at the highest level, possessing an enormous amount of blackmail, and no resolution, no clarity. I don't know what ultimately happened to Epstein in that prison cell.

Sarah Kendzior:

I do know that all of these people wanted this story buried as much as it could be buried and that if it were to go to court, it would reappear again. A lot of secrets about the most powerful and elite people, including Donald Trump, would be revealed. I don't know what happened to him, but I know that they needed, at the least, everyone to believe that Epstein was dead.

Sarah Kendzior:

For all we know... there isn't really debate as to whether he died. It's a debate as to the manner of death. To be honest, I have questions about the whole situation, but what happened is, the point is, that when he was proclaimed dead, the court cases went away. When the court cases went away, the coverage went away.

Sarah Kendzior:

One thing I noticed is that in the initial aftermath of Epstein's death—and meanwhile I'm frantically trying to update the book to get all this in there—there is this flurry of really revealing horrifying coverage of Epstein's interest in science, for example, of his desire to do these freakish scientific experiments on human beings, of his connections to Harvard, his connections to MIT, his funding of all of these elite ventures which again raises the questions of like, "Why are you all hanging out with a known pedophile sex trafficker?"

Sarah Kendzior:

This is like a decade later. There's no excuse for ignorance, and not all of that made it into my book because it went to press beforehand, but it leaves us with a lot of questions. Now, the topic has basically dropped. The Times and other places are back to referring to him as "a financier" or even "a philanthropist".

Sarah Kendzior:

That plays into a pattern of covering for Jeffrey Epstein which goes back 20 years. There were so many puff pieces written about him in places like New York Magazine or the New York Times or Vanity Fair. He was trafficking girls. They knew it. Even after he had trafficked girls, there would be articles written about "splendid parties" he had where elites associated with Trump would appear. People like Wilbur Ross attended those parties. Woody Allen, a fellow pedophile, attended those parties.

Sarah Kendzior:

Trump was on record saying, "Epstein's a great guy." I have to bring it up because it baffles me. Ghislaine Maxwell continued to hang out in these circles as well. She attended Chelsea Clinton's wedding. There's a picture of Chelsea walking down the aisle. You see her in the background like a specter, like a sort of vampiric ghost. It's all really horrifying.

Sarah Kendzior:

There is a giant story here that needs to be told but I don't have faith it will because people are too afraid to even ask these questions. Honestly, I feel like it's a miracle that my abbreviated exploration of this subject even got into print. I do think it's contributing to the reluctance of some people who themselves are tied to others, who are tied to the Epstein-Maxwell operation, to talk about this book at all.

Andrea Chalupa:

Why do you think that there's just this shallow treatment of him that gets repeated over and over again in the press? Because it's such a big crime. A lot of these reporters are overworked, underpaid. There's breaking news all the time. Your head's spinning if you work in a reporter bullpen because you're constantly moving to this story, that story, you're working sources, et cetera. Is it just that they're stuck scratching the surface because they lack the time and the resources to really dive in deep because investigative journalism is expensive?

Andrea Chalupa:

With the shrinking and disappearing of newsrooms across America, investigative units are always the first to go because they're expensive. Investigative reporting takes time. What Julie K. Brown did, it was her tenacity. She was determined to do it. She was determined to get justice for these invisible girls and make their stories finally heard, and God bless her for doing that. We're all better for it.

Andrea Chalupa:

Do you think it's just where we are right now, the state of media, that this is happening? Is it a story so big people don't want to touch it because just the personal responsibility for that as a journalist, how you could be harassed? You could be sued, all the sort of things that you can get targeted with so people just don't to stick their necks out. Or is there something darker where the powers that be at the top of the food chain of these media companies just know that you don't touch it? Because, like you said, Ghislaine Maxwell was at Chelsea Clinton's wedding. What do you think it is?

Sarah Kendzior:

I think it's a combination of everything you said, but I definitely think there's a darker story and I think that the suppression of this story comes from the top. We know about this. There have been reporters who, after Epstein allegedly died, felt that it was safe to come out and say, "Yes, I tried to write an expose about this." I think Vicky Ward said that. She tried to write one for Vanity Fair and it was censored. All the information about child trafficking was taken out. I don't know why she didn't speak out about it until now, because I do think she spoke out in good faith, but it obviously would have been better to have that out earlier.

Sarah Kendzior:

Same thing happened with ABC News. They had this information. A lot of this stuff didn't require massive investigative skills because the court documents were in public domain and he was convicted well over a decade ago. He was convicted during the 2000s. Anything that he was engaged in afterwards, like giving money to Harvard or funding various ventures or hanging out at parties or social establishments, there was already the proof. He wasn't a rumored sex trafficker. He was a convicted one. His ties to all of these powerful individuals, those weren't rumored. He was in photographs. In many ways, I think they used the media, much like Trump and Stone and all these others do, as a sort of a public blackmail.

Sarah Kendzior:

You'd see them hovering in the shadows. On one hand, they were watching the rich and powerful, but on the other hand, many people were watching the pictures of them with the rich and powerful. We saw this with Michael Bloomberg as well. But there is something very dark here. There's something so immoral and so... It's so vile. I don't have words for it.

Sarah Kendzior:

I felt sick when I was writing that chapter. I felt sick when I was doing the research because this network is so powerful and it's so insular and it's been so effective at maintaining political control. Now, we see it's infiltrated governments throughout the west. People associated are really... They've got their hooks in everywhere. It leaves you with a sort of sense of powerlessness as a citizen.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is obviously something bigger than a, I guess, run-of-the-mill pedophile sex trafficking operation. This is something that is directly connected to the most powerful people in the world. There are many allegations that Epstein had girls killed or that Maxwell did. There was one of those allegations referred to Trump that he ordered a 12-year-old, a witness to this, to be killed.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's incredibly frightening. It's traumatic to read about if you have any conscience whatsoever. It's sickening. We all went through that when we were covering Me Too. Every day, we'd wake up to the story of another well-known figure revealed as a sexual predator, a sexual assaulter. It's a lot to take in psychologically, but I think that there is an incentive at the top runs of media, not so much on the individual reporter level, but at the CEO level, to suppress all of this both in order to maintain their access to the rich and powerful, but also because as I describe in the book, media became the playground of the rich and powerful.

Sarah Kendzior:

The people who are covering these stories are often the sons and daughters of other media and political elites. The New York Times itself is an amazing example of this. And that's why you get puff pieces about people like Ivanka and Jared where they're just presented as normal figures in the White House and not as obviously a kleptocratic dynasty with mafia ties. That's what they are.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think that same mentality extended to Epstein. They were like, "Oh, but I went to a party with him", or, "oh, he's friends with my friend." There are discussions... I cite a Daily Beast article, I think it was written in 2011, about these New York journalists and political elites having a party with Epstein to celebrate his release after they knew he'd been trafficking children. They brought their own children to this party. They laughed about it. They laughed at the victims.

Sarah Kendzior:

Ghislaine Maxwell was quoted as just saying these girls are trash. No one cares about them. I think that that mentality, particularly among a certain kind of white rich man in media, is pretty rampant. They really do view them as trash. I think they may view most Americans as trash. Most victims of the Trump administration and of these elite mafia syndicates posing as governments, posing as corporations, as trash. That level of exploitation, of total dismissal of the humanity of so many people, that is one of the greatest crises we face as Americans.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's this utter lack of empathy, this utter lack of concern, for justice. It doesn't even occur to them that this is something that should be covered not just on a political or a national security level, but on a human level because there are real victims here. Ghislaine Maxwell is still running around. God only knows what she's doing. I don't think that this operation stopped. I think it's just mutated into different manifestations.

Sarah Kendzior:

We know that it has its hooks in our government. They just won't go there. If there's a fear factor involved here, that I understand. The threats, the kind of terror that could strike at your heart when you read this especially when you read these testimonies, it's genuinely frightening. I have sympathy there. But at a point, it's like, what are you giving up by not telling this story? What are you giving up by not respecting these victims and trying to help them?

Sarah Kendzior:

I feel like we could all be victims on a broader scale of these criminal, powerful, elite entities. It's not just our moral duty to try to expose them and fight them but it's in the interest of our self-preservation. I guess that's the angle which baffles me with the media because I would think that they would know this is a criminal regime that's also an aspiring autocracy. They do not like journalists. They persecute journalists.

Sarah Kendzior:

Ronan Farrow, for example, discussed this in great detail. It would be in their own interest to try to fight back, yet, they don't. They're frequently silenced or they silence themselves.

Andrea Chalupa:

One thing that you point out again and again is that all of this information that you painstakingly detail in your book, it's juicy. It's juicy. It's the kind of stuff that, as you see with Rachel Maddow being a ratings machine now because she's one of the few that will go after this stuff to a certain degree, you wonder why aren't the cable networks jumping all over this given how much material there is there, and how, like you said, it's in their own financial interest because if they actually covered what's in your book and gave it airtime, that would be a ratings bonanza?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. That's been something that's been disturbing me since Trump launched his campaign because as you and I both know, he did all of this, as I say, in plain sight. When you were looking, for example, at Trump's connections to Russia, you didn't need to look very far because he would sit at a press conference and be like, "Russia, get me Hillary Clinton's emails." It was like he was begging the world to look at these criminal connections and to actually find out what they are and then say what are you going to do about it?

Sarah Kendzior:

He gets off on that. He gets off on the challenge, but that makes it easier in a sense for any kind of investigative reporter who wants to go down the road of looking at Trump and his cohort's criminal connections and their ties to Russia, ties to Epstein, and so forth. It was amply documented by Spy Magazine. I talk about them quite a bit. By Wayne Barrett. Yeah. They refused to do it. We know a little bit about their operation.

Sarah Kendzior:

Michael Cohen confessed to threatening at least 500 people on behalf of Donald Trump. They also have this system of NDA's, of blackmail, of bribery. You and I have gotten a number of death threats for our work, their propaganda farms that will put out stories to try to smear or destroy the careers of different journalists.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think what kind of journalists you are and what your ultimate ambition is makes you more or less susceptible to their tactics. If you're a careerist, if your goal is to just ascend a traditional ladder and you're not that concerned with the quality of your work, then you're a great target. You're a great mark for the Trump machine because your goal is to just get front-page bylines. It doesn't matter if the story under the byline is accurate. It doesn't matter if the story is detrimental to democracy. You just need to have your name there. You need to continue to ascend that ladder, get whatever kind of institutional

approval you want. If you have a conformist mindset, then they will use you. They will manipulate you. I think they're good at spotting people like that, and the people who have been willing to branch out a bit and tell other parts of the story don't really care that much.

Sarah Kendzior:

God knows I don't give a shit. If I cared, I wouldn't live in Missouri. I would live in New York City and I would kiss everyone's ass. I would try to have a more traditional career. I think because I gave up on institutional stability, or these myths of American exceptionalism, or "hard work leads to great rewards" or whatever, I don't know... I've never been that interested in that system. I studied Uzbekistan for a long time. You don't study Uzbekistan if your goal is mainstream success. The position I'm in is very strange because it actually prepared me very well for the mainstream success that I've had.

Sarah Kendzior:

But, anyway, my point here is that if you're interested in the truth, then you both have a large number of resources at your disposal because this is a criminal operation that operates in plain sight. They leave clues wherever they go. They confess their crimes regularly. But what you lack is an outlet that is willing to let you say it to the broader American public. This is where social media is interesting because it's allowed us to circumvent this kind of gatekeeping, this kind of self-censorship and so forth.

Sarah Kendzior:

You and I were able to just set up our own podcast and set up our own show where we say whatever the hell we want. We say things that are true and factual obviously. We're not making things up. But we're not being ordered around by a CEO. We're not having to talk in sound bites. We can control our own operation. I think that that's a good model for other people who want to go down this road.

Sarah Kendzior:

The press won't touch this even though it is in their financial interests, their political interests if they believe in democracy and their moral interest. It's deeply weird. We're on year four of this where we see people still like, "Oh, Trump's tone was so different today. Trump's going to pivot." I'm like, "We just had impeachment hearings where, for example, he threatened to kill the US Ambassador to Ukraine!" He did it in semi-veiled terms, but that's a huge deal.

Sarah Kendzior:

The President of the United States wanted to murder, with Mafia henchmen who have been indicted, the Ambassador to Ukraine. And that just blows right by. They just act like "yeah that, yeah. That was kind of bad." It's an enormous deal. It's the tip of a massive iceberg. I don't know. I suspect that these are rarefied circles. I'm not out breathing that rarefied air.

Sarah Kendzior:

Maybe, one of them will eventually just whistle blow on themselves, whistle blow on their own network or their own newspaper or whatnot. Until that day arrives, I'm not sure we'll totally understand it, but I do think some of it is just cowardice. It's this kind of cowardice, careerism, conformity, complicity. They all boil down to the same thing at one point.

Andrea Chalupa:

What was really shocking are the details that you lay out of the accusations of Trump raping a little girl, a 13-year-old, I believe. You share the court filing. That case was published in the lead-up to the 2016 election and the victim didn't want to come forward at a press conference because she was getting threats. It was just sort of a case that got lost amid all these other, a couple dozen, accusations of sexual assaults and horrible behavior against women by the president of the United States that were being reported on in the lead-up to 2016 and after. Could you talk a little bit about that specific accusation of child rape by Donald Trump?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. In this sense, I would prefer if people read the book. I was very careful to... sorry, I'm flipping through it now.... to avoid both lawsuits and any kind of inaccurate telling both for the victim's sake and for mine. But there was a court case filed. The plaintiff was 13 years old at the time. This is very sort of, I'm looking at it now... very trigger warning.

Sarah Kendzior:

I'll read a very small part of the book just to stay on track here. This is from the last part of the court case: "Immediately following this rape, defendant Trump threatened plaintiff that were she ever to reveal any of the details of the sexual and physical abuse of her by defendant Trump, plaintiff and her family would be physically harmed if not killed". Then, I wrote, "This court document was made available to reporters multiple times during Trump's 2016 campaign. Despite Trump's long documented history of misogyny, sexual assault and threats, the press generally avoided the Trump and Epstein allegations.

Sarah Kendzior:

When they did cover them, they often designated them as irrelevant gossip." So, yeah. It's a really sordid and disturbing story. There was a report in The Daily Mail eventually, in late 2016, saying that the victim had dropped her charges. I don't know about the accuracy of that because The Daily Mail is also the paper that was posting along with the New York Post false stories about the whereabouts of Ghislaine Maxwell.

Sarah Kendzior:

They do this kind of thing where they... They seem to have an enormous amount of information about the Epstein operation at their fingertips. These are outlets that are associated with Rupert Murdoch and with other conservatives who are sympathetic to Trump. I think that they dole out just enough to distract or titillate people to keep them from looking at the heart of the stories and never reveal the full truth. I don't know precisely what happened to that victim.

Sarah Kendzior:

I do know that the Trump camp was very, very concerned with making sure that that story did not get attention. They were similarly vicious and suppressing the court documents about the rape or alleged rape, I should say, of Ivana Trump, which was documented by Harry Hurt in a 1993 book, and Michael Cohen famously threatened a journalist from The Daily Beast in 2015 when he had read about that and wanted to interview Trump about the allegations of rape.

Sarah Kendzior:

Cohen threatened him. He threatened to “destroy him, to fuck him up, to hurt him”, all this kind of stuff. I think if Cohen was doing that with an old story about Ivana and then Ivana came out and was like, “Oh, when I said Trump raped me, I meant it more metaphorically,”—she said something along those lines to try to play down the accusation. You're seeing a real culture of fear. Then, you're also seeing a culture of just incredible cruelty to women.

Sarah Kendzior:

We live in a culture that is like that. We live in a culture where victims are not believed, where survivors are not believed. It's really just been in the last three years that there's been this mass movement to try to encourage people to maybe not automatically believe the victim, but stop just dismissing this out of hand and stop assuming that if it happened a long time ago and someone is making a claim about it, that it must not be true because the victim would have never kept it a secret for so long.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean that is typical. That is the typical story of sexual assault and rape, especially when it's done by someone who's very powerful and especially when that powerful person then follows it up with a threat of violence if you're ever going to tell. And that was the threat that was hanging over all of the victims of the Epstein trafficking operation and certainly over this victim who, I guess she would have been born in about '81. She was 13 in 1994, and suing in 2016 as a grown adult.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think women feel an obligation to speak out when a predator, a rapist, an assaulter, ascends to that level of politics because they know that the pain that they endured on a personal level is going to be expanded on a structural level. That's why Christine Blasey Ford came and spoke out at the Brett Kavanaugh hearings.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's so horrifyingly common. That was something I tried to get in in that chapter, which was about Epstein but it was also just about the culture of the 1990s which was increasingly exploitative and cynical and cruel. You had things like the OJ Simpson trial—which is a trial with domestic assault and murder at its heart—paraded as entertainment. This actually plays into your question about why in the world are they not covering Trump because Trump would be such an OJ-style moment?

Sarah Kendzior:

Usually, what the media does is exploit a very sensitive, but celebrity-filled story full of intrigue and horror and whatnot, for ratings, for cash, for clicks or what-have-you. They've been quiet about this one which isn't like them, but I still think that that kind of exploitative tone to this, the kind of relish people have in the pain of young women and of adult women who haven't, understandably, gotten over the pain of what happened to them when they were children or teenagers, that should never be exploited. It should be taken very seriously. There's still an incredible reluctance to do that.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. It reminds me of this Vanity Fair report on how Ivanka Trump, her reaction to all of these accusations coming out against her father of sexual assault, her reaction was to “hit them back harder”. That's such a Trumpian reaction. That was so revealing. It was just this nugget buried deep in his Vanity

Fair article that was more of a, I wouldn't say a fluff piece, but more of just a socialite profile of Ivanka and her sister, Tiffany, and their relationship and that dynamic.

Andrea Chalupa:

Here, you have this really telling sign of character, of Ivanka Trump having her father's character, of wanting to hit back against these women who all deserved to be heard. This was at the height of the Me Too Movement. Ivanka Trump was going around trying to gaslight as though she's a champion of women. Could you talk a little bit about the key point that your book makes that this has been decades, this crime, this hijacking of our country has been decades in the making, it's all been Hiding in Plain Sight, and guess what? The big reveal of this book is that Ivanka and Jared are the real threat here because they're the future of this continuing.

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh yeah. This idea that if somehow Trump is removed, things just revert to normal, it's absurd on a number of levels in part because of the Republican Party, but also because this is a dynastic kleptocracy in the making. For Trump to be able to preserve his money, his power, his immunity from prosecution, which is important, and also to preserve Ivanka and Jared and Don Junior's immunity from prosecution because they've been implicated in various crimes as well, they need to stay there as a family.

Sarah Kendzior:

There were things I found while researching this book that I didn't put in, in part, because they were more asides and I was just envisioning a future of lawsuits, but there are so many disturbing details about the relationship between Ivanka and Donald Trump. He had her modeling for John Casablancas for his industry when she was a teenager. Casablancas was a known sexual predator, a known child or teenage sexual predator.

Sarah Kendzior:

Why would you do that, for example? Then Trump, of course, went on to start his own alleged modeling agency which may have been a front for other things. Of course, we have Trump saying he wanted to "date his daughter". He has this history of really disturbing relationships with women in general like, oh God, to go down the road of Trump's sex life. I do quote from those who dared to tread that road where Ivanka as part of her lawsuit said Trump was confused about how to have sex with women. He didn't understand how to give women sexual pleasure.

Sarah Kendzior:

We had this long history of Trump being involved in sexual assault, of his multiple friendships with pedophiles—new ones keep popping up like George Nader—it leads in a very frightening road. At the least, I could say Trump is immensely tolerant of pedophilia and invites known pedophiles into his life and into his family's life.

Sarah Kendzior:

Ivanka and Don Junior and the rest of them grew up in a very, very corrupt environment. I don't know whether this is as true for Tiffany, and Barron, I just feel sorry for him. But they grew up surrounded by sex traffickers, money launderers, white-collar criminals, the Russian mafia. They were groomed to inherit those roles. They talked a bit about Ivanka's work on The Apprentice where there were

properties like Trump SoHo that she was involved in that were just mafia fronts. They were money-laundering fronts.

Sarah Kendzior:

At that time, young Ivanka in her 20s was doing things like being brought to Russia by Felix Sater where she sat in Putin's chair. She was nearly indicted, along with Don Junior, for fraud in 2012. I go into that case quite a bit because the players in it are the ones that are allegedly supposed to be handling the outsourced smaller cases and other criminal cases involving New York now, so there's that whole aspect of the corrupt network of accountability.

Sarah Kendzior:

But, yeah. He has been grooming her and steering her and Jared down a very dark path. The chapter I focused on them is much more on Jared. I think that there were quite a few people who, in wanting to elevate Trump into the White House and make him the president, they wanted Jared to get in there. Principal among them is Netanyahu who is a lifelong friend of the criminal Kushner family. Jared's father, Charles Kushner, went to prison for various crimes.

Sarah Kendzior:

I described Jared's reactions to those crimes in his own words where he's just baffled that this could even happen, that white-collar crime could ever be punished. He worked briefly for, I think, the New York DA and just, I don't know. You should read the book as the comments from him are just that, the lack of any kind of moral core or any sense of ethics.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's frightening. There's an emptiness to both of them. They are both very similar. There are hollow shells who are filled with their fathers' evil. They are willing to carry out those tasks and be vessels in that way. I think that Jared has been working with Netanyahu, with MBS, with a number of Russian oligarchs. The same is true of Ivanka, their marriage and their relationship is extremely strange. They were basically set up or at least pushed closer together by Rupert Murdoch, who was a mentor to Jared, and Wendi Deng, Rupert Murdoch's ex-wife who was later revealed to be a Chinese spy according to Western intelligence.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's just a very strange thing that it's the two of them. Again, this involves a yacht. Jared and Ivanka were reunited, after a feud, on Rupert Murdoch and Wendi Deng's yacht and then went on to marry each other. Basically from the outside, it looks to me like an arranged marriage between two criminal families who are tied to some of the most powerful political players and organized crime players in the world.

Sarah Kendzior:

As a unit, as a family unit, they are more powerful. Every organized crime operation knows this. That's why it's called "The Family". That's why you "keep it in the family". There are all these allegories in that respect, but, yeah. People should be gravely concerned with the threat of Ivanka. You've discussed this in great detail on our show about how she's her father in a prettier, more palatable package.

Sarah Kendzior:

I do worry that if Trump ever does go away, that that's how it'll be sold, that maybe she'll even renounce him on some sort of facetious level and be the calm one, the quiet one, the one who's going to bring America back together, the first woman president. There are so many ways that she could be marketed and the media is absolutely primed to eat this up. Along with that will be the sort of fatuous forgiveness of the culture of sexual abuse and sexual assault that is so rampant with Trump and within this administration because there have been so many connected to Trump accused of these various crimes, including some who resigned earlier in the administration

Sarah Kendzior:

I think that she'll be the way they try to clear the slate, but what they're actually going to do is install a more rigid kleptocracy and then, the Ivanka equivalents that we see in the media or in other positions of corporate power will cheer it on because in many ways, they're similar. They recognize themselves in her. I think that might be one of the darkest aspects of all.

Andrea Chalupa:

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth Teller level or higher.

Sarah Kendzior:

We want to encourage you to donate to your local food bank which is experiencing a spike in demand. We also encourage you to donate to Direct Relief at directrelief.org which is supplying much-needed protective gear to first responders working on the frontlines in the US, China, and other hard-hit parts of the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria and refugees who are some of the most vulnerable people in the world to this pandemic. Donate at rescue.org. We also encourage you, as always, to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry. Donate to The Orangutan Project at the orangutanproject.org.

Andrea Chalupa:

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