

Sarah Kendzior: I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling essay collection, *The View From Flyover Country* and the upcoming book, *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: And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump Administration and rising autocracy around the world.

Sarah Kendzior: When we last left off on Gaslit Nation, we were teetering at the edge of World War III. And that was before the tragic plane crash that killed 167 passengers and 9 crew members outside of Tehran. We're going to discuss that Ukraine Airlines crash and events in Iran later in the show, in particular Trump's admission that his administration had planned to kill Soleimani months ago, and there was no imminent threat to the US after all. But to ensure that our brains don't explode due to the sheer ubiquity of horror, we are going to discuss something else first. We are going to discuss Megxit.

Sarah Kendzior: So last week, Prince Harry and Princess Meghan, or whatever they're called, shocked the world by declaring that they are quitting the royal family and moving to Canada.

Sarah Kendzior: Andrea, your thoughts on this impending crisis?

Andrea Chalupa: So many thoughts. Gaslit Nation is now a Megxit podcast. Everyone just needs to deal with it.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa: As [inaudible 00:01:35] been covering, really, we've been a Megxit podcast since the start of the show because in our very first episodes we talked about Brexit itself and, of course, the spike in hate crimes that followed the Brexit vote and the murder of MP Jo Cox by a Far Right nationalist. And so these racist undertones, of course, they drove Brexit and now they're driving Megxit with the abusive coverage of Meghan Markle, a beautiful, unapologetic, black American. She's an outsider because she's American, and then she's a double outsider because she's a person of color. And she brought that celebration of her culture to the royal wedding of Prince Harry. She had a black pastor there. She was like, "This is who I am and I'm going to make sure that I honor that, and for the sake of laying a strong foundation for my family and raising a child together." More power to her.

Andrea Chalupa: And of course, the British Royal Family, God bless them because we get a lot of entertainment out of that gilded zoo of the British Royal Family, getting to look in on them in the tabloid pages and what not. But the British press, which is incredibly racist, the British press, including this Rota media where you have these select newspapers owned by British oligarchs, for the most part, and then

you have Rupert Murdoch, the son of a Eugenics Society member who owns The Sun and some other big media companies, driving this totally skewed coverage of Meghan Markle.

Andrea Chalupa: BuzzFeed did this great breakdown looking at 20 headlines comparing how the main UK media outlets covered Kate Middleton versus Meghan Markle. So you had one headline in the British press showing how the lovely, white Kate Middleton, when she was pregnant she was given an avocado to help with her morning sickness in pregnancy. Good for her. That's so dainty and cute. But then Meghan Markle eating avocado on toast was bringing about the end times, literally. Like, these headlines could not even be just more ridiculously skewed.

Andrea Chalupa: So let me just get down to this because I just, okay. So here is The Express: "Kate's morning sickness cure? Prince William gifted with an avocado for pregnant Duchess." That's nice and quaint and I just see little bunnies hopping through the forest. Now The Express on Meghan Markle: "Meghan Markle's beloved avocado linked to human rights abuse and drought, millennial shame." I see, like, *The Temple of Doom* or something with that one. And these examples go on and on and they are absolutely that absurd. So yeah, good for Megxit. I'm happy for them. More power to them. They are a modern, evolving couple, and I have a lot more to say about this, but I'm going to let you chime in.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh yeah. I'm going to chime in with the really disturbing stuff. So it's like we have the racism, the tabloids. We have Brexit. We have an impending, possibly no-deal Brexit coming down the bend. We have social media monopolies run out of the UK. It is no wonder that Meghan and Harry want to get the hell out of there. It's no wonder that they want to move to Canada. That's like the fantasy of half the world right now.

Sarah Kendzior: But another reason, maybe, that they want to go. Maybe it's just bad timing, like Season 20 of *The Crown* is going to be lit, the royal family is in the news for other reasons, namely because Prince Andrew is a pedophile. So Prince Andrew has also stepped back from his royal duties due to his association with allegedly dead, allegedly suicided sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, who procured underage girls for Prince Andrew to rape.

Sarah Kendzior: And so this British royal stuff may seem tangential to you if you're a regular listener of this podcast, but it's actually linked to one of the key stories that we've been covering, which is the makeup of transnational crime masquerading as governments. And so I'm going to break down this criminal lineage for you right now.

Sarah Kendzior: So, as you know, Princess Diana was Prince Harry's mother. When she died in a car accident in 1997, a car accident that, to this day, some don't think was really an accident, she was dating Saudi businessman Dodi Fayed. And so Dodi Fayed is the nephew of arms trafficker Adnan Khashoggi, who was one of the billionaire scumbags inhabiting Trump's social orbit in the 1980s and who was also a key player in the Iran-Contra affair. And yes, of course, because everyone

has to be linked to everyone, Adnan Khashoggi was related to Jamal Khashoggi, The Washington Post journalist who was murdered and dismembered by the Saudis with the tacit aid of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and others in the Trump Administration. And so Jamal was Adnan's nephew, which makes him Dodi's cousin.

Sarah Kendzior: And so one of the key colleagues of Adnan Khashoggi in the crime and espionage business was Robert Maxwell, a UK publishing tycoon who was secretly working in the late 1980s as a spy for Israel and as a partner of Russian mafia head Semion Mogilevich, who we have discussed on Gaslit Nation many times because he operates the Russian branch of the crime syndicate that props up Trump.

Sarah Kendzior: So anyway, after Robert Maxwell died mysteriously in 1991, his daughter Ghislaine Maxwell took over his illicit operations, which allegedly included trafficking underaged girls. And Ghislaine Maxwell's partner was Jeffrey Epstein. Yes, the same Jeffrey Epstein who was the sex trafficker who got underaged girls for Prince Andrew. Right now, Ghislaine Maxwell remains at large and is allegedly hiding out in Israel, according to [inaudible 00:07:37] no one has been punished for this decades-long crime spree, including Prince Andrew.

Sarah Kendzior: And so we don't know what the hell all these connections mean, but it is once again disturbing to know how many people involved in Iran-Contra and other Reagan Era crime sprees now dominate political life in the Trump era. So maybe Dodi and Diana were inconvenient to the royals and to the criminal elites in their orbit, maybe they knew some secrets, or maybe this was just a random tragedy and they were both victims of the vicious paparazzi chasing them down.

Sarah Kendzior: But, either way, can you blame Harry and Meghan for wanting to get away from this freak show of a family? I cannot.

Andrea Chalupa: I don't even want to move on from this. I want to keep this Megxit train going because I'm enjoying the ride.

Sarah Kendzior: Keep the Megxit train going.

Andrea Chalupa: It is core to our show because we're ultimately talking about white supremacy. The current Prime Minister of Great Britain, Boris Johnson, he wrote a piece saying that Obama as President, having Kenyan heritage in him, was anti-the UK, like anti-British rule, because of his Kenyan background.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh my God!

Andrea Chalupa: That man is now Prime Minister, okay, so that's what we're talking about. We're talking about white supremacy. We're talking about that white supremacy ownership of the prevailing forces in British media, from Rupert Murdoch to the Evening Standard, owners who are Russian-British oligarchs and so forth. The

list goes on. If you look at the Royal Rota that covers the royal family, it's oligarch ownership.

Sarah Kendzior: Right. And if you go back even to what I was just saying about Robert Maxwell, he's another example of this. He was another British oligarch linked to organized crime, linked to Russia, who capitalized on tabloid coverage of the royal family and of the British government and was sort of like a predecessor and an accomplice to the Murdochs' operation, but keep going. Go on.

Andrea Chalupa: I'm grateful for all the points you made on Prince Pedophile. I do appreciate the Queen and all that she has survived in her life, from fascism as a young woman and so forth in all the decades. So I do... this is really ridiculous as an American to have this conversation. I'm not a royalist by any means, but it's really silly. Sarah and I recognize how silly we're being right now and we're enjoying it, all right? So just bear with us.

Andrea Chalupa: I like William and Harry. I think they're good boys. I love Diana deeply. I will always love Diana. What she did for HIV patients, like, that was revolutionary. Holding the hands of HIV patients, AIDS patients, that had to be done at that moment in time in order to break through that stigma. And Diana was a humanitarian and she did make an impact, and I love the fact that she snuck out and had nights out with Freddie Mercury and others, okay? So that's why I have affection towards this subject and we're being ridiculous right now.

Andrea Chalupa: But culturally speaking, I think we also have to point out that Meghan Markle, being a Californian, that you can't get a culture as different from the royal family than California. And I can say that being Californian myself. We are the Care Bears of humanity. It's like when you meet us, spiritually speaking, Californians just tend to envelope people into massive bear hugs.

Andrea Chalupa: Sarah and I just did an interview with the podcast for Swing Left, which is based in Los Angeles. So it was me, a Californian, and two other Californians, and Sarah on the call doing this interview. And I could just feel Sarah clamping up into her womb of darkness where she feels the most safe and secure and thinking, "Oh God..."

Sarah Kendzior: Hey!

Andrea Chalupa: She's getting like in a massive mosh pit of Care Bears here.

Andrea Chalupa: So I think Meghan Markle, good for her going to Canada with her family because if there's a country that is culturally close to California, it would be Canada. Canada and California are both progressive, they're both forward-thinking, and they both have really odd and creepy pockets of the Far Right.

Andrea Chalupa: In Canada, they have Ford Nation. In California, we have Devin Nunes and others. But I think Canada is a great place, culturally speaking, for Meghan

Markle and her family and I love that she was like, "No, I do not want to be in this gilded zoo. I'm a self-made woman. I'm an entrepreneur." Because being an actor, a successful actor, that's the core of entrepreneurship. She struck out on her own and she made it in a very big way and was able to become financially independent.

Andrea Chalupa: I don't want to do what the media does and pit women against each other. Because none of this is Kate Middleton's fault, and to frame it that way, just to buy into the petty gossip of the oligarch media driving this story in the first place. Kate Middleton, let's be fair, if she didn't marry Prince William, she would have just inherited her family's company or done something like that, like posh party planning. She would have stayed in that lane of the family business, whether it's the royal family business or her own family's business.

Andrea Chalupa: Whereas Meghan Markle, she was a humanitarian at a young age and speaking out on social causes as a child, and she maintained that voice and that platform even as she became this successful actor. And so for her, she would have been limited, her potential would have actually been limited by the gilded zoo of the royal family. So she, for a number of reasons, needed to break out. And I think that's the best thing for her and for her health.

Andrea Chalupa: And the good news is that Harry, with the help of Kate Middleton, Harry has spoken out on mental health issues, which is something that a country like the UK needs. If you look at the mental health statistics out of the UK, it has been improving with greater awareness, furthering public conversations. That's been helping, helping people come out and address mental health, and Harry and Kate and Will have been on the forefront of helping those conversations and taking away the stigma and shame.

Andrea Chalupa: And so by doing what they need to do as a family, they're owning that. They're saying, "Look, it's okay to talk about these issues. It's okay to draw healthy boundaries." And boundaries are necessary. Knowing how to set boundaries is a crucial skill in life, especially for women, especially for people of color, who tend to feel like they have to play up a certain way in order to drive defensively through life to avoid other people's racism and bias and so forth. And so they end up taking on more than they should. And so it's important to know to set boundaries and know how to set boundaries. And so good for Megxit. We are pro-Megxit. We endorse.

Sarah Kendzior: Definitely pro-Megxit. And the reason that this conversation seems ridiculous, and it kind of is, because this is a dark show, this is a "serious" show, and there's something inherently ridiculous about the existence of a monarchy in the twenty-first century in a democracy. But honestly, this is relevant to our current era. The US was founded in opposition to monarchy but over and over again has embraced dynasties throughout time: the Roosevelts, the Bushes, the Kennedys. And the kind of fear, I think, of aspiring dynasties was one of the things that turned people away from Hillary Clinton in 2016, this idea of going

Bush, Clinton, Bush, Clinton for so much of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Sarah Kendzior: And now we are basing the fear of a new dynasty, a kleptocratic dynasty of the Trump children. And this is something that we've been talking about and warning about on Gaslit Nation and in our own work since 2016 and 2017. We always said the endgame here is for Ivanka Trump to become the first female president of the United States. And a lot of people initially laughed this off. They called us alarmist and hysterical and all the other words they reserve for women who are right too early.

Sarah Kendzior: But this week it was confirmed that everything we said was correct. The GOP and, of course the Trump family, are grooming those two for a presidential election in 2024 because they expect Trump to be reinstated, I don't want to call it reelected, in 2020. And the Trumps are trying to build a dynastic kleptocracy. And very briefly, the reasons for why they're doing this are obvious: it's money, power, and immunity from prosecution. Those are the three reasons that the Trump family does anything. And you see those reasons not just in the US, but you'll see them in dynastic kleptocracies around the world.

Sarah Kendzior: These types of administrations, they traffic in money laundering. Money laundering is their rationale for existing. And that level of corruption tends to have an inner circle that gets smaller and smaller over time. You see dependencies on lifelong lackeys, you're seeing that with Trump now in people like Giuliani who have been around him for 30 years, people like Stone and Manafort who had known him since the early 80s, and especially, you see a reliance on family and particularly on children.

Sarah Kendzior: This younger generation, the generation of Trumps and Kushners in their 30s and 40s, are there in part to cultivate a softer and more glamorous image to the public to offset the brutality of the current regime. And so you see things like Ivanka, who absolutely was fine with Trump locking up little children at the Texas-Mexico border where they die, she's fine with all of his brutal policies, trying to distance herself from them, trying to say that she somehow is not like her father even though she's had a hand in his plans and her sort of ambiguous role as advisor. Jared Kushner has as well. Jared Kushner has also worked [inaudible 00:17:20] money laundering.

Sarah Kendzior: And the fourth reason that they have this system is pardons. These are crime families. These are crime families who are struggling to become criminal political dynasties, and so they need to have guaranteed pardons down the road. If Trump is going to be prosecuted for his crimes in the future, it's extremely helpful to have President Ivanka or to have, you know, a Don Jr. as a senator, or to just basically spread this developing inner circle further into the Administration. They don't want to deconstruct the administrative state, as Bannon says, in terms of purely destroying it. That's what Russia wants. That's not exactly what the Trump family wants. They want to deconstruct it and rebuild it in their own image for their own profit and for their own nefarious

ends. And this is a very real threat and it's one that we as Americans should be actively trying to stop.

Andrea Chalupa: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We cannot ring the alarm enough to warn people that Ivanka Trump, as President, is very much part of the plan here. So, look at the Republican Party. The Republican Party as we know it, it's lost. It's succumbed to Donald Trump. But that is the fault of the Republican Party itself. Donald Trump is their Frankenstein monster. They created him. And the reason why these "Never Trumpers" hate Donald Trump so much is because he says openly what they work so hard to try to keep under wraps, which is their blatant racism and misogyny and their war against the poor. Normally the Republican Party likes to hide all those positions, those convictions, under Orwellian language like George W. Bush's Compassionate Conservatism, which led to, of course, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which created massive humanitarian crises that we're still dealing with to this day. So that's what George W. Bush's campaign slogan of Compassionate Conservatism, which everyone took the bait on in the media, and the Republican Party was so proud to stand behind that.

Andrea Chalupa: But no, so Donald Trump brings out into the open what Republicans have long been trying to finesse through Orwellian language, and that's really why they hate him. It's because he points it out and he's almost like the little child of the Republican Party that just speaks in this really blunt, child language and say, "No, we're racists. Of course we're white supremacists. Of course we hate black people and people from 'shit-hole countries,'" and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa: The Republican Party now is Donald Trump's party because the endgame of decades of GOP racism, producing this Frankenstein this monster, has produced a Trump monster that serves his racist, proudly racist, and misogynistic and war on the poor-waging base, first and foremost, above anybody else. It's all about the base. He's got to build the wall, even if he has to steal money from other federal departments, in order to serve his base. It all comes down to that.

Andrea Chalupa: And so with the Republican Party being so fully in the hands of Trump, what do you think it's going to do next? It's going to use that massive base that it's been in service to to now get Ivanka Trump elected. And you better bet that Ivanka is going to beat out her brother, the idiot brother, Don Jr., in the war for who gets to go next. Because Ivanka is the favorite child. Ivanka carries herself in such a way that... I don't even want to go there, but this is a news item so in the public service we do have to point it out, that her father had an affair with a porn star that resembled his daughter.

Andrea Chalupa: And so Ivanka carries herself in such a way to win her father's favor and to make sure that she maintains the favorite so she cash in on all of that. And it's not an accident that Ivanka's trotting around the global stage where she's by her father's side, where she's shoulder to shoulder with Angela Merkel, right now the leader of the free world, where she is walking around doing all these photo ops with titans of US industry and so forth. She is positioning herself to be President.

Andrea Chalupa: So her father owns the Republican Party now and she has been putting in all these photo ops and all these press release statements from the White House promoting and building her brand. She was even interviewed by her own spokesperson promoting all these fancy-sounding programs that she's doing that sound really nice on the surface, but it's all whitewashing the crimes of her criminal enterprise Administration. So the big danger is, is that Ivanka's going to come in and suddenly the Never Trumpers are going to support her because she goes back to the way things used to be, where the overt racism, the overt misogyny, the overt cruelty, is going to go now behind a beautiful, sparkling hood, white hood, in the form of Ivanka Trump. And the Republicans will now be soothed by that, and they will feel like they got their party back, and they will feel like they'll have a new chance with a new, fresh-faced generation, and, "Let's give women the chance. Look, we're the party of Condoleezza Rice. How could we be racist and misogynistic? So we're going to bring this woman, Ivanka Trump, to be President of the United States." That's what they're going to do. Ivanka Trump is a Trojan Horse for the Republic Party's racism, misogyny, and cruelty.

Andrea Chalupa: So that is a real immediate danger. And Gaslit Nation is positioned to confront this and we've always, from the very beginning, have been calling on people to think bigger than Trump, to confront the forces that brought Trump to power, to confront our societal weaknesses that the Kremlin exploited in order to help bring Donald Trump to power. And so we're going into this year, 2020, the most important election year, again, of our lives, and if a Democrat manages to overcome the hurdles of the Republicans stealing the vote, gerrymandering, racist ID laws, election hacking, and so forth. If a Democrat miraculously manages to overcome those hurdles, to be sworn into office January 2021, and if everyone just goes home and can relax thinking that Savior Syndrome is going to take care of it now, the Democrats in power, then expect Ivanka Trump to be sworn in four years or eight years later.

Sarah Kendzior: To add on to what you mentioned about the Trojan Horse aspect, when Trump was running for office, people would talk about his bigotry. People would talk about his lack of geopolitical acumen. They even talked to some degree about his Russia ties. But what was always overlooked was the depth of those Russian ties and Trump's criminal history, his links to organized crime.

Sarah Kendzior: And Ivanka shares this history. If Ivanka and Jared are not prosecuted or investigated for their role in this administration and examined in terms of their broader criminal history, all we will have is a continuation of the transnational crime syndicate masquerading as the government that Trump helped formalize in office. It was Ivanka who visited the Kremlin with Don Jr. and with Felix Sater, mobster turned informant turned mobster again. Felix Sater, in 2006, went into the Kremlin and twirled around in Putin's chair. That's not normal. It's Ivanka who vacations with oligarchs and their wives and invited them to the inauguration. It was Ivanka and Don Jr. who nearly went to prison in 2012 because of their role in using Trump SoHo as a money laundering apparatus.

Sarah Kendzior: And she has similar real estate dealings that are being investigated for money laundering and other criminal deeds in Panama, in Azerbaijan. She is part of the global criminal elite. And for a while, the media was investigating her and Jared to some extent. They were talking about how we have a problem with security clearances, how both Ivanka and Jared were given security clearances despite lying about their endless list of foreign contacts, illicit foreign contacts, criminal foreign contacts, on their forms, yet remain in a position of power in the executive branch with access to classified intelligence. Do you remember this? Like a year ago, this was still considered a major crisis. You know, a year ago I was on TV talking on Joy Reid about how this is like the 12th time I'd been on her show discussing this and when was someone going to actually do something?

Sarah Kendzior: And the answer to, "When was somebody going to do something?" is "Never." People don't even discuss this anymore. They've absolutely normalized the presence of Ivanka and Jared. And they downplay the national security threat that they pose because we're dealing with things like Trump nearly starting World War III with Iran assassinating Soleimani, and just the general crisis of chaos that has engulfed the country over the last year. And the suffering and the hardship and the difficulty of even looking at the news, of opening up Twitter and seeing this cavalcade of horrific stories. I read today that the ocean is as warm as if you dropped a Nagasaki bomb in it five times a day. We're watching Australia burn. We're watching people in America put GoFundMes up for their funerals. That is what our lives are like. That's the kind of trauma that we are all collectively taking in as a global society every day.

Sarah Kendzior: And so these criminal actions which contribute in so many ways to the terrible state of our world, these are the people who are in power. These are the people who could change things if they wanted to but they don't. They want that destruction for their own ends, as we've said before. But it gets lost in the moral outrage and the legal outrage and the accountability gets lost. Congress has dropped the ball. The media has dropped the ball. But it's important that we don't lose sight of that, and that we don't lose sight of their long game because they're still playing it. People are in this sink or swim position. People feel like they're drowning. They're grasping for air. But meanwhile, from above, this coterie of criminals lives comfortably, plotting away, looking to a future that they are sure they will inherit because they stole it. And they just pass down that stolen inheritance to their dirty criminal offspring.

Andrea Chalupa: For those paying attention, an Ivanka Trump Presidency is going to make us miss a Donald Trump Presidency. Because at least Donald Trump tells you he's committing crimes as he's committing crimes, whether that is just like a blatant denial on a Tweet, or using his Twitter account to intimidate witnesses, or openly calling for Russia to find/hack Hillary's emails, and then repeating that same crime looking for foreign interference to help him get elected in 2020 through Ukraine saying, "It's a perfect phone call, a perfect phone call. Nothing wrong."

Andrea Chalupa: So Donald Trump is a stupid criminal whose, one of his weapons is chaos and being a blunt force instrument and doing it all openly, thinking that if he just bombards us with his chaos we're just going to be so exhausted and worn down. And as a result, some of those broken sharded pieces have been put together into his own impeachment [inaudible 00:29:16] that big brand he has to live with for the rest of his life, having that honor of being the first president impeached in his first term.

Andrea Chalupa: So in some ways he has helped us, whereas Ivanka Trump, she's going to have her PR publicist empire getting all these swooning pieces just like The Atlantic. The Atlantic, which sometimes behaves like a high-brow Gawker in some of their political coverage, how they go after people who are actually fighting the good fight and speaking truth to power, but then they'll write some fawning piece about Ivanka Trump which is so cynical at its core.

Andrea Chalupa: So don't count on the majority of the media to be on Ivanka Trump the same way they are with Donald Trump because she's going to have a charm offensive in place, one that her father is not temperamentally capable of. But she is. And we saw this in the 2016 Republican Convention when she gave a speech at the RNC where she sounded like a Democrat, and she had people praising her, and she had people fooled that she would be a moderating force. She will do that again. She will come out saying that she's rebranded, she's learned, and she'll say, "Oh, that wasn't in my portfolio. I was focused on this." She'll have the PR experts to help her how to fool people again. Count on that.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. Absolutely. And to bring back a figure that you referenced earlier in terms of British media, British tabloids, let's not forget it was Rupert Murdoch, along with his then-wife at the time, Wendi Deng, a socialite who was said by the CIA to be a Chinese spy. When Rupert Murdoch divorced Wendi Deng, he also said she was a Chinese spy. They were the ones who brought Jared and Ivanka together. Jared and Ivanka had broken up until Rupert Murdoch and Wendi Deng invited them on their yacht, because all these things have to happen on a yacht, and brought them back together.

Sarah Kendzior: And so these two crime families, the Kushner family and the Trump family, became arranged in marriage due to this global oligarch/espionage/criminal group that just seems to surround all of these actors from the 1980s on. They are a product of that culture and it's one of these really strange things. I mean look at your own life, like how many people in your own life are linked to the mafia? Linked to espionage operations? Linked to arms trading? Linked to money laundering? I'm expecting not very many. And the number of people that have flittered in and out of Jared and Ivanka's life while they were out doing things like guest starring on Gossip Girl, which actually happened, underneath it all is criminality. It's just like when Trump was on The Apprentice while he was working in money laundering schemes with the Russian mob in the 2000s, especially right before the global financial collapse. They know how to put on this veneer. They're studied and skilled in it and Ivanka was born into it. Jared, to some extent, was born into it as well, only he stays quieter.

Sarah Kendzior: And so it's disturbing to think of the number of power brokers who have escaped any kind of consequence for their crimes that surround this power couple. And they shouldn't be underestimated, they shouldn't be glossed up by magazines like *The Atlantic*, and they shouldn't be overlooked by the population in general as a threat now and as a threat for the future.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah. And so here are some of the things that we need to dedicate ourselves to over the next decade. So climate scientists keep screaming at us that we have less than a decade left to take bold action to confront the climate crisis. And by doing so, we give ourselves a fighting chance to brace for impact. Because climate change is happening. It's now a matter of bracing for impact. And with the impact comes the expected largest refugee crisis in human history. You're going to see a massive amount of people displaced throughout the world. With that comes a furthering of inequality. So you're going to have white rich people leading climate gentrification, where they move towards higher ground pricing out poor people. And with that comes the real victims of the climate crisis, those who are left to fend for themselves in communities that are underserved by their governments. And those tend to be poor communities, communities of color.

Andrea Chalupa: With the oligarch-owned media, with Rupert Murdoch's global media empire fueling disinformation on the climate crisis, they're going to hold up people of color, poor people of color, as victims of the climate crisis, which then spooks the racist white ruling class into not caring about the climate crisis, and therefore not wanting a tiny pinch of their tax dollars going to do anything about the climate crisis. So this vicious cycle of inequality is just going to be strengthened over time until we have an apartheid between rich white people and everybody else.

Andrea Chalupa: And so that's what we're looking at if we don't stay engaged with the process and stare disaster in the face. And by refusing to do that, by refusing to stare disaster in the face, it's game over. It's game over. It's going to be the worst of a science fiction reality here on the planet. And we got Trump by expecting somebody else to stop this sort of thing from happening. We got Trump by thinking somebody else was taking care of all these things, you know, all of us can just live on autopilot and go about our business. And that's what worries me. When you look at the debate of how much Orwell has come to pass, and being somebody that writes about Orwell, what I think it is the scarier dystopian novel is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. I think *Brave New World* nails it more than *1984* because what *Brave New World* showed was that people escaped into pills and sex and other distractions to not care about each other anymore and to dehumanize each other.

Andrea Chalupa: And so that's what I'm really worried about. That people are going to turn off Gaslit Nation, turn off reading about what's really happening, and instead binge watch the latest this, that, and the other off of Netflix and not care about each other anymore, and instead of doing the important work of refusing to abandon each other and stay engaged and grow and build your communities. Because

that's ultimately what's going to turn this around. And right now in 2020, we do stand a very strong fighting chance. And it's about coalition building. It's about community building. It's about staying engaged with the issues that are necessary in order to stop an Ivanka Trump presidency and to Trump-proof and Putin-proof our democracy.

Andrea Chalupa: And some of the issues we need to rally around, include doing the important work in our states to ensure election security. The Russians are back at it again in 2020 and they're trying new tricks because they know that their strategies have been exposed through the Mueller investigation. So we need to fight for election security in our state. We need to ensure that presidential candidates cannot get on the ballot without having to share at least, minimum, five years of their tax returns. We need to strengthen our public schools. We need to pay our teachers more because by raising new generations of critical thinkers, that's going to be a major force against this disinformation weapon that's being leveraged by authoritarian regimes against us, including our own government and its allies like Fox News.

Andrea Chalupa: And so we have a to-do list as a society to stay engaged with, and communities to build around this. And it's never been a more urgent time for us to get involved and stay involved now, and not feel hopeless against any of this and not to succumb to self-medication. *Brave New World* is a greater threat. *Brave New World* is how *1984* happens. You're so self-medicated that suddenly you wake up in *1984*, all right, so all of us need to stay awake and help others become awake, and you do that from building and strengthening communities. And if you want a place to start, go to the Action Guide on Gaslit Nation, gaslitnationpod.com. Action Guide on Gaslit Nation, gaslitnationpod.com.

Sarah Kendzior: I'm glad you recommended concrete actions, but I think the most important thing you said is just the value in people simply caring about each other, caring whether somebody is hurt, wanting to stop them from being hurt, wanting to stop that suffering. And when you live in a society that shifts from a democracy into an autocracy, one of the greatest losses is trust.

Sarah Kendzior: And along with that loss of trust is a loss of risk. People become risk-averse. They cocoon themselves. They hide themselves and insulate themselves from the world because the world only seems to offer pain. And I think that that's understandable. I think a lot of people are in that state of mind, you know, they're trying to force themselves out of it, both for the election and just for kind of their essential survival. But love is a risk worth taking. Even in this kind of environment, loving other people, standing up for other people, looking out for people who are vulnerable, it's always worth it. It helps you preserve your humanity. And I think in this kind of autocratic environment, we're dealing with challenges that we've never dealt with before because along with the dehumanization of an autocratic or aspiring autocratic government, we have the existential threat of climate change, which is so horrific it's hard to just look at it head on.

Sarah Kendzior: And we also have the dehumanization of social media in which everyone's words are recorded forever and chopped into parts and decontextualized and removed from the person who's speaking them and we see mob attacks through these forms of communication. And at this time, communication is essential, and trying to actually build trust is essential, and I don't think it's really ever been harder. So that's just something to think about. Even with all these other tasks at hand it's just how you relate to the world and being able to maintain that part of yourself that's open enough to love other people and to take that risk knowing that you may be hurt, knowing you may be disappointed, because to not do that is to cut yourself off. It's to become less human.

Sarah Kendzior: And I think that that's why Trump is a successful president for this era, is he cut that aspect of his humanity off from himself a very long time ago. I'm not sure if he ever had it, but by the time he was in his 20s, Trump needed to be a brand because he's terrified of being a person. And I think sometimes people look at that not with the horror that it should entail, but a sort of understandable protectiveness. Like, here is a person made for our time. Reality TV is reality. There's no hypocrisy anymore because he confesses openly to crimes, and so people see this sort of hardened, awful version of authenticity, like the authentic horror. It's not something to strive for. It's not something to see as a protective blanket over your emotions. It's terrifying and it's cruel.

Sarah Kendzior: And I think if you concentrate on who is suffering and how to help them and who is being hurt by this situation instead of kind of always looking upward, you know, looking to royals, looking to presidents, looking to the powerful, like, look at who's getting screwed. Look to the downtrodden and let that be your moral guide. You're probably in that category, I think most of us are in this time. Don't let them take your humanity. Don't let them take your ability to be fully human. That's yours. They can take your material possessions. They can take your rights. They can't take your individuality and your compassion and who you are as a human being, so just hold on to that with all you have.

Andrea Chalupa: Pressure works. If you look at the news just coming out this week on BlackRock, which has been a major disaster capitalist and making money off of the burning of the Amazon and so forth with the companies they invest in, they're now coming out saying that they're going to avoid investments in companies that "present a high sustainability-related risk." That's huge. That's a huge step in the right direction. And you are seeing more and more of that because pressure works and organizing has power. Grassroots power is the most reliable power we have left. And so when you join together with your community, you are planting important seeds of hope. So trust that your actions do matter, and trust that by staying engaged you are leaving behind a lifetime of help and support that you are giving those who come after you to harvest the victories. So stay in the fight because everyone desperately needs you.

Andrea Chalupa: I do want to take a moment and we're going to talk about how essential coalition building is, and then touch on the Warren versus Sanders debate that's currently going on and how frustrating this has been to watch. And in an act of

good faith, we want to commend House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, someone that we have been critical of openly, because that's what we do. We're critical of people that when we don't agree with them and we think they could be doing something better. We did three episodes dedicated to impeachment when Nancy Pelosi came out against it, and we were very passionate in our call for impeachment and we refused to give up. We refused to fall in line. And we took a lot of heat for it and we had people leaving our Patreon page, donors pulling their money because they were furious at us for attacking Nancy Pelosi.

Andrea Chalupa: And we just kept going because that's what we believed in and we took the hits for it. And we said very early on that impeachment was critical. Despite the Senate having a rigged election as Mitch McConnell even said on record, "Find Trump not guilty," despite that, impeachment was still critical for damaging the dictator's brand. Because dictators live by their brand. And now Nancy Pelosi just came out and she stood by that principle by saying, "Donald Trump has been impeached for life," and that got under his skin and he wailed about it on Twitter. And that is going to drive him and his mini-me Ivanka Trump absolutely crazy because they have to live with the stink of impeachment for the rest of their lives. Good for Nancy Pelosi. We applaud her for doing that.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. And speaking of impeachment, and as we discussed on last week's episode, the aggression against Iran was one of the strategies that Trump has been using to draw attention away from impeachment and from the general corruption of his administration. As we also pointed out, there is no such thing as war purely as a distraction. War always has its own consequences. And so we'll get into this more, I think, in later episodes because the Iran crisis is ongoing. It didn't magically end last week. I think we're still going to see recriminations for a lot of the actions of this administration and of both Iran and neighboring countries in the region.

Sarah Kendzior: Briefly, just to sort of catch you guys up, the Trump Administration has gone from insisting that Soleimani was an imminent threat, to contending with reports that Trump had agreed to assassinate him seven months ago, to now claiming that it doesn't matter whether the threat was imminent or not. So we're seeing the repercussions of a pathological liar in the position of commander-in-chief.

Sarah Kendzior: We're still seeing protests in Iran. These protests reflect the variety of perspectives held by citizens, with some backing the Iranian regime, some protesting against it. The plane crash that happened last night, I guess one week ago, was a game changer. It was a tragic game changer. Protesters switched in Iran afterwards to protesting the assassination of Soleimani to protesting the Iranian government, who allegedly fired a missile that hit that plane causing civilian casualties, including many Iranians, and then lying about it and trying to cover it up. So we have yet another disaster on top of the already existing disaster of the US and Iran and its aggression.

Sarah Kendzior: And so all of us... this again raises the question of who exactly is driving Trump's foreign policy. We discussed last week that Pompeo and his fellow rapture fiends want this for religious fanatical purposes. We have people who support Netanyahu in the administration like his old friend Jared Kushner who want it, who see Iran as a threat that must be destroyed. John Bolton, of course, shares this view that Iran must be destroyed. And he's had a lifelong ambition for an Iran war that was shared by pretty much everyone that's ever been in the Trump Administration: Mattis, Kelly, McMaster, the alleged adults in the room, the alleged generals who would save us. They all wanted this.

Sarah Kendzior: And we don't exactly know when this decision was made about Soleimani, but odds are pretty good that it was made when we had no Secretary of Defense because we had no Secretary of Defense for almost an entire year. And that's just one of those mind-blowing facts that people gloss over, kind of like they do with Ivanka and Jared being installed in the White House, a sign that we are a nation collapsing from within in terms of government oversight, and it's now become even more dangerous.

Sarah Kendzior: I think we'll go more into this next week, there's so much to say. But just briefly, obviously, do not trust what Trump is tweeting about Iran. He is now tweeting out support for protesters one week after he threatened to bomb 52 Iranian cultural sites. Trump has no problem with annihilating protesters. He cheered on China for Tiananmen Square, he both sides-ed Charlottesville. He likes carnage. He's ambivalent, I think, to a lot of geopolitical conflicts if they do not directly benefit him. There have been articles, especially in The New Yorker, about how relationships with Iran have benefited him, benefited his goon squad, like Giuliani, et cetera.

Sarah Kendzior: We'll get into this but we want to end the show on another smaller crisis that has been grotesquely magnified over the last 24 hours and so, Andrea, you can turn to the shit show of the 2020 election.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah. Well so, I love how we're having this lively and productive Democratic Primary. And the Kremlin is anticipating Biden being the Democratic candidate to go up against Trump. It's because the Kremlin just hacked Burisma, the company that Hunter Biden served on the board for in Ukraine. So Trump was viciously extorting Ukraine's President Zelensky, who was overwhelmingly elected by Ukrainians to confront and fight corruption. And here you have the President of the United States trying to drag Zelensky into corruption by inventing a scandal to tarnish his rival, Biden, in the 2020 election. And when Zelensky didn't produce anything, and instead this massive extortion by Trump against Ukraine, which is struggling against a war against corruption and also invasion by Russia, the second most powerful military in the world, further victimizing Ukraine itself. And meanwhile, when the military aid promised overwhelmingly by Congress is withheld by Trump in this scheme, Ukrainian soldiers are being killed by his buddy Putin.

Andrea Chalupa: And so now the Kremlin is redoubling its efforts to help get Trump elected by hacking Burisma looking for any sort of dirt possible that can be exploited in the 2020 election. So the Kremlin is still at it in 2020. And one of the strategies that helped Trump narrowly win in 2016, and remember, it came down to just 70,000 votes in the electoral college or something like that, the size of a sports stadium is what elected Donald Trump and canceled out the votes of millions in the popular vote. And now Donald Trump could, once again, lose the popular vote but by an even bigger margin than in 2016, and still maintain the electoral college.

Andrea Chalupa: Because the electoral college, as we all know, is a monument to slavery. It was a horrible compromise by the founding fathers to please the more rural and less-populated states. So with this strategy of helping Trump win and the Kremlin back at it and desperately needing to keep Trump in power, because what's a Democrat president going to do? Pass sweeping sanctions against the Kremlin for all it's been doing. And the Trump crime family and the Kremlin desperately need to escape accountability by staying in power, and they're going to do that by relying on a tried and true playbook which helped them in the first place, and that is divide and conquer. Divide and conquer.

Andrea Chalupa: The stolen emails, hacked by Russian intelligence hackers in 2016 from the DNC, those were carefully curated and weaponized and delivered by Kremlin proxy Wikileaks right before the Democratic Convention in Philly in 2016. That was a big bomb that went off that exploded the opposition to Trump, that drove Bernie and Hillary supporters against each other. You saw those tensions, you felt them, at the Democratic Convention. They were all over the news. And the media just loved it. It was a delicious reality show for the corporate-owned reality show media.

Andrea Chalupa: And so now we have the same sizzling factions being exploited by corporate-owned media between Bernie and Warren supporters. And I know Bernie and Warren supporters can point fingers at each other, "Well they said this," "They said that." Get over it. Everybody needs to be part of the solution now, to rise above this and show leadership and refuse to be dragged down to this level and take the bait of divide and conquer. Because that works. It is so effective. Manafort relied on that playbook to bring Yanokovich to power. Manafort used divide and conquer and his dark arts in Ukraine in furthering the Kremlin's agenda. They use divide and conquer because divide and conquer works.

Andrea Chalupa: So please do not fall for it. And the way you rise above it is to be, first and foremost, aware of it, aware that it's a tactic. And then second, understand that if you fall for the bait of divide and conquer, what you're doing is you're compromising yourself and you're compromising your candidate because you're showing stupidity. If you want big, sweeping systemic change, you need to build smart strategy. Nobody is going to trust you with power if you succumb to stupidity, if you take the bait. If you want us to trust you with power and that you are somebody of moral leadership and character that can build the

necessary coalitions needed to win, needed to build actual systematic change, you need to rise above all of that.

Andrea Chalupa: So right now we're calling on Warren supporters and Sanders supporters to rise above, to show individual leadership wherever you are, and call out the bait and refuse to take the bait, and focus together on the main goal, which is the needed systematic change that's going to close the loopholes of the weaknesses in our society that were driven and created by the far-right in America and which the Kremlin took advantage of in order to bring Donald Trump to power. We talk about them, we call them out all the time on this show, from income inequality to economic disparity driven by racism and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa: So enough already. We're all on the same side. And you do not win without building a coalition. And whoever is the Democratic candidate in 2020 we all need to unite behind them because we are up against an actual existential threat.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. I agree. And we're going to continue talking about this in the bonus episode that we do every week for Patreon subscribers. We've been talking more and more about 2020. So if you want more discussion of that, go ahead and sign up.

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 our listeners to help the victims of the Australian fires by donating to The St. Vincent de Paul Society in Australia, working on the ground to help people in need. Donate at donate.vinnies.org.au. For help directed toward Australia's First Nations communities, check out the Fire Relief Fund for First Nations Communities by Neil Morris. We've posted links to these groups and others on our Patreon page.

Andrea Chalupa: We also encourage you to donate to WIRES, a group that rescues native Australian wildlife in distress. Donate at wires.org.au. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans, already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to The Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.

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

Sarah Kendzior: Our production managers are Nicholas Torres and Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres, and our Patreon-exclusive content is edited by Karlyn Daigle.

Andrea Chalupa: Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Wissenberg, Nick Farr, Damien Arriaga, and Karlyn Daigle.

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