

Gaslit Nation

The Trump Brand of Death

Andrea Chalupa

Sarah Kendzior

Theme Music

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

Andrea Chalupa: I'm Andrea Chalupa, a writer, filmmaker and activist, 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 autocracy around the world. And so this week we are still dealing with the fallout of the government shutdown, which cost American workers money and possibly cost one federal worker his life. The U.S. is now in an extremely vulnerable place, in a limbo that feels like hell. Tonight, Tuesday, is the State of the Union, so God knows what will have happened by the time you're actually listening to the show. But in the meantime, there are a few things we should not forget. Workers are still struggling to get on their feet. Federal workers are dealing with an incredible financial and emotional toll. Over the weekend, a TSA worker, Robert Henry, committed suicide in the Orlando International Airport by jumping from a balcony. He was 36 years old. He'd been working for the TSA since 2006. That is for nearly his entire adult life. It's not clear whether his suicide was caused by the shutdown, but it reminds me of the turmoil of the 2013 shutdown, which also led to panic and depression among federal workers and other citizens, an understandable reaction to chaos and deprivation. During the 2013 shutdown, a man named John Constantino set himself on fire on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and burned to death. His suicide received almost no media coverage despite both the personal tragedy of it and the symbolism of it, and I remember being as shocked by that as I was by the act itself. I ended up writing about him in an essay later published in my book, because he was one of many men who are setting themselves on fire in public places during that time of brutal austerity, an austerity which gave way to the rising authoritarianism we have around the world now.

And I'm going to read a little bit from that essay in my book *The View from Flyover Country*: Rome wasn't built in a day, the saying goes, but it was burned in one. Today Rome does not burn. Its stocks continue to rise; its wealthy continue to profit. Rome does not burn; only its victims do. For every person who sets himself on fire, there are millions suffering in silence. For every person who becomes a symbol, there are millions who watch quietly in shock and resignation, resigned to our shock, shocked by our deference. Self-immolation has long been an act of protest against corrupt and tyrannical rule: Tibetans against the Chinese, Czechoslovakians against the Soviets. The difference between these acts of protest and the unemployed men on fire is that today we are not sure who is in charge. The U.S. government, after all, cannot even govern itself. State attempts at improving social welfare are trumped not by public will or political disagreement, but by what appears to be a preplanned, funded attempt by fringe conservatives to shut the government down. In every country with massive unemployment, which is increasingly every country, citizens see the loss of a functioning social contract and the apathy with which that loss is received.

And so basically, we are in the same position as 2013. You know, I've been emphasizing this in every show since the last shutdown began, that this is not about a wall, this is not just about Trump. This is about a broader plan to deem workers unnecessary, to deem government unnecessary, and to strip the U.S. down and sell it for parts. And so again, I urge you to be prepared for, if not a shutdown, these exact sort of tactics and viewpoints to continue in the weeks and months to come.

Meanwhile, we have other types of losses from the shutdown. Joshua Tree National Park has been destroyed. The National Park Service estimates it will take over 300 years to repair the damage done, if that's even possible, given the ravages of climate change. Death Valley and Yosemite National parks were also damaged, along with other parks throughout the region. What people need to understand, especially if we have another shutdown, is that there are no do overs here. There are no second chances. There are only landscapes, and sacred sites and endangered species lost forever. There are only memories your children and grandchildren will never get to make. The only way to stop this and to ensure protection is to remove this administration which is also destroying national landmarks through illegal means. On Monday, The National Butterfly Center in Texas began to be destroyed in preparation for Trump's Vanity Wall, jeopardizing at least 10,000 species, including ninety-three endangered species. The human toll is also high. The land stolen for this wall will result in flooding for residents who live there, and will devastate their economy, which is buffered by eco-tourism. The Trump administration has waived over 30 laws to tear down thousand-year-old ecosystems with no reason other than hate and greed and flaunting of power. So when you consider the shutdown, consider this: it never ended, much like the 2008 recession never ended. Much like the GOP's broader goals of the 2013 shutdown never receded. Much like all the things that American politicians like to package as resolved never really are. Every time you get a false assurance that the bad times are over, and therefore we must be complacent and compliant, a "we can't impeach now," or "we must wait for Mueller," you're hearing from someone who lacks any sense of urgency or compassion for other human beings. It's grotesque at every level, and it's going to get worse, because we're not even close to remedying the root of the problem. This is why we need to continue speaking out and putting pressure on elected officials and any other power brokers who have the capacity to stop or mitigate this damage. So Andrea, what are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa: Well, my thoughts are that we have the State of the Union tonight, which we don't need to cover because we all know what that's going to be. Trump the Reality Show Host of Terror is just going to be sniffing his way through that, maybe trying to test drive a new nickname on Nancy Pelosi, which will fail miserably. He'll stutter his way through that and just still call her Nancy. But basically, underlying all of this, it didn't begin with Trump. So, for instance, you know, when the first black president gave his very first State of the Union, you had a white congressman from South Carolina, Joe Wilson, interrupt him by screaming, "You lie!" And challenging the credibility of the first black president in front of the entire world. And that of course continued over the full two terms of Obama's presidency, with Trump creating, building an entire movement of birtherism, demanding to see President Obama's birth certificate, which Michelle Obama later said threatened the lives of their family. So at the heart of all this is what I've called before in an essay I wrote, which is what the Republicans, what conservatives have been doing with this shutdown, with this rise of Trumpism, the inevitable Frankenstein monster of Donald Trump, that conservative policies have been giving us for generations since Reagan, had a black woman smugly smiling becoming the poster mascot, the dehumanized black minstrel show, if you will, for the welfare queen, and really playing into white rage that way, and capitalizing on white rage that way. So all of this has been a long time coming, and that's why it's been morbidly fascinating and terrifying to watch the Frankenstein monster, Donald Trump, of the GOP destroy the GOP. So you created him. What did you think was going to happen with all of these inhumane policies that were just targeting and tightening the noose around the poor? And especially the deliberate targeting of people of color that those communities across the country fit your destructive policies and your scapegoating. So basically what Republicans have been building is this two minutes of hate against immigrants, asylum seekers, people of color generally, and all the anger and pain and anxiety gets taken out in this adrenaline rush of white rage that's primal. When you look at early reports of what Hitler's rallies were like, they were primal.

The euphoria in those tents was primal, and that's what the Republican Party is satisfying and has been satisfying for generations. And they've done it, they've done it long before Trump, which is why Trump was inevitable. So in this essay I wrote a couple of years ago, it was talking about how

plutocracy is the new manifest destiny. If you look at all of the destructive policies, the genocide that went on against Native Americans, which we now found out through recent research was so severe, there's entire civilizations just decimated, that it changed the temperature on a continent. It affected the global climate. That is how gruesome and far-reaching this genocide of Native Americans by whiteness was in order to build this country. So America was essentially built on genocide, as we know, and of course slavery, which is its own form of genocide. So what we're seeing now is that same genocide continues, but it's targeting the poor. And, of course, the poor in America tends to be communities of color, immigrant communities, asylum seekers, and with it now you have white people are suffering as well. They're not, they're not, the research is showing that they're not rising as they used to, and they don't even realize it, to the extent that that the rest of us do, especially the communities that are historically the target of these policies. And that's because they're choosing color, they're choosing race, over their own self-interest, and it's just been so chilling to watch. It's really just this two minutes of hate that the Republicans have built a party on in order to divide us and to enrich the rich. And now we have income inequality that's at a crisis level. I feel completely stunned by all of it. And I want to read from a book by Chrystia Freeland who was the editor of The Financial Times, the editor of Reuters. She's now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Canada, and she's been sanctioned by Russia because she's such a badass. And she's she's helping lead the free world right now, holding it down because America is taking a break from that role at the moment, and she's doing a wonderful job. She brought over a Saudi Arabian girl who was in a desperate asylum seeker; she saved her life. She's been really good on refugees. She's been really strong, despite the aggressive Kremlin propaganda, despite the...which is misleading a lot of the leftists. She's been really strong on Venezuela. Trudeau's government is giving a lot of support now to Venezuelans and was first to recognize Juan Guaidó as the interim president, and he is interim president. If you look back on our last episode, we walk through the facts that situation using the voices of Venezuelan experts themselves. So I'm gonna read from Chrystia Freeland's book *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super Rich and The Fall of Everyone Else*. And this is from an NPR interview that she gave: "Freeland says she's worried about what she calls an inevitable human temptation that people who've benefited from a mobile society like America will get to the top and then rig the rules to benefit themselves. 'You don't do this,' she says in a kind of chortling, smoking your cigar, conspiratorial thinking way. 'You do it by persuading yourself that what is in your own personal self-interest is in the interests of everybody else. So you persuade yourself that actually government services, things like spending on education, which is what created that social mobility in the first place, needs to be cut so that the deficit will shrink, so that your tax bill doesn't go up. And what I really worry about,' Freeland said, 'is there is so much money and so much power at the very top, and the gap between those people at the very top and everybody else is so great that we're going to see social mobility choked off and society transformed. So basically what she's saying in her book, *Plutocrats*, is that the very rich, like Howard Schultz, like a billionaire like Howard Schultz, who benefited from all these great social programs growing up-- public schools, public housing, all of it--they now want to remove the ladder that they climbed up on, because they're basically crediting all of their success on their own personal genius, and thinking about their own self-interest here, and trying to justify their own self-interest, that they want to shrink opportunities for everybody else.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, absolutely, and, you know, both of us have been talking about that for a very long time. You know, that's what my book, which was mostly written between 2012 and 2014 is largely about, and a warning of what's to come. And, you know, what I find frightening now is because, you know, no one acted to curb this, you know, rising inequality, opportunity, elites hoarding resources. We're now having this intersection of multiple crises in which people who have had immunity from consequence from the hoarding of wealth now seem to have the ability to act with criminal impunity as well. And, you know, basically the three things I'm sort of seeing intersect are this extreme income inequality in which the very, very wealthy, it doesn't matter to them what happens on the ground. It doesn't matter if, you know, the day to day economy collapses. It doesn't matter if wages never go up. You kind of see this reflected in the stock market, because

the stock market is not reflecting the instability and chaos that the world has been plunged in. You know, it reflects the insularity of the type of people who have a lot of money to put into the stock market, and it's just, you know, rigged for reward.

You know, they're kind of floating on a cloud above us. You know, and we see the same thing with organized crime, and the intersection of organized crime and white collar crime in which there's really not much of a difference. And you know, I look back at times when, you know, you could look at the late '80s, all of the prosecutions of people on Wall Street then, the sort of Leona Helmsley, Michael Milken types, or even back, you know, after the financial crisis where we at least had like Madoff prosecuted. You know, now those people run the government.

You know, they run other governments. They work together in, you know, essentially, a transnational crime syndicate that doesn't need to rely on the same kind of material aspects that other economies were held up on.

You know, this is a digital economy, and then on top of that you have the threat of climate change. And I don't believe for a minute that this group of conservatives truly thinks that climate change is not real. I think they absolutely know it's real, and they're seeking a way to profit off it, and they're seeking a way to to once again keep themselves immune from all consequences.

And that story you brought up, you know, about the genocide of Native Americans being so vast that it literally, you know, changed the climate, it changed science, when I read that, you know, one of my first thoughts was like, "Don't give them more ideas." Because, you know, we're seeing a lot of really disturbing phenomena.

Andrea Chalupa: They're building camps.

Sarah Kendzior: They're building. You know, we're seeing billionaires building luxury bunkers, or homes in places like New Zealand that they think will be both immune from climate change and also, you know, sort of cut off and relatively stable. We're seeing apocalyptic rhetoric from people like Mike Pence or Mike Pompeo.

Sarah Kendzior: You know, they build policy around the Rapture. You don't want to live in a country that builds their their policy around the Rapture. And so, you know, it basically, you know, they've turned everything else into a commodity, and now they've turned the future into a commodity as well.

And it's a rare commodity. It's a commodity that they think they and they alone are entitled to. And what happens to the rest of us is just utterly irrelevant to them, and so, you know, that's very frightening. It sounds like the plot of a dystopian novel. I think it is the plot of many dystopian novels, but, you know, like those novels reflect genuine worries and concerns that people experience when history leaves its mark, or they see this sort of tide turning, and it does lend itself to this kind of horrible surreal quality that we've been experiencing for the last few years, and particularly since Trump took office.

You know, a quality that becomes even more surreal by the fact that people continue to act as if it's normal. You know, they act as if there's not a government that's essentially a crime syndicate. They're acting as if the President is not a Russian asset and a sociopath, and if somehow, you know, we're just going to go through all these rituals like the State of the Union, just sort of, you know, chug along as if all is well. You know, it's genuinely disorienting.

I mean I'm sure you can you can hear in my voice how disorienting I find it, particularly in this time that seems to be the time between a shutdown and either another shut down or a scheduled national

emergency. Did you have anything else you wanted to add or should we move on to the border?

Andrea Chalupa: Well yes, we need to talk about the border. As we always say on this show, the Republican Party is the party of death, but I wanted to talk more about the primal scream of whiteness. I married to a French man which has its fun benefits, and so I go to Paris for the holidays this year with my in-laws, and so right after the 2016 election I was in Paris. So when the world was coming to an end, I happen to be in Paris at a time when the city had three major popular exhibits going on at the same time. One was at the Kwe Bradley Jacques Chirac museum, which was on art and the color line, looking at the institution of racism in America from before the Civil War to the present day, and through art, through all of, you know, great black thinkers, great black artists, you know, many who are not very well known, you have of course all the greats. Like you have Strange Fruit by Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong and the speeches of Martin Luther King, and others. And so as you're going through the history of black resistance art for centuries, what you're seeing again and again through this story of black resistance art was that every time black people in America made any type of progress, any type of advancement in societies, they were met with a massive, violent wave of the white primal scream. So, for instance, leading up to World War I, the start of the 20th century, you had of course The Great Migration going on, where black people were escaping the authoritarianism of the South, the terrorism of lynching in the South, and moving up north to industrialized cities like Chicago. And then of course you had a lot of black veterans coming home from serving in World War I, and they had their minds open and expanded from being abroad and what they saw and all this, you know, and their experience in the military and the pride that inevitably does instill in you. Because it is an achievement, of course, to serve one's country and to perform dutifully in the military. And so when they came home to Chicago and other Northern industrialized cities, they carried with them a new pride that made the white populations very uncomfortable, of course. And so what you had in the summer of 1919 was the Red Summer, where you had twenty five violent riots that killed dozens of people injured several hundred people. And of course, the victims, the targets, it was black upward mobilization, like black upward mobility and social aspiration, that's what the target was. And so as you went to this exhibit and you saw again and again black achievement met by the White Primal Scream, you left it thinking Donald Trump was inevitable. Donald Trump is the American story, and all of us were naive to think otherwise and expect anybody else to win but him. Who else would follow the first black president than Donald Trump.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa: And that is the American story. The Russians just help. The Russians just came in and said, "We see an opportunity. We're just as corrupt as the GOP. These guys love golden handcuffs just like we do. These guys love making money off of slain school children killed by the NRA. The Russians just saw an opportunity and seized the opportunity. But this is all part of the larger American story.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, absolutely, and this is something I thought about constantly, you know, living in St. Louis. You know, living in Missouri, a state of the infamous Missouri Compromise, living, you know, near the courthouse where the Dred Scott decision was made, and also, to your point, living across the river from East St. Louis, where in 1917 we had one of the worst race riots in U.S. history., you know, they call it a race riot; what it was was white mob violence. You know, it was in reaction to gainfully employed black workers, and their resentment and their horror and their hatred of it. Back to your point about Paris, you know, Josephine Baker was one of the people who endured that riot, and when black people in East St. Louis, you know, heard the white mob coming, you know, they thought it was like a natural disaster. They thought it was some sort of, you know, like wild animals. It was incredibly frightening, and it was part of a series of that kind of violence, and you know, you can go back a century from that and that same region, and I have written about this too. Next to East St. Louis is Alton, Illinois, which is the home of Elijah Lovejoy, you know,

who was an abolitionist journalist who did live in St. Louis, and he fled. He was white, but, you know, still an abolitionist, and he fled white mob violence. And that mob followed him over the river, followed him to Alton, through his printing press into the Mississippi, and then eventually killed him. He was, you know, in his late 30s when he died. That was in the 1830s. That was during, you know, Andrew Jackson's era. That was when Native Americans were crossing through Missouri on the Trail of Tears. So yeah, you know, none of this is new in some respects.

There's always been this this constant struggle, you know, this constant tension between, you know, the absolute worst impulses of humanity being sanctioned or being fought against through law. And that's why, you know, when Trump was elected, you know, there are many freedoms you need to protect, but the vigilance of the justice system was foremost, because you can't make an appeal to morality here. You can't make an appeal to shame, and when a crowd turns into a mob, which is what happens at so many Trump rallies, you know, the situation becomes very hard to control. And so what you need is to keep those laws strong to offer legal protection. And of course to prosecute the obviously guilty. But we've failed to do that. You know, over the last couple of years, we have lost even more rights than before.

You know, I'm glad that at least tonight Stacey Abrams is speaking, because among the rights that we've lost, are voting rights, we have increased voting disenfranchisement. And if you can't vote then that's the, you know, the road to an even greater loss of rights and a degradation of law.

So yeah, it is the same old story, only, you know, what I fear is that we're in like a final chapter in the story of America and I hope that that's not the case. But things keep happening that, you know, push me in that direction. And, you know, what I feel is the the worst thing, you know, the thing that's kind of hardest to talk about, is what's happened at the border with the state kidnapping of migrant children. And, you know, this week we found out our worst fears about the separation of migrant parents and children is true. The trauma was intentionally inflicted by the Trump regime, and now there's thousands of children being withheld from their parents with no plans to reunite them. The Trump administration is claiming that reuniting the families would be, quote, "the real trauma," which means that migrants who came to the border seeking freedom and seeking safety may have lost their children forever. And, you know, one thing I think about is even in these cases where they do get to be reunited, you don't get that time back.

You know, you don't get that part of your life back, and if you're a parent, you know, you know the nightmarish-ness of that situation. I mean it's really it's the worst thing I can imagine for any parent and it's just such a, it's just beyond a disgrace. It's such a horror that this is happening on our border. There's no day that goes by, you know, where I don't think about this, you know, as a mother myself and just as a person, and think how how can we be doing this to these families? And also beyond just being immoral, it's illegal according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, one act of genocide includes, and I quote, "forcibly transferring children of the group to another group with the outcome"--and again, to quote--"of causing mental harm." And there's no denying that this is happening. You know, and according to other legal experts the forced separation may also fall under the grounds of felony kidnapping. So that's what your government is doing, and to kind of go back to the point that both of us were just making, you know, this is how genocides start. And we've had this constant refrain, you know, of it can't happen here, you know, from the moment Trump declared his candidacy to when he held office. And what I've been saying is not just it can happen here, but it has happened here. They just, you know, it hasn't happened en masse to white people in America. But it happened to Native Americans, this forced separation. It happened to black families who were brought here in chains, and it's happening now. And, you know, the lack of urgency, this sort of wait and see and let's see how it turns out, or wait for 2020, or wait for Mueller or whatever, like I just, I don't know how you, how people reconcile that with the horror of this situation. I don't know how those who have the power and the capacity to stop or slow or mitigate this live with themselves every day.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, this feels impossible to talk about, because what we know is not as evil or terrible as what we don't know yet about this entire human rights crisis created by Steven Miller, created by Ivanka Trump, created by Jared Kushner, created by Donald Trump. This is a long row of giant burning crosses that they have on the border. This is hate incarnate, and yeah, like you said, the United States government, with our tax dollars is carrying out every parent's worst nightmare in our name.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa: For people that have suffered so much in their own countries, which are victims of decades of abysmal and destructive U.S. foreign policy in the first place. So what's really needed isn't a stupid vanity project like a wall which all security experts, border security experts are saying the wall does not help. The wall is nothing but a medieval tribute to an incredibly vain family. What I think is needed that no one's really talking about is there's more urgency for a Marshall Plan for that for Central and South America just to provide reparations and help undo some of the damage of a century of U.S. foreign policy in that region. And if you do that, and if it's well executed with experts, not Iran Contra graduates, like not the Iran Contra crowd, but if it's well done, executed by experts, academics, the leading journalists brought in on on these commissions you could help give reason for people to stay in their own countries, and you could help empower people to safely confront and fight corruption in their own countries, and make that part of the world safer, and people want to stay. And so I think any sort of sensible border security strategy, which of course the Democrats are advocating for, has to include a Marshall Plan for that part of the world, because as we're always saying on this show, America's foreign policy is a story of self-inflicted karma. It's like, when will people learn? So yes, this is a crisis, and every crisis is a demand for healing, and so any conversation about border security has to also include greater programs, greater incentives to help people stay in their own countries and help repair the damage that our foreign policy has caused in that part of the world.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah absolutely, and you know, I wish more Democrats were thinking that broadly, or talking about it. You know, one of the frustrating things--

Andrea Chalupa: That boldly!

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah!

Andrea Chalupa: They're too afraid, like pandering to trying to win those independent voters who, you know, those Steve Schmidt, I created Sarah Palin voters. You know, you're never going to win them. But what you're seeing with the blue wave that came in in the midterms of 2018, you need quality candidates.

You need candidates that inspire people to fight to not only show up at the polls on voting day, but to help knock on doors and build a progressive political structure. When you have quality candidates, you can push forward a progressive message, but when you water yourself down, when you're afraid of your own shadow, no one's going to follow you anywhere.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, and what I really wish is that there were candidates, and hopefully we'll see this in the months to come, because it is so early, that understand that you cannot separate domestic and foreign policy issues. You particularly cannot separate them when you are running against a Russian asset who is installed in the White House, but just broadly speaking, you know, as you said, the humanitarian crisis in Central America is in part because of our own doing. And, you know, we have an obligation at the least to try to remedy that in some way and obviously, you know, we should not be doing what we're doing now. The people who are kidnapping children and doing God

knows what to them should be in jail. It's just such a...I don't know. I mean, you know, I am with this topic. I get very worried. I get very...on a gut level.

Andrea Chalupa: It's state sanctioned terror.

Sarah Kendzior: It is! It's state sanctioned terror. It's to the most vulnerable people, you know, it's to babies. You know, in one case they ripped a baby away from its mother while the baby was breastfeeding. It's just the sheer, the cruelty toward people who are already in such a vulnerable situation and just against like the most, you know, secret of human relationships. You know, that bond where that child is literally physically dependent on its mother for life. I mean it's just...it's...it's mind blowing. And, you know, there are other things about those that came out in the last week that are very disturbing. You know, Rachel Maddow did a show, I think based on some information that people had tweeted out that a lot of the bizarre details that Trump had given about human trafficking on the border came from the movie *Sicario: Day of the Soldado*.

People recognize this from the movie because he was making these bizarre claims, like people left Muslim prayer rugs there, and you know, this all came out of their questions about, you know, the duct tape he described. When trafficking experts were looking at this information, you know, that Trump was giving in his speech, they were like, "What the hell is he talking about? This doesn't reflect any reality we've ever seen on the ground."

And so now in part we have the question of, "Where the hell is Trump getting this information from?" answered. We don't know whether he just saw the movie as fiction or whether, you know, and I can actually picture this, somebody like Steven Miller showing him a few clips and being like, "Yeah yeah, you know, documentary footage. We know what's going on." Because, you know, Miller is so key to this. You know, he is the force behind this plan. He also tends to be Trump's speechwriter, which makes me worry for the State of the Union.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah.

Sarah Kendzior: But, you know, one thing, you know, and I hate bringing this up again, but I feel like we kind of need to go there because other people aren't, is Trump has this history of being linked to human trafficking, including sex trafficking of minors, which makes an already horrific situation even more worrisome. You know, he was friends with multiple traffickers, including, you know, Jeffrey Epstein, who procured him, allegedly, a 13-year-old girl who he raped, according to court documents. That case was only dropped after the victim was threatened. He was friends with Taufik Arif, who was arrested for trafficking, and then, trafficking minors. And then that was ultimately dropped. You know, he's another billionaire able to pay his way out, much like Epstein. Friends with Roy Cohn, friends with John Casablancas, who had a questionable modeling agency, you know, and they face the same allegations. I mean, that's a lot. And then of course you have Trump model management which, you know, we don't know if there is some sort of a prostitution element to that company, but we do know that it was deeply corrupt. You know, models who were brought over from foreign countries to work for Trump were living in terrible conditions. There is a lot of question about the legality of it in terms of visas, immigration process, what exactly these young women were being promised and what they received. I mean, and none of this has been thoroughly investigated. And you know, it needs to be. Like, this is not some sort of idle speculation. There is enough of a steady history, a very disturbing history in Trump's background that I think it's completely reasonable to wonder what exactly is going on with all these kids, especially the ones who have flat out disappeared. You know, there's another aspect of this, too, which is the, you know, evangelical belief, you know, that these children need to be saved, that they need to be rescued, and that the way to do that is to take them away from their biological parents and put them into, you know, evangelical homes. You know, this is something that we've seen reflected in people like Betsy Devos.

So that's another possibility as well. And, you know, this sounds very out there, but this unfortunately is who we are governed by. We are governed by sociopaths, by people who don't follow the rule of law, by people who have a long history in crime, in associations with sex traffickers, pedophiles, and who often, you know, proclaim that the apocalypse is imminent. You know, these are not rational actors, so we should not expect rational behavior. We should expect sadistic behavior, and we should therefore be extremely vigilant and fight very hard for the victims of that behavior, you know, who most of all are these children at the border.

Theme music

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Andrea Chalupa: I think it's amazing that Trump is quoting a Hollywood film for creating domestic policy, but certainly not surprising, because this is a man who was obsessed with the relationship of Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh God, I forgot about that.

Andrea Chalupa: Trump devoted all these tweets to analyzing that relationship. It's sort of, you know, there's been all these things that we could say, "This one story alone." You know, the time he called Mexicans rapists, the time he said--the grab them by the pussy tape--we've all these examples of, "This one story alone should have stopped him from winning the White House, because it just defines his character. Why didn't everybody see it?" But I really think the 2012 Twitter meltdowns he would have over Kristen Stewart and Robert Patterson's love story, whatever, I feel like that is really what we should have been like, "Guys, this is somebody who has a lot of time on his hands." Like, Trump has failed at many things: Trump Steaks, Trump University, all of his organizations are now under investigation. The only thing Trump has succeeded at is microblogging on Twitter. Like that's his first and only love, and he's prolific, as we all know. And so we now have this report that's making the rounds that Trump is lazy, that he rolls into work at 11:00 a.m. He's busy snorting McDonalds Big Macs and yelling at Fox News and taking cues from Sicario and other Hollywood movies. Of course, he's like a lazy president. You and I, Sarah, worked so much harder than the President of the United States. My lazy Sunday is probably more productive than any given day of the week for Donald Trump. I mean, this was, when he was building his whole racist birther movement, which helped lay the groundwork for his victory in 2016. He was calling out Obama left and right as lazy, you know, playing into all of that. And any time Obama would go on vacation, which wasn't a lot, certainly not by comparison to Trump's first month in office, all those golfing outings he took his entire first year in office that we paid for with our tax dollars just to, you know, support secret service going out there all the golf carts they had to rent. But first of all, everybody has a right to a vacation, and Americans are toxic when it comes to our attitude towards vacations. Vacations are a matter of mental health even if you can just take a week off and unplug and binge watch Netflix and walk your dog, like anything you can do to just unplug from work for a bit is incredibly healthy, helps your mind recover. My father's a neuroscientist who wrote an essay that went viral on how there's all these tricks and pills and things for the mind these days, but what the mind really needs is 24 hours of solitude. That's restorative. That's what's going to help you, you

know, heal, optimize. And so I really hate America's attitude towards vacations. And so President Obama, whose hair is turning white being President of the United States because he actually gets work done, he had a right to any vacation he needed. I feel a lot safer knowing the guy with the nuclear codes is out there in Hawaii healing and getting some much needed perspective and fresh air. But by the other, opposite extreme, I feel incredibly vulnerable knowing that this sniffing Big Mac addict who is best friends in the White House with an actual Nazi, Steven Miller, I feel a lot more concerned that he's even in there with his klan with a K, but also that he's not doing anything. He doesn't like to read. He doesn't trust experts. All he trusts is Fox News, which is propaganda, and Hollywood movies. And of course the latest on whatever's going on with Twitter. Why the hell did anyone, anyone, any pundit anywhere, ever say he's going to pivot? This is a presidential moment about the man who had a years long feud with Rosie O'Donnell. How do how do we allow it to get this far? And I'm speaking on behalf of future generations when I ask that question.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. This will be in the history books, the great Kristen Stewart feud and all that, you know. I wonder, though, about him as lazy. Like that's just, it's not really how I think of him. I think of him more as somebody who knows, you know, what he needs to know to get by, which in his case is mostly how to do propaganda, spin and crime, and then knows the best people to outsource the rest of the work to which of course is, you know, basically the worst people like the worst people in the world.

Andrea Chalupa: The Nazis.

Sarah Kendzior: He's come out and said this. He's made speeches bragging about how he literally finds the worst people in the world to do his bidding, and in that case, I feel like he's telling the truth. You know, that's why he's surrounded himself with a lawyer goon squad for his entire life. You know, whether it's Roy Cohn or Michael Cohen. You know, he knows how to silence people with NDAs, you know, he knows how to control a narrative. And so sometimes when I see this whole, you know, "He's so lazy," there's kind of an implied attitude of, "Oh, well then he must be harmless. He must not be so bad." You know, we saw this in some of the books that came out, like with Fire and Fury, and what people need to get is that Trump covers up crime with scandal. That's been, you know, the story of his entire life. He has no capacity for shame. Any publicity is good publicity. The one thing he can't handle are criminal consequences or having the depth of those crimes exposed.

And so I kind of wonder, you know, when we see these charts of like what he's allegedly doing in the White House all day, like executive time, you know, with his Big Macs and his TV, like part of me is like, "Yeah, you know, that's obviously happening." Because we can see him like live tweeting, you know, fighting through the screen, you know, when Fox News is on.

But I also think, "Of course he's leaving stuff out." You know, we find out over and over that this illicit meeting happened, and this back channel was formed, and this secret call happened, and he destroyed the notes on this situation. Like, that's all happening now, you know, which is why life feels like the rerun of the worst show ever, because all that happens is a year from now, you know, you and I, if we're still alive, will be on this show, you know, talking about, "Oh my God, you know, back in February 2019 we found out that when Trump said he just was doing executive time, he was actually doing, you know, a, b and c." On and on it goes, and on and on the investigation drags, and it's incredibly frustrating because, you know, there's no transparency and there's definitely not the kind of hard push to accountability that we need right now. Definitely not for Mueller. And, you know, Congress, you are now back in session, at least temporarily, like you need to have some hearings. You need to have, at the least, oversight hearings. I don't care if you call them impeachment or oversight. I think they're all going to kind of, you know, go in the same direction, which is exposing and documenting corruption. But you need to do that now. You needed to do that, actually, like two years ago. But, you know, now that the Democrats have the House, you

know, now works as well, because people need to know what's actually going on.

Andrea Chalupa: Exactly. And, you know, years from now, you and I are going to be wearing Ivanka Trump-branded uniforms, jumpsuits, recording on pirate radio from some Ivanka Trump-branded camp somewhere.

Sarah Kendzior: Ivanka Trump Handmaid's Tale special line.

Andrea Chalupa: She's a trademarking all of it. [laughs] She's trademarking death. So I want to say a story about immigrants. All of us, except the Native Americans, of course, all of us are here because of immigrants. Like, we had that first generation that went through hell so we could all be here. And part of that hell included all of that awkwardness of being immigrants in America. So, for instance, you know, my parents, both my mom and dad born in refugee camps came to this country with nothing. And there are so many horrible stories of hunger and just fighting for survival. My dad used to work at Hearst Newspapers changing the big ink cartridges, and he would leave Times Square like 5 a.m. from work covered in ink. He said even though, you know, he said he'd be walking through Times Square, and people would just recoil at the sight of him because he was like a literal monster walking down the street. And so one story he told me was growing up in the Lower East Side, you'd have just these, this big mix of immigrants, all up, you know, up against each other in the tenements in the Lower East Side and he would go with his grandfather to the market, and every week there'd be the same ritual where his grandfather would barter with the shopkeeper, some other Eastern European immigrant, and they'd go through all these Eastern European theatrics, all these hand gestures where my grandfather would act like the shopkeepers prices were like pulling intestines out of his stomach, like, "How dare he rob him like this?" And the shopkeeper'd be like, "Okay look, I'll only give you this price, but don't tell anyone else. And you're cutting off my nose by doing this, you're really depriving. Like you're chopping off my limbs here." Each of them were just like sacrificing so much for the other just to make this deal, and then they'd make the deal, the goods would be exchanged, and then they'd repeat the whole ritual next week. And that's how it went, on and on and on. And so when my grandfather found out about Macy's, they went up to 34th Street, Herald Square at Macy's. And my grandfather, you know, Ukrainian immigrant, goes in there, and he's trying to buy something, and he says to the like, the posh shopkeeper in Macy's, "Look, I'll give you half for this." [laughs] and tries to carry out that whole like Lower East Side ritual inside Macy's in Herald Square, and this is the kind of stuff that that immigrants go through, and all of us came from this. We're all products of this, and all the wave of immigrants coming in today, they all are experiencing this. Like there's children today who are going to have stories for their children about all these awkward, sometimes really funny, stories of trying to find your way and navigate an entirely new country, a new language and all of it. I don't think my grandparents even knew English. Like I was raised by, practically raised by my grandfather, who inspired my whole film project, Mr. Jones, and we spoke in Ukrainian. So all of it, all of this is to say is that immigrants, we should never lose our pride in being this wonderful melting pot, because that is absolutely our strength. All of us come from somewhere, and I just want to say it's been incredibly tough for all of us. Clearly, you know, whether we're directly vulnerable or impacted by what this Nazi regime is doing in our country, and what the the Far Right is doing around the world. But it's incredibly hard, of course, for Jewish communities in America whether you know anyone impacted or not, to see a synagogue shot up because of this man's rhetoric. And to see kids doing Nazi salutes as though it's the most hilarious thing. That is a rage inside that it's like impossible comprehend. Like, when I see the statues and monuments going up to Stalin in Russia, a mass murderer, my grandfather, who I said, you know, practically raised me, he was arrested as a young father and tortured during Stalin's purges. And when you see, you know, the most busy subway, the most busy metro stop in Moscow be remade so it's glorifying Stalin, that's something that just, I can't express the rage I feel. Like I will be going about my business and that will be on the back of my mind, so I can't even imagine what would all of these groups that are that are being impacted because of this global rise of the Far Right, how they're feeling for their ancestors, for their family history.

You know, the Muslim ban, whether you're a practicing Muslim or not, that's cultural. That's Grandma and Grandpa. That's family stories if you come from a Muslim background. Like you're really trying to deny a person's inner sense of self. And so all of this is just so inhumane, and we're with all of these communities. I want to share like psychologically that this isn't normal. This is violence. Rhetoric is violence. Propaganda kills, as we've seen. And I share your absolute rage, and I share this. It's very difficult to turn it off, because it's just so unjust, it's so unfair, and you feel like your ancestors that suffered so much are being victimized again by this hate.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. I mean I think it's, you know, you come from a family, you know, who fled a country because they were being violently persecuted, you know, which is the story, you know, it's a story of my family. It's a story of a lot of immigrant families. This was always presented, at least like when my grandparents talked to me, as like, you know, "Thank God we were able to get here. Thank God we were able to come here." Because everyone, you know, back in Eastern Europe died.

We've lost that part of the family, and, you know, I think with, you know, that generation and the generation of like our grandparents, our parents, it was a unique time in American history where, you know, if you were white at least, you were able to rise up. You know, you actually could achieve that American dream, which people thought was a, you know, a permanent structural thing, but I think, somewhat horrifically, was a fluke of American life. And push your way through. And so yeah, there's something very psychologically jarring, you know, because all the horror stories your ancestors told you about what they fled, you know, are now in your country, you know, in the place that, you know, on one hand it still feels like home, you still feel the love that you have for your homeland, as corny as I'm sure that sounds to people. But, you know, I feel that. You know, I get sentimental. And then you're also living...because of that love you live in a constant state of grief. You know, and this is not to say that, you know...obviously, if you've heard the first half of the show, we do know some rose-colored, sunny view of America. You know, we know and talk constantly about the worst aspects of America, because we need to understand these structural problems if we have any hope of fixing them. But the audacity of the hatred, you know, this hatred that's always existed, just being out in public, whether it's like the MAGA bomber, whether it's the guy who shot up the synagogue, whether it's Charlottesville, you know, the open neo-Nazis' movement. You know, this is not, it's not just that it's no longer underground, that it's aboveground. It is state-sanctioned in a way that it really has never been. People would at least put up a façade of, "Oh, we don't actually believe in this," or, "Oh, we're really, you know, we're pro-democracy. We're inclusive. We're for everyone." They let that façade down. They're flaunting it, you know, they're flaunting this turn to autocracy, they're flaunting white supremacy, and they're flaunting transnational kleptocratic ties with other white supremacists that Trump, so to speak, any actual loyalty to America, either as an actual entity or as an ideal. They've abandoned the ideal as well, and so that's, you know, it's a crushing situation. It's a jarring thing to experience every day. I mean know just trying to get you to go through life. You know, I don't know what you want to talk about. Now, part of me because, you know, they're our age, they're our generation I kinda want into get into the like Don, Jr. stuff that's been going on in this week.

Andrea Chalupa: Oh yeah, the Trump kids.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, the Trump kids and the Trump Tower meeting. You know, this week we had some revelations. You know, as you recall, in 2017 Don, Jr. tweeted out, you know, evidence of collusion on Twitter, giving documentation of a secret meeting that we now know all about, its many participants, including Manafort, Kushner, Rinat Akhmetshin, you know, another Russian lawyer. Who am I leaving out? Oh and of course--

Andrea Chalupa: Veselnitskaya.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. Yeah. And of course, Don, Jr. And so there's been all this talk, you know, what really happened at the meeting? You had Paul Manafort taking crime notes. You know, this has been discussed, and so one thing that people were debating is, you know, who did Don, Jr. call after the meeting. Did he tell Trump? Was Trump Sr. aware of everything that had transpired during this extremely illicit meeting which was not actually about adoption as they tried to label it as such but was really about Russian sanctions and forming kleptocratic alliances? And so now, you know, Trump feels all smug, because it turns out that Don, Jr. did not call him, but called NASCAR CEO Brian France and a man named Howard Lorber. Lorber is, you know, an old-time friend of Trump a finance crony who escorted Trump to Russia in 1996 when a newly hyper-capitalist mafia state, Russia, was making all sorts of deals with shady people around the world, like Donald Trump. So I did not feel like this was actually anything that Don, Jr. would have wanted to have out there. Like, if he wants to not look incriminating maybe, you know, not calling the dude who like helped Trump set up like a lifetime of shady deals in independent Russia. You know, it's not the thing to do. But what else I thought was funny is that Trump immediately like tweets all this out. You know, Don, Jr. tweets out the evidence, and Trump is basically like, you know, here's the truth about like the shitty stuff my son was actually up to. It doesn't involve me, so it doesn't matter. Like, you see absolutely no incentive or motivation for Trump to protect his son, and I've always thought, you know, in this situation Don, Jr. should turn because Trump hates him.

You know, he's the weak link. You know, I think he looks at him, he sees weakness. He does not want him in the White House. He left him out. He let Jared and Ivanka in. You can go into Don, Jr.'s childhood and, you know, I'll stress that, you know, as adults we are all able to make moral decisions. We can decide what kind of people we want to be, but his childhood, for all of his material advantages, in many ways was awful. You know, his his father, Trump, was accused of raping and abusing his mother Ivana in a 1990 interview with Vanity Fair. Don, Jr. told the interviewer--this is when Don, Jr. was just 12 years old--that Trump doesn't love him, that he only loves money, that he only loves himself. You know, there's stories about Don, Jr. being, you know, physically abused later in life, about struggling with substance abuse. Like, these are all qualities that, you know, I'm not judging, but that Trump absolutely judges. You know, if you look at Trump's brother, you know, who was an alcoholic, like, Trump scorned him. Trump loathed him. He sees any sign of weakness as a sign that this is a person who is disposable. This is a person who's going to be of no use to me. And that's how I think he sees Don, Jr. and I've kind of wondered of these moments where where Don, Jr., sometimes Eric, too, although Eric's just so deeply stupid that I'm not really sure falls into this-- Like danger here.

Andrea Chalupa: Eric's the coat hanger.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, Don, Jr. seems a little more on the ball. Maybe part of him just wants out. You know, I mean he's chosen his actions in life. He did not choose to be Donald Trump's son. Maybe he wants out. Like he's basically confessing things on Twitter. He's, you know, talked openly about relationships with Russia. I don't know if it's conscious or subconscious, but whatever approval he's looking for from Donald Trump, whatever love he's looking for, he's not going to find it because he was right when he was 12 years old. You know, he is incapable of love. And so I think he should, I think he should turn.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, somebody who went to college with Don, Jr. and knew him quite well over the years and was even hanging out with him in 2016 told me that they hate each other. Don, Jr. and Trump don't like each other. There's no love there. And the same goes with Ivanka. Yes, Ivanka is a favorite. And yes, Ivanka's being primed to take over. Ivanka Trump, first female president, as we're always saying on this show, That's the end game. But at the same time, it's a love that's born of her father's love for objectifying women. And Ivanka Trump has molded herself into her father's ideal her entire life. And when her parents were getting divorced, there was a report that Ivanka was panicked over whether she could keep the Trump name or not, because of that, you know, after the

divorce. Even as a child, Ivanka was a grifter branding maven just like she is today, like buying up all these trademarks, including getting trademarks from China when we're in a trade war with China and just all like the conflict of interests there. I agree with you: Don, Jr. should absolutely flip, but at the same time Don, Jr. is in a lot of trouble. So I think just like all of these other arrested corrupt elements, the six that have been arrested so far connected to Trump's campaign, I think Don Jr., just like any other of these guys, is jonesing for a pardon from the President of the United States, who just happens to be his father, because Don, Jr. is in a world of self-inflicted pain. Look, they were-- these guys did not have the best relationship with their dad, but they were leeching and profiting off of their father's name, that Trump brand. They were born into this money just like their dad was, and they were, all they do is just create this whole gaslighting illusion of this gold-plated Trump name, and they wanted to use that to build the tallest tower in Europe, which is going to be the Trump Moscow Tower and Ivanka was going to have an Ivanka Trump branded spa in the tallest building in Europe, and they're gonna make all this money off of it, and that's really at the heart of this. They all knew this was going on as they were denying any deals or contacts with Russians throughout 2016. So the kids are in a world of trouble. All of them. Even little Eric Trump, you know, who is such a such a gift. [laughter] And he told a reporter, "Yeah, you know, where do we get all that money for his golf course in a recession? Oh, the Russians." The Russians were a piggy bank because no other bank would lend to the Trumps, and the one that did, Deutsche bank is now going under because of it. Obviously, Deutsche Bank has its own corruption money laundering issues, but that speaks of Deutsche Bank's character, that they were willing to take the risk by letting in Trump, because, you know, birds of a feather flock together. And now Deutsche Bank's going down and the Trump clan is, too, slowly but surely. I just think, my gosh, these Trump kids were given everything, and this is how they chose to play the hand that they were dealt, to enrich themselves at the cost of everybody else, and they simply do not care. Like I said, they will be branding our ashes after they burn us all down. They will never miss a branding opportunity.

Sarah Kendzior: No, that's totally true. The only thing I was thinking is that I feel like Trump's contempt for Don, Jr., it just seems so stark and so obvious that I could see him potentially withholding a pardon, you know, if Don, Jr. going to jail, you know, did not negatively affect Trump's own fortune in any way, I could see him just kinda letting it happen, you know, if it helps him feel like he's, you know, innocent or somehow more immune from consequences himself, he'll let his son go down. The only person who I think he has some interest in protecting is Ivanka, you know, and there are a lot of disturbing qualities to that relationship. And of course Kushner by association.

Andrea Chalupa: Because Ivanka is his type. Ivanka gets from her father. you know, all children crave approval and love from their parents, and Ivanka unfortunately knows how to get it from her father with that little kitten voice and those kitten heels and like pink everything and just making herself out to be a Barbie doll porn star, which is, you know, her her father's brand in women. And women first and foremost for Trump are valued by how they look and sex and whether he wants to grab them by the pussy or not.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, that's the only one that he would protect, for the reasons you mentioned. And also I think because of, you know, Kushner being a key node in this broader kleptocratic arrangement we've seen, which has become increasingly dangerous and violent. You know, we see this in the relationship with NBS, you know, the death, the murder, of Jamal Khashoggi. We see this in all of the backdoor dealings that he's attempting to do throughout the Middle East, especially in his relationship with Netanyahu, and the relationship between the Netanyahu family and the Kushner family goes back 30 years. Every person in that family, on both sides I think, has been involved in crime. You know, there's a corruption investigation of Netanyahu going on in Israel right now. Kushner's father served jail time for his own crimes.

Kushner, of course has committed a multitude of crimes in plain sight. And as I've been saying

repeatedly, from the start, my litmus test of the efficacy of the Mueller probe is whether Jared Kushner gets indicted because, you know, his crimes are so flagrant. And he has such an incredible national security risk that I am just in disbelief that it hasn't happened. You know, I mean everyone in this situation everyone, in that White House is a national security risk. Last week we were talking about how Bannon is just like tromping around the world full of classified intelligence, building fascist movements, and it's like is he using the information he gathered during his tenure in the White House to do that? Yeah! You know, is that a existential threat to the United States? Yes. So, you know, why are they moving faster? Why are they indicting faster? But, you know, there's some speculation that Don, Jr. is next, that he may be indicted. And I'm just thinking, you know, man like you gotta take a deal. You got to actually do the deal. You know, make a decision for yourself, Don, Jr. because your father is not going to help you. And so, you know, this one goes out to the kids, I guess very special Gaslit Nation.

Andrea Chalupa: I can't wait for the sanctions special. They finally nab Don, Jr. I do take pleasure in the fact that waiting for the FBI to raid your home and arrest you must feel a lot like living in an Edgar Allan Poe short story. Just the torment of that gives me some satisfaction as we're waiting for the hopefully inevitable Don, Jr., Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump indictments.

Sarah Kendzior: If they feel tormented. I mean, they're acting undisturbed. You know, Roger Stone is pretty content. He was happy to go out doing his little Nixon hand gestures. You know, he was greeted enthusiastically by a crowd of Trump fans when he appeared at some sort of conference or venue. He does not yet have a gag order placed on him. I think he sees this as potentially lucrative. He doesn't seem bothered by the idea of, you know, going to jail at all. I think he thinks he's not going to, or that if he is it's going to be a very short term thing. I think Manafort felt the same way. That's why he kept committing crimes while in prison. I think if he thought that the Mueller probe was serious, he would have not done that. You know, it was obviously no impediment to him and I understand why he wouldn't think it's serious.

You know, no one cracked down on him for decades and then Mueller and various judges, you know, gave him all sorts of perks. You know, they nearly let Manafort out on the run with no G.P.S. tracking. You know, they nearly let Rick Gates go on spring break vacations. You know, this has not been a very tough probe when you consider the scale and scope of the crimes committed and the danger that all these people pose to national security. You know, for whatever reason, maybe it's just because of his his character as I described before, I can kind of see some panic building in the in the Don, Jr. tweets, which is again, you know, please take the deal. But yeah, I hope that they're afraid because it's a sign that they take it seriously. But I wonder, especially with Barr coming in, especially with them declaring that, you know, this the probe's results may be withheld from the public, and with the general lawlessness and destructiveness of the GOP, their willingness to shut down the entire government, to purge the FBI, to prevent the FBI from doing its job effectively. Maybe they don't have any cause to be worried, which means more of a cause of worry for us.

Andrea Chalupa: At the same time though we've seen the hubris of Manafort Papadopoulos and Flynn get confronted. They keep digging themselves in deeper. They're behaving like rich white people who are shocked that justice applies to them. And so we have seen Manafort getting himself in trouble, deeper trouble, for his hubris. Papadopoulos as well. And Flynn is being squeezed right now by the feds to cooperate in another case involving his Turkish contacts. So I do think that these idiots thought they could get away with this, clearly, and they were just so out in the open. Kushner is asking the Kremlin, "Hey guys, can we can we establish a back channel? That'd be really convenient for us so we can, you know...I love you and all, you know, you're my first love, but my wife at home, you know..." That's kind of like how the Trump regime was talking to the Kremlin. Like Flynn's just on his cell phone calling the Russian ambassador. They were just handing over the FBI like all of their crimes on a silver platter, because they never thought they would get away with this because they're not very smart criminals to begin with. And yes, they've hid behind this Mark

Burnett, executive-produced, glinting Trump brand for so long and in fooling many Americans into thinking that they are a successful business family and they have advice to sell you on how to, you know, succeeded and excel at Trump University and so forth. But it's the emperor has no clothes full on out now, and they don't know how to operate in this new reality, and it's really fun to watch. I do think that our checks and balances, as strained as they are, as purged as the FBI has been under this regime, I do think that there is the shock of the justice system, even at this the snail pace. They do feel the leash of this investigation I mean it's so sweeping, it's so large and there's so many more names for us to discover and connections for us to discover, and we're gonna be studying this for many generations to come. We're all living through a major point in American history that's going to baffle and fascinate generations of historians. And so I think they know that they cannot escape this for the rest of your lives, but it's it's up to us to stay engaged in all of this and to make sure that they don't, because none of this is inevitable.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah I mean I feel like that's the optimistic view, is the one where one there's a future too. We got to actually be the ones who write history. You know, history is always written by the victors, and if this actually plays out in a just manner, clearly these people should be in prison. Like I don't feel like I'm being partisan or biased and saying that. Like they have openly confessed to their crimes. You know, Trump for example has confessed to obstruction of justice. Sessions and Kushner violated clearance. Like we have no proof out in the public domain that they should be in prison, which is what makes it all the more frustrating. And, you know, there is something very strange and very surreal about the paper trail that they left, because it's really, really obvious. You know, you have things like Cohen and Seder emailing each other about installing their boy in the White House. You have, you know, Trump, Jr. Plastering these incriminating emails out on Twitter. It's like, you know, it just leaves me with a few questions. Like one, okay, like this is a pretty easy crime to solve. Like, where were you FBI? Where were you law enforcement over the last few decades when this was all being laid out? And maybe they are just stupid, you know, maybe they're bad at doing crime, or they have so much hubris or arrogance that they feel completely comfortable leaving a trail, or in the case of Manafort they don't know how to handle technology, how to convert Word into a PDF. And that becomes the downfall. But, you know, I am worried, because I can't tell if what's happening now is just the continuation of 40 decades of criminal impunity, and they feel like, you know, by grabbing executive power they're able to extend that impunity. They can rewrite the laws to protect themselves, or as you said, are they actually coming up against a new kind of barrier? Because everything that they've done, you know, all their crime, would skirt the definition of what people would think of as crime. It would be white collar crime. It would be lobbying, whereas it was really just crime. It was crime under another name. It was crime under another brand, which is really what know Trump is all about.

Andrea Chalupa: To be clear, to be clear we're always saying on this show that the people that were supposed to be protecting us in 2016 were asleep, and now everybody's playing catch up. And I don't think the Trump clan ever imagined that people would finally call them out, and I do have faith that, you know, as rich as they are, as privileged as they are, as clueless as they are, I do have faith that justice is coming for them, but we have to keep up the pressure, because our checks and balances are strained, and it's the power of the people the power of the grassroots which is an essential check on their power and ensuring that justice is ultimately served.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, absolutely and on that note, you know, once again we need to push for hearings. You know, if you look at Nixon--and of course you can't make a direct comparison, because this is so, so much worse and bigger than what Nixon did-- but, you know, what transformed American opinion was public hearings. Was being able to see the evidence brought to light and have people make up their own minds. And I think that that's the only thing that's fair to everyone. It doesn't matter who you vote for, it doesn't matter what party you're in. You know, you are entitled to that information. You have the right to know. You had the right to know before the election. And so I think transparency is always the enemy of autocracy. You know, there are

countries around the world, I mean you, you know, made a movie about famine and horrors in Ukraine that were long denied, and that journalists helped bring to light. And, you know, when I studied Uzbekistan for a large part of my career, you know, one of the most closed, insular and brutal governments in the world, transparency is what they feared, you know, they feared having all those crimes laid out in the open, not necessarily because of repercussions, but because it wakes people up. It makes people think, you know, "What do I deserve?" And, you know, they come up with the answer of, "I don't deserve to live under a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government that has absolutely no respect for me or interest in my welfare." And so if anything, even if he's not impeached just for people to know the truth, that's a tremendously powerful thing.

Andrea Chalupa: Gaslit Nation is produced by Andrea Chalupa: and Sarah Kendzior. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon. It helps keep us going. Our editor for this was Karlyn Daigle. Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Visenberg, Nick Farr, Damian Arriaga and Karlyn Daigle. Our phenomenal logo was designed by the genius that is Hamish Smith at the New York-based design firm Order. Thank you so much Hamish. Gaslit Nation like to thank our supporters at the producer level and Patreon: Paige Harrington, A.W. Nicholson, David Porter, Dominique de Graaf, Georgia Rand Collette, Jared Lombardo, Jason Bainbridge, Jody Dewitt, Joanna Markson, John Ripley, Kate cotton Kevin Garnett Lorraine Todd Terry Brady Andrea Tina Vai Angelique coastline Ann Marshall, Michael Balan, Catherine Anderson Carina, Kathy Cavanaugh, Irina Guardia, Ethan Mann, Janet Cox, Chase Greta, Jennifer Slavic, John Dan Brown, John Keane, Joy Kristine, Kevin Christy, Kim Melon, Laurence Graham, Luke Scranton, Lynn Sanchez, Margaret Moe, Matthew Copeland, Mike Tripico, Rhonda White, Rich Craw, Sonya Donovan, Stephanie Roscitt-Fulps. Thank you all so much. We could not make the show without you.