

Gaslit Nation Transcript  
15 April 2020  
“Corporate Manslaughter”

Sarah Kendzior:

Writing Trump's history is a bizarre exercise in parsing layers of propaganda. There's the propaganda written in real time by Trump's press lackeys, sometimes with anonymous quotes that were later revealed to be from Trump himself, often made under the alias John Barron. A real John Barron was the author of a 1974 best-selling book about the KGB. There is the investigative journalism written in real time on Trump's nefarious financial affairs by journalists who mostly have since died. And there is the media [inaudible 00:00:41] when investigative journalists from Trump's past were censored, threatened, or generally kept out of the news, while journalists of Trump's present ignored blatant crimes in favor of an obsessive focus on Hilary Clinton's emails, a misalignment of priorities that was stoked by the FBI itself.

Sarah Kendzior:

I remember in 2016 thinking that this parsing of spectacle and propaganda and searching for documentation of the obvious is, ironically, the exact exercise I had to perform as a doctoral student, examining materials from the former Soviet Union. It doesn't feel ironic anymore. American and former Soviet operatives are a linked entity, and prestigious institutions manufacture history in a way that would make George Orwell shudder and Roy Cohn proud.

Sarah Kendzior:

In 2017, the New York Times published an article insinuating that Trump and Manafort had no real relationship until 2016 when Manafort fortuitously appeared in the Trump Tower elevator to charm him, like characters in a romcom from Hell. The article did not mention that Manafort had known Trump since the 1980s, had lived in Trump Tower since 2006, and was linked to Trump through Cohn, Stone, and a mafia syndicate intertwined with the Kremlin. To grasp why a Pulitzer Prize-winning paper would cover up that story, an accurate and far more interesting story, in favor of bland falsehoods is key to understanding how Trump operates.

Sarah Kendzior:

Trump spent 2016 incriminating himself by doing things like asking Russia for Hilary Clinton's emails at a press conference or getting sued for child rape by a woman who claimed to be a victim of a global trafficking network. But still most of the press did not bite, writing fawning portraits despite the enticement of Trump checking every box of classic tabloid fodder, mafia ties, sex crimes, spies, secret meetings with global elites. Any one of these stories would be ratings gold. When the press works against its own financial interests, as it did by rejecting the harrowing truth of Trump, there is a deeper problem. As described throughout this book, the tactics Cohn devised to tame the press worked all too well.

Sarah Kendzior:

Roy Cohn died of complications from AIDS in 1986. Trump, true to form, abandoned Cohn when he fell ill, prompting Cohn to proclaim in an interview with Barrett that Trump pisses ice water. Cohn, true to form, died after being disbarred for dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation, and being convicted of fraud, fulfilling his dream of dying while owing the US government vast amounts of money.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was feted at his funeral by the New York and DC celebrities who had legitimized him much in the way future New York and DC celebrities would legitimize his protégé, Trump. They didn't talk about the mafia ties, about the shakedowns, about the political persecution, about the pain Cohn caused his country. He was one of them, of their social class, so he had to be soft-pedaled to the status of lovable goon, much as Roger Stone would go on to be called a dirty trickster or Trump would be embraced as a tabloid amusement.

Sarah Kendzior:

Before Cohn passed, he managed to teach Trump three key skills: how to swindle money, how to get married for maximum benefit, and, though the purpose behind this agenda was never publicly revealed, how to cozy up to America's enemies, the greatest one at that time being the Soviets. But most of all, he taught Trump how to construct a new American reality out of the wreckage of the American Dream.

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Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of *The View From Flyover Country* and my new book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, which came out last week, and it's available for sale now.

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, rising autocracy around the world, and a global pandemic. So we are in Week 1,000 of covering the pandemic from quarantine. All of our worst fears have come to pass. I believe many of yours have as well, so welcome to our nightmare. I think you're not going to like it.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's great to have you. Welcome to our nightmare, it's great to have you. That's the next *Gaslit Nation* album.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, yes. It's like Alice Cooper, but in a positive way, uplifting. It's enlightening and entertaining. Anyway, Andrea and I are losing our shit. It's just too much, so we're just going to lose it further by going right into the horrific new coronavirus dream team that was announced yesterday. This is euphemistically called the "Council to Reopen America", and if you are a *Gaslit Nation* listener, you will recall that for about two years of episodes, going back to 2018, we have laid out who we believe are the most dangerous members of the administration, and they are the ones that outlasted the constant purges of this revolving-door autocracy. We have asked you time and time again to think why are these people

viewed as so indispensable? Why are they still around for so long? What kind of plans might they have in store? Well, now we know.

Sarah Kendzior:

In March, we laid out how some of that inner sanctum of corrupt and criminal elements, often linked by nepotism, had been put in charge of the coronavirus response. At the time, this included Jared Kushner, Stephen Miller, Stephen Miller's new bride, Katie Miller—who also works for the Trump administration—Steve Mnuchin, and Mike Pence. On Monday, Trump announced the new committee, and now these are the people on the Council to Reopen America. We have Jared, and now joined with Jared, of course, is Ivanka. We have Wilbur Ross, we have Steve Mnuchin, and then some new faces in the crowd, Larry Kudlow, Mark Meadows, and Robert Lighthizer, who I had to look up. Somebody wrote on Twitter that he's the Jeff Lynne of the Traveling Wilburys to this little cabal, and that is true, so Robert Lighthizer, but we'll fill you in on who this asshole is.

Sarah Kendzior:

As we've been saying for a long time, Jared and Ivanka have been essentially looming within the Trump administration as a kind of shadow government. They exert far more control than is generally noted or acknowledged by the mainstream media, who tend to write about them in these kind of court intrigue pieces. They seek to build a dynastic plutocracy. We have been warning you for years that the ultimate goal is President Ivanka. Andrea, you said you had some thoughts on this, so before I get into everybody else, let's hear what you have to say on that.

Andrea Chalupa:

I've got to rant, yeah. Well, it's just plain as day that the plan is for Trump to stay in power, to steal the next election, to carry out his next term where he can pack the courts with even more Far Right judges, handpicked for him by the Far Right Federalist Society, which overwhelmingly is against a woman's right to choose and against LGBT rights largely, and so forth, and maybe Trump might even finally get that third term he's been teasing us about. And after he's done, it's going to be his favorite child, his mini-me, Ivanka. That is the plan, that is why they've gobbled up the Republican Party. It's now the Party of Trump, and the government is now the Government of Trump. They're leaving their brand of corruption deep inside, purging, surrounding themselves with lackeys, loyalists, all of it. That's the name of the game. They're carrying it out, as Sarah's book says, in plain sight.

Andrea Chalupa:

So on recent call with business leaders, just to give an example of how dictatorship works, Dictatorship 101, on a recent call with business leaders, Trump claimed Ivanka created 10% of all jobs in the United States. This is known as the Big Lie, a lie so colossal and brazen that how dare you even challenge it? It's just so absurd. But repeated often enough, it becomes part of the mythology of a dictatorship, and this is all according to a famous psychological profile of Adolf Hitler from a 1943 book, and I'm quoting this book now: "Never admit a fault or wrong, never to accept blame. Concentrate on one enemy at a time. Blame that enemy for everything that goes wrong. Take advantage of every opportunity to raise a political whirlwind." That is what Trump does. That is what he's known for doing.

Andrea Chalupa:

According to his ex-wife, Ivana Trump, Trump studied the speeches of Hitler, Trump studied Hitler. That is why we're seeing, right in front of us before our eyes, Trump in his Hitler cosplay. Believe your eyes,

believe your ears. Don't allow anyone to normalize any of this. And of course, one of the enemies that Trump likes to create his feuds with and scapegoat is the press. According to Lesley Stahl of 60 Minutes, she pressed him on this. She said, "Why do you keep attacking the Press? So get over it already. You've made your point. Why are you doing it constantly?" And Trump told her that he does it to demean you and discredit you so no one will believe negative stories about him. Obviously, and it's the dictator handbook. So let's listen to this wannabe dictator, falsely claiming another Big Lie that he has total authority. Here's CNN's Katie Collins, taking on an aspiring dictator. This is how it's done.

Kaitlan Collins:

A quick question on something you just said. You said when someone is President of the United States, their authority is total. That is not true. Who told you that?

Donald Trump:

Okay. You know what we're going to do? We're going to write up papers on this. It's not going to be necessary, because the governors need us one way or the other, because ultimately, it comes with the federal government. That being said, we're getting along very well with the governors, and I feel very certain that there won't be a problem. Yeah, please, go ahead.

Kaitlan Collins:

Has any governor agreed that you have the authority to decide when their state [crosstalk 00:12:20]

Donald Trump:

I haven't asked anybody, because you know why? Because I don't have to. Go ahead, please.

Kaitlan Collins:

But who told you the president has the total authority?

Donald Trump:

Enough.

Andrea Chalupa:

And then at another coronavirus Trump rally, here is Trump beating up on one of his favorite scapegoats, the Press. Paula Reid of CBS News in turn teaches a master class on journalism.

Paula Reid:

The argument is that you bought yourself some time. You didn't use it to prepare hospitals, you didn't use it to ramp up testing. Right now, nearly 20 million people are unemployed. Tens of thousands of Americans are dead.

Donald Trump:

You're so disgraceful. It's so disgraceful the way you say that. Let me just ... Listen, I just went over it.

Paula Reid:

How does [crosstalk 00:12:52] or this rant supposed to make people feel confident ...

Donald Trump:  
I just went over it.

Paula Reid:  
... in an unprecedented crisis?

Donald Trump:  
Nobody thought we should do it, and when I did it ...

Paula Reid:  
But what did you do with the time that you bought?

Donald Trump:  
You know what we did?

Paula Reid:  
The month of February, that's [crosstalk 00:13:05] gap, the entire month of February.

Donald Trump:  
You know what we did? What do you do when you have no case in the whole United States? When you ... Excuse me. You reported it. Zero cases, zero deaths on January 17.

Paula Reid:  
January. February, the entire month of February, the [crosstalk 00:13:20] has a complete gap.

Donald Trump:  
On January 30-

Paula Reid:  
What did your administration do in February for the time that your travel ban bought you?

Donald Trump:  
A lot. A lot. And in fact, we'll give you a list. What we did, in fact, part of it was up there. We did a lot.

Paula Reid:  
[inaudible 00:13:33]

Donald Trump:  
What? What? You know you're a fake? You know that? Your whole network, the way you cover it is fake.

Andrea Chalupa:

Simply put, this little blood money brigade that Trump's put together, it's just an extension of how dictatorship works. Dictatorships are essentially a mafia state, it's organized crime where they brutally consolidate power, they purge. Now is the time where they're cashing in, more than ever before.

Sarah Kendzior:

No, I agree, and while I'm glad that those reporters finally confronted Trump in real time, what should be happening, and I can't stress this enough, is that these press conferences, these rallies, these Trump propaganda rallies that are disguised as press conferences should not be aired at all. They should not be aired live. If something absolutely essential happens, like some sort of public safety or public health information is delivered by an actual reputable source, and we need to know it, then cut that little clip out and air it later. Because all you are doing is acting like a bunch of BOTOXed Riefenstahls just putting out this horrific propaganda, as Andrea accurately calls it, this Hitler cosplay, into the world.

Sarah Kendzior:

And networks, you have a choice, you have a choice of whether to do the right thing in an absolutely seminal moment in our history. Trump thrives on this. This is his oxygen. If you cut this off, it is beneficial for our country and our safety, and it hurts him. This is something that actually does take away his power.

Sarah Kendzior:

But anyway, back to the crime cabal. So along with Jared and Ivanka, we have Steven Mnuchin and Wilbur Ross. Many episodes ago, I brought up how they all come from the same little New York City Wall Street shakedown cabal. These are people who've been tied to corporate raiders like Carl Icahn, who himself was part of the Trump administration and who actually selected Ross and Mnuchin. This was Carl Icahn's idea. He installed them into this administration, and Icahn was investigated by Robert Mueller in later 2017 and actually had to resign. There actually seemed to be some push back. It was one of the brief moments of hope I had during that entire probe. Nothing, of course, ever came of it, because we're talking about Robert Mueller, the most ineffective prosecutor of all time.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, Mnuchin also was tied to the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme. He's one of the few people who made money off of that, and we've discussed this in many episodes. But what's important to remember, of course, is well, what is Mnuchin's job? He's the Treasurer, and Wilbur Ross is the Secretary of Commerce. The Treasury was hijacked by Russia in 2015. BuzzFeed has written numerous exposes about this. It was never resolved. The whistleblower was the only person punished, and so any action that has to do with Mnuchin and coronavirus and bailout money and all of these other issues is actually a Trump-Russia issue, it's actually a Trump transnational crime issue, and we should look at the oligarchs and other beneficiaries who are working in the shadows, trying to benefit off that.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so for the lesser known members of this little crime cult, we've got Larry Kudlow, who I guess is not lesser known because he's on television lying all the time. Technically, his job is the Director of the US Economic Council. He is yet another financial crime lord from the '80s, another Reagan throwback, who had worked with trickle-down economics czar Art Laffer, who himself has also returned to help guide this process.

Sarah Kendzior:

So we've always noted on this show how many of the people in the Trump administration are just the culmination of long-term Republican strategies devised in the early '80s. You see this with Paul Manafort, with Roger Stone, and with all of these individuals who basically, as Reagan famously said, they want to drown government in a bathtub, they want to destroy the federal government from within, but now, of course, it's linked to transnational organized crime, to mafia operations that are tied to the Kremlin but that extend worldwide. It's more complicated than a sort-of all-American, rugged individualism. That's the packaging, but it's actually a global affair, and digital media has increased that even more.

Sarah Kendzior:

Kudlow said of the coronavirus back in February, "We have contained this. I won't say airtight, but pretty close to airtight." There are now over 20,000 people dead in the United States with no sign that we have peaked yet. I saw a thread the other day, and they're like, "When did you know that the coronavirus was going to change American life as we knew it forever?" And they said, "When Larry Kudlow said it was airtight, I knew we were fucked." And I'm like, "Yeah. We knew before that. We were watching the videos out of Wuhan." But that's a pretty good indicator.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so then you have Mark Meadows, and you may be like, "Who the fuck is Mark Meadows?". Mark Meadows is Trump's Chief of Staff, and the reason you may have forgotten that is because Trump goes through Chiefs of Staff like they're Spinal Tap drummers. Other fun facts about Mark Meadows, he was a key proponent of the Jerusalem embassy move, funded by Sheldon Adelson. Sheldon Adelson is the primary donor to the Republican Party. He is someone who is upholding this whole Trump administration, and he's been very quiet over the last couple of months. I've kind of wondered what he's up to.

Sarah Kendzior:

Notably, nearly everybody on the Council for ... What the fuck did they call it? Oh, to Reopen America. Yes. The Council to Reopen America was involved in this Sheldon Adelson branded Jerusalem embassy move, so that's interesting, considering so many of them have nothing to do with Middle East policy, like Mnuchin, or at least it's not in their job description. Notably, like Mike Pompeo and Mike Pence, Mark Meadows is a rapture fiend, who is basing policy around his belief that we are living in the end times. Meadows also is a disaster proponent in general, secular and otherwise, who helped cause the 2013 government shutdown.

Sarah Kendzior:

Recently, he has spent his time critiquing the Mueller Probe and trying to shut that down and defending Trump's 2019 shakedown of Ukraine. So he's on the Council. He will be determining your economic livelihood and the livelihood of our nation. And then finally, we have Robert Lighthizer. I don't have a hell of a lot to say. He seems to be a fan of trade wars, a likely part of the War on China propaganda effort where we see the administration labeling this the Chinese Flu or whatever the hell they're doing. Anyway, so all of these shit-heads are managing a plague. Do you have thoughts on that, Andrea?

Andrea Chalupa:

Look, the Republican Party has always been united in their sense of corruption of, deregulation of, breaking unions, unions that allowed people to not just make a living wage but to actually thrive in America, and they've crushed the unions in America just like they're destroying the environment, which leads to a decline in species and so forth. And so the Republican Party is so united compared to the Democrats, as we're seeing the Big Tent in the Democratic Party, because the Republicans, first and foremost, rally around blood money. These are the ideological errors of the same people who were on the side of the Confederacy, who thought that human beings should be raised like cattle, that families should be broken apart, that people could be raped, children could be raped, because they were owned, they were owned.

Andrea Chalupa:

So we're still fighting the Confederacy, and slavery itself has transformed into the largest prison population in the world in the United States. You have guys like John Kelly and others benefiting from not just the private prison industrial complex but also the prison camps for asylum seekers that are on the border that are destroying families, destroying children, trafficking innocent people.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Republican Party has always been the safe refuge for the movement that built America, that helped build America, that's always profited and fought to protect with deep pockets blood money, blood money, blood money. You saw it with Bush's illegal wars, his illegal invasions built on lies—Afghanistan, Iraq—that we're still stuck in, that unleashed a Pandora's Box, that gave birth to ISIS and so forth. And so it's no surprise that you have a very blatant extension of this, led by Ivanka and Jared Kushner, who are friends with a mass-murdering dictatorship, the Saudi regime, and including its murdering prince, MBS, who killed an incredible writer, Jamal Khashoggi, while his fiancée waited in the car. These guys are profiteering right before our eyes.

Andrea Chalupa:

There are so many examples of this, and I want to quote David Begnaud of CBS, citing his colleague, Weijia Jiang, and pointing out how Trump is once again putting profit over people's lives. So David writes on Twitter, "Adding to what Weijia's reporting below, a famous spokesperson told me, 'This is not the way we usually do it. FEMA usually gives to the state directly. Now, 50% of what FEMA is flying in from overseas goes to private companies, which sell it to states that offer the highest dollar.'"

Andrea Chalupa:

What he's talking about, just to clarify because I didn't before, is that FEMA was bringing in all these shipments of much-needed protective gear to keep our medical workers on the front lines who are working tireless hours, who are separated from their families, who are getting sick and dying themselves, so all these much-needed supplies that Jared and Ivanka and Trump's White House are flying in through FEMA, all those much-needed supplies, 50% of them are going to the states, and then the remaining 50% are being fought over from the states and being sold to the highest bidder through private companies, through private companies, and those private companies are then profiteering off of this blood money.

Andrea Chalupa:

Now, who are those private companies? Well, there's a really interesting story in Politico showing how this guy named Mike Gula went from being a big-time, big-time GOP fundraiser to suddenly having a



massive change of heart and going into the business of providing much-needed protective gear, like masks and other things, to medical workers, to the states that desperately need them. Here's Alex Isenstadt of Politico, pointing out on Twitter, "Hard to overstate just how big a deal Mike Gula was in GOP fundraising circles. Now, he's running an enterprise being billed as one of the largest producers of corona supplies, and it could be the kind of activity that catches the eye of investigators."

Andrea Chalupa:

Why would it catch the eye of investigators? He's a GOP fundraiser, he's one of them. What I'm saying is the reporting is pointing to the fact that Trump's inner circle, the guys that are helping him consolidate, seize, and stay in power, they're making blood money, hand over fist right now. The only jobs Ivanka Trump is creating, before our very eyes, are blood money jobs. She's enriching guys like Mike Gula.

Sarah Kendzior:

No, absolutely, and it's grotesque on its own level. We're also seeing things like the governors that had been forced to basically be game show style for necessary medical supplies, for personal protective equipment, they're now forming their own alliances to try to keep the circulation of those medical materials flowing between them. And that, of course, is tapping into the fantasies of the Republican Party and particularly of the Kremlin for a breakdown of the United States, a dissolution of the United States, the hardening of these "red and blue lines" into something that's real. And I don't think that that's certainly the intent of the governors that are participating in this, although I do wish that Gavin Newsom would stop referring to California as a "nation-state". Perhaps he's unaware, but that's literally the term that neo-Confederate and Cal-Exit Kremlin operations have been using to describe it.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is a time where we need to stick together as America, because what Trump and his lackeys are doing, what the Republican Party wants to do, is strip this country down and sell it for parts. And a broken down country is a lot easier to manage. A country of terrified people, 30% of whom are now unemployed, are easier to manage, and eventually, the fear that we're all facing turns to scapegoating, turns to panic, turns to blame, and it leads to a lot of simplifications about what kind of state has what kind of governance and so forth.

Sarah Kendzior:

I know I mention this time and time again, but because it's the reality of my life. I live in a blue city, quote unquote, that's in a red, quote unquote, state. I could go right across the river to Illinois and be in a blue state, and historically, that's a significant thing for a Missourian to do. That is what slaves from Missouri had to do, that's what abolitionists from Missouri had to do, all throughout the 19th century. I do not want to be in a position where our country is so fractured that these are the kind of comparisons that I'm thinking in my mind.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I think that one of the reasons that this fracturing is starting to stick and that I'm seeing a lot of very angry—"Well, go ahead. Go and secede. We don't need them."—with this assumption that somehow the "red states" are entirely filled of MAGA hat-wearing neo-Confederates, where in reality most of these blue dots or blue areas are heavily black areas. You certainly see that in Louisiana and Alabama. You see it in St. Louis, and you see it in the former cities of the Rust Belt in places like St. Louis or Kansas City or Cleveland. It's not so simple.

Sarah Kendzior:

But I think what's missing, and this just crushes me, is there's no national mourning, there's no national grief. We're all feeling it. I think everyone is. It doesn't matter who you voted for or what your political views are, we're all feeling the intensity of the sadness, the fright, the fear for the future, and the loss. Most people, they know someone who's had coronavirus, or they know someone who has died from it, or they know someone who knows somebody. It affects all of us, but do you see the flag at half-staff?

Sarah Kendzior:

In some states, yes, in some cities, yes, but do we see it nationally? It's abnormal. It should be at half-staff, and I know that that's a symbolic gesture, and that what's needed above all, of course, is protective equipment, is a raise for all of our medical workers and our service workers. They need hazard pay, they need a raise that will endure beyond this tragedy. There are more concrete things to do besides lower the flag in a symbolic gesture, but they also need to do that. We need days of mourning. When we have mass shootings, even if it's in one location, they will lower that flag.

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm known for taking these big cross-country road trips, and one of the things that's always saddened me over the last couple of decades is how often the flag is at half-staff, no matter where I am, because there's always some sort of horrific tragedy going on. But this is one of the most just devastating and destructive tragedies of our lifetime, and there isn't this sense of national, unified mourning and grief and appreciation for our medical workers who are risking their lives, or service workers who are risking their lives, postal workers, everyone who can't just stay home, who has to go out.

Sarah Kendzior:

And also, honestly, pay some tribute for everyone who is staying home, who is often losing their job as a consequence, losing their livelihood, psychologically suffering. We have PTSD from this as a nation, as a world. It's a lot to take in, and I see sort of national movements, symbolic things in China, in Italy, and then here, you just have it all as Trump. It only is about Trump, because it can't be anything else. Everything has to revolve around him and his emotional state and his family and their crime and their theft, and they're taking this moment of incredible vulnerability for all of us and exploiting it so blatantly, so cruelly, and with so little push back.

Sarah Kendzior:

If this isn't the time to call this shit out, whether at a press conference or in Congress, then when is it? We, the people, cannot take to the streets right now. We could hurt each other. We would be virus vectors trying to change this administration, but Congress can do things, and instead, they take a vacation. I don't understand it, I don't understand the lack of pragmatic action, and I'm excluding, of course, the people who are trying. Mayors are trying, governors are trying, and a great appreciation for that. Many others are not trying, and they're not calling out in plain terms just how criminal this is.

Sarah Kendzior:

They're shrugging it off, like, "Oh, that's Trump. It's just Trump being Trump again." It's like, "Yeah, he's a fucking dictator and a criminal, and you've known that the entire time. You have to stop using your feigned shock as a mask for your inaction." That is what's happening. They pretend that they were born yesterday, and they couldn't possibly foresee these circumstances, even though Trump and his cronies

announced them all in advance, even though in many ways this is the continuum of a Republican plot, an organized crime plot, a Kremlin plot, a white supremacist plot, and so many others that are using this as a vector. I'll stop, because I'm just so disgusted that I could go on forever, but I want to hear your thoughts.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, no, I'm furious, and there's certain places I can't allow my mind to go, because I will just have a breakdown over just how criminal this is and how negligent the people that could've stopped it and didn't stop it. The Trump Crime Family stole this election in the first place. Paul Manafort is in prison for helping them engineer that strategy. Paul Manafort promised that he could deliver, and he did, and he broke his silence days before the 2016 election, bragging on how those swing states were going to turn to Trump at the last minute, states that Hilary was supposed to have securely for herself, and we saw that, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania. They stole the election, and we let them steal the election, and no one stopped it when they could, and now, here we are. Here we are.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's no other outcome for that disastrous decision about stopping them when we could, and the fact that we have a full-blown dictatorship picking up speed in the White House, driven by Trump himself, who has studied for this moment, he has studied for this moment. And Ivanka and Jared are lock-step with him. The three of them are the unholy trinity, they are the de facto President of the United States. This is all playing out before our eyes, and they're profiting. They're profiting off of killing people, off of depriving states that need it most of life-saving supplies. That is what's happening right now, because we didn't stop them when we had the chance.

Andrea Chalupa:

Let's break it down some more in how Trump and his loyalists, their inner sanctum of the blood money brigade, how they're profiting off of this. So there's been a lot of talk about this hydroxychloroquine, this malaria drug, this drug that's being used by people who suffer from lupus and other ailments. There's been chatter out of France, from a dubious doctor out of France, that it might help with COVID-19, so the FDA fast-tracked approval for states to test it. There's been no signs that it has any positive results, yet Trump in his coronavirus Trump rallies has been pushing it.

Andrea Chalupa:

And lo and behold, it turns out that he has a small stake in a company that sells this stuff. That's no surprise there, but of course, the reporters have pointed out that it's such a small stake, so it doesn't really seem like he'd be doing it for financial reasons. But don't forget, this is Donald Trump. He one time cashed a check for 13 cents sent to him from Spy Magazine, so anything that's good for business, no matter how small, is good for Trump. He puts his own interests first all the time.

Andrea Chalupa:

Business Insider points out how the rest of Trump's circle has a stake in this drug. I'm going to read now from Business Insider: "Others within Trump's circle also have ties to Sanofi, the company that makes this drug. According to The Times, The Times reported that one of Sanofi's largest shareholders is Fisher Asset Management, a fund set up by political donor Ken Fisher, who has a history of donations to the GOP and contributed to Trump's 2016 campaign, according to NBC. However, a representative for Fisher Investments in an emailed statement argued that 'The holding was not material in its size.' The

spokesman said, 'The company represents less than 0.8% of Fisher Investments portfolio, and the firm's ownership is less than 0.7% of Sanofi. Neither the firm nor Ken Fisher have ever promoted the drug described in the New York Times article in any way or discussed it with anyone.'" End quote.

Andrea Chalupa:

A 0.7% stake in Sanofi was, as of early April 8th, worth around \$775 million. The spokesman also said that Fisher had donated to Democrats as well as Republicans. A fund previously run by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross also invests in Sanofi, and according to the report, "Though Ross said in a statement that he was not aware of the company's involvement with Sanofi, nor was he personally involved in the decision to explore hydroxychloroquine as a treatment." And according to ProPublica, "Employees who are formally compensated or employed by Sanofi went on to work at several federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Justice, and the Office of Management and Budget. Despite the optimism surrounding chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine as potential COVID-19 treatments, the drugs can cause severe side effects, and misuse has led to poisoning and even death." But who cares when the stock is up, and the stock did go up.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so this is a topic that has, as you just mentioned, gotten some investigative journalism, people are taking a look at it, and I've been asked my opinion on it several times. And it's like, yes, of course, Trump and Kushner are trying to profit off death, trying to profit off of a crisis. This is what they do. Trump was immortalized by John Bolton as having participated in a metaphorical drug deal in Ukraine and is now involved in an actual drug deal. And while, of course, this is bad, and under normal circumstances would be cause for impeachment hearings, and you would have a Congress that would actually commence with that, here it's really the tip of the iceberg.

Sarah Kendzior:

I've said many times that Trump covers up crime with scandal, but he also covers up big crimes with small crimes. And so the small crime here, which the media is endlessly scrutinizing, is the pedaling of this snake oil for a fleeting profit, but the big crime is the same crime that they've been engaged in all along, which is systematically stripping down America and selling it off for parts. That's been their goal since they entered the White House. This is a fundamentally anti-American administration. So I encourage people to investigate this case, but don't lose sight of the big picture.

Andrea Chalupa:

So guess what? In addition to this reality show of terror we're seeing play out, that cable news is running by airing Trump's campaign rallies, which are supposed to be coronavirus updates to help bring the country together, so in addition to that reality show of terror, we also have Trump packing the courts across America and leaving a massive, massive monument to himself in how he's remaking America's judicial system in his image, essentially. Let's break this down.

Andrea Chalupa:

If the coronavirus coverage isn't making you infuriated, listen to what he's doing to our courts. According to Vox, "In less than three years as president, President Trump has done nearly as much to shape the courts as President Obama did in eight years. Trump hasn't simply given lots of lifetime appointments to lots of lawyers, he's filled the bench with some of the smartest and some of the most ideological,

reliable men and women to be found in the Conservative movement. Long after Trump leaves office, these judges will shape American law, pushing it further and further to the Right, even if the voters soundly reject Trumpism in 2020."

Andrea Chalupa:

Let that sink in for a moment. "On the Courts of Appeal, the final word in the overwhelming majority of federal cases, more than one-quarter of active judges are Trump appointees. In less than three years, Trump has named a total of 50 judges to these courts compared to 55 Obama appointed during his entire presidency. Before he became president, Trump promised to delegate the judicial selection process to the Federalist Society, a powerful group of conservative lawyers that counts at least four Supreme Court Justices among its members. 'We're going to have great judges, conservative judges, all picked by the Federal Society,' Trump told a radio show, hosted by the Right Wing site Breitbart while he was still a candidate.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Federalist Society spent decades preparing for this moment, and they've helped Trump identify many of the most talented, conservative stalwarts in the entire legal profession to place on the bench. Trump's nominees will serve for years, or even decades, after being appointed. Even if Democrats crush the 2020 elections and win majorities in both Houses of Congress, these judges will have broad authority to sabotage the next president's agenda. There is simply no recent precedent for one single president having such a transformative impact on the courts."

Andrea Chalupa:

Trump has built a monument to himself in our judicial system, everyone, okay? That is what he's done here. Imagine if he steals another election, or imagine if the Left cannot unite just like the Left could not unite in the UK in their recent election. There's so much in-fighting, and that in-fighting helped the Right in the UK, they helped the Right consolidate power. It completely finalized the deal on Brexit. The in-fighting on the Left in the UK's recent election did that.

Andrea Chalupa:

What if we have that here in the US? What if the Left can't come together around Biden? What if those who wanted Bernie Sanders to be the next president, even if Bernie's endorsed Biden, even though Bernie and Biden are friends, what if the Left can't come together again, like they couldn't in 2016? Close elections are easy to steal. We need a landslide in 2020 in a lot of these key states to make it as hard as possible for Republicans to steal them.

Andrea Chalupa:

So if Trump manages to steal another election, imagine what our courts are going to look like with another four years of Trump. As we're always saying in authoritarian regimes, the judicial system, they're the cage bars. they're the cage bars that trap any hope for democracy. If you look at Ukraine, for example, all those dozens of people that gave their lives in their popular uprising that actually succeeded, popular uprisings rarely manage to succeed, but in Ukraine, Euromaidan, The Revolution of Dignity, it succeeded, and it did so because dozens gave their lives in order to force Yanukovich off the throne, and then he fled to Russia. And the next president was pro-Western, pro-democracy, and he was overwhelmingly elected.

Andrea Chalupa:

But what happened was the fight against corruption that so many gave their lives for in the Ukraine was completely hobbled by the judicial system in the Ukraine. You had all these corrupt judges that were delaying and stopping much needed progress. And plus, you had some corruption by that president that was elected, who was an oligarch, and he wasn't fulfilling his promises. He was doing some good stuff, but not enough. The judicial system certainly helped corruption stay in place.

Andrea Chalupa:

Again, remember the judicial system are the cage bars that lock in and confine any hope for democracy to flourish, and if Trump gets another four years, we could really slide into the black hole, the abyss of corruption, and it's going to take people sacrificing their lives in protest and uprisings like we saw in Ukraine, like we saw in Syria, like we saw in Venezuela. And remember, popular uprisings rarely succeed. Look at what those kids are doing in Hong Kong, how they're going out to protest, and they have letters to their parents saying goodbye to them in their backpacks.

Andrea Chalupa:

So we don't want a generation like that where kids have to go out to protest, not knowing if they'll ever see their parents again. We don't want to get to that point yet in America. And if we stop Trump, no matter what, you vote for Biden, no matter what, in November. If Bernie tells you to vote for Biden, you vote for Biden. If you do not, you are sentencing a generation to go out and risk killing themselves to try to turn all this back. We stand a fighting chance right now. If the Progressive Movement gets four more years of Trump, it's done. We've lost a generation, we've lost maybe two, three generations. We don't know how long it will take to reverse this. It's a black hole of corruption. We just keep sliding deeper into it. It's very difficult to climb back out.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, and honestly, that's sort of the optimistic view. There is the ticking clock of climate change hovering above this. And also the weaponization of things like coronavirus if they do things, for example, like a vaccine is brought forth, but it's not widely or equitably distributed, where it becomes something only accessible to people of certain beliefs or accessible of certain incomes, to millionaires, billionaires, corporate elites, and so on. These are all hypothetical ... Well, climate change is not hypothetical. That's a hypothetical scenario that I think a lot of people would listen and think, "Well, that's impossible. That's so outrageously evil and so outrageously wrong, stop going down that road, stop thinking those thoughts."

Sarah Kendzior:

That's often the reaction when we bring up something like that, and then what happens is it comes to pass in reality. And I'm not saying this is definitive. I'm not saying that it's something that they're going to do. I'm saying it's definitely the kind of thing they are capable of doing. They are capable of doing so many horrific acts, that what you've seen transpire so far will pale in comparison to what's coming, and to be quite honest, Andrea and I hold back a lot. We have private conversations about what we imagine they'll do, given their background in things like trafficking, the multiple pedophiles that Trump has befriended, these dark horrific networks that surround people like Jeffrey Epstein. This is the mafia. These are mafia states, and they are brutal and vicious and relentless, and they have no regard for the sanctity of human life. So there are a lot of places that this could go.

Sarah Kendzior:

If you think it's bad now, you have no idea what they're capable of, and we often don't go down that road, because we have enough to deal with, with what we know for sure or what we can say with 90% certainty we believe is coming. We try to stay in the realm of established possibility. If we go beyond that, it's evil. You're dealing with evil, and so yes, you need to take every measure possible, every precaution, to ward this off.

Sarah Kendzior:

And that doesn't mean you go around saying Joe Biden is amazing. It doesn't mean you get sucked into some sort of personality cult for anybody. You should absolutely critique Biden for things that he's done wrong. You should try to improve his platform. And I think that Biden realizes that especially in economic issues, he needs a more progressive platform. I think he's taking Bernie's advice to heart on that, because with coronavirus, things like universal basic income, dramatically raising the minimum wage for service workers, debt forgiveness, those are not just mainstream proposals, those are desperately needed proposals to keep our economy afloat.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so however we come out of this, we will be a different country than before, and I think that Bernie Sanders recognizes that, and I think Joe Biden recognizes that, and I think the Democrats that are moving to form a strong coalition, one that's not conformist, one that still has variety and viewpoint, that's arguing about issues. That is healthy. That is a healthy democracy, and you see folks like AOC and Warren and so many other Democrats, they grasp this and they understand it, and they're trying to do this right, and they're trying to do it meaningfully.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I honestly think the majority of Sanders' voters understand this as well, but I would say pay no attention to the Bernie or Bust crowd, because guess what, everybody? We're already at bust. We've been at bust a long time, and you're going to go from bust to hell, so maybe do your part to protect the most vulnerable people in America, because if you're already hit hard now, what you're going to be subject to is so much worse, so vote for someone other than yourself. Vote for other people's wellbeing and try to evaluate it morally on those grounds.

Andrea Chalupa:

You have to ask yourself, are you willing to help someone you don't know? And if the answer is yes, then the solution is following Bernie's lead and voting for Biden and working together in the big loud tent of the Democratic Party to get these Progressive policies passed that we desperately need, and the temperature is right to finally get there.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're going to play a little bit of a clip from Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders recently coming together to address the pandemic and to show leadership, to show unity, to show Americans working together, to show everything that the Trump Crime Family refuses to show in their daily campaign rallies in the White House, which violates the Hatch Act. Trump just ran a campaign video showing how great he is. That violates the Hatch Act, because White House staffers worked on that. Who's going to hold him accountable? Who's going to hold those staffers accountable for breaking the law? We can't, because

the DOJ is Trump's own personal lawyer, his mafia lawyer. It's his Roy Cohn, his consigliere, so there's that. So now, for something different, here's Biden and Bernie coming together, and Bernie is explaining to all of us how big structural change is done.

Bernie Sanders:

We've got to deal with incoming wealth inequality. We've got to deal with a healthcare system that is broken in so many ways. You mentioned the issue of climate change. Man, we don't have a choice there. The future of the planet determines, demands, that we are bold in transforming our energy system. And as you've indicated, we can create millions of jobs doing that. So there's a lot of work to do. Let's go forward together in doing that, and I know you are the kind of guy who is going to be inclusive. You want to bring people in, even people who disagree with you, you want to hear what they have to say, we can argue it out. It's called democracy. You believe in democracy. So do I. Let's respect each other, let's address the challenges we face right now and in the future, and in that regard, Joe, I very much look forward to working with you.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I want to applaud Bernie Sanders. People were critical of him for staying in the race as long as he did, but by staying in through Wisconsin, Bernie supporters came out and they voted for a critically important Supreme Court state race in Wisconsin, which removed a Far Right judge and replaced him with Jill Karofsky, who ended up winning. So we have here from the BBC, "Dane County judge Jill Karofsky's win for the 10-year term in Wisconsin reduces the Conservative majority in the top court to four to three. The court is expected to decide a case that seeks to purge more than 200,000 people from Wisconsin's voter rolls. The issue is sensitive in a state where presidential elections have been decided by fewer than 30,000 votes."

Andrea Chalupa:

That's what was at stake in the Wisconsin primary, and so Bernie stayed on the ballot through Wisconsin, and then the next day he dropped out of the race. And by being on the ballot, one could argue easily that that helped Karofsky win that challenge. So that's what we have to do, little by little. We need to take back our country through races like this. If we stay on this path, in 10 years we could be living in a strong, stable democracy with Progressives in the White House. This is how it's done.

Andrea Chalupa:

Anybody who wants to burn it all down, thinking that there's a path, there's an alternative option of all of us building barricades and sacrificing our lives, that option isn't reliable either. Look at Syria, look at Venezuela, look at Egypt. Egypt has slid back after their uprising, so we're in trouble here, this is serious trouble. And so all of us have to unite or die, as our friends at the How We Win podcast at Swing Left like to say, "Unite or Die." Those are our only options ahead of us.

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

We want to encourage you to donate to your local food bank, which is experiencing a spike in demand. We also encourage you to donate to Direct Relief at [directrelief.org](http://directrelief.org), which is supplying much-needed



protective gear to first responders working on the front lines in the US, China, and other hard-hit parts of the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria and refugees who are some of the most vulnerable people in the world to this pandemic. Donate at [rescue.org](https://rescue.org). And we also encourage you as always to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry. Donate to the Orangutan Project at [theorangutanproject.org](https://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 keeps 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:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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