

Gaslit Nation Transcript  
May 13 2020  
"Show Trials"

Sarah Kendzior:

"The public, having been assured that it's just scandal, it's just Trump being Trump, will then surrender its own demands for accountability. This is called normalcy bias, the idea that if a situation is truly dangerous, if massive crimes are being committed in plain sight, someone will intervene and stop them. Normalcy bias is the psychological counterpart to American exceptionalism. You can see these dual myths at play in every massive American oversight turned tragedy, from 9/11, to the war in Iraq, to the 2008 financial crisis.

Sarah Kendzior:

Notably, you see many of the same elite scammers, men who profit off the good faith that informs normalcy bias in each of these atrocities as well. But no one held Trump accountable, not in the 1980s, not now. That is to say, no one held Trump accountable in a meaningful way. The only way he and his criminal kind recognize—indictment and imprisonment. He remained a distant folk villain, a TV and tabloid monster, a threat outside my orbit. I could walk in and out of Trump Tower as a little girl and not feel afraid. It never crossed my mind that 30 years later this man would endanger my life.

Sarah Kendzior:

"Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past," Orwell wrote in *1984*. Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the party is in full control of all records and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the party chooses to make it. We are living in the future Orwell warned about.

Sarah Kendzior:

I am living in the *1984* my mother laughingly assured me did not exist. I am writing this book to report the past in its full truth in a hope that an understanding of the past will impact the future. That is the hope of every journalist who documents abuses of power. But I write under the rule of a tabloid tyrant. I write about a New York past from a Missouri present. I write with a memory that it is my own job to doubt, because I have seen how the media is made. I have seen how this monster is fed. I remember absorbing its myths as a child. I have found the crimes under the scandal and struggled to bring them to public light, to make the part of whatever the records and the memories agree upon so that we at least know what we are fighting.

Sarah Kendzior:

I wrote in the beginning of this chapter, 'When you are a young child, you have no sense of anything that happened before you existed unless it is explicitly spelled out.' The horror of the present is realizing that many adults had no sense of what was really going on during my 1980s childhood either. And that those who did know and lived to tell the tale, are the ones who stole the future."

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Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling books, *The View From Flyover Country*, and, *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration and rising autocracy around the world. So, for the last two months we've basically been covering the coronavirus crisis and now we're going to leap back into our regular *Gaslit Nation* fare, which is the decimation of democracy by the Trump Crime Cult. And we're going to start with Michael Flynn. So last week Bill Barr directed federal prosecutors to abandon their prosecution of Flynn. Flynn, as you know, briefly served as Trump's national security advisor before resigning a few weeks into his tenure. Flynn later admitted that he had lied to the FBI, during the presidential transition, about his conversations with former Russian Ambassador, Sergey Kislyak. Barr's dirty DOJ deciding to override a guilty plea is an unprecedented move in our country's history. A move that shows what we've told you all along, "This is a transnational crime syndicate masquerading as a government."

Sarah Kendzior:

They will rewrite the law so that they are no longer breaking it. They are attempting to create a one party state and law, facts, truth or precedent are no obstacles to their goal. We warned you a year ago that Barr does not care about the view of history in a traditional sense, both because of his generally apocalyptic view of the future, but also because he shares Karl Rove's view that reality is something that the Republican Party creates and therefore that invented reality will become the history that future generations study. Barr confirmed that himself in an interview this week. People are blowing off that interview as bravado, but you should take it seriously. The weakness of authoritarians is that they cannot resist flaunting their power, and in doing so they reveal their agenda and allow you to more effectively combat it if you are willing to actually take it seriously.

Sarah Kendzior:

But the problems with Flynn do not begin with Bill Barr, they begin with Mueller's failed probe. It was easier for Barr to pseudo-clear Flynn because Mueller did not even charge Flynn for his many other crimes, only charging him for lying to the FBI. And Mueller made a plea deal with Flynn that led absolutely nowhere. And so I'm going to read you a few paragraphs about Michael Flynn from my new book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, because it sums up the problems a little more briefly than were I to try to lay them all out, although I'm sure Andrea will weigh in on that. And so here we go.

Sarah Kendzior:

"The 'Mueller is playing 3-D chess' analogies began to take off at this point among those desperate for a rationale as for why Mueller's team were making rookie errors. Some pundits liked to claim that Mueller was doing a classic mafia roll-up, where he would go easy, nab the low-level players first and then arrest the key instigators all at once. That illusion was shattered when Mueller insured that Michael Flynn walked free in fall 2018, at least so far.

Sarah Kendzior:

"Flynn was a central figure in the Mueller probe. A foreign agent for both Russia and Turkey who aspired to illicitly deal nuclear material and kidnap a Turkish cleric living in the United States, Flynn was the first national security advisor for Trump before resigning less than a month into his term after his Russian campaign ties were revealed. In December 2017, he struck his own deal with Mueller and pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI. In December 2018, Flynn was supposed to be sentenced and it was expected he would get the maximum penalty. In an unusual rebuke, the judge, Emmet Sullivan, said to Flynn, 'Arguably, you sold your country out,' adding, 'I'm not hiding my disgust, my disdain, for this criminal offense.' Sullivan was the rare official ready to make a Trump associate pay for his crimes until Mueller stepped in and recommended that Flynn serve no time at all. There remains no logical explanation for this move. Mueller chose to coddle a plausible traitor. Flynn remains a national security threat who roams the country meeting with right wing extremists.

Sarah Kendzior:

"There are many questions here. Why did Mueller give cushy plea deals to Flynn and Gates when the information from those deals did not lead to indictments of the most dangerous perpetrators? Why were other key players, like Roger Stone, allowed to threaten people, including a judge, without consequence after their own indictments? Why was there no mention of Semion Mogilevich and his crime syndicate in the Mueller Report, especially when they had been a key target during Mueller's tenure in the FBI? Why was the broader context of the case, the mafia, omitted by the Mueller team? Why did the probe abruptly end on March 5th, one day after the House Judiciary Committee sent out a list of 81 people they sought to interview about Trump administration corruption, the first sign that the House would flex its prosecutorial muscle? Did Mueller end the probe voluntarily or did Barr shut it down? We do not know the answers to these questions because Mueller refuses to answer them."

Sarah Kendzior:

I wrote that in 2019 and we're basically still left with those questions unanswered. But what we do know is the willingness that the DOJ will go to cover for this criminal syndicate to enable its actions and even, their ultimate ambition is to put Michael Flynn back in the Trump administration. So, Andrea, do you have thoughts on Michael Flynn?

Andrea Chalupa:

I have thoughts on all of this. Obviously, if the Trump Crime Family steals another presidential election, as they desperately need to in order to avoid accountability, Michael Flynn, of course, will be back in the oval office. And he is somebody who is incredibly dangerous because, like Donald Trump himself, like Putin as well—and Flynn, of course, as we know is friends with both—he lives in his own reality. In the Obama administration, which of course he was fired from, they called it "Flynn facts". So basically, Michael Flynn's mind is like the comment section on a Breitbart article; it is a Breitbart article. He goes hand in hand with America's racist uncle, Rudy Giuliani, who is that iconic demographic Fox News viewer stuck in his La-Z-Boy chair screaming at the television, which isn't even plugged in. So, Rudy Giuliani and Michael Flynn are going to be running amuck, stealing from our country hand over fist, doing all types of dirty deals with dirty oligarchs abroad should the Trump Crime Family get away with stealing another election.

Andrea Chalupa:

Flynn was helpful in their first theft of the White House in 2016. He looked respectable. He looked like he was cast to play the role of a respectable general. Trump, being the reality show producer, the reality show terror president, was grateful to have somebody in a uniform, somebody that looked the part like Michael Flynn. They became very close together during campaigning together, flying across the country. And they were just two Fox News viewers sharing the same mind. And we saw that play out when Flynn, up on that stage, led a "Lock her up" chant in Cleveland, Ohio at the Republican National Convention. "Lock her up. Lock her up." And that of course is a major civil rights crisis to lock up someone like Hillary Clinton, who, despite decades of investigations against her, including by Republicans in Congress, hasn't committed any crimes. So to throw someone like Hillary Clinton into prison would be a civil rights crisis, just like it was a civil rights crisis in Ukraine when the gold loving, Putin loving, Putin-dependent Ukrainian idiot, Viktor Yanukovich, when he came to power with the help of Donald Trump's longtime friend and neighbor, Paul Manafort.

Andrea Chalupa:

When Viktor Yanukovich came to power, one of the first things he did was throw his political opponent, Yulia Tymoshenko, into prison on trumped up charges and that was a major civil rights crisis for Ukrainians. No matter what you thought of Yulia Tymoshenko, which—whether you liked her politics or not, it was a civil rights crisis that she was unjustly locked up for invented crimes by her political opponent—by the Ukrainian Donald Trump. And, of course we know now, thanks in part to the Mueller investigation, as Mueller himself told us in his famous Iron Triangle speech, there are all of these fancy accounting firms and law firms that tried to whitewash that civil rights crisis of Yulia Tymoshenko being in prison. And I want to update everyone on that story. She has successfully won an \$11 million case against Skadden, the US law firm that worked with Americans under the guidance of Paul Manafort to whitewash the fact that she was in prison and try to essentially justify it to western leaders, to western thought leaders and media and so forth. So, let that be a lesson that justice can sometimes happen.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yulia Tymoshenko, is by far not perfect. I believe she is corrupt. I believe she is a big disappointment to Ukrainians, but she doesn't belong in prison if she hasn't broken a law. And that takes us back to Mike Flynn, who did break laws and he did lie to the FBI. He did get on the phone with the Russians and worked directly with the Kremlin. When he was talking to Ambassador Kislyak, he was not in the White House at all yet in any official capacity, and he was essentially carrying out US foreign policy on behalf of the United States government, which of course, that's a mark against him as well. That was something that he was not allowed to do and he was carrying on as though that was official, basically reassuring the Russians to lay low and not overreact to Obama's sanctions against their attack on our democracy in 2016. So, Flynn very much overstepped in that role in trying to soothe the Russians and not have them do anything crazy, to not worry, that their time would come. Essentially, that they would eventually be rewarded. And they have been with the Trump Crime Family being in the oval office.

Andrea Chalupa:

So I think all of this is extraordinarily dangerous. Basically what we've been saying on this show for a very long time is that the Trump Crime Family, along with their propaganda machine including Fox News, including Sean Hannity, which Fox News under Donald Trump is essentially state propaganda, it's state media. And that's how it's operating, that's how closely the White House and this massive influential TV network are aligned and in bed together. They worked together to try to discredit the FBI and the DOJ, before it was purged and under Barr, and people like my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, who independently

used public domain information to point out how Paul Manafort was hijacking our democracy and essentially working as Putin's operative. And they vilified her using their propaganda machine. Sean Hannity made up lies about her and made her a big target, and that drove harassment. So we've been saying this all along, that they need to make the FBI and Christopher Steele, and a mom of three kids, my sister, look guilty on invented charges, invented crimes, in order to have the political cover to then free their accomplices, like Mike Flynn.

Andrea Chalupa:

And we're talking about Mike Flynn now, pretty soon they'll be carrying this out for Paul Manafort, so they have some excuse to pardon him. They're going to go down the line. I don't think Michael Cohen will get that red carpet treatment, because as sleazy and as dirty as he was, and all the threats that he made against journalists, and all the dirty corruption that he did on behalf of the Trump Crime Family, Michael Cohen did produce great TV in his Congressional testimony that was riveting television that Americans watched, and that certainly hurt a thin skinned wannabe autocrat like Trump. So I don't think Michael Cohen's going to get that treatment. But, what they're doing now with Flynn, in trying to make the good guys the bad guys, even if they have to invent crimes and gaslight Americans in order to free their accomplices so they can go on to commit more crimes is just the start. And if we don't stop them in November 2020, it's game over for our democracy.

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Sarah Kendzior:

Now, I want to get into the potential for show trials, whether of Clinton or of Obama, they're hinting at that. But first I want to remind folks a bit about some of the allegations with Flynn, because they implicate people who are very key members in the Trump administration. We have mentioned many times that the inner core has been whittled down to basically a dozen individuals. We've had this revolving door autocracy where many people left. The innermost part of that core is Ivanka and Kushner. And what Flynn did reflects a broader agenda that Kushner appears to have involving relationships with Russia, with Israel, with Saudi Arabia. I'm going to read a little bit from a Jerusalem Post article from 2017, where it says, "Flynn is accused of making false statements about his conversations with Russian Ambassador to the US, Sergey Kislyak. One of the two statements is allegedly about the UN resolution, which condemned Israel's settlements as a 'flagrant violation of international law' in which Trump's team sought to have vetoed."

Sarah Kendzior:

And so, that was the kind of activity that Flynn was getting up in with Kushner as an accomplice in December of 2016. And one of the witnesses or people that they engaged with on that action in the UN was Vitaly Churkin, the Russian Ambassador to the UN who died very mysteriously a few days after Flynn left the White House. He had what is believed to be a heart attack, but because they never released a toxicology report and the Trump State Department banned any examination of the cause of death, he's not there to clarify what exactly these arrangements or proposed agreements consisted of.

Sarah Kendzior:

There were other people investigating Flynn who are no longer with us. Early in 2016, before Trump actually took office, Elijah Cummings, the Representative, put out a letter to Mike Pence, warning Mike Pence that Michael Flynn was a national security threat who had been engaged in all sorts of improper behavior involving not just Russia but Turkey. And now Elijah Cummings is no longer with us to comment on what has transpired. And of course, Mike Pence is still in office. And this was always a troubling thing for Pence, that Flynn had confessed his guilt. That he allegedly was cooperating with Mueller, and that Pence had been alerted as to Flynn's criminal ambitions on paper by Elijah Cummings before Trump took office. That was always a fairly damning thing for him. Now those people are no longer there. So, we've always said this is an issue of the US and Russia, and of Trump's ties to the Kremlin and to the Russian mafia.

Sarah Kendzior:

It often seems like they're trying to replicate what happened in Ukraine, as Andrea laid out, as well as fulfill a broader ambition of tearing apart the United States in the manner that the Soviet Union was torn apart, which Putin has described as, "The great trauma and tragedy of his life." But it goes broader than that. It involves so many different countries and so many layers of criminality and culpability. In this case in particular, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Russia and also Turkey. And so, for Flynn of all people to be cleared is a very damning sign of things to come. And as Andrea noted, he was infamous for his cry of, "Lock her up," against Hillary Clinton. I have been worried that their goal for the election, especially as the country is in this state of fear and panic—and most people I think realize he's not a legitimate president. He's not a president who's there to serve the public good.

Sarah Kendzior:

But I think even those who are more hesitant to recognize that are certainly recognizing it as he reacts to coronavirus with apathy and malice or a mixture of the two. They're going to want to create a narrative of persecution. They're going to want scapegoats and they're going to want distractions. We're already seeing this language weaponized towards Clinton and we're also seeing it weaponized towards Obama with this "Obamagate" narrative, whereas we had predicted long ago they're seeking to flip the script, to investigate the investigators and to basically redo the 2016 election and all the mechanisms of propaganda that had proven effective for them before in the context of 2020. And to take Biden and turn him into a kind of Obama/Hillary hybrid with an assortment of baggage that's really a projection of the crimes that the Trump camp itself has done. I have more to say on this, but I feel like I've been talking a while if you want to weigh in.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, I have more to say on this too, so let's keep going. But yeah, I want to point out that Michael Flynn and his son in those final weeks, months of the 2016 election, they were driving so much of that Pizzagate conspiracy theory, this nonsense, total right wing fantasy that there was a sex dungeon for children in a popular family pizza parlor in the heart of Washington, DC and it was owned and controlled by people linked to Hillary Clinton and John Podesta and so forth. And it was just totally fantastical and disgusting. It's so interesting that they used pedophilia, they used children being trafficked, when Trump himself was so closely linked to an actual pedophile trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein. And that his own, a member of his cabinet got Epstein off the hook for raping all these children and helping his powerful friends, allegedly, like Donald Trump himself, rape children. So, you have to look back at pizzagate now, now that we know what we know, and wonder how much of that was just projection.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're always accusing the other side of doing what they're doing, like "Crooked Hillary". I would give anything for Hillary Clinton to be president right now. I would sleep at night. We probably wouldn't have a pandemic. She was in Obama's White House. Obama stopped the Ebola pandemic. He laser focused on it and put a stop to that. We might all be... Sarah and I might have finally gotten our vacation. Who cares about that now, obviously. But I mean, so what I'm saying is, they project. They've always projected and so you have to wonder now about Pizzagate and how much of their obsession of pedophilia came from their own culture, their own crimes.

Sarah Kendzior:

Right.

Andrea Chalupa:

Being in the ether of all these creepy people. And what they did by driving that Pizzagate conspiracy is they made the target on Hillary Clinton's head even bigger. They created an atmosphere of danger. And what it, of course, led to was some kind from North Carolina driving up and shooting up this pizza place. Shooting up the pizza place where you had to then get a guard at the door, a bouncer at the door day and night at this family pizza place. It was heartbreaking. And so, when they fall in to their propaganda paranoia, what they're trying to do is equivalent to a Nazi book burning—how the Nazis would gather the Brown Shirts and burn books. And they'd stand around a bonfire and they'd get all frothy in the mouth and they'd get the taste of blood that they were coming after you, and they were going to change the culture. And they were in control now, they were in power now.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, these guys aren't getting around and doing book burnings, but what they're doing is they're firing up their base, they're firing up their Brown Shirts and getting them all excited. And that then puts public officials, like Hillary Clinton, like Obama and his family, in danger. Michelle Obama wrote about birtherism, how it wasn't a funny, silly little thing for her. How she felt in serious danger. Because what they're doing is that they are inspiring some of their followers to take that next step and show up with a gun in gun-obsessed America. And this is their blunt force instrument. There's nothing innocuous about this, they know what they're doing. They know that they are creating a culture of violence and they're fanning the flames of that violence.

Sarah Kendzior:

Absolutely. And I'm glad that you raised the issue of Jeffrey Epstein, because when Pizzagate emerged it was after the alleged child rape case by Donald Trump had almost made it back into the mainstream press. A woman who had been 13-years-old in 1994 had come forward and said that she had been raped by Donald Trump and that she was, as a 13-year-old, had been procured by Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell to be a prostitute for rich and powerful men. And this case had been bouncing around courtrooms, it had come and gone, but she was going to show her face and make a statement to the world on November 3, 2016, until she was threatened and her lawyer was threatened and that disappeared. And right around that time, Pizzagate, the narrative of that emerged. So that, of course, if you brought up Epstein and this child pedophile trafficking network, immediately people would say to you, "Oh, well you sound like one of those Pizzagate people. You sound like some sort of lunatic," even though this case had already been to court in other contexts.

Sarah Kendzior:

Epstein by this time was a convicted sex trafficker, a convicted child sex trafficker, a well-known pedophile. None of this was debatable. One thing that's notable here, and I go into this in my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, is that it was Bill Barr's father who brought Epstein into prominence. Bill Barr's father was the headmaster of Dalton when he hired Epstein, who was 20-years-old without a degree, to teach math. From there, Epstein went into high society, connected with Ghislaine Maxwell and the two of them connected with Trump in a variety of ways.

Sarah Kendzior:

And now who do we have in charge of the DOJ at this time, letting Michael Flynn go, burying the Jeffrey Epstein case? We have Bill Barr. So we have this very disturbing continuity that I don't think is coincidental. I don't think we know the full story. I honestly think one of the wisest moves that anyone seeking justice and clarity and a way forward for this country can do is to fully investigate the Jeffrey Epstein trafficking operation and the role that I played in international espionage, in blackmail, in controlling heads of state.

Sarah Kendzior:

I feel like that case is at the heart of so many of the issues that we're facing. And the reluctance for people to come forward and take on the individuals in the Trump crime syndicate may be related to various connections that were there with Epstein. I don't care who gets outed in this process. I think we need full transparency and full clarity because there are too many coincidences. You can trace that path from Michael Flynn and the Pizzagate narrative to Epstein, to Bill Barr, to Bill Barr's dad, to Donald Trump, to Donald Trump's dad. I mean, it just goes on and on in this circular form and then you can get, also, Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, and Prince Andrew, and Brexit. I mean it sounds crazy, it's very overwhelming, but that's what happens when a conspiracy drags on for at least 40 years with no attempt at resolution, with no attempt at clear storytelling. Or at least, those attempts that are made are often silenced either by excessive litigation, by threats, by blackmail, or by other mechanisms. But the truth needs to be told.

Sarah Kendzior:

I want to get into what Obama said, but I don't know if you have more that you want to add on that aspect of things.

Andrea Chalupa:



Yeah. I just wanted to add, it's just, for anybody on the Left who doesn't take the crimes of the Trump Crime Family and their long history, their financial dependency on dirty Russian oligarch money, and you've just sort of dismissed it as an excuse that so called corporate democrats used for why Hillary lost and so forth—wake up. I don't understand it because this is about our oligarchs joining forces with their oligarchs. And when you live in an oligarchy, as we do here in the United States, you're dependent on whether the oligarch is determined to contribute to your society in some productive way—like the oligarch Bill Gates chooses to do with his wife Melinda—or whether it's going to be a Robert Mercer oligarch, who is driven by this ideological need of... I don't even know... What is Robert Mercer's motivation other than just being an asshole?

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm not completely sure, but you know what freaks me out about Robert Mercer is, we've had all this talk from Trump about the way to cure coronavirus, besides drinking bleach, is through ultraviolet rays or intense rays of light. And we know Robert Mercer believes that nuclear weapons are good for your health. After the bombings of Japan he said, "No, that was actually good for them. They were physically healthier after that happened." And the kind of combination of those two things, the fact that no one knew exactly what Trump was getting at, but that one of his benefactors believes that nuclear bombs are a way to improve health makes me worried that Trump, himself a fetishist of nuclear weapons who has talked frequently about his desire to use them, may want to not just nuke hurricanes but nuke the coronavirus. So that's been going on through my mind. But yeah, I mean philosophically Mercer is a hard Right, antigovernment, almost makes the Koch brothers seem mild in his desire to dismantle the "administrative state", as Steve Bannon once said. I don't think there's a philosophy behind it beyond the raw grab of power for this insular elite.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. And he founded Cambridge Analytica, the militarized propaganda firm, with Steve Bannon, the white supremacist. So my point is that when you have historic levels of income inequality as we do now, thanks to decades of Republican corruption and steamrolling over all types of rules, and complicit Democrats who did their part—when you get to this level of income inequality, this new gilded age of America being ruled by oligarchs, essentially, they buy up the newspapers and then their newspapers and TV networks fight each other and so forth—that's what's happening in the Ukraine. That's what Ukraine looks like, the atmosphere there. You're at the mercy of the oligarchs and their turf wars with each other. What Russiagate is, essentially, it's just a story of oligarch power. Russiagate is a story of unchecked oligarch power starring American oligarchs and Russian oligarchs together, that's all it is.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so, the whole call to action with Russiagate is confronting all of the vulnerabilities in our society, all of the corruption in our society that the Trump Crime Family and the Kremlin, and their oligarchs and our oligarchs were able to take advantage of to help install Trump in the White House. And if you want to secure our democracy, you need to factor in foreign policy. You need to stand up to autocrats. You need to pass legislation like the Magnitsky Act which sanctions oligarchs, anybody involved in corruption abroad. You need to stand firm on that. In the 21st century, foreign policy is domestic policy, and domestic policy is foreign policy. One mistake that Obama's White House made was they focused solely on their domestic policy, trying to make a freer, fairer world for all. That was their North Star, they said. They were focusing on making college more affordable, investing in community college and so forth.

And of course you have Obamacare and trying to expand coverage. But they didn't factor in how their foreign policy would eventually infiltrate their domestic policy when Putin came a-knocking.

Andrea Chalupa:

I talked to one Russian opposition leader who said that he was banging his head against the wall trying to get through to the Obama White House. And just saying like, "Do not sleep on Putin. Do not underestimate Putin." And lo and behold, Putin just swept in and used our own weaknesses against us. So again, I want to say for those on the Left, the whole soul of Russiagate, it's a confrontation with the oligarchs, whether they're our homegrown oligarchs here in the US, or abroad. Because these guys travel in a different stratosphere than us. They can pay off people. They can bribe people. They can pay for PYSOPs like you and I could go out and buy a slice of pizza, that's not hard for them. They can pay for all types of things. They could buy publicists that are masters of the dark arts that can sprinkle all types of hit pieces about people they don't like. So we're totally outgunned here.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's what this whole conversation we've been having on Gaslit Nation is about. It's about trying to even the playing field by addressing all of these social ills and finally bringing them to the surface and how we confront them. And guess what? White supremacy is key to that because who are these guys? They're a bunch of rich white guys who are fanning the flames of xenophobia. As we've said before, Putin's propaganda machine domestically is staunchly xenophobic, but the face that it's propaganda machine presents to the world tries to be sympathetic towards all these social ills that it uncovers in America, when it's an absolute monster for its domestic audience and it's racist, and proudly racist, and a fever dream of white supremacy.

Andrea Chalupa:

So we have to be very clear in calling the enemy by its name. We're up against a global class of oligarchs that are white supremacists, that want to hoard opportunities for themselves and they want to create the future for themselves. And they're totally satisfied with letting the rest of us die away because then they don't have to deal with us. It's genocide of the poor. That's what we're talking about when we talk about Russiagate. It's about confronting the ruling oligarch class that is essentially committing genocide against poor people, and brown and black people.

Sarah Kendzior:

Absolutely, and that's only been accelerated and exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis, which they see as a mechanism to disproportionately hurt those communities, deny them medical treatment, knowing full well that these are either communities that are already on the front lines having to work in the service industry and in the medical industry, or in cases with Native American communities, they lack access to clean water, making it harder to do the kind of hygienic things like frequent hand washing and so forth that protect you from it. And so, that was always the goal was this accelerationalist mindset, this incredible sadism that is rooted in white supremacy. They were not shy about it. It wasn't hard to detect back in 2015, 2016 and even before. There was just a reluctance to admit it and there's a similar reluctance to admit the obvious threat posed by the Kremlin and by complicit actors within our own government.

Sarah Kendzior:

During the Obama administration, so many different agencies were hacked by Russia. You had the State Department, the DOD, the DNC, the RNC. We found out in 2018 that the Treasury was infiltrated by Russia in 2015, but they didn't bother to tell anyone that. And by the way, anything that you're viewing in light of bailouts or any kind of big financial maneuvers from the Treasury, especially from Steve Mnuchin, needs to be viewed in the light of the fact that Russia has hijacked it and that's being used as basically an ATM for Russian oligarchs.

Sarah Kendzior:

And one of the people who was most reluctant to bring this information to the fore was Obama. And I'm not saying here that he was complicit or that he participated, or that he encouraged it or liked it, but there was an incredible downplaying of the severity of this threat during his administration, but especially during the Trump campaign, even though there were many openings for him to talk about this. For example, when Trump asked for Hillary's emails at a press conference. Or when Harry Reid sent out his multiple letters to James Comey saying, "Hey, everybody, Russia's going to falsify the official election results." That's the terminology that he was using by the way.

Sarah Kendzior:

And the old line is that, "Oh, Obama was afraid to speak out because it would be viewed as partisan and he'd be attacked by Mitch McConnell." And it's like, well, that's going to happen no matter what he says. That happens because he exists. That happens because he's living and breathing and black. And that is how the Republicans operated the entire time that he was in office, so he was never going to get treated fairly by them. He was never going to be treated fairly by the media. But what he needed to do was honor his obligation to the public. And so for the first time, really, this week, I heard Obama talk frankly about the nature of this threat where he said during a web talk with members of the Obama Alumni Association.

Sarah Kendzior:

And here is the quote, "The news over the last 24 hours, I think, has been somewhat downplayed about the Justice Department dropping charges against Michael Flynn, and the fact that there is no precedent that anyone can find for someone who has been charged with perjury just getting off scot-free." It's not quite perjury, but nonetheless. "That's the kind of stuff that you begin to get worried that basic—not just institutional norms—but our basic understanding of rule of law is at risk. And when you start moving in those directions, it can accelerate pretty quickly, as we've seen in other places." Now, this is the kind of statement that should have been said in 2016 and in fact WAS said by some of his contemporaries, by people like Harry Reid or people like Elijah Cummings.

Sarah Kendzior:

But with Obama, it's not that our basic understanding of the rule of law is at risk, it's that a crime syndicate inhabits the White House. That is what is putting the "rule of law" at risk. It's the hollowing out of our agencies. It's the packing of our courts. I feel like Obama is like Rip Van Winkle or something, waking up four years later and just sort of starting to reflect on this. And I know that he pays a lot of attention to protocol and to tradition, and that, traditionally, a president doesn't speak out, a former president doesn't speak out against the current president, but usually the current president is not a Kremlin asset affiliated with the Russian mafia who wants to destroy America from the inside. So I think it's completely appropriate for Obama to speak out. I think it's appropriate for George W. Bush, another

person who has not really been saying anything—it's appropriate for him to speak out. Or for Bill Clinton. Or, I mean, Jimmy Carter actually has spoken out. But it's been one of these frustrating things.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've talked a lot on this show about normalcy bias, about how so many people were convinced that the crisis could not possibly be as severe as what we were saying, because if it were people would behave differently. They would react with urgency. They would be making bigger demands. They would be using more blunt language to describe the assault on our democracy. And that they expected to be hearing from former presidents. If our country is about to die, if it's about to fully turn into consolidated autocracy, if we're going to have full fascism under Bill Barr, which may well happen, you would expect former presidents to say something about that. They were the president of this country, they certainly would have thoughts and feelings. We're only getting that now. I worry that it's too late and I worry that it is prompted by the baseless persecution of Obama and of the Obama Family, which as we've said is just fodder for Trump's white supremacist base. I'm worried that's what's maybe bringing him out to the point that he feels he needs to say something. It's a frustrating and sad situation in a number of ways.

Andrea Chalupa:

Obama is an institutionalist. I respect studies that focus on how the year you were born is so key to how you then develop in the world. And I feel like Obama was just born at a time when institutions worked and the generations that came after just know institutional decline that's rapidly accelerating. My heart goes out to high school students and college students that are graduating into a pandemic with Great Depression level unemployment. So, I think Obama in his mindset has been an institutionalist, "our institutions are strong, our institutions will protect us". Well our institutions have been purged and now our institutions are in tatters, and they simply cannot survive four more years of the Trump Crime Family. Because what's going to happen is Trump's going to do four more years just to show that he's a two-term president.

Andrea Chalupa:

He's going to be too lazy to even carry out a third term, even though by that point he will find some legal way to carry out a third term. He'll get bored and he'll just retire on his own show on Fox News and let Ivanka take his place. And that's how it will go if we allow them to steal another election. And this is game over for us. And we lose a generation, and it's going to take a new generation to sacrifice themselves, essentially, in some way, shape or form to try to get it back. So, it's very dangerous times. But I do want to say to anybody listening, feeling demoralized, and not just by the facts of the situation and the dangers ahead, but demoralized by the gaslighting coming out of this White House, demoralized by the idiots—the useful idiots I should say—in the media, and just generally just the gaslighting is always ramped and it always just is boiling over as we get closer to a big election.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you're feeling demoralized by just whatever's in the air right now—and it's going to get more polluted and foggy—you have to stay focused. You have to stay focused. And one example of staying focused that I love and I want to share is coming from this documentary series that we all seem to be watching now in America in our quarantine and it's called, *The Last Dance*. It focuses on the glory years of Michael Jordan, especially when he was at the Chicago Bulls during their height. And there's a really great episode where they talk about how Michael Jordan mentored Scottie Pippen during the heated years when they were up against the Detroit Pistons in this really tense, life or death sports rivalry. So Michael

Jordan talks about how he helped Scottie Pippen essentially become a killer, and becoming a killer and withstanding the pressures of a very heated rivalry is fighting for your mind and staying cool under pressure, and not taking the bait. Because you have to remind yourself at the end of the day, the war is in the mind. The war is in the mind.

Andrea Chalupa:

We call our show Gaslit Nation because they're trying to screw with your head. They're trying to get you to give up. They're deliberately trying to exhaust you with their terror and demoralize you. Propaganda is meant to weaken your system, break down your system so you don't even care what's true anymore. It's not a matter of what's true, what isn't, you just give up. It just exhausts your reasoning. You have to awaken your inner Scottie Pippen now. And if he could do it and defeat the Detroit Pistons, then so can you. He totally transformed and they could no longer get into his head, and when they could no longer get into his head, they lost. And so, you've got to stay strong now. You've got to fight for your mind and you've got to stay focused.

Andrea Chalupa:

And we have an action guide for you that is meant to not only give you concrete actions and groups that you can support and communities you can join, but also inspiration to help you focus. So go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide on [gaslitnationpod.com](http://gaslitnationpod.com). We also have a reading guide where you can check out all types of books that break down what we're talking about in greater detail. So the point is that any time you feel them trying to demoralize you, you need to grab hold of your mind and strengthen your mind, and fight for your mind. The war is in your mind. So, you've got to stay focused. And the whole point of this exercise that we're in now—we're in the thick of it now and it's just going to get more intense—the whole point of the months ahead is to choose to do something instead of nothing, even when you feel like giving up.

Andrea Chalupa:

The whole point of the exercise in the months ahead and starting now, is choosing hope over despair. Choosing hope over despair. Getting out of bed in the morning and telling yourself that you're going to plant seeds that are going to outlive you. You're going to plant seeds that are going to outlast you. And you can plant those seeds by throwing a couple bucks to an organization that desperately needs it. Check out our action guide for organizations that you can support. Be their calvary, show up, make phone calls for groups that you care about. Adopt candidates. Go check out [everydistrict.org](http://everydistrict.org). Go check out Future Now. Those are groups that are fighting on the all important local level. Adopt candidates on the local level. Get involved. Get involved. Get your friends together and fight. Convince the smartest person you know with the biggest heart you know, that's ruled by empathy, to run for office. Give them the confidence they need to do that. There's ways you can do that on our action guide. So the whole point right now is to stay focused and to stay engaged, and refuse to let them win the war in your mind.

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 line 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. Donate at [rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org). And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at the [orangutanproject.org](https://www.orangutanproject.org). 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:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

Our logo design was donated to us by Hamish Smyth of the New York based firm, Order. Thank you so much, Hamish.

Andrea Chalupa:

Gaslit Nation would like to thank your supporters at the producer level on Patreon...