

Gaslit Nation Transcript

31 March 2021

Sleeper Cells

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/sleeper-cells-49420093>

Music Clip from Your Body by Ella Goodwin (<https://ellmusic4.bandcamp.com/track/your-body>)

Ella Goodwin:

you don't know your body like i do
your pain your curves your hurt you never knew
i'll tell you when i think you're through
cos you don't know your body like i do

you don't own your body like i do
sign the bill, cash the check, spend it too
cos i take what i want when i do
you don't own your body like i do

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

For today's show we are featuring music. As always, once a month, we will share a song submitted to us. You can submit your music. Look for the link on how to do that at the top of our show notes for this week's episode. We always publish your show notes every week on the Patreon page, so look out for that. This month, the month of March 2021, we are featuring the music of Ella Goodwin.

Ella is a 21 year old singer/songwriter, feminist scholar and activist from upstate New York and current senior at Lafayette College. As a Gender and Sexuality Studies and Sociology double major and the co-president of a sexual violence prevention and peer education group on campus, much of Ella's academic focus has revolved around analyzing issues related to the gender binary, and sexual and gender based violence.

Set to graduate in May, Ella hopes to work in the field of sex education, and is particularly passionate about the ways that childhood sexuality education can work to deconstruct the hierarchy of bodies and

pleasures that both drives and is supported by intersecting forms of oppression. Ella often weaves together conversations about embodiment into music and songwriting.

This is Ella's description of her song, *Your Body*: "I wrote this song in the wake of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's passing and in thinking about many different interconnected issues related to bodily autonomy and patriarchal ideas of body ownership hierarchy. In this song, I'm trying to connect the various ways that this body domination is dictated to us and expose it in the form of a love ballad, a form which traditionally romanticizes these notions and tends to conflate love and ownership."

You can check out more of Ella's music on Bandcamp. She's ellamusic4.bandcamp.com and SoundCloud, ellamusic4.bandcamp.com. Thank you, Ella, for your beautiful song, *Your Body*. We'll play it in full at the end of this week's show.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, thank you, Ella, because everybody needs some music because we are living in a very strange time. We're living now in a time, two months into the Biden administration, where I think we're facing the inevitable need to forget or desire to forget that comes after steady trauma. Of course, we have all the trauma that came before 2020, but I think, now that we're a year into COVID, where we had a global pandemic, an attack on the Capitol, brutal attempts at autocracy, very little accountability, and then finally, we're sort of slowly moving in the other direction, where at least the aspiring autocrat has been removed from power, the vaccines are coming in, although not yet for me.

I think there's this natural tendency for people to want to move on, because it's genuinely traumatic and difficult to cope with this level of stress and violence. Unfortunately, though, we cannot move on, and that's what a lot of today's episode is going to be about. Because the conditions and the fractures and the criminality that brought us to this point are still lingering there beneath the surface. Which brings me to another thing that is going to make this time get even stranger.

I'm just going to tell you a little story of 17 years ago, I moved to Indiana, to Bloomington, and we were renting a very little tiny house and opened the door to move in and found that everything in the house was covered with the decaying corpses of giant insects, and then even more insects that I'd never seen before in my life were flying through the air and screeching and howling. I was like, what the hell? What is this? Is just what an Indiana summer is like?

I found out later that these are the Brood X Cicadas, which awaken from hibernation under the Earth every 17 years and emerge into the air in massive swarms, dominating every bit of space that they see, and spewing their corpses along the ground. This was like being in a horror movie, and I was too young the first time that this happened to really remember it. But now we're in 2021, it's now 17 years later, and they're about to emerge again.

If you live basically in the Midwest, and in some parts of the mid-South like Kentucky and D.C. appropriately, you are going to be swarmed with these disgusting, giant insects. So, if you live in these regions and you see these cicadas swirling around you, I want you to remember that that is exactly what is happening with Trump's criminal cohort, with this transnational crime syndicate that we continually

reference on this show—a syndicate that is a criminal underground, a syndicate that exists beneath the surface, only to emerge as a swarm every now and again into the public view.

But it is there all along. That is the era that we are living in now, during these early years of the Biden administration. The political cicadas are currently in hiding. You have Trump, basically off the radar. You have the instigators of the Capitol attack escaping accountability. You have white supremacist terrorists not being held accountable for their crimes. And you have, of course, a global mafia comprised of plutocrats, oligarchs, corrupt state actors, and organized crime itself.

It's laying low, just as Trump lay low in the early 1990s when he was trying to stay out of the spotlight after his series of bankruptcies and after other white-collar crime figures are being arrested. This is a pattern. You should expect the political cicada swarm to emerge later this year, but particularly in 2022. So, don't forget, don't lose sight of the past, don't lose sight of the future, stay on guard and be prepared and push for accountability.

[begin advertisement]

Now that we're coming up on a year of the new normal, it sometimes feels like we'll never get our old lives back. The uncertainty of not knowing when this will end is frustrating and a little scary. We all miss our old routines and being able to see friends and family. Now, more than ever, therapy is a way to find our way out when things feel especially dark. Just talking through fears and anxiety can make you breathe easier and feel hope again.

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On that note, I'm going to pass the mic to Andrea, who I know has some thoughts about the lack of accountability thus far.

Andrea Chalupa:

I certainly do. Thanks, Sarah-

Sarah Kendzior:

For that beautiful story.

Andrea Chalupa:

All right. Happy spring everyone. The vaccines are flowing. So, Sarah?

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm?

Andrea Chalupa:

Who am I describing? We're going to do a little trivia here.

Sarah Kendzior:

Little game?

Andrea Chalupa:

Here we go, the newlywed show. All right, who am I describing? A powerful narcissist who likes to give big, rambling monologues. You go see him in his office and he just starts off in a big rambling monologue, and you have to sit there and listen.

He doesn't trust the experts. He surrounds himself with sociopathically ambitious sadists vying to prove their loyalty to him, even if it means humiliating themselves. A gaslighter in chief whose base is violent and carries out mob violence in his name, including murder. And meanwhile he acts like he has nothing to do with it, yet he openly loves their adoration and wields their loyalty like a weapon. Who is this?

Sarah Kendzior:

I feel like this is like autocrat Mad Libs and the natural answer is Trump, but there are a variety of possibilities, so you're going to have to fill it in.

Andrea Chalupa:

All right I'm also describing Hitler. There's a great three-part documentary series called The Rise of the Nazis. The parallels between Trump and Hitler are astounding. Everything I just described is Trump and everything I just described is also Hitler. You can watch The Rise of the Nazis and you absolutely should to understand why Sarah and I are keeping Gaslit Nation going. You can watch it through PBS, the wonderful PBS.

This is a direct quote from the documentary series by the esteemed... The person quoted is the esteemed historian, Sir Richard Evans, the provost of Gresham College in London, and author of 18 books, including the Third Reich trilogy. He was interviewed in The Rise of the Nazis.

Sir Richard Evans describes Hitler this way: "Hitler realizes that if he tells a very simple message, it doesn't matter if they're true or not the point is that you have to keep repeating them, keep hammering them in, 'make Germany great again', 'restore the economy.' They are empty slogans, but they're carrying a message that although vague is very powerful."

Again, who does that sound like? It's Trump, but it's also Hitler. What's extremely important to understand is that Hitler and the Nazis came to power because conservative leaders in the establishment helped them and refused to do anything to stop them, even as they dismantled democracy and built a concentration camp for their political enemies and other scapegoats.

The Nazis were used by the Mitch McConnell's of their day to defeat the left and consolidate power under a ruling far-right coalition. Hitler and the Nazis were considered the "lunatic fringe". Their movement was fueled by hate, scapegoating and violence. The stormtroopers committed violence out in the open, in bars, on the street. And as their movement grew, so did support from the police.

Germans, who bravely fought for the rule of law and tried to investigate Hitler and turn to the courts found it was too late; the law quickly became just a pretense in Germany under Hitler. Hitler went from being a failure in trying to overthrow democracy in a violent coup attempt to dictator of Germany in 10 years. When he became chancellor in 1933, it took the Nazis only six months to dismantle democracy and establish a dictatorship. Six months. But even before then, almost immediately upon coming to power, they began building their first concentration camp.

The Nazis produced propaganda films to make the concentration camps seem humane. There was footage of the prisoners getting exercise in the fresh air. The Nazis passed economic policy that helped many Germans financially. They did all this to normalize genocide and sell it to the broader public. It was all part of a campaign of normalization. They knew what they were doing. They did it all trying to look as socially acceptable and as common sense as possible, hiding under simple slogans like "law and order". They knew they needed to gaslight the public as they consolidated power and turned Germany into their own greed machine.

The Nazis weren't just mass murderers, they were also mass crooks who enriched themselves by stealing from their victims, stealing from the state. Kurt von Schleicher, a power obsessed conservative leader (like Mitch McConnell), Franz von Papen, a German conservative leader who liked to talk out of both sides of his mouth (like a Ben Sasse or a Lindsey Graham when he warned us about Trump, then went on to loyally serve him), and President Paul von Hindenburg, who was like the Republican Party. He just wanted to defeat the left, keep them out of power.

Hitler could do whatever he wanted as long as he kept the Left out of power. Whatever those three German conservative politicians I just named did with their lives, whatever awards they won, whatever proud accomplishments they achieved, they will always be remembered as the idiots who helped Hitler come to power and failed to stop him when they had the chance.

Their hatred of the Left and their love of power brought a mass murdering narcissist to the helm. They knew who Hitler was. Hitler was infamous in his own day. They weren't naïve; they just loved power and hated the Left. That's how they justified allowing the Nazis to consume them and consume Germany. That brings us to the conservatives in America who hate the left and love power.

Federalist Society. What is the Federalist Society? According to NPR, “the Federalist Society is a hugely powerful nationwide organization of conservative lawyers. What do they do? The Federalist Society helped Mitch McConnell and Trump pack the courts with far-right ideologues to ensure the protection of white male patriarchy, including judges who attack or protect attacks on reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, the environment, and so forth. They drove the right-wing ideological packing of the Supreme Court under Trump. We're going to be living with their damage for many years to come.”

Who are some of their members? From the Washington Post: “There's much for this crowd to celebrate, the conservative and libertarian society or law and public policy studies has reached an unprecedented peak of power and influence. Brett Kavanaugh, whose membership in the society dates to his law school days, has just been elevated to the Supreme Court. He is the second of President Trump's appointees, following Neil Gorsuch, another justice closely associated with the society. They joined Justice Clarence Thomas, who said last spring, he's been a part of the Federalist Society now since meeting with them in the 1980s. Chief Justice, John Roberts, listed as a member in 1997 to '98, and Justice Samuel Alito, a periodic speaker at society events.”

Also, you can count Amy Coney Barrett now too, I'm going to add that in. “The newly solidified conservative majority on the court will inevitably decide more cases in line with the society's ideals, which include checking federal power, protecting individual liberty and interpreting the Constitution according to its original meaning.”

That means when Black Americans were enslaved, during that time, that original meaning when it was written. “In practice, this could mean fewer regulations of the environment and health care, more businesses allowed to refuse service to customers on religious grounds, and denial of protections claimed by newly vocal classes of minorities, such as transgender people.” Here's a clip of Justice Alito giving a speech just this last November, November 2020, addressing the Federalist Society and attacking gay marriage, which he voted against when it went before the court.

Justice Samuel Alito:

You can't say that marriage is a union between one man and one woman. Until very recently, that's what the vast majority of Americans thought. Now, it's considered bigotry. That this would happen after our decision in Obergefell should not have come as a surprise. Yes, the opinion of the court included words meant to calm the fears of those who cling to traditional views on marriage. But I could see—and so did the other justices in dissent—where the decision would lead.

I wrote the following: I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes. But if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots, and treated as such by governments, employers and schools. That is just what is coming to pass. One of the great challenges for the Supreme Court going forward will be to protect Freedom of Speech.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes, the Supreme Court didn't help steal Trump the election like he hoped they would, but they still allowed him to come to power in the first place. This is John Roberts' Supreme Court that gutted the Voting Rights Act, which helped tip the scales for the Republicans in 2016, and has allowed an all out assault on voting rights across the country, as we're seeing now recently in Georgia.

In Georgia, Republican governor, Brian Kemp signed into law, a Republican bill that makes it harder for people to vote and criminalizes giving out water to those standing in line. Brian Kemp, who had to purge voter rolls as Secretary of State to help seal his own election for governor against Stacey Abrams. Brad Raffensperger, the Georgia Secretary of State currently, has effectively been sidelined by his own party with the shocking Georgia law, which gives a Republican-run election board power to take over any election office for "underperforming." Meaning, for not producing the election result they want.

Once again, Republicans are setting the stage for another Trump to come to power, and possibly have an easier time staying in power, because as we're seeing now in Georgia, any election official who sticks their neck out to uphold the rule of law can be removed. This brings us to Christopher Wray. According to The Nation, Christopher Wray, back in his Yale Law School Days, joined the same Federalist Society, this Federalist Society that basks in speeches by a Supreme Court justice bashing gay marriage, that Federalist Society. You know, the libertarian power hungry legal machine.

This is about a Libertarian, far-right takeover of our government, an operation funded in part by the billionaire oil magnate libertarian, Charles Koch, Koch, who is actively trying to block the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, the largest election reform bill in a generation, as urgent and important as the Civil Rights Act. Everything we're describing is an immediate danger to us. We cannot emphasize that enough. It's the same repeat of history where the far-right is willing to weaken our democracy, even if it means putting us at danger for another Trump.

In a Senate letter from February 2021 by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and several judiciary committee members, they describe why all of this matters and why Christopher Wray coming out of this culture is a danger. In the letter the senators write, "Unfortunately, the FBI appears to have taken steps in recent years that minimize the threat of White supremacist and far-right violence, a grave concern that some of us have raised with you on numerous occasions in recent years. Additional reporting suggests that the FBI, at the behest of Trump appointees, diverted resources to investigate left-wing movements at the expense of adequately addressing the threat of violence by White supremacists and other right-wing extremists. These reports raised serious concerns about whether the FBI is allocating law enforcement intelligence resources in a manner that reflects the scale of the threat posed by violent White supremacists, whom the Department of Homeland Security has called 'the most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland.'

I cannot emphasize enough: they are allowing a Hitler to come to power in exchange for attacking the Left, in exchange for weakening our democracy, at a time when White supremacist violence is one of the greatest threats. The FBI currently has a White supremacy crisis. From CBS News: "Of the top 10 leadership positions in the FBI, all are currently held by White men. Currently, only 4% of the 13,000 FBI agents around the world are Black, a number that has stayed virtually the same for decades." From CBS News again: "Over the last several months, CBS News spoke with more than two dozen current and former Black agents, all of whom describe some sort of racial discrimination while in the FBI. They describe long standing problems at every level; the FBI's failed attempts to recruit more Black agents, the disproportionate weeding out of Black applicants during the training process, and how White managers tend to only promote individuals who look like themselves."

We'll link to this article in the show notes, which you can find on the Patreon page, as always, for this week's episode. It talks about the efforts of former Black FBI agents and a group called "The Mirror Project," calling the FBI to urgently increase diversity in their ranks, citing how this is especially urgent for the FBI civil rights investigations into police shootings, and, of course, the crisis of violence against Asians, which has been driven by Trump and his whole movement.

Police forces and the military are infiltrated by white supremacist terrorists, as has been widely reported. On January 6th, at the violent coup attempt, police officers were beating up Capitol Police. Hitler, like Trump, used to say "law and order." What they mean is they want to live above the law and unleash raw power and not be held accountable, to kill George Floyd and get away with it, to scapegoat like they're doing with Asian Americans right now, to be a proud cult of narcissists led by a narcissist. That's what the Nazis did. That is what Trumpism is currently doing, and we have a massive, deeply funded, far reaching far-right elite establishment that is empowering them to do this.

The staggering lack of diversity at the FBI under Christopher Wray helps explain why the FBI under Christopher Wray failed to stop the violent attempted overthrow of our democracy by White supremacists. We saw it coming. We here at Gaslit Nation even let people know we were going to do a special episode about the attack before the attack even happened, because we saw it coming, because our show regularly covers White supremacy. We saw it coming and the FBI did not, because the FBI has a White supremacy crisis under Christopher Wray, and is led by someone who at least at one time was a member of a powerful organization—the Federalist Society—that works to uphold the insidious power structure of White supremacy.

Christopher Wray staying on at the FBI during a time of growing threats of White supremacist violence, supported by political warfare waged against our democracy by Republican leaders attacking voting rights and making it harder to vote, makes us vulnerable to the next Trump, the far more successful Trump, who is going to go full Hitler next time. We won't be so lucky because our system, from the Senate to the Electoral College is very much slanted in favor of Republican rule.

Christopher Wray and his very White FBI, the Federalist Society and their far-right judges and their Republican Party from State Houses to the halls of Congress, are like the Kurt von Schleicher, Paul von Hindenburg and Franz von Papen, their hate for the Left and love of power mean they're willing to destroy themselves, destroy democracy, if it means letting a mass murdering narcissist come to power again. Hitler did not steal power, Hitler was handed power.

The solution is to diversify both law enforcement and the military, including and especially at the very top, starting with the head of the FBI. Christopher Wray must go, and a Black woman, for the safety of all, must take his place. Leaders in Congress and in local office must strengthen the rule of law. Laws are only as strong as those responsible for upholding them.

You do this by getting rid of the filibuster and passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Act immediately. Ban weapons of war nationwide. The more laws you pass to protect and strengthen democracy, the more roadblocks you put up for the dictator. It's like cyber security. Hackers can get in anywhere, cybersecurity just makes it harder. Strengthen the rule of law, first and foremost.

So, the threat remains, the genocidal culture remains. Think of this time as living among sleeper cells. They're there. They're in the police force. They're in the military. They're far-right ideological judges appointed by the Federalist Society's dark money. They're the Republican Party, the NRA, the Trump family, the Kremlin dark money, the greed of big tech that pushes disinformation in exchange for profits. The sleeper cells are among us.

I want to end by sharing an analysis by two law professors covered by Greg Sargent in The Washington Post. We'll link to this in our show notes. It concludes that our current system is so biased in favor of Republicans that "even reforming or abolishing the filibuster and granting statehood to Washington, D.C. would be modest efforts to protect our democracy." The clock is ticking. Democratic leaders must act with urgency, or no matter what they achieved in their long, illustrious careers, they will always be remembered for having lost her democracy when they had a chance to save us.

Sarah Kendzior:

There are a few things I wanted to comment on, and one was initially when you were making the comparison between Trump and Hitler, which one of the points you raised I think is well merited, there's also just such a parallel between the time we're in now and the time in which Hitler rose. If you look back at 1918 at the end of the Spanish Flu, at the end of World War I, what followed in that wake, when people were finally able to leave their homes again and go out in the world, was just a blitz of White mob violence.

Whether the Red Summer of 1919—that's what it was called when there was White mob violence in many US major cities, including Chicago and Baltimore and Charlotte and elsewhere. There was the Tulsa Black Wall Street massacres and destruction of that Black business center and homes in 1921. We're now on the year anniversary of that, coming up this summer.

We had incredible economic instability, incredible anti-immigrant sentiment, where you saw the US closing the borders to immigrants from Eastern Europe and from Southern Europe and from Asia, while still generally allowing it for immigrants from Western Europe, who they deemed of superior quality. And, of course, you saw the rise of fascism. You saw Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin building their movements, building their audiences, using new kinds of technology, just as cable news hosts and aspiring autocrats are using those networks, as well as social media, today.

You saw the demonization of left-wing or liberal groups, labor unions, and so forth, and just a country in an incredible place of trauma. You saw this in the wilding out of the 1920s, followed by the crash, followed by attempted fascist movements within the United States. This is the history that they tended to gloss over in school, at least when I was growing up. Much of these things were things I found out later. I know that's true for a lot of people about things like Black Wall Street. Everyone wants to gloss this over, and that's in part because they want to play into the myth of American exceptionalism. But I think also because the parallels are quite stark.

So I am worried about an outbreak of violence when vaccines are more widespread and the COVID restrictions are lifted. We're already starting to see some of this. I went away last week, and I wrote in

my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, that whenever I go on a road trip, the flag that I pass on every highway is always at half staff, because there's always been a mass shooting, and there were two just in the four days that I was gone. Unfortunately, I think we're in for more of this down the road.

Then the other thing I wanted to respond to was the FBI, where yeah, on January 5th, Andrea and I announced a *Gaslit Nation* special episode to talk about the violence of January 6th, about the attempted attack on the Capitol, because they had announced it. So, we were able to announce a special. As you said, we saw it coming and the FBI didn't. Another way to put it is the FBI saw it coming and either decided to look the other way, or looked on with approval. Because they could have stopped it. This was a very obvious operation.

There are many reasons why they didn't, none of them good. While Trump was in power, there are excuses that they could make about threats—either threats to the FBI itself, which Trump purged multiple times to individual agents, or the threat of Trump abusing executive power at its most horrific extremes. We may all remember that Pelosi went and met with the Pentagon because they were so concerned that Trump was going to use a nuclear weapon in his final weeks in office.

Last week, we had representative Gwen Moore on and we played a clip of her from Trump's second House impeachment hearing, where she was very worried about what he was going to do with just a couple of weeks remaining. So, all of that was there then, but there's absolutely no excuse and no good explanation for why Christopher Wray remains in this position now, when Biden has the capacity to remove him, when there's obvious cause to remove him, because he allowed blatant criminal acts, not just the Capitol attacks, but all of the criminality of the Trump administration to thrive while he was placed in as FBI director.

This includes a number of things, like the lack of any investigation into how they handled COVID. We're going to get into that in a bit, because hundreds of thousands of deaths could have been prevented if people had chosen to act. We have multiple cases of obstruction of justice, and on that note, I'm also wondering, where is the unredacted Mueller Report that was promised to us if the Democrats were to take the House and the Senate and the presidency, which they did? We cannot put these things on the back burner, or we won't survive.

I know we've raised this point a million times, but it's worth repeating that we have a very consistent bad record of FBI directors. I'm trying to think of when there was really a good one, because this enterprise started with J. Edgar Hoover, but nonetheless, we have a history of FBI directors being complicit actors with transnational organized crime, and in two cases—that of William Sessions and Louis Freeh—going on to directly work for the Russian mafia as paid consultants. And this is all one big enterprise.

It ties into the Federalist Society, it ties into these White supremacist groups. This is how they gloss over their criminality. This is white-collar crime. This is also simply White crime. As Andrea pointed out, the makeup of the FBI is overwhelmingly White men. I'm not even sure that diversifying it would be enough. I mean, you have to have people who are truly committed to justice, to accountability, to transparency, and who are willing to take on other White men, who are willing to hold those power brokers accountable, no matter how prestigious they are, no matter how glossy their reputation is (in the case of

people like Bill Barr), and no matter you know what kind of powerful international backers they have, as in the case of someone like Jared Kushner. They have to be just full on... I guess like Eliot Ness, although, I suspect that's another myth that I was peddled during my American childhood.

Anyway, they're not doing their job, and you have to ask yourself, what exactly do they think is going to happen to this country? What does the national security apparatus of America think is going to happen to this country if they are *this* reluctant to do the most basic job of protecting us? They won't protect us from an autocrat. They won't protect us from transnational organized crime. They won't protect us from a pandemic. And yes, this is literally their job. This is like the only thing that they have to do, and all that they've really focused on excessively over the years has been Islamic extremism, Islamic terrorism. White supremacist violence got put on the back burner. White-collar crime got put on the back burner and the only person who seems really willing to take this on in the Senate right now is Sheldon Whitehouse, and so that's concerning given that the Democrats do have this majority and they still are acting cowed. They're still acting intimidated.

Then, we have the problem of criminality within the government, within prior administrations as well. Until this is all out in the open, which will necessitate telling the American people the truth about the FBI, and the truth about the complicity of prior directors—that, of course, includes Robert Mueller and his actions, burying parts of the 911 report, letting Jeffrey Epstein off the hook, refusing to indict the numerous conspirators who went on to steal and commit illicit acts during the 2016 election, that includes people who we then went on to indict like Paul Manafort and Roger Stone, and then of course, James Comey who removed the head of the Russian Mafia, Semion Mogilevich off the top 10 Most Wanted List and then went on to target Hillary Clinton instead.

This is a very consistent story. It's a complicated story, but it's consistent in that every character is a villain. That's the history of the FBI for the last 30 years. It doesn't mean every person working there is a villain. I'm sure there are people there who honestly do want to protect this country and have tried, despite these bureaucratic obstacles in this incredibly corrupt culture. But they are sometimes openly driven out—as they were by Trump—or just seemingly they're not effective.

We are not a protected country and it's very reminiscent now of the end of the Soviet era, where there is just so much rot, where institutions are so battered and broken that it's like you could drop a feather on them and they will collapse. That's the point that we're at, and the thing that's so frustrating is that there are remedies to this, and we keep telling you the remedies over and over. The two big ones right now are to abolish the filibuster and pass the Voting Rights Act.

But along with that, there just needs to be a change in mindset and expectation. To demand accountability shouldn't be some sort of radical dream. It shouldn't be some sort of fantasy act or something where people treat you like you're entitled if you're asking your national security apparatus to do the most basic task in front of it. It should disturb you that Andrea and I told you more about the Capitol attacks and what was going to happen, and that we started telling you about them in October or November, that this went on for months. And we certainly weren't alone in this. There were many other journalists who were warning and warning and warning, and some public officials as well. This all could have been prevented. It was so predictable, so preventable. They didn't prevent it because they didn't

want to. You need to ask, but why didn't they want to, and why would Biden not remove the person who allowed this to happen immediately?

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, I will just add that the whole gaslighting slogan of Republicans being tough on crime... The Republican Party is a criminal operation. It's an international criminal operation, and the NRA was funneling Kremlin dark money. Russian oligarch-linked dark money was circulating among the Republican campaigns in 2016. For all the reasons that you listed, Christopher Wray, Republican. Comey, Republican. Mueller, Republican. Republicans are not tough on crime, that is why we had criminals come to power. That is why we had criminals in the White House enriching themselves and mass murderers... Failing to prevent a pandemic which led to essentially mass murder by corruption, carried out by Trump and his family, Ivanka and Jared and their cronies.

Republicans are tough on poor people. Republicans are tough on Communities of Color. Republicans are tough on LGBTQ people. Republicans are tough on women. They are not tough on crime. What they are trying to uphold is this destructive power structure known as White male patriarchy, and they enlist White women like Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, arguably the least qualified person to ever be considered for a Supreme Court appointment.

That is what they're trying to uphold. It's this insidious power structure all around us. Christopher Wray is very much a part of it. When we talk about the John Lewis Voting Rights Act being passed, when we talk about reforming or abolishing the filibuster, which has always been used by Republicans—especially more aggressively in recent years to stop progress, to rollback civil rights—we're talking about modest proposals. Those are modest proposals.

The study I cited earlier that Greg Sargent writes on the Washington Post: modest proposal. A bold step must be getting rid of Christopher Wray, immediately. A moral step must be getting rid of Christopher Wray immediately and putting someone in his place who is determined, determined to be tough on crime, because Christopher Wray simply is not. He's part of the problem.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, because the criminals are their friends, and that's it. It's as simple as that. Their definition of a criminal is created in advance of actually finding the crime. A criminal is a Muslim. A criminal is a Black man on the street. A criminal could never be Donald Trump, who committed a lifetime of crimes in plain sight. He was investigated by the Treasury. He was investigated—and has a very interesting little relationship—with the FBI, because that's their friend. That's their accomplice.

A criminal would never be Felix Sater, who agreed to inform for the FBI and seemingly go on an endless crime spree, collaborating with a variety of actors as a result. A criminal could be Whitey Bulger, who they also gave a pass to, allowed him to commit murders in exchange, allegedly, for information. But, I look at all of these cases, and whenever I hear the words "FBI informant", I'm always thinking that it's such an incredible euphemism for somebody that you have befriended in order to carry out your own criminal activity under the rubric of the law.

This also extends to other government agencies, like the CIA. Iran-Contra, was a very obvious example of that. It's rewriting the laws so that the criminals are the lawmakers and the law enforcement officials, and anybody who they see as either a convenient scapegoat or target can be vilified in the public sphere, and emblazoned in people's minds, this is what a criminal looks like, this is what someone who should be behind bars looks like, whereas everyone in their circle is just granted elite criminal impunity.

It is very frightening to have this at the level that it is, because it's always been there. It's not like we had some great, just system before Trump rolled on in. This has been going on for decades—I wrote a book about it. Many people have written books about it—but they are being exceptionally brazen in the way that they display it, and this goes beyond the FBI and into the Republican Party itself.

As you mentioned, with the voting laws that were passed over the last week in Georgia, if you missed that, I'll just read a brief description of it, where the new Georgia voting law adds a photo ID requirement for voting absentee by mail, cuts the amount of time people have to request an absentee ballot, limits where drop boxes can be placed and when they can be accessed. It bans people from handing out food or water to voters waiting in line and it allows the Republican controlled state election board to remove and replace county election officials.

Speaker 4:

Why are y'all arresting her? What did she do? What did she do? You could be arresting Governor Kemp.

Rep. Erica Thomas:

Let me say something. We sit here every single day and we defend these bad bills, like SB202, and all we asked is for her to be able to see him sign a bill that is signing our rights away. And you arrested her. She did not touch anybody. She did not say any slanderous words to any of these standards, but you're going to tell me that you're arresting a city or state representative for *nothing*. She didn't do anything but knock on the governor's door. I'm done, I'm so done. I'm so done. Protect and serve who? Protect and serve who? Protect and serve the Georgians. Because she knocked on the door, you just arrested a State representative. I'm done.

Sarah Kendzior:

That was a clip of Georgia state representative, Park Cannon, who is a Black female representative being wrongfully arrested and charged with two felonies after merely knocking on the door of Governor Brian Kemp's office during the signing of the Georgia Senate bill. So that is how Republicans are reacting to Georgia. And this is not an isolated case. What's happening in Georgia is just the beginning, and it's happening nationwide. For example, this is what happened in Michigan this week. I'm going to read a little bit from an article from MSNBC:

"The GOP-controlled Michigan legislature is planning a maneuver that would enable it to pass contentious election changes into law and effectively nullify a likely veto from the state's democratic governor," a top Michigan Republican said. Ron Weiser, Chair of the State Republican Party, told activists Thursday that the party will spearhead a ballot initiative, assuming Governor Gretchen Whitmer vetoes new bills that Democrats and voting rights groups say would suppress voting. Under state law, lawmakers can enact such initiatives without a gubernatorial veto or letting them go to a public vote."

In short, these legislators are overruling the will of the public, overruling the will of democratically elected Democratic governors, and preventing people from voting in the future. That is their reaction to Georgia turning blue. This is what Ruth Ben-Ghiat—who we interviewed a few weeks ago—calls electoral autocracy, and it is the natural step of this very well-organized machine to continue to hijack our democracy.

One final example, and this is just from the last week alone: in Florida, the Florida Democrats tweeted out a summary of what was called "anti-rioting legislation" passed in Florida last week. The actual purpose of this legislation is to criminalize peaceful protests—this is HB1—to be anti first amendment, to disproportionately harm Black and Brown communities, place more value on confederate monuments than human lives, and will cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

So, that's all happening now. That's what the GOP is doing out in the open, so I can only imagine what they're doing in secret, buried like those little cicadas in the ground, because this level of brazenness is the kind of thing that happens when a country is turning from a democracy to an autocracy once the groundwork of that autocracy has already been established, once it's in voters' minds that this is, if not normal, just like a thing that happens, just like a bad thing that you should expect to happen, that no one is really expected to fight aggressively against, that we should come to accept somehow in our lives.

We've had numerous cases of this happening throughout both long ago history and recent history. You could look at Jim Crow. You could look at the Patriot Act. People will accommodate quite a bit. But you cannot accommodate this. If you accommodate this, if the Democrats do not stand up to all of this immediately, we are going to just go right back into the Trump era, only worse. And they're not hiding that either.

This week, Tucker Carlson on his show was saying "Yes, we should move towards being a fascist country." The term "fascism" itself has become acceptable. It's become an aspiration for the Republican Party. It's become their platform. Antifa, literally to be anti-fascist, is now being labeled as a radical and unAmerican way of being, even though it's as American as you can be; to oppose fascism, to oppose Nazis, to want freedom, to want truth, justice and the American way.

The Republican Party is like the anti-Superman party, and it should feel weird to you. It should never be normalized in your head. It's like, yes, this is what the GOP is doing. It's not what it *has* to do. This is a choice they're making, and the choice that the Democrats are making to not fight this as aggressively as they possibly can and to not do basic things—like abolishing the filibuster and passing the John Lewis Voting Rights Act—you should be just as angry about that, because there is a way out. Yeah, it's not easy, but it's going to be a hell of a lot harder if you don't do anything.

Music - Your Body by Ella Goodwin (<https://ellmusic4.bandcamp.com/track/your-body>)

you don't know your body like i do
your pain your curves your hurt you never knew
i'll tell you when i think you're through
cos you don't know your body like i do

you don't own your body like i do
sign the bill, cash the check, spend it too
cos i take what i want when i do
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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.

Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria. Donate at 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 theorangutanproject.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, and you can also subscribe to us on YouTube.

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