

Gaslit Nation Transcript

07 January 2021

“Traitors and Patriots”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/traitors-and-45873929>

Jon Ossoff:

Right now, we have a crisis of corruption in American politics. Since we're live on Fox, let me take this opportunity to address directly the Fox audience. We have two United States senators in Georgia who have blatantly used their offices to enrich themselves. This is beyond partisanship. The reason, to your question, that I talk so much about health and jobs and justice for all the people is that we can unite behind that program.

Jon Ossoff:

We've lost nine rural hospitals in Georgia in 10 years. We can reopen them. We can invest in infrastructure to build jobs, revitalize our communities, create opportunity, raise the minimum wage so that people doing an honest week's work cannot just survive, but can thrive and, yes, pass landmark, civil rights, and voting rights legislation to secure equal justice for all. I humbly and respectfully request the support of everyone who is tuned in on Fox right now, and I'd love for you to log on to ElectJohn, elect J-O-N dot com. That's elect J-O-N dot com. Make a contribution to our efforts here in Georgia.

Speaker 2:

One more quick one while we've got you. Any concern that the allegations of wrongdoing against Reverend Warnock could possibly be a drag on the democratic ticket next week?

Jon Ossoff:

None whatsoever. Reverend Warnock addressed this issue a year. Here's the bottom line: Kelly Loeffler has been campaigning with a Klansman. Kelly Loeffler has been campaigning with a Klansman. So, she is stooping to these vicious personal attacks to distract from the fact that she's campaigning with a former member of the Ku Klux Klan. I mean, we deserve better than that here in Georgia, and I want to encourage everybody to make a plan to vote on Tuesday.

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 journalistic thriller *Mr. Jones*.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration and rising autocracy around the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

And we are excited to join you in a new year—new us, same Republican party. We're going to be talking about that horror show today, but, first, we wanted to share some announcements. Obviously, this is a time of mass trauma. Everyone is hurting, whether they show it or not. This is unprecedented. We're living through a dangerous crossroads that's going to be studied generations from now very closely by historians to make sense of all this. So, congratulations on all of us for getting to live through interesting times.

Andrea Chalupa:

What tends to happen after times of mass trauma is you have a period of wilding out. You see some of this in my film, *Mr. Jones*, where Walter Duranty—the Moscow Bureau Chief of the New York Times who helped the Soviets cover up Stalin's genocide to Ukraine—you see him hosting a wild party with sex, drugs, and hedonism. He really did live that lifestyle. He participated in the infamous satanic orgies in 1920s Paris with the very well-known and celebrated satanist Aleister Crowley. They would do horrific things. It was pretty nasty, and that wasn't uncommon.

Andrea Chalupa:

I mean, they just have lived through the great war. Duranty was a war correspondent. He wrote about how he was hanging out with a group of soldiers having lunch. They went off and came back killed, their bodies rolled in charred, headless. So, when people live through trauma, they deal with it in different ways.

Andrea Chalupa:

We are going to be entering a period of a lot of disturbing new stories coming to the surface of how people are going to be dealing with that trauma. So, please do what you can for yourself, for your loved ones, to build a relationship—a conversation—with your trauma. Talk to it. Get to know it. Seek the help that you need to help handle it. I'm doing that because I have studied difficult times in history before. I've seen how trauma endures and I've seen how trauma impacts generations. I've seen how trauma has shaped countries' futures and it's just something that we have to deal with. We have no choice.

Andrea Chalupa:

All public servants on the front lines have to understand that the trauma now—the national trauma, the mass trauma—is as important to deal with as, say, Kremlin aggression, corruption, any of it, because it's going to express itself in a lot of challenging ways.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, one way we want to help you get through these difficult times is to do what has helped me tremendously, and that is make art. Make bad art. Make good art. Make whatever art you can. One thing that I realized about myself is, in the lead up to the election in November, I was trying to keep a journal. I was thinking, "Oh, this is so historic. I should be writing this down."

Andrea Chalupa:

I tried it. I sat down with a journal. I got through one paragraph. I'm like, "This is boring. I can't do this." So, what I did instead was I wrote a screenplay. It was a screenplay that I've been wanting to write for a very long time, and it just came out instantly. Instantly. It was about George Orwell and his wife, Eileen O'Shaughnessy, living through the horror of World War II, where they felt like they had no future.

Andrea Chalupa:

Eileen's beloved brother, Eric, who was a doctor in World War II, he went off to Dunkirk and the last sighting of him was just sitting there in a café watching the Germans explode the sky. It was almost like he just stared at the devil and couldn't move and he just succumbed to that evil. Eileen would wander the streets of London with Orwell just in shell shock over the loss of her brother.

Andrea Chalupa:

I understood from writing this screenplay, this history I had studied for years, I saw it completely differently because I, too, was grappling with these issues. Is there a future? What kind of future is there? I was able to say what I needed to say and how I was feeling through art.

Andrea Chalupa:

I couldn't sit down and write it in plain sentences. I needed to express it in some other way. I think a lot of people are like that. Whether you're an artist or not, whether you can write or not, whether you can create music or not, just go out and make something. Say what needs to be said. Help yourself that way. Consume art. Enjoy art. Encourage others to make art. Sit down with your kid and make a drawing, whatever you need to do. It does help tremendously.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, as part of this, we have a brilliant idea from one of our production managers who helps us make this show, and her name is Karlyn Daigle, and she's a wonderful organizer in Portland, Maine. We talked about her brilliant work before. We'll link to some of it in the show notes for this episode, which you could always find on our Patreon page, for free. We publish every episode on our Patreon page. You could access it for free and get the show notes there. We treat that like our dynamic active website. So, please go to the Patreon page for this episode and for any show notes when the episodes come out.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, Karlyn came to us with a really great idea that we're excited to share with you. She said, as a musician—because Karlyn's a musician—she wants to hear from you what music you have, what music you've written, what music you're working on. So, for the artists out there, send us your songs. Send us your music, and Karlyn will go through it, and every month, she'll highlight a different artist and you can find out how to sign up for that, again, at the very top of our show notes for this episode. We'll be highlighting this program as we go through. We're very thrilled and grateful to her for this great idea.

Andrea Chalupa:

The other thing we want to share since we have a lot of work ahead of us—a lot of rebuilding—it's a new year, so I'm calling on all of you to join me in reading two books that are going to better equip us to do the work that these very difficult times are calling us to do. Those two books are: Stacey Abrams' *Lead from the Outside: How to Build Your Future and Make Real Change*, and also, we're going to read Amanda Litman's *Run for Something: A Real-Talk Guide to Fixing the System Yourself*. Whether or not you plan to run for office, these are two books you must read because they're going to show you on how to stand up and do the work wherever you are, do the most good wherever you are, and own your power, realize how powerful you are.

Andrea Chalupa:

When we're going through difficult developing democracy crises (that the United States is going through now), self-reliance becomes the name of the game. In Ukraine, one of the organizers of the revolution was a leader in a party called Self Reliance. So, these two books are going to help us, show us how to be self-reliant because as we always say in Gaslit Nation, grassroots power is the most reliable power we have left. So, let's read these two essential guides to learn how to own our power and how to help support the really good candidates, the public servants we need to clean up this democracy because as we're going to talk about today, we're up against traitors.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're in this slow motion coup which is leading us to a slow motion civil war, and Trump and his goon squad, they're not going to be able to overturn this election. We don't think so, of course, but who knows? I don't think they'll succeed. In the short-term, I'm optimistic, but in the long term, you know what they're going to do. They're going to target the secretary of states in the key states they need in order to win the electoral college. They're going to try to elect their QAnon cult to those positions of power. They're going to try to elect their QAnon cult to the governor of offices in these key states they need to win.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, we really need to protect these offices. We need to flood the system with good men and women that believe in science, believe in truth. The way we're going to do that is by reading books like Stacey Abrams' book, Lead from Outside, and Amanda Litman's book, Make Real Change and Run for Something. The more informed we are, the more vigilant we are, the better chance we stand in making the essential differences we need to make in order to protect our country from these traitors.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, speaking of traitors, we're going to be covering hopefully the defeat of David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler in Georgia tonight in a special bonus episode, which you can get by signing up at the Truth Teller level or higher on Patreon. My predictions for that—you may be listening to the show, this week's episode after the fact, after the election results are out, so I'll just share what I think is going to happen. We'll see how that pans out—

Andrea Chalupa:

I think Ossoff stands a good chance of eking through. Perdue didn't show up to the debate, which made him look like a coward. Loeffler went full Carolyn Bryant Donham, the White woman who accused a 14-year-old Black child, Emmett Till, of being sexually aggressive towards her. She's been making these horrific racist dog whistle allegations toward Warnock. According to Salon, Loeffler's campaign promoted a Facebook ad that darkened Reverend Warnock's skin and amplified this ad over another ad that did not darken his skin. She's also been just using all these racist tropes against him, as has been widely reported. Also, of course, among her supporters is a KKK member, as Ossoff pointed out.

Andrea Chalupa:

The other thing to point out is that in helping amplify all of this racism and fascism is, of course, Big Tech. Mark Zuckerberg could be a Black Mirror episode. Here we have Judd Legum of the site Popular Information breaking down how Facebook is complicit in spreading Republican far-right hate and disinformation. Judd writes on Twitter, "I know it's Christmas Eve, but people should understand what's happening with Facebook ads in the Georgia senate runoffs. These elections will determine the

trajectory of American politics for the next two years. Facebook's conduct is indefensible. Follow along if interested.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“The story starts on December 17 after Facebook begins allowing political ads in Georgia. American Crossroads, a super PAC run by Karl Rove and financed by Mitch McConnell starts running a brutally dishonest ad against Raphael Warnock. The American Crossroads ad tells Georgia voters on Facebook that Warnock said, 'Goddamn, America,' as if he was expressing his own views, but he wasn't. He was quoting Jeremiah Wright in a speech delivered on 7/11/13. We tracked down the quote.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Here's Warnock's full quote: 'Extracted from its theological and rhetorical context and looped to the point of ad nauseam was the most provocative phrase, “Goddamn, America.”’ The ad claims this means Warnock repeated the same anti-American hate himself. False. It's really impossible to overstate just how dishonest this ad is. It's like Kelly Loeffler going on Fox News and saying, 'Jeremiah Wright said, “Goddamn, America,”’ and then running an ad attacking Kelly Loeffler for saying, “Goddamn, America.”’

Andrea Chalupa:

“Based on my Twitter thread on December 17, one of Facebook’s fact checking partners evaluated the American Crossroads ad and came to the same conclusion: it misleads voters because it lacks context. It took them a while, but Facebook eventually removed the American Crossroads ads.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Under Facebook's rules, politicians and parties can post false political ads, but PACs cannot. But on December 20th, American Crossroads just reposted the exact same ad dishonestly attacking Warnock, and Facebook approved it. American Crossroads quickly spent more than eight grand on this ad that was previously removed and reached as many as 250,000 Georgia voters.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“I exposed what happened on Twitter and after a delay of several hours, Facebook took down the duplicated ad. Removing the ad was what Facebook's policy required, but it was pretty disturbing that American Crossroads can just keep posting copies of the same ad. So, I email Facebook this question, ‘What's preventing American Crossroads from posting it again?’ No response.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Then on December 22nd, American Crossroads posted another ad with the same false attack on Warnock. It was approved by Facebook again. This was a claim that was already removed twice by Facebook. I emailed Facebook yesterday at 10:00 AM about this ad and have received no response. This ad is still up, still active, and still misleading Georgia votes. It still violates Facebook's rules. Facebook does not appear to care. Facebook has 50,000 employees and had \$21.4 billion in revenue in the third quarter of 2020.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“My newsletter”—which is Popular Information—“has two employees and zero billion in revenue in the third quarter of 2020, but I seem to care more about this than Facebook. If you care, too, check out my newsletter, Popular Information.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Update. Eight hours later, these ads are still up. Haven't heard anything from Facebook. Update. This ad has finally been taken down. Merry Christmas.”

Andrea Chalupa:

Good work, Judd. We'll see if Warnock manages to break through this massive disinformation racist campaign led by Rove, McConnell, and Loeffler.

[begin advertisement]

Sarah Kendzior:

This year, our homes and our offices are now the same space. Maybe you have to deal with over-hearing every one of your partner's conference calls. One of my friends was telling me the other day that they've been sitting in their car in the garage for some necessary alone time. We've all been dealing with even more stress than usual. If any of these scenarios sound like you, it's a good idea to get support from a therapist to figure out how to find peace and quiet within yourself.

Sarah Kendzior:

Talkspace therapists give you the support you need to feel your best. Talkspace has thousands of licensed therapists trained in over 40 specialties, including anxiety, depression, relationships, and more. Your therapist can help you set and achieve your goals. I think you'll be amazed at how much progress you make each week that you attend therapy.

Sarah Kendzior:

An experienced therapist can give practical guidance that can really change your life for the better. At Talkspace, you can find the support that you need. As a listener of this podcast, you'll get \$100 off your first month with Talkspace. To match with a licensed therapist today, go to talkspace.com or download the app. Make sure to use the code GASLIT to get \$100 off of your first month and show your support for the show. That's GASLIT in talkspace.com.

[end advertisement]

Sarah Kendzior:

So, again, make sure you tune in tonight. We're going to give our instant reaction to this critical Georgia senate race, which will, of course, be followed by the massive shitshow of January 6th, which we're also going to do a special episode on. So, this is a momentous week.

Sarah Kendzior:

To just kind of set the stage, I think Andrea encapsulated very well the level of trauma that we as Americans are going through—that the world is going through—as a result of COVID, as a result of rising

autocracy, collapsed economies, but to just kind of lay out exactly how bad this is compared to previous times: we are now living through the worst pandemic in modern history—certainly, the worst pandemic in the last century—the worst economy since the great depression, and it will probably be worse than that (the only reason I'm saying it's not is because it hasn't gone on as long), the worst hack of the US government in history, and that's the hack by Russia, which we really haven't heard a lot about since it first occurred, but it affected, basically, every governmental institution, as well as a large number of private companies. That hack, that attack—the cyber attack in America—is ongoing.

Sarah Kendzior:

We are living through an attempted coup. This is the first time that the President of the United States, after being soundly defeated, has refused to accept the election results, and he's using all sorts of tactics, including threats of violence, to try to maintain his position. We're going to be talking about that all episode long.

Sarah Kendzior:

We have a brewing civil war as a result of the factions that have been inflamed by this treason and by these crimes. We have a brewing foreign war with Iran, which we're also going to talk to. We have an administration that serves organized crime, and that has been the case from the moment that Trump has stepped into office. And yes, it builds on the relationships of prior administrations, but this is still unprecedented in how blatant and how direct it is, and how irrelevant they find the survival of the United States, which is an afterthought at best and its destruction is a goal, a specific goal at worst. Of course, all of this is being led by a narcissistic sociopath who sees other human beings as disposable and has a lifelong obsession with using nukes. So, that's where we are.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, if you're feeling down, if you're feeling like this is just an incredibly tough time, it's because it truly is. I mean, we are dealing with a lot. So, if you're even able to just get through your day, then that's enough. If you're able to just hold on through this, that's enough. There have been a lot of people I've seen really hurting and maybe psychoanalyzing it, but there are external factors that anyone who has a conscience, who loves people, cares about people, who values life is going to be upset and traumatized by these times. As Andrea said, the aftermath of that is going to linger for a while. So, it's something that we should talk about more in the future.

Sarah Kendzior:

For now, as I've been saying now for about two months, back to the coup! We still have a coup. We have some new coup developments. The big one this week is that the coup is now on tape. We had Trump pressuring Georgia's Republican Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, to "find enough folks to overturn Biden's win in the election", repeatedly citing disproving claims of fraud and raising the prospect of "criminal offense" if officials did not change the vote count for Trump. That is all on tape. That is something that you can and should listen to.

Sarah Kendzior:

Among the more notable lines of that conversation is Trump saying, "All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have because we won the states." Here, it's worth noting that Georgia counted its votes three times before certifying that Biden won by 11,779 vote

margin. So, Raffensperger responded, "President Trump, we've had several lawsuits, and we've had to respond in court to the lawsuits and the contentions. We don't agree that you have won."

Sarah Kendzior:

So, it's obviously very good that Raffensperger (sorry, I'm butchering his name here) is standing up to Trump, is being clear and consistent. This is the way that all officials should have been handling him from the very start. They have not.

Sarah Kendzior:

One thing, of course, that's worth mentioning is how similar this phone call is to what Trump deemed the "perfect phone call" with Ukraine's leader, Zelensky, which was also a shakedown in which Trump used the same mafia tactics of asking him for an illegal favor to sway an election and implying that Zelensky will be harmed if they do not grant Trump the favor.

Sarah Kendzior:

Like Zelensky and like others who Trump mentioned in that Ukraine call—most notably Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, who he said was going to "go through some things"—Secretary of State Raffensperger has already been threatened. His wife has been threatened. His family has been threatened and no one is doing anything to stop those threats.

Sarah Kendzior:

This has been the pattern of the past five years, as well as the pattern of Trump's entire life. The reason that little pundits keep saying that Trump is "acting like a mafioso" is because *he is one*. Trump is part of transnational organized crime. He has been working for transnational organized crime for his entire life. He is a career criminal and we have the archives of every episode of Gaslit Nation, as well as my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, to lay out the dirty details of that.

Sarah Kendzior:

You've witnessed this. You've seen this in action. You've seen when other civil servants try to hold Trump criminal lackeys accountable—lackeys like Manafort and Stone and Flynn—they ended up threatened. We've had judges threatened, juries threatened, whistleblowers threatened, congresspeople threatened, journalists threatened, and these threats were successful.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, now, we're at the point where the individuals who hijacked our democracy, who have been using our treasury as their personal ATM, who have been trying to destroy our country from within with the help of a criminal network, with the help of the Kremlin and other hostile states, now they have been pardoned.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, my question is, what does it mean now that Trump has pardoned all of these extremely dangerous individuals who have been working together, in tandem, by the way, since the 1980s? What role might they be playing in the ongoing attempted coup? What role will others like Erik Prince and his war criminal mercenaries also pardoned (the mercenaries, I mean, not Prince), what role will they play?

Sarah Kendzior:

So, Andrea, I'm sure you have some thoughts especially on the pardoning of Manafort and others.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes, that was clearly expected. I've been prepared for the pardoning of Manafort since early 2017. I even wrote on Twitter that Manafort is going to go shooting his way out. He will never flip. And I was correct. Now, here we are. So, I've been emotionally prepared for this moment. Yeah. But I do want to say that as this slow-moving coup has been ongoing, I think it's extremely ominous that during this time, Boston Dynamics released a video of one of their robots dancing. Coups succeed when you have the security forces on your side and the military. Trump does not have that. He started purging the Pentagon after he lost the election, and it was too late. It's just too late. He doesn't have that widespread force in order to stage a successful coup.

Andrea Chalupa:

When we do this work in studying authoritarianism, it's so obvious to us how all this is going to play out because it's the same dictator playbook. We've seen this in post-Soviet states. But what is always the unknown is the technology and the dystopian tech that they have in order to attack us and suppress us.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, I really feel that these knuckleheads that consume a lot of our attention—the Hawleys, the Cruzes, the Nuneses—they are a sideshow, in my opinion, to the larger issue of this robot soldier space race that it's currently ongoing that hardly gets any attention.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, when you see a dancing robot, I share the opinion of Jason Stanley, the author of *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*, when he wrote in response to Boston Dynamics' terrifying robot machine, "Siri, show me how a few tech oligarchs will control an increasingly impoverished massive humanity eager to address massive inequality?" Yeah. We're going to be old enough probably to see this robot force take hold somewhere in the world. It's coming, because these robots keep getting more and more advanced.

Andrea Chalupa:

Another disturbing development we had over the holidays, from the Washington Post, and I'm reading now from the Washington Post: "The Secret Service also took the unprecedented step of allowing the former detail leader to temporarily leave his job to become a White House political adviser." I want to repeat that again. A Secret Service agent became a White House political adviser to Trump.

Andrea Chalupa:

"Anthony Ornato was hired as White House deputy chief of staff earlier this year. In that role, he helped coordinate a controversial June photo opportunity in which Trump strode defiantly across Lafayette Square to pose with a Bible after the park was forcibly cleared of peaceful protesters."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Ornato also helped coordinate numerous rallies across the country during the pandemic, per Trump's wishes. The mass gatherings were blamed for increasing the spread of the coronavirus in some of the

communities where they took place and left many in the ranks of the Secret Service infected or exposed.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Ornato will be leaving the White House and is slated to return to the Secret Service to become the assistant director overseeing the agency's Rowley Training Center, according to the people familiar with the changes who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe personnel decisions. The posting is prestigious but outside of the president's immediate protection team.”

Andrea Chalupa:

So, again, you need the security forces—you need the military on your side—to unleash a successful coup. What worries me is how we have this far-right strain in our country, the ideological heirs of the people that committed genocide against Native Americans and fought to uphold slavery, and they're going to learn from Trump's mistakes. As we keep saying, the next time one of these guys gets into the White House, they're going to go immediately for the military and security services and make sure it's packed with their cult in order to have a successful coup next time around.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Absolutely. Of course, it's been frightening to see the sedition caucus taking hold, both for what it means—that Republicans would blatantly embrace anti-constitutional actions in the service of a mobbed up proto-dictator with overt alliances to hostile states, that they'd so easily abandon this country, its history, and its people—I mean, what it shows is just the field of disposability has expanded. That's been the lesson basically since the Reagan era, where people who are not White—Native Americans, Black Americans, many American immigrants—there's obviously a very long history of legalized persecution of selective autocratic practices. White Americans would observe this. White immigrants would come to America and observe this and try as hard as they could to classify themselves as White to get the protections of Whiteness and to be immune from those sorts of discriminatory and retaliatory actions.

Sarah Kendzior:

What we've seen recently is that pretty much everyone is viewed as disposable, except for an extremely narrow elite that constantly has to prove their fealty to a cult—to a cult leader—and that the concept even of a nation state, of something bringing us all together as American, which we've always had our differences, but that was something that I think we took for granted just that the United States would survive in some form as a cohesive unit. That's out the window.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think that's one of the things that's contributing to the sense of incredible trauma and incredible unease. It's like that saying, "You can't go home again," amplified on a massive scale. A lot of us have been inside our houses viewing the world through little doom screens on our phone, interacting less directly with our communities, and then when we do go out into the world, we see those communities falling apart. We see businesses that are never coming back. We see schools that aren't in session.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, all of that happening because of COVID just lends this broader purposeful agenda of the Republican party to destroy this country. You can see how they would pull it off. You could see them exploiting that

situation. You also see how little this means to them, how little love for country that there is, love for our states, our landmarks, our schools, our community, our society. There's no lowering of the flag to commemorate the victims, to lend moral support. They want to break that sense of cohesion entirely. It's a very frightening thing to see.

Sarah Kendzior:

Trump is a wartime president, and the war is on the United States. The war always was on the United States, and it's taken four years for people to realize that, but that is what we are living through. I think that once people grasp that—that the intention is to destroy us from within, to destroy this country, to break it down, to sell it off for parts—it becomes less mysterious.

Sarah Kendzior:

I hope that from that understanding we have the wherewithal and the determination to fight back, but my God! People are arriving at these realizations very late. I'm scared of what the next 48 hours will bring, much less the next few years. The next 48 hours scare me quite a bit.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, I have stuff to say in Iran, but do you have things to say about that?

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, I think from being destroyed from within, I think we should cover the cyber Pearl Harbor.

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh, yeah. Go for it. One catastrophe at a time.

Andrea Chalupa:

From the New York Times: "On Election Day, General Paul M. Nakasone, the nation's top cyberwarrior, reported that the battle against Russian interference in the presidential campaign had posted major successes and exposed the other side's online weapons, tools and tradecraft. 'We've broadened our operations and feel very good where we're at right now,' he told journalists."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Eight weeks later, General Nakasone and other American officials responsible for cybersecurity are now consumed by what they missed for at least nine months: a hacking, now believed to have affected upward of 250 federal agencies and businesses, that Russia aimed not at the election system but at the rest of the United States government and many large American corporations."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Three weeks after the intrusion came to light, American officials are still trying to understand whether what the Russians pulled off was simply an espionage operation inside the systems of the American bureaucracy or something more sinister, inserting backdoor access into government agencies, major corporations, the electric grid and laboratories developing and transporting new generations of nuclear weapons."

Andrea Chalupa:

“At a minimum, it has set off alarms about the vulnerability of government and private sector networks in the United States to attack and raised questions about how and why the nation's cyberdefenses failed so spectacularly.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“Those questions have taken on particular urgency given that the breach was not detected by any of the government agencies that share responsibility for cyberdefense — the military's Cyber Command and the National Security Agency, both of which are run by General Nakasone and the Department of Homeland Security — but by a private cybersecurity company, FireEye.”

Andrea Chalupa:

“‘This is looking much, much worse than I first feared,’ said Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia and the ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. ‘The size of it keeps expanding. It's clear the United States government missed it. And if FireEye had not come forward,’ he added, ‘I'm not sure we would be fully aware of it to this day.’”

Andrea Chalupa:

Another quote from New York Times: “‘We still don't know what Russia's strategic objectives were,’ said Suzanne Spaulding, who was the senior cyber official at the Homeland Security Department during the Obama administration. ‘But we should be concerned that part of this may go beyond reconnaissance. Their goal may be to put themselves in a position to have leverage over the new administration, like holding a gun to our head to deter us from acting to counter Putin.’”

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm going to interject here because that is exactly what this is, Suzanne Spaulding, and you sound exactly like an Obama official, which failed to stop Putin's attack on our democracy in 2016. Yes, a million times yes, the Kremlin has massively infiltrated our government and leading industries in order to put a gun to our head so Biden can't come in and meaningfully sanction the Kremlin for all of its ... This is what it is.

Sarah Kendzior:

I want to interject, too, because when I hear alleged experts say this, I feel like I'm losing my mind because I wrote an article that came out in early 2018 (I believe in January 2018) in Fast Company, and I think I read part of it on the bonus episode we did on the cyber attack about how this may be the real leverage—the fact that Russia has hacked our infrastructure, that fact that Russia has hacked our power grid. We knew about that in 2018.

Sarah Kendzior:

What we have now is another attack—a much bigger, more expansive cyber attack—but they had already gotten into everything by 2016, and that was revealed by senators like John McCain during congressional testimony. And of course, we had all the previous hackings of the DOD, the State Department, the White House, the RNC, the DNC, and on and on and on.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, when these individuals are quoted as if this is some new battle that no one could have foreseen or how did this happen, I mean, it's insane. Of course, we had Andy Greenberg—the author of

Sandworm—on our show discussing all of this; discussing the potential for future attacks; discussing the predecessor attacks in places like Ukraine; as well as ones that had taken place in the United States before.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, yes. Yes, this is incredible leverage. It's leverage over any administration, but when you know that Trump is aligned with the Kremlin and that Biden will allegedly be inaugurated in about two and a half weeks, this is something we all need to keep in mind. But...ugh. Anyway, go on.

Andrea Chalupa:

I agree, but we also had on the show David Shimer, the author of *Rigged: America, Russia, and One Hundred Years of Covert Electoral Interference*. That breaks down in excruciating detail...excruciating because it's like a *Veep* episode of how the Obama administration failed to protect us from the Kremlin's attack on our democracy.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, you have to read this book. Also, in November 2016, when Sarah and I were first getting to know each other and we were constantly on the phone and our husbands were like, "What is this new relationship that's taking over your life?" we were talking all the time about the gun the Kremlin had to our heads.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes!

Andrea Chalupa:

We knew. We were like, "Okay. This wasn't just election hacking. They must be in the grid. What does this mean for air traffic control and aviation in America? What kind of terrorism, what kind of ticking time bombs has the Kremlin planted across our country through cyber warfare?" So, we were onto this in the very early days. That matters because if we can figure it out, why the hell didn't the people in-charge of protecting us figure it out?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. The only thing that we came up with at the time was, "Oh, well, they don't want to tell us about it," because we basically saw an enormous humanitarian catastrophe looming with Trump. We knew that if Trump were to remain president, there was going to be mass death and now there has been mass death. And we knew that we were going to lose control of our institutions to organized crime and hostile states, and we have.

Sarah Kendzior:

The only thing we thought of is, "Well, what's worse than that eventual fate?" it would be an immediate fate. It would be something like the grid going down right away in the fall of 2016, and that being something that potentially they could be holding over the heads of all the institutions that should be protecting American people from this because we just could not figure it out. I mean, it was just the

most obvious plot, and it was a plot that people had confessed to and it was a plot that experts were like, "Yes, this has indeed happened. Russian has permeated our grid."

Sarah Kendzior:

Cybersecurity experts were already looking at it. It just wasn't discussed. It was one of those big topics. Another one, of course, was Jeffrey Epstein and his operation. It's like the media just wouldn't broach it. Our government officials wouldn't broach it. I think it's because it shows either incompetence, at best, or complicity, at worst, because we, of course, know—and I think this is certainly true of the Trump administration—that they left the door open.

Sarah Kendzior:

Trump welcomes these kinds of hacks—these kinds of cyber attacks—if they come from one of his partner states. He does not care if this country collapses. He cares only about, as I said many times, his money, his power, and his immunity from prosecution, and whatever happens to this country or the people who live in it is irrelevant to him.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, if some form or leverage is gathered by the hostile states that are using him for their own aims, then he's fine with it. So, that was an immediate danger that he would remain in office for four years.

Sarah Kendzior:

At this point, there is no explaining the lack of action from the FBI, the CIA, Mueller, Comey, the House Intelligence Committee. Take your pick. Everybody who was supposed to enforce accountability and protect us has failed. There is no way that they failed from ignorance. They absolutely knew this. They knew this in the same way that Andrea and I knew it, and they know it in the same way that you know it if you've been listening to our show, or from the myriad of experts who've been examining this and expressing their concerns.

Sarah Kendzior:

This information is not out floating in a vacuum or a void. It is not hard to find. We often see the criminals themselves confessing to the crimes or threatening the crimes, and then making good on those threats. So, you have to ask, "What exactly are our institutions doing? Why are they so willing to abet this phenomenal failure that has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans, with more to come, and they just seem to feel nothing?" They seem to feel nothing, no loss. It's as if it's expected.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, a lot of us, as I was saying to you privately earlier debating whether I should say this publicly, it reminds me of the end of the Soviet Union. It reminds me of that kind of choreographed destruction, where, of course, you saw the USSR struggling with internal conflicts and tragedies, whether Chernobyl or the war with Afghanistan or just a general breakdown within the Politburo—within the Kremlin—often abetted by a gerontocracy as we have in the United States where we have very old out of touch people ruling.

Sarah Kendzior:

Then you see it fall apart with Gorbachev as this figure that smooths that process out, and then the oligarchs and Western plutocrats go in for the kill. They strip it down. They steal the resources. What happens to the individuals of the states that stayed authoritarian...because, of course, not every republic of the former Soviet Union ended up meeting the same fate. There are many that embraced democracy like Estonia, Lithuania. Ukraine has been struggling for democracy, and others that stayed totalitarian in the case of Uzbekistan or just strongly authoritarian in the case of Russia, but the commonality for the authoritarian group is that what happened to the people was absolutely irrelevant to the ruling elite.

Sarah Kendzior:

It was a very, very narrow segment of society that was allowed to prosper and even allowed to really survive. That's the direction I see us headed, and I don't see the kind of reaction from people in our institutions, the proper sense of alarm. I see a lack of surprise from them, and a kind of like, "Yeah. Let's just further this thing along." That's the vibe I'm getting.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, we do see flickering signs of life every now and again, but even those signs are somewhat suspicious. When it's Dick Cheney leading the blowback against the authoritarian state, honestly, I'm suspicious. There, I'm referencing the letter from all prior secretaries of defense—people who held that position—that have written an open letter to Trump saying that the military should not be involved in the election process. I'm not actually reassured that that's coming from Dick Cheney because this has been a continuum. This has been a very long decline, and Trump was its culmination. That election was its culmination, and now we've been living in the aftermath of that.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've been talking about the attempted coup of 2020, but we've been living in the aftermath of the coup of 2016, a coup which people failed to acknowledge had occurred, a threat which people just thought they could close their eyes or look at the other way, a threat in which many, many people were complicit—I think more than many of us want to admit or many of you want to admit. I want to admit it just fine.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, go on with what you're saying.

Andrea Chalupa:

Oh, there's more. Back to the New York Times: "Their sources said they're worried about delicate but unclassified data the hackers might have taken from victims like the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, including Black Start, the detailed technical blueprints for how the United States plans to restore power in the event of a cataclysmic blackout."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The plans would give Russia a hit list of systems to target to keep power from being restored in an attack like the one it pulled off in Ukraine in 2015, shutting off power for six hours in the dead of winter. Moscow long ago implanted malware in the American electric grid, and the United States has done the same to Russia as a deterrent."

Andrea Chalupa:

All right. So, now, this is the best part of this article in the New York Times, which you can find in our show notes for this episode, which is available for free on our public Patreon page, where we publish every weekly episode. Are you ready for this? Everyone lean in close to make sure you hear this, understand it, and tell everyone you know about this.

Andrea Chalupa:

From the New York Times: "Employees say that under Kevin B. Thompson, the CEO of SolarWinds"—which is the ground zero of this attack—"Thompson is an accountant by training and a former chief financial officer. Every part of the business was examined for cost savings and common security practices were eschewed because of their expense. His approach helped almost triple SolarWinds' annual profit margins to more than \$453 million in 2019 from \$152 million in 2010."

Andrea Chalupa:

Did you all get that? America, our entire country, our federal agencies, leading industries, God knows what else because this is a massive attack that's going to take years to fully understand and to undo, it was...the ground zero of this whole operation from the Kremlin was helped by the greed of the CEO of the company who chose profits—the almighty dollar—over cybersecurity.

Andrea Chalupa:

The article goes on to explain the only reason why this asshole caught up and started doing some major security implementations was because European countries passed a regulation, which required those measures. So, if you want to know why the Kremlin—along with their proxies like Nigel Farage in the UK and in other places—are going after the EU and trying to break up the EU, it's because the EU is such an effective regulatory body. It forces through regulations, reforms, and accountability. That's why all the bad guys want to destroy it. So, don't forget that. That's an important takeaway from this horrific story as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, I just want to stress this again. American greed, which has been weakening our country since the Reagan revolution, American greed left us vulnerable to the sweeping and potentially devastating attack by a foreign adversary. Once again, America's out of control culture of greed and corporate profits over safety and human life is making us increasingly vulnerable. It's destroying our country from within. From Trump's Republican party to the NRA, to Big Tech, American greed keeps letting the Kremlin come right in.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. I just have one more thing to say about this and, again, I believe I noted this in the Patreon episode we did previously, is that the timing of this hacking is very interesting. They're saying that it began in earnest in March, nine months ago, which is, of course, right when everything began to shut down because of COVID and our work activity, our school activity, any kind of in-person meetup that we may have had moved online where that information could be tracked, where it could be recorded, where, for example, if you're some sort of hostile data mining entity, you are suddenly given incredible access into the interior life of American citizens.

Sarah Kendzior:

I don't know if that's just a coincidence. I do know, though, that it's a national security threat. It's a really serious and terrible problem. The fact that we basically don't have a government at the moment, this horrific endless transition period that has led us with no oversight, no one really even attempting to step up and fill the void and tell us what's going on, it worries me a great deal because I don't know what position we're going to be in once we find out the full extent of this cyber attack. Maybe we won't be able to tell each other about it because the grid will be down.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, do you have any more in that or shall we move on to Iran?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, move on. Well, I mean, it's-

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, it's all connected. It's all one big, giant-

Andrea Chalupa:

The next theater, the other theater of World War III. Go on.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's just unbelievable. We've been talking about all these crises, often discreetly, for a number of years, and they're just intertwining into one giant week of hell. So, we have been talking about war with Iran for a long time because all of Trump's friends really, really want it. Pretty much everybody who's been appointed into this administration wants it. Trump may want it less, I think, than others, but nonetheless, he's amenable. Of course, we started talking about this much more in depth with the assassination of Qasem Soleimani one year ago.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, we're in that anniversary week of one of their most prominent military figures being killed, and then we've been waiting for some kind of retaliation from Iran and also the exploitation of the potential of retaliation from Iran. It's that exploitation that I am worried about most right now as Trump seeks to hold on to power.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, tensions between Iran and the United States are very high. There have been a number of verbal threats back and forth. We've also seen the US sending its warships back to the vicinity of Iran. Iran has retaliated by seizing a South Korean tanker saying that this was in response to US sanctions. They also have blamed the recent assassination of its leading nuclear scientist on Israel, and have accused Israel of trying to instigate a war between the US and Iran.

Sarah Kendzior:

On Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Twitter, "New intelligence from Iraq indicates that Israeli agent-provocateurs are plotting attacks against Americans — putting an outgoing President Donald Trump in a bind with a fake casus belli."

Sarah Kendzior:

So, basically, what Zarif is saying is that Israel is going to attack the United States and then blame it on Iran so that Trump has a pretext to then strike Iran. Israeli officials have denied these allegations. However, this is something I could see happening and it doesn't require Israel's participation for Trump and his backers to do it. To some extent, the Israel factor is neither here nor there. Though, it is worth noting the incredibly close relationship between indicted criminal Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump's criminal son-in-law, Jared Kushner. This is a relationship that stretches back decades and I've documented it in my book *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Sarah Kendzior:

Kushner, of course, is implicated not only in Israeli politics financially and as a holder of West Bank settlement properties, but has been implicated in a number of Middle Eastern plots with Qatar who paid off his debt for 666 Fifth Avenue and, of course, the Saudi Arabia and his close ties with fellow murderous millennial, MBS. So, you have to ask yourself, "Well, what has Kushner been doing over there in Israel where they're naming things after him, where they're lavishing praise on him?" We know, of course, that Netanyahu is among the many people who want this war with Iran, and have wanted it for a long time, and have wanted the US to do it for Israel.

Sarah Kendzior:

We also have Pompeo, a longtime Iran war hawk. He wants this war in Iran. He's been spending a lot of time over in the Middle East. It's not looking good. A lot of people—experts on Middle Eastern policy, on nuclear warfare—have been expressing grave concerns that Trump may use this final remaining time in office, God-willing...not God-willing to create a war in Iran, I'm just hoping this is really, truly his last few weeks in office. My God! Just that sounds so good.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, though, we're worried he's going to blow up the world before he goes. There's some other disturbing Middle Eastern developments, which I think are going under the radar. Last week, we saw Sheldon Adelson, who is the biggest donor to the GOP flying convicted spy for Israel, the American Jonathan Pollard, to Israel on his private plane. Upon arrival, Pollard was greeted very enthusiastically by Netanyahu. This is how spies are always greeted. You could see this with Robert Maxwell, the father of Ghislaine Maxwell, Jeffrey Epstein's partner, who got a giant lavish funeral in Israel for being a secret Mossad agent his whole life.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, this development was only made possible by Trump taking Pollard—a dangerous traitor—off of his parole and allowing him to leave the country. Again, I think this is something that Kushner probably was involved in. We've seen a number of these pardons and arrangements not come from Trump's own mind, but from advisers, from Kushner, sometimes from John Bolton. That's who got Scooter Libby out.

Sarah Kendzior:

Adelson has made clear that his own loyalty lies to Israel and not the US, and that's not my opinion. This is just something he's literally said. He said he regretted serving in the US military instead of the Israeli military. He said he hopes his sons serve for the IDF instead of for the United States, and he said, and this is a full direct quote, "All we care about is being good Zionists, being good citizens of Israel because

even though I'm not Israeli-born, Israel is in my heart." We'll put a link to the video of him saying that in the show notes.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, those are very dangerous things for the leading donor to the GOP to say, especially one who basically purchased himself a Sheldon Adelson-branded embassy in Jerusalem and who's backing a traitorous, mobbed up administration and now is lending his private plane to convicted spy, who is running around full of American state secrets. Everyone is welcome to their political opinions. It's not against the law to prefer another country over the United States, but you clearly don't want somebody who does that to be the main funder of an American political party. I can't even begin to describe how bad and disturbing this is.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've seen this happen with many of our prominent political figures. You obviously have Trump and his predilection to Russia. You've had the Bush family and their predilection to Saudi Arabia. We have Pelosi outright saying that if the Capitol crumbles, her fundamental concern will be aiding and working with Israel; not American death, not the demise of our country because, news flash for Pelosi: the Capitol is crumbling. But Israel.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, as I said before, this is not about Israel per se. It's about a lack of commitment towards the wellbeing of American citizens and the national security of America. There are many, many, many countries that are wrapped up in this horrific morass and they're working together. You are seeing the worst, most autocratic elements of every country that the Trump administration works with working together; Putin, MBS, Netanyahu, and on and on and on. Of course, you're also seeing people protesting them. There've been protests against Netanyahu, now, for half a year, and it really would be a boon to the world if those protests succeed.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, that is very disturbing. It's just another symptom of this broader disease where you're seeing transnational organized crime, oligarchs and plutocrats and spies just living in a world of total impunity—elite criminal impunity—and it's bringing down our country, it's bringing down our societies. It's making it more difficult for people to tackle everyday problems and everyday problems nowadays consist of things like how do we get a vaccine to the people, how do we have a baseline functional government and representatives we can contact when things are going poorly for us?

Sarah Kendzior:

I hope that there is radical change with this new administration. I don't think anyone associates Joe Biden with radical change, but I hope that they confront directly what has been done to our country; the gutting of its institutions, the loss of expectation of baseline loyalty that we are all living here. Of course, we don't all think the same things. Of course, we're not all going to agree with each other. That's normal. That's healthy.

Sarah Kendzior:

When everyone agrees with each other on everything, that's a sign that you're living in a dictatorship, but this whole thing of, "Let's have our formal loyalty to a country, maybe be the United States. Maybe

it would be something else. Maybe be Russia. Maybe be Israel. Maybe be China.” I mean, that's not great. That's why the Republicans do this, by the way. That's why they're constantly accusing Democrats of having some weird loyalty to China, fixation on China. All that is is projection because that's what they've been doing. They've been taking dark money from autocratic regimes, having it get into their campaigns through proxies like the NRA and other groups, and it has eroded any semblance of public service, any semblance of commitment and loyalty and patriotism to our country, and it's just absolutely shameful.

Sarah Kendzior:

You look and you see all the people who have suffered and fought for our democracy, both abroad and from within, and how cavalierly they throw this all away, these seditious Republicans. It's just disgusting.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes. Speaking of the global virus of far-right authoritarianism, Josh Hawley and this stunt that he's doing to further his career, to basically kiss the ring of Trumpism, it reminds me so much of the Trumpian far-right government in Poland, which gives us an idea of where we may be headed in 2024, in 2028. In Poland, you have this handsomely boyish, young president who is seen as a puppet for the old conspiracy theorist, narcissist who runs the party, and is the puppet master. This whole movement in Poland under this far-right government has purged state media, turned it into a propaganda weapon, packed the courts, attacked LGBTQ people, attacked immigrants.

Andrea Chalupa:

Last time I was in Warsaw, in 2019, a Ukrainian independent journalist told me that for the first time she didn't feel safe in Poland because of the viciousness against immigrants, against anybody who's typically treated as a scapegoat. They're under threat in Poland. The latest is this constitutional court that's largely seen as illegitimate did an outright ban—essentially an outright ban—on abortion rights in Poland.

Andrea Chalupa:

Of course, when you attack abortion rights, you're basically trying to shove women back into the home, trying to take away women's freedom and autonomy. It's been this horrible boiling pot of growing dangers against democracy in Poland and I could very much see us headed there, where you have Josh Hawley who was educated at Stanford University and Yale Law School, he taught at the prestigious St. Paul School in London...This guy, according to his education, should know better and instead he's going to challenge the constitutional right to have these election results certified on January 6th. He's, of course, doing this and Ted Cruz is doing this because they see how much golf Donald Trump plays. They see how much time Donald Trump spends on Twitter. They know he's not a reader. Trump does not like to read or pay attention to things.

Andrea Chalupa:

He doesn't like the actual work of being president. He likes the power. He likes the immunity, but he doesn't really like being president. So, what they're betting on is that Trump's going to finally go out to Florida, Mar-a-Lago, and stay there, and spend four years golfing, realize that the Biden and Pelosi don't have the spine to go after him and his crime syndicate, and life after the White House isn't so bad, but he's still going to be the puppet master of the Republican party. It's now his Republican party.

Andrea Chalupa:

He's completely cannibalized it and all of the corruption from George W. Bush's justices on the Supreme Court giving us Citizens United and gutting the Voting Rights Act, all of that corruption by the "establishment Republican party" gave birth to Trumpism. It was the ultimate outcome of when you chip away at our democracy, when you allow dark money, including foreign money, to flood our elections, what do you think you're going to get? You're going to get Donald Trump as President of the United States, and we're likely going to see a Senator Ivanka Trump because she, as has been rumored, as has been reported, is allegedly going after Marc Rubio's seat as the US Senator in Florida in 2022.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, Hawley...this is just careerism. If you're wondering how dictatorships work, well, congratulations, America. You get an inside look now, and this is what it is. It's just rule of law gets steamrolled, and in its place you have a culture of corruption, which is essentially an industry of corruption, where it's not about the rule of law and following norms and good governance. What you have, instead, is might makes right. Trump bullied his way into power with the help of a mass murdering terrorist xenophobic regime, the Kremlin, and he's in-charge now of the party.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you want to get into power, if you want to move up the ranks in an authoritarian system—and that's what the Republican party is, it's an authoritarian system—then you've got to kiss the ring of the top dog and Trump is going to remain the top dog. It's really scary now because as I said at the start of the show, they're going to try to do a smarter coup next time. They're going to learn from this, and that is why we all must stay engaged and vigilant and check out the Gaslit Nation Action Guide and just commit yourself to some action items there because it's an all-hands-on-deck time in our nation's history for the foreseeable future because this is not going to go away anytime soon, unfortunately.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Just a few thoughts on Hawley because Hawley, of course, is my senator because I live in Missouri. The greatest take down of Hawley comes from Lindsey Simmons, who you should follow on Twitter. She's a fellow Missourian who ran for congress, and I wish she had won. She's a Democrat and she's somebody who intimately knows this situation.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's been weird for us in Missouri to see how Hawley is presented by the national media and kind of upheld on a national stage because he's known here just as such a phony, such a hypocrite. Very early in his campaign, there were just these little things, like he wanted to debate McCaskill on a flatbed truck and he didn't know what that was. He was trying to pretend to be this rural down home guy. He doesn't even own a home here. He called St. Louis bread company Panera, just a lot of indicators that Josh Hawley was D. C. bound, that he had no particular attachment to Missouri, that he was using this just as a way to kind of market himself to the Trump base.

Sarah Kendzior:

One of the more interesting elements of his career was how he dealt with Eric Greitens, who's just like him. Eric Greitens is my former governor who was indicted for, among other things, tying up a half-naked woman in his basement and photographing her and threatening to blackmail her with the

photos. He also got in trouble for illicit use of apps that deleted information, for taking money from a veteran's campaign fund...I mean, the list of crimes goes on and on.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, what happened was there was a call from the Missouri GOP, as well as from the Democrats, for Greitens to leave. When this was playing out throughout 2018, I basically saw this as the future with Trump. I was watching very warily because despite having a mugshot and being arrested and all this, Greitens was just not stepping down. So, we had this criminal governor just sitting there.

Sarah Kendzior:

Hawley at that time was the attorney general and he broke away from Greitens. He has a good sense of these internal fractures within the Republican party. Eventually, Greitens did leave. He, of course, then was not held accountable for any of his crimes because this is Missouri, where quid pro quo corruption is hardly even investigated, so even the most blatant offenses are ones that you tend to be able to buy your way out of.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, it's been interesting watching Hawley throw down with the Trump camp. He's obviously thinking that that's going to be the winning side. You see other Republicans throwing down with, I guess, ostensibly, the Constitution, which is the opposite of the Trump camp. I could see a future where Hawley flip flops around. He's already bamboozled a bunch of leftists. All of these leftists seem to be the sons and daughters of Wall Street brokers. I'm just sort of noticing this. It's like Matt Stoller. They're like, "Oh, Josh Hawley, man of the people," because Hawley will occasionally do basically a sensible political move like push for the \$2,000 COVID aid. Of course, that's the right thing to do. He's not doing it because he cares about anybody's welfare, he's doing it because he's trying to climb that ladder and he knows how easy it is to trick people.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, I encourage people to read up more on Missouri politics because you'll understand the kind of breeding ground for Josh Hawley, mega NRA money recipient Josh Hawley, given a... God, at CPAC, I believe, I don't know if he was subpoenaed....I don't know. He's had quite a run. So, follow Lindsey Simmons. That's what I would advise for now, and definitely, do not buy into national media narratives about this guy because they pay no attention to our state, its politics, its political culture, and he's very good at deceiving people in that fashion.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, there's one more thing I wanted to say going back to Iran, and this also ties into Hawley because all these things are working together. Today is January 5th. Tomorrow is January 6th, the day of hell. The day we've all been dreaded. That's because it's the day that Trump is going to try to cling to power with the help of seditious Republicans like Hawley and those joining him, but there's also the possibility that he will seek some kind of pretext to declare a national emergency. That's kind of the point I wanted to get to with Iran is that there are two things going on here.

Sarah Kendzior:

On one hand, you see people who really do want a war with Iran and have wanted a war with Iran for a long time. On the other side, you see Trump wanting an excuse to declare that he needs to stay in power

because the country is being threatened. I mean, we've already been threatened by a massive cyber attack, but I guess since that's Russia, that one doesn't qualify.

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm worried that there's going to be some kind of attack and he's going to blame Iran or Antifa or Iran and Antifa working together. I mean, it doesn't need to make sense. You need to understand that. The facts don't matter. The logic doesn't matter. It's the raw application of power that Trump is relying on and has always relied on in order to maintain his position.

Sarah Kendzior:

I think that this may be one of the reasons that this letter from the secretaries of defense came out saying that the military wouldn't be involved. What that actually entails, I don't know. I don't want a military coup in our country, by which I mean the military taking over the functions of government. That's not something to strive for, but I'm not sure whether this letter was meant to convey that the military is not going to help Trump in his illegal activities or whether the military isn't going to stop Trump from carrying out his illegal activities of staying in power when he's not, in fact, the president-elect.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, there's just a lot of frightening stuff on the horizon. I think if this doesn't happen on January 6th, it is unfortunately possible that it could happen before Biden's inauguration or, hopefully, hopefully, none of this will happen at all. Hopefully, Andrea and I will finally be wrong and things will begin to improve and things will begin to settle down, but jeez...It's not looking good.

Sarah Kendzior:

On top of all of this, one final thing about the 6th and then I'll get your views on it. The Proud Boys are heading to D.C. to protest on behalf of Trump. You'll also see some people from QAnon who want to join in on this, some other militant groups coming. Trump is encouraging them. He's being extremely explicit about this. We're seeing posts from people who are treating this like a military battle, saying they're ready to die for Trump in D.C., which is extraordinarily sad.

Sarah Kendzior:

There's been a lot of debate about, "Well, what should people do?" because we know that, well, one, Trump just wants mass violence, and he wants mass death, and he also wants to use that chaos as a ladder to maintain power. So, if you have a counter protest, for example, that could give him the excuse he needs.

Sarah Kendzior:

On the other hand, Trump will invent an excuse if there's no counter protest. So, those who want to go out and punch Nazis, I'd say go out and punch Nazis if that's what you want to do, but just be aware that this protest I think may be different than ones we've seen in the past, even more dangerous than Charlottesville. There's no bottom here. I could easily see Trump doing something like Tiananmen Square or the Andijan massacre. I have great admiration for those protestors who are trying to protect the types of places and people that groups like the Proud Boys attack, like Black churches, for example, which are often desecrated when these groups come to town.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, a lot of people are just trying to protect their fellow Americans and I think that's something that should always be praised, but it's a complicated decision, I think, on what to do here because the stakes are higher and I think the odds of mass violence are much more than they've been in previous events. I don't know. What do you think?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. I mean, I completely agree with you. We're up against traitors and they're being helped by Big Tech and American greed, and the consolidation of far-right media, and it's not going to go away when Biden gets sworn into office. We're going to feel these tremors and they're going to explode around every election cycle. So, unless we reform the systems that empower them, including abolishing electoral college, which is what Hawley is banking on, being from a historically—at least at one time—bellwether state like Missouri or being the senator of that state currently, I think he thinks that he's the guy that can peel off Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan from the Democrats.

Andrea Chalupa:

We need to confront these systems that keep us vulnerable. That's it. It's going to be generational work and we plant our seeds, and the more work we do, the easier we make it for those who come after us to go further. That's how we win. If you think about the giant shoulders that we stand on like John Lewis and all these tremendous Americans that moved our country forward—primarily people of color, who have made America freer, fairer—we owe it to them. They faced greater violence.

Andrea Chalupa:

The civil rights movement was up against fiery battles by police, by White mobs. That was unleashed White rage, blood in the streets. We saw that again and again for many generations. So, it's just another chapter of that. The fight is getting easier. You have to think in terms of decades if you're looking for hope. Things are changing for the better, but it's going to take work to keep changing it.

Andrea Chalupa:

This work falls on us now, and it would be a great disservice for us not to do our part in this much longer generational struggle. That's what we're all being called to do. Let that set your hair on fire in the best possible way and find the excitement in it and find the community in it and find your inner power in it, and just plant your seeds and then trust that they're going to grow and do beautiful things long after we're all gone.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, I do want to talk about the latest news in the neo-confederacy, a regular section we should do called Traitors and Patriots. Dozens of confederate monuments have been removed in recent years, but several have gone up, at least in spirit. We have Trump just throwing out the Medal of Freedom. According to the White House website, "Established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963, this prestigious award is the nation's highest civilian honor. It is awarded by the President of the United States to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the security or national interest of America, to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

Andrea Chalupa:

So, who does Trump give the Medal of Freedom to? The creator of the Big Mac. [laughs] I'm just kidding. I wouldn't be surprised. He gave the Medal of Freedom to a far-right radio host, a hater, Rush Limbaugh, his attack dog. Then he gave it to another attack dog, Devin Nunes, who obsessively harassed my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, the independent contractor who warned Democrats and Republicans that the Kremlin was attacking our democracy through Putin's operative, Paul Manafort. She was right. She was proven right. Nunes could not keep my sister's name out of his mouth all through the impeachment hearings, as we saw. It was horrific. She's a mom of three and he's a disgusting human being who put her life at risk, and he gets the Medal of Freedom from Trump.

Andrea Chalupa:

Also, it was reported, it was shared by Representative Eric Swalwell, who wrote on Twitter, "Bannon and Devin Nunes in cahoots in Russia investigation, and I can finally share it with you, and Bannon wanted to lie about it," and then Swalwell goes on and shared an excerpt of the house intel Russia transcript. So, basically, according to this member of Congress, Devin Nunes was coordinating with White supremacist Steve Bannon.

Andrea Chalupa:

Finally, Trump awards yet another attack dog because this guy is the mob boss of the crime syndicate that is the Republican party, Representative Jim Jordan, who's accused by several former Ohio State Wrestlers for knowing and being told directly that several wrestlers were being sexually abused by the team doctor Richard Strauss. Jordan is accused of doing nothing in response to this, allowing the abuse to go on. Strauss was accused of sexually abusing 177 male student patients at Ohio State.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, three White men who protect and further the interest of Donald Trump—a White supremacist leader whose rhetoric has incited hate crimes, including the shooting of mosques and a synagogue, and violence by his strong troopers, the Proud Boys—essentially put up three neo-confederate monuments by degrading the presidential Medal of Freedom by giving it to three fellow White supremacists.

Andrea Chalupa:

This leads me to this great documentary that you all should watch about Grant. I really do mean it.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] I knew you were going to do that. Sorry. Go on.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you need a shot at courage, watch this documentary. I'm going to read now from a letter that U. S. Grant sent his father on April 21st 1861 when the Civil War just broke out. It very much sums up what we're up against.

Andrea Chalupa:

"Dear Father, we are now in the midst of trying times when everyone must be for or against his country and show his colors, too, by his every act. Having been educated for such an emergency, at the expense of the Government, I feel that it has upon me superior claims, such claims as no ordinary motives of self-interest can surmount."

Andrea Chalupa:

"I do not wish to act hastily or unadvisedly in the matter, and as there are more than enough to respond to the first call of the President, I have not yet offered myself. I have promised, and am giving all the assistance I can in organizing the company whose services have been accepted from this place. I have promised further to go with them to the State capitol, and if I can be of service to the Governor in organizing his state troops to do so."

Andrea Chalupa:

"What I ask now is your approval of the course I am taking or advice in the matter. A letter written this week will reach me in Springfield. I have not time to write to you but a hasty line, for, though Sunday as it is, we are all busy here. In a few minutes, I shall be engaged in directing tailors in the style and trim of uniform for our men."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Whatever may have been my political opinions before, I have but one sentiment now. That is, we have a Government, and laws and a flag, and they must all be sustained. There are but two parties now, traitors and patriots, and I want hereafter to be ranked with the latter, and I trust the stronger party. I do not know but you may be placed in an awkward position, and a dangerous one, but costs cannot now be counted. My advice would be to leave where you are if you are not safe with the views you entertain. I would never stultify my opinion for the sake of a little security."

Andrea Chalupa:

All right. "Yours truly, U.S. Grant."

Andrea Chalupa:

This is what we're up against, a slow motion coup leading us to a slow motion civil war.

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 due to the coronavirus crisis. We also would like to share our deepest condolences to Representative Jamie Raskin and his family on the death of his son, Tommy Raskin, an activist who fought for human rights and animals rights. We encourage you to donate to the Tommy Raskin Memorial Fund for People and Animals, which we have linked to on our Patreon page.

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. 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.

Andrea Chalupa:

Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners, and check out our Patreon. It keeps us going. You can also subscribe to us on YouTube.

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 produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nick Farr, Demien Arriaga and Karlyn Daigle.

Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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