

Gaslit Nation Transcript  
10 June 2020  
"Protest Season"

Speaker 1:

I have a question for the two actors: Peter, do you see any Durantys out there? And do you see any Mr. Joneses out there today?

Peter Sarsgaard:

There are Durantys everywhere. Of course, it's constant. What I really look for... When I went to go play Duranty, I ended up mainly talking to journalists about Duranty. They are few and far between, the journalists who are willing to risk their lives, which is really what it takes these days. So you look at the number of journalists killed in the world for just merely exposing the truth about even things like the environment because some corporation stands to lose money. For profit, they will kill you.

Peter Sarsgaard:

It's less me thinking about how many Durantys are out there, because fuck them. I want to celebrate the brave journalists. And I think if we make them truly the heroes in our everyday lives—we know their names, we know who they are, we follow them—even those of us who feel lazy about doing so, it's difficult, it's painful, but to really, really put those people's names in our minds every day. They're the spearhead.

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*, available starting June 19 in North America.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration and rising autocracy around the world. And so this is protest season. All across the United States and across the world for the past two weeks, we've seen large, sustained protests against racism, imperialism, and police brutality. Many of these protests have pushed not only for changes to current policy, but for a re-evaluation of the past and the removal of monuments to colonizers and white supremacists.

Sarah Kendzior:

In the U.S., protesters have forced the removal of numerous Confederate monuments. In the UK, protesters knocked down a statue of 17th century slave trader, Edward Colston, and threw it into the river. In Belgium, protesters defaced monuments to King Leopold II, who ruled over Belgium's brutal occupation of the Congo in the 19th century.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so what we see is that protests that started here against racism, against the brutal murder of George Floyd, have turned into an international movement. And I know Andrea, you had some thoughts about this regarding Ukraine and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes. So much of what's going on right now with the Black Lives Matter movement reminds me of the decommunization movement in Ukraine. We saw in Ukraine with the Euromaidan Revolution of 2013-2014, which was started by a person of color, by the Ukrainian investigative journalist, Mustafa Nayyem who is a half Afghani. He launched the Euromaidan Revolution with a Facebook post.

Andrea Chalupa:

He called the people out to the street to protest rampant corruption of Viktor Yanukovich, Putin's puppet in Ukraine. Yanukovich's family stole an estimated 30 to \$100 billion from the Ukrainian people. So what we saw during the revolution was this massive Lenin statue being brought down by protesters in the heart of Kyiv, and more Lenin statues toppled.

Andrea Chalupa:

When the revolution succeeded and Yanukovich fled town and hid in Russia, where he remains to this day, Ukraine's government past reforms known as the "decommunization law", sweeping changes across the country where towns and cities were renamed, streets were renamed, statues across the nation, all symbols of Soviet brutality and repression were renamed to match more of the ethnic historical names of those places, including native Crimean Tatars considered to be indigenous to Crimea, which Stalin of course liquidated during his time.

Andrea Chalupa:

All of this decommunization was a declaration of Ukraine's independence against the Kremlin's colonization and genocide of Ukraine. Ukraine has had to work hard to decolonize its history. Many Russia watchers today, many journalists that cover Ukraine, they've come to the country through a Russian lens, through history books taught for decades in Western universities that explain Ukraine through a Russian lens.

Andrea Chalupa:

So Ukrainians have had to fight really long and hard to tell their own history, to decolonize their history, to tell their story. As I've said many times on this show, Ukraine's own history gives me hope because this is a country that shouldn't exist because of all of the occupation, and colonization, and genocide that it's suffered, especially under Soviet rule, especially under Stalin. And Ukrainians have had to come together in their diaspora communities especially and say to each other, "Ukrainian lives matter." And say to the world, "Ukrainian lives matter."

Andrea Chalupa:

The story of Ukraine's own struggle for freedom and independence is a story of urgent human rights largely ignored by the Western world. Ukrainians had to start their own newspapers, publish their own books, start their own publishing presses to say to each other and the world, "Ukrainian lives matter. Take pride in being Ukrainian."

Andrea Chalupa:

That is why my heart is breaking when I see members of the Ukrainian diaspora—and this also includes the Russian diaspora—coming out on social media, trying so hard not to be racist while in the process being racist. And so I am joining with others in the Ukrainian diaspora to speak out to my own community, and I know that I'm not alone in struggling with this.

Andrea Chalupa:

As we've always said on the show, there's two Americas. There's two Americas. While America is very much a country that was founded on the widespread systematic genocide of Native Americans and Black people who were kidnapped and taken here from Africa and forced into a Soviet system of rampant brutality and slavery, there's also another America that is a beacon of hope and freedom for the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

My parents, for instance, were born in refugee camps in Germany after World War II, as World War II was coming to an end. And they came to the U.S. as asylum seekers. One of the first things, the very first thing my mother saw was the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. One of the first experiences my father had on American soil was coming into Boston Harbor and a complete stranger stopping, an American stopping to buy him a Good Humor ice cream bar. That was his first literal taste of America.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's a beautiful story. That is the American story. That's a story that countless diasporas across the country take pride in. And my parents went on to fight through their own poverty and achieve the American Dream and contribute back to their country through all sorts of ways. They've always taught me and showed me, through their own example, the importance of being civic minded and standing up for human rights.

Andrea Chalupa:

I know America is a land of opportunity. It's a melting pot for many people whose families have escaped oppression abroad, including of course the Soviet Union. And so it's imperative on us to further these conversations in our own community, and a great example of how this is being done is by a group of Ukrainians in Canada and the U.S. who have built a website full of resources on how to address all these insidious issues of racism and how to talk about them, and all these fact-filled resources.

Andrea Chalupa:

And you can check out this website as a model, as a guide for your own diaspora community, and that is [ukrainianantiracistcommunity.com](http://ukrainianantiracistcommunity.com), [ukrainianantiracistcommunity.com](http://ukrainianantiracistcommunity.com). Calls to action and resources for racial justice in the Ukrainian/American and Ukrainian/Canadian communities. Well done everyone who built and contributed to this effort.

Andrea Chalupa:

One thing, being very proud of my Ukrainian heritage—and I took a lot of pride in what my parents had achieved through the American dream—but one thing I have to claim is my parents and I did not have to deal with racism. And this was evident in the fact that when I was in high school and college and I was starting to drive, I was hell on wheels. I could talk my way out of a speeding ticket in the middle of the night and in the middle of nowhere, and I made this a sport.

Andrea Chalupa:

I was really good at talking my way out of speeding tickets. I was running stop lights and stop signs, and the officers would pull me over sometime on a country road when I was out joy-riding with my friends in the middle of nowhere, or speeding from San Francisco after a night out, going like over 100 miles an hour, and I would just talk my way out of it as though this was a sport.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I have to tell you that if I were a Black girl doing this or Black boy doing this, this could have seriously derailed my life or killed me. Sandra Bland, a young Black woman with her life ahead of her, she was put in jail where she ultimately died, all for not having a turn signal on. Okay? So I just want Ukrainians in the diaspora to know and I want all members of immigrant diasporas in the United States to know that we need to have these conversations with our own communities now.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Black Lives Matter movement is a self-education movement.

Speaker 5:

What is it about the Negro? Every other group that came as an immigrant somehow, not easily, but somehow got around it. Is it just the fact that Negroes are Black?

Speaker 6:

White America must see that no other ethnic group has been a slave on American soil. That is one thing that other immigrant groups haven't had to face. The other thing is that the color became a stigma. American society made the Negro's color a stigma. America freed the slaves in 1863 through the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, but gave the slaves no land, nothing in reality and as a matter of fact, to get started on.

Speaker 6:

At the same time, America was giving away millions of acres of land in the West and the Midwest, which meant that there was a willingness to give the white peasants from Europe an economic base and yet it refused to give its Black peasants from Africa who came here involuntarily in chains and had worked free for 244 years in a kind of economic base.

Speaker 6:

And so emancipation for the Negro was really freedom to hunger, it was freedom to the winds and rains of heaven. It was freedom without food to eat or land to cultivate, and therefore it was freedom and famine at the same time. And when white Americans tell the Negro to lift himself by his own bootstraps, they don't look over the legacy of slavery and segregation.

Speaker 6:

I believe we ought to do all we can and seek to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, but it's a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps and many Negroes, by the thousands and millions, have been left bootless as a result of all of these years of oppression, and as a result of a society that deliberately made his color a stigma and something worthless and degrading.

Andrea Chalupa:

White people are being called to talk to other white people, even in communities that have their own history of feeling vulnerable and marginalized. When I come together with Ukrainian diaspora groups, I feel seen, I feel heard, I feel protected. My last name is not funny to Ukrainian diaspora groups. It's a known Ukrainian last name. I feel protected. I feel like I have the support that I need.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so it does feel uncomfortable that I have to come out and now talk to these Ukrainian diaspora groups and join the voices there in saying, "Hey, I know we have our own stories of oppression. I know we have our own insecurities of feeling misunderstood and targeted by Kremlin propaganda. I know that Ukraine today suffers from an ongoing existential threat of Putin's ongoing invasion. We need to, in solidarity, come out and talk about the privilege that we've all benefited from, the instant credibility that we're constantly given just because we are white, and we need to self-educate ourselves and learn how to have these conversations in our communities."

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

This moment that we're having in our country with protests for human rights in all 50 States, this can't be a feel good hands across America moment. This has to be a conversation that we all commit ourselves to for the rest of our lives and it has to produce self transformation, community transformation, and enlightenment, and awareness. And it's going to take work. And it's going to take feeling uncomfortable and awkward and educating ourselves how to have these conversations.

Andrea Chalupa:

So in the spirit of doing my part, reaching out through this show to the Ukrainian diaspora because this conversation is going to be shared with others, including leaders of organizations, I want to just try my

best, not being at all an expert in having these conversations, share how our diaspora community can start confronting this. And I hope that this helps other diaspora communities have these conversations internally.

Andrea Chalupa:

You have an important platform, diasporas. You have an important hotbed of community and organizations. Please have these conversations. Leaders, write statements, share statements, organize events, and so forth. We're not going to get through this, we're not going to see the change we need to protect children, black and brown children that are still developing as children, their brains are still developing just like the brains of white children, but yet they're treated harsher by law enforcement.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're treated far harsher by teachers in schools, and they are inflicted with so much unconscious bias and overt bias, and they're told repeatedly in the white-accommodating society that we live in that their lives don't matter. And so I think all diaspora communities have to look to their own histories of oppression as a starting point to help open up the minds of their community to why we all must say Black Lives Matter, and recognize how we personally have benefited from the system of white supremacy at the oftentimes brutal and vulnerable expense of others.

Andrea Chalupa:

So I want to start with my grandfather's memoir. It opens with him as a little boy in Donbass, Eastern Ukraine, which used to be a hotbed of Ukrainian language, and national identity, and thought—not anymore, because Stalin deliberately starved millions and Putin's continuing that genocide by invading that part of Ukraine. But my grandfather's story of terror under Stalin begins very simply, just as a little boy on a day of miserable weather and all he's thinking about is how he's going to convince his mom that he's not going to go to school that day.

Andrea Chalupa:

And that's how his story sets off. And he goes on to describe living through Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, and being arrested and tortured as a young father during Stalin's purges. And I want to just say how striking it is that this story of terror begins so innocently with him as a child with his family trying—like any six-year-old or however old he was at the time—trying to convince his parents, how do I not go to school today?

Andrea Chalupa:

If you've spent a lot of time with a six-year-old, you know that they can be clever schemers. My point is that at least he had a family. At least he had a mother and father, at least they were together as a family unit. If you look at what Black Americans have had to endure and what this nation was built on, the Soviet-style, Stalinistic system of slavery in America separated families, separated babies from mothers, raped mothers and treated Black people as property.

Andrea Chalupa:

And they could do whatever they wanted. Separate families? No problem, of course. Rape the mother? No problem, of course. Imagine again, a Stalinist regime going on for centuries, and that's what you have with slavery. And the U.S. has the largest prison system in the world. Again, what do we have with the

Soviet system where innocent people were assassinated on the street just like George Floyd was, that's Soviet-style brutality.

Andrea Chalupa:

And for those in the Ukrainian diaspora who are clutching their pearls and saying that all of these calls for solidarity, and all these companies, and brands, and organizations, and your boss, and the people at work calling you to do a moment of silence in solidarity for Black Lives Matter, and the epidemic of police brutality, and so forth. "Oh, it's so Soviet, we're being forced to do things."

Andrea Chalupa:

Let me just tell you something: our diaspora is united around organizing awareness of Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, which the New York Times actively worked to cover up through Walter Duranty. There have been Ukrainian-led protests demanding that Walter Duranty give up his Pulitzer Prize. The New York Times finally listened, hired a consultant, a historian, Mark von Hagen, to look into Duranty's Pulitzer, and his recommendation was that "yeah, Duranty was a shyster, Duranty passed off Stalinistic propaganda in the pages of New York Times."

Andrea Chalupa:

And when asked, this historian said, "Yeah, Duranty should have his Pulitzer Prize revoked for being Stalin's mouthpiece in the pages of the New York Times and deliberately covering up Stalin's genocide of Ukrainians." How did the New York Times respond to that? They said... Well, Bill Keller at the time, an editor at the New York Times said, "Sure, Duranty could have his Pulitzer Prize revoked, but wouldn't that be like Stalin having his enemies erased?"

Andrea Chalupa:

So understand that what we're doing right now in America, we're taking down slave monuments, taking down these Soviet repressive slave monuments. That is decommunization, that is tearing down Lenin statues. It's America's time now to have this reckoning and it's long overdue.

Andrea Chalupa:

Another story I want to draw my diaspora's attention to is the story of Ukraine's Walt Whitman, Taras Shevchenko, a Ukrainian who is the poet of Ukraine. All his poems kept Ukraine alive. This idea of national identity and unity alive under the oppressive system of Tsarist Russia, and Taras Shevchenko has a famous friendship with the great Black American actor, Ira Aldridge, who escaped America, nearly kidnapped and sold into slavery just like that famous movie by Steve McQueen, 12 Years a Slave.

Andrea Chalupa:

So Ira Aldridge escaped the brutality of slavery in America, escaped to Europe where he became the highest paid actor. And when he was touring in St. Petersburg, he met Taras Shevchenko who was living there. The two of them did not speak the same language, but Taras sang Ukrainian songs and Ira Aldridge sang Black gospels and they bonded. They formed a deep friendship over their shared fear of repression and their shared love for human rights.

Andrea Chalupa:

And after Shevchenko died, his friend, Ira Aldridge, toured Ukraine—a Black man touring Ukraine and putting on Shakespeare plays in tribute to his friend. So understand that we have a long history of

standing up for human rights and we're being called on to do that. And I want to commend the Ukrainians in the diaspora for alerting me to a story about a white Ukrainian woman named Svitlana Flom who, in a park in New York City, repeatedly called the cops on a Black woman.

Andrea Chalupa:

Svitlana Flom could have kept walking, could have left this woman alone, but instead she hovered around her demanding that the cops come and harass this Black woman, and the Black woman in this long tradition of Black Lives Matter videotaped this. This is something that we absolutely have to call out. I'm grateful to the Ukrainian diaspora for calling this out and raising the profile of the story and saying, "Not in our community, Svitlana Flom, shame on you, shame on you."

Andrea Chalupa:

And that is what we have to do now is we have to call out the bad behavior in our community because racist posts on Facebook and Twitter, they turn into Svitlana Floms calling the cops on a Black woman. And I don't care what justification that you have in your minds of twisting this, of why this was necessary—I've heard all types of garbage. Please, look up the Karen meme. Okay? There's a long history in America that's been getting caught on videotape recently of white women feeling entitled that the public space is a white space and harassing Black people, people of color, just minding their own business, and calling the cops on them.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's called being a Karen. It's white entitlement that a public space is automatically a white space. And one of our own, a Ukrainian who hails from Ukraine, did this and it went viral. I'm grateful to the Ukrainians in our community, in our diaspora, that pointed this out and called it out, including leaders. We're being called now, white people, no matter what your background is, to learn how to have these conversations. It's not going to be perfect, but we just have to have them for the sake of having them or nothing's going to change.

Sarah Kendzior:

I agree and I think that it can't be emphasized enough that the experience of immigrants to the United States is not the same as the experience of enslaved people from Africa. If you read Isabel Wilkerson's book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which is one of the best history books I've read, she notes that the great migration in which the descendants of enslaved people are basically reacting to Jim Crow laws fled from the South to other destinations in the United States, that their experience parallels that of refugees who came from other countries fleeing genocide, fleeing war to the United States for refuge.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so that experience of fleeing an incredibly brutal, oppressive regime is the one that was here in the United States. Whereas for immigrant families, including my own ancestors, including Andrea's, it's fleeing from another place willingly. The United States, it's the place that frees you, that rescues you and that does not enslave you.

Sarah Kendzior:

One of the very tragic aspects of this, which you've noted, is that whiteness is something that has been historically in the United States conferred by anti-Blackness and by the willingness of a white immigrant to participate in an anti-Black culture and define themselves as white in order to get the privileges and



benefits that come with that designation. You can easily see this in the history of Polish immigrants in America where when they first arrived, they were basically put in an “other” category.

Sarah Kendzior:

They would be written about in places, and I'm quoting from an old article that I wrote about how immigrants became white in America: “In 1903, New England Magazine decried the Poles, ‘Expressionless Slavic faces and stunted figures, as well as their inherent ignorance and propensity to violence.’”

Sarah Kendzior:

And then you saw things in that early era, for example, after the assassination of William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz, a Polish immigrant, widespread viewpoints that all Polish immigrants were violent, that they were anarchists. You saw op-eds come out where Polish Americans felt compelled to apologize on behalf of their entire ethnicity. We see this nowadays quite frequently. Muslim Americans feel like they have to do this when one Muslim individual commits a terrorist act, and then the media and society responds by blaming all Muslims.

Sarah Kendzior:

We certainly see this happen over and over with Black Americans as well, but one of the really striking things—and I'll wrap this up and we'll find something else, we've been talking about this for a while—I just want to read from this article I wrote that details this historical event in 1919, which was the time, of course, of massive white mob violence across the United States.

Sarah Kendzior:

"In 1919, Irish gangs in blackface attacked Polish neighborhoods in Chicago in an attempt to convince Poles and other Eastern European groups that they too were ‘white’ and should join them in the fight against Blacks. As historian David Roediger recalls, Poles argue that the riot was a conflict between Blacks and whites, with Poles abstaining because they belong to neither group.

Sarah Kendzior:

But the Irish gangs considered whiteness, as is often the case in America, as anti-Blackness. And as in the early 20th century, Chicago experienced an influx not only of white immigrants from Europe, but Blacks from the South. White groups who felt threatened by Black rivals decided that it would be politically advantageous if the Poles were considered white as well.

Sarah Kendzior:

Over time, the strategy of positioning Poles as white against a dark-skinned ‘other’ was successful. Poles came to consider themselves white and more importantly, they came to be considered white by their fellow Americans as did Italians, Greeks, Jews, Russians, and others from Southern and Eastern Europe, all of whom had held an ambivalent racial status in U.S. society. With that new white identity came the ability to practice the discrimination that they had once endured."

Sarah Kendzior:

And so what folks need to do now, if you are a descendant of these communities or just in general, if your concern is respecting the struggle of your ancestors and honoring what they went through in their native land if they were fleeing oppression, the best thing you can do is respect the struggle that is happening right now on the streets with Black Americans facing repression, not just by this

administration, but the culmination of centuries of discriminatory and brutal policies, starting from the founding of America, going through Jim Crow, going through the American prison-industrial complex.

Sarah Kendzior:

Respect that, join that, join that struggle. That is the best way that you can honor what your own ancestors have endured in the past.

Andrea Chalupa:

I want to just comment more on this because one thing that you often hear, especially coming out of conservative media, because a lot of what we're up against with the Black Lives Matter human rights movement is disinformation. I'm seeing a lot of racists in the Russian and Ukrainian diaspora spreading disinformation to justify their racism.

Andrea Chalupa:

And it reminds me so much of the spread of Russia Today, RT, and other disinformation that people in the West, including Western journalists and newsrooms, were falling for when it came to the Kremlin's massive propaganda campaign, confusing people about the truth on the ground with Euromaidan, Ukraine's revolution, trying to make it like some big Neo-Nazi fascist uprising. It's disinformation that we're up against.

Andrea Chalupa:

So when you're sharing articles from the Wall Street Journal, the New York Post, Fox News, remind yourself who owns those powerful media outlets. Rupert Murdoch, the son of a eugenicist, the son of someone who advocated for genocide and white supremacy. The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree. Rupert Murdoch has advanced muddying the waters on the truth of this healthcare crisis, this income inequality crisis, this opportunity gap crisis of what we're talking about when we talk about Black Lives Matter.

Andrea Chalupa:

So what I'm calling on Ukrainians to do, what I'm calling on all people to do, is check your sources. The Black Lives Matter urgent human rights crisis is a disinformation crisis. It's a media literacy crisis. You absolutely have to check your sources on this. And one really good source that is coming out to fact-check the Far Right propaganda polluting our social media, including people's minds, is the same Washington State University that is tracking and creating projections for the COVID-19 crisis.

Andrea Chalupa:

We'll share a link to them in our show notes, but they full-on came out and released a statement saying, "Racism is a public health crisis." So again, be careful of what your sources are. And I want to address this whole concept that I've come across in Far Right media before where white people are lecturing about "good Blacks" versus "bad Blacks" as though there's two different kinds.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I want to make clear that even if you have a so-called "good Black", you still attack them and put their lives at risk and try to destroy them, as we saw with this horrendous story in Tulsa, Oklahoma of Black Wall Street, the most affluent area at the time for Black people, it was burned to the ground by white people, burned to the ground in 1921. And the descendants of this terror, the survivors and their

families of this terror, feared to talk about this. The terror was so great they carried it with them for the rest of their lives. They feared to talk about it.

Andrea Chalupa:

History isn't being taught to this day, or properly understood and properly honored to this day. And that reminds me so much—in my years of research into Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, I met families and descendants that were afraid to talk about it because they still carry the terror with them. So please understand that when we talk about Black Lives Matter, it's all of our responsibility to fully understand what that means.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yep. One of the things that's sprung up in the last week in the midst of all these protests is a move to "Defund The Police." There's an ongoing debate between abolitionists and reformers that is being marred by the fact that the slogan can be interpreted in a number of ways. Minneapolis may prove a case study as the city has announced their intent to dismantle the police without specifying what this actually will entail or whether it will go beyond intention.

Sarah Kendzior:

I don't think they've actually decided, but we're going to talk a little bit about what this means and also how it can be exploited for ill-gotten gains by the ongoing opponent of the Trump administration and its white supremacist apparatus. So, first of all, many of the people calling for the police to be defunded mean exactly that. In many cities, the vast majority of the budget is allocated to the police department, and over the past 40 years, public education and healthcare among other social services have been steadily defunded.

Sarah Kendzior:

The bloated budget of the police at the expense of everything else is a microcosm of what happens on a national level with the massive expenditures by the military-industrial complex. And in many ways they are one entity since the police have become increasingly militarized in recent years.

Sarah Kendzior:

So some crying for the defunding of police simply mean to dramatically reallocate resources, moving it away from the police and to workers that could take their place, drug counselors, or social workers for example. There are also calls for decriminalization of nonviolent activities such as sex work or drug use, and a dramatic reduction in the prison population.

Sarah Kendzior:

How more serious crimes will be solved, like murder, remains up for debate even among abolitionists, but it's important to remember that the overarching goal of those who call for defunding the police is to protect people. And that means protecting people from the police themselves.

Sarah Kendzior:

People are freaking out at the "Defund The Police" slogan in terms of the election, but that is not the greatest risk. The biggest risk is that these calls for criminal justice reform will be exploited right now, before the election, because they are not taking place in a democracy, but in the mafia state of Donald Trump. And so everyone should be aware of these two threats in particular.

Sarah Kendzior:

The first threat is Jared Kushner. Kushner loves to pretend that he is for criminal justice reform. Well, of course, continuing brutal activity through his position in the White House with Ivanka, most notably the white supremacist agenda of his father-in-law, the abuse of migrants in concentration camps and the continued abuse of marginalized Americans, especially Black Americans, through the Trump administration's economic and political policies.

Sarah Kendzior:

Jared Kushner doesn't care about black people. The reason that Kushner wants criminal justice reform is so white collar crime will go unpunished. As we have said many times on this show, autocrats rewrite the law so that a crime is no longer a crime. Criminal justice reform is merely the packaging for Kushner's streamlining of the transnational crime syndicate whom he serves. He wants to avoid his own prosecution as well as Ivanka's prosecution and Trump's prosecution, and this goal was likely shaped by his father's own arrest for white collar crime and witness tampering in 2004.

Sarah Kendzior:

In my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, I described Kushner's bafflement that his father could even be arrested, since he views himself and his family as inherently superior to other people. And I'm now going to read a section of that book.

Sarah Kendzior:

"After graduating Harvard in 2003, Kushner in the manner of modern day children of millionaires completed a series of prestigious internships, among them a stint at the Manhattan DA's office while he was studying law and finance at New York University. His time at the DA's office seeing white collar criminals face justice does not appear to have had any lasting moral impact on Kushner other than sympathy for the criminals themselves.

Sarah Kendzior:

In a 2014 interview, Kushner complained, 'The law is so nuanced. If you're convicting murderers, it's one thing. It's often fairly clear when you get into things like white collar crime. There are often a lot of nuances. Seeing my father's situation, I felt what happened was obviously unjust in terms of the way they pursued him. I just never wanted to be on the other side of that and cause pain to the families I was doing that to whether right or wrong. The moral weight of that was probably a bit more than I could carry.'"

Sarah Kendzior:

And then I go on to say, "For Kushner, moral weight is opposed to both ethics and law. Moral weight is whatever interferes with getting what he wants." There is no ambiguity about the gill of Charles Kushner. Chris Christie, who prosecuted the case, said it was one of the most grotesque cases he had ever dealt with. It has to do with white collar crime, fraud, and just a horrific blackmail scheme involving Kushner getting one of his relatives taped with a prostitute. This is detailed in the book, you can read it for yourself.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, that's the first danger, is that this is basically a pretext to legalize white collar crime under the rubric of "criminal justice reform". Another danger is that the police will be dismantled, or they will quit en masse when they are no longer allowed to brutalize people like they just did in Buffalo, and they will be replaced by private militias. We have already seen unidentified soldiers patrolling D.C. No identification means no accountability and that is what they want.

Sarah Kendzior:

Erik Prince, the brother of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and a long-time Trump crime syndicate acolyte, has been interested in replacing the military and the police with private groups. And we've also seen Trump administration affiliates employ mercenary groups like Black Cube to do its dirty work. This privatization of the police is a very likely outcome unless it is stopped early on, and it will be accompanied by the expansion of the private prison complex.

Sarah Kendzior:

The entire apparatus needs to be viewed as one interlocking system. If you're going to reform or abolish the police, you need to take into account how a crime will be defined, who will mete out justice, how the new system will be exploited by this administration, and so on. What we need to destroy is elite criminal impunity. That necessitates changing more than just the police, but the criminal justice system itself.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so, Andrea, do you have thoughts on that?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, I sure do. What we're talking about when we talk about "Defund The Police", it's not saying "let's not have any police". What we're in right now, this crisis of police brutality, part of what got us here was using the police to take care of issues that they're not inherently qualified to take care of.

Andrea Chalupa:

We have had austerity cuts. We have had decades of voodoo economics, otherwise known as trickle-down theory where the people at the top and Wall Street get bailed out, but anybody at the bottom who's desperate not to fall through the cracks of society into immense poverty, they're being painted as "welfare queens", and they're being painted as so-called entitlement programs of people having their hands out, being lazy. And God forbid, if you help them, they might become lazy and lack incentives, and initiatives and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, Wall Street doesn't seem to be lazy with all the bailouts that they've been getting. My point is that this crisis that we keep reminding people, it's not a 2020 presidential election crisis. This doesn't go away even if Biden miraculously wins and Trump miraculously leaves office. This doesn't go away.

Andrea Chalupa:

When you talk about how to Trump-proof and Putin-proof our country, you're talking about economic justice. You're talking about combating the conditions, the decades of austerity, the decades of voodoo economics, trickle-down theory, that gave us historic levels of income inequality. And what you have

from all of these austerity cuts, you have an utter lack of services for mental health, for treating addiction, for public schools, for teachers' salaries.

Andrea Chalupa:

You have overcrowding of classrooms. You have a stagnant poverty-level minimum wage. You have underemployment. You have all types of issues that are creating historic levels of income inequality. And as a result, you have the powerful police unions, the financially influential police unions, expanding their jobs because police are being sent into schools instead of guidance counselors and therapists.

Andrea Chalupa:

Police are being sent to arrest addicts on the street. Police are being sent to arrest those suffering from mental illness on the street. So when we say "Defund The Police", we're saying, "bring back the social programs to treat addiction, bring back the social programs to support students in classrooms. Pay your teachers more, make classrooms smaller, expand public schools, put that money into public schools."

Andrea Chalupa:

We cannot live in a dystopia where the rich have the resources to escape this planet, where the rich have the resources to escape into their underground bunkers [laughs] as the President of the United States did, and the rest of us are left being held in pens by police brutality. That's what's happening with historic levels of income inequality and that's what the reckoning is ultimately about because with this jobs report that the president was praising, which juiced up Wall Street as these things tend to do with the little sugar-high.

Andrea Chalupa:

That jobs report showed that Black people were being left behind in the surprising job forecast. It was bogus. One thing that Martin Luther King, who was considered a radical his day, kept reminding us, we're not going to have racial justice unless we have economic justice. And he gave a speech appealing to Americans for that and saying that you're subsidizing farmers across America to not plant things.

Andrea Chalupa:

You're subsidizing the rich in America, but you're leaving those who never were given anything in the first place, Black people, who were just given their freedom and that's it and told repeatedly to "pull themselves up by the bootstraps". But when they did, white rage shouted them down. When they did, white rage came after them, violently. When Martin Luther King gave that speech on the two Americas in March of 1968, he was really saying the war for racial equality in America, the movement for racial equality in America, was an economic justice movement.

Andrea Chalupa:

One month later, he was shot to death. He was assassinated. He was killed. And so he left with us fact-checking of the immense white media propaganda machine that shows us repeatedly, in so many different little insidious ways, of why Black lives don't matter from the news they choose to promote, from the photos they choose to use of victims of police brutality and so forth, the details and the historical context they choose to leave out of all these social ills and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're left with a lot of unfinished work and that work is taking on the income inequality gap and stopping these tax breaks for the super rich. So Kushner and Ivanka can bring in Kanye and Kim Kardashian all they want, and talk about police reform all they want, but it's absolutely meaningless for a variety of reasons, which Sarah just listed. But also it's meaningless because they are so proud of their tax breaks for their rich billionaire friends, and it's those tax breaks that are very much leaving so many people, namely communities of color and Black people, extremely vulnerable to police brutality and all types of health conditions and inequalities that have a major impact on people's everyday lives.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're not going to get Black Lives Matter unless we take on income inequality, and that's the real test for people. So all those brands and all these leaders, Mitt Romney and so forth, marching and saying, "Black lives matter,"; it's about the rich paying their fair share in taxes. It's like Elizabeth Warren advocated for, which was that multi-millionaire tax. If you could afford to own several homes, please pay your taxes.

Andrea Chalupa:

Jeff Bezos, please pay your taxes to support public schools, and education, and Medicare For All, and free college. That's what we need right now and that's the real test, not the black squares you're posting on social media.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, exactly. One of the things I think people need to consider is that if you're defunding the police, at this point you're defunding the foot soldiers of a mafia state. You cannot disconnect race from the economy, ever, but the particular conditions of the way that this administration is structured and what they have encouraged from the police in terms of their behavior, in terms of their actions, what they're encouraging from the military in terms of trying to get the U.S. military to fire upon U.S. citizens who are protesting, we're in a different era.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this era is an extension of the unremedied crimes of eras past, but it is still markedly new in terms of what this administration will do, in terms of the extent of gross hoarding of wealth, gross hoarding of resources by an incredibly narrow elite, and the fact that that elite is hooked up to a transnational crime syndicate, to an interlocking network of billionaire, criminal, often white supremacist actors. Everything that's happening on the local level needs to be viewed in this context.

Sarah Kendzior:

We see this tension. We see localities reacting to the brutality of the Trump administration by trying to put up their own powers against it. Whether it's making themselves sanctuary cities, whether it is dismantling or proposing to defund their police departments, whether it's simply refusing to follow through on various orders regarding coronavirus and opening up, we see that there, but it's like you got to grasp the full spectrum of this atrocity and this danger is overwhelming, especially because November is not a quick and easy solution as some top Democrats continue to bleed out.

Sarah Kendzior:

November is going to be a time where we're tested like we've never been tested before, regardless who "wins" or is installed. And what we've been seeing in recent weeks, I think is to some extent, a dress

rehearsal for that. They're seeing what the police will do. They're seeing what the consequences are for that brutality. They're seeing how the military reacts when the military is encouraged to fire on the American people.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is Trump and Barr and the rest of them testing unconstitutional practices, trying to terrorize, and intimidate, and brutalize protestors into submission, trying to establish the court of public opinion on this issue, and they're going to exploit it in every possible way. But what you should never forget is that these are criminals themselves. Trump is Individual One.

Sarah Kendzior:

Don Jr. and Ivanka were nearly prosecuted in court in 2012, and Ivanka—and also Kushner, of course—have committed a variety of crimes in office. Bill Barr is the coverup general. He's also somebody who has been dodging subpoenas and has been immersed in GOP crime his whole life. His family was the one who introduced Jeffrey Epstein and that entire apparatus into American life, continuing a preexisting child trafficking network.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then there's countless others. There's Manafort, there's Stone, there's Michael Cohen. There are all these people from the Trump campaign that are or were in prison until they exploited the coronavirus situation to let them out. And so that is what they're going to go for. Those are brutal operators.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've said on the show many times that white collar crime is violent crime. That is why they call it blood money. And they're going to use that blood money for their propaganda apparatus. They're going to use it to build up private unidentified militias. They're going to use it to brainwash further the police and other just ordinary citizens into tearing this country apart. So that's where the danger lies.

Sarah Kendzior:

You're in much more danger from this band of billionaire sadists than you are from some petty criminal on the street.

Andrea Chalupa:

Without question, without question. And William “Wrecking” Barr’s little green men—the soldiers without insignia that popped up around the White House—that is an intimidation tactic. That is flaunting their utter lack of accountability. They refuse to take accountability for wrecking our institutions, for purging good civic patriots, purging our institutions to further Trump and his crime family’s gains.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I want to just point out that we had a dress rehearsal already of Donald Trump stealing the 2020 election or refusing to step down from power even if Biden should win. We had a dress rehearsal with Barr coming out with this four-page memo covering up the findings of the Mueller Report, which the major newspapers, the New York Times and Washington Post, fell for, where they ran headlines saying, "Mueller famously tight-lipped had to come out and give a rare public press announcement to say, 'That's not at all what my report says.'"



Andrea Chalupa:

Barr is somebody that lies effortlessly. He lied about tear gas not being used to disperse protestors for Ivanka Trump's photo op with her father holding up a Bible like Satan and the omen or whatever in front of that church. So what we're up against is a very dangerous attorney general who is going to try to use the letter of the law to either attack the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election or create some other maneuver to deny us a fair and free election.

Andrea Chalupa:

So this is all playbook, authoritarian playbook. And I just want to comment further on how you're going to have these Walter Durantys in the media claiming that Defund The Police, that whole movement is going to send crime skyrocketing. Nobody wants crime. Defund The Police is an anti-corruption movement, and you already see these Walter Durantys on the Far Right saying that crime is going to spike in New York city to the levels of the 1970s and '80s.

Andrea Chalupa:

Some of the reasons why we got that crime level in the first place was because the police themselves were corrupt. The police themselves in New York City were benefiting, and making money, and arresting people and shaking them down, stealing money from drug dealers and so forth. The police themselves were corrupt.

Andrea Chalupa:

Defund The Police is an anti-corruption movement saying the police have gone too far, especially in New York City. We saw them beating people with impunity, and so let's put that money towards social strengthening and building a social safety net. That's it. It's that simple. And then also you had—which fed crime and created the whole corruption and crime in the '70s and '80s in New York—you had redlining. Redlining—a racist system where the banks refuse to lend to you if you're Black.

Andrea Chalupa:

So when Black people moved into your neighborhood, the whites got out of there because of racism, and also they knew that these Black families weren't going to be able to build businesses because the banks would refuse to lend to them and so forth. So, we've come a long way from the 1970s and '80s in confronting our demons. So if anybody is scaremongering you, as so many are in the media, that we're going to return to that, that's not what this is about.

Andrea Chalupa:

Black Lives Matter and Defund The Police are ultimately, at their core, anti-corruption movements.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. And so on that note, we're going to close out by briefly discussing-

Andrea Chalupa:

Speaking of corruption.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes. Speaking of corruption, let's talk about the New York Times. You should cancel your subscription to the New York Times. We have said this over, and over, and over for years and I think we finally hit critical mass this week when they solicited an op-ed from notable racist, Senator Tom Cotton, who proposed using the military on American protestors, potentially slaughtering them.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so this was not something that Tom Cotton came up with on his own and sent in. The idea was his, but this was content the New York Times was actively seeking. This was the message that they sought to mainstream to the American public. And so finally, we had a large number of Black employees of the New York Times speaking out against the op-ed saying that it endangered not only the protestors' lives, but their own lives.

Sarah Kendzior:

That they did this violated the strict internal censorship policies of the New York Times, which denies its own staffers the right to document threats to their safety that are caused by their employer. Basically there's Fox News, and there's the New York Times, and that's it. And then everyone else that's some sort of mainstream publication, I would put in the category of, "yes, they make mistakes."

Sarah Kendzior:

They put out a mix of good and bad, but they are not essentially a propaganda arm of the Trump administration, and that is what the New York Times is. And I feel like there are obviously good reporters working there. We saw that in their protests against the paper itself, but they are hamstrung and they are used. They are used as an excuse.

Sarah Kendzior:

The Times can go and brag about The 1619 Project, they can brag about their climate change coverage which is also good, to try to counterbalance the fact that they've been rolling out Nazi puff pieces and "intrigue tales" about the Trump administration, often full of lies, full of anonymous officials that just back up the party line in a time of rising autocracy and now in a time where Black Americans in particular are facing grave danger.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so what do they do? They go and find somebody to try to encourage that violence, to encourage more killings, to encourage a brutal authoritarian state, and then try to pass that off as normal.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yep. And I think also what was revealed in that whole James Bennet debacle—and don't cry for James Bennett because he is a totally inept white man who will just fail upwards as they tend to do, and who'll likely be hired at The Atlantic or someplace like that eventually. They'll have his own rehabilitation tour aided by his friends in media.

Andrea Chalupa:

As we've been pointing out since the beginning of the show, there's been an epidemic of newsroom jobs across the country. The size of newsrooms are shrinking or disappearing and what you have left is

predominantly white male newsrooms, and that's what we get our lens through. So James Bennett is safe, he's okay. He's got built-in job security with the system we have set up now.

Andrea Chalupa:

The New York Times is not okay. They don't realize how dangerous of a situation they've put themselves in. And a lot of their inner thinking was revealed through this crisis where you had a Dean Baquet, the editor, saying essentially he doesn't want to cater to the so-called "resistance"—the people calling out for democracy and preserving and protecting the norms in our nation that keep our democracy intact.

Andrea Chalupa:

And what they're engaging in is Both Siderism and therefore flirting with genocidal ideas, as Sarah has pointed out, and that's never safe. The logical conclusion of that builds over years and next thing you know, you get a Trump in the White House, or you get a Hitler. I think the whole lesson of people like the great war correspondent, Martha Gellhorn, who reported on the concentration camps in Europe where she said, "I never got that objectivity bullshit." Because it is bullshit.

Andrea Chalupa:

Nobody can be neutral in the face of slavery. Are you an abolitionist or are you not? Nobody can be neutral when it comes to Black Lives Matter. Do you believe in human rights or do you not? And so the New York Times needs to look at its own inner soul and stop being the handmaiden to abuse of power in our country because they don't understand how dangerous that is to people's actual lives and the future of our democracy.

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

We want to encourage you to donate to your local food bank, which is experiencing a spike in demand. We also encourage you to donate to Direct Relief at [directrelief.org](http://directrelief.org), which is supplying much needed protective gear to first responders working on the frontlines in the U.S., China and other hard hit parts of the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria. Donate at [rescue.org](http://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](http://theorangutanproject.org).

Andrea Chalupa:

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