

Gaslit Nation Transcript
03 June 2020
"Reichstag Fire"

[begin trailer for Mr. Jones]

Mr. Jones:

Hitler and Goebbels are both there. Next thing you know, we're strapped on to Hitler's plane, the Richthofen, fastest and most powerful plane in all of Germany. On the flight, Goebbels is reading the papers, while Hitler studies a map of Europe, and I couldn't help but think if this plane should crash, the whole history of Europe would be changed.

Speaker 2:

Well, thank you, young man, for that passionate presentation, but the Germans have their own unrest to worry about.

Mr. Jones:

The Reichstag fire was not unrest. It was a tactic. The Nazis now have an excuse to end all opposition.

Speaker 2:

How can you be so certain?

Mr. Jones:

Goebbels taught me.

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*, which you heard a clip of at the start of the show.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump administration and rising autocracy around the world. This is one of those weeks that's several decades of news in one week. I know we say that every week, but this is really exceptionally true in this case after the brutal murder of George Floyd and the protests that have emerged in the aftermath. Andrea, I know you had things you wanted to launch into on this, so, let's just kick it off.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, welcome to another episode that's going to sound a lot like *Gaslit Nation*'s greatest hits because Sarah and I have been talking about all these things—the rise of authoritarianism in America and worldwide, that's the whole theme of the show—for many years. In fact, our podcast is essentially our

regular phone calls with each other to help support each other through this extremely difficult time. That's what the podcast is.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's essentially Sarah and I just chatting away, helping each other connect what we're seeing, make sense of it all, add historical context, just minus a lot of the swear words we usually use, and minus a lot of the petty gossip we sometimes enjoy, but it is our phone calls. It is to help sustain each other through this.

Andrea Chalupa:

We decided in 2018 to share this conversation with anybody else who might need help in this department and in staying connected, staying engaged, making sense of it. For us, it is disheartening that all these years pointing out the obvious, all of this is extremely obvious to anybody with any familiarity with the basic, tried and true, and reliable playbook of how authoritarianism works, past and present. It's not creative. It's not creative. It's not innovative. We've seen this all before in the early 1930s.

Andrea Chalupa:

In fact, authoritarian history must be part of civic education worldwide, so that students around the world can easily spot the signs and take it very seriously and not laugh at authoritarian scholars who are putting it out or call them hysterical or call them paranoid or write hit pieces and try to discredit them because there's a massive problem of conformity and self-censorship in the press, which, of course, also existed during the rise of authoritarianism itself.

Andrea Chalupa:

George Orwell wrote about that constantly. He railed constantly against self-censorship in the press. In fact, he wrote *Animal Farm* deliberately as a children's book, so that people would catch on to what was happening, and they would grab the book to be entertained, to be amused.

Andrea Chalupa:

George Orwell did that deliberately to break through the gaslighting in the media, the gaslighting in the press, the massive self-censorship and conformity and the careerism and all the fashionable people who were being celebrated in the worlds of publishing and media.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're going through that all again. We're frustrated. We are very frustrated. I know anybody listening to this is very frustrated, and anybody listening to this is very scared right now and has every single right to be. Sarah and I did not open up these conversations to anybody that needs to hear them for your own authoritarian fetish, should you have on, if you just enjoy listening in on two women chatting away. This was a deliberate strategy to help people stay engaged, to help alert people, to help bring together people who see the truth, and see it clearly and need a place to go.

Andrea Chalupa:

It is maddening to us that anybody should be surprised that we're at this point. If you've been along for the ride since the beginning and you've heard us tell you very deliberately that Vladimir Putin's mass murdering, terrorist, xenophobic, terrorist regime was invading the US through its asset, through its puppet, Donald Trump. You heard us say that in 2016.

Andrea Chalupa:

You heard us say that, guess what, he's going to grab power, consolidate it, our institutions will not hold up. They're going to be purged very quickly. Once he's in, it's going to be very difficult to get him out. We've been saying that since 2017. We were telling you that the goal is to make Ivanka Trump next. Now, that's being widely reported.

Andrea Chalupa:

We've been telling you all of this. Robert Mueller was failing. He was not going to save us. All the things we've been telling you this entire time, people in the media and on social media have laughed at us, called us despair trolls, have tried to silence us, ignore us. All of this has gone on.

Andrea Chalupa:

No one should be surprised that we're at this point. We're telling you once again to take what we're about to say on today's show very seriously because we're not doing it for our own gratification. We're simply doing it because it's so painfully obvious to us, and it's infuriating that it's not obvious to more people.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, here's where we're going next. You need to start preparing yourself. You need to start preparing your family. You need to have a serious conversation with yourself first. We are on a plane that is going down. When the oxygen mask comes down, first, you put it on yourself and then you put it on your child. I am the flight attendant of the apocalypse here.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, what you first need to do is put your oxygen mask on yourself, and then you go attend to the people in your family, the people that you're sheltering in place with. You have to accept right now that everything is going to get worse long before it gets better. Okay? Everything is going to get worse before it gets better.

Andrea Chalupa:

We are headed into extremely dark times. All that we're seeing, all of this fascist pageantry that Donald Trump and his family are doing right now, that is a deliberate strategy to steal this 2020 election and stay in power. They desperately need to stay in power. Putin and Russia's elite desperately need them to stay in power, because guess what? If Biden miraculously wins this election, then it's accountability time, and people are going to be punished. There's going to be more sanctions against Russia, and Russia is going to look like a fool to the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

Putin's tsarist, imperialistic empire has not just financial interest in this, but its own pride on the line, too. That is a very motivating factor, just as much as it is for Donald Trump and his criminal family. So, we're in for dark days ahead. It's going to be a very shaky time. Stop putting a timeline on it. Stop expecting one day to wake up to good news. You're not going to see any good news for a very long time. We're in for moments of horror. You just need to embrace that now as a fact to help prepare yourself so you are not demoralized, because guess what?

Andrea Chalupa:

One of the weapons they're trying to use against us is demoralization. They're trying to break us down. They're trying to take away our hope. They're trying to make us do stupid stuff under pressure. They're trying to terrorize us.

Andrea Chalupa:

We have this show, Sarah and I have our conversations, we write, we have our writing projects, we get it all out as a matter to keep hope alive. That is why we keep telling you that art matters. That's why we keep telling you to make art. That's why we keep telling you to go to our action guide on gaslitnationpod.com and stay engaged because the war is first and foremost in your mind.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're going to continue to try to terrorize. Do not let them terrorize you. Do not let them cower you into silence. You must stay engaged. You must prepare yourself for the worst now, and do not put a timeline, have zero expectation, on when you think this will end. Be open-ended about what we're in now. It's a process. The train has left the station. There's no turning back now. It's going to get worse long before it gets better, and just accept that fact now, and just go to the Gaslit Nation action guide. Go to the Gaslit Nation reading guide to understand how we got here. Listen to our first three episodes again to understand how we got here, and just brace yourself for impact because it's all happening now.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're not telling you that as some form ... We're not like a criminal justice show. This isn't a crime thriller show. Those podcasts are very popular. This is a deliberate strategy to help people who need it, like we need each other, and refuse to abandon each other and to stay engaged. It's dark days ahead, but we are ultimately going to get through it as long as we do not allow ourselves to be terrorized because the war, ultimately, is in the mind.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Absolutely. One thing I want to make clear because yet again, we are seeing this litany of officials and pundits proclaiming their shock, proclaiming their surprise—people are feigning shock to avoid accountability. That is why they do that. They need desperately to claim that no one could have seen this coming because that would mean that no one could have prevented it. This could have been prevented. It could have been slowed. It never would have been avoidable in its entirety.

Sarah Kendzior:

We were headed toward authoritarianism for years. We warned of this during the election cycle, that this would be the outcome. There were already pre-existing authoritarian tendencies, or policies, in this country. We have documented those extensively on the show. None of this should be a surprise. But when you see people, especially elected officials, proclaiming that they just can't believe this is happening or that is happening, that is a cover for them. That is to change your expectations of what public servants are supposed to do, which is serve the public, which is protect the people. That is their actual job.

Sarah Kendzior:

They want you to be in this mentality where basically you have personality cults surrounding politicians where you cheerlead them from the sidelines as they do nothing more than tweet. They're doing the same thing that you are, you as a regular citizen who doesn't have this obligation to actually create policy, to make official edicts from above, to try to stop this.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, I think every citizen has a baseline civic responsibility, but they are literally being paid to do this work and they're claiming they don't know what's going on. No. They absolutely know what's going on. They have known the whole time. It has failed in front of their eyes, just as it has failed in front of ours, and they chose to do nothing.

Sarah Kendzior:

That was a choice that all of these people made, whether it was Comey or Mueller or Pelosi or the intelligence community or the FBI or a variety of people out there. No. It's not uniform. It's not everyone across the board, and I do appreciate those who actually stepped out and fought and took the hits and told the truth. But the majority are now shrinking into this disgusting, feigned ignorance in order to cover up their own complicity in this administration's crimes, because at this point, complacency is complicity. There is no line between the two.

Sarah Kendzior:

I am so deeply... I mean, I'm sure you know, I'm deeply frustrated. This issue of feigning ignorance about authoritarianism is directly linked to feigning ignorance or shock about police brutality, about white supremacy, about the tyranny aimed at black communities throughout the US. They have known about that for a very long time, and they chose to either deny it exists, to put out little makeshift Band Aid policies that don't actually address the structural roots of anything, or in the case of many politicians—and not just the GOP, Pelosi as well—to refuse to support Black Lives Matter. And I don't just mean the organization, I mean the principle, to just outright come out and say that.

Sarah Kendzior:

All of this is linked because when you're dealing with the US, to understand American authoritarianism, it is intrinsically linked to race. That is the original sin of this country, and that, as America becomes an autocracy, of course, it's going to be rooted in white supremacy. All of our state-sanctioned authoritarian policies, or nearly all of them, were rooted in that, whether slavery, the genocide of Native Americans, internment camps of Japanese, Jim Crow laws, the prison-industrial complex. What we're seeing now is that on hyperspeed. We are seeing accelerationism and we are seeing, basically, an attempt at selective genocide, whether in the treatment of the coronavirus where you see, I believe at this point it's one out of every 2,000 black Americans has died in this pandemic, and in the brutality on the streets, and I think where the two may combine, which is people in close proximity being fired on with teargas, not being protected from the virus or from the police.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, yes, we are in a lot of trouble. It was all predictable and, therefore, to some extent, preventable, and do not let anyone off the hook when they say they had no idea that this could happen here because not only is it happening here, it has happened here and, therefore, it will happen here and Andrea will now explain to you what is to come and what kind of precursors there have been in history for actions like what the Trump administration is doing now.

Andrea Chalupa:

Thank you, Sarah. So, here we have Reichstag fire time. We've had threats of this, of course—Trump flirting with the dictator of North Korea, threatening nuclear war, which he would love for the ratings and all that—but this is serious Reichstag fire time.

Andrea Chalupa:

We saw Trump, Jared Kushner, his daughter, Jared's wife, Trump's wife. No, just kidding. We saw Ivanka Trump in her stiletto heels and her big, giant handbag, and William wrecking ball Barr, Trump's attack dog against American institutions and law enforcement. They walked out of the White House yesterday because Trump's ego was so wounded from reports getting out that he was hiding in a bunker.

Andrea Chalupa:

To do this, they had riot cops fire, on peaceful protesters, teargas and pushed them back. We saw a video of this. I mean, it was a violent pushback against peaceful protestors, all so Trump could hold a dictator-style, fascist pageantry stunt in front of a historical church outside the White House and hold up a bible and signal his class war, religious end times base to keep going, to keep helping inciting violence with their rhetoric, with their propaganda channels, with Fox News, with the law enforcement, especially.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, there's obviously historical precedent for this, and most famously, it's the Reichstag fire. So, as an important history lesson, as a reminder of what happened in early 1933, we're going to look back on the Reichstag fire now with help here from Smithsonian Magazine which breaks it down, and we'll link to this in our show notes. I'm going to read from this article now.

Andrea Chalupa:

"Where there's smoke, there's fire, and where there's fire, conspiracy theories are sure to follow. At least that's what happened in Germany on February 27, 1933, when a sizable portion of the parliamentary building in Berlin, the Reichstag, went up in flames from an arson attack.

Andrea Chalupa:

It was the canary in the political coal mine, a flash point event when Adolf Hitler played upon public and political fears to consolidate power, setting the stage for the rise of Nazi Germany. Since then, it's become a powerful political metaphor. Whenever citizens and politicians feel threatened by executive overreach, like sending the military into states to break up protests, the Reichstag fire is referenced as a cautionary tale.

Andrea Chalupa:

The economic unrest of the early 1930s meant that no single political party in Germany had a majority in the Reichstag, so fragile coalitions held the nation together. Meanwhile, the Nazis seized even more power, infiltrating the police and empowering ordinary party members as law enforcement officers.

Andrea Chalupa:

On February 22nd, Hitler used his powers as chancellor to enroll 50,000 Nazi SA men, also known as Stormtroopers, as auxiliary police. Two days later, Hermann Göring, Minister of the Interior, and one of Hitler's closest compatriots, ordered a raid on communist headquarters. Following the raid, the Nazis announced falsely that they'd found evidence of seditious material. They claimed the communists were planning to attack public buildings."

Andrea Chalupa:

Now, I'm going to stop here after reading from this article, which we'll link to in our show notes. I'm going to stop here and point out the Nazis set up the crime before committing the crime. The article goes on to point out that the group of Nazis who investigated the fire and later discussed its causes with historians covered up Nazi involvement to evade war crimes prosecution.

Andrea Chalupa:

We saw what we saw on Monday, and with chaos agents from the Far Right taking advantage of this violence, furthering this violence. There's a video of a police officer in New York holding up a white power symbol. You have Lt. Bob Kroll, the president of the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis where George Floyd was killed, who spoke at a Trump rally in October 2019. It's very clear what's going on here.

Andrea Chalupa:

Trump thrives off chaos. He needs chaos. He wants his supporters out in the street risking lives and violence. He wants this violence to escalate. You have black and brown organizers in the streets trying to stop the violence, many of them leading peaceful demonstrations. Of course, you have opportunists on both sides. That's without question. You're always going to have idiots on both sides of the spectrum, but largely, largely, these demonstrations have been peaceful, and peace is very much part of America's long history of organizing.

Andrea Chalupa:

You had, for instance, in the authoritarianism of the Jim Crow South, the civil rights movement confronting American authoritarianism, that was led by black churches. Then you had Jewish communities coming down because they understood authoritarianism very well, and they were huge in the solidarity in confronting that violence.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, understand that peace, peace is protection, peace is solidarity, peace is resistance. That's built into the culture of the progressive movement. That's a very long tradition that we stand on.

Andrea Chalupa:

What Trump desperately needs is us to rip each other apart. He needs a civil war. Putin needs a civil war. There is even documentation going around held up by Russian opposition leaders saying that part of Putin's chaos agents were pitching an idea of helping feed a race war in America to destabilize us, to rip us apart. They want America to break apart into separate states. They want the United States to be over. It's about divide and conquer. It's all been documented. We've been talking about this since the start of the show.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, peace is protection, peace is solidarity, peace is resistance. That's what organizers are leading with on the ground. That's our foundation. So, I'm going to stop here and let Sarah add to this.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. I mean, if you want to continue with what happened as a result of the Reichstag fire, just to be clear, when the event happened on the 27th of February 1933, the next day, the Reichstag fire decree was passed in which the constitution was suspended. So, very abruptly, you had restrictions on free expression, freedom of the press, privacy, warrants.

Sarah Kendzior:

Then from there, you had, and I'm actually taking this from the Nuremberg Trials Twitter account, which has a bunch of primary source documents online—I highly recommend people go and look through this thread.

Sarah Kendzior:

The next section of the decree spoke of incarcerating anyone who incites disobedience or provokes or incites an act contrary to public welfare, which made it easier to round up offenders with no court involvement and throw them into camps. It then specified the death penalty for crimes such as treason, poisoning, arson, serious disturbance of the peace or conspiring to kill a member of the government.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, this week, what we saw, of course, after these protests emerged, was a scapegoat, was essentially a mythical entity, which they're calling Antifa. Antifa, which is short for anti-fascist, or anti-fascists, exists. It's a real thing. It is not a hierarchical, clearly defined, clearly bound organization. It consists of a lot of people who oppose fascism and express it in different ways.

Sarah Kendzior:

You may remember that the people who were punching Nazis in Charlottesville in 2017, many of them were members of Antifa, and I'm glad. I'm glad they were punching Nazis. I don't think anyone should be criticized for that. I think we should be grateful that they're doing that.

Sarah Kendzior:

There have also been a number of incidences captured on film in which we see white people dressed in clothing that's typical of Antifa, destroying stores, lighting fires, committing crimes, and I want to be clear here that the property damage we're seeing does not remotely matter in terms of importance relative to the crimes that are being committed toward people like George Floyd, toward the countless victims of police brutality and any video you see makes it very clear that it is the police who are the most violent, who are themselves breaking the law, who are gassing people, who are beating people, who are abusing people.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, that said, there are a number of white randos walking around majority-black neighborhoods, burning down buildings like black barber shops, which are very unlikely to be the target of a progressive black resistance.

Sarah Kendzior:

I don't know who these people are. I think it's very difficult to tell. I am someone who covered Ferguson firsthand for months because I live in St. Louis, not just when the cameras were there, not just on the isolated weeks in which there was actual arson and violence. The vast majority of those protests were peaceful, but they were definitely interlopers. There were people who came in and the community here in the St. Louis metro area was like, "Get the fuck out because if you are committing these crimes, we are going to be the ones who go to jail. You're white. You're going to get a pass. Nothing is going to happen to you."

Sarah Kendzior:

Sometimes things would happen, occasionally, to white people who participated in these protests, but the structure itself is what you're protesting. The structure of this excuse to abuse and incarcerate black people who have often done absolutely nothing and blame them for crimes committed by white people.

Sarah Kendzior:

There's a lot of different things going on. There's, as Martin Luther King famously said, "Riot is an expression of the unheard," where you're seeing genuine rage from all sorts of people because these atrocities were never remedied. But then you're seeing opportunists who are taking advantage of this. I do wonder if some of these people dressed up Antifa-style are white supremacists. I wonder if some of them are undercover police or just simply police. I wonder if some of them are Trump sympathizers. It's difficult to tell.

Sarah Kendzior:

Anyway, that's why it was so convenient for Bill Barr when he came out and announced that "the violence instigated and carried out by Antifa and other similar groups in connection with the rioting is domestic terrorism and will be treated accordingly".

Sarah Kendzior:

This is such a typical tactic of an authoritarian regime. They will take an amorphous group, they will expand the definition so that it is as wide as humanly possible. They will deem it a terrorist threat, and then they will use that as a pretext to round up anyone, to round up journalists, to round up activists, to round up protesters, to round up bystanders who nearly witnessed atrocities.

Sarah Kendzior:

I covered a very similar or prominent example of this in Uzbekistan in 2005. There's this event known as the Andijan Massacre in which about 10,000 people came out to protest in the city of Andijan in Eastern Uzbekistan. They were protesting all sorts of stuff; human rights abuses, economic abuses, poverty, and the incarceration of a bunch of Muslim businessmen who the government found threatening.

Sarah Kendzior:

I've written a paper, I've written multiple papers about this event, so I'm going to make a long story short. You could look it up if you want more. Basically, what happened is they hoped the government would come out and actually address the protesters. Instead, the military came out, fired on the protesters, and just on bystanders, pregnant women, children, killed about 800 people, and then tried to cover it up. They tried to cover it up by blaming an amorphous Islamic group called Acromia, which

didn't really exist. Nobody on the ground would recognize it, would define themselves as a member of Acromia. It was something that they had created, and they had put the groundwork in play years before.

Sarah Kendzior:

There were state officials working both within the government and in universities that were saying that Acromia was a terrorist organization and that anyone who was linked to Acromia or in Acromia could therefore be thrown in jail. And they did that. They locked up a lot of innocent people, and other innocent people fled the border and became exiles and began publishing documentation of these events online. I debunked the Acromia narrative, and as a result of that publication became banned from Uzbekistan.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, this is familiar territory for me, and this is real, and this is very frightening to see this kind of tactics used here because I think that they're going to increasingly label anyone who opposes Trump as being in Antifa, and anyone who opposes fascism as being in Antifa, because it is anti-fascist.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, if you've been online like me and Andrea and other scholars of fascism and other opponents of fascism—which you should all be because it's fascism!—then you are going to likely be targeted by this administration. I don't know in what form, but they're going to make this as expansive as possible, and it's just incredibly dangerous on so many levels, first, to have this scapegoat, but secondly, to just openly be declaring, "Yes, we oppose people who oppose fascism. We are fascist."

Sarah Kendzior:

They are so blatant about this. They have been blatant the whole time. From the minute that Trump announced his platform, which had the classic hallmarks of fascism, of scapegoating minorities, wanting to use excessive military force, claiming that he himself is the government, saying he wouldn't accept the election results—he did that back in 2016, he's going to do it again now.

Sarah Kendzior:

Those were all blatant signs. Again, I am so furious that people refuse to admit this because it wasn't a theory. It was all right there. The motivations behind refusing to just describe what was right before your eyes, even without analysis, just describing it as it actually occurs. The refusal of people to do this is so disgraceful. It is such an incredible blight because real people suffer, and we are seeing the result of that suffering right now. We are seeing that suffering in the streets. We are seeing the abuse of black protesters. We are seeing journalists getting attacked in ways that they normally weren't before.

Sarah Kendzior:

One of my friends, Linda Tirado—who's an excellent writer, whose book you should buy—she now is blind in one eye because she was shot by police with rubber bullets. Linda covered Ferguson as well.

Sarah Kendzior:

One thing that's markedly different now than it was during Ferguson is that when we were all out there then, that was one of the first big protests where people had cell phone cameras and they were using Vine and they were doing live streaming, and all of these other things to bring what was actually

happening on the ground to the masses in a way that went beyond what was being portrayed on cable news.

Sarah Kendzior:

The police hated this. They absolutely hated being filmed. They didn't want their brutality to be captured. Some of them, of course, were flaunting their military strength, their equipment, their teargas. They wanted to be intimidating, that was for sure. But they didn't want to be caught and risk legal repercussions. They didn't want a DOJ investigation. I think to some extent, they didn't want the widespread disapproval of the public. That is gone now because it is not Eric Holder and Barack Obama. It is Bill Barr and Trump and four years of streamlined white supremacist militant movements, of all of them being played down, the threat of them being played down, the infiltration of white supremacists into police departments being played down.

Sarah Kendzior:

We are seeing that result, and we are seeing an emboldened police force that doesn't mind being recorded plowing a car into a crowd of people, beating people over the head, grabbing protesters who are merely making impassioned speeches about peace or about justice and brutalizing them. They have the exact same mindset as the Trump administration does, which is they don't mind being caught, they mind being punished.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, my question is who is actually going to punish them?

Andrea Chalupa:

No one if they continue to get away with this and consolidate power and the chaos becomes so great, and the October surprise they're certainly planning is so great that even though Congress legally is the one that has the right to change the election date if needed, there could be so much chaos that the election is suspended automatically because of the chaos. So, yeah, just get ready for this. Get ready for this.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, one point that we keep making on the show is that in authoritarian regimes, the police, the secret police, are recruiting tools for sadists. All of the sadists find each other. Who do you think was carrying out Stalin's purges? The chief of the secret police at the time was an infamous sadist who liked to torture people personally.

Andrea Chalupa:

You've seen young Russians risking their lives and freedom, putting their bodies on the line protesting against Putin's corruption. You see them being sadistically beaten and manhandled by these riot police. That's all a recruitment tool. All of this violence that we're seeing is the legalization of the KKK. What we've seen with the child trafficking, the reports of sexual abuse of children and people being held in detention centers, on the border of the human rights crisis, on the border of the growing camp system on the border. That's all a recruitment tool for sadists. This is all playing out before our eyes, and Trump's base supports it and loves it.

Andrea Chalupa:

One thing I want to point out is what happened less than one month after the Reichstag fire, that event that essentially gave cover to the Nazis to consolidate all power. What happened one month after the Reichstag fire? The first concentration camp was opened at Dachau less than a month after the Reichstag fire. That opened with the arrival of something like only 200 people, and the Nazis would go on to kill over six million people.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, less than one month after the Reichstag fire, the first concentration camp opened. Right now, we have a growing camp system on the border. Right now, we have a very loose term of what the enemy of the state is, including journalists, including activists. As Sarah said, that term is broadly thrown around in order to consolidate power and justify throwing political opposition and journalists into prison.

Andrea Chalupa:

You have Mark Morgan, the acting commissioner for the US Customs and Border Protection, CBP. He tweeted just yesterday, "CBP personnel have deployed to the national capital region to assist law enforcement partners. These protests have evolved into chaos and acts of domestic terrorism by groups of radicals and agitators. CBP is answering the call on the work to keep DC safe."

Andrea Chalupa:

I don't feel safe. We have a right to assembly. We have a right to protest. We have a right to free speech in this country. So, understand that first, they came for the asylum seekers. Who do you think is going to be next if they get away with stealing another election?

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Exactly. I have to say the issue of the camps is one of the things that's haunted me from this administration. I feel like a giant turning point was the creation of camps and of migrant family separation amid 2018, and the sheer horror of that and the refusal of officials—with exception of some like Ocasio-Cortez—to call them what they were, just concentration camps, and I've wondered they invested so much into this. What exactly was it going to be used for, and where does it stop?

Sarah Kendzior:

What I fear is that the abuse of these migrant families—this is one of the worst things that this administration has done, and that's saying a lot—I think it was a test run also for a broader project, and I worry about the combination of targeting these protesters and activists, denying them the freedom of assembly, with a pandemic, with a public health crisis, and with a disease that we still don't fully understand.

Sarah Kendzior:

Epidemiologists have grown strangely quiet in the last week as these protests go on. They're not really out there giving tips about safety. You do see people practicing some of the precautions that are recommended, wearing masks and so forth, but I worry what will happen when these activists are just thrown into regular jails, which is a major spreading point of the disease. And I wonder if they're going to—as I predicted in earlier episodes—weaponize the coronavirus to basically create a leper type class, to basically say, "We need to separate these people. We need to take them away. Oh, it's not about their politics, it's about the fact that they tested positive for COVID-19."

Sarah Kendzior:

I worry that they may use these camps for that purpose, that we may see a combination of the exploitation of a genuine public health threat with fascism, because that's what administrations like this do. They don't waste that kind of opportunity. We also have seen what looks like selective genocide, or an attempt at it, where this disease has disproportionately hit Native American reservations. It has killed, they estimate one out of every 2,000 black Americans, which is just a horrifying statistic, and I think has also led to a lot of the outrage about the general treatment that black Americans experience.

Sarah Kendzior:

There are so many horrific ways that this could go. I am putting these possibilities out there, and the reason I do this isn't to scare people; it's to alert them. It's to warn them that these are the kind of tactics that are practiced by regimes like this. If you wait until they have already entrenched them, you are not going to be able to stop them. That's the lesson of our show. That's the lesson of the last few years.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, when Andrea and I go through these possibilities and lay them out and we present to you worst case scenarios, it's because we don't want these scenarios. We don't want this to happen at all. We want people to be vigilant. Every founding document about democracy calls for eternal vigilance. You can't just kick back and assume that people are going to be good, and that problems are going to solve themselves. We have, already, a lesson in the last four years about the strength of our institutions, which is almost nonexistent, which is extremely weak, about the moral character of our leaders, which is utterly lacking with a few exceptions, about their political will in terms of the opposition, which is not there. They have acted as accomplices. They have acted as appeasers.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, we feel the urge to warn people about this, and if you see this moving in this direction, do everything in your power to stop it. Support the groups who've been fighting for migrant rights. Support the groups who are fighting for black rights. Support the groups who are fighting against the prison-industrial complex. And assume the worst. If you assume the worst, you will be prepared. If it doesn't happen, you get to be pleasantly surprised.

Andrea Chalupa:

I would love to be pleasantly surprised.

Sarah Kendzior:

That would be a novel feeling these days.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. So, we're going to talk about Putin and Trump. Yes, racism, the deep wound of racism in America, is homegrown. It belongs to us. It's the original sin that built America. America was built on the genocide of Native Americans and the genocide, the authoritarianism, of the institution of slavery, which didn't fully go away, of course. It morphed into different forms from Jim Crow laws to the prison-industrial complex to a judicial system that continues to treat black men and women, people of color, like chattel, feeding money, feeding greed to the prison-industrial complex and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, this is ours. America was built on this. It's a Far Right country. Confederate symbols, the confederate flag, confederate statutes that have been allowed to exist in our country from far too long, those are symbols of Nazism. That's Nazism. That's an ideology of hate. That's an ideology of genocide. The confederate movement that exists in America, that's become a global movement, a Far Right movement helped by Steve Bannon and Putin and others.

Andrea Chalupa:

You have Putin's terrorists invading Ukraine right now. What do they have as their symbol? The US Confederate Flag. They've adapted that as their symbol. The confederate flag is equivalent to the Nazi flag. It fights for an ideology of hate. It's dehumanizing and it needs to go. In America, anybody outside of America listening to this, wondering, "What's going on? Why is our house on fire?" It's because America was birthed out of the horror of genocide. It's like Nazi Germany on so many levels. It is. That's just the reality. It's very difficult for us to see that because we also have a beautiful side of America.

Andrea Chalupa:

We have two Americas. We've also been a promised land, historically, for asylum seekers. My parents were born in refugee camps and came here, and experienced the American dream, and built the American dream for themselves. But a lot of those opportunities that they were able to take advantage of, those are disappearing today under this Far Right, corporate, complicit, growing income inequality that's taken over our country. The worst of us is now in control of the White House, the Supreme Court, and the Senate, and many state offices across this country.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, it's not enough for us to tell everyone how so not racist we are. It's not enough anymore for us to do that. We have to now be anti-racist. We cannot politely condone confederate symbols anymore, considering that they're the equipment of Nazi symbols. We need to stomp out Nazism. We need to stomp out the fascists here on our soil. That needs to end now.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's what we're witnessing. We're witnessing this confrontation and it's going to be painful. It's going to be scary. It's going to have moments of absolute terror, and it's going to take years. It's not going to go away any time soon, but it's a necessary process that we need to finally undertake. It's a process of healing. It's a process of understanding that black people have been extraordinarily patient. They've been extraordinarily patient, and that's also a theme throughout history.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you look at what led to the Russian Revolution—the Far Right, tsarist family and the dehumanizing poverty of the tsarist regime in Russia, the disastrous entry of Russia into World War I, how people across the Russian empire suffered, suffered so greatly. They were pushed to a breaking point where they had no choice but to finally overthrow the Tsar.

Andrea Chalupa:

Again, you saw it in the French Revolution. All of those beautiful ideas of the enlightenment, Rousseau and others, that was a white male revolution. It was equality for white men. Women were left out of it.

People of color were left out of the Enlightenment. But what you had was a French Revolution led by women. Women marched on the Bastille. Women marched to Versailles. Why? Because women were starving and their children were starving, and women were in charge of feeding their families, and they were pushed to a breaking point.

Andrea Chalupa:

Even though they were left out of all of the literature that was circulating on calls to revolt, women were the ones that were major catalysts in the French Revolution because they were pushed to a breaking point.

Andrea Chalupa:

You saw that again in Ukraine. You saw investigative journalists into Putin's puppet's corruption. Yanukovich, the Donald Trump of Ukraine that stole, he and his family stole an estimated 30 billion to 100 billion. They were in Putin's pocket. They were the governor for the Kremlin of Ukraine, essentially.

Andrea Chalupa:

Ukrainians themselves were pushed to such a breaking point, such a breaking point of deep poverty and corruption, and then a series of these so-called dictatorship laws that criminalized free speech and other rights in Ukraine. Ukrainians were pushed to such a breaking point that they finally had to overthrow that tyrant.

Andrea Chalupa:

Black people in America have been extraordinarily patient, extraordinarily patient, given how many of them had been murdered on camera by law enforcement. Law enforcement play the victims every time, and ramp up the brutality, and you have complicit actors in the Democratic Party who are afraid or are intimidated to stand up to law enforcement.

Andrea Chalupa:

Essentially, what law enforcement has become in this country is, there's a very powerful strain in law enforcement in America that is essentially a legalized version of the KKK. They know what they're doing. It's intentional, and it's happening before our eyes. Black people have been extraordinarily patient, extraordinarily patient. What you saw these last couple of days, they're at a breaking point, and this breaking point is going to continue.

Andrea Chalupa:

We have everybody stuck at home. Workers do not have to go into the office. Kids are out of school for the summer. People are being told to shelter in place. Going out to a protest where you have to wear a mask, it's actually for your own protection to wear a mask and protest because we have such a militarized police force.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, actually, protests are a difficult subject right now given the very volatile situation we're in, but what I'm telling you is that it's protest season now. It's going to continue because people do not need to show up to an office. Many of them are out of work because of this great depression economic crash and kids are out of school for the summer. They have to be wearing masks, anyway, and a mask is a necessary item to protest safely.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, all of this is going to continue. When you watch it continue, which is inevitable—and Trump is going to be stoking the flames of violence—what you need to keep in mind is that black people have been extraordinarily patient. They're part of a long history of people being pushed to the limit and a breaking point, and being extraordinarily patient, and then finally, they have no other choice now.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you want to ease off the pressure, every single person in a leadership position, every citizen of this country has to start listening, taking this very seriously. It's not enough anymore for us to tell everyone how so not racist we are. We have to now be anti-racist, and we have to stomp out the Nazi ideology that has hijacked very powerful offices across our country.

Sarah Kendzior:

One thing—I mean, I'm not sure we've even addressed it directly on the show—that is, shames the situation and ups the ante, is that Trump wants to deploy the military, the military, into states.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, that's the Reichstag fire. That's the Reichstag fire.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, that's the Reichstag fire, but what we have here is an entity separate from the police, but I think in the view of Trump—I mean, what they're trying to create, it reminds me of the milizia, the milizia of Uzbekistan. I know this word gets used differently in different post-Soviet countries, where you have this entity, this brutal force of surveillance and abuse that's not quite the military, not quite the police as we see them in the Western way, and that is just such a point of fear for people in these countries.

Sarah Kendzior:

Every dissident that I interviewed from Uzbekistan would tremble at just the word milizia. I feel like that is what they are attempting to create in the United States, and the fact that there were so many people who went on and on about how, in the end, the military will save us, and the generals will save, and Mattis and Kelly, and McMaster will obviously speak out when the time is right.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is the fucking time! And we know what side they're on. We saw that yesterday. So, any delusion that the military somehow is going to sweep in and make things right instead of make things worse is out the window. I hope I'm wrong. I hope that when it comes down to it, I hope that when Trump commands them to shoot innocent Americans, that they don't do it, that they refuse to, that they remember what their actual job is. But I'm so appalled, not just that this is happening, but by the lack of any kind of organized response from people who wield far much more political power than us, or more money like Robert Reich from the New York Times, he tweeted, "Where's congress? Where's the Supreme Court? Where are the mayors and governors, living former presidents? Where are the university presidents, foundation heads, religious leaders, corporate leaders, union heads, editors, and publishers? All must stand up to Trump's madness."

Sarah Kendzior:

He tweeted that in reaction to the kind of disgusting way that Trump's action, which is just a classic fascist move. I mean, as you've brought up the Reichstag fire, that was completely appropriate. They're not treating it with that appropriateness. I don't know if you have it on hand, the New York Times headline from the morning...

Andrea Chalupa:

Oh, yeah, the New York Times, the handmaiden to power, whether it's marching us into war in Iraq or printing disinformation about "the FBI sees no connection between Trump and Russia" just days before the 2016 election and so forth. So, the latest from the newspaper of power, from the New York Times, the headline is "As chaos spreads, Trump vows to end it now." Trump IS the chaos. Trump desperately needs chaos in order to steal this election and stay power.

Andrea Chalupa:

Putin, who helped bring him into power, desperately needs chaos in order for Trump to stay in power, in order to avoid sanctions from the US. So, again, the New York Times, another critical election with democracy on the brink, the New York Times is choosing to be not the newspaper of record, but the New York Times is the newspaper of power.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. It's disgusting, and it streamlines it. It mainstreams it. They've done this many times in the past. We've mentioned this in many shows, but this is such a critical point. This is the time where you need to speak in plain language, where you need to condemn fascism, and you need to just talk bluntly about what Trump is doing, what he has done, and what his administration is capable of doing.

Sarah Kendzior:

It is deeply frustrating that when they emerge to do that, it's shaped in this way, and then also this mealy-mouthed, weak-willed response from our leaders that we don't have an emergency session of Congress. We don't even have statements calling on him to resign, and then, of course, he's not going to resign, but just saying that or cutting the purse strings or using every weapon in your arsenal. This is not a regime that behaves normally. It is not behaving as a democratic administration, and it never has. It's openly declared its intent to not be a democracy.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, if you're going to oppose it from within the bounds of Congress, you need to be creative in your own approach. If they're going to do things unconventionally, then you need to do it as well. To just tweet out these little statements like, "Oh, I'm deeply concerned," or "I'm so shocked," it's like, my God! Our country is going to die. We've been very clear about that for the last four years.

Sarah Kendzior:

People are going to die while fighting for it. This was the point that we wanted to avoid. This is what happens when you have an utter failure of accountability and a failure to even identify reality as reality because you're so concerned with protocol or prestige or maybe there are darker agendas involving blackmail, bribery, donor money, loyalties to other countries above the US, what have you. It's a different situation for everyone.

Sarah Kendzior:

What I know is you can't go by the book when the book is burning. That is a lesson that Congress has absolutely failed to learn, and they need to learn it now, and they need to learn it fast, because we're already past the bounds of too late. Right now, it's a matter of damage mitigation, of making this less of a catastrophe and not even of avoiding catastrophe entirely because we're there.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yup. All right. So, speaking of questions of loyalty, whether to our country or foreign power... so all of this, the original sin of slavery, that's ours. America owns that. Putin's mass murdering terrorist regime is, of course, going to take advantage of that. They desperately need to avoid accountability. We should understand, everybody on the Left and on the Right, why Putin and Trump make such a good team, why there's so much solidarity between them.

Andrea Chalupa:

They spoke on the phone just recently. Trump keeps pushing to get Russia back into the G7, making it the G8 again. They were kicked out of the G8 because of Putin's invasion of Crimea and then East Ukraine. The other G7 countries keep saying no, and Trump is pushing for this. This is on Putin's wishlist, of course.

Andrea Chalupa:

What unites Trump and Putin? Again, they regularly speak on the phone, so there's organized crime, there's money laundering, there's attacks on the press, censorship, propaganda, they both incite violence—especially against opposition leaders and the press. They both want to stay in power. They purge. They consolidate power. They encourage sadistic police and law enforcement tactics, and they want a deep state police state, and there's something more.

Andrea Chalupa:

Let me just read to you from a piece that I wrote—which we'll link to in the show notes—for Forbes five years ago on the 17th anniversary of the end of World War II. This is going to explain to you yet another reason why Trump and Putin are made for each other. So, as I'm reading this, remember, I wrote this five years ago, but this could very much be describing Trump and his base today.

Andrea Chalupa:

“Reggie Yates is clearly fearless. The black British reporter traveled to Russia for the BBC to understand the recent rise of fascism. In addition to discovering a mini Comic-Con glorifying Putin, he was also harassed for being black at a nationalist march founded by President Putin, and was commonly informed in one interview that “the mixing of races is impure and leads to mutations”. Yates is mixed race.

Andrea Chalupa:

The charming and buoyant reporter at first smiles through the absurdity, but the bigotry gets to be too much for him. His emotions begin to show in his face. Twice, we see Yates abruptly end an interview and rush for the exit. Xenophobia has been an upward trend in Russia even before recent tensions with the West. Yates gives us a stomach-turning glimpse of a montage of YouTube videos celebrating vicious attacks on immigrants, including a man sitting on a bench who was suddenly kicked in the face.

Andrea Chalupa:

He also interviews an immigrant who was randomly stabbed on the street only to have the doctor refuse to treat him because he was an immigrant. A 2013 poll by the independent Levada Center found that 69% of Russians believe the country has too many immigrants. The discrimination even targets citizens of post-Soviet countries and regions like the Caucasus.

Andrea Chalupa:

Ironically, Putin and his supporters call for the return of the Soviet Union, yet don't want to live alongside the very same people Russia once colonized. A vile pride has taken over the country. It is the design of a dictator who severely restricts press and internet freedoms, legislates homophobia, and exalts the invasion of much smaller neighbors.

Andrea Chalupa:

Journalists and opposition leaders have been arrested and murdered under Putin's watch. Soviet history is even being rewritten to glorify Joseph Stalin. Russia invested in right-wing parties in Europe to purchase influence and divide the EU. It has become a paradise to famous white supremacist leader Preston Wiginton, who spends part of the year there. He recently organized a Texas A&M University lecture by Aleksandr Dugin, an influential Russian political scientist, who called for the genocide of Ukrainians and a world war to usher in the end times.

Andrea Chalupa:

Putin may have created a hate machine, but he has become the face of a monster that will outlive him. Once Putin is gone, another autocrat will take his place. Fascism in Russia is not going away anytime soon. Russians will tell you that they need a strong leader. As one Russian-Ukrainian woman explained to me, it's because they fear a return to the volatility of the Yeltsin years when the collapse of communism plunged everything into chaos. They also fear, she says, ethnic minorities rising up against them, the "real Russians", and creating a civil war. Fascism has become a gravity holding Russia together."

Andrea Chalupa:

That's where we are. It's xenophobia. That's why we keep telling people on the Left to stop amplifying Russian state media like RT. Stop going on RT. Do not support Russian state propaganda. It's a xenophobic state. Domestic Russian propaganda is like Fox News on acid. It's a fever dream of xenophobia and disinformation. Again, these are two culturally-aligned. Trump has his mentor in Putin. That's what we're up against.

Andrea Chalupa:

Now, obviously, this was another Gaslit Nation greatest hits where we covered a lot of what we're up against. We would not have a show if there wasn't hope, if there wasn't a reason to continue to stay engaged. There absolutely is. If you want a place to look for hope, go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide at gaslitnationpod.com. In the show notes, we're going to share a link to Congresswoman Barbara Lee and her PAC to help get progressives elected. We're going to share links to two other essential groups working on the all-important local state level, Every District and Future Now.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you're scared, if you're furious, channel that energy and donate what you can to these critical organizations working on the all-important state level to build a more progressive union. We are in the

fight of our lives. Stop thinking in terms of election cycles and think in terms of decades, where we need to fight now, plant the seeds now, and 10 years from now, we can be in a much safer place.

Sarah Kendzior:

For those who think there's no point in going forward, all is lost, et cetera, et cetera, we still have not only a moral obligation, but an open demonstration that we still do wield some leverage that the people and their power collectively are still a threat. If they thought it wouldn't matter if you voted, they would not work so hard to prevent you from doing it. If they thought that the truth didn't matter, then they wouldn't work so hard to suppress it. If they thought that your right to assembly was no big deal and would yield no repercussions, they would not have these blatant abuses and arrests out in the street.

Sarah Kendzior:

They fear a critical, independent-minded populous that is relentless, that is relentless in its pursuit of truth, that's relentless in its pursuit of justice, and that makes demands, that doesn't just roll over and lie dead. I don't know what the outcome of this will be, but I know that I'm not rolling over, and I'm not backing off. I know that Andrea isn't backing off either, and I know that our listeners aren't either.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, if you're listening to this and you feel alone, you're not. There are millions. There are people out in the street. There are people in their homes who can't protest or are afraid to, but are very much of like-mind. We are living under the tyranny of the minority, but we are the majority. We are not the silent majority. We are the loud majority, and we need to keep it even louder in the weeks to come.

Killer Mike:

It is your duty NOT to burn your own house down for anger with an enemy. It is your duty to fortify your own house, so that you may be a house of refuge in times of organization, and now is the time to plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize.

Killer Mike:

It is time to beat up prosecutors you don't like at the voting booth. It is time to hold mayoral offices accountable, chiefs and deputy chiefs. Atlanta is not perfect, but we're a lot better than we ever were, and we're a lot better than cities are.

Killer Mike

I'm mad as hell. I woke up wanting to see the world burn down yesterday because I'm tired of seeing black men die. He casually put his knee on a human being's neck for nine minutes as he died like a zebra in the clutch of a lion's jaw, and we watch it like murder porn, over and over again. That's why children are burning to the ground. They don't know what else to do.

Killer Mike:

It is the responsibility of us to make this better right now. We don't want to see one officer charged; we want to see four officers prosecuted and sentenced. We don't want to see Targets burning; we want to see the system that sets up for systemic racism burnt to the ground.

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, which is supplying much needed protective gear to first responders working on the frontlines in the US, China, and other hard hit parts of the world.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria. Donate at rescue.org. If you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate at the Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

Our production managers are Nicholas Torres and Karlyn Daigle. Our episodes are edited by Nicholas Torres and our Patreon exclusive content is edited by Karlyn Daigle.

Andrea Chalupa:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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