

Gaslit Nation Transcript

04 October 2023

“Kremlin Kaos Kaucus”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/kremlin-kaos-90281107>

[opening clip]

Rep. Jasmine Crockett (00:00):

...President of the United States has committed. But when we start talking about things that look like evidence, they want to act like they blind. They don't know what this is. These are our national secrets... looks like in the shitter to me.

Rep. Jasmine Crockett (00:14):

This looks like more evidence of our national secrets, say, on the stage at Mar-a-Lago. When we're talking about somebody that's committed high crimes, it's at least indictments. Let's say thirty two counts related to unauthorized retention of national security secrets, seven counts related to obstructing the investigation, three false statements, one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States, falsifying business records, conspiracy to defraud the United States, two counts related to efforts to obstruct the vote certification proceedings, one count of conspiracy to violate civil rights, twenty three counts related to forgery or false document statements, eight counts related to soliciting, and I could go on because he's got ninety one counts pending right now. But I will tell you what the president has been guilty of: he has unfortunately been guilty of loving his child unconditionally and that is the only evidence that they have brought forward. And honestly, I hope and pray that my parents love me half as much as he loves his child. Until they find some evidence, we need to get back to the people's work, which means keeping this government open so that people don't go hungry in the streets of the United States. And I will yield.

[opening theme music up and under]

Andrea Chalupa (01:30):

Our opening clip was Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett of Texas speaking truth to the Kremlin Kaucus Show Trial in the House. And I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker, the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, Mr. Jones, the film that the Kremlin and its lobbyists in Congress don't want you to see, so be sure to watch it. A reminder: we're going to attempt a bonus live stream at 4:00 PM Eastern on Thursday, October 5th for our Patreon community. I'm going to be sharing some fun Fox News stuff that I heard from a former insider. It's stuff we already know, but it's just when you hear it from the horse's mouth, we've got to talk about it. So I'm going to share it livestream for our Patreon community as well as on Instagram because I'm trying desperately to wean us all off of the cesspool of Twitter, which a European Union report called “the largest outlet for Russian disinformation.” It's having a real world effect on elections in Europe.

Andrea Chalupa (02:37):

If you look at what happened in Slovakia with the pro-Kremlin party coming to power in Slovakia, there's rampant disinformation in countries like that. It's not just hitting us here in the US. And there's a [wonderful report](#) which we'll share in the show notes for this week's episode by NBC News, by the wonderful Ben Collins, who's one of the best reporters on the authoritarian beat in the US, looking at the grand master plan of Elon Musk destroying Twitter because that's where we had our power. I said that

from the jump before the deal went through. I said Peter Thiel, the far-right libertarian PayPal mafia dystopian tech Bond villain, wanted to tank us just like he had tanked Gawker. We had to go. We were having too much fun and having too much power, and Twitter's just become a nightmare. And the latest, of course, Zelensky being mocked viciously when he is the world leader that refused to abandon his people.

Andrea Chalupa (03:37):

He had a ride out of Ukraine. He could have gotten himself and his family out and just let Ukraine fall. This was a moment of such terror and uncertainty, and yet Zelensky stayed. He did not have to stay, but he chose to stay. This was a war—I promise you—the West did not want. They were preparing Ukraine to fall and to be supplied with support for gorilla warfare. They were preparing for an occupation; another Afghanistan disaster. And Zelensky staying changed everything. And that is why Ukraine survives today and continues to fight this existential genocide. And Twitter Apartheid Barbie Elon Musk, the child of degenerates who has a string of babies out there because he's got some sick fantasy of populating the world with his fascist super sperm, he mocks Zelensky at a time of continued crisis for Ukraine because the disinformation war waged by Russia being amplified by the fashionable fascists on the far left and the far right is working. Ukraine fatigue is everywhere.

Andrea Chalupa (04:47):

The Kremlin has absolutely entrenched itself in the US Congress, right? That's what we've seen here with Matt Gaetz's whole January 6th redux movement and trying to oust McCarthy and holding up aid to Ukraine and making up this secretive deal, and “Zelensky's Ponzi scheming billions” is all a bunch of bullshit. That's how far gone we are. Remember my last episode, “Hypernormalisation”? None of this is normal. This is a crisis. This is World War III being fought by the Russians on US soil. The Nazis are back. The Nazis are homegrown. They've taken over some of our favorite places. And so what am I getting at? I'm getting at: we're going to attempt a live stream on Instagram, so I'm going to just blast some information out there about Fox News, sharing some insights there that I've heard recently and that I think are worth chatting about. I'll try to answer whatever questions I can.

Andrea Chalupa (05:34):

I then need to rush into a car and make my way home and see my family because I am dealing with a family situation. I will stream for as long as I can on Thursday at 4:00 PM Eastern and that will be part of this week's bonus show for Patreon supporters who keep our show going. If you want to never miss an episode of *Gaslit Nation*, get all of our shows ad-free, invites to exclusive events and more, make sure to subscribe at [patreon.com/gaslit](https://patreon.com/gaslit). That's [patreon.com/gaslit](https://patreon.com/gaslit). Thank you to everyone who keeps our show going. And as a thank you to our community, we're giving out a signed copy of the *Gaslit Nation* graphic novel, *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think*, a wild romp into the inner workings of how to become and try to stay a dictator and how to overthrow one. So the thank you gift to our Patreon community this month...

Andrea Chalupa (06:26):

The book is going out to Anne, last two initials, EL. Congratulations, Anne. You know who you are because you reached out to me saying, “Give me a book!” and so I'm giving you a book [laughs]. That's how easy going I am, okay? you want a book? Ask me for a book. I'll give you one as a thank you if you're on Patreon for our community. So you get a book, Anne. You're the winner for this month. I may have already given out two books already, I don't know, for this month, but whatever. You get one. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And they're signed by both me and Sarah. And back by popular demand—my popular demand—the *Gaslit Nation* Halloween radio play contest. [chaos SFX]

Andrea Chalupa (07:08):

Send us your submissions to [gaslitnation@gmail.com](mailto:gaslitnation@gmail.com) by Thursday, October 18th to get your radio play produced and played on *Gaslit Nation*. Let your freak flag of creativity fly, make art, take back your mind. Don't let these assholes win. Be creative in the face of all their destruction and nonsense and just celebrate yourself. Celebrate all the little things, all the little urges, all the little voices, all the fun intuition and insights in you. Channel it all in your art. Send us a spicy, beautiful, weird, fun, ridiculous, subtle, not-so-subtle radio play by October 18th to [gaslitnation@gmail.com](mailto:gaslitnation@gmail.com). The one rule is keep it five pages max since these are pretty intense to produce; there's a lot of detail that goes into it. And if you have submitted a play in the past, we've read them all. So we're going to go back through and look at some from last year and the year before and we'll reach out to you if you're the winner. We'll be selecting one winner and you'll get produced and performed on *Gaslit Nation*.

Andrea Chalupa (08:15):

Thank you to everyone who makes art, and thank you to everyone who fights for your mind because that's what they're trying to do. They're trying to demoralize us and get us to give up, and instead we're going to be hope defiant. That is how we win. It is an endurance race. Every single right that we enjoy today is the product of an endurance race. It is our turn now to run the endurance race and we are going to win. We are going to outlast and outbid these Nazis. Alright, speaking of, we're having a super fun phone bank for Virginia because posh Nazi, posh Trump Glenn Youngkin wants to take over the state government of Virginia so he can ban abortion, do a 15-week ban, which is essentially an abortion ban. Jukin is a disaster. He's been rolling back environmental policy in Virginia. He's been building a groundswell of far-right support, which possibly puts the state at risk for a Republican pickup in the electoral college in 2024.

Andrea Chalupa (09:20):

So to build our own grassroots protection to fight back against that, we're getting out the vote for the upcoming Virginia elections this November. Join me at a phone bank on Thursday, October 26th, a *Gaslit Nation* phone bank with our friends at Sister District Thursday, October 26th at 6:00 to 8:00 PM Eastern. I'm going to be giving away three signed copies of the *Gaslit Nation* dictatorship graphic novel to folks that join me at this phone bank to get out the vote and make calls to the all-important local state races in Virginia, so much is on the line. It's not just quality of life issues and environmental protections and environmental regulations and a big influential state like Virginia using all of its power to take bold action: the climate crisis, right? Important stuff that Glenn Youngkin is trying to roll back now because he's mobbed up with big oil and coal.

Andrea Chalupa (10:15):

It's also the electoral college in 2024. If we secure Virginia now in these all important state elections, that allows us to breathe a little bit easier heading into 2024. Okay? So join me again Thursday, October 26th at 6:00 PM Eastern. There'll be details in the show notes for this week's episode. I'll be glaring on about this all month long. Alright, so let's get to Matt Gaetz, who looks like he carries roofies in a Pez dispenser. Matt Gaetz, who should be in prison, not holding up much-needed aid for Ukraine, which is of course fighting off a genocide. He's making us look like an unreliable ally. Russian State TV cannot get enough of Matt Gaetz. They are gloating about this. Matt Gaetz is a proud January 6th insurrectionist. He told Steve Bannon on his podcast that they're really proud of the work they did in trying to violently overthrow our government on January 6th.

Andrea Chalupa (11:06):

He should not be in Congress, he should be in prison. He had that close friend, that wingman, Joel Greenberg, who has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for sex trafficking. Gaetz was part of that investigation. He was accused of having sex with an underage girl. He showed nude photos on the floor

of Congress. He was accused of being part of a sex trafficking operation. I mean, just look at him. Look at that face. I mean, it says it all. Matt Gaetz looks like a date rapist, so I believe all those charges. Why did the DOJ let him go? Because it's Merrick Garland's DOJ. So that's reason number one. And as part of that, the excuse that was given in reporting by CNN was that the DOJ, the prosecutors didn't feel that their witnesses in that case were reliable, which is bullshit.

Andrea Chalupa (11:53):

Maybe Gaetz was a snitch that helped land Greenberg, but it's very much in the overall culture of Merrick Garland's DOJ, where the big fish, like the members of Congress, like the other coup plotters like Steve Bannon are allowed to walk around free. And it's the people around them that are suffering. It's all by design, right? It's Merrick Garland's DOJ. He wants proximity to power. He's somebody that doesn't want to upset the hornets' nest. He's as corrupt as they come. He's one of them. Steve Bannon just did this rant on his podcast where he was threatening putting Merrick Garland in prison when Banon and Trump supposedly come back in power in 2024. He's like, "We're going to come get you!" We'll play a clip of that now.

[begin audio clip]

Steve Bannon (12:38):

Your day's coming, dude. After January of 2025, when we go back over this whole illegitimate regime and we get into the receipts, he should be imprisoned for the rest of his life. And my God, if we do our job, after we win, he will be in prison for the rest of his life.

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (12:59):

They're not going to do anything to Merrick Garland. Let's say Trump does come back into power. Merrick Garland's going to enjoy a cushy retirement giving speeches to the Federalist Society. He's fine. He's done his work letting Gaetz and the rest of the coup plotters off the hook. The storm troopers, a thousand or so insurrectionists are going to be freed and walk free. We could point to any person around him and be like, this is why Merrick Garland's corrupt. This is whose payroll he's on. No, Merrick Garland is continuing in a long tradition of the DOJ letting criminals, letting elite impunity run rampant. The DOJ did this when Wall Street executives crashed our global economy. They let them all off the hook. No one got arrested except for one minor person for some minor issue down the line. And then Wall Street got a socialist bailout from the American taxpayer after wiping out fortunes, after wiping out retirements, after wiping out savings accounts and all those Wall Street executives ran free, ran rampant, and they're doing it all again.

Andrea Chalupa (14:02):

That's who Merrick Garland represents; that proud tradition of elite criminal impunity. He's on *60 Minutes* preaching about protecting democracy when not actually practicing it. And now here we are with Matt Gaetz being allowed to hold up much-needed aid for Ukraine that is fighting for survival, where children are being raped in front of their parents. Tens and tens of thousands of kids have been kidnapped into Russia. The real QAnon conspiracy is going on there and Republicans are fine with it because they are ultimately the party of the real QAnon. It's all projection with their accusations.

[advertisement for Hello Fresh]

Andrea Chalupa [16:16]:

What needs to be done now? If we had a real D O J, we would have Gaetz and others being investigated for being on the payroll of dark Russian money. If Clarence Thomas, who's been ruling from the Supreme Court like he was a kept man—and it turns out he was of Nazi memorabilia enthusiast, Harlan Crow, funneling all this money to him when he had cases going before Clarence Thomas—it's obvious Gaetz and these others in Congress aren't doing this for free. They are too cynical to work for free. They are not interns of the Kremlin. They're clearly on some Russian dark money. They need to be investigated for that. That's probably why Trump is now suing Christopher Steele, the former MI6 officer who investigated Trump's Kremlin ties and produced what's now known as the infamous Steele Report, which accurately pointed to longtime Kremlin operative Paul Manafort being the center node between the Trump/Russia operation that brought the Trump family to power in 2016.

Andrea Chalupa (17:15):

So now Trump pops up in the middle of his five lawsuits to find time, to find the energy, to find the resources to sue Christopher Steele. It's obvious that there's this larger operation going on to get Trump back into power to shut down American democracy for once and for all and let Ukraine fall to Russia. And then once Russia rebuilds its forces in Ukraine and occupies Ukraine, it will keep going. We know that because Russia is very good at telling us what it wants to do. It has done this for years. They put up statues to Stalin for years because they wanted their Russian empire back. They wanted the Soviet Union back. They wanted to genocide Ukraine again, and they're not going to stop at Ukraine. I promise you, as the person that warned everyone in a peace for Time Ideas in December, 2013 that the revolution in Ukraine was going to lead to war in Ukraine and that the statues going up to Stalin were a sign that Russian fascism was back.

Andrea Chalupa (18:18):

Reporters in the 1930s that were covering Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany said it was basically the same dystopia. It was just plain old fascism. It was just dystopia. So that is what they're going to bring back, and they're not going to stop at Ukraine. I promise you, they're not going to stop at Ukraine. So this whole operation by Trump to sue Christopher Steele is a chilling, warning/intimidation tactic to all the would-be investigators out there saying, "You don't touch us or we will try to destroy you" or "we will destroy you," right? That's what they want. That's an invitation everyone now to please investigate them now. Go after them because they're trying to turn you away with this Christopher Steele lawsuit. Don't be intimidated by it. We need all the *ProPublicas* out there, all the journalists, all the independent investigators, all the activists, the citizen journalists to dig into these Kremlin lobbyists in Congress.

Andrea Chalupa (19:11):

Because if Clarence Thomas is on payroll, Matt Gaetz and others are certainly on some dark money payroll. That is my opinion on the matter. The signs are all there. If it quacks like a traitor, it's a paid traitor. Remember the New York FBI, Charles McGonigal, right? Remember in 2016 when the New York FBI was acting weird, shady, and Giuliani was cackling on Fox News saying they had some card they're going to play to really nail Hillary? He'd already won the election even though all the polls were against them and New York FBI reopens the email investigation of Hillary days before the election and then that *New York Times* article comes out days before the 2016 election saying "the FBI sees no connection between Trump and Russia"? Who was their source likely for that? The New York FBI. Where it turns out—as we believed our eyes and ears back in 2016, we didn't need this confirmation, but it's nice to have it—

Andrea Chalupa (20:04):

It turns out one of the top agents at the New York FBI was on Kremlin payroll. So again, if it quacks like a traitor, it's a traitor. There's money motivation here. The Koch political dark money network that props up the Republican Party, they want to drop sanctions against Russia. They want to go back to business as usual with Russia. There's this massive Silicon Valley Koch political dark money network that we're under assault by right now. So if you feel like your head is spinning, it's because it's all deliberate. They're trying to demoralize us, they're trying to beat us down. And unfortunately we have a DOJ that is continuing in its proud tradition of elite criminal impunity. So it's up to us to fight back and that's what we're going to do together. We have no choice now. We've got 399 days until the election, and we just need to stay vigilant.

Andrea Chalupa (20:57):

We have to stay strong within ourselves. We need to be defiant now in the face of real fascism because the threats are real and we cannot give up and we have to fight like hell now, just like generations before us came and fought and now we just can't go back, there's no going back. We're only going to go forward. And that brings us to Dianne Feinstein, who passed away at the age of 90. She was a trailblazer of women in Congress. She navigated during a difficult time, of course, with the Harvey Milk assassination. And she unfortunately tarnished her legacy by not stepping down at a time that would've been more dignified for her and her family and also for our country. She put our democracy at risk and I want to just personally blast her staff, Dianne Feinstein's Congressional staff, that kept up this charade of allowing her to stay in Congress as long as she did.

Andrea Chalupa (21:56):

Why was that so dangerous to all of us and why are we talking about that even though people might say, "Leave it alone, she was a trailblazer in many ways. Have some respect."? No, this was shameful what went on. It was absolutely shameful. Let me just explain. I'm going to start with Big Tobacco. That's what we're going to start with. How did the American public finally get protections against Big Tobacco? It was the courts. It was the lawsuits brought to the courts. It was our legal system that finally brought Big Tobacco to heel. That is a model for taking on the NRA and for the climate crisis. So we need the courts to be strong and transparent, especially as Congress remains gridlocked. Unfortunately, Trump and McConnell packed 30% of our courts with far-right ideologues. Feinstein staying in office slowed down Biden's ability to appoint judges.

Andrea Chalupa (22:53):

And that's according to Dick Durbin, the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. You may have heard online memes going out there that Biden appointed more judges since JFK. That was true way back in August, 2022. Right now, Biden's at around 140 judges with around a year left in his presidency. When Trump left office, he had appointed a hundred more judges than that. So Biden needs to speed it up in the time that he has left. And Trump, of course, famously, as we all don't need to be reminded, got three on the Supreme Court that have made our lives miserable ever since. So if Merrick Garland ever gets around to opening a federal ethics investigation into Clarence Thomas, as Democrats have demanded, maybe Biden might have another judge to appoint, but Merrick would have to actually do his job in order for that to happen.

Andrea Chalupa (23:48):

Judges are everything. It's why Hitler and the Nazis attacked the legal system as soon as they came to power, purging and installing loyalists, turning Germany into a dictatorship in six months. The far right has their eyes set on the exact same thing. Leonard Leo, co-chair of the nonsense fascist society, the Federalist Society, and the architect of Trump and McConnell's court packing, he wants to come back. He

wants the White House back, alright? And all of the staffers, the congressional staffers that kept up with Dianne Feinstein's charade, you should all be investigated as well, for maybe taking some bribes or other favors, for keeping her in power as long as you did. That was shameful and it had real world consequences on us as Americans. It slowed down Biden's ability for months—for months!—to appoint judges. Shame on you. Just to end this news recap, Trump and his two idiot sons faced New York State AG Tish James in court for her civil lawsuit, accusing Trump—a career criminal and chronic liar—of fraud, including inflating his wealth by a lot to get loans.

Andrea Chalupa (25:03):

And if found guilty, the Trumps could have to pay \$250 million and be barred from practicing business in New York state. In addition to that civil lawsuit, Trump faces four criminal lawsuits, including the New York case of hush money payments to Stormy Daniels, the Florida case of stealing our national secrets and keeping them—including nuclear secrets—lying around Mar-a-Lago, a known viper's den of foreign spies. But knowing Trump, he had his agents (like, the Kushners) just selling that stuff straight up to the Saudis and the Russians and China. Then, of course, there's the Georgia case and Jack Smith DC case all for trying to overthrow our democracy. So he's very busy at the moment, all while running for president. And to help us make sense of the times we're in, we have on the show this week historian Heather Cox Richardson, author of the widely popular Substack *Letters from an American* and the new must-read book, *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*. She's on the show joining me in gushing over our boyfriend, Ulysses S. Grant.

[transition music]

Andrea Chalupa (26:24):

First things first, Heather: Ulysses S. Grant. Go.

Heather Cox Richardson (26:30):

Well, I'm a big fan of Grant. People tend to remember him only because of what he did in the American Civil War, but he was actually an extraordinarily bright man. Not only was he a brilliant military strategist, but he was also an extraordinarily good politician, a very principled man. And he was also, of course, the person who really started the realist movement in American literature with his memoirs, which are simply brilliant. They're simply brilliant, as a writer. He is misremembered a lot because there was a political hit that was done on him before the 1872 election. And historians and people who study that period tend to focus on the newspapers and what the newspaper said about him, but that was all part of the attempt of a group of newspapermen to bring him down. The actual accusations they were making were not substantiated ever in the court of law, which is sort of illuminating for this moment.

Heather Cox Richardson (27:26):

But all that said, here are the things that I like best about Grant, aside from the memoirs and aside from the fact he won the Civil War and aside from the fact he tried to protect Black Americans in the South, is that he was a really ordinary guy in person. He did have a drinking problem when he was bored. If he was on campaign, he didn't drink, but when he was off campaign, he did drink too much. He adored his wife, absolutely adored his wife, Julia Dent Grant. And my favorite story about that is the pictures that we have of Julia are side too, because she didn't like to be photographed straight on because she had a lazy eye that she thought made her look unattractive and it could have been corrected by surgery, but of course in those days that could also involve losing an eye because they didn't understand about germs or anything.

Heather Cox Richardson (28:18):

So when he started to get famous, she wrote to him and said she was going to have the surgery done so that she would look better to be with him. He's quite a handsome man. And he wrote back this passionate letter in which he said, "Don't do anything to change your appearance. I love you the way you are, and I don't care what other people think. So don't you think about doing something you're afraid of because of what other people think because I adore you." And he also, the other stories I love about Grant are that if you look at the pictures of him from the war, he's very, very slight. He's thin and his men worried a great deal about him because he essentially lived on coffee and pastries during the war. The pictures that you see on the currency for example, or in later years when he's president, he's huge.

Heather Cox Richardson (29:03):

And people don't realize that that's a space of a very few years. And the difference there is that once the war was over, he started to eat again. But until he died, in that day and age, they believed you needed to eat meat. So they always put meat in front of him, but he couldn't eat meat unless it had been cooked so entirely thoroughly that there was no juice in it at all because if he saw the juices for meat on a plate, it reminded him of the battlefield. He cared a great deal about what had happened to his men. And the other piece that I really love about him is that he was just doing his job. He was a brilliant man, obviously. But my favorite story of all about him is that the morning of the surrender at the Appomattox Court House, he had had a migraine all night and hadn't been able to sleep.

Heather Cox Richardson (29:49):

And so when he woke up in the morning—and I just love this because how many of us have those days when you just think you cannot get out of bed because you've got a migraine or because you were up all night or because you can't face what's coming at work or because you're fighting with your significant other or whatever?—and he hadn't slept all night. He'd been wrapped in mustard plasters, which irritate your skin to try and make his headache better. And so he gets out of bed and he reaches to the floor and he picks up the clothes that are on the floor, which again, sorry, but how many of us have done that? And he just gets up and he goes to work because he has to. And that's the day that Lee recognizes that he can no longer protect his army of Northern Virginia.

Heather Cox Richardson (30:32):

And he surrenders. And I just love that moment of, like, it's not pomp and circumstance. It's not, "My God, I'm going to win today!" It's dragging yourself out of bed with a migraine, which if you've ever had a migraine, it's a whole new kettle of fish from headaches. And he just gets up and he does the best he can because it's his duty and his job to do the best he can. And that, to me, just encapsulates him more than any of the victories or the presidency or anything else. He just kept doing his job.

Andrea Chalupa (31:05):

I was getting tears in my eyes listening to talking about Grant. I always say on the show he's my boyfriend, because he is. He's one of my mentors that's helping me through this time. I call Grant the original Nazi hunter because that's what he was doing. The Confederates back then that would go on with the Deep South, with Jim Crow, literally informing the Nazis how to create this legal structure of genocide in Germany. Grant was Nazi hunting before it was cool. [laughs] He's extraordinary. He's not perfect because none of us are. And I think the circumstances of how that memoir came to be, the fact that he lost his fortune in a Ponzi scheme... He was a huge celebrity, right? And I'm telling our audience this, because I know I'm not telling you this, Heather, but he was this huge celebrity in his day, global celebrity, and someone took advantage of him—the hotshot of Wall Street at the time—and he lost everything. His good friend, Mark Twain, convinced him to write a memoir and helped him with it,



helped him get a publisher to bring in money so that his wife and kids would have something after he passed. So as he's dying, he relives his great legacy and he's doing that not because of his ego, not to set any records straight, but literally to rebuild after he had so much taken from him and to leave his family was something.

Heather Cox Richardson (32:30):

So how did you fall in love with Grant?

Andrea Chalupa (32:32):

Well, first off, how do you not fall in love with Grant? But this is going to be the whole episode. I'm just letting everyone know. So I watched Fisher Stevens, who was one of the producers of the, Leonardo DiCaprio, I believe, was one of the producers of that great three-part series, I believe. It was on Grant. It was a dramatized series, and the British actor that played Grant was fabulous. My sister, Alexandra Chalupa, whose story we've told many times on the show, she watched it first and she's the one that sang its praises. And then I watched it and really clung to it during the hellfire of 2020. And in fact, when Sarah and I announced our pre-coup January 6th special because we saw the coup coming, we were warning about the coup all through 2020 on the show. And as the coup was ramping up, we announced a special on it.

Andrea Chalupa (33:23):

We're like, "Come back here after January 6th because we're going to talk about the coup that's about to happen." And in that episode, I think we called it [Traitors and Patriots](#), and I ended our *Gaslit Nation* special announcing the coup before it happened. I ended that episode reading from Grant's own words how we're living in a time of traitors and patriots. And he just captured the moment perfectly for us. And it's been really interesting how these heroes of history have come back, how they've been resurrected. I really do believe as an artist, as a filmmaker, that there is something higher out there that chooses you as a creator to bring this story out into the world when people need it. I felt possessed by the Gareth Jones story. I felt like there was some hand of God that was forcing me to tell it. I had no choice.

Andrea Chalupa (34:10):

I was like Job in the Bible trying to run away from it for so long, but it kept pulling me back in and it survived to be told. And people don't understand how many miracles, how many... We were just saved left and right to get that story out. And it's shown around the world right before Russia launches a second genocide on Ukraine. I'm telling you, there was something there that brought that story out through me and many others. We were like a coalition of soulmates, I call the *Mr. Jones* team. And I felt that way with Alexander Hamilton, how Lin Manuel Miranda also felt possessed and taken over to tell this because he was a boring, wonky, founding father who cared about this treasury guy. But it turns out there's so much more there. And he came at a moment where we really had to understand the promises of our country, the revolution, the enlightenment that our nation—our imperfect nation—was born in, and how these individuals had to sacrifice so much to try to reach the greater promises, and how we're part of the story of fighting for those greater promises.

Andrea Chalupa (35:09):

I'm telling you, I was in the Society of Cincinnati in Washington, DC in November of 2016 when Trump had just come to power with the Kremlin's help. And I'm listening to the Hamilton soundtrack in my ears in an institute that was founded to help Revolutionary War veterans. And I'm looking at these oil paintings of Alexander Hamilton and our founding fathers, and I'm at this event. And at this event with me are Kremlin agents, GRU agents, including one who was in the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting with

Don Jr., Kushner, and Paul Manafort. And I'm just thinking, "This is why Hamilton had to come back right now. So we understand that America is worth fighting for." No, it is not perfect. Yes, it was built on genocide, but we're trying to restore justice and healing and preserve and protect historical truths and fight for equality and make this country safe, not just for us as Americans, but for the whole world.

Heather Cox Richardson (36:04):

That must've been an amazing meeting to be at. One last thing about Grant before we go forward with all the other modern stuff: the house where he wrote that memoir still stands in New York and somebody took me to it. I don't know where anything is. I have no sense of direction. It's still there. And you can see the porch. It's now, of course, in the middle of the city. At the time it was a farm on the edge of the city. And you can stand and the porch is the same pretty much, at least that's how I remember it. And it's really, really weird to think of those pictures—because there are so many pictures of him—he was dying of cancer and he's wrapped in blankets as he's literally writing this out by hand. And to sit there and it's like that's where he sat, that's in the pictures. It's pretty powerful. And now here we are all these years later and you're at a meeting with Russian agents.

Andrea Chalupa (36:58):

Such as life now in America. So let me ask you this. How did we get to this moment of crisis in America? We're on the brink of autocracy. And of course in many states it's already there, certainly for non-white people, LGBTQ+ people and those who are pregnant. There's real fascism in some of these so-called red states, and even in parts of so-called blue states, so-called purple states, groups of us are living under real threat on a daily level. How did we reach this point?

Heather Cox Richardson (37:30):

It's a reflection, I think, of a period, you know, from 1933 with the arrival of the Democrats' policies under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that implemented the New Deal through 1981 when Reagan takes office to dismantle that system. We have been since then on a trajectory that tries to tear apart the period from 1933 to 1981. And in that period, Americans from all political stripes embraced the idea that the government was supposed to regulate business, protect a basic social safety net, promote infrastructure and defend civil rights in the states. That idea that the federal government has a role to play in all those areas was called the liberal consensus. And people embraced it, as I say, across all parties. But the rise of the liberal consensus was popular enough that people stopped defending it. They stopped talking about democracy, they stopped talking about the importance of inclusion in American society for all people.

Heather Cox Richardson (38:31):

And what that did is it opened the way for a small group of elites who were—or not necessarily elites, a small group of people who were eager to dismantle the regulation of business and the protection of civil rights, primarily including the idea of women taking roles outside the home that traditional religious conservatives, especially southern conservatives, didn't like. A small group of people tried to destroy that liberal consensus and they did so by telling a story. And it was a story about little guys that were endangered by an empire, if you will; a government that was crushing their individuality and that in order to really make America great again—which by the way was pioneered not by Donald Trump, but by Ronald Reagan—you had to dismantle this state. And if you were going to do that, you had to identify the enemies who were creating this state and supporting this state, and they were all the people that you're talking about.

Heather Cox Richardson (39:26):

So that narrative, which really took off in the 1950s, and you can see it in things like the popularity of *Rawhide* and *Bonanza* and *The Lone Ranger* and all the westerns that were on television in the 1950s and the 1960s. That narrative became in the 1960s—especially under President Richard Nixon—a narrative of us good guys (the silent majority, the white middle class) against them. And “them” became anybody who was looking for those things that I’m talking about; the regulation of business, a social safety net infrastructure or the protection of civil rights. And from that, of course, we got a government under Reagan that went and gutted the middle class, pushed through a number of laws and tax cuts that really moved wealth upward dramatically and made the rest of the country really fall backward. And with that, it created a population that was eager to demonize that other group of people, those others.

Heather Cox Richardson (40:24):

And from that, and this is really obviously a drive-by history here, but we get Trump in 2016 holding up a mirror to those disaffected people and saying, “Look, I can give you what you want. I’m racist, I’m sexist, *and* I’m going to make your healthcare better.” People forget this, but he talked about healthcare, he talked about fair taxes, talked about bringing back manufacturing. He talked about infrastructure. “I’m going to give you all those things that you have been primed to want since 1981 and to some degree before that.” And from that, of course, we get Trump in office and his real attacks on our institutions and in the institutions that are so important for protecting democracy because they are staffed by people who are nonpartisan (at least in their professional lives) and simply want to protect the guardrails of a democratic system. Those guardrails are in real trouble now.

Heather Cox Richardson (41:20):

At the federal level, certainly, if the Republicans continue to grow in power at the national level—you look at the 2025 project and you ought to break out in hives because it is a blueprint for authoritarianism. But certainly at the state level and at the state level where Trump was so effective at packing Republican Party officials with his own people. We have things like you’re talking about: the 14 states that have imposed really draconian restrictions on abortion and on LGBTQ rights, even though a poll that was taken just the week that you and I are recording this, says that only 9%—9%!—of Americans believe that abortion should be illegal in all cases whatsoever. You can’t get 9% of people to agree on, you know, what time to have lunch. The idea that somehow they are representing the majority is just a fantasy. But we’ve ended up now in a place where, because of that, I think that story and the fact that a lot of people weren’t paying attention because the guardrail seemed as if, “Yeah, maybe it’s not a president you like, but how much damage can he really do?” Now we’ve lost those guardrails and we have a much better sense of how much damage could he really do. And the answer is all of it.

Andrea Chalupa (42:37):

Yep, absolutely. So in terms of *Democracy Awakening* and in your brilliant Substack and wherever you appear—I watch your YouTube videos and it’s so fun hanging out with you through the power of YouTube—what are your lessons from history on how we protect ourselves now and how we build a livable future? Because I think people are seeing authoritarianism as the smash-grab for power of population control, population culling in order to fight for survival in this *Mad Max* wasteland as the climate crisis asteroid hits and we live in this totally inhospitable, lawless, ungovernable world. And ungovernable, I’m using that, of course, from the Pentagon; America’s own national security reports of where we’re headed. So what lessons do you have for us at this moment in time? What can we look back on in history in terms of how to protect ourselves now and build a livable future?

Heather Cox Richardson (43:40):

So one of the things I think is really important to do is to remember to keep things in the correct lanes. That is, it's really easy to feel overwhelmed if you think about it all and you think you have to fix all of it. And so one of the things that I try and focus on is what part of this I can affect? And so I have a dear friend whose big concern is fresh water. And she says, "If we could just make sure everybody in the world has drinkable water, we could fix so many things because if you don't have drinkable water, you're susceptible to all these diseases and you have high mortality rates and on and on." She said, "I don't understand why everybody doesn't care about getting people fresh water. That should be everybody's top priority." And I said to her, "Well, actually, my top priority is getting people elected who care about getting fresh water to everybody."

Heather Cox Richardson (44:31):

So one of the things to do is to figure out what your lane is. She's really working hard on getting people fresh water. I'm not working on that at all, because she's working on that; I'm working on getting people elected who will make that a priority or make those sorts of policies a priority. So the first thing to do, I think, is to make sure you're not trying to fix everything at once because fixing the issue of climate change—and it's really dire—is a question of making sure we have the people in place who will make that a priority. Because if we get rid of the governments that are making it a priority because we're upset about the entire system, it's not a win. The idea of replacing the institutions that are working on those issues very imperfectly, but working on them... I mean, the Biden administration has invested far more in climate science.

Heather Cox Richardson (45:24):

It's a historic investment in climate science than anybody has before. And it feels to me like we're in one of those zeitgeist moments that you were just identifying for Hamilton, for example, that everybody recognizes now that something has to be done, but it's going to take more push to make sure enough gets done because we're certainly not there yet, but tearing down those who are working imperfectly is not an answer. Because what we're going to get is the people who simply want to continue to rake in as much money as they possibly can from fossil fuels. And that's not going to take us in any way near where we need to go. But I think that from history, the story that we don't tell enough and that is so crucial in this moment is that what really creates change is, first of all, changing the way people think about things by telling the right stories. But also by creating communities that act on those stories.

Heather Cox Richardson (46:18):

So one of the things that really jumps out to me—and I'm 60 and I don't feel like this has been the story of my life, I feel like this has really started coming to the fore in the 1990s and the 2000 aughts—is people saying to me, "I'm only one person. What can I do?": And the answer to that is find another person because the reality is we would not be in the place we are in the United States today with an attempt of a small minority—and they are a small minority—to take power by manipulating the system and by creating violence against the rest of us if they were a majority. By definition, if you're a majority, you don't need to suppress anything because you know you can rely on voters, for example, to keep you in power. One of the reasons that Democrats want to keep making sure a lot of people can vote is they know what they want to do is very popular.

Heather Cox Richardson (47:10):

So recognizing that the reason the minority (the political minority) is trying so hard to manipulate the system is because they know that if in fact we recognize our strong majority, they won't have a leg to stand on. So the idea of finding someone else is incredibly important. And there's a number of organizations that do that, that help you figure out who else in your ruby red area is actually thinking the way you are. But also then recognizing that what has always created change in the United States is two

things. One is an economic system that's fair—and that sounds like a really funny thing for me to say but if you look at any of our civil rights movements, they come in times of economic prosperity in which there's not a huge gap between the people at the bottom and the people at the top. So one of the reasons I'm always focusing on tax policy, which sounds like, “What?! You care about climate change so you're focused on tax policy?!”

Heather Cox Richardson (48:05):

If people feel like they've got enough to eat, they're willing to share with other people. That's the bottom line. That is always a predicate to making sure we get positive change in this country. The other one though is transparency. That is, if you think about the civil rights movement, and people tend to focus on Rosa Parks, for example, not being willing to go to the back of the bus. But what really made Rosa Parks is she was a secretary for the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) which was formed in 1909. And it's a biracial coalition, a multi-religious coalition, a multi-political coalition designed to make this country a democracy once and for all. And they're very clear about organizing in 1909 as a reflection of the fact they're trying to mirror Lincoln's birth a hundred years before they organize.

Heather Cox Richardson (48:56):

Not technically, but they say they organize on his birthday. And what they do is they don't simply work in the courts for the expansion of civil rights, although they do do that as well. They always talk in public, in very public ways about things that are not fair; about atrocities, about people being killed, about rapes, about the ways in which the laws as they existed at the time, especially in the American South, the Jim Crow laws, were themselves a perversion of American democracy and were actively creating circumstances in which white men largely could enact atrocities, could hurt people, could rape people, could murder people, could put their eyes out, could do all sorts of things that white Americans didn't want to look at. They insisted on keeping those front and center. And at the end of the day, once people understood what was happening through a community that was highlighting those things, they did the right thing.

Heather Cox Richardson (49:56):

We get the Civil rights Movement. First of all, we get the Reconstruction, but we also get the Civil rights movement from white men, who were the ones who were voting in that period, which people tend to forget. But how did they get to a place like that? They got to a place because they looked at the things that the community that was inherent in the NAACP was highlighting and refusing to let them look away from any longer. So the idea that we can't change things is just not born out by our history, even the face of extraordinary disadvantages.

Andrea Chalupa (50:37):

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