

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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“Giuliani and The Unholy Trinity”

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

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. And so there has been a trend over the last few months here in the United States of Amnesia, which is the erasure of the Trump Crime Cult's history by both the media and by officials, including a near total lack of accountability for the January 6th attack on the Capitol. Instead, media outlets and politicians have drowned themselves in debates over Dr. Seuss, Mr. Potato Head, or Mrs. Potato Head. I don't know what the hell it's called, because it's a freaking plastic potato, and other trivialities that they are redefining as culture wars. There's a lot to say about the difference between the right-wing depiction of "wokeness," versus, say, civil rights and historical accuracy, or for that matter, the difference between "cancel culture" and accountability.

Sarah Kendzior:

For example, it's not cancel culture when a publisher pulls Josh Hawley's book about the evils of big tech after he encouraged a violent attack on the country that he's supposed to defend. And it's definitely not cancel culture when another publisher picks up his book and Hawley brags that his book on the evils of big tech is number two on Amazon.com. That's just hypocrisy culture, but I digress. Want to know what cancel culture really looks like? It looks like intimidation, excessive litigation and attempted censorship.

Sarah Kendzior:

And it's happening right now to Catherine Belton, the author of the critically acclaimed book, *Putin's People* which came out last year. *Putin's People* describes how Putin rose to power alongside KGB lackeys and a coterie of oligarchs who then proceeded to strip down the former USSR and sell it off for parts. Notably, Belton extends her analysis into the role of the West, discussing how oligarchs from the former USSR moved into the US and Europe and used their geographic perch not only to strengthen Putin, but to enable the destruction of Western institutions from within.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is the story of, as we always say on Gaslit Nation, transnational crime syndicates masquerading as governments. So what is happening to Catherine Belton now? She is being sued for defamation by some of the most powerful oligarchs in the world. This is an act not only meant to intimidate Belton, but to intimidate anyone reporting on oligarchs and mafiosos. And the timing of it, after Putin ally Donald Trump left office and Russia's authoritarianism increased in turn, is notable. We have a lot to say on this, but first let's run down who exactly is suing Belton. So first we have Mikhail Fridman, a citizen of Russia

and Israel who co-founded Alfa Bank. You may recall Alfa Bank as the bank named in investigations of illicit activity between Trump and Russia during the 2016 election, as well as its connection to Russian operative, Maria Butina, and the NRA. Alfa Bank was the subject of a FBI investigation, although all those inquiries seemed to have been dropped, probably because Fridman sues anybody who talks about it.

Sarah Kendzior:

In 2018, the US treasury department put Fridman on a list of figures with ties to the Kremlin. Like many oligarchs, Fridman launders his reputation through charitable donations, including to the Russian Jewish Congress, the European Jewish Fund, and Israel's Genesis Fund, as well as through positions in prestigious groups like the Council on Foreign Relations, other members of which included Jeffrey Epstein, who laundered his reputation in a similar fashion. And for more on this, you should listen to our interview with Jennifer Taub, the author of *Big Dirty Money*, where she talks about how oligarchs and plutocrats from around the world engaged in this kind of reputational rehab. And so then, another oligarch suing her is Roman Abramovich, who we've covered on this show several times. Like Fridman, Abramovich-

Andrea Chalupa:

Ivanka's good friends with his ex wife who came to the inauguration as Ivanka's guest. Yep. Sorry, continue.

Sarah Kendzior:

Exactly. Oh, no. You're welcome to weigh in. Like Fridman, Abramovich is a citizen of Russia and Israel, and is in fact now the richest person in Israel. He became an Israeli citizen in 2018 after the UK refused to renew his visa following the Skripal poisonings, which was the murder and attempted murder of British citizens on UK soil by Russian assassins. Until then, Abramovich had long been a prominent figure in the UK due to his ownership of the Chelsea Football Club. Like oligarchs and mafiosos that came before him—most notably Russian mafia head, Semion Mogilevich—Abramovich used Israel's right of return rule to get Israeli citizenship that allows him to circumvent legal limitations imposed on oligarchs like him in the West. So this is a very, very powerful guy. This is one of the most powerful people in the world and it must be horrific for Belton to be targeted by him.

Sarah Kendzior:

Abramovich is a winner of the aluminum wars of Russia's brutal 1990s and he is allegedly the person who suggested to Yeltsin that Putin be brought to power. Like Fridman, he attempts to launder his reputation through charity, including donating money to Russian infrastructure projects and being one of the biggest donors in the world to the Chabad movement and to right-wing Israeli groups building settlements. And so this is just the capsule view and maybe Andrea will have more to say when I finish this little rundown. There's a lot of information out there on all of these guys and you can read Belton's book or other books detailing this nexus between the Kremlin, oligarchs and organized crime for more. Anyway, moving along, Belton is also being sued by Rosneft, the Russian oil mega-corporation that has come under investigation for numerous environmental and financial controversies, including violation of anti-monopoly legislation, to put it lightly.

Sarah Kendzior:

Like everyone else I just mentioned, Rosneft tried to launder its dirty reputation by buying European football clubs and making massive charitable donations, but they still ended up being sanctioned by the

West. The desire to get those sanctions lifted played a major role in Russia's election interference in 2016 and it's likely why Rex Tillerson, the Rosneft-friendly Exxon CEO who was awarded an Order of Friendship medal by Putin in 2013, became Trump's first secretary of state. And finally, we have a lesser known individual, Shalva Chigirinsky, another oil and real estate tycoon who has been under investigation for a multitude of crimes, including tax evasion, spousal abuse, and sexually abusing his own daughter when she was a child. The now teenage daughter has told courts that she wants nothing to do with him. Like Abramovich, Chigirinsky became a citizen of Israel after having to leave London after falling under investigation.

Sarah Kendzior:

And he also was, for a while, a resident of the United States. Like the others, they are treated as untouchable in multiple courts of law. These guys are often referred to as "Russian oligarchs," but in many cases, they are not ethnically Russian, nor are they from what is now the Russian Federation—they'll come from former Soviet states like Georgia or Ukraine—nor are they always residents of Russia. These are people who tend to hold multiple passports, multiple residences, definitely multiple bank accounts and are key players in transnational activity that skirts the boundaries of illegal activity and exploits loopholes in competing court systems.

Sarah Kendzior:

This makes them much harder to catch and to bring to justice. They got their start, however, by garnering Kremlin support during the turbulent '90s and consolidating that support alongside Putin in a symbiotic and deeply corrupt relationship. Anyway, that's the group of dangerous elites who are suing a lone author for her investigative work. It's notable that this libel suit is playing out in the UK, whose libel laws have also enabled the targeting and attempted silencing of other journalists, notably Carol Cadwalladr, who similarly dug into Russian and multinational corruption regarding Brexit and social media. This is a very scary time to be a journalist when you are doing real work. So, Andrea, what are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa:

That's the real censorship. This is the same classic story with Tucker Carlson in the United States screaming about censorship or how oppressed he feels, even though he's got massive job security with his own primetime cable news network and the protection of his boss, Lachlan Murdoch, who shares his far-right extremist views, his Nazi dog whistling and all of it. So it is the danger that we're up against, which is, when you have historic levels of income inequality, whether it's in the United States—which came extremely close to becoming a kleptocracy should Donald Trump have stolen the 2020 election state and power.

Andrea Chalupa:

Obviously you have these historic levels of income inequality in Russia as well and other closed societies and struggling democracies like Ukraine. And what happens there is with oligarch owned media, with an oligarch class, the civil society—the people in the grassroots, the journalists, the editors, the writers, the artists—they have to struggle against their own self-censorship, which is extremely difficult to do because you have to choose between speaking the truth and saying what needs to be said for the good of your society.

Andrea Chalupa:

Keeping things fair and open, fighting for human rights and equality, protecting lives, actual lives that hang in the balance of the most vulnerable, and whether putting food on your table or staving off a destructive lawsuit that could bankrupt you, or a prison sentence in some countries. We've seen a climate that's become increasingly dangerous worldwide towards journalists, towards activists. This is happening right here in the United States. So part of fixing income inequality is protecting freedom of speech because the more fair things are for everybody, the more opportunities we all have to rise up, the stronger the social safety net for all of us, the more communal of a spirit you're going to be fostering.

Andrea Chalupa:

And you're going to be defanging these powerful people from weaponizing their wealth against you through lawsuits, through harassment, through black ops that they could hire these firms to investigate you as they did with Ronan Farrow and in the investigation of Harvey Weinstein and others. So again, if you want to have free speech, free media, free open mind in society, artists feeling safe, journalists, independent thinkers feeling safe and able to say what needs to be said for the good of all, you need to confront and fix the historical levels of income inequality. And that is a global fight against corruption, wherever it may be found.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. It's surreal to see the sorts of things people are arguing about here, which are often in this realm of triviality, when you look at what's happening to Belton, when you look at what happened to Ronan Farrow. I wonder, I feel like we're in a different era and some of this is like what we talked about last week with paywalls going up and the actual investigative journalism, the sort of dangerous journalism that's being done is often not revealed to the public. It's often very hard to get and then, of course, a bunch of gossip and lies and propaganda is circulating freely. But I think there's also just been a drop, like an unwillingness to really root out the corruption at its core. I look at Ronan Farrow's *Catch and Kill* and I think that couldn't get published today.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I look at Catherine Belton's *Putin's People*, and I think that probably couldn't get published today. And I look at my own book, at *Hiding in Plain Sight*, and I'm like, "That can't be published today either." And the commonality to this is that I guess, with the exception of Weinstein for Ronan Farrow's book, the bad guys won. They've gotten away with it. The fact that Tucker Carlson is surging is an example of this. There wasn't accountability for the crimes. Mueller didn't come through, Congress didn't come through, they haven't even acted on Capitol attacks and because of that, the ambiguity about, "Well, who's really the troublemaker here? Who's really the bad guy?" It becomes the journalists. It becomes the people who are digging into these massive acts of corruption with almost no institutional support—a lack of support from our government, a lack of support from publishers who get scared off by these types of lawsuits, these sorts of threats, just the sheer volume of power.

Sarah Kendzior:

The fact that these are billionaires, these are people who control so much of the world's economy, that it's really a David and Goliath situation and David's getting trampled here. And I don't know what that means. I think people are... Maybe they're indulging in these really silly arguments, like for example of a silly argument, there've been numerous Substack debates among major well-known figures about whether saying that you're tired on social media is some act of performativity and some grand statement about where you are in the political spectrum, instead of simply saying you're tired for whatever reason.

You didn't sleep well last night, it's a global pandemic, whatever. That's the kind of thing that people are writing these weird think pieces and having these weird debates about. And meanwhile, we have rising autocracy and mafia states actually targeting journalists, making it impossible for them to work, putting them in jeopardy.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've had so many people on this show whose lives have been put in jeopardy. We just had Iyad el-Baghdadi, who has been in that situation and it's just... I don't know. It's so utterly surreal to me because you see who's winning. And Hawley, like I mentioned in the beginning, is a prime example of that. Like, "Oh, cancel culture, they wouldn't publish my book after I tried to commit a seditious illegal, violent act." And then they did. And it's about how bad big tech is. Then he's bragging about how big tech is helping him sell it. It's just so transparent, it's so blatant and-

Andrea Chalupa:

The thought police is the thought police.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, they are the perennial victims. And so, yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

If you read the Idaho Legislative Act of trying to ban critical race theory, it's so controlling. It's like, "You will not think this, you will not think that. You will all be united, goddammit." It's like fascist 101, you know what I mean? So, I know... Sarah and I have had our conversations privately about how cancel culture is a thing. How do we even phrase this, Sarah? It's like-

Sarah Kendzior:

Bad faith, a lot of bad faith arguments.

Andrea Chalupa:

Because we're all exhausted and we need a punching bag and we need some release.

Sarah Kendzior:

But then there's actually a struggle for accountability, which is a completely different thing. I mean, the thing that drives me nuts with the whole, "Can we teach critical race theory in schools?" is that half the time what people are arguing against—these Republicans are arguing against—they're arguing against historical accuracy. It's not just a lens you're looking through. It's like, let's talk about some events that happened. Let's talk about what happened in Tulsa in 1921. Let's talk about the slave trade in a way that doesn't make them sound like unpaid interns. Let's be blatant about this.

Sarah Kendzior:

And in Missouri, they are trying to ban this accurate history and the high school where I live, which is a 90% Black high school that's not going to take to this favorably, they wrote a letter to the local newspaper saying, "It's unconstitutional and it's censorship, but it's also so tremendously insulting to our intelligence that you think we would just read something like The 1619 Project and we would just absorb

it uncritically, that we would not have the capacity to analyze it, question it, challenge it if that's what we wanted to do."

Sarah Kendzior:

That's the thing that's so revealing to me about the GOP side of this is that they assume anyone who reads some sort of critical text, a text that is critical of interpretations of White history or that merely points out White mob violence in the past, that everyone is going to have an identical opinion, that there's not going to be rigorous debate. It's like, the point of this is rigorous debate and young people are capable of it. But I think because the GOP falls in line like an authoritarian cult and all of their members are too afraid to speak out and deviate—and the ones who do, like Liz Cheney is doing right now, are ostracized for it—they assume that's how everybody else thinks, that we all voluntarily are signing up for Camazotz in *A Wrinkle in Time*. And it's not, it just isn't. Anyway. We should maybe go into this in another show because we have the Giuliani crime spree.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. So many crimes, so little time.

Sarah Kendzior:

Indeed, indeed.

Andrea Chalupa:

I just want to point out that, because this is historic, Idaho became the first state to ban critical race theory, which makes me think we need to airlift a bunch of books across the State of Idaho and do some educational freedom writers. You know like the magic school bus? Get the magic school bus out there and just teach people about human rights and the long authoritarian history of the United States, what came out of the mass genocide of Native Americans and the Holocaust of slavery. We will be talking more about that on other episodes. So back to the crime spree that is Giuliani.

Sarah Kendzior:

Oh yes. And back to talking about whiny criminals who portray themselves as victims. So, Rudy Giuliani, as you know, was raided by the FBI last Wednesday in what was a long overdue investigation into his illegal activity and his refusal to register as a foreign agent, which is something senators like Elizabeth Warren were bringing up in 2018 in an official capacity in a letter from the Senate. And, of course, this was all revealed to the world during the impeachment hearings in 2019. And this is another reason I feel like we're living under collective amnesia, because we have discussed all this! You already knew all this. They just didn't do anything about it, so maybe y'all forgot. Anyway, the FBI is reportedly investigating claims that Giuliani pushed to oust ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, on behalf of Ukrainian government officials in exchange for information on Biden family business dealings in Ukraine, in particular, Hunter Biden.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is of course extremely illegal, and this was also a plan that Giuliani revealed in real time, as he was committing the crimes. And we covered this in real time. We had an episode in May 2019 called, 'Will Giuliani be the Manafort of 2020?' And the answer is yes, yes, he will. And then we did a follow-up episode called 'Dirty, Dirty Giuliani.' And it's like, what the... This was just out there and I'll just have one thing to say before I'm going to turn it over to you to explain to our audience yet again what Giuliani did

in Ukraine. But now there's all this hullabaloo about, I think it's the New York Times, The Washington Post and NBC News, all having to issue a retraction because they initially reported that the FBI warned Giuliani that he was being targeted for a Russian influence operation. And when I saw those headlines saying that, I just started laughing. I knew a retraction was on the way, because he's not being targeted, he's been part of the operation the entire time.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I'm going to go into this. He's been involved in this for decades. It's like basically Rudy Giuliani volunteered as Tribute and then got promoted to Game Master in America's Hunger Games, that is what happened. What is the FBI going to say? The FBI that had two former heads, as we mentioned, many times, William Sessions and Louis Freeh go on to work with the Russian mafia. And Freeh directly was a supporter and backer of Giuliani. This is all one network. Are they going to warn him by giving him a high five? Or are they going to warn him by being like, "Good job, man. Keep it going. Trump 2020."

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, if they talked to him at all, I feel like that's probably what happened. And again, I don't understand why Christopher Wray is there. I don't have enormous faith that anything is going to really happen with this, just like it's not really happening with Matt Gaetz. But anyway, we should probably do a little refresher for our audience about why Giuliani became the Manafort of 2020. And so I'm going to pass it over to you.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. Because the money's good. [laughs] It's like a lot of job security if you're going to work for blood money. There's plenty of clients in that sphere. Manafort left a vacuum in the market and Giuliani essentially filled it. That's what happened. And yeah, I agree with you that Washington Post, New York Times and NBC News walking back that story where the FBI briefed Giuliani about being the target of a Russian disinformation campaign and he simply didn't care because... [laughs] Well, yeah, it's hilarious. But I also want to say that we briefed Giuliani about the fact that he was very much part of a Russian disinformation campaign. We had several shows about it.

Andrea Chalupa:

We laid out the entire groundwork of the first Trump impeachment. We laid out the crime as it was happening in the first half of 2019. You can listen to those episodes. There's one called 'Lisa Page' where we were like, "Trump's going to try to extort the President of Ukraine to try to create a scandal to hurt his enemies and stay in power." There's 'Dirty, Dirty Giuliani.' There is, 'Will Giuliani be the Manafort of 2020?' So, Giuliani just keeps racing the rest of the Republican establishment to the bottom and getting worse and worse. And we've been calling it out. And so has Senator Elizabeth Warren who issued a powerful letter to the Justice Department in 2018, basically calling Giuliani to be investigated for being an unregistered foreign agent. I'm going to read from this letter now.

Andrea Chalupa:

"Giuliani's work on behalf of the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine, whose mayor is a member of the Party of Regions, is concerning. The Ukrainian Party of Regions' connections to the Russian government, an anti-democratic activity, are well-documented. Paul Manafort and Rick Gates, who both served in senior roles on the president's 2016 campaign team, were convicted of or pleaded guilty to criminal acts, in part because of their work on behalf of this Russian backed Ukrainian political party. Mr Giuliani's

financial connection to the organization, the organization's close ties with the Russian government and Mr. Giuliani's ongoing public advocacy against Special Counsel, Robert Mueller's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election, raises further questions that warrant review."

Andrea Chalupa:

Again, that is Senator Elizabeth Warren to the DOJ (the Department of Justice) in 2018. Everybody paying attention to corruption in America was warning that Rudy Giuliani was a Kremlin op against American sovereignty and serving a Kremlin asset who came to power in the first place in 2016 with the Kremlin's help, which he openly welcomed. And now they're trying to deliberately cover up the crime with a long string of obstruction of justice, including firing the FBI director. So back to Giuliani, his other clients have included Bahrain (which is a dictatorship), Brazil, Turkey (which has a dictator, Erdogan), and the MEK, an Iranian opposition group once considered a terrorist organization by the US and UK.

Andrea Chalupa:

Giuliani was famously invited to speak and initially accepted attending a conference to promote the Eurasian Union, which is the Kremlin's answer to the European Union. Giuliani backed out of that after being scheduled to appear on a panel with a Russian who was an advisor to President Putin, who had been sanctioned himself for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. So, Giuliani has pretty much been rolling in it. That whole dictatorship, terrorist lobbying market that Manafort built up in recent years, Giuliani got a big piece of that action in an influential way, influential because he was the lawyer for the President of the United States and together they tried to [laughs]... It's not funny. It's not funny. None of this is funny, but understand we've been covering this for so long.

Sarah Kendzior:

We're laughing through the pain. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

Exactly. Right. This is all coping mechanisms you're hearing.

Sarah Kendzior:

It is, it really is.

Andrea Chalupa:

So many criminals, so many crimes and so little time to cover them all. And on this show, since the start, we would get pushback from listeners saying, "Why are you focusing on Ukraine so much?" And that entire time we just kept focusing on Ukraine because we're trying to tell everyone, "Wait and watch, you'll see, you'll see. You'll understand why we're focusing on Ukraine so much." And then bam, Trump's first impeachment came together. Basically Ukraine mirrors the US in some ways—big levels of income inequality, a lot of oligarch owned media, you've got a strong civic society organizing. Strong, independent journalism that's fighting against all these forces and you have these totally immoral characters that will do anything for money, like Giuliani and Manafort, and you have their Ukrainian counterparts and they all get together to commit crimes.

Andrea Chalupa:

And they're all essentially working for the interests of the Kremlin and Mitch McConnell because those two forces, the Republican Party that Mitch McConnell represents... I don't care about whatever talk there is of a civil war. There's no civil war. They're all cut from the same cloth. Birds of feather flock together. Mitch McConnell, the Republicans and the Kremlin, they're all working to enrich themselves and live above the law and to make as much money as they want at the expense of anyone and anything; the environment, people's rights, doesn't matter. They just want to make money and live above accountability. That is what brings them together. It's just a simple story of corruption, so keep that in mind. Hopefully Giuliani is going to be investigated and hopefully this continues. Hopefully Roger Stone will be fully investigated. There's already a look into his tax dodging. And then Bannon and Flynn and Manafort, the sanction package that was just passed under Biden-

Sarah Kendzior:

The Four Horsemen, sorry. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. The Four Horsemen of the American Apocalypse. So with this huge sanctions package against Russia that Biden just passed, they came out and said that Manafort was colluding with the Kremlin by giving sensitive US polling data in 2016 to a known GRU agent who was his long time associate. And he knew what he was doing when he did that. That was a confirmation of collusion. So all of this is to say that pardons don't matter now when new crimes are coming to the surface and new investigations are surfacing. And the big message for the Biden administration today is if you're serious about fixing economic struggles in America, if you're serious about fixing economic inequality, if you're serious about tackling essentially what is corruption—legalized corruption that creates all this unfairness in our economy—if you're serious about that, you have to go after the criminals that are benefiting from this system and worsening this system. And those are the names I just listed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And Kushner and Ivanka.

Andrea Chalupa:

You're stepping all over my gown. [laughs] I was just going to say, do not just go after the low hanging fruit. I know there might be a tendency to clutch one's pearls because there's just so many criminals, but that's because the crime was enormous. And the operation required a lot of criminals. They full-on worked together in a coalition of corruption to come to power in 2016. And they did it in tipping the Brexit scales as well, Brexit and Trump are the same crime. So of course you're going to have a lot of criminals because the crime was enormous. They stole the most powerful office in the world. They stole the seat of power on the planet and they abused it to enrich themselves and create all this damage. And hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in the process.

Andrea Chalupa:

These are real criminals and we deserve justice for what they have done. Do not hold back just because it might be shocking to some and send headlines around the world if you arrest all these people who deserve to be investigated and indicted. The big test that whether justice will be served is not at these low hanging fruits get picked off—like Manafort, Stone, Bannon, Giuliani—it's if Ivanka and Jared, who were the heart and soul of the Trump campaign, the nucleus of the Trump campaign and the transition team, the transition team which Michael Flynn said told him to call the Russians, right?

Sarah Kendzior:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Andrea Chalupa:

So if you go after Ivanka and Jared, who were the de facto president of the United States, along with Trump, they were running that government with him. If you go after Ivanka and Jared, do not hold back. Do not hold back. They deserve to be investigated and indicted for their long list of corruption and criminality. They are at the center of this and the low hanging fruit coming up again and again, the Kremlin clown car, we're getting tired of covering that. We need to get real justice here, and you're not going to give it to the American people until you bring down the heart and soul of the operation, which was Trump, Jared, and Ivanka, the unholy trinity.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, very well said. And I 100% agree. And to get deeper into this morass of criminality, just so you know, every week we write this kind of loose outline of, what are we going to talk about this week?

Andrea Chalupa:

And then we completely ignore it.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Occasionally we completely ignore it. But just to make sure we have our facts right, we have our dates right, et cetera. This is the longest outline, and it literally is just a list of horrible things that Rudy Giuliani has done. And it goes on and on and on and I'm not sure we're going to fit it all in. A lot of people recently have been like, "What could have brought about this change in Giuliani and how did he transform from America's Mayor to this?"

Sarah Kendzior:

He has always been this. And so I'm going to break down that; Giuliani's history of enabling crime and enabling Trump, which go hand in hand. So first of all, I will start out with, Trump has always surrounded himself with criminal lawyers, very Better Call Saul style criminal lawyers. Among the previous lawyers who were indicted was his mentor, Roy Cohn. Also, Michael Cohen was indicted. Trump has also been represented by Alan Dershowitz who was accused of raping a teenager procured by Jeffrey Epstein. And now Dershowitz, of course, is speaking out on behalf of Giuliani and defending him. During his second impeachment hearing, Trump was represented by David Schoen, who said this, this is a quote from him: "I represented all sorts of reputed mobster figures; the alleged head of the Russian mafia in this country, Israeli mafia, and two Italian bosses, as well as the guy the government claimed was the biggest mafioso in the world."

Sarah Kendzior:

So, wow, congrats. Schoen was also the last person to see Jeffrey Epstein before Epstein was proclaimed dead. So this is the type of legal crew that Trump runs with. And obviously, Giuliani fits right in that mix. And you can look at all the other lawyers surrounding him—Victoria Toensing and whatnot—you'll find the same pattern over and over. Second, the America's Mayor thing was a complete fluke. Giuliani was always a controversial and brutal figure in New York City. He was beloved by racists, Wall Street and police who like to beat up or kill innocent Black people and get away with it. By the time 9/11 hit,

Giuliani was a washed-up scandal magnet, best known at that time for cheating on his wife. And I know this because I worked at the New York Daily News at that time and one of my jobs was to create "Rudy and Judi packages" for the new thing called the internet to go on the New York Daily News website.

Sarah Kendzior:

So I got to just write endlessly about Rudy Giuliani's sex life for months on end and every job I've had since has been an improvement, even this one where I talk about organized crime and autocrats all the time. Anyway, speaking of organized crime, we'll step back a bit. Giuliani has been tied to Trump since the 1980s and he helped Trump's rise to power, as well as Trump's backers rise to power, by clearing out most of the Italian mafia when he was a prosecutor, thus making way for the Russian mafia to come in and launder their money through New York real estate (like, say, a bunch of Trump properties) while Giuliani looked the other way. In the 1990s, the FBI had begun an investigation of the Russian mafia—and this is described in Robert I. Friedman's book, *Red Mafiya*, which is highly recommended—but the focus quickly shifted to Islamic terrorism after the 9/11 attacks. From 2001 onward, foreign organized crime began to merge with American white-collar crime in a way that dangerously strengthened mafia strongholds on US institutions and benefited people like the Trump family.

Sarah Kendzior:

But aside from that, Giuliani was proclaimed a hero for his response to 9/11, but in reality, that was a mess for him as well. After the World Trade Center was attacked by terrorists first in 1993, Giuliani, who was mayor, decided to put the command center to stop future attacks in World Trade Center Building 7. And so that's the building that was near the Twin Towers that was not hit by a plane, but fell down later anyway. No one really wanted to talk about this decision at the time, in the years immediately after 9/11, because of the trauma of the event, with the exception of the late great New York City journalist, Wayne Barrett, who in 2007 summarized what he thought Giuliani's biggest mistake was. And Barrett is the author of biographies of Trump, of Giuliani. He died the day before Trump was inaugurated, but he's one of the best resources on all of these terrible people.

Sarah Kendzior:

So I'm going to read a little of his answer. Barrett says, and this is in 2007, "On 9/11, there wasn't any unified command and that was a direct result of what Rudy himself did. That was his principle error that day. He made a few others, but that was his principle error. In the lead up to 9/11, why were they even going to a command post? Why weren't they going to the command center, which the city had spent up to \$70 million creating and operating? That's because he put the command center in 7 World Trade, in the complex that had already been attacked and it was vacated early in the day. So it was dysfunctional throughout the day, and that was a very costly error because there was no functioning command center. It heightened the importance of establishing a unified command at this much more makeshift thing that occurs in all major events, this command post."

Sarah Kendzior:

And so the myth around Giuliani was just that, it was just a myth, a myth that I think very frightened, very desperate people bought into because they needed a hero that day. And Giuliani was tough and he was the mayor and people will bow to authority in those sorts of situations. So while I understand that reaction, it was certainly unearned. Then you get some strange interactions with Trump in the months following 9/11. You should also check out Trump's extremely non surprised and unsympathetic initial reaction to 9/11, when he was interviewed immediately after the Twin Towers collapsed, but that's

another story. So Giuliani did some strange things. One of them was borrowing Donald Trump's private plane to make a trip to Israel three months later for a purpose that was never completely revealed. The man that funded that trip on Trump's private plane, financier Jeffrey Silverman, committed suicide under strange circumstances in 2002. But that's another story.

Sarah Kendzior:

The reason I'm bringing this up is that this is just another odd incident in the long relationship between Giuliani and Trump, which shows Giuliani's willingness to insert Trump—then a private citizen—into state affairs. And then you see the exact same thing happening in 2016, when Trump starts to insert Giuliani—now a private citizen himself—into state affairs when he becomes the president. So they have had this kind of dynamic for 30 years. And I think I will read one more thing and then I'll hand it over to Andrea. I want to emphasize how far this connection and this really kind of grotesque relationship goes back. So again, I'm going to turn to reporter Wayne Barrett, who says that, "Unsurprisingly, Trump and Giuliani met when they were streaming organized crime together in the 1980s." And I'm going to read from a 2016 article that Wayne Barrett wrote for the New York Daily News.

Sarah Kendzior:

He says, "Rudy and Donald first got together in the late 1980s shortly before Donald became a co-chair of Giuliani's first fundraiser for his 1989 mayoral campaign, sitting on the Waldorf dais and steering \$41,000 to the campaign. A year earlier, Tony Lombardi, the federal agent closest to then US attorney, Giuliani, opened a probe of Trump's role in the suspect sale of two Trump Tower apartments to Robert Hopkins, the mob-connected head of the city's largest gambling ring. Trump attended the closing himself and Hopkins arrived with a briefcase loaded up with up to \$200,000 in cash, a deposit the soon-to-felon counted at the table. Despite Hopkins' wholesale lack of verifiable income or assets, he got a loan from a Jersey bank that did business with Trump's casino. A Trump limo delivered the cash to the bank."

Sarah Kendzior:

"The government subsequently nailed Hopkins' mortgage broker, Frank LaMagra, on an unrelated charge and he offered to give up Donald, claiming Trump participated in the money laundering and volunteering to wear a wire on him. Instead, Lombardi, who discussed the case with Giuliani personally and discussed it with me for a 1993 Village Voice piece called 'The Case of the Missing Case,' went straight to Donald for two hour-long interviews with him. Within weeks of the interviews, Donald announced he would raise \$2 million in a half hour if Rudy Giuliani ran for mayor. LaMagra got no deal and was convicted, as was his associate, Louis 'Louie HaHa' Attanasio, who was later also nailed for seven underworld murders. Hopkins was convicted of running his gambling operation partly out of the Trump Tower apartment, where he was arrested."

Sarah Kendzior:

"Lombardi, who expected a top appointment in a Giuliani mayoralty, conducted several other probes directly tied to Giuliani political opponents and testified later that, 'everyday I came to work, I went to Mr. Giuliani to seek out what duties I needed to perform,' and closed the Trump investigation without even giving it a case number." So these two have been defending each other, backing each other up, bailing each other out, and American history would have turned out completely different had Trump actually been prosecuted in the late '80s, early '90s when so many people like him—Ivan Boesky, Michael Milken, Leona Helmsley, and so forth—were being prosecuted for similar offenses, but he had Giuliani to keep him out of trouble.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then as president, he returned the favor. They are both transactional actors. That is how they think, that is how they operate. And they are, you know, mafiosos. They surround themselves with people who can wield power, who are loyal above everything else and who will accept any level of atrocity as long as they each personally benefit from that dynamic. And so, God, there's more where that came from, but I went on for a while. What are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, my thoughts are, as the saying goes, "If the mob doesn't kill you, that means they own you." So if Rudy Giuliani, the big, tough mayor of New York City, if he got away with taking on the Italian mafia, who was he working for that whole time? Who kept him alive? And why? Why was he useful and how has he been used for all these years? And I think that saying for anybody facing off with the mafia, if the mob doesn't kill you, because you refused to bend, then they bought you off. Then they own you. I believe that's what we're looking at here. I do want to point out some new reporting out of BuzzFeed, which is really interesting and telling—a transcript of Rudy Giuliani's phone call with another Ukrainian official, who's still active. And I'm going to read from this now, and you'll see why.

Andrea Chalupa:

So this is Rudy Giuliani to Andriy Yermak on July 22nd, 2019. Again, this was made available to BuzzFeed. "My involvement in this came about because way back last November, I got information from a reliable investigator, international investigator, that there was a certain amount of activity in the Ukraine."—First of all, Rudy, it's just Ukraine. To put a 'the' in front of it denotes it's a region of a larger power, which is what Russia would like you to believe. Rudy goes on to say, "International investigator that there was a certain amount of activity in Ukraine during the 2016 election that involved Ukrainian officials and Ukrainian citizens. Mostly officials being asked by our embassy and possibly by other American officials."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Basically the statement was to produce dirt on then candidate Trump and Paul Manafort. And that just to shorten a big, long thing over a course of about four or five months, they did produce information about Manafort and about the Trump campaign and even possibly about Trump, and that it was the most prominent thing being this black ledger of Manafort's, which was found on the doorstep of a parliamentarian and then delivered to the embassy, the FBI, I think Ukrainian inspector general and also given to the press. And it was one operative of the Democratic National Committee, a woman named Chalupa." That should be my sister's memoir, *A Woman Named Chalupa*.

Sarah Kendzior:

It should be.

Andrea Chalupa:

The story of a long suffering patriot. So this is the transcript of Giuliani's call with the Ukrainian official, Andriy Yermak. Yermak is the current Chief of Staff of the President of Ukraine. So what's amazing here is everything you just heard with my sister being targeted, with the investigators of Trump's corruption and criminality and Paul Manafort's corruption and criminality, all that, the investigators being investigated, right? That was the theme of the Trump years, of his rising autocracy. That whole thread began with—as far as I know, as far as we've seen in our reporting—that whole thread began with the Kremlin. BuzzFeed in early 2017 publishes the Steele dossier and immediately on the heels of that, Putin's Sean

Hannity—his chief propagandist—does this big TV special about how my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, an independent contractor who was working on ethnic outreach for the DNC in 2016, how she basically invented this whole Russiagate scandal.

Andrea Chalupa:

That was the story. And I even make a cameo in there as her accomplice. And that was this whole thread of blaming her, that starts. And then it picks up with Ken Vogel's piece in Politico, trying to paint my sister as interfering in 2016. They use some dodgy source who's now currently himself under investigation, that was Ken Vogel's source. Ken Vogel's piece is used relentlessly in Trump's defense in the first impeachment case. And Manafort keeps pushing it. And Giuliani keeps pushing it. And Senator Ron Johnson, another Kremlin mouthpiece in Congress, keeps pushing it. So the point is, we've seen open coordination and collusion by the Republican Party and the Kremlin out in the open. The FBI did not need to warn anybody personally. It was all out there this entire time and we need accountability for it. And these criminals, these traitors to our country, need to be locked up. And the system that has empowered them this long needs to be reformed for the good of everybody.

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 GiveIndia.org to help Indians battling COVID-19.

Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, the humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Syria, donate at Rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to The Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org. Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes, it helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon, it keeps us going. And you can also subscribe to us on YouTube.

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