

Gaslit Nation
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Merrick Garland's Eyes Wide Shut
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/merrick-garlands-52280102>

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling books, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker, and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, 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. So, what a week, man. What a week. We are going to get into Merrick Garland and Joe Manchin and other walking failures. But first, I want to look at the big picture.

Sarah Kendzior:

The Democrats are losing not only the policy war, but the narrative war, and they are losing the country in the process. Which means more importantly that we, the people, are losing our country. In 2020, I wrote that the Biden administration needed investigations and prosecutions of three major Trump administration crimes. And keep in mind, there's a lot more where that came from but these are the big three, in my opinion.

Sarah Kendzior:

The Biden administration has investigated none of them. And as a result, our country is in even greater danger. Meanwhile, crucially, the GOP has created vigorous counternarratives for each crime. And so, the first one is the Trump administration's handling of COVID. This was also managed by Kushner, Pence, Mnuchin, Miller. We did a lot of episodes about the little insular crime cabal with absolutely no experience or interest in public health that was put in charge of managing a global pandemic.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so what did they do? They let the virus spread, they hijacked PPE, they profited off of people's deaths, they shook down states, they threatened governors, and so on. And so obviously there should have been an investigation of this immediately. It's an ongoing public health threat. There has been nothing.

Sarah Kendzior:

So what has the GOP done in response? They have been focused on the "origin story of the virus" and blaming China and saying that it was created in the lab, and it was perhaps purposefully linked. Now, I want to be clear: I don't have a problem with anyone investigating the origin of COVID-19. I think it needs to be investigated.

Sarah Kendzior:

The very first episode we did about this—which by the way, was in January 2020 so I don't want to hear that no one could see this virus and this pandemic coming—speculated as to the origins and also pointed out that China is indeed an autocratic state and it's very hard to get accurate information. And we were getting a lot of information from Chinese doctors and nurses who were bravely posting videos about it on Twitter.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so there's no issue here with finding out the origin. It's just what good does it do knowing the origin of a pandemic when we have no defense in place when it hits us? And not only no defense in the case of Trump, but they purposefully allowed it to spread. They literally said, "Let it infect them." They let hundreds of thousands of people die. Those deaths could have been avoided.

Sarah Kendzior:

So this is just a counternarrative that the GOP is using so they can seem like they are the people who actually care about COVID. And there's a bunch of stuff with the vaccines, but I'm going to move on to the next one which is, of course, the January 6th attack on the Capitol by violent seditionists.

Sarah Kendzior:

Again, we do not have an investigation. We do not have a meaningful FBI investigation. They are only going after low-hanging fruit. They are avoiding prosecuting or even investigating the instigators of this crime, which include Michael Flynn, Roger Stone, Steve Bannon. These, not coincidentally, are the same people who were involved in Trump's illegal and illicit activity during the 2016 election. They are also, not coincidentally, people that Trump pardoned shortly before the coup. This was all out there. We've gone over this a million times. This was a rehearsed, and pre-announced, and live-streamed atrocity that somehow is just managing to mystify everybody at the FBI, DOJ and Congress.

Sarah Kendzior:

We still don't have a Congressional investigation. Nancy Pelosi, shockingly, did not follow through. Anyway, so the GOP of course has their counter narrative. The first is the Big Lie—the Stop the Steal lie—which was actually invented by Roger Stone in 2016 in anticipation of Trump not being coronated for that election. So this is not actually something new. Again, you had four years to figure this out.

Sarah Kendzior:

We are also getting, "It was Antifa." Yes, obviously it was Antifa. That's why they all had Trump hats and Make America Great Again caps and a bunch of Trump propaganda and were screaming, "Hang Mike Pence"... Well, actually, I don't know. That's a universal appeal. Leave me out of that one. I'm not saying to hang Mike Pence, by the way, so strike that from the official record. That was not a threat, not a threat. Anyway, they're also saying these were tourists, et cetera, et cetera.

Sarah Kendzior:

The GOP has created a narrative of the Capitol attack. The Democrats cannot even hold on to the actual narrative of what happened, even though it was all recorded on social media and on television. And they are once again failing to bring it to the public through hearings, through briefings, through updates. We're just getting little panic tweets.

Sarah Kendzior:

The third one—this is really the heart of Gaslit Nation here—is the fact that for four years, the White House was inhabited by a career criminal Kremlin asset. Our president was overtly more loyal to another country than the United States and was working in the interests of oligarchs and mafiosos from foreign states, which is unprecedented. It is an enormous big deal.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so, of course, they're not doing anything about that, even with the failed Mueller probe, we still had an investigation for obstruction of justice documented in his report. Congress is not following through on that. The Biden administration and the DOJ are doing nothing with that.

Sarah Kendzior:

And meanwhile, you have the GOP, which has revived it's "Biden secretly works for Ukraine" narrative. We've gone over this before. They flipped the script. They investigate the investigators and if they get back into power, this is going to be even more dangerous than it is now, but it is very dangerous now. We are in the eye of the hurricane.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, I have been talking about this tactic—the GOP tactic of preemptive narrative inversion—for a long time. This is not new. An early and important example of it was the creation of the Pizzagate narrative in 2016 as court documents alleging that Trump had raped a 13-year-old girl procured by Jeffrey Epstein came to public light.

Sarah Kendzior:

Preemptive narrative inversion is a time-tested tactic used both by the GOP in general and by Trump in particular and was honed by his mentor, mafia lawyer and McCarthyist, Roy Cohn.

Sarah Kendzior:

So in other words, as I've been saying, the Democrats should have been prepared for this. But instead, what's remarkable is that they're not only not bothering to control the actual narrative (that is the truth), but they're not bothering to investigate the crimes. I would say that the GOP is many moves ahead here, but the truth is that the Democrats (at least the leadership) are barely bothering to play. They are surrendering in advance.

Sarah Kendzior:

This surrender is not about a partisan battle. Ignoring crimes this severe is a surrender of the United States itself. Back in 2019, when Democratic leaders like Nancy Pelosi were trying to deny the need for rigorous and transparent impeachment, I said on this show, "Fighting only the battles that you know you will win is a sure way of ensuring you lose." Preemptive surrender in a rapidly consolidating autocracy is permanent surrender.

Sarah Kendzior:

The refusal of officials to fight has led us to this terrible juncture more than any other factor. It is the lack of even trying that is most damning. Trying your hardest and failing is one thing, not trying at all is an abdication of duty and an act of complicity. Andrea, what are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. I mean, it's crisis levels and it's getting exponentially worse. At the same time, I want people to understand that the future has not been written. What we are witnessing from the Republican Party is classic, textbook authoritarianism. They check off all the boxes of what authoritarianism is, how it works, how it comes to power.

Andrea Chalupa:

From scapegoating vulnerable minority groups to inciting political violence through hate speech and propaganda, to this violent victimization narrative that they push to embolden themselves and justify their violence and perpetuate their cycles of political violence and so forth, and having that worship of a strongman figure—that savior figure—that has his whole larger than life, totally a natural mythology around him and his family and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

What we're witnessing is not creative. It's not original. It's been done by tyrants for a very long time now. It is just plain, boring textbook authoritarianism, and it works. It works. In addition to that, it's also the very alarming signs of genocide. Authoritarianism leads to genocide. Totalitarianism systems lead to genocide and a big step towards genocide is the prevalence of hate speech and propaganda vilifying others like vulnerable communities and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, with all of that said, the reason why I had to really emphasize that is because one weapon authoritarians rely on—and Putin does this brilliantly—is they try to make themselves appear inevitable, that the future belongs to them, that the future is going to be more of the same, so therefore, give up. There's no hope for you. There's no alternative. Putin is forever, Trump is forever.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I want to tell you that's simply not true. The authoritarians like Putin and Trump know that is not true. And you know they know that's not true because they're so scared, and panicked, and desperate. And Putin, for instance, is ramping up his terrorism against the opposition.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's Soviet level brutality happening under Putin now because he's so panicked. You have that as well with Trump's desperation. His speeches are just masterclasses in gaslighting. They're targeting viciously on the local level. They want to make sure they have all the local officials in office so they can steal elections, and stay in power, and put us in a hostage state, which are very difficult to get out of once you're in.

Andrea Chalupa:

The desperation is strong, but understand: in every autocrat's nightmares is the deep-seated fear that the people will treat the autocrat as illegitimate and that the people will show signs of alternative futures, alternative possibilities. And that's what you need to be doing right now. Every single person listening, Sarah and I, every single human being who cares about their loved ones, who cares about living and breathing the air of a democracy and all the stability and all the economic opportunity that a real

democracy grows, we all need to be in the business of consciousness raising, because the war is in our mind. First and foremost, the war is in our minds.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're trying to deprive us of any sense of having a future. They're trying to take that away from us. So don't let them. That's their big fear. That's what really keeps them up at night. That is what haunts them. No amount of money in the world can soothe that deep-seated fear in every autocrat. So the more that you live your values out loud, the more that you encourage people to run for office, the more you talk yourself into running for office, the more you help others run for office, the more you flood the system with good, empathetic, science-driven people, the more terrified the autocrats are going to be.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, our job is to live our lives so we are the autocrats' worst nightmare. Whether it's our homegrown autocrats or those abroad, you live your values out loud. And you can do that. If you don't know where to start, you can go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide.

Andrea Chalupa:

And an important step on the Gaslit Nation Action Guide is to make art, be creative. Because when you're being creative, that shows faith in the future. That shows that you're taking your future in your own hands. You're making something, you're building. So, go out and build the future that you want and know that the future belongs to you and that no one can take it from you.

Andrea Chalupa:

And the Putins and the Trumps trying to say that they are inevitable, that they are forever, that is part of their Big Lie. And they are terrified of you living your life defiant of the Big Lie.

Andrea Chalupa:

So now in terms of where we are, what we're up against is the redux of the Mueller report. It's institutionalist. We had Craig Unger, Vanity Fair contributor, on the show talking about his book, *House of Trump, House of Putin*, looking at Trump's decades' long relationship with the Russian mafia.

Andrea Chalupa:

And Craig Unger summed up Robert Mueller perfectly. He said, Robert Mueller signed up to go fight in Vietnam. That's how much of an institutionalist he is. And look where it got us. The guy who went running towards Vietnam willingly when so many people with heart were running across the border to Canada and doing what they could to get out of that corrupt war. We're just up against institutionalists-

Sarah Kendzior:

I agree with everything you say. The one thing I want to emphasize though is that it's not just a matter of the autocrats. The American people did an amazing thing when they did remove an aspiring autocrat who was doing everything he could to illegally hold onto power when they removed Donald Trump. And now we have the Biden administration, a Democratic House, a Democratic Senate, and basically Vichy Democrats.

Sarah Kendzior:

We have a severe problem with the Democratic leadership. I've said many times the Democrats are not a monolith. I don't think this problem is across the board. And I absolutely agree that one of the most important things you should do, now, as a regular citizen, is speak out, is document, is speak truth to power, and don't be afraid of criticizing a party that is failing. Don't be afraid to apply pressure on these failed institutionalists, these failed officials.

Sarah Kendzior:

If they are not doing their job, if they are not enforcing accountability, we are going to just continue to become further entrenched in this pool of criminality. We will not be able to extract ourselves from it. And here, I don't see an example of, say, the Biden administration or others valiantly fighting for our rights and freedoms. I see them surrendering in advance or refusing to try, so they need to be pushed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I've been heartened to see that so many leading analysts just across the political spectrum, across different areas of expertise, have these exact same frustrations that Andrea and I do. We often feel like we're kind of off on a ledge. We've been talking about some of this stuff for months, warning about the need for accountability for months, we did not share this sort of blind faith. And unfortunately, we have again been vindicated, which is not at all what we want.

Sarah Kendzior:

But it is good that, I think, most Americans, they just don't want this. Most Americans are rejecting this and most Americans are holding on to their expectations that, yes, we deserve our rights. Yes, we deserve our freedom. We deserve transparency. We deserve accountability and we do not deserve to live under a mafia state. And it is very unfortunate that the head of the DOJ, Merrick Garland, does not seem to agree with this assessment.

Sarah Kendzior:

He seems to be committed to keeping the mafia state apparatus that accelerated under Trump, which formed well in advance of it, intact at the DOJ. And so I'm going to give a little rundown of what Merrick Garland has been up to over the last two months.

Sarah Kendzior:

Last night, it was announced that he is going to continue the DOJ's defense of Donald Trump for raping journalist, E. Jean Carroll, in a department store in the mid-1990s.

Sarah Kendzior:

If you don't know this case, a brief summary: Carroll sued Trump in 2019. She says she has DNA evidence of the rape. Trump then sued Carroll for defamation and said that the assault never happened and that he could not have raped Carroll because "she was not his type". This case then went through New York State courts for a while until, in an unprecedented move, GOP coverup guy, Bill Barr, then the attorney general, decided to have Trump's personal case defended by the DOJ.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, this is not normal. This is not what the DOJ is supposed to be doing. This is an absolute abuse of executive power that resulted in taxpayers paying Trump to defend himself against a woman that he

raped. And now Merrick Garland is continuing this. And so, just to remind you of how gross and unprecedented this was. This is what the lawyers for Carroll said about the case at the time. I'm just going to read a little from their preliminary statement.

Sarah Kendzior:

"There is not a single person in the United States, not the president and not anyone else, whose job description includes slandering women they sexually assaulted. That should not be a controversial proposition. Remarkably however, the Justice Department seeks to prove it wrong."

Sarah Kendzior:

"At the behest of the White House and following a certification from the Attorney General pursuant to the Westfall Act USC 2679D, federal lawyers have moved to substitute the United States of America as the defendant in this action. They assert that the defendant, Donald J. Trump, was acting within the scope of his employment as president when he defamed plaintiff, E. Jean Carroll, a woman he sexually assaulted over 20 years ago as retaliation for revealing his misconduct."

Sarah Kendzior:

"Trump's defamatory lies, including assertions that Carol had falsely accused other men of rape, that she was lying about him as part of a secret political conspiracy, that she had fabricated her accusations to sell books, and that he had never met her despite a photograph of them together."

Sarah Kendzior:

"Trump also remarks, 'She's not my type.' These are the statements that the Justice Department asked the court to find that Trump uttered within the scope of his duties as president."

Sarah Kendzior:

So, think about that. This is what Merrick Garland and the DOJ under Joe Biden are defending and perpetuating. And this is not the only thing they're doing. So here's a little rundown of Merrick Garland, the new Bill Barr, the new Bob Mueller, the new lackey to the mafia state: Garland, as we covered last week, defended Trump and Barr when they ordered the brutal beating and gassing of protesters in Lafayette Square one year ago. These were the Black rights protesters who were out there because of the murder of George Floyd.

Sarah Kendzior:

And they got the military involved. Merrick Garland says that Trump and Barr are above the law on this. Merrick Garland has covered up Barr's obstruction of the Mueller probe and refused to release the full OLC memo that Barr used as a pretext for lying about the Mueller probe and falsely summarizing it.

Sarah Kendzior:

Garland defended the DOJ spying on The Washington Post and CNN and other journalistic outlets for Trump. He defended Don McGahn against Congressional Democrats' Subpoenas. Garland has given no briefings about the January 6th attacks on the Capitol. And as I mentioned, he refuses to prosecute any of the high level operatives that were involved, that were bragging about their involvement openly, like Roger Stone, Michael Flynn, Lin Wood and Steve Bannon.

Sarah Kendzior:

In this respect, he's very similar to FBI head and Federalist Society member, Christopher Wray, another failure Biden can and should remove but is protecting. So Andrea, what are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, I think this is something darker. Yes, it's institutionalism, but there's something there. And I wanted to unpack Merrick Garland's judicial record because we need to absorb what we're up against right now, because time is of the essence. And we don't have time. I just want to start with saying, do I think Merrick Garland, if you had been placed on a Supreme Court, would he vote with the conservative majority of the court? Would he be on the side of all of this sweeping far-right ridiculousness that's apparently allowing to go on at his DOJ? No, I do not.

Andrea Chalupa:

And that's very clear if you look at Garland's judicial record, which we need to break down now for everybody. So, for 24 years, Merrick Garland served as a United States circuit judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. This is one of the most powerful courts in the country. The D.C Circuit is considered the second most prestigious court in the U.S after the Supreme Court.

Andrea Chalupa:

Serving on the D.C Circuit, Garland mostly oversaw administrative law and rarely saw controversial cases. I want to emphasize that again. For 24 years, Garland mostly oversaw administrative law and essentially avoided controversial cases because they weren't largely coming up for that court.

Andrea Chalupa:

Garland, in terms of his record, tends to side with the president. The D.C Circuit tended towards consensus building. So, for 24 years, Garland served in a court driven by consensus building. All right? Again, I'm going to stress these key terms; administrative law, president, consensus building.

Andrea Chalupa:

In terms of his own positions as a former DOJ prosecutor, Garland tended to be tough on criminals. He's shown in his record sensitivity to press freedom and also dissented against majority opinion in an outspoken rebuke calling out the torture prisoners in the horrific Abu Ghraib prison.

Andrea Chalupa:

He ruled on insisting the CIA disclose information on their drone killings. He has a track record of showing humanity and standing up to even Obama's White House, too, in his judicial record. He did, however, rule in favor of superPACs when forced to, following the Citizens United ruling.

Andrea Chalupa:

Garland is not an activist liberal ideological judge. Garland simply does not have the practice to face the challenges he's up against given his conditioning over the past 24 years, being in a court driven by consensus building and focusing largely on administrative law and avoiding controversial cases.

Andrea Chalupa:

What's coming out of the DOJ, I believe, is darker than Merrick Garland simply being corrupt. I don't believe that this is a classic case of a Ukrainian judge, for instance, who is being given offshore bank accounts somewhere and new cars or having his family threatened. I think this is a classic case of something that's plagued humanity throughout history.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's a great book by the historian Barbara Tuchman called the *March of Folly* on how governments act against their own self-interest, in part, because of simple wooden headedness. That's what we're up against here. It's the wrong person for the wrong job during the wrong time.

Andrea Chalupa:

I think some of these cases coming out of the DOJ that are staggeringly abusive in power—they're an abuse of U.S tax dollars—I think they indicate either that Trump made a deal and set certain conditions before leaving office or before calling for his protestors to stop violently storming the Capitol, and/or the DOJ has been thoroughly purged by Barr and Trump, and Barr and Trump's people are pushing through everything they can, and Garland isn't the man to stand up to them because he just doesn't know how.

Andrea Chalupa:

His experience for the last over two decades has been anti that. So I think the bigger issue is that the muscle needed to take on the international crime syndicate that has clearly infiltrated the DOJ has atrophied for Garland over his 24 years of administrative law and consensus building.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, it sucks. I do want to add that under Garland's DOJ, they did bring back federal inquiries in a police violence and at least they're labeling White supremacy violence as the greatest threat the U.S faces, which the former Nazi in chief obviously did not do and played down for obvious reasons.

Andrea Chalupa:

Garland's DOJ did achieve the impressive feat of stealing back a lot of the ransom money from the colonial pipeline attack, which matters because it helps deter other attacks. But again, it's just the wooden headedness of Garland is aiding the legal warfare by the White supremacists.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, maybe Garland gets his sea legs. Adam Jentleson, who served as Harry Reid's deputy chief of staff, was on the show earlier this year and was saying how Harry Reid needed to grow into the role of majority leader.

Andrea Chalupa:

That wasn't something that came overnight for him. And by the end of his tenure, as we've celebrated on the show, Harry Reid was fearlessly speaking out, calling out FBI director, James Comey, for refusing to ring the arm of the national emergency of the Kremlin's attack on our democracy in 2016.

Andrea Chalupa:

Reid did this not once but twice. I think given the right circumstances, Garland could grow into the leadership role. Unfortunately, we don't have time for that. The Kremlin-backed national emergency of

growing authoritarianism is deeply funded and working extremely hard to hijack our democracy. And they might succeed in 2022, and certainly by 2024.

Andrea Chalupa:

And once you're a hostage state, it's very hard to get out. Once you're a hostage state, it's human sacrifice time. People have to put their lives on the line. They have to do what Navalny is doing. They have to do what those kids in Belarus are doing.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm telling you all now, if anybody is in any proximity to power in Congress, anywhere, please, please, please, please get an actual Nazi hunter to serve as Merrick Garland's training wheels and come in and clean house in the DOJ. That needs to happen ASAP, today, if we are to stand a fighting chance.

Andrea Chalupa:

So consider Sarah and I as your outside consultants that come into the organization and tell you what you're not seeing right in front of your face and have the ruthless outside opinion to say, "This is what you need to do. You need to get rid of this swath of people. These people are working against your interests. These are all moles here for foreign governments. Get them out." There's really no time.

Andrea Chalupa:

And they are running out the clock. They're trying to slow you down. Joe Manchin is part of that operation. He's been bought off. He's been Koched up with that Koch money. The way Mitch McConnell slowed down Merrick Garland's nomination in the first place, they knew. They're trying to run out the clock because the authoritarians are naturals at this. It's in their dark, black hearts what they're doing. They've got these killer criminal instincts and they know what is effective: run out the clock.

Andrea Chalupa:

So please, get outside consultants inside Merrick Garland's DOJ and do what Merrick Garland simply does not have the muscles to do, because his muscles have atrophied over the last 24 years with his administrative legal fun time that he's been having, his consensus building, his worship of president. He's not the man for this hour. Please get someone in. Please get a Ulysses S. Grant in immediately to the DOJ to clean house for the sake of our democracy and for the sake of future generations who will be tasked with paying the ultimate price to reverse the stupidity and the wooden headedness plaguing Washington right now.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. I just want to emphasize a point you made because I don't think we make this point enough now that Biden is in. When Trump was in power, when that administration was in power, they did what all autocrats did, which is conduct massive purges of anybody that could stop them within any institution that may hold them accountable.

Sarah Kendzior:

This included purging, for example, the Russian mafia experts within the FBI and it included purging the DOJ and anybody who was going to put country above party, country above Trump, Constitution above all else. And so the DOJ is still filled, we presume, we don't get updates from the DOJ, so, you know...

Sarah Kendzior:

But there's no reason not to believe it's not still substantially employed by Trump and Barr lackeys and they need to be removed. We saw so many illegitimate appointments during Trump's tenure. We saw a slew of nepotism appointments. We've documented those in depth.

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, two of Barr's children were serving in the administration and I believe still are serving in that administration. The other thing we warned you about is, of course, autocrats pack the courts. Those are the two big moves. You purge the institutions and you pack the courts so that you rewrite the law so you are no longer breaking it. You give yourself immunity from all crimes.

Sarah Kendzior:

That is supposed to end when the aspiring autocrat departs. And so, the fact that this is continuing under the protection of the DOJ, it does indicate something very dark. And I think some of it is the fact that Trump administration lackeys are still in there. I think some of this is just that the DOJ is a deeply corrupt and broken institution that has had deeply corrupt and broken people working in high positions of power in it for my entire life.

Sarah Kendzior:

And among them is Bill Barr. As I've said before, if the DOJ is to clean house, it's going to run into some very uncomfortable pieces of information here and acts that people have done. If they're going to look at what Bill Barr did during the Trump administration, you then have to look at what Bill Barr did during his previous tenure as the AG of the George H.W. Bush administration, which would include letting all the Iran-Contra guys off the hook, it would include maybe BCCI.

Sarah Kendzior:

Bill Barr is a scandal machine. We were so perplexed when all of these alleged "legal experts" kept saying, "Oh, Bill Barr, he's such an institutionalist. He's going to bring the Trump administration in line." We're like, "What the hell are you talking about?" This is like the ultimate GOP cover up guy. This is a guy who's like Wikipedia. It's just a giant list of scandals or scumbags that he protected, because that's his job. He goes and cleans up the mess of the GOP. And that is what he did for Trump and that's now what Merrick Garland is doing for him.

Andrea Chalupa:

I want to add one more point too about this as well.

Sarah Kendzior:

Okay. One quick point I want to make is that before I was talking about the Democrats' inability to maintain an effective narrative to the public, to show the public what's going on, to use the kind of strategies that the GOP does very effectively through their propaganda outlets like Fox News.

Sarah Kendzior:

One exception to this rule is the Merrick Garland rule, which is the way that they managed to convince an enormous number of Americans that if Mitch McConnell does not like Merrick Garland, if the Republicans are trying to block Merrick Garland from the Supreme Court, then Merrick Garland must be

great. He must be some amazing advocate for justice. He must just be a man of the utmost integrity. We have clearly seen that that's not the case. But nonetheless, wow. What a story! What a narrative! Maybe try doing that with the truth. Anyway, Andrea, what were you going to say?

Andrea Chalupa:

So, for a clear answer on whether the rot goes all the way up to Biden and Kamala Harris and their closest advisors and their team is whether Merrick Garland gets the Nazi hunters that the DOJ so desperately needs and Barr's authoritarian purge is reversed. If that doesn't happen in 2021, then it's confirmation that Biden and their whole operation that brought them to power—the core team—picked Garland intentionally because they wanted somebody wooden-headed enough that would be easy to control, and would do the bare minimum, and would look good in a suit, and say the right things when called upon, and keep his head down and just enjoy himself doing his pruning at the rose bushes-

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

- and pontificating on administrative law and consensus building. That's not how the nation was united in the civil war. We had a ruthless, spiritual warrior in Ulysses S. Grant, all right? I'm starting like a comic-con for Ulysses S. Grant lovers out there because I know there's opportunity for one. He did what had to be done. He was ruthless, but he did it grounded knowing that he was on the right side of history and that he would ultimately, ultimately, maybe not initially in all those decades after the war where he was vilified, but he knew ultimately that he would be proven correct. And he had to do what needed to be done.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so please, Merrick Garland, Biden, Kamala Harris, live your values out loud. Show the American people that you're going to reverse Trump and Barr's authoritarianism at the DOJ. If you do not, then it's confirmation to us that you like it that way and that you're part of the problem.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmhmm (affirmative). Yep, exactly. And speaking of part of the problem, let's discuss Joe Manchin. It's just been an amazing week for news here. So, over the weekend, Joe Manchin officially came out against the For the People Act and against abolishing the filibuster. The For the People Act, of course, is a desperately needed bill to preserve voting rights and to preserve democracy, especially as the GOP continues to destroy voting rights state by state and add new stipulations in some states, including the ability to simply throw out your votes on the GOP state legislature's whim if their preferred candidate does not win.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so, as we have said many times on this show, you cannot just vote this problem out. You cannot just wait till 2022 to fix this because we will not have free and fair elections in 2022 without voting rights. So when you see people saying, "Oh, you know, I know the solution. We just need a democratic supermajority."

Sarah Kendzior:

That literally can't happen. That's what we're trying to fight right now. I don't know how much more I can explain it, so I'm laughing because I'm terrified. It's not funny in the slightest. And it definitely should not be hinging upon one or two individuals. Although many people who are experts on this, including Walter Shaub, who is an ethics advisor for multiple administrations, and others have pointed out that Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema as well are basically the rotating villain.

Sarah Kendzior:

They're the scapegoats to this process. There are other Democrats within the Senate who are not being vocal, but who appear to also oppose the For The People Act and the abolishment of the filibuster. And so, Manchin may just be their fall guy. Manchin is also an enormous asshole, but Andrea, I think you had more on this. I'm getting too pissed off.

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, yeah. So, Manchin came out with—again, all these guys are masters of gaslighting. Manchin came out with the gaslighting masterpiece in the Charleston Gazette Mail where he said he could not support the For The People Act because there wasn't a single backer on the Republican side, and that bipartisanship is going to destroy our country.

Andrea Chalupa:

How the hell can you have bipartisanship when one party is full-blown, proudly authoritarian and inciting political violence against the public and elected officials? So, the reason why Manchin is able to put such a finesse on aiding and abetting authoritarians and their hijacking of our democracy is because he is funded by groups like the U.S Chamber of Commerce, which is staunchly Republican backing, and the dark forces that propelled Trump into power. It's the dark forces that were happy to rake in all this money, tax cuts, deregulation, while Trump was in power dismantling our democracy.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's the same dark forces that were happy to cash in on Hitler's rise to power. Hitler made his genocide more palatable for the broader public by giving them all these financial goodies. And so, the U.S Chamber of Commerce is very much a part of that ideological legacy and it's destroying the planet. And Manchin is beholden to them. He's a puppet of big money. The dark forces, the Deatheaters, that have given us both Trump and an apparently impotent Democratic leadership. And of course, as I mentioned earlier, Manchin has taken Koch money.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's K-O-C-H, just to be clear, sorry.

Andrea Chalupa:

He's Koched up to the high heavens and the Koch's were targeting him. I have no doubt they're very happy about all of this. And he is giving the Koch's what they want, which was to stop this legislation that would protect our right to vote and would give us some defense against these highly-targeted local state illegal warfare that Trumpism is carrying out against us.

Andrea Chalupa:

They're organizing on the all important local level. Since we started Gaslit Nation, we've been telling everyone, "Please organize on the all-important local level. Know who represents you locally." If you are represented by a Trumper or a Putinite, take that.. They're the same thing really, a Trumper *and* a Putinite.

Andrea Chalupa:

Go and take their job. Go and take the job of your local elected officials. Get your friends to run for local office. Our democracy depends on what happens in our own communities. So please, please, please, run for local office to act as a barrier against the steamrolling of authoritarianism.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's also breaking news since we started reporting. The wonderful folks at ProPublica have uncovered a treasure trove of secret IRS files that show how oligarchs in the U.S have been living tax-free and basically leaning on the rest of us to pay our taxes so they can become staggeringly wealthy and speed up their operation to build spacecraft so they can get the hell out of here after destroying the planet apparently.

Andrea Chalupa:

Do you mind if I read from this now? We have Jesse Eisinger at ProPublica. I'm going to read from his thread.

Sarah Kendzior:

I just have one quick thing to say about Manchin.

Andrea Chalupa:

Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is just a public service announcement that I am voluntarily giving because I think it's of interest to people. William Barber, Reverend William Barber, has announced that the Poor People's Campaign is going to be holding a Moral March on Manchin in West Virginia led by West Virginians of all colors, creeds, et cetera, from the hood to the hollers, on Monday, June 14th.

Sarah Kendzior:

He then says that West Virginians and Kentuckians will lead a moral March and non-violent direct action on Manchin and McConnell on Wednesday, June 23rd in Washington, DC. So, if you would like to go make your voice heard, I would urge you to join them.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's worth noting that when West Virginians are actually polled about the For The People Act, they're for it, like, overwhelmingly across the board. This is not a controversial thing. They also just either don't know what the filibuster is (like most Americans don't know what the filibuster is), or they're fine with it being abolished.

Sarah Kendzior:

Joe Manchin is not doing this to represent the people of West Virginia. He's not doing this as Andrea already noted to "be bi-partisan", he's doing this because he's corrupt, because he's paid off, and because he doesn't care if our democracy dies. And so now, yeah, go on with the oligarchs there.

Andrea Chalupa:

So back to the oligarchs, which Joe Manchin is hoping to become one, hence the corruption. Jesse Eisinger writes on Twitter. "New today, ProPublica presents the secret IRS files. We've obtained a vast trove of never-before-seen tax data on thousands of the richest Americans covering more than 15 years. The data provide an unprecedented look into the financial life of America's Titans, from Jeff Bezos to Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch, Mike Bloomberg, and many more."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Sometimes these guys even paid zero in federal income taxes. Bezos did it in 2011 and 2007. Musk did it in 2018. Icahn, Bloomberg and Soros did it too in recent years, but that's somewhat unusual. What isn't is that we found that the ultra wealthy essentially sidestep the tax system. We did a calculation no one else has ever done comparing how much the top 25 richest Americans pay in taxes compared to their wealth growth. That can be thought of as income for this group."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Here's the summary: A typical American with \$70,000 in income will pay about 14% in federal income taxes. The top marginal income tax rate is 37%. The top 25, they paid 3.4% of their wealth growth in 2014 to 2018. In our story today, we explain how this works and why it came about. You'll learn about a key Supreme Court decision from over 100 years ago. You'll learn the phrase, "buy, borrow, die". You'll find out which Titanically wealthy couple was able to report so little in income to the IRS that they could claim the child tax credit." Ugh.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's like a blind item gossip list of plutocratic corruption, but go on.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, we will link to this article. And it's disgusting, and it will be in the show notes for this episode available on our Patreon page as always where we post every episode that comes out. So guys, you know, something has to give. The Deatheaters need to be exercised, right? We need to have a massive white sage democracy party and get the Deatheaters out because they have lost their minds. They're not thinking logically. They're destroying our planet and therefore destroying themselves.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's greed as an addiction. It's greed as mass destruction. And as much as Joe Manchin desperately wants in on that club and is working his way to earn a spot up there, all these little bottom feeders like Manchin and others, it's self-destructive behavior.

Andrea Chalupa:

Look at Ukraine. It's the same greed, the hostage situation that has kept Ukraine in its black hole of corruption. So, I'm telling you the only way for... And again, look at Ukraine for a model and what we do about it; strong civic engagement, strong, independent media, refusal to give up and claim the future for

yourself. Build the future you want to see. Do not believe the Big Lie that Putin and Trump are inevitable and are forever. They're not. They're actually very weak and scared inside, hence all the terrorism and violence. All right? So, the future belongs to you. Never forget that.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, speaking of the future, I would like to endorse somebody who I have the deepest affection for. I live in New York City. I've lived here for a very long time. I'm raising a family here. I care very deeply about the issues of what happens in my city. My parents are both New Yorkers. They grew up here. And so New York is family to me.

Andrea Chalupa:

I know there's this big New York City mayor's race that a lot of people are focused on and I want to share a story about one of the people running for mayor, and that is a lovely woman by the name of Maya Wiley. Maya is a staunch progressive, which is why Elizabeth Warren and AOC both endorsed her for New York City Mayor. It's so important. who is the mayor of New York City.

Andrea Chalupa:

As we saw under Trump's terrorism, New York stood up against him and fought. You have Letitia James, a state AG going after him. So it's so, so, so important what happens in the states and in the big cities, they are our defense against abuse on the federal level. As long as New York City is healthy, the rest of the country is supported by that. So, New York mayor does matter very much.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, Maya Wiley, strong progressive that obviously checks all the boxes for meaningful solutions for addressing police brutality by the NYPD which is rampant, meaningful solutions for addressing climate change and the communities that are going to be most impacted like Black and Brown communities, meaningful solutions to ensure economic justice for everyone so we're all protected, so we're all strengthened, so all families regardless of who they are and where they live can be safe in New York City.

Andrea Chalupa:

Maya checks all the boxes for that. And in addition to that, what I really admire her for is that she is a progressive who was very early on understanding the threat of the Kremlin's weaponization of our own corruption against us. She understood the threat of the Kremlin's attack on our democracy in 2016 and how the Trump campaign openly aided and abetted that attack.

Andrea Chalupa:

And I know that because I first met Maya at the March for Truth, which is a march that I organized with a bunch of Twitter strangers who are now friends. We had no experience in doing marches and we pulled one off nationwide in over 130 cities. We did that all in three weeks, and Maya was a wonderful, wonderful supporter of that march.

Andrea Chalupa:

We stayed in touch over the years and when I had a daughter in 2019 and I had just come home from the hospital, my daughter was less than a week old, I got an email saying that Barbara Lee—the great Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who was the lone vote in Congress risking her life standing up against

Bush's invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan—Barbara Lee, I got an email saying that she's going to be in New York City and wanted to meet with me.

Andrea Chalupa:

There's very few people I would let in my home after I had just delivered a baby, and Barbara Lee is one of them. So, I hosted Barbara Lee in my home and we had a wonderful conversation and it was just so inspiring to meet her, and she held my newborn daughter. And that was like this Elven Queen blessing the newborn baby kind of energy that I was all excited about.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so, one of the requests that Barbara Lee's team had was would you mind hosting a fundraiser for Barbara Lee in New York City so she could grow the squad in Congress and raise money to bring more progressives into Congress? Obviously, on the show Gaslit Nation, when we ask people to do things like run for office, help people run for office, make phone calls, knock on doors, we strive to show up with you. We make phone calls. We write letters. We do what we can too, of course, with you, alongside with you to get out the vote.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, I felt that I had to say yes to Barbara Lee, even though I was feeling very tense having just had a baby and feeling overwhelmed by that. And so, in order to be able to show up for Barbara Lee and show up for my country and to help build a stronger, progressive movement, the first person I turned to was Maya Wiley.

Andrea Chalupa:

I called Maya and I said, "Barbara Lee wants to fundraise in New York. I need help doing this. Would you help me?" And she said yes. And that gave me such a vote of confidence that I could do this. And we did it. And the fundraiser was so big, we had to move into a bigger room just to accommodate everybody that showed up.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm so glad that I pulled myself together to do this at a time when I thought I couldn't, because it was one of the last big events I engaged in before everything shut down with the pandemic. And it remains such a beautiful memory for me. And that event was made possible because Maya Wiley agreed to help me and was a big help to me.

Andrea Chalupa:

I know her personally and throughout that time, I was sending her baby pics of my daughter because she was asking for them. She was like, "I need baby therapy, send me a pic." And so when Maya called me in September of last year, when we were all frozen and all mentally going through such a hardship with the 2020 election, when Maya called me and said she's running for mayor, I was overjoyed. I was so excited.

Andrea Chalupa:

I just thought about my daughter growing up in New York with Maya as mayor and my heart swelled. I immediately donated to her campaign. I immediately endorsed her. And through all the strength and

grace I've seen from Maya over the years and how she's inspired me personally, I'm going to add an endorsement that I don't think any other person out there can be—not AOC, not Elizabeth Warren.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, from 2017, I've been working on a novel that Sarah has politely pretended to listen to me talk about, about this dystopian novel, this big resistance movement and all these strong women and strong men who love strong women fighting back. And it's about the power of mothers and daughters and the power of female friendship.

Andrea Chalupa:

And one of the heroes in this novel, I named her Maya. And so for somebody, for a human being to make a work of art is one thing. For a human being to pay tribute to somebody else in that art with a name, that shows you just how much I trust Maya to run this city and how much I trust Maya to build a safer, healthier, more inclusive and cleaner New York, where I can feel safe and secure raising my daughter.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so, I urge all New Yorkers to please join me in voting number one, number one choice for Maya Wiley. I trust her with my family. I trust her with my city. I trust her. I love her. And I'm so proud of what she's done.

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 GLAAD, an organization on the frontline of fighting for the rights of LGBTQ people at a time when they, especially trans people, are under attack by repressive and harmful republican legal warfare. Support their critical work at GLAAD, glaad.org.

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

Original music in Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nick Farr, Demien Arriaga and Karlyn Daigle.

Sarah Kendzior:

Our logo design was donated to us by Hamish Smyth of the New York-based firm, Order. Thank you so much, Hamish.

Andrea Chalupa:

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