

Gaslit Nation Transcript

15 September 2021

Quid Pro Joe

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/quid-pro-joe-56168345>

Sen. Joe Manchin:

He will not have my vote on \$3.5 [trillion] and Chuck knows that. And we've talked about this. What's the urgency? What's the urgency that we have? It's not the same urgency that we have with American rescue.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman:

So I've spent the last week touring the damage of hurricane Ida in my district. We lost at least five lives right here in my district, 50 lives in the region. People's businesses—small businesses—have been completely destroyed, basement, completely destroyed, houses of worship completely destroyed, homes completely destroyed. There were two Iona College professors, both in their late seventies, driving in what they thought was a rainstorm that immediately became a flash flood. Their car started to float. They couldn't get out. They both passed away. So when we talk about a sense of urgency, people are losing their lives and their livelihoods right now because our infrastructure is a hundred years old and climate change is here to stay. So it's important for Senator Manchin and others to understand people are dying every day in my district and across the country. And we have to go big, right now, in this moment. It's now or never when it comes to infrastructure and climate change and hurricane Ida proved that to be true.

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.

Andrea Chalupa:

And our opening clip was Representative Jamaal Bowman calling out Senator Joe Manchin, who is threatening to block the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package that will help protect us against the climate crisis and lift countless people out of poverty. This week, since there's so much news—too much news—we are going to be doing a bonus episode for our Patreon subscribers at the Truth Teller level and higher where we answer questions submitted by our listeners at the Democracy Defender level and higher. It's always interesting to hear what is going on in people's minds. It's very much what's going on in mine and Sarah's minds during this apocalyptic time. So, if you want to join that support group, please sign up at Patreon and you'll get that bonus episode early this Tuesday afternoon. So this week, we are running a segment we're calling Quid Pro Quo Joe Manchin. It is all about the so-called kingmaker in the US Senate who is holding our democracy hostage.

Andrea Chalupa:

Apparently Quid Pro Quo Joe Manchin has had this nickname for some time now, according to a 2017 article from thestreet.com. Quid Pro Quo is, “you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.” That's also the currency of the Trump mob boss and all those complicit in Trump's crimes and criminality. That's how they operated. Trump was, of course, famously impeached—the first time—for trying to force the president of Ukraine to invent a scandal to tarnish his political rival, Joe Biden, in the 2020 election in exchange for releasing much needed defense aid already agreed to by Congress. You want America's help defending yourself from Russia, the second most powerful military in the world? Then invent a Biden scandal. That's quid pro quo. That's how Trump operates and that's how Republican Benedict Arnold Joe Manchin operates. Currently, Joe Manchin is the single vote in the Senate threatening to block the \$3.5 trillion package that would strengthen America's social safety net, pulling countless people out of poverty, making it easier, for instance, for women to reenter the workforce after so many were forced to cut back or give up their jobs due to the pandemic as children stayed home and needed help with zoom school.

Andrea Chalupa:

This big massive package would help America transition to cleaner energy at a time when we're getting bombarded by the climate crisis, which is only getting started. I want to focus on the help this \$3.5 trillion package would give children because this is especially important. Landmark studies have shown that the support children receive before the age of five determines their full potential for life, including their earning potential, which means tax money they would put back into the economy. All of that is determined by the health and education of the child before the age of five. That's why this package is so important for the long-term health of our country.

Andrea Chalupa:

From CNBC on how the \$3.5 trillion package would extend the child tax credit and all the other good it would do: “This credit alone will help some 65 million children across the US, roughly 90% of kids in the country, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. It will also lift some 4.1 million children out of poverty, slashing the overall poverty rate by around 40%. Continuing the credit, which so far is only for the 2021 tax year, will mean these benefits continue. Children and their families would also potentially be helped by planned investments in childcare and education baked into the proposal. Senate Democrats would like to extend universal pre-K to three and four year old children and expand child care benefits for working families. The plan would also make community college tuition free, give money to institutions serving minorities, and increase the maximum Pell Grant award to help people attend and pay for higher education. Child nutrition programs would also get a boost.”

Andrea Chalupa:

All right, so what's in it for Quid Pro Quo Joe Manchin to be the single person in the Senate to screw over America's children, America's future, hardworking men and women in desperate need of a lifeline, and also protect our species from extinction in the worsening climate crisis? Well, Joe Manchin, as we keep saying on this show even before it was popular... Do you remember, Sarah, when we ran that episode very early at the start of this year, Joe Manchin Gaslights America, and everyone was like, “Leave Joe Manchin alone!”?

Sarah Kendzior:

We're the hipsters of Joe Manchin hatred. So, yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

Exactly. So Joe Manchin is essentially a corporate lobbyist, namely an Exxon lobbyist, in the Senate. What's more, as David Roberts who runs a newsletter called Volts points out on Twitter: "Coal isn't actually that big a part of West Virginia's economy. It employs less than 2% of the state workforce, but coal is a very big part of Joe Manchin's personal finances." So a single selfish, greedy, rich person, in an organization set up to protect greedy rich people—the United States Senate—which was controversial at the time of its founding, continues to be one of the serious damaging mistakes of the founding fathers. It continues to plague the American experiment. I know the founding fathers launched a revolution, then fought a war, then had to establish a government and deal with the aftermath of war. And none of that was easy. But their bad judgment and compromises threatened not only our democracy, but the world. We need American leadership to help right now with the transition to clean energy and Exxon and coal lobbyist Joe Manchin is determined to stand in the way. What's more, Joe Manchin's moral failings are a family affair.

Andrea Chalupa:

His wife and his daughter are very much cut from the same cloth. Joe Manchin's daughter, Heather Bresch, got a job at Mylan, a drug making company, with the help of her father and quickly rose up in the ranks of the company to become the president and CEO. Under her leadership, the company created a monopoly and jacked up the price of life-saving EpiPens needed to stop life-threatening allergic reactions. A two-pack of EpiPens used to sell for less than \$100. According to *The Intercept*, under the leadership of Heather Bresch, "Mylan drove the price above \$600 within five years." And what's more, Heather Bresch took that money she raked in from price gouging and paid herself a massive salary while consumers suffered. From a 2016 article in the *Washington Post*, "Bresch's total compensation went from \$2,453,456 to \$18,931,068." So, she went from \$2.5 million a year to nearly \$19 million a year from 2007 to 2015.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's a striking 671% increase. Is that... That's crazy. "That period coincides with the period when Mylan acquired the rights to EpiPens and steadily hiked the average wholesale price from about \$55 to \$320. A standard two-pack now costs between \$600 to \$700. The price has prompted outrage among many consumers who have taken to social media to complain that they can no longer afford the potentially life saving medicine." All right, so, what's more, Joe Manchin's wife, the mother of Heather Bresch, according to *The Intercept*, "lobbied states to require schools to stock epinephrine as the Head of the National Association of State Boards of Education." That, of course, must have been really helpful for her daughter considering her company established a monopoly on EpiPens. So from a 2016 article in *USA Today*, linked to in the original *Intercept* article I mentioned, "After Gayle Manchin took over the..."—Gayle Manchin, again, is Joe Manchin's wife who raised Heather Bresch to be, apparently, an alleged corrupt criminal.

Andrea Chalupa:

"After Gayle Manchin took over the National Association of State Boards of Education in 2012, she spearheaded an unprecedented effort that encouraged states to require schools to purchase medical devices that fight life threatening allergic reactions. The Association's move helped pave the way for Mylan's specialty, maker of EpiPens to develop a near monopoly in school nurses offices. 11 states drafted laws requiring epinephrine auto-injectors. Nearly every other state recommended schools stock

them after what the White House called the EpiPen Law. In 2013, it gave funding preference to those that did." This is a 2016 article. "The CEO of Mylan then and now was Heather Bresch. Gayle is Heather Bresch's mother." Holy smokes. This is soo ridiculous. It's putting the Trumps to shame. The Manchin's put the Trumps to shame. That's a lot of quid pro quo going on in one family.

Andrea Chalupa:

You want to live, pay up. "Heather Bresch testified before Congress in 2016 and denied any wrongdoing"—because, apparently, this is America where you're free to make money at the expense of people's lives and livelihood. "Heather Bresch would go on to retire from Mylan with a \$30.8 million package. There's now a nationwide class action lawsuit against Mylan for creating a monopoly of the EpiPens market, hiking up the prices by engaging in an illegal scheme." Listen, I want to say, I know parenting is hard, but Joe Manchin raised this person, because this is who Joe Manchin is. Joe Manchin's daughter makes Ivanka Trump look like an amateur.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's wild to hear this because I remember when we did our episode and I had some line like, "Joe Manchin is a mystery wrapped in an enigma wrapped in money." And, you know, we went digging through all the dirt of his family's and through his strange foreign policy votes and, to some degree, in his finances, but this was at the time where everybody was wondering like, "Why is Manchin standing in the way of the Biden administration agenda? Why is Manchin blocking the filibuster?" One would assume that all of this information, which we had some of back then was known. It was known to members of Congress, was known to the people who could potentially have been applying pressure on Joe Manchin, and my question now is given that his daughter is a white-collar criminal, who should be stopped in her own right, not purely as some sort of political maneuver, but because she's hurting people.

Sarah Kendzior:

She's hurting sick people. She's hurting children. She's profiting off death which, of course, has been the trajectory of this country for a while, especially since COVID. But it's amazing to me that this hasn't been more front and center when everybody was scrambling to find the mechanism of leverage that could actually sway Manchin to do the most basic things for the Democratic platform, and this was all there. Because, you know, you described the infrastructure bill, there are obviously things in it that are good. It will all be repealed, it will all vanish, if the GOP takes over in 2022, in 2024. And the way that they will take over, of course, is through the loss of voting rights, both traditional disenfranchisement and suppression maneuvers, but also new laws like the ones in Georgia and Florida that allow the state legislature to simply override your vote.

Sarah Kendzior:

And just the constant narrative contestation of, "Oh, this is fraud. If I lost, then it is fraudulent," which we're seeing with Larry Elder in California. God only knows what's going to be happening by the time y'all get this episode tonight. But anyway, Biden was always in danger of being a placeholder president and having any good policy that his administration passes fade away, and Manchin was always one of the foremost obstacles to that. So, I guess my question is—since you have gotten your PhD in Joe Manchin studies over the weekend, taking one for the team here at Gaslit Nation—why the hell didn't all this come up earlier? And why didn't they LBJ-style, or I hate to say it, like, Mitch McConnell-style use this as leverage to get Joe Manchin to do his job, which for those who have forgotten, his job is to serve the American public. And he's not.

[begin advertisements]

This episode of Gaslit Nation is sponsored by Talkspace. The world is racing to get back to normal and start meeting up in person again, but after the year we've all had, getting back to normal takes time. If you're feeling overwhelmed by it all, you're not alone. It's important to find the support you need to face those feelings and move forward. Talkspace makes it easy to match with a licensed therapist and scheduled live video sessions, all from the comfort of your device. You can start messaging your therapist the same day you sign up. Talkspace works around your schedule at your convenience. Whether you're experiencing depression, anxiety, or other problems, Talkspace is the number one online therapy platform to help you sort through any issue. Start feeling better with a single message. Match with a licensed therapist when you go to [talkspace.com](https://www.talkspace.com) and get \$100 off your first month with the promo code, Gaslit. That's \$100 off when you use code Gaslit at [talkspace.com](https://www.talkspace.com).

This episode of Gaslit Nation is sponsored by Best Fiends, a puzzle game you can play on your phone. We're way past due for a less stressful and more refreshing time, and when you download Best Fiends, you can give your brain a dose of refreshment all year long. No matter what the season brings, you can always get some guaranteed fun with Best Fiends. Best Fiends challenges your brain with fun puzzle levels, but it's a casual game, so it doesn't stress you out, which is a good thing right now. With Best Fiends, you can solve puzzles, collect cute characters, and play alongside your friends and family. There are literally thousands of levels to play and tons of cute characters to collect. Best Fiends is made for adults, but it's bright, colorful, fun, and approachable for everyone. And it's totally free to download. With thousands of fun puzzles to solve, there's something new every day. Download Best Fiends free on the Apple app store or Google Play today. That's Friends without the R, Best Fiends.

[end advertisements]

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, the Democrats always bring a baguette to a gunfight, so, I don't know. I raise those questions all the time. Teddy Roosevelt used to be brass knuckled with getting things moving and getting people lined up to do the right thing when they didn't have a moral compass. Back to the damning *Intercept* article on the Manchin family of grifters. I want to read from this now. "Manchin last week urged Democrats to take 'strategic pause' in consideration of the party's \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package, the centerpiece of the Biden agenda. A key component of the bill would lower drug prices by allowing Medicare to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies. That market power would save the government and patients billions over the next decade. But perhaps even more importantly, it would give the government greater insight into how pharmaceutical executives set prices. The change could reveal the type of collusion that keeps those rates high, exposing companies to risk a regulation or prosecution."

Andrea Chalupa:

So, Manchin cannot back the \$3.5 trillion package because it's bad for the family's grifting business. Manchin used to be tough on pharmaceutical companies and drug prices, but they apparently bought him off by hiring his daughter. This is what goes down in Ukraine. When people look at the black hole of corruption in Ukraine, it's because of families like Joe Manchin's. Here's yet another example of the quid

pro quo that the Manchin family apparently runs on, again, much like the Trump family. From a 2016 article in the *Washington Post* on Manchin's corrupt daughter, Heather Bresch: "The most scandalous incident occurred in 2008, shortly after Heather Bresch was named the chief executive of Mylan, and this involved the master's degree in business administration from West Virginia University that was listed on her resume. It turns out she never got it. An investigation by the school prompted by a newspaper report found that some administrators had added courses and grades to her transcript to make it look as if she had completed the required coursework."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The incident made headlines across the state because her father, Joe Manchin, was governor at the time, and the school's president, Mike Garrison, was a longtime family friend and former business associate. The controversy blew over quickly for Bresch and she remained chief executive, but Garrison and a slew of other administrators resigned from their positions following expressions of no confidence from students, faculty, and alumni. In 2015, Bresch caused another firestorm when she merged Mylan with a company in the Netherlands. The transaction is known as 'tax inversion' and involves joining with a foreign entity to move a legal corporate headquarters abroad. Doing so provides a major advantage, trading US corporate taxes, which is at 39%—among the highest in the world—for a tax bill from a different country that is presumably less. Such moves are so unpopular with the American public that only a handful of us companies have dared attempt them. Members of Congress, including her father, Joe Manchin, denounced such tactics as undermining the US economy."

Andrea Chalupa:

So his daughter is also a major tax dodger. All the help that pharmaceutical companies like Mylan receive from the US government, all of the partnership, support and help... Then she goes off and sets up an offshore company to dodge paying taxes. I mean, it's not just one scandal. It's a list of corruption. Joe Manchin raised this person and it shows. One might think if Manchin operates with a quid pro quo mentality, then why not just buy him off, right? The Democrats tried that by giving his wife a cushy job. "Gayle Manchin was confirmed to be a co-chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission, a federal government agency which promotes economic development across the region's 13 states." That's from *The Intercept*. People have to understand, everyone listening to this, that Exxon and the Republican party dark money machine simply have more money than the Democratic side, apparently.

Andrea Chalupa:

Or, they're more eager to part with it if it means they can enslave a politician like Manchni with golden handcuffs. And again, this is how corruption runs in Ukraine. The GOP and the world's largest polluters, like the Koch's, are the highest bidders for Manchin's soul. So far, the Democrats can't seem to compete with that, or refuse to, maybe because a bribe is illegal, but dark money makes bribes legal currently in the United States, thanks to Citizens United. So, who knows why the Democrats keep getting outbid? Maybe it's just a simple fact that Joe Manchin, his values, are aligned with the forces in America—corporate greed, major polluters—that simply want to make limitless money and have zero constraints. And so that is who he's going to throw his lot in with.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, I think this is yet another case—and we've certainly discussed this with the Trumps and the Trump family—of oligarch envy, of an American politician looking at the way the oligarchs are thriving in the former Soviet union, in the middle east. There's not really a distinction in my mind between "oligarch"

and “plutocrat”. I mean, they work directly together. I think they just tend to be used to denote certain regional attachments, but really there is no difference. And they want further erasure of any kind of legal constraints. They want to build dynastic kleptocracies. They want to have elite criminal impunity not only for themselves, but also for their families. And they've discovered that the best way of doing this is by installing themselves and installing their family members into office. Because when you are making the law, you can live above it.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is often described as a Republican phenomenon. Before that, it was described as some sort of unique aspect of the Trump branch of the Republican party, but, of course, the entire Republican Party is the Trump Republican Party. And we saw this before. You know, we saw this with the Bush administration, we saw it all throughout the '80s with Iran-Contra and other scandals, and we see it within the Democratic Party as well. What makes it more frightening now is that the type of corruption and kleptocracy that they're engaged with forms an immediate existential threat to our existence, most notably, of course, with climate change, with climate catastrophe, with connections to groups like Exxon—Exxon which peddled climate science as a conspiracy theory. There's all these, you know, attacks, there's pejorative use of conspiracy theorists that's basically stifled discussion of real crimes, of things we talk about on this show a lot, like the Jeffrey Epstein case and so forth. That same tactic was used by Exxon and used by fossil fuel corporations to deny climate science its validity and to force it into this 'both sides' position endlessly debated on TV of, like, “Oh, is it real? Is it not? Are these people crazy? Are they exaggerating? Are they obsessed with apocalyptic outcomes?” It's like, no, dude, they were trying to warn you, just like epidemiologists tried to warn you about COVID, just like Andrea and I and other people who study authoritarianism tried to warn you about that. And we're warning you about kleptocracy and we're warning you about corruption as an existential right now. So, you know, a lot of this frightens me. It's not this sort of horseshoe concern, or, “Ooh, we've got a 50/50 Senate, how do we flip them? How do we buy them off?”

Sarah Kendzior:

The repercussions of what Manchin is doing go so far beyond Manchin. And to be honest, if they did manage to “win him over or buy him off”, we're still going to be stuck dealing with this problem. We'll get into this either later in this show or in the bonus, but this particular class—this class of oligarchs and plutocrats—have not only devised a legal system in which they can act above the law, break the law rewrite the law so they're no longer breaking the law, but not have to participate in the global economy, not have to participate in the kind of everyday economic transactions and dependencies that the rest of us do, not have to look for jobs in the way the rest of us do.

Sarah Kendzior:

What I'm going to talk about a bit later, I think, is the breakdown of the global supply chain, which is becoming this huge crisis for all sorts of industries. But this particular class—this class of oligarchs and kleptocrats—they simply float above it, and there's no sign of this abating. The election of Biden has not changed this in any meaningful way, in part because this is a matter of the justice system. It's a matter of an absolutely broken legal system. And you should listen to our old episodes where we interviewed Jennifer Taub about global corruption and about American dynastic kleptocrats, in particular the Sackler family, who recently were just deemed immune from prosecution. This is the family that laughed and sneered as they murdered hundreds of thousands of Americans through opioids, through Big Pharma, through their peddling of basically extremely dangerous products under false descriptions for decades on end.

Sarah Kendzior:

And they're reported as getting off on the deaths of this, of loving that they were profiting off of death and pain. People know this. It's in the public record. And they're just declared immune. There's an entire caste that is just floating above us, and that is what Manchin and his daughter and his family seek to join. And if they don't see that as a crisis for democracy, for the legal system, for the climate, and for our ability to have a future, I don't know what else will. This is not a personality conflict. This is not just a matter of him being an absolutely horrific human being, even though he is. It goes so far beyond that.

Andrea Chalupa:

Currently the Democrats are working with Joe Manchin on a compromise to the voting rights bill called the Freedom to Vote Act. This was just announced this week. It would provide all sorts of protection against Republicans storming state governments with voter suppression laws driven by Trump's Big Lie, "The 2020 election was stolen", essentially ushering in an electoral autocracy where elections become meaningless because they're rigged by voter suppression and gerrymandering and partisan officials. This new Freedom to Vote Act has the support of every Democrat in the Senate. And let me read off some of the great things we could get out of it. There would be a voter ID compromise, which even voting rights advocates are fine with because they find it to be reasonable. It would make election day a national holiday. It would standardize a lot of necessary reforms for protecting election security, and a lot of great things.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's a really wonderful package that would help us immensely and protect us from Republican authoritarianism. We could sleep at night if something like the Freedom to Vote Act went into effect. But it's simply not going to because Joe Manchin still refuses to do anything to reform the filibuster. He just said in recent days, "The filibuster stays as is." So that means they're going to need 10 Republicans in the Senate to join them. And that's simply not going to happen, obviously, because Republicans depend on voter suppression to come to power and stay in power. So Manchin is just doing this—the Freedom to Vote Act—because he needs to buy himself some PR. He needs to get some good press headlines. He needs to continue his gaslighting of America so people are distracted thinking that he's a team player when, in reality, he's an enemy within.

Andrea Chalupa:

So I just don't know... How do Democrats get through to Joe Manchin? As we said in our episode earlier this year, [Joe Manchin Gaslights America](#), Joe Manchin will never come around because Joe Manchin is a living, breathing Confederate monument. Joe Manchin profits from White supremacy, which continues—like the centuries-old system of slavery before it—to exploit human bodies for profit. His daughter did this. His wife did it. And now he's doing it from his perch in the US Senate. And he doesn't care about all the non-White lives that are most vulnerable to the climate crisis, that are most vulnerable to slipping through the cracks, to being plunged deeper into poverty. The climate crisis, the greed crisis plaguing the healthcare industry, the economic crisis, the growing income inequality gap, those are crises that impact all of us, but they hit non-White people harder, and the damage lasts across generations. Joe Manchin, like the living, breathing Confederate monuments before him, simply does not care. He's off partying on his houseboat—yes, he has a houseboat in Washington, DC—with other Confederate monuments like Lindsey Graham. Yes. That did actually happen. He had a party with Lindsey Graham and Graham caught COVID after that.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Sorry, there's just images in my mind. I'm not going to share.

Andrea Chalupa:

I know, I know those images. But at least Joe Manchin, of course, has a houseboat for the end of the world which his greed is helping usher in.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. You know, I gotta say, it's like this whole year... It's been like... I don't know. You know how the way all movies seem, or a lot of TV shows seem to just be like reboots or remakes or sequels, and there's this sort of sense of sluggishness to everything? I mean, it's weird. It's like we're in this time of rampant catastrophes, of catastrophes that move incredibly fast, as we see in climate. We see the West burning down, we see hurricanes of unparalleled force rising seemingly out of nowhere and hitting our shores. And at the same time, there's just this incredible inertia. And it's like, everything that we're saying in this episode is just the shit that we warned everyone about very early in the year. And we were told to, you know, "Be good cheerleaders" and, "Just stop complaining" and that "there was a plan and they were going to secretly fix it."

Sarah Kendzior:

And, "Don't worry about Manchin!" and blah, blah, blah. Then, of course—and I noted this last week—first you get denial, then the denial is immediately turned into despair. And it became, "Oh, but there's Joe Manchin. Nothing we could do. Why bother trying?" And it's like, you know, it's your god damned job to figure out solutions to things. I remember when you had to clarify, Andrea, why you were criticizing Biden. And you actually had to say, "Well, you know, I am not the most powerful person in the world. And Biden is." It's like, dude, this is why you were elected. Biden, I mean, because I apparently have to clarify that for certain individuals. This is why these people are put into power and it's very difficult for me to believe they did not anticipate the crisis of gridlock Joe Manchin.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's also hard for me to believe that if this weren't Joe Manchin being the leading corrupt figure holding things up, it would just be Sinema, it would be Feinstein, it would be someone else, because they do not want to deal with accountability. They do not want to deal with entrenched corruption. I don't want to go down the Fox News wormhole, but I do wonder if Hunter Biden's various sleazy activities have maybe prompted some hesitancy on the part of Biden to look at the children of other people who are in office, like Joe Manchin's daughter, just because it's such an instant kind of thing that you can bring back to them. We have this horrible legal system where the lines between illicit activity that's just sleazy and illegal activity have grown incredibly blurred over the last 30 years.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so I don't really know how to classify the criminality of a lot of the people we have in there. But I know that it's rampant, as is nepotism, as are all of these little shady deals. And unless you got more to say on that, you know, since we're talking about sequels, we can maybe talk about the California recall, which I guess will be happening tonight, and the potential Coup 2 that's supposed to happen this weekend. But do you have any final thoughts on Manchin before we get into all that?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, the whole thing is frustrating and we can't let it go. No matter what happens in the years ahead, we have to hold the fire to this family of grifters. And I think the best thing to do is shun the Manchin grifter family, continue to investigate the daughter and the wife's alleged corruption, hold them accountable for any crimes and corruption, and refuse to let Joe Manchin and his gaslighting string you along. Hold their feet to the fire and then fight like hell to hold onto all seats in the Senate in 2022 and win just one or two more, which can be done with Val Demings in Florida, who's taking on Marco Rubio, and whoever is going to be the primary—Democratic primary—winner against Kremlin propagandist, Ron Johnson, in Wisconsin. We do stand a chance in 2022 of making Joe Manchin, like all other Confederate statues, obsolete.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. I mean, at any rate we should try, but on that note, I really wish the Democratic Party would realize the morale issue in play when you have states like Florida, for example, with their new voter suppression just tossing out all the ballots kind of laws, that that is going to severely impact the kind of momentum needed to get people to rally around a qualified Democratic opponent. I think people will still vote. I mean, this is just sort of the sense I get from talking to other disillusioned people like myself. We're all planning to vote. Nobody wants the Republican apocalyptic death cult alternative. It is an existential threat. But folks put in a lot of sacrifice and a lot of effort to turn that election around in 2020, particularly in Georgia, facing a pandemic, an aspiring autocrat, bands of White supremacist militants, a corrupt justice system, lines that went on for hours and hours. I vote in a primarily Black area of St. Louis and I therefore wait in those lines because that's very typical for any primarily Black and often primarily Hispanic region of the United States.

Sarah Kendzior:

People took incredible pains to vote and to make sure their votes count and all we want is the filibuster gone, voting rights restored, a guarantee that when we vote a legislature can't just remove it. And there are individual lawyers who are very active in trying to repeal these horrific laws. Mark Elias is certainly one who's been very active in this respect. The ACLU often gets involved. But for God's sake, the Democrats on a national level, at the highest levels of office, they have to stop treating this like it's a bargaining chip or an optional activity. There is no more fundamental thing to protect than voting rights, because from voting rights flows all of the policy initiatives and infrastructure plans and other things that we would either like to implement or preserve for the sake of our public safety or national security, our ability to survive. These aren't fanciful ideas that we're having. Americans are really trying to hold on for dear life.

Sarah Kendzior:

And it is so insulting to have so much of this framed as like, "Oh, you be good and maybe you'll get voting rights." You know, "You play along and you cheerlead and you get out and you volunteer your time and maybe, *maybe* your right to vote will count." It's insulting to all the civil rights activists of the past who fought so hard to even get these laws in the 1960s, to preserve them onwards, and have been fighting since 2013 when the Supreme Court struck down part of the VRA. This is a long simmering crisis and... Oh gosh, I mean, you know, I hope you're right. And, of course, what I'm saying is you try anyway. Even if the odds are very long, even if the situation is very bad, you try anyway. You try to flip the Senate. You try solutions that don't involve having to depend on a state or a country or a governmental body. You try to

take care of each other, because it's the right thing to do. But God, it is frustrating to have to... I don't know, just deal with people who don't see it that way, who, again, are kind of floating above it all, not quite at the level of Manchin and the other aspiring oligarchs, but in their own clueless way, in their own little bubble. And it's the kind of bubble that... I don't know. It leads to greater disasters. And on that note, should we talk about Larry elder?

Andrea Chalupa

[laughs] Well, hopefully Larry Elder is obsolete too by the time this runs.

Sarah Kendzior:

I feel like he can't get obsolete. This is what I'm worried about. So, all right. So, just to be clear, Andrea and I are taping this... It's like—

Andrea Chalupa:

Tuesday the 14th, where people better be voting against the recall across California.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah. Tuesday, the 14th, 10:30 AM Central Time. Central Time is the best time. Central Time is the standard. I'm calling it for the show and I'm going to make you all accept it. But anyway, our point is we don't know who won the recall. We don't know if Gavin Newsom has been recalled, but you probably know by the time that you hear this. What we do know from Psychic Friend Larry Elder is that he has created a website that has already claimed, prior to the votes being counted, prior to the votes being cast, that there is a fraud in the results, which he claims "resulted in governor Gavin Newsom being reinstated as governor." He said this on Monday. He created, you know, there's an online form where you can report election fraud for an election that has not happened yet, that has not been completed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this is because it's part of the constant GOP narrative of election fraud that we've seen since 2016, when the phrase "Stop The Steal" was coined by Roger Stone and was applied to Trump, basically—not even basically—saying flat out that if Trump is not installed as the President of the United States, then it means that the election is illegitimate. It means that there has been fraud. Ironically, there *was* fraud, as we've detailed for several years on this show. There were the maneuvers of people like Paul Manafort, one of many indicted campaign advisers of Donald Trump who was trading information with Russia. There are questions as to the integrity of the voter databases and machines, which, again, were hacked by Russia. They've admitted that the databases were hacked. We're supposed to believe that no votes were changed, despite Harry Reid issuing two statements—one in August, 2016, one in October, 2016—to James Comey (these were publicly released) saying "Russia planned to falsify the election results", meaning that your actual vote can be changed, kind of like how the GOP is flat out announcing now that they're going to change your vote if you happen to live in the state of Georgia and so on. Anyway, there are a lot of things in question in that 2016 election and none of it was subtle. None of it was spurious. It involved Donald Trump holding a press conference in July, 2016, asking for Russia to get him Hillary Clinton's emails. It involved an enormous number of illegal or illicit actions on the part of the Trump team and his staff, and they were not investigated. They were not prosecuted. And what they did that was very clever is that they got the Democrats to be backed into a corner and say, "No, it's impossible."

Sarah Kendzior:

“American elections are of the utmost integrity. They could never be rigged. They could never be manipulated. Your vote is sacrosanct and we will always protect it,” blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, because they thought—or so they claim—they thought that Trump would lose. I thought Trump would win. So, you know, the whole time I'm like telling people this and everyone thinks I'm nuts on all accounts, like on Trump winning, on him winning illicitly, all this shit. Anyway, he wins and they can't do anything because they'd look like massive hypocrites or sore losers or liars or whatever if they then say, “Ph, by the way, the election was under attack by a hostile foreign state and its partners” because, you know, as we've also noted many times, it was not just Russia, not just the Kremlin, it was a transnational crime syndicate with whom Trump, Manafort, Roger Stone and others had been immersed for several decades.

Sarah Kendzior:

And this was just the pinnacle of one of their plots. As to their mysterious motivation, it is money and criminal impunity. It's really not very mysterious at all. Anyway, so what's happened since? Of course, we had the attempted coup in 2020, which again employed the Stop The Steal line. This was a repeat. This was the same shit that they pulled in 2016, only this time they announced the entire plan on the internet for months, and it involved other newer players like Lin Wood, who recruited a lot of susceptible, unhinged individuals to come to the Capitol on January 6th. We got to see it all streamed on TV. Basically, we got to see the “bloodbath” that Roger Stone promised America in 2016 if Trump were proclaimed the loser. We got to see it play out live.

Sarah Kendzior:

We've documented this many times. I recommend reading the transcript of our, I think it was our January 13th episode, [Clear Intent](#), which came out right after the attack on the Capitol. We also did a preview special of the attack on the Capitol on January 5th because we knew it was coming. And we've been waiting for accountability. We've been waiting for people like Stone, Michael Flynn, Steve Bannon—who on January 5th spoke of the impending attack—and Lin Wood to be held accountable. They have not been held accountable and all we've seen is them rewriting the narrative of what happened that day. We saw an abbreviated second impeachment of Donald Trump, which the Democrats at the time claimed was abbreviated because they planned to have Congressional hearings and a thorough investigation of what happened on January 6th. They have not. They have put this on the back burner.

Sarah Kendzior:

And the result of that is two things that we're seeing coming this week. First, the California recall election and the rise of Larry Elder putting forth this preemptive narrative that if he loses, it's stolen. If he loses, it's fraud. If Newsom is there, they are going to need to resort to other tactics to get them out. You know, maybe lawsuits, maybe something else. Because the thing is, September 18th, this weekend, there is a planned basically like a Coup 2 set for DC in which a lot of the participants of the Capitol attacks or supporters of the Capitol attacks who claim they feel aggrieved by things like the killing of Ashley Babbitt and by the jailings of the low-hanging fruit that torpedoed the Capitol, ransacking it, breaking things, attacking people, threatening to kill Congress and so on, they feel like it is unjust to be imprisoned or investigated for such crimes.

Sarah Kendzior:

They're going to show up. And there are folks warning of violence, among them the Capitol Police. I don't know exactly what is going to happen on this day. Maybe nothing will happen. Maybe it'll just be one of those things that peters out. You know, we hear about a lot of these planned hard right-wing protests, and sometimes they don't amount to much. But increasingly... And I think this is also a consequence of the pandemic kind of raising everybody's emotional levels, people being deeply frustrated about all sorts of stuff, trapped inside, kind of, you know, very much going down internet wormholes, losing their grip on reality or being frustrated by reality itself. It really goes both ways. Anyway, I kind of think folks are going to be looking for violence. And I think that if they are looking for a rationale, Larry Elder and Gavin Newsom is going to be a featured storyline. We've already seen this with Trump.

Sarah Kendzior:

He went to California. He's bringing this up. He's already claiming that Elder is the aggrieved party. They want California. California is the 5th biggest economy in the world. If Elder takes over California, as we noted on our [special California recall election episode](#), you're going to see a California that resembles the Texas of Greg Abbott, the Florida Ron DeSantis, which is a very big, very powerful and economically wealthy state being controlled by a right-wing lunatic who defers even more than Gavin Newsom does to corporate interests, who doesn't believe in climate science, or has a track record of that. You know, there's all sorts of reasons why this is disastrous and it's a hard kind of battle to wage here, because, you know, Newsom is no prince. Like, we're not, or at least I'm not a fan. This is one of those situations where you really are voting for the lesser of two evils, but keep in mind with Larry Elder, he's seen as a vehicle for broader aspirations within the most... Not just hard right, but just anti-American, anti-any kind of rule of law entitled wing of the Republican Party.

Sarah Kendzior:

They're going to use him. They're going to use whatever happens tonight for their own agenda and try to translate it into on-the-ground violence. And the solution here is what they should've done immediately after the Capitol attacks, which is, you investigate everyone. You don't feign naivete. You don't do what the FBI did, which is like, "Well, we don't see any evidence" when the guy... It's on TV! We all saw the evidence. We all saw everything transpire. You need to hold people accountable no matter how elite and powerful they are, because I think that that's at the heart of it. They do not want to look at Flynn and Stone and Bannon and Wood and the Trump family, that's while they'll go over some random QAnon guy, they'll go after somebody like that.

Sarah Kendzior:

They don't want to look at those guys because those guys were part of the government. Those guys were part of multiple administrations and they have secrets. They have insight, but also these are people who were accepted by highbrow elite society. They're accepted by institutionalists. They were given credibility by institutionalists, and so when you take away their credibility (as well you should), the credibility of the institution itself comes under scrutiny (as well it should), and that's what's necessary, is to look at the breakdown of institutions. It's not about individuals. It is about institutions because as a random actor, none of this would be possible. Not for Trump, not for Flynn, not for Bannon, and not for others. It's because they are joined as a team and they are backed by a broken justice system. They are backed by a broken media and they will take it to any extent that they can, unless limitations are imposed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And the refusal to impose limitations, the absolute gutlessness at the face of this threat to all Americans and to our national security from the Democrats and from the FBI and from the other agencies of accountability that are supposed to protect us, it's disgusting. So yeah, get ready for this weekend. All right. So that's it for today's episode, hopefully I'm wrong about everything, but if you want-

Andrea Chalupa:

But at least you're being hopeful!

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, yes. Being hopeful, putting forth suggestions, that's what I'm all about. Anyway, we have more doom and gloom and warnings for you in our Patreon bonus. As I mentioned earlier in today's episode, I want to touch on the problem of the broken supply chain. I have a horrible feeling we're all going to be touching on the problem of the broken supply chain as the year goes on. Again, hopefully I am wrong. But to tune into that episode, please go subscribe at our Patreon. We'll probably post a clip or two from the show so you can get a taste of what we're about. It's worth your money, worth your time. Get in while the getting is good and we still have the parts available to produce the show. And thank you for your support.

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 Oil Change International, an advocacy group supported with the generous donation from the Greta Thunberg Foundation that exposes the true cost of fossil fuels and facilitates the ongoing transition to clean energy.

Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate at 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. 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 and Gaslit Nation is produced by David Whitehead, Martin Vissenberg, Nik 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:

Gaslit Nation would like to thank our supporters at the Producer level on Patreon and higher, especially the first two who did not get thanked in August. So we're going to thank you profusely for many weeks to come...