

Gaslit Nation Transcript  
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The Sociopath Network  
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Francis Haugen:

During my time at Facebook, I came to realize a devastating truth: Almost no one outside of Facebook knows what happens inside of Facebook. The company intentionally hides vital information from the public, from the US government, and from governments around the world. The documents I have provided to Congress prove that Facebook has repeatedly misled the public about what its own research reveals about the safety of children, the efficacy of its artificial intelligence systems, and its role in spreading divisive and extreme messages. I came forward because I believe that every human being deserves the dignity of the truth.

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 as always, we have an early show at Gaslit Nation that runs Tuesday afternoons. This week, we're going to be answering questions submitted from our listeners at the Democracy Defender level and higher on our Patreon. And we have, always, a lot of interesting questions and there's a lot that's on people's minds and it gives us ideas for the show, these discussions we have with our listeners. So if you want to submit a question, you can sign up there. And we're also going to talk about the massive exposé of the Pandora Papers and what they mean. If you want to hear the early episodes, you can sign up at the Truth Teller level and higher, and we'll meet you there... How was that? Oh, I keep going? [laughs]

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Aren't you going to talk? Do you want me to set you up for this?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, because then it's just me talking for 10 minutes.

Sarah Kendzior:

What do you want me to ask you?

Andrea Chalupa:

“So Andrea, what's going on in Congress?”, and then I answer that.

Sarah Kendzior:

Okay, cool. So Andrea, you have some news about what's going on in Congress?

Andrea Chalupa:

I sure do Sarah. [laughs]

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Do tell, do tell. I'm sure it's good news.

Andrea Chalupa:

Always, always good news coming out of Congress. Okay. So, we have Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda, which is coming at us within the form of the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package. Biden had—president Joe Biden I should say—had a press conference on Monday where he stressed that the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package is his bill, not the Progressives’ bill, not Bernie Sanders’ bill. This is his Build Back Better agenda. That matters because people in the media and Rupert Murdoch's propaganda machine are trying to paint this as a socialist takeover, as Progressives versus moderates, when the reality is that the Progressives wanted a \$6 trillion package. That was the Progressives’ original plan, original wishlist, considering that we spend trillions anyway on being the largest military in the world and we still can't stop the asymmetrical warfare of the Kremlin bringing Donald Trump to power and using every available social media platform against us.

Andrea Chalupa:

So, this is definitely Joe Biden's package and it's half of what Progressives originally wanted. And what's most important here is that the Democratic Party—Progressives and real moderates, your run of the mill moderates—are united around this bill. Nancy Pelosi calls it the culmination of her long career. It would definitely be a jewel in her crown, so to speak. But the vast majority of the starch in her flipped color, the vast majority of the party is united behind President Biden. The existential threat to our nation and the world is coming from the so-called moderates who are in fact Koched up corporate lobbyists—and that's Koch, K-O-C-H, that Koch political network—and the main culprits, of course, are Manchin and Sinema. The \$3.5 trillion package is about helping America (which is experiencing a decline in life expectancy) and to raise the quality of life and catch up with the industrialized nations when it comes to important generation-defining future-protecting things like education. Here's President Biden on how his Build Back Better agenda will help America when it comes to education, and he's speaking directly to Republican leadership here by mentioning China because Republicans like to rally their base by pretending they're tough on China.

President Joe Biden:

The legislation, both the Build Back Better piece as well as the infrastructure piece, are things that I wrote. These didn't come from—God love him—Bernie Sanders, or AOC, or anybody else. I wrote them. I disagreed with Medicare for all, for example. I disagreed but I laid out what I thought would be important. For example, I think, in the Build Back Better program, it's required that we in fact have the best education available to us and I'll be speaking to this in detail tomorrow. But look, here's the

situation: How can we, in the ever-competitive world, increasingly competitive world, how can we not meet the educational standards at least other countries are working toward? Nobody is reducing the number of years they want their children to go to school or people go to school. You've heard me say it before, as my wife says, "If we don't, if any country out-educates us, they're going to out-compete us." Look what China's doing.

President Joe Biden:

Look what the rest of the world is doing. They're investing. They're also investing in things that relate to the ability for people to go to work and stay at work. We have several million women who can't go back to work because they don't have any way to take care of their children. So, to give a tax cut to a working mom to be able to afford daycare, is that bad? Is that a bad idea? I think it's a darn good idea that will get people back to work. So, there's a lot of things in the legislation I'm going to be talking about across the country that I think the American people overwhelmingly support, but the idea that somehow this is somebody else's legislation... This is what I wrote.

Andrea Chalupa:

Biden just needs two other votes in the Senate: Manchin and Sinema. So far, Manchin insists on shrinking down the reconciliation package significantly, gutting over \$2 trillion of programs. Sinema also continues to block it. Neither Manchin nor Sinema will provide specifics on what they're looking to cut specifically; childcare, fighting climate change? Instead, Sinema rushed off this week to rake in money at a fundraiser by business groups actively opposing the bill. That's according to the *New York Times'* reporting. Sinema and Manchin are instantly recognizable as the kind of greedy, power-hungry politicians that plague Ukraine and keep Ukraine in a black hole of corruption. Manchin, meanwhile, enjoys his time on his expensive houseboat, where he was recently confronted by a group of activists on kayaks, including a number of voters from West Virginia. And Sinema, who makes time for corporate America but is out of touch with voters in Arizona and declining rapidly in support there—especially, of course, among Democrats and independents—recently remained silent as activists followed her into a bathroom, begging her to please support the bill.

Andrea Chalupa:

And also, again, she was confronted on a plane by an activist. To be fair, Sinema, unlike Manchin, hasn't bothered to hold any meetings with activists on the front lines of the issues she's harming. What's interesting about Sinema is that you see a change in her most dramatically in 2014 when she runs for reelection in the House of Representatives, becoming one of a handful of Democrats to earn the support of the Republican dark money-fueled US Chamber of Commerce. From that point on, Sinema's transformation from a hardcore anti-capitalist, anti-war, anti-imperialist activist to a corporate lobbyist, so-called moderate Democrat leaning increasingly conservative becomes complete. Big Business essentially bought Sinema in 2014 and she has stuck by them for job security. It makes sense given that when she first ran for the House of Representatives in 2012, it was a nasty, nasty fight.

Andrea Chalupa:

Sinema was the target of vicious attack ads by Republicans. They threw everything at her. So in 2014, when she ran for reelection, to give herself an easier time, she went bi-partisan and embraced the staunchly conservative US Chamber of Commerce and has been secure on that track ever since. Sinema may like to call herself a Maverick, something that John McCain's dumb daughter—what's her name, Megan McCain, that one—John McCain's shameful daughter, who does not live up to her father's

character at all, Megan McCain also promotes that whole Maverick label of Kyrsten Sinema. If Sinema were a real maverick, she would have the courage of her convictions. She wouldn't sell out for personal gain as she clearly did in 2014. Now, "A coalition of dark money groups allied with the Koch political network is spending tens of millions of dollars to take Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda.", quoting the *Rolling Stone*.

Andrea Chalupa:

Meanwhile, Mitch McConnell, the Darth Vader of obstructionists, is determined to block Biden from helping millions of Americans and raise the quality of life in our country because the worse Biden does, the easier time the Republicans will have suppressing the vote in the 2022 midterms and taking over the Congress, which would put them in a stronger position to steal the White House in 2024. Republicans so far have refused to work with Democrats to raise the debt ceiling, which means the US will soon default on its debt. We covered this in last week's episode, and what it means to you; social security checks will stop arriving, military men and women will stop being paid, the financial markets around the world will take a hit, financing for all sorts of companies and projects could suddenly stall. The domino effect could be catastrophic.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yeah, absolutely. It's potentially disastrous, but—I know you feel the same way—we are sick of talking about Manchin and Sinema, and I think we're with the majority of Americans on that. They are an exemplar of a failed system. They are an indicator of how gridlock not only is perfected on the Republican side, but if two people can seemingly hold up bills and progress for millions—hundreds of millions—of Americans, then obviously something is deeply wrong. But the main thing I keep thinking as we've watched this play out now for nine months, you know, we came in with expectations that they would restore voting rights which have been decimated since 2013, and the partial repeal of the VRA, and that they would abolish the filibuster and then pass the Democratic agenda. There was so much exuberance over the fact that the Democrats have the House, the Senate and the presidency.

Sarah Kendzior:

The main line here is they're running out the clock. Enemies of democracy are running out the clock. These include plutocrats. These include foreign oligarchs. These include mafiosos. This obviously includes the Republican Party, which has both autocratic, theocratic, kleptocratic and secessionist, I think, in some cases, aims for the future of the United States. It also includes enablers on the Democratic side. Obviously the two big enablers at the moment are Manchin and Sinema, but if it weren't these two, it would be somebody else. It would be Diane Feinstein or it would be some other Senator. What alarms me here is the lack of urgency, in part because as, you know, you've actually spelled out the details of what's in this package, which is something that the media has tended not to do. They're focused on the fight. They're focused on Democrats versus Republicans and treating it as a horse race game, which they do with absolutely everything.

Sarah Kendzior:

They do it with COVID. They did it with treason. They did it with a coup. It's all just a big game. And in the midst of this, people are going to genuinely suffer. But overriding all of this is, as Hillary Clinton said yesterday, an existential crisis, an existential threat to the United States that has been explicit since 2016. Hillary Clinton tweeted this yesterday, that she's astonished that more people don't see or can't face America's existential crisis. And she's been saying that since she was running in 2016, where she said a

large number of things that people dismissed as hyperbolic at the time; that Trump was in league, you know, she would phrase it as with the Kremlin and with Putin. And that's certainly true but, of course, he's also in league for a lifetime with the Russian mafia. And she pointed out his criminal ties and concrete evidence of them; his lifetime of bankruptcies and corruption, his alliances with white supremacists around the world, his encouragement of white supremacy, of violence, his desire to use nuclear weapons. Every claim that Hillary Clinton made about Trump during that campaign was true.

Sarah Kendzior:

And it was objectively true then. I mean, this is something we've talked about many times, how all the evidence for this was in the public domain. Clinton was not acting off of some sort of interior logic or secret information. All of this was public. It was often confessed openly by Trump and by Bannon and by other people in his fold. So the level of denial *then* was alarming. And it's now been five years since Andrea and I met each other through Twitter purely by chance because we both had heard rumors about Trump having a disgusting sex tape or rape tape. That's the beginning of the beautiful friendship that spawned this beautiful show. We've been saying this as well for five years, working off of the same public domain evidence. All we've seen since then are our worst suspicions realized. One of the things I really, really did not want to be true in terms of things that I predict was that the Biden administration and the Democrats in Congress would not rise to the occasion during this extremely limited window of opportunity that they have right now after having gotten the House, the Senate and the presidency, where they need to put in structural implementations to ward off autocracy. They need to abolish the filibuster, to bring back voting rights, to pass these big packages, but to also ensure that whatever they pass stays there if they are not an office again in the future.

Sarah Kendzior:

And, of course, they failed us in a multitude of ways. We've done whole episodes on Merrick Garland. We've done episodes on Antony Blinken. We recently did a little bit on Mayorkas and what they're doing to Haitians at the border. It's been a very disappointing administration, but this package that they've put together is good and at least it has some sort of substance, some ambition to it. But I don't know, man. I mean, it's very hard to watch this because we're living in a liminal space that people refuse to acknowledge. We are standing on that hinge between democracy and entrenched autocracy. And there are people who will admit it and they'll call it out, but generally speaking, it feels like we're going through this pantomime of representative democracy. And, I don't know. If I were them, I would have gone in with plans B through Z as to how to deal with obstructionist Republicans, how to deal with obstructionist Democrats like Manchin and Sinema, how to deal with every possible barrier to preserving a sovereign and free and fair nation.

Sarah Kendzior:

I would have been super prepared, maybe Elizabeth Warren style. And they're just not. And the people who will pay the price for this are not going to be Biden and the rest of these elected representatives. They'll pay some price. It's regular people, it's ordinary people. It's the planet itself and the health of the climate. All of this is just teetering on the edge right now and it's very hard to watch this all play out. Because, you know, we can pinpoint the roots of the problems and the points in time where people switched and started taking that Koch money and whatnot, but the immediacy of it is grim. So, I appreciate those who do call it out. Whatever you think of Hillary Clinton, she's been consistently calling this out from the get go and I wish everyone would speak in such plain terms.

Andrea Chalupa:

The people that are confronting Kyrsten Sinema and Manchin, they're doing so because they understand the existential threat.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm (affirmative). They're living the existential threat.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. That's where their courage comes from, because the alternative is death for their communities. The alternative is living with chronic disease if we don't do something about pollution and climate change, and if we don't do something about immigration reform and all of it. They're on the edge of destruction and violence. And so for them to go up to Manchin and Sinema, their bravery comes from a survival instinct which Manchin and Sinema lack because they're so clustered in their money. In 2014, the headlines were showing how the Koch political network was fueling, spending tens of millions on, as they always do, but in 2014, it was a big moment in terms highlighting the game-changing expending of the Koch political network. One of the Republican groups they gave to was the US Chamber of Commerce which picked just a tiny handful of Democrats to support in 2014. One of them was Kyrsten Sinema and she's been hiding out in the bosom of the Koch-backed dark money Republican political network ever since. We all didn't bother to pay attention to it because she wore colorful wigs and she was an openly out bisexual. And she wore these zany Pee-Wee Herman Funhouse outfits. Pee-wee's Playhouse outfits. And we all thought, "Look at this quirky girl. Look at this gen X pixie dream girl, alternative album, Gin Blossoms..."

Sarah Kendzior:

Contempo Casuals 1995.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yes. The wet seal section.

Sarah Kendzior:

Forever 21. That's it, she's Forever 21. She's the type of middle aged woman who shops at forever 21, just, you know, bravely just moving along there in denial of biology and the passage of time.

Andrea Chalupa:

And we fell for it, you know? She appealed to our nostalgia of being back in middle school.

Sarah Kendzior:

I did not fall for it, man. I'm forever 2021. I'm forever in the doom loop. So, this did not get by me, but I did not delve as deeply as I should've into my suspicions because I had the idiotic faith that somebody else was going to... you know, I too succumb to normalcy bias at times. I assumed if there were two incredibly corrupt, big money taking, obviously compromised Democratic senators that would actually hold up the agenda of 96% of Congress, that someone somewhere would have a backup plan for that, someone somewhere would know how to use some leverage, be it threats or bribes or common sense, or whatever else you want to do. And oh, how I was wrong.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah. I just think Sinema is a weak person. I think she has a weak character. She started off her political career as a staunch activist. People keep pointing out that Kyrsten Sinema a few decades ago would be one of those people protesting and getting in the face of Kyrsten Sinema today. What happened is that she completely transformed herself in order to rise to power and stay in power, and that transformation became more and more soul sucking to the point where she's just a Koch network shill. She's just one of them now. She's The Man. She's the system. She's the machine that she was used to rage against. In 2012 when she first ran for the House, it was such a bruising campaign. The massive amount of money pumped into the ads against her were personal. They went after her.

Andrea Chalupa:

And so I think to get some sense of safety, she just went right straight into the enemy's arms because they were bigger in terms of the funding. They had the deep pockets to protect her and that's what they apparently have been doing ever since. And the Democrats didn't pay attention to this or watch it very closely because we didn't have the reform movement of Bernie Sanders coming in in 2016. And you know our thoughts on Bernie. We've been critical of him, too, very much on the show. But what you have to give him is that he inspired a whole generation of people to enter politics and run for office, which is exactly what we need right now. We need to flush out the system. There's no shortcut to that. That's how you change. Everything is going to go through the system, so if you want a new system, you get new good people, empathetic people, science driven people to run for office.

Andrea Chalupa:

And Bernie showed that you could do that with an average of \$27 of donations. So the small pocket donations, the people-powered donations that were coming through the Bernie Sanders campaign, that launched a thousand other campaigns across the country for offices large and small. And that really forced the Democratic establishment to come to the table and work with Progressives. And now, as I've said, after the 2020 election, Progressives did better than these moderates. Progressives expanded their numbers—I'm speaking specifically about the House—and the moderates lost a lot of people in the House in 2020, where the Progressives expanded the Squad. And they did that because Bernie showed them they could. So there was this reform movement and I think if the reform movement had happened sooner, maybe Kyrsten Sinema could have been targeted earlier. Maybe we would have had more red flags around her, but who knows.

Sarah Kendzior

That and I think... I mean, look how the media is covering this, where it's purely viewed in terms of optics. For them, it's about the optics of somebody followed Kyrsten Sinema into the bathroom and began talking about being deported and about human violations happening in America and about how these protective measures need to pass so she can live her life (you know, she's a constituent) and so she can live freely in Arizona and have the Democratic agenda that she campaigned for, that she volunteered for, actually play out. These are not wild things. People were not running around insulting her. They're not running around threatening her. They're trying to get a meeting with her as constituents. And all that the media will talk about is the optics. It's very similar to them not describing what's actually in the bill.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's just purely how things look. And the optics of someone being deported, the optics of somebody getting sick and dying because they don't have access to healthcare, those optics don't seem to matter to them at all. And that just speaks so much about who is in the media, who can afford to be in a media

that pays very poorly, that requires expensive credentials, that is systemically racist. I've seen so many journalists who aren't white quit over the last few years after sort of an inverse of this pattern—before that, more were being hired—because it is so impossible to work under those conditions. Just the humiliation and the refusal of editors to take your stories seriously, to take the topics you're interested in seriously. And I've seen some of those journalists branch out and do independent work, which I think is great, but this is just such a broken system and both the actual crisis and the way that it's represented to the public exemplify that. And speaking of optics, shall we move on to Facebook here?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, but I just want to point out that even the media is posting their own videos of trying to get any comment out of Sinema and it's not working for them either. So she's ignoring journalists and activists. I just think she's a weak, scared person who is hiding out in her shell, and that's a shell that has been built by the Koch political dark money network.

Sarah Kendzior:

A Poison cotton candy shell. Yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

Do those exist?

Sarah Kendzior:

They do for Halloween. Okay, so moving on to Facebook. Well, two things happened over the last 48 hours. There was an extremely damning 60 minutes interview with a whistleblower, Francis Haugen, who is testifying to Congress today. To be clear, it is 10:00 AM Central Time as we're recording this show, so you're probably going to hear a lot more about Haugen and about Facebook. She worked there and she managed to get documentation of the way that Facebook capitalized in a very literal sense on anger, hatred, desire for ethnic cleansing, desire for violence, and exploited that and cultivated that in its audience. So, that happened Sunday night. And then the hearing is today. And in between that, yesterday for, I don't know, the majority of the day—I think it was about six or seven hours, it depends where you live—Facebook and the companies which Facebook purchased, which includes Instagram and WhatsApp went down to the point that they literally did not exist on the internet for that duration of time.

Sarah Kendzior:

And there were rumors that it was gone forever and that they had really, truly disappeared, maybe from a DDoS attack, maybe from some sort of internal revolt within a very corrupt company which not everybody is thrilled about, obviously, because you see whistleblowers coming forward. Then it came back. In the interim, you know, we don't fully know what was happening here. I have some theories. But it spurred a lot of conversation about what happens when a company this massive and that is used for basic infrastructural needs worldwide disappears. I thought it was so interesting that last week we did a whole episode about a potential government shutdown and about all the terrible things that can happen to people when federal services are no longer available, and then that shutdown was averted, at least until December, and then Facebook shuts down.

Sarah Kendzior:



It made me wonder, What would have more impact if it lasted for two weeks: a shutdown of the US federal government or a shutdown of Facebook and all of its services? Honestly, I'm leaning toward Facebook because I think folks learned the degree of dependency that exists, not as much for Americans but for people in other parts of the world. There are numerous countries where WhatsApp basically is text messaging. They don't have another reliable avenue of telecommunications, so when that happens, people are stranded. People don't have a way to communicate with each other. And I'm not defending Facebook here at all. I think Facebook is incredibly awful, and this is actually an argument for why it needs to be one, regulated and two, broken up. Facebook's purchase of all of these other social media companies a decade or so ago has been incredibly destructive, in the sense that it is destroying people's essential ability to communicate.

Sarah Kendzior:

There's also the fact that people say, "Oh, if you don't like Facebook"—and you should not like Facebook—"Then why are you on Facebook?" That is not as easy as it sounds. I mean, I personally use Facebook way, way less than I did before, say, 2015-2016 when it became clear where it was going. But within my Facebook account are photos and comments from friends and relatives who have since passed away. There are things that just have sentimental value to me, like when my children were born. I guess it was my second child when I was on Facebook by that time when he was born. And I see all these congratulatory messages from friends and relatives and I was showing those to my kids the other day, now that they're older. It's like looking at old letters or old birthday cards or a family photo album. Facebook unfortunately has replaced this.

Sarah Kendzior:

And it's not as easy as just moving all of your photos or your information onto a hard drive or whatnot because of the interactive capacity. If I could just print out my entire account, I would. I don't think that's necessarily possible in the sense that I want to actually preserve what it looks like. And so while I certainly don't put anything personal... I don't put anything on Facebook that I don't want.... Like, I don't care if the whole world sees what is on my personal Facebook page. It's nothing interesting. It's pictures of nature and I post these kinds of things very infrequently.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's like the bacon festivals you go to.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Yes, I went to the Indiana Bacon Festival, I saw Blue Oyster Cult. It was awesome. No regrets. I met Buck Dharma.

Andrea Chalupa:

Your amazing, charmed life.

Sarah Kendzior:

Exactly. My incredibly thrilling life out here in Missouri. It's often the same stuff I'm posting on Twitter. It's just, you know, I have my friends on Facebook. We have different conversations about it, but again, it's like, you know, my life is... I don't know if I'd say boring, but it's definitely not interesting.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's fascinating. As an east coast liberal, I look at you and I'm like-

Sarah Kendzior:

You need to come and study me. I'll go to a diner and then you walk in-

Andrea Chalupa:

We can shoot pumpkins again. We can go to that festival where we threw pumpkins in the air.

Sarah Kendzior:

They got rid of that. They got rid of weaponized fruit at every fun farm, a fall farm that I've been to in the Midwest and Illinois and Missouri this season. Anyway, that is the type of shit I post on Facebook. Like, "There's no more corn cannon at Pumpkinland." That's the kind of incredibly breaking news level excitement that you will find on my Facebook page.

Sarah Kendzior:

One thing I want to say about that though is that it wasn't always that way and, say, a decade ago, I definitely would feel more comfortable sharing something vulnerable about myself. Never anything that personal, but like, Ooh, I've got a doctor's appointment tomorrow. I'm nervous about it. You know, something along those lines. I would never post that now. And one thing I noticed, because I was friends with and also writing about dissidents from Uzbekistan, most of whom were in exile which is why they had access to Facebook in the first place. At that time, it was banned in Uzbekistan. They would post pictures of cats, pictures of what they ate for dinner, incredibly bland assessments about their family or about the sunset.

Sarah Kendzior:

I was like reading a bunch of hallmark cards. And I knew what they were actually doing. I knew that they were trying to pose a serious challenge to a brutal authoritarian kleptocracy, but they of course could not reveal anything personal about themselves on their Facebook pages because they always felt like they were being surveilled. And they probably were being... I mean, I can basically say yes, they were being surveilled by their government and by Facebook itself. I have now turned into that type of poster on Facebook where it's all surface level. It's all bland. It's not anything that anyone didn't already know or wouldn't figure out from observing me on, say, Twitter or any kind of public space. I self-censor for my own protection because this is a deeply, deeply corrupt corporation and I am in a deeply, deeply corrupt country where I have no protection from my own government.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is something that Andrea and I have spoken about many times over the last five years. We don't have anyone to go to if somebody comes after us. We've got nothing. And so, you know, it's up to us to protect ourselves and that's one way of doing it, but it sort of shows this evolution of how the United States has turned into more of a kleptocracy. I'm not comparing us to Uzbekistan because obviously that situation is far more severe than what we contend with, but that's the direction we're leaning. Uzbekistan did not get more democratic since the advent of the internet. The west got more autocratic. That has been the progression of events. And Facebook played a seminal role in stoking that and in just stoking violence.

Sarah Kendzior:

I guess my final point on that is that I have not quit Facebook, I have not left Facebook, I've just, as I said, I post infrequently and I post somewhat blandly because I'm dependent on things that I don't want to lose that are on Facebook. And that is the most dangerous thing, I think, about the situation. It's not the disinformation, it's the dependence because one leads to another. You're on Facebook or on WhatsApp or on Instagram because you're relying on it for something. You're relying on it for basic communication. You're relying on it to promote your business. You're relying on it for GoFundMe's and for other fundraising things. The last thing I did on Facebook before it went down was donate to my friend's son who's doing a charity drive for Parkinson's disease, for research on Parkinson's disease. And would I have known about that without Facebook?

Sarah Kendzior:

No. That's literally the only point of contact I have with this person. So, you know, it can be used for good. They're choosing to use it for evil. They're choosing to stoke and cultivate the most evil impulses in people. That dependency is what I think leads people to see hateful content, inflammatory content, lies about vaccines and coups and other things—although, I think, as I said in the bonus, I personally never see any of this. So, I'm sometimes wondering, you know, what is everyone else seeing? Because that's the other thing they do is they finetune that algorithm. So I do get recommendations, but it's like, you know, "Midwestern nature lovers, here are your scariest abandoned sites to see." It's very tailored to my personality.

Andrea Chalupa:

Wow, those are some powerful algorithms.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, exactly. It is a powerful and accurate algorithm and so I guess I should say good things, I suppose, that it's not trying to get me to ethnically cleanse others. You know, it's a terrible network. So as all of this is happening with Facebook, we are seeing the erosion of vital infrastructure in the United States, most notably the postal service, which now is going to be "permanently slower," according to the Post Office under Louis DeJoy in their press release, and more expensive. We've gotten into this before, about how Biden could absolutely get rid of Louis DeJoy right now. All it would take is replacing Ron Blum, a person connected to Jared Kushner, from the Board of Governors on USPS and then replacing him with someone who will fire DeJoy and bring the post office back. Instead, we're headed for an America where the postal service may be privatized and therefore will fall into the exact same vulnerability as a corporation—that's a Freudian slip there, I almost said country—like Facebook, where it's going to be

something people rely on but that's also destructive, that's harmful, and that can just break down for hours at a time and you have no recourse.

Sarah Kendzior:

You have nobody to turn to because again, it is privatized. I guess my final point on this before I turn it over to your thoughts is that there is some speculation about why it went down. We don't know. I think their story is, it was just a completely coincidental accident that the longest shutdown of Facebook and its subsidiary corporations in the history of the company came the day after the most damning report on it from a whistleblower in its history. It's just an amazing coincidence. What I'm wondering is whether those six hours where it was completely offline was basically the equivalent of a massive digital shredding operation, whether there were files similar to those that Francis Haugen copied that perhaps they were able to destroy in this interim period. And that's, you know, I'm just speculating. They may not care. They may not feel threatened enough by Congress to actually hide anything. I wouldn't be threatened by Congress right now. They're clearly ineffective. But I don't know. What are your thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa:

Well, you're not alone in thinking that. Jason Kint, the CEO of Digital Content at Next, a trade association that covers digital content companies, wrote on Twitter: "I deflected conspiracies today, but now change my position. If I were Facebook and knew these 8 SEC whistleblower complaints were being published today, I sure as hell would take down my own apps to distract the press. They are deadly, way beyond what we've seen so far." So, a coincidence like this, because when you had *60 Minutes* do the damning interview with Francis Haugen, when Francis Haugen comes out on *60 Minutes* and that's the big story, and then the following morning at around, I think it was like around noon, six hours of Facebook being shut down and Instagram and WhatsApp also were not working like they should.

Andrea Chalupa:

And these are three platforms that people have a dependency on. Facebook is the internet to some people. It did, of course, create a big distraction and you cannot trust a company like Facebook. For instance, today, the whistleblower that we met and heard from on *60 Minutes*, Francis Haugen, testified to Congress (today being Tuesday) and let me read to you what she wrote according to Jeff Bennett of MSNBC: "Mark holds a very,"—and she's talking, of course, of Mark Zuckerberg and this is part of her testimony today to Congress—"Mark holds a very unique role in the tech industry and that he holds over 55% of all the voting shares for Facebook. There are no similarly powerful companies that are as unilaterally controlled. There's no one currently holding him accountable but himself." Mark Zuckerberg, as we all know, is a sociopath.

Andrea Chalupa:

He began making a name for himself in tech as a college student where he created some misogynistic website that created a big stir on his campus, where you could rate girls based on their attractiveness. That's gross. Then that somehow leads him to do The Facebook and the rest is history. I want to stress some of the coverage that's been coming out, especially in recent weeks, exposing Facebook. *The Wall Street Journal*, which considering its editorial section is a mouthpiece for Rupert Murdoch, does do incredible investigations and they came out with a series exposing the harmful business model of Facebook, which has already been widely documented for destabilizing democracies worldwide, as seen in the documentary everyone should watch called, *The Great Hack*. And, of course, Facebook has also had a lot of notoriety in recent years for taking Kremlin-linked money to help Trump come to power in

2016 and trying to hide that, and actively and enthusiastically working with the Trump campaign in 2016, helping turn Brad Parscale into a grifter superstar.

Andrea Chalupa:

Now in 2020, a high profile Facebook executive Andrew Bosworth, just to show you the caliber for the company, Andrew Bosworth credited Facebook with getting Trump elected in 2016 and said that Facebook “should not do anything to stop Trump from getting elected in 2020.” Of course, because they wanted more money from the Trump campaign. Now, from *The Wall Street Journal*, there's an investigative series as I mentioned before, it's called *The Facebook Files*, and some of the things that they've uncovered include Facebook-owned Instagram knowingly making young girls depressed by profiting off of and exploiting body image issues. Facebook tried to cover up the full extent to how the site was knowingly contributing to dangerous vaccine misinformation, which we all know leads to serious hospitalizations and deaths. The whistleblower, Francis Haugen, has risked being sued by Facebook to come forward to allege how the company has a corrupt culture of choosing profits over safety and covering this up and being accountable to no one.” Mark Zuckerberg, who controls Facebook, is accountable to no one.

Andrea Chalupa:

For instance, Mark Zuckerberg, the number one decider—he's the majority stakeholder of Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg is Facebook. So let's just replace Facebook with the name Mark Zuckerberg. So for instance, Mark Zuckerberg, new his Instagram algorithm was driving children to die by suicide but refused to change it because it boosted engagement. This long history of moral corruption that leads to serious widespread...into like Facebook, namely, but Google and others are just as dangerous. And I also want to point out how Apple, okay, Mr... what the hell is his name, that cash hoarder who's hiding all his money?

Sarah Kendzior:

Which one?

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs] Tim cook, the CEO of Apple. So all of these Big Tech guys that like to pretend that their algorithms are making the world a better place, Apple and other Big Tech giants are censoring the Russian opposition right now under Putin's orders. Okay?

Andrea Chalupa:

These guys are just completely corrupt and they're serving authoritarians at home and abroad. So, yes, Big Tech is increasingly dangerous and there needs to be something done about it. What's interesting is that, in Facebook's case specifically, one shred of good news is that it's increasingly losing relevance among young people, which advertisers love young people because they don't understand—yet many of them—fully, the value of money, so they just want to buy things and force their parents to buy them things. Advertisers tend to love that demographic. Young people just see Facebook for the olds. So, Facebook has an irrelevancy crisis coming up with this younger generation, but that kind of organic change is not enough. Much more must be done to protect people from the unhinged greed monster that is Facebook and Big Tech, generally. Democrats, in response to the Facebook whistleblower and all the reporting that's come out, Democrats are proposing a bill that protects people's privacy from social

media companies that gives parents more control over what their kids can see online and forces the companies to work towards the common good and prioritize public safety.

Andrea Chalupa:

It will be interesting to see if Republicans get behind that and help pass the bill, given their own complaints of social media giants "censoring" far-right voices. Likely Republicans won't support a bill that prevents a company from making money by any means possible, even if lives are at stake. Republicans are the party of harmful deregulation and oligarchy, so we can't really count on them—as always—to hold Facebook accountable. I want to also point out that whole outage we had with Facebook, whatever the actual cause was, things are just simply not right over there. Things are unstable internally and showing an increasingly dangerous lack of leadership and utter accountability.

Andrea Chalupa:

Once again, it's time for the Feds to break up Facebook, start there. And they can do it, too. They have the power to break up Facebook by enforcing and passing antitrust laws and regulations. But here's the problem: Facebook will be protected by the US court system with 30% of the judges appointed by Trump, including a Trump-packed Supreme court, the same Trump that Facebook credits itself with having brought to power. So, for now, when it comes to being broken up, Facebook is protected by the dangerous legacy of the monster it helped bring to power in 2016. That's how kleptocracies are formed: monsters protecting monsters after the monsters help enrich each other and come to power. I do want to point out, speaking of the US justice system, *The Wall Street Journal*, once again defying the logic of its Rupert Murdoch editorial board by producing credible hard-hitting investigative reporting, found that around 15% of federal judges in the US have "violated US law and judicial ethics by overseeing court cases involving companies in which they or their family owned stock. A *Wall Street Journal* investigation found that judges have improperly failed to disqualify themselves from 685 court cases around the nation since 2010."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The jurists were appointed by nearly every president from Lyndon Johnson and Donald Trump. About two thirds of federal district judges disclosed holdings of individual stocks and nearly one of every five who did heard at least one case involving those stocks. Alerted to the violations by the *Journal*, 56 of the judges have directed court clerks to notify parties and 329 lawsuits that they should have recused themselves. That means new judges might be assigned, potentially upending rulings." Again, that's around 15% of federal judges have broken the law and/or committed serious ethics violations in refusing to recuse themselves from cases where they had financial interest or their families did. This is America.

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 a generous donation from the Greta Thunberg Foundation that exposes the true costs 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](https://rescue.org). And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at [theorangutanproject.org](https://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 at our Patreon. It keeps us going. You can also subscribe on YouTube.

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