

Gaslit Nation Transcript

13 October 2021

Running Out The Clock

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/running-out-57332070>

Maria Ressa:

We know what's at stake. And I guess... I told you, you know, I feel like I'm fighting for my rights. That's only the first part. I feel like we have to hold the line because if we don't, our democracy will fundamentally change. It will... It's dying in front of our eyes. The crash happened in plain view. So, can we resuscitate it? Can we uphold our rights? And that's a lot of responsibility. And I guess that's part of the reason the fight is worth it.

Christiane Amanpour:

The Philippines, along with parts of India, along with Myanmar, are notable for the fact that news equals social media. It's almost like your newspapers or television stations, new stations just have zero impact whatsoever. In fact, Reporters Without Borders ranks the Philippines 136 out of 180 for press freedom, but it is called—back in 2018, even Facebook called the Philippines “Patient Zero in the global spread of misinformation”. So this applies to the United States. It applies to Europe. It applies to many, many parts of the world. Tell me why it is so destructive in a country like the Philippines, or is it just the same as it is in the US?

Maria Ressa:

Absolutely the same. More destructive in a country like the Philippines, because our institutions are weaker. And obviously even in the United States, you can see the role of Russian disinformation, of Chinese disinformation here in the Philippines, right? Here's the last part that's really alarming about it, is that if we don't deal with this, news organizations, any real human endeavor, will become impossible if you cannot tell fact from fiction

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 investigative journalist, Maria Ressa, a co-founder of Rappler, a digital media company, and the first Filipino to win the Nobel prize for her relentless reporting against a disinformation-fueled, violent, oppressive regime in the Philippines, under vocal Trump and Putin ally, Duterte. And everyone, we have an early show running on Tuesday afternoons on our Patreon exclusive to subscribers at the Truth Teller level and higher. Since we always have a lot to cover, whatever we don't

get through on this week's outline today, recording today, will go to our early show and we'll also be answering questions this week submitted by our listeners at the Democracy Defender level and higher. There's always lots of questions because there's a lot happening. And it's a really helpful support group for all of us to get through these times, together.

Sarah Kendzior:

All right. Yes. These times, these wonderful, wonderful times. It has now been 9 months since the January 6th attack on the Capitol and none of the key organizers—that would be Trump, Steve Bannon, Roger Stone, Michael Flynn, and others who we've been covering for 9 months—have been held accountable. So much time has passed that if you got pregnant on the night of the Capitol attack, you would have a baby by now. You would have, like, a *Rosemary's Baby* kind of baby. Anyway, the latest development this week is that the House January 6th Committee has sent out subpoenas and some of the people subpoenaed are not complying. Since you may have lost track of definitions over the last, you know, 5 years of Trumpism and of Democratic enabling, subpoena literally means “under penalty”. A subpoena is a written document commanding the presence of somebody under penalty of failure.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's the etymology of subpoena. So you are supposed to be punished for defying a subpoena. And for the last, you know, basically ever since the Democrats re-took the House and were able to have the capacity to do this, they have refused to enforce accountabilities for people who have not showed up to respond to subpoenas, whether in the initial House hearings with people like Felix Sater, who was supposed to appear after Michael Cohen, or people who refused to show up to impeachment, like John Bolton, who then went on to save that information—or parts of it—for his book. It's been a disaster. We have this ongoing pattern where if you don't actually bring consequences for people who are breaking the law after committing the initial crime that they're being subpoenaed for, they will just do it over and over again.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so we're seeing this now where former White House Deputy Chief of Staff of Communications, Dan Scavino and elite criminal operative fascist Steve Bannon are both dodging the subpoenas. These are 2 of the 4 people who have been subpoenaed by the House. The others are former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, and former DoD official Kash Patel. They are right now, allegedly cooperating, but I wonder, How long is that going to last when they see that nothing is happening to the other 2? This is the Mueller probe all over again. This is Trump's first impeachment all over again. And so one thing I want to highlight here is the danger posed by Steve Bannon openly defying the subpoena, because Bannon has been bragging about his role in plotting the January 6th coup for nearly a year now. He bragged about it before it happened, and we have a clip of that.

Steve Bannon:

All hell is going to break loose tomorrow. Just understand this: all hell is going to break loose tomorrow. It's going to be moving. It's going to be quick. You got to get into Raheem's Twitter feed. You gotta get into Posobiec's Twitter feed. There's going to be many moving pieces. Remember, just, it's the fog of war. Just keep, keep, keep, keep focused on what's important.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then he bragged about it after it happened. He bragged about it recently, and he's now flaunting his seeming impunity by outright saying that he's not going to go because of executive privilege afforded to Trump, who is not the president, who was defeated. But, of course, the entire argument is hinging on their lie that this was an illegitimate election and that what they were doing was, as Roger Stone coined in 2016, *Stopping the Steal*. So I have a lot to say about this and about the House's refusal to enforce accountability. But first, Andrea, do you want to give some background about Bannon and exactly what kind of threat he poses?

Andrea Chalupa:

Bannon is a key example of how a force of personality shapes history. We had the historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat on the show to talk about her must-read book, *Strongmen*, and as you go through the last century of dictators, you really see how these strongmen—from Mussolini to Gadhafi and so many others—through sheer force of personality and following the dictator's playbook destroyed democracies, destroyed lives, got away for a very long time creating crises and human rights abuses of all sorts. So Bannon is very much cut from that same cloth. He's somebody that has been there for a very long time and greatly driving the destabilisation we're now all suffering under. Just to do a little rundown of some of Steve Bannon's worst "Greatest Hits", here are just a few examples; Bannon tried for years to open a far-right Catholic academy in Italy, where he would teach the dark arts of media manipulation.

Andrea Chalupa:

That effort, as of now, has been shut down by a year's long court battle in Italy. Bannon was arrested in August, 2020 for fraud and his role in the We Build The Wall fundraising scheme, which stole from their donors. Over \$25 million was raised and Bannon reportedly pocketed more than a million of that. All of this was money coming in tricking Trump's base, convincing them that they were actually going to crowdfund to build a border wall, even though Trump had, of course, promised in the 2016 election that Mexico would pay for it. Back in 2007, Bannon co-founded far-right disinformation cesspool Breitbart, which helped drive today's far right disinformation crisis. He also helped launch psychological warfare tool, Cambridge Analytica, with far-right American oligarch, Robert Mercer. The Republican Party, with Jared Kushner's help and leadership, used Cambridge Analytica to win both the White House and Congress, a victory that in part relied on stolen Facebook data and driving out authoritarian leaning voters. Bannon's revival of white supremacists in the US has been blamed, of course, for the klan-like rally in Charlottesville, Virginia to protect the statue of a ruthless slave owner and Confederate general, Robert E. Lee, which led to the murder of a young woman by the name of Heather Heyer when a white supremacist drove his car into the crowd.

Andrea Chalupa:

Bannon likes to pride himself on breaking things in a Leninist fashion and he certainly has been chipping away at breaking US democracy for the past decade through amplified hate and disinformation, an operation he works to spread and empower worldwide. And again, that's going back to that Italy academy that he tried so desperately for so long to get going. Bannon has allies with far-right leaders across Europe, Brazil, and other places, and together they're leveraging the power of Facebook and social media to try to build their far-right communities to destabilize democracies worldwide, to weaponize hatred. And remember, if you study genocide, the stages of genocide are set through hate speech, through propaganda. That's where genocides begin; through disinformation, through dehumanization, and Bannon is a master of those dark arts.

Andrea Chalupa:

Back to the Leninist comment. That was something that was reported on. It's not something that I believe Bannon openly talks about, but it's certainly how Bannon operates. He sees himself as a revolutionary and he has achieved a lot of those aims in bringing Trump to power with the Kremlin's help in 2016 and playing a key role in the White House for... I don't want to even say a long time because it wasn't a long tenure, but just the fact that he was even in the White House was a low point for this country. Bannon, of course, suffered legal trouble in 2020 and he earned his pardon from Trump by massively kissing up to him, even praising his old political enemy, Ivanka Trump, and saying Ivanka Trump would be great in a leadership role as president, or whatever he was saying to suck up to Trump and Ivanka because Ivanka and Jared and Trump were basically running the pardon gravy train in the final hours of their administration.

Andrea Chalupa:

And Bannon was advising Trump on the whole Stop The Steal effort. Bannon predicted, as we did here on this show, that Bannon was a central organizing figure in saying that January 6, everybody tune in, it's going to be major. It's a revolution. That was further proof, of course, that this—the January 6 violent coup against our democracy—was very much a movement and effort that was coordinated, planned, anticipated. They knew what they were doing, and it was all coming from the top because Bannon on his podcast announced it. And he very much had the ear of Trump at this time and was advising him. He was rewarded greatly for it with the pardon he so wanted and got. So that is Steve Bannon, a human weapon of mass destruction.

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Sarah Kendzior:

and what the Democrats are showing in how they react to Bannon is that you cannot fight hate speech with weasel words, and you cannot defeat an accelerationist with inertia. As we have said many times on this show, they are running out the clock. Everyone in the situation is running out the clock. The GOP and the transnational crime syndicate that backs them is running out the clock and the Vichy Democrats—the enablers within the party—are running out the clock. I don't know if it was us, I doubt it, but, you know, the House Committee insists that, in their own words, “They are not going to let anyone run out the clock.”

Sarah Kendzior:

But I'll believe it when I see it, because this is what they said on October 8th in response to Bannon's defiance of the subpoena and to general public frustration with the inaction toward the biggest attack on the Capitol since 1812. This is a statement from Bennie Thompson and Liz Cheney, the chair and vice-chair of the committee. They write, “While Mr. Meadows and Mr. Patel are so far engaging with the select committee, Mr. Bannon has indicated that he will try to hide behind vague references to privileges of the former president. The Select Committee fully expects all of these witnesses to comply with our demands for both documents and deposition testimony. Though the Select Committee welcomes good faith engagement with witnesses seeking to cooperate with our investigation, we will not allow any witness to defy a lawful subpoena or attempt to run out the clock. And we will swiftly consider advancing a criminal contempt of Congress referral. We thank those many patriotic Americans who are coming forward voluntarily to participate in our inquiry. The Committee is making rapid progress” —[laughs]—“and will not be deterred by those who seek to obstruct our efforts.”

Sarah Kendzior:

Again, you know, we've heard this so many times. We heard this all through the Mueller probe. We heard this all through both of the impeachments and what does it lead to? It leads to the same people running around with utter impunity, plotting new coups, plotting more destruction, threatening public officials, doing all the same stuff that they have done and have threatened to do, because there isn't action, there's just rhetoric. And I hope I'm wrong. I hope by the time you hear the show, or maybe look back at this show in the future, that it all seems incredibly dated and poorly predicted. Unfortunately, that has not been the case with Gaslit Nation. We have a very good track record of accuracy. We're pretty much begging you to break it at this point.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're the best!

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] We're the best. We're the best at predicting the worst, and that tells you about the country you're living in and who's running it. It doesn't really tell you a hell of a lot about us other than, you know, we'll tell you the truth, no matter how horrible it is. And speaking of that, let's move on to the

Lincoln Project. So after Representative Thompson releases a statement, Rick Wilson, who is one of the founders of the nevertrump scam PAC the Lincoln Project, to which you should never send your money—

Andrea Chalupa:

I liked... I am partial to Steve Schmidt, I just got to say. And my mom likes him every time he comes on Morning Joe. We have a bit of a... But, I mean, I understand a lot of the criticism there, but go on.

Sarah Kendzior:

Well, I'm going to be, you know, there are worse people than them. I'll get into this. I mean, they are on the same side of a big part of this battle as we are. And they know that, and we know that, and the point is to try to preserve our country. The point is to try to preserve our sovereignty, our freedom, our safety. What happens after that if we actually are able to defeat an autocratic threat, a transnational mafia, what kind of country we will be at that point, I think, is where we will probably have quite a vigorous debate with these folks over at the Lincoln Project. I do have a lot of concerns about their finances, their transparency, things along those lines, but neither here nor there. I will stand by my ,Do not send them money.

Sarah Kendzior:

But as I was going to say, I don't trust Rick Wilson as a person exactly, because my guess is that the long-term plan of him and of other people in the Lincoln Project is to have the United States basically have two parties; the psychotic traitorous MAGA party (the one that is currently the Republican Party under the banner of Donald Trump) and a different kind of Republican Party, a Republican Party that's a lot like the Republican Party Wilson was in his whole life under Ronald Reagan, under both presidents Bush. And what that party will do is basically the same awful standard stuff that the Republican Party has done since I've been alive, but without actually trying to destroy the United States permanently, which is a goal of Donald Trump and his criminal backers. As we've said many times, they want to strip this country down and sell it for parts.

Sarah Kendzior:

They do not care about its existence. They don't care if it remains, and I do not think that the Lincoln Project is on board with that kind of plan at all. But if they do bring back a different kind of Republican party, I think you will suffer under that revived old school Republican Party and that's why I oppose it. Because what the Lincoln Project does is the same thing that cable news does and other big corporate actors do, which is they shift the framework of political possibility to the right and they try to narrow the political imagination. We've seen this process playing out over decades where positions that people held in the '70s, or honestly, even, you know, in FDRs era, in Theodore Roosevelt's era, in terms of breaking up corporate monopolies and stuff, they're not considered these really out there leftist positions. Or, they're not really considered that by Americans, but they're portrayed that way in the media and by a lot of politicians.

Sarah Kendzior:

That's why people like AOC or Bernie Sanders or Warren are sometimes portrayed as, like, wild radicals, where they're really just trying to uphold the law.

Andrea Chalupa:

When they're European moderates.

Sarah Kendzior:

Exactly. In any other country, they would be moderates. And what they're suggesting isn't impractical, it's not outlandish, but that's the framework. And I think that the Lincoln Project encourages that kind of framework. They don't want you to think about what else is possible, and they also want to make a lot of money selling their message, and they have made a lot of money. And that money might otherwise go to progressive activists or voting rights activists or to other groups that are trying to help everybody and not just a select few. And I'm not trying to trash Rick Wilson here, this is not personal at all.

Sarah Kendzior:

He's doing what he does. You know, he's a smart guy. He's very good at it. He's a very good little operative, but I don't agree with his general kind of goals, *except* for the goal of preserving the United States as a sovereign democratic nation and holding the Trump crime cult accountable. And I'm going to, in good faith, say that we all share that objective. So anyways, that's Rick Wilson and he comes out after Thompson releases a statement and basically says, "The January 6 Committee is not going to do anything. They're not going to hold any of these people accountable. It's dead in the water. They're making fatuous excuses. This is a travesty. Trump has won.", et cetera, et cetera. I agree with him, not to the extent I think Trump has won, because I think the purpose here is we all continue to fight no matter how bad the odds.

Sarah Kendzior:

And we continue to put everything we have into this and demand that people "on our" side battle these individuals with the same level of ferocity that they are showing. And in that respect, I think Rick Wilson actually is a good example to follow, you know, because he doesn't hold back. That's kind of the appeal of the Lincoln Project for a lot of people—even though they're often jacking other people's content—is that they're talking about this in a more plain and direct way. They're saying there's an autocratic threat, Trump is a criminal. They're not hedging around it, which is what the Democrats are doing. And so therefore, I think they may succeed in reviving their little Republican Party. They're savvy in that way, so watch out for that. And so, you know, I agree with Wilson that the Democrats are failing to hold anyone accountable.

Sarah Kendzior:

And the reason I agree is that the Democrats are failing to hold anyone accountable. This isn't an opinion. This is just observation of things that you can see with your eyes or hear with your ears. You don't need to imagine anything. You just need to see right in front of you, which is extremely dangerous inaction. It's a purposeful abetting of elite criminal impunity by the Republican side. The Democrats then went on, after Wilson wrote this Twitter thread, to deny it. They did a quote tweet of Wilson from the official January 6 Committee account and said it was all nonsense without elaborating why. So, this is where we're at right now, America. We have a coup committee that responds to people with tweets. This is how far we have fallen. And so anyway, what disturbs me about this is that it's the exact same pattern that we've been seeing since the attack on January 6 and the impeachment hearings that followed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so I kind of want to review a little bit of history. I encourage you to go back, listen to our episodes from around that time. You can listen to our pre-attack special on January 5th, because it was so obvious that we were able to do a preview show, or listen to our episode [Clear Intent](#), where we laid out the perpetrators and what needs to happen in the immediacy and urgency of the crisis, which clearly the Democratic leadership decided to ignore. Anyway, some reminders about what happened with the second impeachment hearing of Donald Trump in February. First off, Nancy Pelosi did not even want to do it. She did not want to have an impeachment hearing at all for this severe attack on our electoral integrity, on the physical domain of the Capitol, death threats to representatives, representatives who had to hide from a mob.

Sarah Kendzior:

She was dragged to impeachment by a lot of representatives, but foremost by Jamie Raskin. And it is possible that Donald Trump only had a second impeachment hearing because Raskin had also just endured an absolutely horrible family tragedy. And he was speaking very passionately about how he refused to lose his country, too. And I think it was impossible to not hear that and be greatly moved, greatly saddened, and to understand the urgency and the fragility of the situation. So, they finally do. They agreed to do the impeachment and what does Pelosi do? Well, you may remember the day that they were going to call witnesses and everybody got really excited. They were like, "Wow. The Democratic Party is revived. It's going to hold people accountable. The truth shall be known," and Pelosi banned the witnesses. She did that after Lindsay Graham and other Republicans wanted to call her as a witness.

Sarah Kendzior:

And I don't know what the objection would be. I mean, if I were working in Congress, I'd want to go and tell everybody about how Donald Trump basically called out a mob to come in and attack. What is there to hide? And what concerns me here—and we've gotten into this in other episodes—is that in late 2018, Pelosi told major Democratic donor Haim Saban, a guy who identifies himself as a one issue donor and his issues is Israel, that, and I'm paraphrasing here, "If the Capitol crumbles, the foremost priority of the United States will be Israel." And so we still don't know why she was talking about the Capitol crumbling at all. Like, that's a very strange topic of conversation. And when she said that, that was the moment that I started worrying there was going to be an attack on the Capitol.

Sarah Kendzior:

I worried about this for over a year because I thought that comment was so exceptionally strange. And whatever it means, I think it's the kind of thing that may have come up in the impeachment hearings. And I'm not saying that I know for sure this is why she did it, but nonetheless, she shut the whole thing down. It was a really terrible kind of presentation because they had announced witnesses and then they retracted it. So it just made them look terrible, it made them look unserious, and most importantly, it prevented the public from knowing the truth. During this impeachment hearing, they relied mostly on evidence in the public domain, and there was a surplus of it. That itself was an indictment of the fact that this even happened, is that we all knew it was coming.

Sarah Kendzior:

It was not mysterious, as the FBI continues to insist it was, it was out in the open. But what they did was focused on Trump specifically and on some of the randos who were eventually scooped up in the very lackluster investigatory process. But they did not mention Michael Flynn, Roger Stone, or Steve Bannon,

who they could have played the clip. And they did not mention the fact that those individuals were acting as the link between the Trump administration and groups like the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers, QAnon, and so forth that made this event—this pre-planned, let's all wear matching January 6th civil war t-shirts event possible. Fourth, after that, they then went on, they said, “Oh, well, we're going to cut this impeachment thing short because you know, the Biden administration has a lot of stuff to get done. We have this big agenda, we're going to pass voting rights. We're going to do this and that,” and they didn't do any of these things.

Sarah Kendzior:

“And so we need to cut it short and then we're going to have a really serious in-depth thorough investigation of this attack.” And they don't do it. They say instead, “Oh, you know, well, if we're going to investigate this, the committee needs to be bipartisan,” and the Democratic leadership is insisting on this even though one political party spurred on a violent attack where people were coming and actively wanting to kill members of Congress, or, they're so terrified of Trump—the guy who was encouraging this—that bipartisanship was not a reasonable goal. There were members of Congress who abetted the coup. There were people like Mo Brooks, and Marjorie Taylor Greene, and my Senator, Josh Hawley, who were cheering it on and possibly even helping it from the inside.

Sarah Kendzior:

So this was just not going to happen. They knew this. The Democratic leadership absolutely knew this and they used bipartisanship as an excuse to stall the process. And so that meant these guys did not form a committee for the January 6th attack until July 1st. So it's like 6 months later. Then, they don't hold any hearings until July 27th. So, we're now after 6 months after the attack, we got one hearing where police officers testified. It's horrifying. Congress does nothing. They go on vacation and then they just, you know, sit on their asses until they decide to hand out these subpoenas in September. And now, of course, the immediacy of the crisis has been stripped from the narrative. It's framed mostly in the media as a sort of horserace thing instead of a profound threat to our democracy, an ongoing rolling coup, and they're not doing a whole hell of lot,

Sarah Kendzior:

This morning, Jamie Raskin said, and I'm quoting him here, “The law applies to everybody, including former presidents and including friends of former presidents who are facilitating the incitement of violent insurrection against the union.” And so my hope here is that Jamie Raskin is as successful now in actually enforcing consequences and getting the rest of this party to enforce consequences as he was back in January and February when he got the impeachment proceedings rolling and did, in my opinion, a very good job as one of the impeachment managers. But we need more than words. We need more than rhetoric. We need action. So, I've got a lot more to say about who is actually ultimately in charge of enforcing this, which is the DOJ and Merrick Garland. But do you have thoughts on any of this, Andrea, on January 6th and the aftermath?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, I want to just read a very short excerpt from a 2018 *New Yorker* article by David Remnick called “Trump versus The Times: Inside an Off the Record Meeting.” And it should be read as a warning from Steve Bannon. So I'll read from that now: “Steve Bannon, once Trump's chief ideologist, put the matter well earlier this year when he told Michael Lewis, ‘We got elected on Drain the Swamp, Lock Her Up, Build the Wall.’ he said. ‘This was pure anger. Anger and fear is what gets people to the polls.’ Bannon

added. 'The Democrats don't matter. The real opposition is the media, and the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit.'" And that is what the whole dark money Koch political network, Bannon's whole operation, all of those far-right coalitions of power and money are currently doing. They're flooding the zone with shit.

Andrea Chalupa:

That is what all of these Big Lie audits and candidates for local office are doing. They're flooding the zone with shit. That is what all of these maniacs who are literally flooding these school board meetings and harassing local officials, educators, over mask mandates and the vaccines that are going to be increasingly available for school-aged children. All of this is being fueled by the far-right terror network that is increasingly taking over America's institutions. They've taken over the Supreme Court. They've taken over a lot of the media space that is increasing. We have AT&T, one of the largest corporations in America, that funded One America Network, which is driving out all sorts of hate speech, including violence, political violence, at a time of increasing political violence, very concerning links to Russian disinformation, that's being funded by AT&T. How many of you listening are clients of AT&T? Your phone, the way you communicate with the outside world, with your family, with your children, how much of that is going through AT&T? And they're funding a major misinformation weapon against American democracy right now.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Democrats have to understand, as we keep saying on this show, you can't play by the same rule book that you have for decades in Washington because you've been steamrolled for decades in Washington, and you're up against people who are being very efficient in chipping away at our democracy. The only way to overcome the dictator's playbook is to be relentless, is to be ruthless in the name of good, to use all the power at your disposal and to take bold measures, and to ensure that people see what you are doing in their everyday lives, to see changes, because if Democrats are demoralized by what's going on, if they're tired of this Sinema and Manchin Groundhog's Day, where all we're hearing about is Sinema and Manchin's obstructionism, all the great things we could have in this country, all the quality of life builders and climate crisis aggressive action that we could have if it weren't for Manchin Sinema. If we don't get past those 2, if we don't get some accountability for the den of thieves that actively destroyed America and actively destroyed America's standing in the world for so long, for a terrifying 4-year term that culminated—naturally, of course—in a violent coup attempt to overthrow our democracy, where several people were murdered by a violent white mob.

Andrea Chalupa:

If we don't have accountability for that, if we don't have accountability for Trump, Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, and all those complicit in their crimes and criminality, you're going to have a dampening of anger. You're going to have a lot of Democrats saying, "What is the point in being demoralized?" and overcoming them, steamrolling over them to the polls are going to be the disinformation-fueled anger of Bannon's foot soldiers. And that's what's coming for Democrats in 2022. And if Bannon's army takes over Congress, then you're going to have a Republican Party that is better positioned in 2024 to steal the White House, even if a Democrat should fairly win the White House in 2024. Because remember, it's Congress that certifies the election results and they could challenge it and finally be effective this time. So everything we've lived through under Trump, everything we've lived through under Reagan, all the positioning they've had in place going back as far as Nixon, how they've really damaged the culture, they've really shifted the culture where they told the whole lie about a Reaganomics and trickle down

theory, which created the largest income inequality gap we've seen in this country that has surpassed even the Gilded Age.

Andrea Chalupa:

All of the institutional failure we've been suffering under has been decades in the making, and we're certainly not going to get out of it overnight. But the way we are going to get out of it is by Democrats owning their power and grassroots organizers and communities owning their power, and that has to include us as well, as tiring as that is, as exhausting as it is. The reason why we highlighted Maria Ressa and the other Nobel Peace Prize winner who we'll talk about later today, Dmitry Muratov, is because these are two incredibly brave reporters who are working in some of the most dangerous countries today for anybody who cares about facts and accountability, and they're doing so relentlessly. They're doing so even against great odds. And it's a reminder to us to get out of the fog of this Groundhog's Day, because we really do have to hold the line no matter what. No matter what our disappointment is, no matter what disillusionment is setting in, we have to have to own our power as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

If we want Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic leaders to own their power, to step up, we have to own ours as well. And remind ourselves that all progress in America has come from the bottom up. It has come from grassroots movements. It has come from diverse coalitions. It has come from inclusivity. It has come from courage from the ground up demanding change, because nobody—nobody—gives up power willingly. So, we're up against a system of white male patriarchy refusing to die, refusing to be outnumbered—which is inevitably going to happen if you look at the studies of the shifting demographics in America—and they're fighting like a cornered dog right now. But never, ever, ever forget that there's more of us than there are of them. If we are going to get through this, we have to demand more of ourselves. We have to demand more of our elected officials. And if they're not willing to do the job, we must replace them because without accountability, without real life-changing programs seen and experienced and lived in our lives from our public officials, we're never going to get through this, and the Bannon hate machine is going to destroy whatever is left.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes, extremely well said. And I'll just emphasize, the GOP—the Trump GOP—has been talking about January 6 nonstop since it happened through all their propaganda outlets and with enormous anger, with enormous frustration, sort of feigned frustration, like, How dare they have have stolen our rightful place? The Democrats are not. And what eventually happens is that the lack of expression of anger, of outrage, and combine that with the lack of action, really makes people doubt their own recollections of events that they saw play out on TV, play out on social media. You know, the deletion of Trump's Twitter account, I think, also contributes to this loss of collective memory. But yeah, that's absolutely right. And so this is a war that needs to be fought on multiple fronts in order to avoid an actual civil war, which is something that these folks are also clamoring for, because as we've said, their goal is to have the country collapse.

Sarah Kendzior:

It's to strip it down and sell it off for parts, ownership by oligarchs and plutocrats, and it's a very dangerous situation. There is not room for error here. And so I'm going to start a little bit talking about Merrick Garland. So, let's review what Merrick Garland has been doing at the DOJ. A lot of people had high hopes for him (I did not), hopes that were dashed because Merrick Garland is a mafia state enabler.

He is an anti-America attorney general at this point, not only because he fails to take action on things like the January 6 attack, on the crimes committed by the Trump administration, but because he goes out of the way to protect players from that administration and to protect the deeply, deeply corrupt institution of the DOJ, refusing to do the necessary reforms. He should be fired. Biden should fire Merrick Garland and replace him with someone who will actually do the job of protecting America.

Sarah Kendzior:

So a little Greatest Misses rundown here of things Merrick Garland has done in office, briefly; he has used the power of the DOJ to protect sexual predator Donald Trump in a personal legal battle against E. Jean Carroll, a woman who says that Trump raped her. I believe her on this. He defended Trump and Bill Barr when they ordered the beating and gassing of protesters in Lafayette Square and got the military involved in the summer of 2020. Merrick Garland covered up Bill Barr's obstruction of the Mueller probe. He has refused to release the full OLC memo that Barr has been using as a pretext for his lies and that he used when he held the attorney general position. Garland defended the DOJ spying on the *Washington Post*, CNN, and other media outlets for Trump. He defended Don McGahn against congressional Democratic subpoenas.

Sarah Kendzior:

So that's pretty notable. That's pretty ominous, as it speaks to a current refusal to act. He has, as we've mentioned, refused to prosecute any of the high level operatives involved in an enormous amount of Trump crimes, but in particular, the January 6 attack and the 2016 election and aftermath, including Roger Stone, Michael Flynn, and Steve Bannon. He appealed a ruling that the Democrats had won seeking to expose corruption at Trump hotels. So again, you see Merrick Garland personally protecting Donald Trump like this isn't even a state matter. He's basically doing the same thing Bill Barr did. He's being his personal lawyer. He refused to follow up on a House investigation of Barr and former Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross that, of course, had been shut down by Bill Barr. When Barr was in the Trump administration, he shut down an investigation into himself. Garland could pick it back up. He won't do it.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then this one is really interesting: Merrick Garland and his DOJ wants to implement a 50-year delay on when courts can consider releasing materials from federal grand juries. And just to give you an example, had this policy been implemented during Watergate, no one would have known what Nixon was doing. This is an anti-transparency policy. It is a pro-corruption policy. And this policy, if it is implemented, will also mean we will not find out the full information from the Mueller probe until 2069. So, we'll be dead. And so that's the tip of the iceberg. You may be wondering yourself like, well, what the hell is wrong with this guy? Like, why is he so terrible? I'm going to give you the beginning of the Merrick Garland villain origin story. To hear the rest of it, I think you're going to have to go to Patreon because we're running out of time here.

Sarah Kendzior:

So yeah, let's begin a little review of Merrick Garland's life. He is a friend of political and corporate operative, Jamie Gorelick. And so you might be like, who is Jamie Gorelick? Well, basically, she is Merrick Garland's Roy Cohn. She is to Merrick Garland what Roy Cohn was to Trump and Manafort and Stone. She is an exemplar of the Big Law corruption that we have discussed so much on this show, this nexus where state corruption, organized crime and corporate corruption meet under the protection of a

broken system of lawyers and lobbyists. Gorelick has been a friend of Garland since college. They went to college together and in a large part she's been responsible for his career. She was a member of the Clinton administration and she was who hired him when she was serving as the deputy attorney general. He was her top deputy. He was her right hand man.

Sarah Kendzior:

And so again, who is Jamie Gorelick? She is the Forrest Gump of corruption and has been at the edges—and sometimes at the center—of the worst political crises of the past 30 years. Again, very much like Roy Cohn. I'm going to give some examples. Andrea cut me off when we're running low on time so you can explain—

Andrea Chalupa:

Will do!

Sarah Kendzior:

All right. So, let's go back to the Clinton administration. In 1995, Gorelick wrote a memo that created a wall between the FBI and the CIA and therefore, to some degree, made the 9/11 attacks possible by blocking this kind of communication. She wrote in 1995, and I'm quoting here, "We believe that it is prudent to establish a set of instructions that will more clearly separate the counterintelligence investigation from the more limited, but continued criminal investigations. These procedures, which go beyond what is legally required, would prevent any risk of creating an unwarranted appearance that FISA is being used to avoid procedural safeguards, which would apply in a criminal investigation."

Sarah Kendzior:

And so her doing this... Sometimes the right wing will call this the Gorelick Wall. And I hate admitting that they have a point on anything, but they do. They do have a point on this. This memo made it very difficult for law enforcement and intelligence to share information about terrorists, and in particular about Al Qaeda. And later on when the 9/11 Commission was formed, a commission that she participated in, she refused to talk about any of this. All right. So what does she do after leaving the Clinton administration? She is appointed vice chairman of Fannie Mae in 1997 and served there until 2003. And if you have loans, you know what the hell this is. During that period, Fannie Mae developed a \$10 billion accounting scandal. This scandal helped earn Gorelick \$26.5 million in income.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, you've got her on that scandal. In 2010, she went on to get a new client, British Petroleum, and defended it after multiple oil disasters. And so here, she's rather reminiscent of Alan Dershowitz. This is somebody who is a lawyer who just seems to be drawn to the absolute worst people on earth and makes the great effort to represent him. This is not a coincidence because Gorelick is Garland's mentor. Who is Gorelick's mentor? Oh my God, it was Alan Dershowitz! And I'll get more into that in a bit. And so *Politico* wrote a bit about this. They quoted Robert Weissman, the president of Public Citizen, on this issue saying, "Speaking generally, the reliance on high powered insiders results in corporations escaping penalties that are not as severe as they would otherwise face." He's talking about the possibility of federal prosecution of Big Oil.

Sarah Kendzior:

He was right to worry about this because during the Obama administration, Gorelick ultimately got BP off the hook for the economic distress that it had brought to the Gulf region of the United States and dodged demands that the company helped pay to restore the Gulf of Mexico. And this was something that just shocked onlookers at the time. And so she just keeps on going. In the mid 2010s, when everybody was taking a great interest in racist police brutality and there were protests all over the countries, Gorelick decides to represent the cities of Chicago and Baltimore against probes into the police murders of Laquan McDonald and Freddie Gray respectively for each city. In addition to doing that on the side, she was working as an opponent of student loan forgiveness doing work for the predatory for-profit college, the University of Phoenix, while also lobbying against Obama administration efforts to curb subsidies to private student loan firms.

Sarah Kendzior:

So that's the Obama years, and I'm even leaving stuff out, but I want to just get this in and then I think I'll wrap this up and put the rest in the bonus because this is important, and I know it will be of particular interest to Andrea. So what does Jamie Gorelick do when Trump is elected? She becomes Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump's personal lawyer and helps them get their White House positions, and I'm going to quote the *Huffington Post* here. It says, "In order to get Jared and Ivanka into their White House jobs in the first place, Gorelick had to push the legal envelope hard, insisting that the federal anti-nepotism law did not apply to White House staff, a position with which many experts on legal ethics and Democrats in Congress disagree. Gorelick also helped structure the financial arrangements of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner."

Sarah Kendzior:

If you're a listener to the show, you know what that entails. She promised divestments that did not happen. And quite frankly, she should be subpoenaed. Jared and Ivanka should be under federal investigation for the multitude of crimes that they committed in plain sight. But she's not being subpoenaed, and Jared and Ivanka are not being investigated because her friend and her protege is Merrick Garland, the attorney general of the United States. And I'll talk about this more because it keeps getting worse, but I'll turn it over to you, Andrea, for your reaction and a conclusion.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're going to pick that back up again in the early show, which is running for our Patreon subscribers at the Truth Teller level and higher. So, log in for that and subscribe. Thank you, Sarah. So, you'll get my thoughts on the early show. I want to turn to an inspiring story, as we mentioned earlier, the Nobel Peace Prize. 2 investigative journalists won the Nobel Peace Prize, as they should. Prizes generally don't matter, but in this case, the selections were strong statements against the growing violent authoritarianism in Putin's Russia and the Philippines under Duterte. I'm going to read now from the statement put out just a few days ago by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee: "The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2021 to Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace."

Andrea Chalupa:

"Ms. Ressa and Mr. Muratov are receiving the Peace Prize for their courageous fight for freedom of expression in the Philippines and Russia. At the same time, they're representatives of all journalists who stand up for this ideal in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse

conditions.” And we, of course, discussed Maria Ressa earlier in the show. So I want to highlight Dmitry Muratov. The Nobel Peace Prize statement describes his work. “He has, for decades, defended freedom of speech in Russia under increasingly challenging conditions. In 1993, he was one of the founders of the independent newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*. Since 1995, he has been the newspaper’s editor-in-chief for a total of 24 years. *Novaya Gazeta* is the most independent newspaper in Russia today with a fundamentally critical attitude towards power. The newspaper’s fact-based journalism and professional integrity have made it an important source of information on uncensorable aspects of Russian society rarely mentioned by other media. Since it started up in 1993, *Novaya Gazeta* has published critical articles and subjects ranging from corruption, police violence, unlawful arrest, electoral fraud, troll factories, to the use of Russian military forces, both within and outside Russia.”

Andrea Chalupa:

Obviously, both these journalists and their colleagues have faced relentless pressure from the regimes that they courageously cover. This award to investigative journalists—not just these individuals, but investigative journalists everywhere—is obviously very welcomed. It certainly helps make up a bit for awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama simply for not being George W. Bush. Obama would go on to escalate the US war in Afghanistan and earn the nickname, The Drone President, for his killings by drones, including several civilians and around 40 people at a wedding in Yemen. Just to pay further tribute, from Catherine Belton, a special correspondent for *Reuters* and author of the must-read book, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*. Catherine Belton has been, is being sued, has been sued, by several Russian billionaires for how they were covered him in the book, including Chelsea football club owner, Roman Abramovich, who is reportedly like a son to Putin.

Andrea Chalupa:

Belton writes on Twitter: “Dmitry Muratov dedicates his Nobel Prize to the brave journalists-” Sorry. “Dmitry Muratov dedicates his Nobel prize to the brave journalists of *Novaya Gazeta*, killed for doing their job: Igor Domnikov, Yury Schekochikin, Anna Politkovskaya, Stas Markelov, Anastasia Baburova, Natasha Estemirova -- these are the people who received the Nobel Prize today” The Nobel Prize was announced the day after Putin's birthday, which also happened to be the 15 year anniversary of the murder of Russian investigative journalist, Anna Politkovskaya. We're going to end now with Maria Ressa talking to the *New York Times* about winning the Nobel Peace Prize and what it means

Maria Ressa:

I’m honored that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has honored me and my fellow journalist, Dmitry Muratov in this way. The relentless campaign of harassment and intimidation against me and my fellow journalists in the Philippines is a stark example of a global trend that journalists and freedom of the press facing increasingly adverse conditions. The Philippine government filed 10 arrest warrants against me. In the last year, the government has prevented my travel 4 times, including when my mother was diagnosed with cancer and I needed to go to see my aging parents. I think this just shows you that the battle is worth it. The personal sacrifices are worth it.

[end music, roll credits]

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. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org. Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Kendzior and Andrea Chalupa. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check at our Patreon. It keeps us going. You can also subscribe on YouTube.

Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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

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Andrea Chalupa:

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