

Gaslit Nation Transcripts
24 November 2021
DeJoy of Crooking
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/dejoy-of-59068464>

Nancy Pelosi:

On this vote, the Yeas are 220. The Nays are 213. The Build Back Better Bill is passed.

[cheers and applause]

Sarah Kendzior:

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best sellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*, and the upcoming book, *They Knew*, out in 2022.

Andrea Chalupa:

That sounds like a horror film. *They Knew*.

Sarah Kendzior:

It does. Nonfiction horror.

Andrea Chalupa:

Nonfiction horror, your specialty. I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker, and the writer and producer of the nonfiction horror film, *Mr. Jones* about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine. It's actually a journalistic thriller. And I, we, did take poetic license, FYI. I have to say that.

Sarah Kendzior:

Alright then. And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. So—

Andrea Chalupa:

Wait a minute. We've got the early show for Gaslit Nation coming up where we'll be answering questions submitted by our listeners at the Democracy Defender level and higher, and anybody who subscribes on our Patreon at the Truth Teller level and higher can listen to this week's show and our whole back catalog of bonus episodes. So sign up to get access to the Gaslit Nation early show, running Tuesday afternoons, and join the fun of our Ask Us Anything Q&A's. Our opening clip was the House Democrats celebrating the historic passage of the Build Back Better Act. More on that later in the show.

Sarah Kendzior:

Alright. So, since we last left off, the verdict in the Kyle Rittenhouse trial was announced. Rittenhouse, of course, is the teenager who killed two people at a civil rights protest in Kenosha, Wisconsin in the summer of 2020, and has since become a favorite of right-wing elites who like to cloak their own lust for

power under the veneer of vigilante justice. Unsurprisingly, Rittenhouse, who got millions of dollars in free legal assistance, was acquitted. He had a judge who did not bother to hide his bias in Rittenhouse's favor, coddling him throughout the hearings and instituting limitations for the prosecutors, like not allowing the men who Rittenhouse killed to be referred to as victims, among other things.

Sarah Kendzior:

There is a lot to be said about this case—issues of gun violence, civil rights, new laws attacking the right to freedom of assembly—but I want to get into why Rittenhouse, a teenage killer, has accrued such wide support, support that is not limited to the Far Right. The Rittenhouse case is an extension of the broader crisis of elite criminal impunity, the same crisis we've been discussing on Gaslit Nation for years in which wealthy criminals who commit blatant crimes go free due to their money, power and networks of corrupt legal fixers. We've said before that disgust with elite criminal impunity is one of the few things holding America together. There is universal disgust among Americans with the criminal empire of child rape trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein, for example, who was allowed to run his operation for decades with full government knowledge. There is universal disgust with the criminal Sackler family who were granted immunity from prosecution after knowingly killing tens of thousands of Americans through their opioid empire and laughing about their deaths. Loathing of these elite operatives crosses party lines, both because their crimes are so horrific and because the institutions that are supposed to protect us from sadistic abusers like this have instead worked to protect those sadistic abusers.

Sarah Kendzior:

The Right Wing understands the unity of this American disgust with the system, and so they are trying to curtail potential united demands for accountability by inviting in footsoldiers and promising them protection if they obey the party line. That is what Kyle Rittenhouse is to them; a footsoldier, a pawn, and nothing more. They do not care about him as a person. They care about him as a symbol to ordinary white Americans of what they can get if they play along. Government refusal to enforce accountability for criminal elites has emboldened ordinary people to commit violence, believing that if they do, they too will get elite protection. Rittenhouse is now a symbol of that system. People are attracted to criminal impunity if they feel it is transferable, but they are repulsed by it if they feel they can be its target. And the truth of the matter is that we are its target.

Sarah Kendzior:

Over the past few years, we've endured a government that let hundreds of thousands die of a preventable plague, an attack on the Capitol whose elite architects remain unpunished, ceaseless illicit acts of corruption by powerful corporate and government actors, blatant attacks on civil rights—including the right to vote—and more. Some of these crises are decades old. Some were created by the Trump administration, all were accelerated by the Trump administration, and none have been addressed by the Biden administration. The Biden administration and the FBI have steadily refused to enforce accountability for criminal elites, whether it's the January 6th operatives, the COVID death grifters, the members of transnational organized crime, and so on. Ordinary people correctly interpret this lack of action as weakness. The weakness is dangerous because it is enabling both the criminal elites themselves and their recruitment efforts.

Sarah Kendzior:

Young white men will see Kyle Rittenhouse as someone who killed two people and was rewarded for it with money, fame, and job opportunities while never having to face serious consequences for his

actions. He is not only going to inspire current vigilantes to ramp up their violence, he may inspire ordinary people who might've never considered engaging in such brutal violence to do so now. This shift in political culture is in line with other ominous developments, like Texas allowing bounty hunters to target women who they suspect have had an abortion, and laws in multiple states allowing the driver of a car who runs down protestors blocking traffic to face no consequences, even if they are committing an act of violence. This is state-sanctioned violent vigilantism in the name of preserving elite right-wing power, and Rittenhouse is their new propaganda toy. Andrea, do you have thoughts on that?

Andrea Chalupa:

Rittenhouse is the Republican Party of today. He's always been the Republican Party. The Republican Party has gotten more brutal in not just its tactics, its rhetoric. There used to be a token intellectual in the Republican Party, like William Buckley, who would be a master of gaslighting and write these essays of why the South must prevail that would use all of these big eloquent words and make the Republicans feel warm and cozy about their racism and white supremacy violence. Now, it's just straight up caveman white supremacy, just taking a rifle and shooting someone's bicep off, shooting two people in cold blood. And you have the Kevin McCarthy's who are just running their mouths for eight hours on the Congressional floor about baby carrots. The level of proud stupidity has never been higher. Their level of proud, blatant racism and unmasked KKK hoods, taking the KKK hood off has never been higher.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's just so in your face now, and it's backed up by all of these authoritarian laws they're passing state by state to steal the next election to install their Neo-Confederates into positions of power in the almighty local offices in state governments across the country that certify elections. We're dealing on many fronts here and it's backed up by an ever-expanding right-wing media juggernaut in the form of Fox news—which has the highest rated cable shows—backed up by right-wing radio, which is across the country, backed up by new networks, relatively new networks, like One American Network helped launched by corporations like AT&T and, of course, the Sinclair network gobbling up local TV stations across the country. So it's a massive imbalance of power with this consolidation and aggressive spread of right-wing propaganda that's backing up and recruiting and protecting not just this Kyle Rittenhouse, but all future Kyle Rittenhouses.

Andrea Chalupa:

The message it's meant to send is to protestors on the Democratic side—to progressive protesters—because what did we do as soon as Trump came to power? We reset ourselves. We reset the energy in the country through the Women's March, and through the Women's March, you had all of these men and women empowered and inspired by that mass movement. And what did they do? They started running for office. They started organizations to help people run for office. They took back their power, and that is what helped protect our country under the threat of the Trump family's authoritarianism, where they literally engineered a violent coup attempt to stay in power and force America into a dictatorship, which we stopped. Grassroots power was a big protection against that. And so now when we go to protest, now when we organize protests, we have to have in the back of our minds a Kyle Rittenhouse showing up and thinking that he can get away with murder.

Andrea Chalupa:

That's extremely dangerous for the efforts and the psyche of organizers across America who we desperately need right now to protect democracy on all levels. I want to talk about solutions really

quickly because this is very important, what the whole Kyle Rittenhouse tragedy is urgently reminding us of, and that is the all-importance of local office. Amanda Litman of the essential group Run For Something who we've had on this show—Run For Something recruits and helps young progressives run for office and positions large and small. It's a group everyone should start supporting now, if they don't already, with automated monthly donations because as we're about to be reminded, it's these grassroots groups like Run For Something that are doing the all-important work of flushing out the rot of our system by electing good people to office. That nitty gritty work, that grind, is how we ultimately take back our country.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Trump Death Cult is already on a wave of Koch dark money running for local office, so more and more good-hearted and empathetic people who believe in science need to be doing the same on the local and state level. That is how we win. That is how we protect ourselves. That is how we take back our country from the brink of authoritarianism. From Amanda Litman of Run For Something on Twitter, she writes: "The judge overseeing Kyle Rittenhouse's trial was reelected again and again for around 40 years, often running unopposed. If you want to run for a judicial position or any other role that might bring real accountability, run for something. We'll help you." Alright. So that's an important, urgent reminder to all of us that we're not going to get out of this unless people roll up their sleeves and run for office. Good people.

Andrea Chalupa:

The hyper-partisan judge in the Kyle Rittenhouse case is, of course, endemic of a hyper-partisan right-wing extremist Republican authoritarian movement in Wisconsin. As the judge was stealing justice from the victims of Kyle Rittenhouse and their families, Republicans in the state tried to steal the election and future elections in Wisconsin with an increasingly authoritarian power grab promoted by Kremlin propaganda weapon, Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who was part of a Republican delegation that visited Moscow on the 4th of July after his surprise victory in 2016 in a state targeted by the Kremlin's hackers and influence campaign, as shown in the Mueller Report. From the *New York Times*: "Republicans in Wisconsin are engaged in an all out assault on the state's election system, building off their attempts to challenge the results of the 2020 presidential race by pressing to give themselves full control over voting in the state. The Republican effort, broader and more forceful than that in any other state where allies of former president Donald J. Trump are trying to overhaul elections, takes direct aim at the bipartisan Wisconsin Elections Commission, an agency Republicans created half a decade ago that has been under attack since the chaotic aftermath of last year's election."

Andrea Chalupa:

"The onslaught picked up late last month after a long awaited report on the 2020 results that was ordered by Republican state legislators found no evidence of fraud, but made dozens of suggestions for the Election Commission and the GOP-led legislature, fueling Republican demands for more control of elections. Then, the Trump-aligned sheriff of Racine County, the state's fifth most populous county, recommended felony charges against five of the six members of the Election Commission for guidance they had given to municipal clerks early in the pandemic. The Republican majority leader of the state Senate later seemed to give a green light to that proposal, saying that prosecutors around the state should determine whether to bring charges." That's what authoritarianism looks like.

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Sarah Kendzior:

The Republicans are aware of this. They're aware of grassroots power. They're certainly aware of the fact that we had record voter turnout in 2020 leading to an unexpected outcome in states like Georgia. And so they're taking every effort they can and in many ways it mirrors what happened during the long rolling coup between November, 2020 and the Capitol attack. First Trump and his cronies tried just denying reality using propaganda and that didn't work. They went to the courts. They went to intimidating officials, threatening them with violence. That happened in Georgia. That was on tape. The January 6th Committee and the DOJ has done absolutely nothing about that.

Sarah Kendzior:

And then finally, when all of that failed, when it failed in the Supreme Court, they went to citizen vigilante violence. They had operatives like Michael Flynn and Lin Wood and Roger Stone telling people, "You can commit violence on our behalf and you will roam free. You will be fine. We will protect you. We're going to win." And this is similar. You know, they are pawns. This is how they view Rittenhouse as well. This is how they view anyone who will come next. There's been a variety of outcomes for these very low level people basically recruited off the internet through Lin Wood's Twitter account, ranging from no sentence at all to light sentences, to, I guess for the QAnon Shaman—the epitome of a scandal distracting from crime—he got 40 months. But, you know, they are aware of this. And so while we need to focus on these local elections, especially elections of judges, we also need protection for the elected officials that we have. Never forget that Roger Stone threatened to kill the judge in his trial and he walked free and nothing was done about that.

Sarah Kendzior:

The judge in the Manafort trial had to have personal security—armed security—with him. The jury had to have security with them because they were all threatened. And then he gave Manafort a greatly reduced sentence than what was expected. The reason they're using these tactics is because they work. And it's getting worse and worse, which is why agencies that can enforce accountability, that can put an end to this culture of threat instead of streamlining it and normalizing it, need to act now because the 2022 election is going to be, as Roger Stone says, a blood bath. That's what he promised in 2016. That's what we nearly had in 2020. You know, we certainly had a small version of that and I worry it will just get worse and worse in the years to come unless something is done. Never forget, things can be done about this. This is not set in stone. We just have institutional actors that are refusing to do their jobs and that's why this threat continues to endure.

Andrea Chalupa:

I think you're being totally outrageous—

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

And a Kremlin operative of the highest, most sophisticated order by insisting on America's lawyer, America's prosecutor, America's protector, Attorney General Merrick Garland, do his job. The one that is funded by our tax dollars.

Sarah Kendzior:

You have seen through my plot, Andrea. This is also, by the way, a grifting plot, because we know that the key to a good grift is to study Uzbekistan for 15 years-

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs]

Sarah Kendzio:

And then move to Missouri to launch your big media career, then express the most unpopular opinions about the most powerful people in your industry and in every other industry on the internet, in advance, telling the truth too early, pissing off everybody. Just like you. You, you little manipulative media operative, you did the biggest sellout move ever, which is you made a movie about Stalin's genocide and famine in Ukraine. And Gareth Jones, I mean, it's like who hasn't made a Gareth Jones movie? It's like Rocky and Rambo. We're on like, you know, Gareth Jones Part 8, you grifter, you. I cannot believe you get away with it.

Sarah Kendzior:

And, you know, it's unfortunate that we've been caught. We've been identified as Deza, as grifting liars. I was caught last week with my radical views that everybody in America should be getting their mail on

time, out in the open, by brave, brave stans for Louis DeJoy. And, you know, the depth of humiliation I felt that my position had been clarified, that Yeah... Yeah, we should get our mail.

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs]

Sarah Kendzior:

I mean, oh God. Thank God they put me in my place. Like, I feel chastened now. I'm grateful. Thank you, Louis DeJoy stans. Thank you, Merrick Garland stans. I have seen the light. I shall bow to your institutions, because we all know that's what America's about. You know, America was founded on bowing to a king-like institutional actor, not, you know, expressing ideas or pushing back against tyranny. None of that shit. Not for this America. It's just obeying the institutional lines, obeying orders, just following the rules, kind of like other regimes. Anyway.

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm going to ask you a serious question and I expect a serious answer.

Sarah Kendzior:

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] No. Well, it depends who you ask. If you want to go on Team Mensch, I've been a member of, let's see... The Communist Party, various separatist groups, Hamas, Hezbollah, Al-Qaida, the KGB, the Kremlin, oh God, who else? Uh, the Russian mafia, the Azerbaijani regime, the head of Gazprom. I was also sent to a Soviet socialist realism training camp in the early '80s, when I was a toddler.

Andrea Chalupa:

We're referring to the crazy stuff people have written about us online and on Twitter threads.

Sarah Kendzior

Oh! I forgot the biggest one, the most important one! Beyonce! I ran a drug cartel—on behalf of the criminal, of course—with my partner, Beyonce. This was all exposed by another brave internet soldier and we were also backed, by the way, by Tupac, who is not only alive, but is working for the FSB. So, thank you. Thank you, internet warriors. Thank you, keyboard warriors. I don't know how you type with your hands tied to that cross, but somehow, somehow you've managed-

Andrea Chalupa:

I'm proud to say... We're going to close this up because Sarah and I are being ridiculous because of the holidays. I'm proud to say that I've been crowned Ukrainian Illuminati by the Kremlin itself, Putin's chief propagandist, Putin's Sean Hannity, did an entire segment off the heels of *Buzzfeed* publishing the Steele

Dossier blaming... So, Putin's Sean Hannity blamed my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, the brave human rights activists that alerted anybody that would listen about the Kremlin's attack on our democracy in 2016 and how Paul Manafort was the instrument of that. And so Putin hits back by saying that my sister and I together are Ukrainian Illuminati that invented the whole Russia scandal. So, the conspiracy theories, the accusations keep coming, Sarah and I keep our heads down and keep doing our little show together, reminding people to please, for the love of God, if you've got a good heart and a solid mind and you believe in facts and science, run for office. Everybody must unite and vote in every single election.

Andrea Chalupa:

We have to stay engaged because what they want is to demoralize us. And we refuse to do that. So, speaking of speaking out, pressure, raising our voices, calling out our institutions, demanding accountability for our institutions, demanding that we get the services that we need in order for our democracy and our lives to function. All of that work matters because it looks like Ron Bloom, the Democrat appointed to the Board of the US Postal Service by Trump who is protecting his buddy, Louis DeJoy, the Postmaster General who has been purging the US Postal Service to benefit himself and his cronies financially, it looks like Ron Bloom is going to be replaced by the Biden administration. To remind us of why that is urgently important to get rid of DeJoy, we have Representative Katie Porter and her Excalibur whiteboard, which confronted DeJoy's mismanagement of US Postal Service, writing on Twitter: "On time mail delivery has plummeted under postmaster Louis DeJoy, forcing veterans to wait longer for prescriptions, seniors to scramble to pay bills without their social security checks, and communities to feel less connected. Postmaster DeJoy needs to go."

Andrea Chalupa:

We'll play that clip now of Representative Porter in a House Oversight Committee hearing on Friday grilling USPS Deputy Inspector General for auditing, Melina Perez. As you listen to the audio, the visual in the video that this clip was taken from includes Katie Porter's famous whiteboard, shining bright like the blazing flame of justice.

Representative Katie Porter:

The audit found that by the spring of 2020, mail delivery was right around 92%. That is, about 92% of the mail got there within the standard of on-time. That dropped to 80% by the fall of 2020 and by January of 2021 was hovering at around 61%. I realize this has gone up somewhat since then, but I wanted to ask you, when did Mr. DeJoy take over as postmaster? Do you know?

Melina Perez:

The summer of 2020.

Representative Katie Porter:

The summer of 2020. So, June of 2020. And what happened after he took over? Did the rate of on-time mail delivery go up or down?

Melina Perez:

It went down.

Representative Katie Porter:

I'm a professor and I used to do a lot of grading. And 92% is considered widely like A-. 80 is considered hanging on, hanging onto the lowest possible B. 60% is, at best, a D-. The Postal Service delivers 48% of the world's mail. It is an institution. It is a civic treasure. And we let it get all the way...What you found is we get all the way to that D- level.

Sarah Kendzior:

This is finally some good news and as Andrea noted, public pressure works because this is something that Biden could have done all along. Ron Bloom was in a holdover term. He's the Chairman of the Board of Governors on the Postal Service, which means he is the one who was protecting Postal Service wrecking ball DeJoy. And so he could have been fired at any time. Biden did not need to wait for Bloom's term to expire, but he chose to keep Bloom and the disaster that Katie Porter described has ensued. So, it's a bit of a mystery to me why anyone would do this. How do you sell yourself as the infrastructure president while you're destroying a vital piece of infrastructure such as the US Postal Service? I think that may have finally occurred to the Biden administration.

Sarah Kendzior:

So, you know, as they are passing Build Back Better, hopefully they are, I think, realizing that these two things contradict each other. Also, we need to get the mail. This shouldn't be controversial. Everyone should be able to vote. Everyone should be able to get the mail. These should not be points of contention in the Democratic party. So anyway, we did a previous episode—I think it was called [Why Are Democrats Protecting Louis DeJoy?](#)—months ago, calling for the resignation of Ron Bloom or the firing of Ron Bloom. So, I guess, you know, glad you listened to us years later. One of the things we mentioned in there was the corruption surrounding Ron Bloom. In addition to being the Chairman of the Board of Governors of USPS, he is the Vice Chair and Managing Partner of Brookfield Asset Management.

Sarah Kendzior:

Brookfield, of course, is the firm that Jared Kushner partnered with to have Qatar bail out his debt over 666 Fifth Avenue during Trump's term when Kushner was working in the White House, thus making this a matter of interest to Congressional investigations. And this illicit arrangement that Kushner had with Qatar and with Brookfield did, in fact, spur an investigation by Ron Wyden and Joaquin Castro, and that investigation seems to have mysteriously been dropped, or it's in a holding pattern? I don't know. If anyone has information about that, including Wyden and Castro, feel free to tell us. Right around the time that they were investigating that arrangement, Bloom was appointed by Trump in 2019. So, yeah, a lot of strange stuff. But as the story moves forward, there is good news on the horizon.

Sarah Kendzior:

Initially, there were just rumors that Biden was planning to replace DeJoy. *The Washington Post* has now confirmed that Biden has nominees. He's going to nominate Daniel Tangherlini—who served as the Administrator of the General Services Administration under the Obama administration—to replace Bloom. They're also going to replace another member of the board. It says Derek Kan, a Republican and the former Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget—it doesn't say under which administration—will replace Republican John M. Barger. So, we need to vet these people. That's all I gotta say on that. People did not vet Ron bloom. We did and we got screamed at for it. We were told all year long that it was impossible for Biden to do anything. And then suddenly, Biden did something and they all went silent on my controversial position of everyone should get the mail.

Sarah Kendzior:

So yes, vet these folks, especially the Republican, but also the Democrat. Ron Bloom is an important cautionary tale about the Democratic party in that you cannot assume you know what kind of action somebody is going to take just because of their party affiliation. This is a guy who spent his entire tenure in the Postal Service just protecting the job. And, of course, DeJoy not only torpedoed the Postal Service, but basically, he participated in election tampering because this was during the pandemic. And so just one final word on this: It is remarkable that after 2020, the Democrats are not pushing harder for vote by mail because, in part, of the culture of vigilante violence that we've been discussing throughout this episode, where public officials—public servants—are routinely threatened and people who are going to vote are going to be nervous.

Sarah Kendzior:

To be very clear, we want everybody to vote, but it should not be something expected of you to have it be a place where you could lose your life or get injured or be threatened or anything. Our officials need to be protected. Our voters need to be protected. And one way to protect this during an election is to increase voting by mail so folks can just drop off their ballot at the post office and not have to wait outdoors in line for like six to eight hours—this happens in many communities around the country, particularly in Black and Latino communities—and that will help ensure the safety of everybody involved. So that's another thing the Biden administration can fix.

Andrea Chalupa:

And, there are some other victories, hopefully, on the horizon, thanks to the leadership of President Biden and progressives in Congress. The House passed the Build Back Better Act last week, which will be the most aggressive legislation passed for combating the climate crisis, strengthening the social safety net by providing universal pre-K. And it's paid for mostly, according to the Congressional Budget Office, which ran an analysis of the package. Several leading economists have said that the Build Back Better Act will lower inflation. Authoritarian experts have pointed to economic instability and crisis being a driver of growing authoritarianism. If we secure our economy, provide jobs and other services to the American people, we are also securing our democracy. The Build Back Better Act—Biden's agenda for fixing the fracturing holes in our weak and vulnerable social safety net—is an essential first step towards economic and democratic strength, and a major rebuke to the many dangers of Trumpism and damaging Republican tax cuts for the very rich at the expense of the rest of us.

Andrea Chalupa:

The Build Back Better Act goes on to the Senate, where Republican lackeys Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema are sure to try to gut it to please their dark money masters. The fight is not over. Keep in mind, once again, progressives led on this issue. Progressives were promised by President Biden and moderates in Congress and Democratic leadership that this act would get done and the final bill that Biden would sign would remain a meaningful one that would change people's lives for the better. They were promised this, and that is why some progressives—namely in The Squad—withheld their votes on the recent passage of the infrastructure bill in the House, because they were promised that the infrastructure bill and the Build Back Better Act would be passed together. That is what Nancy Pelosi promised throughout the negotiation process and then suddenly, the infrastructure act had to be passed first and the progressives had to give up their leverage of withholding votes on it in order to force the passage of the Build Back Better Act.

Andrea Chalupa

So now progressives have been forced to trust that moderates in Congress and Republican lackeys like Manchin and Sinema will do the right thing. So, progressives have held up their end of the bargain. They fought for Biden's Build Back Better agenda. They were told to trust the process. They have a right to be wary of those promises, of course. If the Build Back Better Act finally does pass and meaningful climate and social programs remain intact, it would be because progressives fought tooth and nail for it, serving as the defensive line. To give you a specific example of how important the Build Back Better Act is for the American people, here's [Senator Elizabeth Warren on Twitter, writing](#): "Insulin's been around for 100 years. There's no reason for Big Pharma to keep hiking up prices. There's no reason to force people to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars a month to stay alive. So the #BuildBackBetter Act will cap costs at \$35/month—and it will transform lives."

Andrea Chalupa:

Manchin and Sinema have both been paid off by Big Pharma. Manchin's daughter is a notorious price gouger under investigation for her shamelessly immoral price hike of life-saving EpiPens, as we've covered in recent episodes. Manchin received campaign contributions from his daughter's company during its price-gouging scandal. That is otherwise known as corruption. The *New York Times* just reported that both Manchin and Sinema are raking in Republican donations for opposing Biden's agenda, including tax increases on the super wealthy due to decades of Republican tax cuts for the rich paid for by the poor, driving America's income inequality gap higher than it was during the Gilded Age.

Andrea Chalupa:

According to the *New York Times* report, one Wall Street executive called Senator Kyrsten Sinema, "Saint Sinema", for her refusal to raise taxes on the wealthy. Republican leaders have said they won't run anyone against Sinema next time she's up for reelection in 2024. In an earlier show, we explained how this is all part of Sinema's transformation from a progressive activist into a handmaiden for Republican authoritarian oligarchy, because she's a person without courage or convictions. She fought a hard campaign to get into Congress and doesn't want to go through that bruising experience again, so she has submitted to the dark side like Anikan Skywalker. Any of us can succumb to the dark side because it's easy. Resistance and having the courage of your convictions is harder and more dangerous. Non-white members of Congress do it all the time. They stay in the light because they have no choice.

Andrea Chalupa:

The color of their skin makes them a target of everyday aggression and microaggressions to very real existential threats, like their communities being the most vulnerable to the climate crisis, pollution, economic crisis, racial bias in the healthcare system and financial system, rampant far-right police and para-military violence, and so on and so on. So, Kyrsten Sinema is the Democratic version of Cancun Cruz. Just like Ted Cruz rushed off to Cancun, Mexico as many Texans were freezing to death during a winter storm, Cancun Sinema has also abandoned her constituents for the luxury and warmth of the endless supply of Republican dirty money. Meanwhile, according to a senior Exxon lobbyist caught on camera by an investigation, Exxon meets regularly with Joe "Maserati" Manchin, who was recently caught on camera fleeing his yacht club and getting into his dirty money Maserati to escape young activists of the Sunrise Movement begging Manchin not to sentence them to a future of mass death by blocking the climate change programs in president Biden's Build Back Better Act.

Andrea Chalupa:

We shall see if Manchin and Sinema will join a long list of villains in history who have sold their souls at the expense of innocent lives. Democratic leaders seem hopeful. The Senate will vote on the Build Back Better Act before the end of the year. The *New York Times* provides a summary of what's at stake for the American people in one of the most consequential social programs in decades: "The bill offers universal pre-kindergarten, generous subsidies for childcare that extend well into the middle-class, expanded financial aid for college, hundreds of billions of dollars in housing support, home and community care for older Americans, a new hearing benefit for Medicare, and price controls per prescription drugs. More than half a trillion dollars would go towards shifting the US economy away from fossil fuels to renewable energy and electric cars, the largest investment ever to slow the warming of the planet. The package would largely be paid for with tax increases on high earners and corporations, estimated to bring in nearly \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. Savings in government spending on prescription drugs are projected to bring in another \$260 billion." Once again, all of these life saving programs remain at risk from Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema's greed.

Sarah Kendzior:

And on that note, I'm gonna close out the show with a quote from an interview that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez did with the *New York Times* where she was talking about this, about this gridlock in the Senate, about the slow roll of the sort of policies and initiatives that the Democrats promised in their campaign. And she noted that Biden can get a lot done through executive orders. And just put a little prelude to that: You will hear a nonsense argument of, "Oh my God, Biden can't do executive orders because then a Republican will come in and they'll do it, too." It's like, dude, they're going to do whatever the hell they want anyway. They had an attack on the Capitol. They purposely spread a plague. We're way, way beyond them waiting for the Democrats to do something unconventional and being like, "Gee guys, maybe we should try that out."

Sarah Kendzior:

So ignore that. The point is getting things done now, getting policies and plans into play now. And so AOC says to the *New York Times*: "There is an enormous amount of executive action that they're sitting on that I think is underutilized on student loans. We've got executive action on the table with respect to climate. There are certainly things that we can do with immigration. So why are we taking this as a legislative compromise when the opportunity is so much greater or when Biden could do this stuff with a stroke of the pen? And it's just reminding us that he's choosing not to. We always try to tell people why they need to settle for less instead of being able to harness the energy of our grassroots and take political risks in service of them, the same way that we take political risks in service of swing voters. We can do both."

[Outro theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by standing up on our Patron at the truth-teller level or higher

Sarah Kendzior:

We 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 cost of fossil fuels and facilitates the ongoing transition to clean energy.

Andrea Chalupa:

We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, the 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 out our Patreon. It keeps us going. You could also subscribe to us on YouTube.

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Speaker 4 ([43:58](#)):

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