

Gaslit Nation Transcript

19 October 2022

“Kanye. Elon. Trump.”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/kanye-elon-trump-73483701>

(opening clip)

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Kill and confront the extremist movement of which JD Vance unfortunately is a part of, right? Who says that the President of the United States is intentionally trying to kill people with Fentanyl? Who says that the election was stolen? JD Vance does. Who runs around with Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, who wants to ban books? Who's running around with Lindsey Graham, who wants a national abortion ban? You're running around with Marjorie Taylor Greene, who's the absolute looniest politician in America. This is a dangerous group and we do need to confront it.

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior (00:44):

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best sellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight* and of the book, *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent*, which is out now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:58):

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. It's the film the Kremlin does not want you to see. They they keep shutting down screenings.

Sarah Kendzior (01:14):

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

Andrea Chalupa (01:22):

We're going to start this week's show with an overview of the make-it-or-break-it 2022 midterms. If you feel at any time a sense of ominous storm clouds during this conversation, head on over to *Gaslit Nation's* 2022 Survival Guide, which you can find on the homepage of our website, gaslitnationpod.com. It is your one stop shop for all things 2022 midterms; where to get in to help get out the vote, events that we—the *Gaslit Nation* podcast—are co-hosting with a lot of wonderful groups like Sister District and Indivisible. So it's really, really, really a critical time. So much is at stake. Kevin McCarthy just came out and said that if Republicans take over the House, that they're going to stop giving all this aid to Ukraine. As we've always said on this show: Vladimir Putin's greatest ally in his fascist global takeover attempt—because Ukraine is on the front lines fighting for all of us.

Andrea Chalupa (02:27):

And Putin has been buying off politicians around the world, across Europe. His oligarchs have been pollinating his corruption in major institutions across Europe and the US. The Republican Party used to have like one or two freak show Republicans that were clearly the Kremlin candidates. Now the entire party is co-opted with Kremlin talking points. And now they're saying openly—they're very comfortable to say openly—that they're gonna turn off aid for Ukraine from the United States if Republicans should take the House. That is going to empower Putin and allow his genocide, his extermination of the Ukrainian people. That's what he wants to do. He's been very clear on that point. He said it, he showed it. And so the genocide's gonna be successful and the war is going to turn around in Putin's favor if the US should turn off aid to Ukraine. President Biden will still be in power for two more years.

Andrea Chalupa (03:18):

But it's going to be harder to get what Ukraine needs in order to protect itself from an actual ongoing genocide. And as we know, the European Union has too many of these Kevin McCarthy types, these fringe pirate candidates that are also pulling the levers of power in Putin's direction. So the EU, without a strong US, isn't a reliable ally for Ukraine. Certainly I'm talking about Western Europe and parts of Central Europe. Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries, they're strong. They're ride or die for Ukraine so we're safe there. But without a strong US, a united NATO, a united global democratic alliance will be much harder to come by. We saw that under Trump, how hurt global democracies were with Trump in power causing all this chaos. That was a very challenging time for Ukraine. The president was blackmailed, was extorted by the president of the United States, right?

Andrea Chalupa (04:11):

So with Kevin McCarthy in power in the House, Putin is going to have a field day. It's going to be springtime for Putin should that happen. So please join us in fighting like hell. Go to the *Gaslit Nation* website, gaslitnationpod.com and check out the 2022 Survival Guide. I wanna go down with some of the events we're having just so you can join us, join me personally. So we're going to be doing an important phone bank on October 25th, Tuesday, 5:00 PM Eastern with Sister District calling North Carolina voters for state races there. North Carolina is an important hub for abortion rights. A lot of women in the South whose states have banned abortion or really restricted it have been flooding to North Carolina to get abortion healthcare. So we need to protect abortion rights in North Carolina. So join us in making calls to voters in North Carolina on October 25th, Tuesday, 5:00 PM Eastern.

Andrea Chalupa (05:05):

I will be on that call with Sister District making phone calls with you. Then on October 28th, Friday at 4:00 PM Eastern Time, we're doing a phonebank with Indivisible for US Senate candidate John Fetterman in Pennsylvania. Sarah will be joining me. It's going to be Halloween themed. Wear a funny hat, wear a funny t-shirt, wear whatever you want. Just join us for the important phonebank to help Democrats expand their majority in the US Senate. Then on October 30th, Sunday at 1:00 PM Eastern, phonebank with Swing Left for Christy Smith for a US House district in California. Christy Smith lost her last race in the same district by only 300 votes. 333 votes. That's how close it came. So if we can eke her through this time around, we can stand a chance of keeping fascist bootlicker, Kevin McCarthy, outta power in the House, okay? Then November 7th, Monday, 4:00 PM Eastern Time, phonebank with Indivisible for US Senate candidate Mandela Barnes in Wisconsin to unseat Kremlin stooge, what's his name?

Andrea Chalupa (06:14):

Johnson, The guy that spent 4th of July in Moscow that one one year. And then US Rep. Lauren Underwood in Illinois. These are all critical races that we absolutely must win. If you want this information I just listed, go to gaslitnationpod.com and click on the Gaslit Nation 2022 Survival Guide. All this information is there and you can sign up. The links are there. Come join us, make calls. Every little bit helps. So I just wanna just to share quickly. We have wonderful research compiled by *Gaslit Nation's* associate producer, Karlyn Daigle, who took a deep dive on the midterms to understand what we're up against. Thank you, Karlyn. And here's what Karlyn wrote: "Andrea, I have to say that from doing this research, it's truly mind boggling how many election-denying psychopaths have a path to victory in these races." And there you have it.

Andrea Chalupa (07:10):

This is not a drill. Fascism is here. Fascism has momentum. They're coming for us. It is just going to get worse. The more of these guys are in power, they will use that advantage to further their reach and little by little, month after month, it's just gonna be shock and horror, right? Karlyn provided this wonderful overview. There are 36 House Democrats not running for reelection. Of those 14 seats are vulnerable. There are 28 House Republicans not seeking reelection—only six of those seats are vulnerable. The key takeaways are redistricting has given Republicans a huge advantage and has made this election complicated, particularly in the South and Midwest but it's an overall trend. I wanna note that redistricting—meaning extreme Republican gerrymandering—could have been a lot worse than it actually turned out to be, but thanks to changing demographics in some of these districts, Republicans couldn't be as aggressive as they wanted to be and that's what saved us.

Andrea Chalupa (08:11):

It could have been a lot worse. And those demographics are going to continue to change rapidly. I mean, demographics are not destiny. People on the Democratic side, the Democratic Party side, the Stacey Abrams organizing machine, everyone has to unite to try to ensure that those demographics go our way and that Republicans don't co-opt them. So there's still work to be done. But so far the changing demographics in America did disrupt Republicans plans to do even more extreme gerrymandering. We got a bit lucky here. It could've been a lot worse. Almost every Republican candidate is a MAGA Republican. Democrats on a national level have not invested resources into more rural communities and we'll find out after November 8th whether that's gonna backfire. Democrats are running primarily centrist moderates who focus on bipartisan messaging against extremists with very few exceptions. Literally, every single Republican candidate either fully supports a national abortion ban or supports extreme restrictions on abortion.

Andrea Chalupa (09:17):

All but one identify openly as anti-abortion. Alright? So that's very scary, right? All those *Handmaid's Tale* memes we've seen over the years since Trump first came to power, those are very on the nose. That's where we're headed. Some good news: The very first day of early voting in Georgia where Senator Warnock and Stacey Abrams—two superstars on the front lines of defending our democracy, they're on the ballot there—this very first day of early voting reached nearly the level of the first day of early voting in 2020. That's a huge surge of voters for a midterm election. And we all know how well Georgia did in 2020, turning blue for Biden and electing two Democratic senators when the pundits said it couldn't be done. Gabriel Sterling, the chief operating officer for Georgia's Secretary of State, we all remember him

as the guy who held the urgent press conference in 2020, calling on then-President Trump to stop inciting violence and threatening the lives of poll workers, where Gabriel Sterling warned, "Someone's going to get killed."

Andrea Chalupa (10:22):

And he was right. The harassment of poll workers was a prelude to Trump inciting violence and his attempted coup on January 6th, where people *were* killed. Once again, FBI director Christopher Wray was warned. It was all out in the open and he did nothing and let it happen. Why is he still in power? On Monday, Gabriel Sterling wrote on Twitter, "As of 4:15 PM we have seen over 100,000 Georgians cast their early vote. This blows away the previous midterm first day record of approximately 72,000. And we have lots of voting to go today." So that's a huge, huge surge. Hopefully those numbers are all in our favor. That's a very good sign. When Democrats vote, we win, as we saw with the miracle in Kansas, the big vote to protect abortion rights in Kansas. So please join us. Make phone calls, knock on doors, donate what you can, make a plan to vote. Make sure that you're registered. Help others vote. Volunteer as a poll monitor if it's not too late where you are. Do everything you can now to help protect us from the worst. We can push back the tide of fascism. You could start today. Go to the *Gaslit Nation 2022 Survival Guide* at gaslitnationpod.com.

Sarah Kendzior (11:36):

All right, well thank you for that. And just to elucidate that things can get worse and the horrors in store for us, especially if the GOP retakes the House, I'm going to start this segment—which is referenced in the title of our show today, "Kanye. Elon. Trump", by discussing a tweet that was posted by the House judiciary GOP on October 6th that said exactly that: "Kanye. Elon. Trump." And at the time, we didn't know why, but a strange series of events began to unfold shortly after surrounding this unholy trinity in a very reality TV-style, WWE-style way, as if part of a script. And so there's a lot going on, in terms of alliances and audiences for hate rhetoric. And we are going to break it all down today. We have decided to divide up the assholes.

Sarah Kendzior (12:38):

So I am going to take on Kanye and Trump and Andrea is going to give us the latest on Kremlin mouthpiece and billionaire shitposter Elon Musk. Get ready because none of this is fun, but I think it's important. I think we need to study this because this is the direction of the future in terms of public discourse and monopolies over public conversations. So here we go. On Sunday, Kanye West decided to make the following tweet where he says, "I'm a bit sleepy tonight, but when I wake up I'm going death con 3 on Jewish people. The funny thing is, I can't actually be antisemitic because Black people are actually jew too. You guys have toyed with me and tried to blackball anyone who opposes your agenda." And so this tweet was removed shortly after because it violated Twitter rules against hate speech.

Sarah Kendzior (13:37):

And the tweet arrived after Kanye had worn a White Lives Matter t-shirt at a Paris fashion show after he had gone on Tucker Carlson's show to express extreme right-wing views. And some of his disparaging comments about Jewish people were actually edited out by Carlson's show. They were too overt, but they were leaked in videos to *Vice*. It was a week which culminated in Kanye announcing that he intends to purchase the social media website Parler, which is a favorite chat site for white supremacists and Trump supporters. And it is currently owned by a man named George Farmer, who is the husband of

notorious Trump supporter Candace Owens. And so all of these moves dovetailed with Trump posting antisemitic rhetoric of his own on his own social media network, Truth Social, shortly after. I'm gonna get to that in a second.

Sarah Kendzior (14:39):

But to take the broad view, what we are seeing here are tools of autocrats attempting to purchase the digital public sphere. Kanye and Elon Musk are functioning as intermediaries for autocratic power players, much as oligarchs and plutocrats have traditionally done. And as they've done before in the United States, we've seen this with Peter Thiel, for example. And he's, you know, making moves now as well. That these two men are obnoxious and cartoonish does not make them less dangerous. It actually makes them more dangerous because they understand the social media landscape and the attention economy much in the way that Trump did. And they know how to dominate it with rhetoric on the road to sealing it up with money. They understand that these days fascism sells. And fascism is backed by powerful corporate and political operatives, which I'll get to in a minute. But the first thing that we need to emphasize is the rise in antisemitism, including physical attacks on Jewish Americans and on synagogues and on other gathering places, and the general streamlining of political violence since 2016 and especially since 2020. When Kanye West says that he wants to “go death con three on Jewish people”, that is an anti-Semitic threat.

Sarah Kendzior (16:07):

It is an incitement to violence toward people who have a history of genocide. This is unequivocal. You know, you should note Kanye is not criticizing or targeting a particular individual in this tweet. He is targeting, in his own words, “all Jewish people”. And so, you know, there should be no prevaricating about this regardless of some of his other comments. And so what prompted this outburst? Well, you need to look at the history here. Kanye has for years been building alliances with right-wing extremists, most notably with Trump but especially with Jared Kushner. The topic of Kushner was actually raised on Tucker Carlson's show where Kanye asserted that Kushner had inaugurated these Middle East policy deals, these so-called Abraham Accords, for personal profit. And here Kanye is absolutely right. That's completely true. But what Kanye's antisemitic tweets have done is made it much more difficult to talk about this subject.

Sarah Kendzior (17:20):

For example, the \$2 billion that Kushner received from Saudi Arabia, his various dirty deals with Qatar, with Israel and so on. Those dirty deals should absolutely be examined, as should his long history with Kanye. That history, the history of the two of them, has been curiously left out of a lot of discussions. So I want to remind everyone that in 2020, Kushner and Kanye were so close that they were speaking on the phone almost every single day. And this was reported in a multitude of places including *Forbes*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and so on. This is not a spurious claim, what's happened since then? So I think maybe folks have forgotten, but it's important to put this in context. So, *Forbes* writes in August, 2020, “Kushner seems to have an outsize influence over West. Their relationship helped bring West and his wife, Kim Kardashian-West, to the White House for an instantly famous Oval office meeting, and they collaborated on ideas for sentencing reform.”

Sarah Kendzior (18:27):

I'm just gonna interject here by saying that Kushner's idea of sentencing reform is abusing the pardon power to bail out all of his criminal friends, as well as his father. So, you know, any kind of facade of interest in any serious criminal justice reform should be ignored when it comes to him. And so *Forbes* goes on to describe Kushner as "exploiting Kanye West's mental state for political gain." And this is from the article: "'He's mentally ill,' says a West friend. 'When you have people around him who have the best intentions and don't need anything from him, you can steer him when he's in that space into a positive place. When you have people around him who see him as an opportunity, they create a very, very bad scenario.'" And this is the article continuing: "Some close to West feel that Kushner now falls into the latter camp in ways that flirt with exploitation, concerning after Kardashian-West asked publicly for compassion and empathy, when described their understanding of Kushner's conversations with West as reverse psychology."

Sarah Kendzior (19:34):

"Others prescribed less malicious intent, though that narrative would require a level of naivete that would rank up there with sitting in a meeting at Trump Tower with Russians who promised to have dirt on Hillary Clinton." That's actually from the *Forbes* article that that's not me. [laughs] Anyway, I will remind you that all of this was happening as Kanye West was running for president. You may remember this short lived run. It seemed to be designed to take votes away from Democrats. According to the *Washington Post*, this was actually illegal because you had the candidate of one campaign in a very tight relationship with somebody managing another campaign, with Kushner, who of course was working on Trump's 2020 campaign. So that's the short version of their backstory. You should pay attention to these kind of WWE-style feuds, but never lose sight of who is getting hurt most in the process, which is right now every Jewish American facing an onslaught of hate rhetoric as a result of their words.

Sarah Kendzior (20:42):

And speaking of hate rhetoric, later that weekend we had a new post from Trump, which so far I believe no one in the Republican Party and very few in the Democratic Party have condemned despite its overt hateful antisemitism. And so I'm gonna read this little tweet-type thing from Trump which he posted on his own network. Trump says, "No president has done more for Israel than I have. Somewhat surprisingly however, our wonderful evangelicals are far more appreciative of this than the people of the Jewish faith, especially those living in the US. Those living in Israel though are a different story. Highest approval rating in the world. Could easily be Prime Minister. US Jews have to get their act together and appreciate what they have in Israel before it's too late!" First things first: We have, once again, a threat against Jewish Americans.

Sarah Kendzior (21:41):

You should not play this down. The quote, "Jews have to get their act together and appreciate what they have in Israel before it's too late" is a threat complete with a demand, complete with a timeline. We also have a clear example of what is a recurrent theme in both Republican politics and in right-wing Israeli politics, which is demonizing Jewish Americans, most of whom vote for Democrats, in favor of Christian evangelicals and, most importantly, in favor of Israel. Trump has previously berated Jewish Americans for being loyal to the United States. It's basically an inverse of the dual loyalty trope. In Trump's view, Jewish loyalty should be to Israel first, even if you're an American. He backs the fanatical ethnonationalism of his longtime friend, Netanyahu, who is also a longtime friend of the Kushner family, and who much like Trump and Kushner has been involved in a multitude of criminal and corrupt acts.

Sarah Kendzior (22:47):

And so there are many reasons for this decades-long corrupt alliance. There's also a long history of Netanyahu stoking antisemitism against the liberal diaspora, whether in his alliance with *Breitbart* or his aid to other far-right Zionists in spreading the George Soros myth, which *Buzzfeed* did a great expose on, on the origins of that. So we'll link to that in the show notes. And Netanyahu is now on a US media tour. He was on *Morning Joe* this morning defending Trump's antisemitism. He was on Bill Maher's show doing much of the same. So you have to kind of ask here, you know, why is the media giving him this platform? Why are they not condemning Trump? Why are our leaders not condemning what is an overtly antisemitic statement from Trump? Again, I want to emphasize this is a dangerous and profoundly unfair situation for Jewish Americans.

Sarah Kendzior (23:42):

And so it's remarkable that more of our elected officials have not spoken out to condemn it. And what it shows is that they, too—some of them at least—value the foreign state of Israel over their fellow Americans. They value Israel over Jewish Americans who need protection from bigoted fanatics right now. And so it's not really surprising to hear silence from the GOP, you know, who have always backed or tolerated Trump's hateful positions. But it's also worth noting the positions of leading Democrats when it comes to Israel because it's extreme. It's not just, you know, a kind of friendship or a support of a partner state. The leaders of the party have put Israel before the US. Chuck Schumer told *The New Yorker* that God had chosen him to be in the Senate for the purpose of protecting Israel. We'll link to that article as well because a lot of folks have doubt on that one.

Sarah Kendzior (24:39):

Nancy Pelosi infamously proclaimed in December, 2018 while sitting side by side with mega donor Haim Saban at a fundraiser that, and I quote, "If the Capitol crumbled to the ground, the one thing that would remain would be our commitment to and cooperation with Israel." And as I've said before, that is a disturbing comment to make about any country because one would assume that the first priority of a US official would be to protect Americans and not a foreign country. And it's notable here, I think, that this rhetoric on Israel and Schumer's rhetoric often lines up with that of Trump. And that's certainly not true of everybody in the Democratic Party. And so you have to ask why? Well, there are a lot of reasons but one major one has been the role of AIPAC, the lobbyist and major funder of campaigns of both Democrats and Republicans.

Sarah Kendzior (25:33):

Since 2020, AIPAC has ramped up its funding of insurrectionists and bigots, even when those candidates espouse antisemitic beliefs or align themselves with antisemitic causes. AIPAC just spent \$27 million in the Democratic primaries trying to defeat candidates who believe in Palestinian rights, but they only succeeded in defeating Andy Levin, a progressive former synagogue leader from Michigan whom they felt needed to be ousted for his belief that Palestinians deserve to be treated humanely. So again, they don't care about the fate of Jewish Americans, they care about Israel. And if that means backing people who tried to overthrow the government or who float the "great replacement theory", then they'll do that. That's what they're doing now, currently. AIPAC is funding over 100 Republicans who refused to certify Biden's election victory. This is the financial muscle—or part of it—behind that group.

Sarah Kendzior (26:47):

And so why are the Democrats not speaking out about this? Well, according to *The Guardian*, they are so afraid that they don't even wanna publicly address their own fear. An anonymous Democratic staffer told *The Guardian* that they were not prepared to get in a public confrontation with the lobbyist group. And then here's a quote from the article: "AIPAC is now an embarrassment, but frankly it's too powerful to go up against", the staffer said. "We don't need them pouring money in against us so we hold off on public criticisms." My guess is that this is the same reason they're not condemning Trump, even when he's making threats against Jewish Americans. They are terrified of Israel and of AIPAC and of this big donor network and what they might do. And so this is a vile situation in so many ways. It is antithetical to democracy. It is antithetical to morality. All of this needs to be called out and condemned; the antisemitism, the alliances, the cowardice, and the corruption. And that is the story of Kanye West, Trump and the Republican Party.

Andrea Chalupa (28:01):

It's such a shame.

Sarah Kendzior:

It really is.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's just a nightmare. I mean, the whole theme of that tweet, right? How did it go? It was, "Kanye. Elon. Trump." That's the big campaign slogan of Republican fascists this election cycle: "Kanye. Elon. Trump." That's a very concise summary of this excellent, must-watch series on PBS right now called *The US and the Holocaust*. It is this extraordinary three-part series, which is available if you're in the US—I don't know how to watch it outside of the US—but if you're in the US you could watch it for free on the PBS website. Just Google "PBS and the US and the Holocaust". It's by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick, and Sarah Botstein. It's such an extraordinary detailed look at what the US was doing and how the US essentially enabled Hitler to build and carry out his mass murder machine.

Andrea Chalupa (29:11):

And all of the American celebrities (like Charles Lindbergh, of course), all of the American business titans (like Henry Ford), and all of the far out there American politicians—too many to name—who were staunchly anti-immigration, who didn't want immigrants from so-called shithole countries, who only wanted white aryan Northern European Nordic immigrants to be allowed into the United States during a time of countless people—mostly Jewish people—being forced from their homes because in places like Germany and Austria, they were being driven out of the homes they knew, their businesses attacked, physically vandalized, windows broken, the beards of their spiritual leaders, the rabbis, publicly chopped in front of everyone. The beard of a rabbi is a symbol of the spiritual authority that the community entrusts in that person. You'd have laws against driving. Jewish people were forbidden from doing all sorts of basic things. And it is just this chipping away at basic human dignity.

Andrea Chalupa (30:28):

And on top of that, if they wanted to flee all this from Germany, the Nazis imposed restrictions—severe restrictions—on how much money Jewish people could take with them to flee the country and start a

new life abroad somewhere. It was just horrific cruelty. And all of the details—I'm only listing a few—are heartbreakingly and powerfully shown in this three part series, *The US and the Holocaust* on PBS. Everyone is morally obligated to watch this to understand where we are now and how extremely dangerous it is now. All the signs are there. You have these influential people, these powerful people across business and culture who have been co-opted into this antisemitic, pro fascist, pro genocidal thinking. Some of them do the propaganda more delicately than others. Kanye, for instance, is just a straight up... I don't even know. He's just going for it.

Andrea Chalupa (31:30):

He's just being openly antisemitic now. It's always been there, but now he's just letting it rip. Elon Musk is trying to play both sides. He's doing it poorly, of course, but it's very, very clear. And Russian analysts who are experts on understanding Putin's mind, like Fiona Hill, have been pointing out that Elon Musk is very clearly communicating messages to the West, to Ukraine, of what Putin wants, negotiating on behalf of Putin and pushing all that. That's happening in real time. And I wanna point out the significance of that because Putin is at war, Russia is at war with not just Ukraine. Russia has very clearly stated again and again that they're at war with the West. They're at war with democracy, wherever democracy exists in the world. Democracy must fail and fascism, mafia states must prevail. Russia is part of an axis of these kleptocratic states along with North Korea, Iran, Assad's Syria, Venezuela.

Andrea Chalupa (32:35):

They're propping a lot of these failed dictatorships up financially, with military support and so on. They're friends with Netanyahu, who wants to turn Israel into an autocracy. They're openly proud of creating these new axes of autocrats. They are a coalition, which we should really take as a lesson, as an important reminder of how essential coalitions are to winning any sort of battle. And so the dictators and the wannabe dictators are openly, proudly in a coalition and they have all of their useful idiots from Elon Musk to Kanye co-opted as part of this effort to normalize the unjustifiable. It's all happening before our eyes and it's just going to get worse if we don't have a more meaningful reaction to stop them. The help we're giving to Ukraine isn't enough. It's simply not enough. And it's about to get weaker if, God forbid, the fascist Republicans who have been completely taken over are aligned with Putin's Russia, with Russian fascism.

Andrea Chalupa (33:33):

It's a combination of homegrown Republican fascism, the same kind that inspired the Nazis; the Jim Crow laws, the strict anti-immigration laws, the forced mass deportation of non-white people from the US. All those things, all the legal apparatuses, all of those inspired Hitler. Hitler liked the US when Hitler was coming to power. He was a fan of the US, of the Republicans, the Mitch McConnell's of the day. And he used the lessons from America, what America was doing against non-white people, to carry out his dictatorship in Germany, to build it all, to pass these laws taking away daily dignity, daily human rights from Jewish people and build his killing machine. So it's all coming back. History is repeating. History's repeating because we don't learn from history. History's repeating because we've had a far-right, libertarian-led, extremist Republican-led movement over the past several decades in America to attack intellectualism, to attack schools from kindergarten on up to the university level, to bring in a dumbing down of America, as we've seen with this far right propaganda takeover from Fox News, Newsmax, One America Network, Sinclair gobbling up local TV stations.

Andrea Chalupa (34:49):

And on top of that, just like you had during the rise of the Nazis, you have a bunch of capitalists cashing in on this with the hedge funds destroying newsrooms. And investigative journalism units are the first to go because they're the most expensive and that's a further weakening of public discourse, of anti-corruption watchdogs, of reformers, of communities. So there's been a lot of people that have been cashing in on the decline of all this and setting the stage over decades for fascism to finally take hold in America. And we're at an extremely dangerous tipping point for not just our country, but the world.

Sarah Kendzior (35:24):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, we're at the culmination of a lot of trends that grew to the point that Trump was able to get into office, that Brexit happened, that Putin felt comfortable invading Crimea in 2014, not expecting backlash—and he didn't really get it in a meaningful way—and then all of this was laid out on the table very explicitly in front of us in 2016. All the hypotheticals became real. The axis of autocrats was spelled out. The more that people investigated these kind of key players in this nexus, whether Trump or Kushner, the more corruption and the more decades-long entanglements were revealed. You know, I'd add Manafort and Stone and others to that list as well. So you could see the way that Israel and Russia were working together, for example. I was just sharing with you privately this morning, remembering how Netanyahu was the person who helped bring Trump and Putin together for the Helsinki Health Summit back in 2018.

Sarah Kendzior (36:27):

But those alliances go back longer. And so what we had over the last, you know, I guess six years was an opportunity to air all of this out and to try to rectify it and to try to strengthen alternative alliances, alliances with democratic countries and countries that were trying to preserve their democracies under threat. I would put the UK in that category. I'd put us in that category, where you see kleptocratic operations gaining and gradually stomping out democracy over time. We have not done that in the US. The last two years were the best opportunity that we had with the Democrats having the presidency, the House and the Senate. There are obviously maneuvers in play that had been planned for decades on end. For example, the packing of the Supreme Court and the ability of an ultra right-wing Supreme Court to overrule a lot of domestic policy decisions.

Sarah Kendzior (37:25):

But nonetheless, it's like the most basic lessons have not been learned, you know, which is: Do not give in to dictators, do not make financial deals with dictators—they're learning that the hard way with Saudi Arabia—always expose corruption, get dark money out of politics, take, bigotry and hate rhetoric seriously, treat it equally across the board. Whoever makes the threat, it's the threat that matters. It's who gets hurt that matters. It's who suffers in these situations and feels unprotected and vulnerable that matters. We've had so many hate crimes over the last six years, such an incredible rise, against Black Americans, against Asian Americans during covid and really accelerating against Jewish Americans. So you would think that there would be just at the most basic level and ability of members of Congress and others to flat out condemn this..

Sarah Kendzior (38:26):

To, when Trump says this, think about his backers, think about his role as a demagogue, think about the kind of networks he taps into and about the fact that he very clearly is trying to separate Jewish Americans from Israel, claim basically his preference for Israel and start some sort of battle that is, you know, so dirty, so corrosive, so full of baseless innuendo, and also one that I think can be weaponized by people like Kushner and Netanyahu to try to discourage discussion of their own corruption by trying to put it into the, “Oh, you're being Antisemitic” basket where, you know, the reality is we need to talk about an individual, their actions, what they've done, whether it served the American public, whether it betrayed the American public, and we also need to keep in mind this broader movement of hate rhetoric and attacks of physical violence against ethnic minorities within the United States.

Sarah Kendzior (39:29):

That's a complicated balance to maintain when you're dealing with folks like Kushner and Trump that are very good at PR, that are very good at manipulating mass media, that have a foothold in networks like Fox, in shows like Tucker Carlson that are happy to produce the kind of narratives that they want. It's just deeply frustrating that folks had time to learn from all of the mistakes of the past six years, from the hesitancy, the refusal to see what's right in front of them. And I feel like there is just an embrace of fascism. It's like America went through the five stages of grief and instead of staying at anger—which is where they should have stayed when dealing with an autocratic threat—they've decided to move to acceptance. They've decided to find some way of rationalizing it.

Sarah Kendzior (40:19):

And here, I don't mean the majority of Americans but I do mean many of the Americans that hold positions of power in politics, in media, in corporations, the ones who will set the tone for the rest of us ordinary folks who don't, you know, we can't throw our weight around as much, especially since voting rights and other rights are under threat. You see it in the entertainment industry even. You see all these layoffs where it's mostly non-white show creators and writers, and often a lot of women getting sidelined. Similar layoffs in journalism. Some of the atmosphere reminds me of 2002, when America was so traumatized by 9/11 that they were kind of willing to accept a lot of autocratic measures that they shouldn't have as they were hit with a propaganda blitz.

Sarah Kendzior (41:14):

So things like the War in Iraq, the Patriot Act, you know, it did get scrutiny from people but those people were dismissed as either hysterical or alarmist or sometimes even as traitors, as unpatriotic. I'm seeing that same sort of, “Let's just give in” kind of vibe, like “Let's just give in to the white patriarchal structure. Let's stop fighting these battles because”—I think this is part of it—“people aren't fighting for us. Our officials aren't fighting for us.” People aren't doing their most basic duty, whether it's Merrick Garland or Christopher Wray or Biden in terms of not firing Merrick Garland, Christopher Wray, Louis DeJoy and all of these others. The opposition has grown quiet and I think it's in part because of trauma, but it's also because of lack of support and this kind of ceaseless onslaught of threats and hateful violent behavior.

Andrea Chalupa (42:09):

People need to take all these issues that we're talking about and boil them down to the politics, the elections, the elections happening right now. For instance, we have a massive number of listeners in New York State, and I wanna just share that a new poll shared by good old Steve Kornacki, from the poll's from

Quinnipiac. They have Governor Kathy Hochul up only four points over Republican Lee Zeldin. Only four points.

Sarah Kendzior (42:46):

Lee Zeldin, who has been endorsed by Trump right after Trump made his antisemitic post.

Andrea Chalupa (42:52):

Yeah. And then Sienna, the Sienna poll had Hochul up only by 11 points. Those averages, that's not very comfortable for us here in New York state, which is supposed to be a blue bastion against the fascist takeover of our country. What's really interesting, back to the pbs, us and the Holocaust documentary, New York City, Brooklyn, kept coming up as a big Antifa anti-fascist hotbed against America's homegrown Nazi movement, against the whole America First crowd and the isolationists, and the fake anti-imperialist pacifists and all of it. You had New Yorkers being badass and speaking truth to power. And that included sneaking onto a ship which was set to go to Germany and ripping off the Nazi flag and getting arrested. That also included swarming the big Nazi rally in Madison Square Garden on George Washington's birthday, where they had these big banners of George Washington.

Andrea Chalupa (43:56):

And the place was just packed full of Proud Boys and Roger Stones of the day. And outside New Yorkers just gathered and harassed and screamed and just disrupted the events as much as they could. So we need New York to be blue. We need strong democratic leadership in this state. And this is a reminder that if you're terrified about all the stuff we talk about on this show, you need to look where you live and make sure that you are represented by good governance wherever you are. Pay attention to who is representing you, where you live. Fight like hell to clean up your community. Get involved locally in your community. Go to gaslitnationpod.com and go to our 2022 Survival Guide and there's a whole long list of ways that you can help turn the tide and protect what's left of our democracy from a full blown fascist takeover.

Andrea Chalupa (44:48):

They have been very clear on what they want to do. The crimes are being committed out in the open. This has been a long term plan. We did a big old series in the spring talking to all sorts of historians and other experts about the generations of work that has gone into getting us here. And now they're reaping what they've sowed. It's harvest time for the fascists. We're about to enter the Supreme Court season, which now feels like *Hunger Games*, where the Supreme Court is going to be further chipping away at landmark decisions and taking away our democracy before our very eyes, scapegoating people through the legal system. So this is real. It's happening. The thing you need to do is, as much as we all wanna curl up in a little ball, we all feel that way. Despair is a very healthy and normal reaction to all this.

Andrea Chalupa (45:39):

But don't stay in your despair too long. That's something that this work has taught me again and again. Do not succumb to your despair. Don't wallow in your despair. You could do whatever you can to self heal, to get out of bed in the morning. You know, look into your child's eyes. Just give yourself a reason to fight and cling to whatever joy you have in your life and get oxygen in your lungs and your mind. But you need to get out there and fight. We desperately need you. We cannot do this alone. So please lock

arms with us and help us get out the vote. We've laid it all out there on what to do and where to start. Own your power. Do not let them fool you into thinking you're powerless, because that's simply not true. And the existence of this show is a reminder of that.

Andrea Chalupa (46:20):

We remind ourselves of that every single day. We're all about taking back our power from people who have genocidal aims. And genocidal maniacs do not stop at their targets because what's at the heart of it is mass murder. There's just something wrong with these people. They're wired differently. So the whole point of human civilization, the way we've even managed to get this far, is setting up all sorts of systems and protecting those systems from people that would do us harm, from the bad guys that are real, that exist out there. So all of us need to fight like hell right now because we have simply no other choice.

Sarah Kendzior (46:59):

Yeah, absolutely. As a sort of final point, it's very frustrating and it does cause feelings of depression, feelings of despair to see institutions collapsing around us, to see this level of betrayal or inertia. So I just wanna emphasize to people that in times like this, what you can always hold onto is your own moral clarity. And it's essential to do that now in the midst of all this overt bigotry, all of these threats, all of this hate rhetoric beyond just the structural threats. We're seeing interpersonal threats as well. Your moral clarity, your sense of ethics, your sense of compassion and empathy, that is something that no official, no dictator, no one can take away from you unless you let them. That is a choice that you always have no matter how much things are crumbling around you. And so it's absolutely essential to hold on to that part of yourself now. Never relinquish it. Never give up. Always follow your heart and your own conception of what is right and wrong. Do not go along with the crowd in this sort of situation. We've seen what has happened in the past and you should learn from that history.

[outro - theme 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:

Pakistan has been decimated by record floods and people need help. To help the victims of the floods, donate to Pakistan Emergency Flood Aid at www.launchgood.com/campaign/pakistan_emergency_flood_aid. Climate and economic crises are everywhere, so please consider supporting your local food bank as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine razomforukraine.org. We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you wanna 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.

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

Gaslit Nation would like to thank our supporters at the Producer level on Patreon and Higher...