

Gaslit Nation Transcript

09 November 2022

“America’s Cry For Help”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/americas-cry-for-74410943>

Josh Shapiro (00:00:00):

That's not how we do things in this commonwealth or in this country. And that is not freedom. You know, this guy loves to talk a good game about freedom, right? Let me tell you something. It's not freedom to tell women what they're allowed to do with their bodies. That's not freedom. It's not freedom to tell our children what books they're allowed to read. It's not freedom when he gets to decide who you're allowed to marry. I say love is love. It's not freedom to say you can work a 40-hour work week, but you can't be a member of the union. That's not freedom. And it sure as hell isn't freedom to say you can go vote, but he gets to pick the winner. That's not freedom. That's not freedom, but you know what? You know what we're for? We're for real freedom. And let me tell you what real freedom is. Real freedom is when you see that young child in North Philly and you see the potential in her, so you invest in her public school. That's real freedom. That's real freedom. Real freedom comes when we invest in that young child's neighborhood to make sure it's safe, so she gets to her 18th birthday. That's real freedom.

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:52):

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

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:04):

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, a film at the Kremlin does not want you to see, so be sure to watch

Sarah Kendzior (00:02:18):

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. And just to get this out of the way, we are taping this episode on election day at 11 o'clock central time, so all of the advice and insights and analysis you hear is informed by this particular moment and not by the time the episode comes out. But there will be things that are relevant to you. I feel like that scene in *Spaceballs* where they're rewinding the VCR, so I'm gonna just pass it to Andrea who has a lot of long-term advice for how to weather this time.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:53):

For how to get through the next week because it's going to be a very long week for our country. So our opening clip was Josh Shapiro giving the closing statement of what we're fighting against; a radical right libertarian takeover of the Republican Party, including the PayPal Mafia that is attempting to destroy our democracy. And one weapon they're using is of course their takeover of Twitter—

Sarah Kendzior (00:03:20):

Name 'em! Who are the PayPal Mafia, for those who don't know?

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:23):

Well obviously it is Peter Thiel who is pumping all this money into the race of JD Vance in the Senate race in Ohio. JD Vance and Peter Thiel together are invested in a website pumping out Kremlin's information. That report came out from *The New York Times*. And then you have David Sacks who is a big buffoon on Twitter, who's always pumping out Kremlin talking points and rolling his eyes at the genocide of Ukrainians. And then of course you have their friend Elon Musk, who is a trust fund kid. His nickname is Apartheid Clyde because of his trust fund South African roots. And he just came out and said, "Vote for Republicans." This is the guy that popularized electric vehicles, who really drove and led the market of electric vehicles. He knows what's at stake with the climate crisis, this existential crisis.

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:19):

And yet he's telling everyone—his is 115 million followers—to vote for the party that wants us all to burden hell here on earth by doing absolutely nothing about climate change except for profiting off of Big Oil and allowing Russia, a gas station dictatorship, to get away with genocide. So it's very scary. If you wanna deep dive into the forces we're up against and their long game that they've been playing against our democracy, the decades long work that is finally coming to fruition for these deep-pocketed extremists, go listen to our [spring series on fighting fascism](#), including our [interviews with the historian Nancy MacLean](#), who wrote *Democracy in Chains*, and the journalist [Anne Nelson](#) who covers dictatorships and she wrote a great book called *Shadow Network*. These are books you absolutely must read and interviews on *Gaslit Nation* you must listen to. All of this is extremely important to understand because when you look at the financing of this massive election that we're all in, it's massive in terms of the financing; the big, big dollars that are being spent, especially in all these must-win races for each party to determine who controls our country and therefore whether we are going to live in a democracy or a dictatorship.

Andrea Chalupa (00:05:36):

A Christian nationalist, libertarian, no rules, living above the law, corruption, arresting journalists, arresting opposition leaders, silence... all the perks of being a dictator, right? So all the money that went into that, if you look at the financing of these elections, it's really interesting. The vast majority of the mega donors—the big giants—are pumping their money into the Republican Party. But the Democrats are outraising those mega donors, those oligarchs, the billionaire class. The Democrats are outraising through small donations. Massive amounts of money, small donations across this country have blown into the Democratic Party. And I wanna tell you that same level of interest and energy I have been coming across at all the phone banks that I have been doing in all of these must-win states; Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina. When I announced several weeks ago that I was going to be doing the 1,000 voter outreach *Gaslit Nation* challenge (meaning I challenged myself and our listeners to try to reach a thousand voters, either phone calls or knocking on doors to get out the vote), I did it.

Andrea Chalupa (00:06:58):

I'm two phone calls away from finally getting to my 1,000th voter outreach attempt through phone banking. I'm at 999. I've been doing this nonstop. I've been talking to voters in all of these key places and I'm telling you the conversations we're having, the biggest problem I've been having phone banking, is getting off the phone with people because so many people are so scared about what's going on in our country. There was a lot of flack towards Biden and the Democrats when they were having all their speeches and using that messaging saying, "This is fascism", the F-word, it's fascism, one party in the

United States is fully a fascist party now and our democracy is on the line. And I have to tell you, I know that there was some flack for that because it always comes down to the economy. “It’s the economy, stupid” as the conventional wisdom of campaigning goes.

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:47):

And certainly we're in an economic crisis, we're headed towards a recession, we have an inflation crisis—the whole world has an inflation crisis. Oil prices, all of it. I understand gas prices, but the reality is the fascism messaging, the truth, pointing out the truth, pointing out everything Sarah and I have been pointing out since 2016, if not sooner, that's working. People see it. We're not alone in seeing that now. The conversations I'm having with people who are either registered Democrats or independents, one guy told me—he's 78 years old—one guy told me that he's never voted in an election, it's been years since he voted, he's an independent, he doesn't care about either party, but he had studied German history, he spent some time in Germany, he studied the German language, German culture, German history, and he was terrified of what he was seeing on the Republican side.

Andrea Chalupa (00:08:37):

He's like, “It's them. It's the Nazis. It's exactly what they were doing; the stormtroopers, the political violence, the hate speech, all of that pre genocidal language that lays the groundwork for actual genocides.” It's real. It is what it is. It's why we keep telling you on the show to go off and watch *The US and the Holocaust* on PBS. It's real. This is really the crisis level we're at. It's the entire show of *Gaslit Nation*. It's the reality we've been warning you about. And this real threat to our democracy works in driving out the base. People are energized unlike ever before. I'm telling you all that because what you have to understand is the fact that this election, according to the most credible, nonpartisan polls, including also looking at the historic early voting, including looking at the massive amount of small donor fundraiser numbers, all of that combined and all of the phone banks I've been on for all this time, how people are talking on these zoom calls saying, “I'm not sleeping.”

Andrea Chalupa (00:09:40):

“I can't sleep. I need to make these phone calls to feel better at night to sleep.” This is a cry for help. Whatever happens on election night, whatever the results are, I want our public officials and every single position of power in this country to understand that the American people see what is happening very clearly and this is a cry for help. Our fundraiser dollars—cry for help, our volunteer hours—a cry for help. Our record voting numbers—a cry for help. We cannot do this alone. I'm a big believer in the power of grassroots. I'm a big believer in the power of people to stand up and to fight for their families, to fight for their communities. I'll never forget a sign that a woman held in Kyiv, the revolution of 2013-2014, where she held up a sign when they were trying to overthrow in a popular uprising the Trump of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich, who just like Trump was heavily reliant on Paul Manafort to come to power.

Andrea Chalupa (00:10:37):

And this woman, this mother, held up a sign in Kyiv saying, “Ukraine is my child. Ukraine is my child.” And that is what we're all fighting for; we're fighting for our children, we're fighting for ourselves, we're fighting for a future, and we're fighting to feel safe. And the people in Ukraine that I lean on heavily for moral leadership, for the energy I need to resist actual fascism in this world, they did so much on their own without any institutional support when they had European officials trying to get them to accept

Yanukovich staying in power, when the world turned its back on them again and again in their nearly decade-long resistance against an actual invasion, a genocidal invasion by Russia. Ukraine has fought alone for so long, and finally the world is giving it some of the help that it desperately needs. But I've watched Ukrainians, regular people, stand up and fight on their own.

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:30):

But I can tell you in some of the key moments, they needed some institutional support. They needed some people to help them along the way. They needed some people to show up in Kyiv from various capitals in the world. They needed journalists to report on their story and report on the violence that they were suffering. So we cannot do this alone. We need to have our public officials, especially in the Department of Justice, to do more than just the bare minimum of sending election monitors to some of these key states to ensure that people can vote and people can vote safely. I'm telling you right now that we cannot survive as a democracy—we cannot survive as a democracy—if Donald Trump is allowed to run for office again. That is so extremely dangerous for us. That is so extremely dangerous for us. It normalizes all of his violent crimes against individuals and how he wielded his Twitter as a weapon against whistleblowers, against law enforcement, against private citizens.

Andrea Chalupa (00:12:32):

He constantly did this. We all watched him do this, on how he stole nuclear secrets at a time when we're being threatened with nuclear war from Russia and its ally, Iran. And then of course how he violently tried to overthrow our democracy and several people were killed and some public officials came very close to being captured and killed. And again, one of his supporters just tried to kill the third most powerful person in the land, the leader of the opposition, Nancy Pelosi, and instead ended up bludgeoning her husband. So wake the fuck up, to the DOJ. Whatever the election results are tonight, this has to be... All the historic fundraising, the historic vote from the Democrats, the historic volunteering, the youth votes screaming, all of us are screaming for your help right now, Merrick Garland. We are screaming for justice. We are screaming for protection.

Andrea Chalupa (00:13:22):

We are screaming for security. We are screaming for a future. And I wanna talk about that future now because one thing that we've been highlighting and learning together on this show from all the interviews that we've done is that the money we've been raising, the phone calls and the canvassing, all of it is extremely important. But if this continues to fall on our shoulders, this threat of fascism continues to fall and strain the grassroots communities, then you need to help us, Democratic Party, with greater investments in—as we've learned together on the show—rural communities. We had a Maine state senator here on the show telling us how she won election in a Trumpian district—in a rural Trumpian district. She said, “We can win in rural districts. The Democratic Party cannot turn its back on rural districts. They have to invest in organizers already in those districts.”

Andrea Chalupa (00:14:19):

“They have to empower people and invest and build relationships in those districts.” You have to do that now. So number one, Democratic Party, if you wanna stand a chance in 2024, if we do well in this election and we stand a fighting chance for 2024, the Democratic Party has to take its massive war chest that regular Americans across the country have entrusted it with and start investing in rural communities

and building relationships there and training organizers there and winning the vote there across rural America. The second thing they have to do is fight like hell for the Latino vote. We had, again, another Latino expert on the show, right? With Popular Democracy, her organization. And it comes down to pocketbook issues. It's not enough to say to the Latino voter—which is not a monolith, of course, but on average, the Democrats have depended on immigration as an issue.

Andrea Chalupa (00:15:11):

That's not enough. You need to be aspirational. You need to think about their families. You need to think about what services, what quality of life, what are you giving them in terms of how they can feed their families, protect their families, send their kids to good schools, have clean drinking water. You have to be very clear on how you're going to protect Latino voters and their families. They need more. They need to have that solid, aspirational pocketbook issues messaging to them. Treat them with respect, greater respect. And then the third is the youth boat. We had Dakota Hall on the show from the Youth Alliance and he was wonderful in saying, "We want basic stuff. We wanna go to school and not have to worry about being shot up. We wanna make sure that we have clean drinking water. We wanna make sure that we have a job when we graduate."

Andrea Chalupa (00:15:58):

"We wanna make sure we're not gonna be buried in student debt." These are all basic quality of life issues, some of which are unique, dystopian *Black Mirror* unique to the United States, like the mass shooting in schools. And so please, Democratic Party, *please listen to us*. It's not enough that you scare us into giving you money and scare us into voting and scare us into organizing. You also have to paint an alternative future and make it clear in your messaging, in the organizers that you hire, in the coalitions that you build with, in the local community leaders in Latino communities, in youth communities, in rural communities that you build with, that you are serious about fighting for a better world, for quality of life, for safety, for security, for families, for young people trying to make it in this world, for newly arrived immigrants, new citizens that are trying to achieve what they've always promised was the American dream.

Andrea Chalupa (00:16:56):

You need to fight like hell to bring back the American dream. We cannot have a system anymore of oligarch looters who are stealing from us and want to empower these Republican fascists so they can continue looting together. And that is their solution on how they're going to build generational wealth, right? Whereas the rest of us are going to be left behind. We wanna have a future where my kids don't have to depend on me leaving them anything, that they have a chance to go to school. They're not gonna be buried by debt. They have good job prospects, clean air to breathe. They can go off into a movie theater, a public park, and they can send their kids to school and not have to worry about a mass shooting, right? So please, you need to start painting a picture and building, with community and coalitions, a better world, together, with all of us.

Andrea Chalupa (00:17:50):

It's about pocketbook issues being aspirational and showing the way forward because right now, the only thing the Republicans have is a conspiracy theory dystopian hellscape. And if you can just build and show a better world and to get there, not only do you need to invest in rural communities, Latino communities

and the youth vote, you also, for the love of God, please use your war chest to invest in really good media outlets that are taking on the corrupt forces that are speaking truth to power, that are exposing the hypocrisy of the disinformation machine. Invest in greater media sources because right now with Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter, that's another Fox News gaining ground, right? And we need to push back against that. So bring back... What was that site?

Sarah Kendzior (00:18:43):

ThinkProgress, which was shut down by Neera Tanden because what it was doing, what Casey Michel and others were doing, was exposing kleptocracy, including the oligarch proxies like Len Blavatnik that fund not only the Republican Party, but the Democratic Party, in particular Nancy Pelosi who was the biggest recipient of that oligarch proxy money. And the Democrats did not want that truth out there and there it went. And then we haven't had, I think, a progressive news source that reaches a large audience since then. It was a real self-own. If your goal was protecting journalism, democracy, the free flow of information and so on, if your goal was protecting kleptocrats, corruption and dark money, then it was a great success.

Andrea Chalupa (00:19:31):

Yep. And so really the Democrats need to understand that the fascism is a serious threat, but it's also a low hanging fruit opportunity if you make the right investments, if you make smart investments. And it's very simple. It's very simple to do. We've had the guests on the show to tell you where to make those very smart, simple investments. And you need to start building there with rural America, with Latino America and with young America. And if you can build those relationships and build that political infrastructure on the ground now heading into 2024, we stand a greater chance not only of holding onto our democracy, but also breaking through the disinformation crisis that no one in government seems willing to do anything about, right? I mean, this whole Elon Musk takeover should have been flagged and stopped as a matter of national security, given who he's mobbed up with.

Andrea Chalupa (00:20:25):

But it wasn't, as one example. So we want everyone to do some soul searching. Obviously pat ourselves on the back for all the hard work. Whatever wins we had tonight, whatever upsets that we achieved together tonight, that was on us. That was our hard work. We made that happen together. And we shouldn't take any win for granted. No matter what the ultimate tally is for who gets Congress, who gets which governor, House, governorship, we still need to pat ourselves on the back for how hard we fought. And we also need to do soul searching and put greater pressure on the Democratic Party to do a better job fighting, do a smarter job investing and also greater pressure on the DOJ because there's no way in hell you should allow an open traitor—an open career criminal like Donald Trump—to run for office. And the fact that you've waited this long to go after him for something as simple as, you know, the Mueller Report, which you should have done back in the day, that 400-page Mueller Report where Robert Mueller, former director of the FBI, said under oath in Congress when he was asked by a Republican congressman, could he indict Trump when he left office?

Andrea Chalupa (00:21:34):

And Robert Mueller said, "Yes." The Mueller Report is a 400-page charging memo against Donald Trump. And yet you just sat on it. You had your opportunity then and the longer you've waited, as you keep saying on the show, the more political any indictment would finally look. But you've gotta do it anyway

because to not do it would actually be the political upset, would be the political outrage, would be the political nonsense. The majority of this country is on your side. The majority of your country wants strong rule of law. The majority of this country wants our democracy protected and secured and it simply will not be if Donald Trump is allowed to be free and allowed to run for office and allowed to do rallies, just like Steve Bannon just did a rally with Kari Lake, another Trump MiniMe in Arizona who might steal the electoral college votes for Arizona in 2024, God forbid if she wins her race.

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:25):

Why is Steve Bannon allowed to be free campaigning with Kari Lake? Why are these criminals, why is the Willard Hotel war room in Washington DC that helped Trump organize a violent attempted coup against our democracy, why is this Kremlin clown show allowed to be walking around free? You're endangering our democracy by doing nothing, Merrick Garland. More needs to be done. The clock is ticking. Put the Fox News outrage talking points aside. Get Tucker Carlson outta your head, whatever he will say. Anybody who's standing in the way of this, their names must be leaked to the press. They must be exposed. And justice must finally, finally be served because the American people are pleading for it at the top of our lungs. And whatever the results are tonight, that's what we've seen a hundred percent so far.

Sarah Kendzior (00:23:21):

Yes, absolutely. I have to say, there's all these people pressuring Twitter users to flee the platform because we've never been anywhere run by a bad billionaire before. And I hope that they don't, in part because I want to hear people's actual thoughts about the Democratic Party, which many people have been withholding or kind of playing down or giving the soft version because there's an election. It is important to vote for the lesser of two evils. I think this episode's gonna drop after all the polling booths have closed. So I'm just gonna say some stuff. I feel like everyone has been biting their tongues so much. It's like their tongues have gone forked. There's an effect of this when you are withholding information about corruption when you're refusing to point out the obvious, that makes it difficult for people to navigate their political reality and it's a demoralization in and of itself.

Sarah Kendzior (00:24:24):

I think having an absence of relevant information and acknowledgement that we are all—or a lot of us are—seeing the same things, seeing the same dark path. When you don't have people with you noting that publicly, it can be an upsetting thing to go through. It's hard enough to endure this attack on democracy and freedom from the extreme right. It's also hard to endure the complicity from the Democratic elite. And so now that the voting part of the election is over (I'm sure they're still counting lots of places. This is gonna go on for a while), to me it looks like they wanna lose. It really does. Not the voters, not everyday people, certainly not all the canvassers and volunteers and people working hard and not most of the candidates. But does the leadership of the Democratic Party want the Democratic Party to lose?

Sarah Kendzior (00:25:18):

Yeah, I think they do. And I think they did in 2020. I think it was an absolute fluke, one that was hard fought. It came about because people went and voted in a pandemic against an aspiring autocrat because they clearly, clearly saw the threat of that and went to great pains to do it. There was also a good platform in 2020 that the Democratic Party ran on and then they went on to enact almost nothing

from this platform. We in fact lost a lot of our rights. The pandemic was handled horrifically and they also mocked and spat upon those who pointed this out, including people whose family members had died, including people who are suffering. People who want to win an election don't act like that. They don't alienate their base. They don't alienate their voters. This is actually somewhat how the GOP acts.

Sarah Kendzior (00:26:14):

The GOP runs on policies that nobody wants. They're extremely unpopular. Overturning *Roe v. Wade*, extremely unpopular. Getting rid of Medicare and social security, extremely unpopular. They don't care because the GOP assumes that they have the election in the bag because the way that they get to be in power is not through winning over hearts and minds, it's through manipulation, whether legalized manipulation like gerrymandering and these new voter suppression laws brought in as a result of the partial repeal of the VRA, and also a lot of illicit maneuvers that needed to be investigated by the DOJ, but of course our DOJ does nothing to protect democracy, so it wasn't. But on the Democratic Party, you see a flip side. You have to ask, "Can you be this inept for this long under the same group of people, under people like Nancy Pelosi who has been blocking accountability in a manner that benefits the Republicans since 2006 and onward when dealing with the Bush administration?"

Sarah Kendzior (00:27:21):

These are enablers. As we have said many times, we have Vichy Democrats who are backed by foreign partners, oligarchs, plutocrats, dirty money, dark money. The good news is that we also have people in the Democratic Party who are fighting for good. They are fighting for the public. They're not supported by the leadership of the party. They're often spat upon and pushed out and I'm worried that some of our best people may lose, people like Katie Porter, especially, who's been very good at documenting corruption. But yeah, this is not a normal way for a party to run. All year long, when people ask me, "What's the difference between the Democrats and the Republicans?", I've had this answer in my head that I never would say which is, "Oh yeah, they're very different. The GOP will kill you, but the Democrats will let you die."

Sarah Kendzior (00:28:13):

And of course I didn't say that because the midterms are coming around the bend and I was like, "Eh, it's a little much." Now I can say it. You've all voted. That is basically where I see the leadership of this party. So I just wanna talk a little bit about some things to come as the results come in. They're not instant. I think you should look at elections the way you do, say, a terrorist attack or a mass shooting, where the early information is almost always bad. You're feeling very tense and anxious. It's coloring the emotion of everyone who reports it. Wait and see as the results come in. And so that's just one thing. I think that because Merrick Garland and the DOJ made no effort to investigate or indict the leaders of the January 6th attack—they only went after pawns, they only went after a lot of people who were tricked into going because Donald Trump told them it would be fine—that people feel emboldened and enabled to try the same progression of tactics to get power that they did in 2020 and 2021.

Sarah Kendzior (00:29:21):

And that progression is basically a propaganda deluge and then bullying of the candidate to try to force their concession. This has worked for the GOP before. It certainly worked on Al Gore. If that does not work, then they take it to the courts. Again, you see the prototype for this in 2000, these long drawn out

court battles, or sometimes short ones. Trump went through an enormous amount of court battles in 2021 before, finally, they get to the last tactic which is violence. It's usually violence as a last resort. And Garland has let them know that there is no consequence for this. There's no punishment for this. What I worry about is because I think most Americans, including those who support the extremist right, we're not paying that much attention to the first two parts of this; all the court proceedings. They weren't getting hung up on all that legalese.

Sarah Kendzior (00:30:14):

What they did notice is that people could go and attack the Capitol violently and call for assassinations of Congresspeople and announce the plan on the internet in advance and have it on television... And nothing happens. They notice that violence works and violence has been streamlined. Political violence has become a normal part of American life and our institutions are not protecting our officials from it. There are almost no repercussions. So I think it's possible they'll just go straight to violence to get what they want. Hopefully none of this will happen. This isn't inevitable, but it is the progression that we've been on for the last few years so it's worth noting. And then the final thing I have to say is that if the Democrats lose—and despite everything I've said, I do want them to win because the GOP is an apocalyptic death cult.

Sarah Kendzior (00:31:06):

And everything Andrea has said before is true; we're raising our children with these people looming over us and that's a horrific situation. But I know what they will do because they've already been planting these little seeds. They're gonna blame the voters. They're gonna blame voters that didn't show up in part because either they couldn't because they did not pass voter rights laws meant to protect people as they promised they would, or they couldn't because of health because they didn't manage the pandemic as they promised they would, or because they're disillusioned because they went out in 2020 and voted in a plague at risk of their own life and then have been spat on and mocked. And I do think everyone should vote anyway, but I understand why people wouldn't want to. And so they're gonna move to do this. You already saw it because what the Democratic Party has been doing instead of protecting our basic rights and freedoms is yelling at their own base, sometimes threatening them with violence on the internet, for criticizing Biden, criticizing Harris, criticizing Fauci, Wolensky, anybody... Merrick Garland, the DOJ.

Sarah Kendzior (00:32:17):

You do that and then they say, "Oh, you're doing voter suppression." And these are mild criticisms. They're often not even criticisms. They're just pieces of factual information about what a certain official has done. And they have these skills. They have these propaganda farms that they invite to the White House, places like Occupy Democrats. They were investigated for fraud, but Biden brought them in to meet with him personally. He invited a large number of well known documented grifters. And I'm not using that term lightly. The grifters are people who have been investigated at one point by state or federal officials for financial fraud, including taking campaign money away from Democratic candidates. John Fetterman's campaign advisor had to come out and say, "Do not give money to these people." And then what does Biden do? He invites them to the White House. And so what they do most of the time is just scream at ordinary people and I think make them less likely to vote.

Sarah Kendzior (00:33:17):

I would not call it voter suppression because we have serious voter suppression in this country. We have structural impediments to voter suppression that make it impossible to vote. It's not just a matter of your inner feelings or something, it's a matter of being physically prevented from doing so. But I definitely think it demoralizes people. And so they're gonna blame... Gosh, I'm gonna try to guess on this: They'll blame Black voters. They always blame Black voters. They're definitely gonna blame young voters. And it's important to know here what's happened to young voters, that they've had their poll stations taken away, that there are new ID laws that have made it difficult for them to vote if they're in college in a different state. Biden did not fire Louis DeJoy. The postal service in the United States still doesn't work. I've heard from countless people who didn't get their information in time, didn't get their ballot in time and therefore can't vote.

Sarah Kendzior (00:34:11):

And I think they're gonna blame white women. And I think that's because, you know, I would guess maybe half of white women are gonna vote Republican, and I think that that's a stupid thing to do and I think that they shouldn't do that. But the reason they blame white women instead of examining their own failures and our institutional failures is to try to create a barrier between the white women who did not vote for this, who have in fact been pushing for progressive causes. They want to create a divide between us and Black voters and other voters who might form a meaningful coalition, not just against right-wing extremism, but against Democratic complicity. They do not want that kind of coalition to exist. They want you to blame yourself and you are not to blame. You have lived through enough. This has been a very, very difficult series of years by any historical standard.

Sarah Kendzior (00:35:12):

You could easily compare this to the late 1960s. You could compare this to the late 1930s, early 1940s. I mean, honestly, I would say it's worse. You're getting kind of an amalgamation of all of America's catastrophes rolled into a six to eight year period. And then you add to that the ticking clock of climate change and digital media, digital surveillance, which makes fighting autocracy different. You have to use different tactics. It's really hard. So I don't want people beating themselves up if the outcome is bad. I want you to instead pat yourself on the back for simply making it through this horrible time and for the work you did for voting, even if you had to do it while holding your nose—which is what I did—and for being part of a community, for speaking out, forgiving a shit about other people. That is one of the most important things you could do right now.

Sarah Kendzior (00:36:10):

It doesn't have to do with politics or joining a party, it just means supporting people, caring about them, caring about their welfare, extending empathy. That is what people are hungry for. They are hungry for a helping hand and just an acknowledgement that things are indeed bad right now, that people are suffering, that it is fundamentally unfair and that we do not deserve this. I don't think anyone in America deserves what's happening right now except for this very rarefied, corrupt, plutocratic elite. They also haven't gotten what they deserve because what they deserve is investigation, possibly indictment and certainly a removal from power because it is they who have caused our suffering.

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:57):

So I want everyone to stay grounded in the fact that whatever the results are, if the Republicans are celebrating a massive win, just remember the election should never have been such a contest in the first place. The reason why the nonpartisan, credible polls were so close, the reason why the Democrats were able to amass a war chest based on small donations, the reason why you had just an outpouring of activism and getting out the vote, and the reason why you had such massive historic high levels of early voting across the country is because Americans are crying for help. America is pleading for someone to come in and uphold the rule of law and protect our democracy from a Kremlin clown car of proud traitors who have built an entire party based on gloating about being traitors to our country, praising Putin, praising Russia and attacking the victims of in Ukraine of Russia's genocide. This is where we're at. It's the America First crowd. They are back and they're far more dangerous than ever and someone needs to step in and do something. Study history of whatever they had to do with the America First crowd back in the day. But we're here now and it's happening. So again, whatever the results are, remember this election was America's cry for help. Sarah listed all the people who are gonna be blamed. Sarah and I will probably be blamed [laughs].

Sarah Kendzior (00:38:32):

[laughs] We're blamed for everything.

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:33):

But keep in mind, we've been bringing you interviews. We've been bringing you Get Out The Vote events. As I mentioned, we had Analilia Mejia of the Center for Popular Democracy saying, "Here's what you gotta do to get the Latino vote: pocketbook issues." We had Chloe Maxman and her campaign manager, rural runners saying, "This is what you gotta do to build progressive infrastructure out in rural areas. You gotta invest money there, you gotta train organizers there where they are. You gotta build relationships there." And now we're going to have on the show another person, another expert who must be listened to, and that is Dakota Hall, the executive director of the Alliance for Youth Action. He is the first Black and Indigenous leader of that organization and a former executive director of the Alliance's Wisconsin-based affiliate Leaders Igniting Transformation, The Alliance for Youth Action grows progressive people power across America by empowering local young people's organizations to strengthen our democracy, fix our economy, and correct injustices through on-the-ground organizing because there's no substitute for that. And not only that, you're training the leaders of tomorrow and you're breaking through the disinformation force field or the far right and you are strengthening our democracy. The young people are pissed. Dakota Hall will tell you. And it's time for those in power to listen.

[transition music]

[begin interview]

(00:40:12):

Everything is coming down to the youth folk. What are you seeing in terms of youth turnout so far?

Dakota Hall (00:40:19):

I mean, I think on the ground, across the country, we're seeing an excitement of young people who are ready to turn out the vote. Over the course of the last few weeks, we've seen millions of young people

already take advantage of early vote opportunities in their state. And we have many more coming who are gonna come and vote on Tuesday, November 8th and really have their voice be heard.

Andrea Chalupa (00:40:39):

Okay. So what are some ways that organizers are turning out the vote? What would you have to do differently, for instance, to reach young people?

Dakota Hall (00:40:46):

So I think historically when people think about the youth vote, they have to typically gone to campuses. And while it's not wrong, within the Alliance Youth Action Network, our groups not only work on campuses but they work inside of communities to reach the hardest to reach voters who have been disenfranchised by the system. And so groups across our network are knocking on doors, ensuring that they're reaching young people in culturally competent ways to ensure that we are actually engaging young people, not just for this election but to get them into our organization to help build power to ensure that we are having a long term vision for our country, right? I think oftentimes elections are short term incremental campaigns, but what we're trying to do is not only bring people into this midterm, but bring them into a long term political infrastructure that has continuous leadership development opportunities for young people to continue to grow and we get victories electorally.

Andrea Chalupa (00:41:35):

Oh, fantastic. So you're bringing more and more young people into the process, like running for office and organizing.

Dakota Hall (00:41:42):

Yeah, absolutely. So one of the things that we're doing this year that's a little bit unique is we're rolling out the red carpet for what we're calling "democracy debuts" to ensure that young people who are coming out for the first time to vote are really being highlighted in this election, right? I think every single election we talk about the youth vote, but we never actually really think about what does it mean to actually participate into democracy for the first time when you're turning 18 and building? A lot of young people have been engaged into school board fights and other local fights Over the last few years, especially as we see in the increase in growing tragic school shootings, young people have been more civically engaged, but now they get to come out and make a debut with their voting. And so we're really highlighting that as well too, that young people, over the last four years, since the last midterm election, there's over 8 million new voters that are coming out, right? And so we're rolling out the red carpet for each and every one of them. I think it's also important to note that of 8 million, about half of them are young people of color, further adding to the most diverse electorate we've ever seen in our country's history.

Andrea Chalupa (00:42:35):

That's amazing. And what advice do you have for parents to help young people roll out the red carpet? What would rolling out the red carpet look like to sort of give some sort of ceremonial heft to the first time of voting?

Dakota Hall (00:42:49):

I think parents, guardians, grandparents, uncles, aunts whoever's in your family that is an adult that can help usher you into this new era of voting can really help you celebrate that by helping making sure that

you know how you're registered to vote. Go vote together on Tuesday, November 8th. Do something afterwards that's fun that celebrates the fact that you all are having your voice heard into this democracy and one of the most critical times for our democracy's history over the last few decades. When I think about where we're at with the rise of authoritarianism, white nationalism, right now more than ever every vote counts. When we see elections in New Hampshire for US Senate being decided by a thousand votes in the last Senate election there, we see close elections all throughout the country that this notion that your vote does not matter could not be less true in this moment. I think one of the historic things that we've seen over the last two major federal elections and in 2018 and 2020 is we've seen groundbreaking, record-setting engagement from young people in voting. We hope that trend continues and we're gonna need all hands on to make sure that happens.

Andrea Chalupa (00:43:50):

Absolutely. And so we're gonna play a clip of your interview today to encourage young people and people with young people in their lives to get out and vote on Tuesday election day. But also we're gonna play the full interview on election night when polls have closed. And since a lot of people are trying not to hyperventilate and look at the polls, one talking point that's taken over is the young vote is going to save us.

Dakota Hall:

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa:

Generation Z is pissed off. Generation Z's been activated, they're coming. Generation Z is going to basically be the blue wave that overcomes fascism in America. You're not in the business of predictions, you're in the business of building and organizing. But do you feel comfortable making a prediction of what it might look like on election night?

Dakota Hall (00:44:40):

The prediction I'm willing to make is that young people are pissed the fuck off. They are angry that this country has set them up for failure. They are angry at the fact that they see social security nets and social barriers being broken down, right? They're upset at the fact that we took away the constitutional right for a woman to gain access to an abortion. They're upset that they're built going into a system that requires to take on tens of thousands of dollars in loan debt just to achieve a middle class dream in this country. They're upset that healthcare is being unfound and underfunded in their communities, whether they have access to get to a hospital, whether they can afford that healthcare bill. They're upset that after almost 10 years after hearing about the first crises with water, that some communities in this country still do not have clean drinking water. So the prediction I think we're gonna see is that young people are gonna come out and vote similar to 2018 numbers if not higher because they're angry at the fact that this country has progressed so slowly on key social issues and now it's in their hands, right? They can be the deciding factor that can flip a seat, that can push forward candidates to be more progressive, to introduce bigger, bolder change as we come out of this pandemic.

Andrea Chalupa (00:45:49):

Great. What is your advice to candidates and to volunteers doing phone banking and canvassing when it comes to talking to young voters? And I'm raising that question now because I want the answer should

Georgia go off into a runoff if the Warnock/Walker race for the US Senate in Georgia so close, and we all have to keep canvassing, keep making phone calls all up until election day on December 6th. We're gonna be talking to a lot of young voters should that happen. And this is just a good skill to have for next year's state elections in places like Virginia as well as 2024. So I just want to know for my own self that skill. How do you talk to a young voter? What do you think we should be thoughtful of?

Dakota Hall (00:46:33):

When you talk to young voters, you have to understand that presenting the same status quo is no longer acceptable. Incremental change to young voters is not necessarily what they're looking for. Young voters are looking for candidates who can express their values of what they stand for, not necessarily what they stand against. I think over the last four years, and since Trump was elected in 2016 especially, we've only heard candidates talk about what they're against. And while that's fine, I get the fact that people are against Trump, they're against the ideals and where he wants to take the country. But you also, at the same time have to present a vision that moves this country forward as well too. And so I think we're at this moment now where Trump is no longer in office, while he may try to run in 2024 again, young people are now looking for, okay, we got Trump outta office, we did our part. How are you delivering for us? Are we getting our student loan debt forgiven? Are we moving on climate change? Are we going to enact the women's right to have an abortion in this country? And so candidates have to begin to shift their mind from thinking about not just what they're against, but putting forth a bold platform moving forward,

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:40):

Moonshot basically, to basically confront the crises we're up against,

Dakota Hall (00:47:45):

I don't wanna phrase it as a moonshot where it's going to be this big value effort that takes decades and all this other kinda stuff because I think what oftentimes what young people are asking for are actually very achievable things that we should have already done. Paying people a living wage in this country is not a moonshot idea. Giving people access to healthcare is not a moonshot idea, so it's really just making sure that we're living up to the basic minimal values that this country professes to have. I think we can get to the moonshot stuff, but what we're asking for are really just basic; How do we make sure that everyone has a quality of life that does not put them into poverty, that does not end their life unexpectedly early? So I don't consider a lot of things that we're asking for moon shots.

Dakota Hall (00:48:26):

I think we're asking for pretty basic life necessities that require us to just be bold enough, right? I think we can get to moonshot ideas, but first we have to make sure that every young person in this country gets lunch at school, that they don't fear gun violence, that they can have a planet that they can inhabit when they're an elder, that they can have a living wage job when they get outta college and not be bound by debt. So all those things, I think, are just basic setups for society to make sure everyone has the freedom to thrive.

Andrea Chalupa (00:48:53):

Absolutely. And so how can us older folks not sound cringe when talking to young voters? Because I did do some phone banking for young voters, and I did my best. I think I stepped in it once or twice when I said something like... I was having a heart to heart with one young voter and I really got into it. We were

on the phone for 10 minutes and I said something about Trump and his gang, something like, “You wanna elect this person because you want adults in the room.” And I'm like, Wait, I mean this person is legally, technically an adult, but maybe society doesn't treat them fully like an adult yet. You know what I mean? So I felt like dammit, I shouldn't have used that turn of phrase, maybe. So do you have any general advice for us who are middle aged—proudly middle aged and checked out of most popular culture and barely leave our houses anymore? [laughs] No, but do you have any advice for us on how to navigate those conversations in a way that aren't totally embarrassing for us?

Dakota Hall (00:49:50):

I think one, equating adulthood to maturity has always been something that we do. It's like, oh, you become an adult and you're automatically suddenly mature. And we can see this with Trump that he has childlike behavior throwing tantrums. And so I think often with young people, it's like, “Oh, you're only 18. You're not mature. You're 21. You're not fully mature” when it's like, actually, I know a lot of people under the age of 18 who are more mature than the political leaders that we have right now. And so I think really what we're in is that we're in a moment in which this country is being called for leaders to step up who have integrity, who have maturity, to really navigate some pretty tough problems that we have in this country. When we think about what this pandemic has highlighted for us, we've seen that mothers cannot go out and buy formula. That is a problem that requires both sides of the aisle to come together and fix that.

Dakota Hall (00:50:41):

That is not a partisan issue, saying, Can mothers get formula? When we think about what else has happened in this country where young people have been exposed to damaging mental health crises on social media throughout this pandemic, that is not a bipartisan issue, right? It actually just takes maturity to come into a room together with people and trigger out the pathway forward that is best for everybody. And so I think what young people are often frustrated about is you hear these things about, Oh, well, we're sending people to Congress to go fix these issues, but they only talk about issues that are very, very niche to their actual constituents. These are pretty far-right ideas that we're talking about. We're not talking about what's impacting everyday people. We're not talking about the fact that the price of milk is way too high, and what does that mean for families to go out and be able to afford groceries?

Dakota Hall (00:51:25):

We're not talking about the price of gas. We're talking about really far-right fringe issues and it's like we're disconnected from everyday people and we're not doing that. And so I think young people are just like, “Well, if those are the adults, why aren't they talking about issues that matter? Why can't they come together to help fix some of these pretty common sense issues that I think we all can agree upon, like maybe mothers should be able to go out and buy formula.” There should not be a crisis of formula shortage in this country. You have to talk to young people like their actual people, right?. And young adults I think now more than ever have a critical political analysis that has just been developed due to social media because the amount of information that they're able to absorb compared to every other generation is far exponential. They're just sponges. They've seen crisis after crisis after crisis since being able to come onto social media. Some of them saw Trayvon Martin murdered, and it's only gotten worse there with school shootings. They've seen Trump. They're about to hit their first recession as a working adult. So it's so frustrating to think that why wouldn't we treat them adults because they've been exposed to adult things for literally since they've been teenagers?

Andrea Chalupa (00:52:30):

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I hate to sort of belittle what you just said because it was so powerful, but I wanna just raise this point; the celebrity issue. Billie Eilish just did a big video for Fetterman. Taylor Swift is having a big moment with her latest album. She just went on Instagram saying, "Vote early." She was nonpartisan. She said a general vote message. And it seems that the strategy has always been to rely on celebrity outreach for the young voters. Does that matter anymore? Do you see any uptick when celebrities get involved? Or is it really just like you said, with this generation, they're unique in terms of how fast they've had to grow up because of all the crises they've lived through so far in their young lives?

Dakota Hall (00:53:17):

When celebrities get involved, I would probably say about 85% of their fan base is typically usually informed about the issues. And so where they actually have the most impact, in my opinion, is getting some of those fans who are necessarily on the margins when it comes to civic engagement and democracy. I think Taylor Swift actually was able to help register quite a significant amount young people when she did her register to vote on Twitter, right? Because oftentimes when you look at their reach on social media, their platform is probably bigger than any organizations that we have, right? And so what they're able to do is they're able to mobilize the people that we may not be able to reach, who may not necessarily be tuned into what's happening in politics, but they get notifications when Taylor tweets or they're looking for the next Taylor Swift news and they see that Taylor or Billie or whoever else is knowing civic engagement.

Dakota Hall (00:54:11):

So it's like, Oh wait, let me go learn more about this. My idol, my hero, somebody I aspire to be is telling me I need to go vote. That's always gonna be an impactful message. I was a voting age but I remember one of the first times I'd really seen celebrities do that was in 2004 when Diddy, Sean Combs, Puff Daddy, however you wanna refer to him, had his Vote or Die campaign. And I was very intrigued as, I think I might have been 10 when that happened about, oh, what celebrities are talking about voting so publicly and doing campaigns and getting that awareness out there. As a young person, I just was like, Oh, okay, I can't vote, but what does this election mean? And so I think they had a really big influence and that's why we call them social influencers because they can do that. So I think while it may have died down because we've been able to engage so many people over the last six years underneath this political Trump era, but they still have an impact on the far margins

Andrea Chalupa (00:55:03):

I would imagine. So we need more celebrity endorsements it seems, just to break through all the noise, especially. What sort of impact do you think young voters will make in the 2024 election and how do we start building that outreach now?

Dakota Hall (00:55:20):

I think young people will decide the 2024 election. There's only gonna be more young people there. It's gonna be one of the larger voting blocks, It'll be the most diverse voting block. So I think however they decide to vote, that will be the winner that you see who takes the White House, especially in key swing states where the electoral vote will swing it, right? I think there's a lot of young people in California, and I think we've seen a trend with California compared to a place like Arizona, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin. How you do that work is what we've been doing over the last few years. We don't stop at the election, right? So if you're engaging a young person for this midterm election, you don't just stop talking to them right

after the election. You continuously involve them in different things. And so I think what science has always told us, and just human relationships is, the longer relationship you have with an individual, the more likely they're willing to listen to you and to take action about things you care about. And so if we're able to retain the base of young people that we've mobilized in 2022, I think we'll have a stronger shot in

Andrea Chalupa (00:56:20):

Looking back, is there anything you wish the Democrats would've done differently this election cycle when it came to youth voter outreach?

Dakota Hall (00:56:27):

It's always gotta start earlier. You can't just pop up programs on campuses in September. You have to make sure you're doing year round investment in the young people. You have to include them into platform curations. You can't just rely on the DNC committee to make your Democratic platform. You have to actually go to where people are at and if you look at the composition of that, there's not many young people on there. When I say young people, I'm really talking about the 18 to 20 year or even high school students who have ideas that are gonna be different than previous generations about where they wanna take this country. And so that's the advice that I have: How do we get them to that level?

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:03):

Is there anything else that you think people should know about the youth vote and how to reach young voters?

Dakota Hall (00:57:10):

I mean, the youth vote is only gonna get bigger. It's only becoming more diverse. And so how you're gonna have to reach them is gonna change from what you did in 2004. 2008, 2012. In all these previous elections, I think people have just concentrated on college campuses. And so if you're really talking about engaging in a multiracial democracy, you have to actually understand the social conditions of each community. There are states out there that have very large educational outcome disparities. And so when you don't actually have a base of college students that are Black and Brown, if you're talking about doing youth organizing for those most marginalized and you're only doing it on college campuses, you're missing the mark there, right? Because we know that racism has played an outcome in educational futures. So if you're not actually seeing that young Black and Brown BIPOC young people are going to college and you only focus your electoral program on reaching college students, how do you expect to engage young Black and Brown voters who have been historically disenfranchised since the reconciliation era in this country? You're missing the mark there too. So it's about expanding the idea of what democracy could be and who gets to be involved in democracy and making sure that you're really reaching the people on the margins who need to be involved in democracy the most to make it a true multiracial democracy for everybody.

Andrea Chalupa (00:58:22):

The election's gonna be over. We may or may not have a runoff in Georgia that goes through December 6th for the US Senate race there, fingers crossed that we don't and Warnock wins on election night. What does your year look like gearing up for 2024?

Dakota Hall (00:58:37):

It looks like intensive base building and training for young people to ensure that they're consistently engaged, like I was talking about, to make sure that they have political homes, civic homes, and their local community that are working on issues important to them. It's involving high school students right now so that way the 16 year olds are ready and equipped to know the civic process. And when they turn 18 in 2024. And the work looks the same. We don't plan on stopping. We plan on assessing what happened in our various states and doing a diagnostic of what worked, what didn't work, and fix the things that didn't work, improve the things that did work and continue to move forward and hopefully get this country into a place where we can achieve equity for everybody.

Andrea Chalupa (00:59:15):

And how do people listening get involved with your organization, including young people that wanna roll up their sleeves and join?.

Dakota Hall (00:59:21):

You can find us on social media or on our website, Alliance for Youth Action, that will be the handles that you find us on, that will be our website, allianceforyouthaction.org, to really ensure that we're meeting the needs of young people. And you can get involved with our amazing 20 organizations where we operate in 18 different states. There's also a vote ready site on our page to make sure that you are equipped with the information and knowledge on November 8th. We want more people in the movement. We need more people in the movement, and we're really to multiracial democracy that works for everybody.

Andrea Chalupa (00:59:52):

Thank you so very much for coming on the show.

[outro theme, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

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