

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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“A Book Deal Isn’t Justice”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/book-deal-isnt-78029862>

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior (00:11):

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 (00:23):

And I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller... I almost said *They Knew*, but it's called *Mr. Jones*, the film the Kremlin does not want you to see, so be sure to go see it.

Sarah Kendzior (00:38):

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. So, last week's episode was devoted primarily to the arrest of FBI counterintelligence agent Charlie McGonigal, who is now out on bail. McGonigal's treasonous actions shifted the focus back to the events of 2016, but what I want to do here is kind of remind folks that Trump and the FBI and his relationship with not only Russia but other countries is a multi-decade operation and a very complex topic. By the way, for a refresher on what McGonigal did you can listen to that episode called [“Traitors in the FBI”](#). Basically he was working for Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska while pretending to investigate him. So Trump was always a profound and obvious national security threat to the United States due to his decades of ties to organized crime, both in the US and abroad. To understand how he was even in a position where he could run for president in the first place without being outed as such, you need to look at the government institutions that refuse to hold him accountable and why. This includes the DOJ, the FBI, the state and city courts of New York, the IRS and the Treasury, many of which investigated Trump and the Trump organization multiple times over multiple decades and knew the truth. You also need to look at the media outlets who buried stories about him and why. This includes not only stories about Trump's many, many ties to organized crime—which authors like David Cay Johnston tried very hard to get out during the 2016 election and then he was censored, and he talked about that openly—but also stories like Trump's ties to pedophile traffickers like Jeffrey Epstein. You may recall that a 13-year-old trafficked by Epstein in the '90s sued Trump for raping her in court. And this was not covered during the 2016 election, in part because that survivor tried to hold a press conference and she and her lawyer got death threats.

(03:03):

My point here is that the topic of WHY Trump's full story isn't told or is partially told and then is suppressed is a story unto itself. And so on this show, you can go back to our very first episodes. We have gone over these events many, many times, giving you the full context and also discussing the ties of corrupt actors in the government and media. But we still don't know the answer of WHY they seek to suppress this story and you should never forget that the complicit parties are in a position to tell us, and that the Democrats for four years were in a position to obligate these criminals to tell us. In early 2019 when the Democrats took the House, they scheduled a series of interviews and hearings with 81 people

and organizations, and then carried out exactly one of them: The Michael Cohen hearing in early 2019. From late 2019 through 2022, Trump's two impeachment hearings and the hearings of the January 6th committee were also opportunities to explain to Americans why all this corruption was allowed to occur and who in our government is complicit. And the Democrats decided not to take those opportunities. Never forget this. In times of severe crisis, silence is complicity. Inertia is complicity. And complacency is complicity. We are owed explanations for why people behaved the way they did, not only in the obedience that they showed to Trump but in the lenience that they've shown to his broader mafia network because those vulnerabilities remain today. So that's my first point. My second point is when you don't know why someone in power is behaving strangely, the first thing you should do is follow the money. So it's striking to me that as two major Russian oligarchs finally land back in the headlines—that's Oleg Deripaska and Viktor Veckselberg—

Sarah Kendzior (05:11):

Nearly everyone is ignoring that those two oligarchs are also illicitly funding much of the US Congress and have been doing so for years. We have gone over Deripaska *many times* to the point that there's a *Gaslit Nation* t-shirt about it. But his most recent incarnation, as mentioned, is as the sanctioned oligarch who McGonigal was working for while pretending to investigate. Veckselberg has recently made headlines because he is a primary funder of scandal magnet and serial liar, George Santos, and the way Veckselberg—another sanctioned oligarch—got that money to Santos is through his US citizen cousin Andrew Intrater. The way both Deripaska and Veckselberg have moved their money into Congress is through their common partner, Len Blavatnik, who is also a US citizen, born in the USSR, which makes it legal for him to do the donations that Deripaska and Veckselberg as sanctioned foreign oligarchs are not allowed to make.

Sarah Kendzior (06:11):

Blavatnik likes to sue people who call him an oligarch, so we'll just call him a plutocrat or a businessman, as they say in Russia. Blavatnik has been pumping Congress full of cash for decades, but particularly over the last eight years. Primary recipients included Nancy Pelosi and the DCCC, to whom he gave the largest donation in its history, and current House speaker Kevin McCarthy. But the money is all over the place. Biden, McConnell, nearly every major representative, and a bunch of smaller ones received money from him as well. All of this information is available on the FEC website or on the website OpenSecrets, and you can track those donations to major political events like, say, investigations getting dropped or Nancy Pelosi announcing that she's not gonna impeach Trump ever. This is not subtle.

Sarah Kendzior (07:11):

Honestly, the presence of these amounts is very weird. It's like he's advertising proof of purchase. The FEC website basically functions as a receipt for a purchased Congress, and a purchased Congress and a complicit FBI are a very dangerous combination. And so that brings me to my final point, which is when you're examining a state crime—and Donald Trump is a walking state crime—do not limit time and do not limit place. Yes, all roads lead to Putin (as the Democrats like to say) but they take a number of roundabout routes and in some cases the Kremlin is not even the main destination. Most of the criminal elites that we're looking at are people with multiple passports, offshore accounts, and illicit operations all over the world; people like Paul Manafort, Jeffrey Epstein, or Oleg Deripaska. They work in the service of certain governments, or sometimes the governments are working for them, and the Kremlin is a pivotal example of that.

Sarah Kendzior (08:11):

But this is a global crisis of transnational organized crime and the tentacles of this octopus stretched through Brexit UK to the complicit leaders of Germany and other EU states, to Netanyahu's Israel and

MBS' Saudi Arabia, and to every autocracy in every kleptocratic country, which means basically every country in the world, although most heavily in this case in Europe, the former USSR, the United States, and the Middle East. The Trump operation has precursors including Iran Contra and the Epstein/Maxwell trafficking network and they involve the same countries and the same operatives again and again. So be suspicious of people who want to limit the scope of an interconnected crisis because its victims are interconnected too, and if we don't examine it, we will not be able to stop it. So Andrea, any thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa (09:14):

Yeah. [laughs] I mean, guys, you know?

Sarah Kendzior (09:18):

[laughs] That was like *Gaslit Nation* 101, a refresher. A refresher for new folks coming to our show because apparently the mainstream media does not wanna cover McGonigal.

Andrea Chalupa (09:28):

And if you're new to this show, welcome.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm.

Andrea Chalupa:

This is the show where we say the same thing every episode week after week, *Waiting for Godot*-style, *Waiting for Garland*.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

Obviously, our listeners are going to say—some of them anyway are going to say—“Well, what about the breaking news that the Manhattan District Attorney is going to hit Trump over the hush money case where he or Alvin Bragg, who has a history as a prosecutor of having attempted to sue... Having sued Trump around a hundred times. That's really one of his claims to fame. He was considered a “progressive prosecutor” who won his election with the thanks of the progressive grassroots organizing force here in New York City. Alvin Bragg has obviously gotten his share of criticism. There have been some high profile departures from the DA's office, including Mark Pomerantz, who is somebody who is now writing a book.

Andrea Chalupa (10:39):

I pointed it out. I wrote on Twitter saying, “For the love of God, could the Feds not write book deals?” [laughs] Could the Feds not save the juicy stuff for the books and instead just get Trump and his Kremlin clown car. And I got a lot of heat because I used the word “Feds” because I'm actually speaking to Merrick Garland and his office, because I'm telling you, I could see this all ending with Merrick Garland just walking into retirement after two years. Trump's still free, Trump's still holding court in Mar-a-Lago. I don't think, with him running for president, I don't think Trump's going to win because the country hates

him so much and he'll just be a polarizing force that unites all of us against him. And Biden or whoever the Democrat is will sail into a second term for the Democrats holding the White House.

Andrea Chalupa (11:26):

But I do think that Trump will remain free and I do think Merrick Garland is set up for a cushy retirement, giving high paid speeches and writing some book and saving juicy bits for the book. And that enrages me that the federal prosecutors go on as they have, saying, you know, "Here's my book!" Why the fuck did you let Trump off the hook? Why didn't you guys work harder? Why didn't you work smarter? Where's your apology? I don't want your book deal. I want your apology to the American people. And God bless them, because a lot of these guys like Peter Strzok were harassed for years by Trump's Twitter account, which was the original incitement to violence before January 6th. Lisa Page has talked about her fear of going out in public. That was deliberate obstruction of justice where you're putting a target on the heads of public officials, on law enforcement.

Andrea Chalupa (12:20):

Trump did that very, very well with his whole vicious cult of storm troopers. And, of course, the big conclusion to all that was the violence, the violent attempted coup we saw on January 6th. So I feel for you guys. I feel for the law enforcement. But at the same time, he can't keep getting away and book deals are no consolation. I understand that Mark Pomerantz is a state prosecutor, but my tweet, my message was for the Feds because I could really see Merrick Garland saving it for the book deal because he doesn't have the balls, he doesn't have the training, he doesn't have the motivation to actually prosecute Trump. So prepare yourself for that. And the latest coming out of the New York DA's office with Alvin Bragg bringing his case to a grand jury, which could lead to a criminal verdict for Trump, it's still not going to be enough to stop him.

Sarah Kendzior (13:17):

Yeah, 100%. I've remarked upon this before. I think the first time was when John Bolton announced that he was writing a book instead of testifying to Congress about the criminality he'd witnessed in the Trump administration. The publishing industry is also to blame because they're creating an incentive for either witnesses or participants in state crimes to stay silent, to reveal it for the book. They're offering advances that are often very high, in the millions of dollars. This is also something that is applied to multiple FBI agents and officials; Andrew McCabe was an early one for grifting, you know, first doing a GoFundMe, claiming he could no longer pay his bills after being fired, but then landing a book deal, becoming a TV contributor. Comey of course was another one who made a massive payout.

Sarah Kendzior (14:10):

It's still amazing to me though that this money is enough to make all of these individuals abandon their country, refuse to protect their fellow Americans, refuse to do their jobs, and this is becoming normalized. It's absolutely grotesque. And to be clear, I don't have a problem with the individuals who did do their jobs. Somebody like, you know, Alexander Vindman or Marie Yovanovitch, people who actually testified, people who came forward, and then they wrote a book about their experience. That's fine. But these are people who are weaponizing their complicity into publishing prophets. And it's created this bizarre dynamic where you have journalists and historians solving state crimes while the prosecutors write books about the crimes that they refuse to solve, even though all of the evidence is in the public domain, often freely confessed to by the criminal.

Sarah Kendzior (15:08):

Trump, for example, has confessed to obstruction of justice on TV twice alone, as well as a number of other crimes. You know, and they keep it coming. But it's an incentive structure that needs to be

dissolved. It's very... I don't know, it's grotesque. I could easily see Merrick Garland doing it, although notably, one of the exceptions to this is Mueller. Mueller has not written a book. Mueller has not, to my knowledge, done any major interviews. I think Mueller wants to dodge a lot of these questions because in 2011, Mueller made a big speech about how the Russian mafia and its infiltration into Western and American institutions represents the most profound threat to democracy. And then of course Trump proved that that was the case. I think Mueller actually is sort of sheepishly walking away. I don't know if Garland has any shame. I hope nobody actually would buy a book for that, but...

Andrea Chalupa (16:06):

I'll pounce on him, all the agents.

Sarah Kendzior (16:09):

They're building cults in advance too. That's the purpose of it; to create these people and make them into reality TV characters. The exact media infrastructure that Trump participated in and that basically made Trump who he is is being used for the FBI, for the DOJ, which is of course why the arrest of McGonigal, while first and foremost a national security crisis, but it also punctures an enormous hole in these bureaucratic cults that they've liked to create, this savior syndrome, this idea that people are gonna swoop in and rescue you when the reality is the rescued crew is in on the plot and has always been and covers that up in the books as well. The books function as propaganda for broken institutions. Okay, what were you saying?

Andrea Chalupa (17:00):

We had our live taping last week, which was a lot of fun. And one of the perks of the live taping is that you and I get to spice things up a bit because we really do say the same thing, in so many words, week after week. So the live taping added an element of excitement to our otherwise dull marriage, right? [laughs] Just kidding. I'm having a great time.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

But one of the questions we got in the Q&A, which I thought was very... You know, the Q&A was fantastic and we didn't record it because we wanted it to be a big free for all, where people can just talk about whatever they felt like. And it went on for a long time. I don't remember...

Sarah Kendzior (17:37):

For like an hour and a half. You get your money's worth on a Gaslit Nation Q&A.

Andrea Chalupa (17:42):

The reason why I make that point is because this question came up when Sarah had to leave to go to physical therapy for her knee because she's an old lady, emotionally and physically, like I am as well.

Sarah Kendzior (17:52):

This case has aged me by several decades [laughs].

Andrea Chalupa (17:56):

[laughs] This never ending conversation has aged Sarah's knees.

Sarah Kendzior (17:59):

It has aged me and under the Biden administration, life expectancy has plummeted about five years. So, you know, this can't go on forever. Anyway, go on.

Andrea Chalupa (18:09):

So when you were gone, Sarah, someone raised a really interesting question saying, "Why is the stuff we say on the show so different from what the cable news pundits who come from a legal background—former prosecutors turned talking heads—why are those former prosecutors so much more cautious or optimistic about Merrick Garland putting the pieces together and building a sound solid case and letting the facts bear out and letting the legal process churn, and that we should all be patient and sort of, you know, wait for it? Why are we so spitfire and having made up our minds that we can't trust Merrick Garland?" And my answer to that, and I'm raising this because I think it's something that people should know, is that there's a cultural difference here, I would say. There is an advantage of being an outsider.

Andrea Chalupa (19:04):

The people that are around Merrick Garland who are in the rotating wheel of private practice, public service, working as a federal prosecutor, state prosecutor to go into private practice, that's an industry. These are people that know each other. They live in Washington, DC. They send their kids to the same school. They build reputations, they build careers, they go to the same conferences. They know each other. They've built up these relationships over the years. For instance, Jamie Gorelick, somebody that represented Kushner and Ivanka and mentored Merrick Garland and somebody who's had a track record of, you know, sometimes you might not wanna hire that person with that sort of track record where she—

Sarah Kendzior (19:47):

Incredible corruption is what Andrea's getting at. Like the Forest Gump of corruption for the last 25 years. The new incarnation of Roy Cohn.

Andrea Chalupa (19:55):

Yeah. So when Sarah speaks about Jamie Gorelick, she becomes like Mother of Dragons, fire-breathing, "Why is this person allowed to have the influence that she has?" Whereas somebody inside the beltway who knows Jamie Gorelick personally and has done the professional circuit with them, so to speak, meaning going through the same circles, knowing the same people, socializing in the same types of events, being insiders together. So someone from that group reached out to me on a project, you know, discussion, discussion, chat, chat. "Oh, by the way, could you mention to Sarah that Jamie Gorelick's not that bad. She's actually a really good person. She's really nice."

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

So what's at play here is that, you know, the person who mentioned this to me, I like this individual very much. I'm friends with them. I consider them a trustworthy source and person generally, and I'm happy to work with them.

Andrea Chalupa (20:44):

But I think what the big divide between freak show Sarah and freak show and Andrea [laughs] and our combined freak show being extra potent is that we don't... Unless... How do I say it? We're kind of hermits to begin with. We didn't get into this to make any friends. And the big gleeful irony is that we made friends along the way with each other. And we're just outsiders. We're just outsiders. And it's very typical for somebody with an outside perspective to be able to point fingers because we don't have to worry about running into Jamie Gorelick at the next mixer [laughs]. We're liberated from that. And that's sort of how I always wanted to be. I started, for instance, researching and looking up to Gareth Jones, the real life hero of my film, *Mr. Jones*, at a young, impressionable age.

Andrea Chalupa (21:33):

And it was very clear to me that Gareth Jones was an outsider. He was Welsh in the British Empire. He came from a working class town. His father was a schoolmaster. He had to really make his way in life and all the opportunities that he got, he got through hard work and ingenuity, which means that when he flew too close to the sun going after Stalin and the abuse of power there across the western world, he got knocked down and there was nobody really to catch him. He came in as an outsider into Moscow. The Moscow Press corps that was in the pocket of the Kremlin, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning Moscow bureau chief for the *New York Times*. Gareth Jones was an outsider. He was like a cowboy coming into town and blowing the lid off a huge story. He had the benefit of the outsider perspective, and that's why he had the guts to tell us the story that was right in front of their eyes that they wouldn't dare touch. And so that's sort of where we come in. We're not part of the cable news, former prosecutor pundit class. We're not part of the fancy thinktank class. I, more than Sarah, have some overlap there with friends from past lives, current lives, whatever. But for the most part, you know, we're able to sort of put these things together and go, "Wait a minute, that's not right and we shouldn't normalize it."

Sarah Kendzior (22:56):

Yeah, no, I have a few things to say about that. I mean, one is that in terms of Jamie Gorelick, you know, I do question you if you've decided to voluntarily associate yourself with her. I mean, it's one thing if you have no choice, if you're at the same giant corporate law firm or whatnot. But this is an individual who I don't have any opinion about as a human being, you know, as a person, I don't know her. All I know is what she's done and I know what she's done to our country, and I know what she's *chosen* to do. You know, we've talked many times about how everybody deserves defense if they're going to court. But there's a certain type of lawyer that's drawn to the absolute worst, most destructive, most immoral people in our country and rushes to defend them.

Sarah Kendzior (23:42):

One of them is Alan Dershowitz, who notably trained Jamie Gorelick, who then mentored Merrick Garland. And another of course is Gorelick herself, where you have this giant history; everything from writing the memo that facilitated the 9/11 attacks by breaking up communication between the CIA and the FBI while she was working at the Clinton DOJ, defending the fossil fuel industry, the opioid industry, Big Tech, volunteering to be the ethics lawyer of Ivanka and Jared... I mean, it just goes on and on. You can look through our archives. So this is just based on what she has done as a destructive force who's continually placed in a position of power, most recently, still mentoring Merrick Garland in the DOJ, also overseeing the January 6th Committee, also briefly appointed to a "disinformation committee" by Biden, where she was paired up with Michael Chertoff, the war criminal from the Bush administration.

Sarah Kendzior (24:45):

So this is just an objectively bad person. You know, of course we're outsiders [laughs]. I live in Missouri. I live in Missouri voluntarily. So, no, I'm not going to like cocktail parties or trying to immerse myself in that world. That world is an absolute nightmare to me. But if I were there, if I were geographically located in that place, I would not associate myself with a person like this. I would not seek them out and I wouldn't excuse them. But yeah, that's the thing. That's how corrosive this culture is, this corporate culture, this government culture, is people get used to these individuals and they don't wanna call them out in public, partly out of fear but partly because they can't square, I think, what that person has done in their professional life with the smiling woman or man that appears before them, or this veneer of respectability.

Sarah Kendzior (25:35):

That's why all these idiots were defending Bill Barr when he was initially appointed attorney general under Trump. And they were like, "Oh, yes, Bill Barr, so polished, so scholarly, plays by the rules,"—which of course is a lie. This was the notorious GOP coverup operative going all the way back to the first Bush administration. So you have to really ask, you know, "This is so easy to find out so what are they doing?" And the answer is, they're protecting institutions. And they're protecting the institutions that pay their bills, that hire them, that hire their friends, and they're afraid to speak out against it. The other thing is, when it comes down to the legal pundits and us, you know, and just for people who don't know us, Andrea and I both spent our careers before we launched the show in 2018 studying the authoritarian states of the former Soviet Union.

Sarah Kendzior (26:29):

I got my PhD studying Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan's politics and digital media. Andrea, as you noted in the intro, made an entire movie about Stalin's genocide in Ukraine and the British journalist or Welsh journalist who explored that. And so, you know, we've devoted our lives to these topics of how dictators rise to power, how they stay in power, how mafia states work, and how they work in the present era. And a lot of times I've seen this very convoluted talking point that somehow if your expertise is in authoritarian states, you lack the legal knowledge to comment on ongoing cases. And this is the furthest thing from the truth. These are people who are somehow under the illusion that mafia states and dictatorships don't have courts. Courts are incredibly important to the survival of a dictatorship. They have lawyers. They have judges. They have jurisdictions.

Sarah Kendzior (27:28):

They have an entire system that is meant to lend this official tarnish to often innocent people and send them off to prison. And our system is not that different. We're seeing this all the time. We see this with, you know, innocent Black people who are killed by police and the police go free. We see this in white-collar crime and organized crime cases that aren't prosecuted. You can learn a lot about how America works by studying the legal systems of authoritarian states abroad. And that's something I did in my professional life. I was actually an advisor to a group of Uzbek lawyers who were trying to defend people in Uzbekistan who were being shaken down by the police, asked for bribes, persecuted by the state, and they were looking for innovative ways not just to protect people but to also educate the general public about, you know, what is the law? What is the constitution? What are rights? What does freedom mean in a place like this? And so, through working with lawyers from authoritarian states, I learned more about how my own country works. And it's hypocrisies and it's deficiencies. So it's very strange to me that people would set up this binary framework of legal versus authoritarian, because the cage bars of autocracies are often the court systems. And if you don't understand that, you are not qualified to pontificate about this on television or anywhere else

Andrea Chalupa (29:05):

Exactly. When they should have been listening to us all the time because laws don't matter once the dictator comes into power, as we all saw in how quickly Trump was purging, and all the corruption, the fire hose of corruption coming outta that administration. And people just couldn't keep up anymore. It's like we were just abused for four very, very long years that could have been avoided if law enforcement had lived up to their social contract in protecting us from the Russian mafia instead of trying to do deals with it, or letting their misogyny show and trying to stop Hillary Clinton from becoming president and so on.

Sarah Kendzior (29:44):

Laws are only as good as the people who enforce them, and the people who are supposed to be enforcing these laws have not been good at all. And just to briefly bring up what you were referencing before, which is that, you know, Trump could possibly be indicted by the Manhattan DA, by Alvin Bragg, who of course was the successor to Cy Vance, the guy who let an enormous number of white-collar criminals off the hook, including Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein, Don Jr., Ivanka, and so on. I was looking at the lawyer for this. This case goes back to David Pecker, the guy who owned the *National Enquirer* and used it as a catch-and-kill operation. And I noticed that his lawyer, according to the *New York Times*, is this guy named Elkan Abramowitz.

Sarah Kendzior (30:33):

And I was thinking to myself, you know, why do I know that name? Why is that so familiar? And then I remembered: That's the guy who paid off Cy Vance so that he wouldn't charge Harvey Weinstein. Abramowitz gave a \$26,550 contribution to Vance and then Weinstein avoided the charges. That is how the Manhattan DA system works. The same thing happened with Trump, with Don Jr. and Ivanka. Trump's lawyer—I believe it was Marc Kasowitz—gave a donation to Cy Vance for his campaign and then suddenly, you know, they're not pursuing the charges. And so when people are looking at like, why hasn't Alvin Bragg done this or that? They need to look at Cy Vance and why he didn't do anything for the more than a decade long tenure that he was there.

Sarah Kendzior (31:27):

My point here is that this is a systemic problem. And Bragg has the opportunity to change that system right now. He so far hasn't. The other lawyers there also haven't, but people need to look, they need to dig deep and they need to look back in time at the continuity here, because it starts with Trump and his mafia network. It starts with Trump's mentor, Roy Cohn and his mafia network. And they are who control the courts, the judges, the juries, so on and so forth. You could look at Manafort and Stone and their trials and how many times the judges were threatened, the juries were threatened, how many people in those situations had to have armed security. The fact that these legal experts, legal pundits, don't bring that up on the air—this pervasive culture of threat and bribery and complicity—is very interesting to me.

Sarah Kendzior (32:23):

The fact that they just get up there and they pretend like this is some sort of functional system in which, "Oh, yeah, we need to hear all the facts and we need to make sure everybody, you know, is adequately represented," ignoring the broader context, which is that this is a thriving mafia state and has been for a long time. New York and DC are the two places where it's situated most and they are products of these New York and DC cultures. It's disgraceful. It's why a lot of the American public is under-informed and often shocked by the things that we say on this show even though everything we're saying is in the public domain somewhere, it's just not emphasized or not deemed important, or it's forgotten over the years, in part because the justice system will not follow through.

Sarah Kendzior (33:09):

And so people think that if somebody's not being charged for a crime, that they must be innocent of the crime, and that those who accuse them of it, even if the person has confessed to it (like Trump) must have somehow gotten it wrong. They want to maintain their faith in a completely broken and frankly evil system. And here I'm thinking about jackbooted foot soldiers. You know, the people who kill people like Tyre Nichols for nothing. It was rare in this case that the officers were even indicted because they usually just get away with it. That is the American "justice" system and it's just as brutal for certain segments of the population as any authoritarian state and just as forgiving of kleptocracy as any authoritarian state.

Andrea Chalupa (33:58):

Mmmmm. <affirmative> This whole thing with the Manhattan DA's office... I can't emphasize enough how Alvin Bragg came in as the progressive candidate representing progressives. And again, track record of having sued Trump around a hundred times. He then goes on being in office for a short period. Two of his prosecutors resign; Carey Dunne and as we mentioned Mark Pomerantz. And they issue a letter. In Pomerantz's letter, he wrote that there is "evidence sufficient to establish Mr. Trump's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The public interest warrants the criminal prosecution of Mr. Trump. I fear that your decision means that Mr. Trump will not be held fully accountable for his crimes. I've worked too hard as a lawyer and for too long now to become a passive participant in what I believe to be a grave failure of justice. I therefore resign my position as a special assistant district attorney effective immediately."

Andrea Chalupa (35:01):

And then he returns to private practice. So how odd is it that Alvin Bragg, a Black man—which I know as we saw with the Tyre Nichols murder, it doesn't mean anything because Black people themselves can be tools and hold up the brutality of white supremacy—but Alvin Bragg was running on a progressive platform for reform. He was boosted by the progressive grassroots machine he had. Again, he sued Trump a hundred times! Why would he then, once he comes into power, not go all the way? And why would lawyers around him that were appointed by Cy Vance resign in such a dramatic fashion? I agree with Sarah, and as we both have said many times on this show, you cannot trust Cy Vance. Cy Vance let the Trump children off the hook in a fraud case in exchange for a campaign donation. Cy Vance is the product of nepotism. And so on and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (36:07):

So this, the lawyers that resigned, I don't buy that. And then one goes off to write a book about it? Why didn't you stay? Why didn't you stay and fight? And what happened to Alvin Bragg as soon as he was allowed into the halls of power? We don't know. He's not speaking out about this. Something happens to you if you're the progressives' choice in the DA's race in New York City—which is a progressive hotbed as everyone knows, a progressive hotbed that haunts the dreams of Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy—and you're the choice candidate for DA and you win, and suddenly you're slow walking? You refuse to indict Trump, but now nevermind, you're suddenly coming back with a case that you're bringing a grand jury that could lead to criminal charges to Trump? So I don't know if Alvin Bragg came in, sensed that the Trump case had a ticking time bomb built by Cy Vance's corruption, and he realized that... Maybe he knows something about what was there waiting for him, was designed to fall apart, designed to do nothing.

Andrea Chalupa (37:13):

Maybe he needed time to actually build something and these two resignations are kind of showboat resignations. I don't know, speculation, you know, all speculation. But Alvin Bragg did speak out against Mark Pomerantz's book in the sense of warning the publisher, "We should review it first. Make sure

there's no classified information that could harm the investigation." My point is this: For the love of God, prosecutors working in public service, being paid with our tax dollars, please fight it out to the bitter end. Be like me and Sarah on Twitter. Stick it out to the bitter damn end. Don't go anywhere. Don't resign. If you feel that your DA is going to... I know there's a lot of protest resignations that can make a difference in certain situations, but for the love of God, stick it out and fight, fight, fight. Don't jump ship and write a damn book. And Merrick Garland, we see your retirement plan. We see what you're working towards. For the love of God, we see you. And I do wanna say, Sarah, one thing that's really funny about you on the long list of funny things is you don't save it for the book deal.

Sarah Kendzior (38:23):

No, I'm like a walking spoiler for my own books.

Andrea Chalupa (38:26):

Exactly. All the conversations I've had with you, you know, when we're not taping obviously, there's never been a time when you're like, "Ooh, listen to what I uncovered. It's so juicy. I'm gonna put it all in my next book. I can't say it on the show." I'm pretty sure on the show, you work out what you want for the books,

Sarah Kendzior (38:42):

Pretty much, yeah. Well, I mean, there's a few things going on. You know, there's the matter of this is an urgent crisis. We don't have time for the books to come out. We don't have time for this information. The other thing is, if you write well, you don't need to save it for the book. You can actually get people to buy your books based on your worth as a writer and your mastery of prose and other things.

Andrea Chalupa (39:05):

Ooo look at you tooting your own horn, as you should.

Sarah Kendzior (39:09):

[laughs] Well, hey man, I'm just saying, it is possible. It is completely possible to lay out the pertinent facts that the public has the right to know in real time in advance, and *then* write a book on it. A book is not the same as a podcast or a tweet. A book is an opportunity to flesh out a topic with depth and with resources and all of these other things that you can't do. But yeah, I think it's disgraceful. I think we're living in a very dangerous, very urgent time and these people have to stop fucking around. There is no excuse for it. Actual people are hurt by their gross ambition. And I just don't get it. For a lot of them, even like a million dollars is chump change, you know, or the royalties they make off of this.

Sarah Kendzior (40:00):

It's not that much. And it's nice to be on the *New York Times* bestseller list. I've done it a couple of times, but it's not that exciting. I mean, especially if it's not your job. If your job is, you've worked in an administration or you're a lawyer or whatever it is you've trained for your whole life, wouldn't you wanna be really great at that? Wouldn't you wanna fulfill the obligations of your profession? Your profession is not being a writer, but these publishing contracts are basically functioning as tacit NDAs. I mean, that's something I wish people would explore is how these arrangements are made because I know that sometimes the publishers will tell the author, "Oh, don't reveal this or that in advance. Save it for the promotional campaign." I mean, my publisher knows better than to try this with me [laughs] because I would never do it.

Andrea Chalupa (40:49):

It goes straight onto the podcast. Straight onto the podcast.

Sarah Kendzior (40:51):

[laughs] I'm like, "No. I'm sorry. People need to know right now." That's who a journalist should work for. You know, there's the adage that you afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted and that's what you and I have been doing. And I wish it's what more people are doing. But my thing is, even for those little grifters out there working for the DOJ, you don't have to do it. You could actually do something cool, like your job, and investigate and indict well known organized crime mafiosos and then write a book about that. That's a book that everyone would really like to read. You could really have the best of both worlds here. And then we, those of us sticking our necks out without resources, without institutional backing and putting ourselves and our families in danger in the process, we would be a little more safe.

Sarah Kendzior (41:42):

And we would appreciate that. So it's really interesting to me that that's their kind of excuse, you know? It's become this acceptable myth, like, "Oh, you saved it for the book!" as if that's a normal thing to do. It's absolutely not at all a normal thing to do. And I think a decade ago this would've been viewed as incredibly scandalous, just as it was when the first of these began to appear, when John Bolton and Jim Comey had their books come out, it was thought of as disgusting. And it still should be. It's just that there's been so many, such a glut, that people are used to it. And I feel like it's just this whole, you know, reality TV transformation of the "criminal justice system" and it's accompanied with these paid troll bot farms and propagandists and all these little groups meant to build them up.

(42:33):

It's bizarre. I look at the freedom of speech that we still have left—which of course is disappearing due to social media monopolies, algorithms that shadow ban or block people, you know, the erosion or destruction really of local news and the fact that so many of our newspapers are now folded into these giant conglomerates—there's a lot of bad things still going on, but we have looser laws on speech and media than most countries. And I know people in authoritarian states who would love to have the rights to speech and media that we have. And when I see people just throw that right away, that opportunity away, to just chant little mantras about your reverence for federal officials who are betraying our country with their inertia, with their inaction, it boggles my mind. If you have this freedom, then use it for the public good. It's so clear cut to me. I don't know. I don't get it.

Andrea Chalupa (43:34):

Yeah. During the Trump years when Trump was just wreaking havoc like Chronos, lawyers across society stepped up and were pushing back. I had a heartfelt appreciation for lawyers. I became a fangirl of some of these lawyers who would write letters pushing back on various abuses of power and authoritarian power grabs by Trump. Some of these letters were just works of art. And I reached out to one of these lawyers that wrote an especially powerful letter, you know, just for general help on some things. I'm like, "I'm a big fan of your work." [laughs]. And this lawyer went on to help me with various projects pro bono, such a goodhearted person. And so if I were to do it all again, I would go to law school. I think it's a superpower if you're a person with the right intentions to have a law degree.

Andrea Chalupa (44:24):

And I think part of the frustration is like, I wanna be a lawyer. I wanna be a prosecutor in the DOJ. Let me in there. Let me be the annoying pain in the ass in the office that makes everyone stay an hour extra so

we can finally nab this guy. And I think at the end of the day, a lot of these men—because it's mostly men, let's be clear, that are patting themselves on the back and cashing in on the book deals. Like, I haven't seen a Lisa Page book. Maybe I missed it—but you know, I don't think they have a culture there to really go after guys like Trump like they need to. I don't think they have a competency. I don't. I think it's emaciated and I think it's incredibly sad.

Andrea Chalupa (45:03):

And I think the culture propping the mystique up of these guys is abusive and sad and I think people just need to brace themselves for what's coming. And I think it presents a crisis for everybody. And a crisis for parents, because how the hell are you supposed to raise your child to know what's right and wrong in the world and read them all of these children's books and children's movies that are showing the bad guys getting caught, justice being served, and they grow up in a bubble like so many, let's be frank, like white people have grown up in a bubble in America. And then they come to a certain age and then they learn that Iran Contra happened. Oh, and before that there was Watergate. And then the Watergate pardons. Oh, and then there was this guy Trump. Trump did what? His family did what?

Andrea Chalupa (45:53):

Yes, that's how the world really works. So it's this horrible feeling being a parent in Merrick Garland's America where I'm raising my child to have blinders on. And what, so I can lead them like a cow to slaughter to live in a world where they're preyed upon by giant corporations and authoritarian politicians and disinformation machines like YouTube and Facebook and Twitter and so on and so on? And throw out the mercy at Fox News and all the incitement to hate in the NRA, because nobody is willing to stop these guys. There's absolutely zero political will at the top to stop them. What do I say to my kid? At what age do I have that talk? I'm very well aware that parents of non-white children have to have this talk probably even before they're ready because the talk is forced on them by so many things that they face in their daily life and throughout society. But you know that authoritarian threat on the far right is getting worse when white parents have to think like, “At what age do you tell your kids that this is really how the world works. And I cannot explain to you, I cannot give you a good reason why it works this way other than it's making a lot of people money.”

[transition music]

Andrea Chaupa (47:13):

January 27th, 2023 marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Holocaust, of course, is a genocide where we say “never again”. Unfortunately, genocides continue to this day. There's the genocide by Russia in Ukraine. There's a genocide in Myanmar, China, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, and South Sudan. So genocides are very common. We are going to play a trailer for a film made by a member of the *Gaslit Nation* community. It was executive produced by Gayle Donsky, who supports *Gaslit Nation* on Patreon and reached out to us with a link for her trailer and information about the film, *The Broken Promise*, which I'm going to read now: “From the Armenian genocide to Bosnia to Rawanda to China to Ukraine, the message is painfully clear; genocide is not a once in a generation event humanity can witness, ring its collective hands over and consign to the history books. It is a tool authoritarians wield all too easily.”

Andrea Chalupa (48:22):

“And big business is complicit in its use. With insights from genocide survivors and their children, members of Congress, legal scholars and human rights activists, *The Broken Promise* independent feature length documentary explores reemergent patterns of genocide and the political and institutional failures that enable perpetrators of crimes against humanity. The film shines a light on the warning signs of genocide and how ordinary citizens can stand against these atrocities and finally ensure that the promise of “Never Again”, a refrain after the horrors of the holocaust, is fulfilled. If you'd like more information on *The Broken Promise*, look out for a link posted in this week's show notes available as always on the Patreon page for this week's episode. Thank you.

[audio of film trailer for [The Broken Promise](#)]

[outro - theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (51:25):

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 (51:31):

We want to encourage you to donate to your local food bank, which is experiencing a spike in demand. We also encourage you to donate to Oil Change International, an advocacy group supported with the generous donation from the Greta Thunberg Foundation that exposes the true cost of fossil fuels and facilitates the ongoing transition to clean energy.

Andrea Chalupa (51:51):

We encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization, helping refugees from Ukraine, Syrian, and Afghanistan. Donate at Rescue.Org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at theorangutangproject.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 (52:30):

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 (52:42):

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

Sarah Kendzior (52:49):

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

Andrea Chalupa (52:56):

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