

Gaslit Nation Transcript

08 February 2023

“Trump Lost, But the Coup Won”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/trump-lost-but-78389049>

Andrea Chalupa (00:00:00):

Quick announcement: Join me on Saturday, February 25th at a virtual event to commemorate the one year anniversary of Russia's genocidal reinvasion of Ukraine. I'll be joining the all-civic group, The Media and Democracy Project, for a stream screening of my film, *Mr. Jones*. Afterwards, we'll have a Q&A session. I'll be there live with you on Zoom. We'll discuss the film, what role the media plays in defending against misinformation and authoritarianism, and what we can all be doing to support better media. You can sign up for that by going to the website that we'll link to in the show notes for this episode, available as always on the Patreon page for this episode, or wherever you get your podcasts. Admission is free, but we do suggest a donation to the wonderful and essential *Kyiv Independent*, whose journalists are risking their lives to cover the genocide. Thank you so much.

[intro theme music up and under]

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:01):

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 (00:01:14):

And I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine.

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:26):

And this is *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. So just FYI, Andrea and I are both suffering from colds. I'm getting over mine and no longer sound like Joan Rivers. Andrea seems to have a case of NPR voice [laughs], but we're going to soldier ahead and then try to fill up the allotted time by giving you the big picture of all of the corruption that has occurred in the last time since we chatted. So to kick things off, by the time you hear this episode Joe Biden will have delivered the State of the Union address. We are going to talk about that on our Patreon bonus which we're going to tape tomorrow after the speech. So if you wanna listen to our thoughts about that and also get your questions answered directly by sending them to us, you can sign up on [patreon.com/gaslit](https://www.patreon.com/gaslit).

Sarah Kendzior (00:02:32):

So yeah, you have that to look forward to. Anyway, I was thinking about what Biden is going to say at this historical juncture and I started thinking back to the Obama administration and when Obama would do the State of the Union, and I used to think to myself, you know, I wanna live in that version of America. I wanna live in the America that Obama is describing. It sounds so nice and so peaceful and prosperous, and it was genuinely jarring to hear Obama's description of a country so removed from what I and everyone I knew was experiencing in everyday life. And this was not due to Obama specifically on a lot of

issues, but a large number of economic and political factors having to do with greed and corruption; factors that led to an American decline that was not acknowledged in a forthright way by the mainstream media until the 2016 election brought these issues to light in a horrific way.

Sarah Kendzior (00:03:41):

And I had to stop watching Obama give that speech, give the State of the Union, because the disconnect hurt so much. Then, of course, after Obama we got Trump and his State of the Unions, which sounded like fascist war cries—because they were—and I couldn't watch those either. And so I'm expecting with Biden we'll get something more like the Obama era but mixed with a defensiveness; not a defense, mind you, of America and the American people, but defensiveness of himself and the broken institutions for which he stands. And I say that with sorrow because I was hoping that things would be better, but the title of today's *Gaslit Nation* episode is, "Trump Didn't Win, But the Coup Won". And this is coming out of a conversation that Andrea and I were having about developments especially since the Republicans took the House and, you know, what's in store for us in 2023 and onward.

Sarah Kendzior (00:04:47):

We were kind of looking back at this and realizing the only part of Trump's coup that was truly defeated was Trump himself. The damage and infiltration and elite criminal impunity and cruelty live on. And so we're gonna give you a few examples of this. I will start. Hopefully Andrea's voice will return and she can jump in. There's so many examples of this and we encourage you on Twitter, on our Patreon page, to submit your own. The most obvious one to me, the most obvious example to me of Trump did not win but the coup won, is that the Insurrectionists are in the House and now they are being installed on top committees. People who attempted to overthrow the federal government are now creating the policies of the federal government. People who are national security threats are now dictating national security. And so there is an opportunity to do something about this by simply not seating insurrectionist and seditionist members of Congress; people like Paul Gosar, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Lauren Boebert, a large number of them who announced their plans in advance, who confessed after, who are openly complicit.

Sarah Kendzior (00:06:10):

But Pelosi, Speaker of the House at the time, failed. She refused to do that. She allowed them to remain in their positions and to gain a larger following and now they have the structural power that they lacked when the Democrats were in charge of the House. And now it is the Republicans. There was and still remains an opportunity to do something about this for the DOJ if they would investigate the January 6th attacks and these open public confessions of sedition from multiple Republican members of Congress, but the DOJ does not care because Merrick Garland's DOJ does not work for the public interest of the United States of America. Merrick Garland's DOJ works for the coup. Do you have any thoughts on that, on our roaming seditionists creating the policies that define our lives?

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:12):

I was miming throughout your entire read out.

Sarah Kendzior (00:07:17):

[laughs] We need an interpretive dance live-action *Gaslit Nation*.

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:20):

Yes, this will be a special video episode of me just expressing myself with my hands. You know... It is what it is.

Speaker 3 (00:07:29):

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:33):

[laughs] Just to add to that, there was a troubling editorial by *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* got their editorial board together and they called out senior Democratic Senator from Illinois, Dick Durbin, for allowing Republicans like Kremlin propagandist Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who barely, barely, barely eked by for reelection against openly progressive and openly black Mandela Barnes in Wisconsin. It was like one percentage point or something. We got so close in Wisconsin. So Ron Johnson, who famously spent 4th of July in Moscow with a group of other traitorous Republicans and just spews Kremlin talking points, he was given as an example in this *New York Times* editorial on how he was allowed to block a proposed judge by the Biden administration. And there's this really stupid piece of etiquette. It's not even a rule. It's like a Senate tea party etiquette, where there's a courtesy given to senators that block judges from their home state that have been proposed by the president.

Andrea Chalupa (00:08:53):

So here you had this wonderful, qualified, openly gay judge outta Wisconsin who Biden put forth, and Dick Durbin, who's running the show on getting the judges confirmed in the Senate, let Kremlin Ron Johnson block this judge. And he just was like, "Oh, shucks, okay." [laughs]. That was Dick Durbin's response. Like, "Ah, dang it." How can you allow this to happen when Trump McConnell packed the courts, the Federalist Society—that's just this extremist white patriarchy Birch Society type legal warfare against our country—packed the Supreme Court, they overturned *Roe v. Wade* just like they always wanted, even though we all watched in the confirmation hearings, these guys—Amy Coney Barrett, Kavanaugh, others—speaking out of both sides of their mouths in these confirmation hearings, basically lying when it came to *Roe v. Wade* being settled law and so on... How can you, in this time, in McConnell and Trump ideologue far-right court packing, not push through as many qualified, law-abiding, good governance judges as you possibly can?

Andrea Chalupa (00:10:08):

Dick Durbin is acting like a Manchin and a Sinema when they hold the filibuster to be sacred when it's absolutely not. As we've talked about on this show; we had Adam Jentel on with his great book, *Kill Switch*, talking about how the filibuster is a weapon of white supremacy that was innovated and driven and popularized by white senators from former slaveholding states to try to put the breaks on civil rights for non-white citizens and to repeal/turn back some of those laws and just basically stop progress across our country. And it works. It works, it works, it works. And it's working today just as intended. And one of the things that's working against is climate change; slowing down progress, meaningful progress on climate change. Who's going to be most impacted by climate change? Everybody, but especially non-white communities that live in very low lying areas in a lot of cities that tend to be on water and so on and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:07):

So Dick Durbin is the Manchin and Sinema when it comes to allowing Biden's judges to be blocked by this really archaic, stupid tea party etiquette rule, gesture, piece of etiquette, let's call it that, known as blue slipping; the blue slip. *The New York Times* editorial board was so alarmed by this, they got everyone together and wrote a big old fat editorial from the editorial board of *New York Times* saying, "For the love of God, Dick Durbin, stop it, cut it out. We see what you're doing." They called him out. They called out Dick Durbin. And thank God, because he's someone that's been on my radar as an obstructionist towards ringing the alarm and enacting any meaningful reforms, any meaningful

accountability. He's someone that is like a cuddly version of Manchin and Sinema, but he's a Democrat establishment figure who's entrenched in that club, who is pleasing the corporate masters that serve both parties, but he just has a cuddlier face while doing it.

Andrea Chalupa (00:12:10):

That's why he sort of flies under the radar and he's not such a villain as Manchin and Sinema are for the public. But Dick Durbin's up in that club with them, the very elitist cloistered, elite impunity, pretending to be doing things when you're really not, just shuffling the papers around and allowing Kremlin operatives in the Senate to block Biden's judges when we desperately need to confirm as many as we can over the next two years. We're only guaranteed two years and there is a lot that Biden can do in that time, even with a shitshow running the House with their super slim margin. But ruling as though they got a mandate from the American people, ignoring the fact that the American people went with pitchforks and torch... Well, no, they're the party of torches. But, you know, even though the American people went to the polls saying, "Hell no, we're not gonna become a fascist, fake Christian nationalist, Hungarian, you know... What's that guy? Viktor Orbán?"

Sarah Kendzior (00:13:10):

Orbán.

Andrea Chalupa (00:13:11):

Putinite, mass murdering, bringing back slavery, bringing back child endangerment laws, forcing kids to work in factories and so on. There's a law that's just out of Iowa where they're gonna roll back protections for child labor. They're gonna bring back the industrial revolution of kids being forced to work in factories. I'm not kidding. It's obscene what we're up against. It's really that, like, mustache twirling evil.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmmmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

And guys like Dick Durbin are part of the problem.

Sarah Kendzior (00:13:40):

Yeah, 100%. I'm very glad you brought up the need for lower district judges to try to combat the radical rightwing Supreme Court, you know, whose judges were appointed by an illegitimate president under Trump; a president who should have been investigated for a multitude of crimes—if you're wondering what those crimes are, you can consult five years of *Gaslit Nation* episodes—and who carried with them their own disqualifying past actions, like Brett Kavanaugh and his debt, another story which has been dropped and not investigated. And I have to say, one of the most shocking things (and I don't get shocked by that much anymore), you know, I've been living in a state that has a trigger law, in Missouri, which means that the day that Roe was overturned while I was out kayaking on a lake, trying to get my frustration out, my attorney general signed away my right to my bodily autonomy.

Sarah Kendzior (00:14:41):

And that attorney general is now the senator of my state. And women here were devastated and reproductive rights activists in particular were devastated. And we're often forced underground because

the priority of these activists, of these doctors, of these women and often men who are trying to protect our rights to privacy, our rights to bodily autonomy, is to help people. It's to help people in a terrible time of need, in a very vulnerable position. And so there's not in that case, you know, people aren't gonna go on Twitter and be like, "Guess what I did today? I violated state law and, you know, helped a young girl who was raped get an abortion." This isn't for bragging rights. This isn't for theater.

Sarah Kendzior (00:15:31):

These are people's real lives, you know? And I live in one of these states and I thought really that there would be more pushback from the Democratic Party on a national level. Instead what I found is that we as people who live in the trigger states, we are demonized or we're used as pawns in fundraiser emails. You know, "give us some money and maybe—maybe—we'll push to get back your bodily autonomy." And the overwhelming message from the Democrats is, "You're asking for it. You all were asking for it." Now, I'll just say, I've heard that phrase a lot of times. And that's very much how it feels like. To be clear, we're not. In all of these states that people like to typecast as very conservative, as "bright red states", you're seeing people pushing back. We saw that in Kansas with their referendum. And when the opportunity for a referendum to make sure that reproductive rights stay protective presents itself, all of these states are voting to protect them. Nobody likes the severity of the *Roe v. Wade* overturn, especially when it's combined with stuff like Texas having bounty hunter initiatives and so forth. It's very frightening. But they're not really doing much even rhetorically to push back against it. They're not treating it as a public health crisis, which it is. And one of the things they can do, as Andrea said, is appoint judges who on a local level will protect the rights of pregnant people, but we're seeing reluctance to do that. I believe in New York also we're seeing this attempt to try to push forth anti-abortion judges.

Sarah Kendzior (00:17:20):

We saw it with Henry Cuellar in Texas when Pelosi and the other Vichy Democrats were trying to back him even though he's against women having reproductive rights. It's a frightening thing because it makes you feel like folks who are already very disadvantaged, facing incredible cruelty from these legislatures, because, you know, let me be clear: they get off on this. They absolutely love this, these rightwing members of the Supreme Court, these rightwing extremists in legislatures like Missouri. It's about control. It's about the ability to abuse and corral women like cattle and deprive us of the rights to our own bodies and our own decisions. And that's a frightening thing on a day-to-day level to live under. You would think there'd be more solidarity, more protection, but no. We're asking for it, as I've heard.

Sarah Kendzior (00:18:16):

So yeah, two things there: We've got insurrectionists and secessionists in the House; we've got a radical right-wing Supreme Court, which has the ability often to overturn the more sensible decisions of state legislatures; and then a third example of Trump did not win, but the coup won, is that Trump is roaming free. Trump is running for president again to be mafia Grover Cleveland. This is a situation that I think is unparalleled in history, at least in democratic countries. I can certainly think of a parallel in Germany in 1933, but I've never heard of a country in which an openly plotted violent coup was allowed to proceed, was barely fought against, and then through the effort of the electorate, of the voters, of the public, the coup failed and then the administration that came in refused to investigate it, thoroughly at least refused to hold the elite operatives behind it accountable instead focusing on low level pawns, and then allows the head insurrectionist to run for president again despite the fact that he openly believes that our elections are illegitimate unless he wins them, has threatened an enormous number of Americans, enormous numbers of people in Congress, of private citizens.

Sarah Kendzior (00:19:50):

This is very obviously a man who should be in prison, a man who should not be allowed to run for anything again. And it's frustrating to see the commentary about the situation because people still treat it to this day like a horse race game, like some sort of little popcorn chewing "rah rah, are they gonna get him?" And Andrea and I don't care. We want our country to be protected. We want to be protected ourselves from a national security threat, from a violent demagogue with a proven track record of exactly what he will do to people once he gets into executive power, and obviously this should be treated as a profound crisis. And obviously that profound crisis extends far beyond Trump to the network, some of whose members I was just naming, you know, who were also not investigated; Stone, Flynn, Manafort and so on. The DOJ has turned their back on that. I have more examples, sort of stretching out from there, but any comments on Trump coup plotter central being allowed to possibly return to the White House?

Andrea Chalupa (00:21:06):

I know this sounds mad to say, but I would actually be relieved if it was Trump on the ballot in 2024. I mean, it'd make a absolute mockery of the criminal justice system in the US, but so does every police lynching of a young Black man in America. It would just underline all that. I think Trump would be significantly easier to beat than DeSantis, who is the prettier package and the better-behaved fascist in the eyes of the independents that you need to win the electoral college. Unfortunately, the reality is just not enough people vote and Trump brings out the non-voters to vote against him. His whole MAGA movement turned Arizona blue on the big races. It won Nevada, significant races in Nevada. And we came again very close in Wisconsin for the Senate. Unfortunately, DeSantis, he fools people. *The New Yorker* gave him a profile that was supposed to sort of dig deep, but it ended up convincing folks.

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:08):

People were saying to me, "Well, you know, DeSantis seems like a reasonable guy. He's got some good environmental records." Desantis is very much a cookie-cutter of Viktor Orbán, who has turned Hungary into an authoritarian state lite, like the Diet Coke of authoritarian states. You had his whole coalition that got together, put their differences aside to try to defeat Orbán, and they couldn't do it because, one, gerrymandering was so bad in Hungary, and also he's done a lot to really weaken the opposition, including spreading his propaganda on social media and state media and so on. And the anti-gay laws are straight up Orbán, and Putin in Russia. That's how Putin consolidated his power when he was climbing. Building a dictatorship for himself was through anti-gay laws. And DeSantis is straight out of that playbook.

Andrea Chalupa (00:23:04):

Where Trump comes in like a whirlwind of fascism, DeSantis is the frog in the pot of boiling water of fascism, where it's just slowly, gradually heating up. I'm concerned that his younger, fresher face and his Brooks Brothers [laughs], you know, his Brooks Brothers mystique is going to fool enough of these independent voters that you need to win the electoral college in America, and that it'd be a very close matchup between Biden and DeSantis. We know that the Koch brothers' political network is desperate—desperate—to shut out Trump. They're pledging a fortune to a Republican primary leader who's not Trump, so Trump really is the underdog even though he is the spiritual force of today's Republican Party and they built this monster. They built him. This is the Republicans' Frankenstein monster; all those years of racist dogs whistles and misogyny and coming after *Roe* and all these things.

Andrea Chalupa (00:24:05):

The Obama birther movement was very much a Republican movement that Trump was the leader of. Trump is the Republican Party because they've been in bed with him for so long and now they see that a whirlwind of fascism, you know, orange Hitler just doesn't sell, doesn't win the voters they need. And so

they're going to try to pivot to a DeSantis because he's safer for them. And I'm sure the Kochs will get behind DeSantis. And I do worry about a Biden/DeSantis matchup. We're going to watch the State of the Union tonight. We're going to see what sort of energy comes out this evening, what the promises are, and then we'll talk about it on this week's bonus episode for our Paton subscribers, as well as answering some questions from our listeners. And we can talk about, you know, is it looking like Biden's going to run again?

Andrea Chalupa (00:24:53):

Because that's the big question. *The New York Times* just did a bit of a hit piece. Whatever your criticism of her is, I've been critical on this show of Kamala Harris, vice president, but *The New York Times* did go after her in a recent piece that came out saying that she's waffling, that even the people in her inner circle, that Kamala's folks referred the *New York Times* to in order to get positive quotes for their profile on her and what she's been up to, they turned on her instead and expressed concern to *The New York Times* of whether Kamala Harris has what it takes to rise above. And again, the vice president role is historically awful. You're contained, you're in a box. Vice presidents very rarely have a legacy other than, of course, famously Dick Cheney because he was the military industrial complex.

Andrea Chalupa (00:25:45):

He was Halliburton invading Iraq to make a bunch of money for himself and shareholders. That was just a baldfaced money grab, right? And so that made him sort of the singular vice president, as vice presidents go. But typically it's not a fun role. And she took it on. I mean, she would've been fine in the Senate. She would've been great bringing her prosecutor skills on Senate committees and grilling people and producing great TV. That's what she was doing before and we're not really getting that because that's fine in that role, but being that sexy TB Law and Order prosecutor that gets played by Maya Rudolph on SNL, it's not the vice president role, you know? [laughs] You're more like a backup dancer and that's a really tough thing to be stuck in. Biden came in to be the white guy that vouched for Black Obama to become president.

Andrea Chalupa (00:26:38):

You know, he was like the affable white guy with his big shiny teeth and love of ice cream who could put his arm around Obama and make Obama seem less threatening to the racists in the country and so on, like, "it's all gonna be okay", you know? And that was a very strategic choice, which produced a beautiful, authentic friendship between the two that was very clearly genuine. Biden did a lot of good things for Ukraine during his time as vice president. But Kamala, there are headlines of her coming out and doing things when it comes to, I don't know, some labor laws recently like she was standing up for but she hasn't really come out... I'll just say again: As vice president, we knew that Biden had a soft spot for Ukraine. That was obvious. He gave a lot of attention to Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (00:27:21):

He was assigned to Ukraine as part of Obama's foreign policy portfolio. He delivered on Ukraine in a lot of significant ways, including delivering a *Gaslit Nation* sermon in Ukraine's parliament, telling the Ukrainian government that the Kremlin was weaponizing their own corruption against them. Then the Kremlin, you know, having success with that in Ukraine then weaponized American corruption against us in the US through Trump and the rest of the Republican Party and so on. So Biden stood out as being a champion of human rights in Ukraine and fighting corruption in Ukraine and standing up to the Kremlin. He stood out for that. You could tell that that was his soft spot, that he really genuinely cared. And it shows a lot as president. He's done miraculous things as president. He shut down Nord Stream 2, which I used to pull my hair out over on this show. Thank God. Angela Merkel and the rest of the German establishment allowed Germany to become further entrenched on Russian gas.

Andrea Chalupa (00:28:14):

Biden shut that down. He said he was going to, and he did. He united NATO. He united global democracies. He's fought tooth and nail to help Ukraine to confront an existential genocide against the country. It's an open genocide that Russia's waging against Ukraine. So we know that he had this passion for Ukraine and it showed, as well as president. It shows now as president. I cannot tell you what that passion as a leader is for Kamala. She needs to just stop with the consultants. She needs to stop with the communication experts and just release her heart and just go after what she loves. I'll just go and say this: When John Kerry was running for president and he earned the nickname "Flip Flopper", that was true. He really did have consultants on one cell phone and the other cell phone, and both cell phones pressed to ear.

Andrea Chalupa (00:28:58):

Kamala can't go down that path. She needs to just like, you know, rip open her shirt and show the super girl uniform underneath and just come out swinging for whatever cause is deep to her heart. She has two years to do that; just be authentic now. But I do not think that America is ready for her in a matchup versus DeSantis at all. I do hope that it is Biden running in 2024. I really do. And I think the anger towards him that shows up in the polling, I really do believe that that's coming from general malaise in America where we feel like, my God, the fascists are winning, the fascists are relentless.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

Why won't somebody do something? And Biden being president, everyone looks to him, like, "Why isn't Trump in jail? Why aren't more of these guys arrested? Why is Bannon running around couping? Why is Manafort going around doing a rehabilitation book tour along with Jared Kushner and Ivanka?" So that whole feeling of Gotham City being ran over by the Penguin and the Joker and so on, that's what we're responding to in Biden's poll numbers. And if he can just fix that and get the DOJ shaped up... I know there's a separation between him and America's top cop Garland, but he could also say as president that he wants greater accountability, that he wants this neo-Nazi warfare against our democracy, including neo-Nazis trying to blow up the power station in Baltimore, a predominantly Black city. If he could do more of a rallying call against the homegrown fascist threat in America and the Russian operations that pour gasoline on it, if he can just be a lot more visible in taking on those demons and forcing accountability, you'll see his polling numbers shoot up.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:43):

And I do want to see him run again. I think he's been great for Ukraine. I think he'll win again, especially if he has a lot of the same team helping him as he had in 2020 with Bernie Sanders on the stump and Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg. If he has the whole unity force out again and talks about accountability in concrete ways of how he's going to give us accountability, finally, I think he'll be fine, especially against DeSantis and all that Koch money.

Sarah Kendzior (00:31:11):

Yeah, I mean, it's hard to say. I agree with you that Kamala Harris versus DeSantis would be a disaster. I also think DeSantis is somebody who—as the scrutiny grows, if there's debates and so forth—is gonna crumble, I think, a little more than folks anticipate. I think people think he's like, you know, the new

Ronald Reagan and I don't see that in him when he speaks, but he is a threat. I mean, he is a threat within Florida and that has become the template for what the GOP wants to do nationally and is going to be able to do nationally in a lot of ways, because when they're able to get a national board like the Advanced Placement Courses to get rid of their Black history course or to strike writers from it, that trickles into the national discourse.

Sarah Kendzior (00:31:58):

That's just one example of something that DeSantis and his backers have been able to pull off in Florida. I mean, it's like if we make it to 2024, I'll be kind of astounded because with Trump and the rest of these people running around and couping and criming, it is an active, ongoing, daily national security threat that transcends politics. It transcends our electoral system. It transcends these kind of, you know, "We can wait until the election" type scenarios. We're in danger right now. But one other thing that does make me worry though, assuming we get to 2024, assuming Biden does run again, is that I think a lot of folks voted for Biden as a vote against Trump; a very strong vote against Trump. They also voted for the platform that Biden ran on which included a lot of accountability and which included a lot of social welfare programs and did not include the biggest military budget in history.

Sarah Kendzior (00:32:58):

It did not include a lot of the things that he's done. And this is where I get to another point on my list of how Trump lost the election but won the coup, is that we're seeing this in this "culture war" that the GOP launched and really amped up once they lost the actual election. What they call a culture war is actually a sophisticated attack on human rights and now they've gotten their cruelty codified in law. This is, again, an opportunity, like you said, for Biden and Harris and others to at least rhetorically speak out against it. One thing that's absolutely wild to me is that when Biden did do this, when he made his big pro-democracy speech in the fall of 2022, it was debated in the media, like, "Is it appropriate? Is it appropriate for the American president to vouch for democracy?"

Sarah Kendzior (00:33:53):

They need to first of all just ignore the media, ignore that type of punditry, which is really both-sidesing democracy versus fascism. And I'm sorry, when you both-sides democracy versus fascism, you are throwing fascism a win. It's incredibly cut and dry. And they've been doing that on a more localized level regarding specific topics—or should I say specific rights—for years. We saw this with the escalated attack on trans Americans. We've seen this with a revival of homophobia that I've, you know, I've not seen the levels of this since the 1990s. It's like going back in time. We've seen it in the continued assault on Black Americans by police. Most of the time the police are let free. And then this media culture that contributes to the threats instead of covering them instead of speaking to the victims, instead of centering the victims.

Sarah Kendzior (00:34:56):

One thing that just continues to blow my mind—we've covered him on this show before—is Christopher Rufo, the GOP operative, will get on Twitter and he'll just announce like, "Yeah, you know, here's our new plan. We found this term 'critical race theory.' We're going to make every single debate about it. We're going to demonize it, but also expound upon it so vaguely that the term will lose all meaning and will just serve as this stand-in catchphrase for all the evil that the Democrats are doing." He comes out and says, "This is our game plan." And then they follow the game plan, the media follows the game plan, and then meanwhile you've got writers, activists, professors, teachers in public schools saying, "Hey, we have a problem because this isn't just some sort of abstract debate."

Sarah Kendzior (00:35:47):

“We have the GOP actually putting forward incredibly repressive and bigoted laws through state legislatures, through local legislatures. We could use a little help here.” And then you've got people, you know, starting in 2019 especially, just kind of laughing off that threat, saying that the real threat was “wokeness,” which I think they're using in lieu of another word. And it's only when things get to a level where you're seeing incredible suppression, incredible personal attacks, things like kids in middle school and high school having to submit their menstrual cycles and the dates of them to state governments. I mean, really over the top stuff. They're finally like, “Ooh, ooh, maybe we went too far on attacking the ‘wokeness.’ Maybe we should have taken all those other attacks a bit more seriously and not contributed to the both-sidesing of fascism.”

Sarah Kendzior (00:36:45):

But the thing is, it's too late in terms of a lot of the laws—I think a lot of these people are gonna be sued for being unconstitutional—but it's not too late, at least rhetorically to see what you stand for, to condemn Nazis. For some reason, it was very easy for people to do this during the Trump administration; after Charlottesville, after all of these other horrific events. They suddenly have become very timid. And this correlates with a lot of changes we've seen in media, a lot of firing of journalists who aren't white, of women, of the same thing happening in entertainment. It's the backlash. It's just an incredibly wide ranging backlash to a lot of pretty major movements, including #MeToo, including fights for Black rights, including fights for voting rights.

Sarah Kendzior (00:37:39):

If there was a culture war, for a while progressives or at least Democrats were winning it. And then they surrendered that war by pretending it wasn't happening or that it wasn't serious, it was just some sort of debate and not something that had to do with actual laws that affect actual human beings, and now that's the point that they're at. And I think DeSantis is the person who embodies that the most because he's accomplished that in Florida and as a result, people who live in that state are suffering enormously. I've got other points, but do you have any response to that?

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:16):

Yes, I agree. And DeSantis has an annoying voice. I'm a big voice person. I'm saying that while I'm on the brink of losing my voice right now from this cold, but his voice is so whiny. [laughs] He sounds like such a little bitch.

Sarah Kendzior (00:38:33):

He looks like if Reagan, like, if you compressed in some sort of machine and shrank him down, like a deformed action figure or something.

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:41):

He looks like some woke mob gave him a permanent wedgie.

Sarah Kendzior (00:38:48):

[laughs] Yeah. I mean, that's why I kind of feel like I look at, you know, who is most likely to be the new demagogue, because it's not easy to be a demagogue. You can have all the help in the world and you still can't pull it off like Trump

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:59):

Trying, and it's not taken off.

Sarah Kendzior (00:39:01):

[laughs] Yeah, Trump was a natural born demagogue. That was his utility to the GOP and to all of these illicit backers abroad and to the mafia. He's a showman, he's a front man. I don't think DeSantis has that kind of charisma. Initially, I was worried about Tucker Carlson or somebody like that—somebody who more naturally inhabits the demagogue role—going in there, but they seem to be placing their bets on DeSantis. I mean, you could just look at where the money's going. You can look at where the big backers who elevated Trump and elevated others are throwing down their cash. And it's early, but so far it's DeSantis, which is alarming in its own right for what DeSantis is doing to Florida and doing to our country right now. And it's also just crazy. You know, I look at him... He and I are almost the exact same age. He and I are like a week apart. And I think about that sometimes—

Andrea Chalupa (00:39:50):

He looks 10 years older.

Sarah Kendzior (00:39:52):

[laughs] I know!

Andrea Chalupa (00:39:53):

Because he's rotting from the inside.

Sarah Kendzior (00:39:55):

But I also think about, well, how old was he when certain pivotal events happened, like the LA riots, the OJ Simpson trial, the impeachment of Bill Clinton, 9/11? We were the exact same age. And I keep thinking how he's hearkening back to so many of the things that we both grew up with, and it's just a retread. The woke debate now, it's the PC debate of the 1990s. The radical Republicans now is the same movement that Newt Gingrich was working on in the mid 1990s. This is just one big continuum, one big nightmare that we were born into. And I wrote *Hiding in Plain Sight* about that. I started it with Trump's career in the 1970s corresponding with the decline of the entire country, corresponding with me and Ron DeSantis [laughs] being born apparently during the Carter administration.

Sarah Kendzior (00:40:47):

And so he's witnessed all this, and it's just sometimes wild to me that you can be the same age as somebody and witness all these events and come out with just utterly different views. But I think he has this preening ambition that I lack, which is why I am doing a podcast from my bedroom with you.

Andrea Chalupa:

Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

Thanks.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Yes, exactly. No, it's a compliment. It's a compliment. Alright, so other indicators that Trump lost, but the coup won: major ones are that people who helped facilitate the coup are still in their positions in the federal government under Joe Biden. And this remains one of the big mysteries of our time. We've done separate episodes on both of them. I think the DeJoy one was called [“The DeJoy of Crooking.”](#) Anyway, Louis DeJoy is still in charge of the post office after trying to annihilate mailboxes, prevent voting by mail. He was supposed to be investigated by Congress for all these things, potentially by the DOJ for these things.

Sarah Kendzior (00:41:50):

Instead, he's there. And Biden, he did replace people at the Board of Governors in the postal service, but he replaced them with Louis DeJoy fans. So Louis DeJoy remains in that position of power, which of course is dangerous for an election. Even worse, you have Christopher Wray staying in as the head of the FBI. He was Trump's pick. Of course, the suggested pick for Trump from Mitch McConnell was Merrick Garland, who Biden then made Attorney General. Trump rejected the Merrick Garland bid and chose Wray instead. Wray looked the other way when an attempted coup and violent attack on the Capitol happened, still has not arrested the major operatives behind that attack, and had a Kremlin asset or possibly agent working right under his nose, Charlie McGonigal, who we've covered in previous shows. And you don't hear any talk from the Biden folks about, like, “Yeahhhh, maybe we should get rid of this guy.”

Sarah Kendzior (00:42:51):

“Maybe this is not who we want here. Maybe he actually should be investigated. Maybe the FBI is a broken evil institution.” But no. And I bring these up because there are a lot of things going wrong in America that are not in Joe Biden's control, he can't do much about them. Inflation was one. And... Well, I might get into Covid later. There are things he can do about it but there are some things that just happen and they're not caused by the President and they can't be unilaterally fixed by it. He can get rid of Christopher Wray, he can get rid of Louis DeJoy, and he's just choosing not to. He could also get rid of Merrick Garland—although God only knows who he'd replace him with—and has chosen not to.

(00:43:33):

And that's a very frightening thing because to me it says, “I approve of this coup.” I don't see any other logic behind this because it is incredibly dangerous for our country. It's dangerous for him personally, one would think, so it's kind of bizarre in the sense of self-interest. Anyway, I've gone over this before. There's no precedent for this internationally. We've seen in recent months in Brazil, in Germany, people attempting coups and the normal thing happens when someone attempts the coup, which is the coup plotters are arrested, indicted, investigated, not allowed to serve in Congress [laughs] and so forth. I'm sorry, I'm laughing because it's just so bleak. Along the same lines, Kevin McCarthy, a leading Insurrectionist, is now the Speaker of the House as a result of the GOP winning. And we've gone through in previous episodes how shady that election was.

Sarah Kendzior (00:44:31):

Particularly the action in George Santos' state of New York. And McCarthy is troubling not just for his seditious impulses and right-wing hardline views, but because of his connections to a variety of oligarchs. He has taken an enormous amount of money from Russian oligarch proxies like Len Blavatnik, who can legally give money as a US citizen and can therefore further the interests of people like Oleg Deripaska or Viktor Veckselgurg. We also have McCarthy's own history, where he allegedly admitted that he knew about Trump's illicit ties to the Kremlin and to the Russian mafia all along. And that was reported way back in 2017. And you'd think, “Eh, maybe there'd be some follow up on that.” But no. This is yet another

thing that the DOJ could have investigated, but they were too busy working for the Russian mafia themselves.

(00:45:32):

The house GOP is too busy planning show trials and also deleting evidence of prior investigations from the internet. If you want to go see what the Democratic House was up to in the brief period that they were actually investigating all of these corrupt people—this is from about 2017 to 2019 before Pelosi became the Speaker of the House—there are quite a lot of investigations from the oversight committee and other committees, in particular Elijah Cummings’ investigations, the late Elijah Cummings, of things like illicit Saudi money going to members of the Trump crime family. Those are being deleted by the Republicans, I assume. Those are being deleted from the archives that are available to the public online. So we're watching history be erased and we're watching history be rewritten, all of which is a crisis, particularly in an era where we already are contending with social media monopolies dominated by people like Elon Musk, Peter Thiel and whatnot. We're losing access to primary sources and to real-time evidence of what truly happened. And that... You'd think folks would want to preserve that because if you can't have an accurate rendering of history, it's very hard to fight for the future. It's a truly threatening and damaging sequence of events. Any thoughts?

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:03):

Ooh [laughs] Sorry.

Sarah Kendzior (00:47:06):

Wray, DeJoy, McCarthy.

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:08):

It's such a punch in the gut to see McCarthy as Speaker of the House. He did some video where he was saying, “The House is going to stand firm. Republicans are gonna be united against China, China buying up all our farmland,” which I agree is troubling. Why the hell are we letting an authoritarian state buy up so much farmland, you guys, when sustainable farming, sustainable feeding of an overpopulated country is a very big issue right now that's gonna reach a crisis point? So please do not let an authoritarian regime buy up all our food, especially one that doesn't like us, doesn't like democracy and is carrying out a genocide against a religious minority: the Uyghurs. So yeah, that's not a good policy, but they use China as just another Republican racist dog whistle. They don't really care about that at all.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

Otherwise they wouldn't have had Trump and Ivanka as being the heart and soul of the Republican Party, Ivanka having her daughter speak Mandarin on Instagram or whatever to try to win hearts in China, and Ivanka jumping the line and getting all those Chinese patents, Trump having a bank account in China and on and on it goes. Trump basically did WWE-style wrestling theatrics, as you pointed out. He's a grand showman and that's what an aspiring dictator needs, and DeSantis doesn't have that. But this whole sort of Kevin McCarthy GOP being the tough part tough guys on China is just gaslighting. They would be right in China's pocket alongside Trump if they could, and I'm sure many of them probably are.

Sarah Kendzior (00:48:46):

Oh, yeah. In Missouri, a lot of them are. And then they do the same thing where they rightfully will condemn the mass purchasing of Missouri farmland by the Chinese government or by proxies for the Chinese government. I mean, this is one of these issues where I think most Americans agree about this. We also agree about things like Saudi Arabia owning a lot of our water supply in the Southwest. These are threats to our sovereignty and I don't think it matters what political party you're in; we should all be alarmed by that, but we also should be alarmed by the hypocrisy and the inaction, especially in an era of climate change, especially when resources like food and water are going to become increasingly scarce, and we need those resources for the people actually living here. And again, this is about the Chinese government.

(00:49:38):

This is not about Chinese people. It's obviously not about Chinese-American people who are in the same situation as we are because we are one country. And yeah, it is shameful. And so I have two more points to make on this "Trump won the coup." The next one is about the January 6th committee, which was in my view basically a wash. It was not as bad as the DOJ's inaction, but I do think it failed to inform the public about the background and extent of the attacks, much like the impeachment hearings failed to, much like the canceled oversight hearings failed to. It was an ineffective exercise in selective narrative dissemination. Among the things that everyone is still wondering about are who was that bomber outside who potentially could have killed Kamala Harris? You'd think that would be a bigger issue, especially given the photo evidence.

Sarah Kendzior (00:50:38):

But again, as I said, our FBI's too busy working for the Russian Mafia. Who removed the panic buttons in Ayanna Pressley's office? Who made other public threats of violence against other members of Congress? You can see a lot of these plans for this operation being released online. We saw Lin Wood, a colleague of Flynn and Stone, laying them out there. It's not a mystery. We also have connections within the government, you know, Michael Flynn's brother, Charles, allegedly aided this attempted coup and he's still there too. He's still there in the US military. I've said this so many times that apparently I need to say it again so that someone else besides our show cover it: The January 6th committee was overseen by Jamie Gorelick, a mistress of disaster, the modern Roy Cohn.

Sarah Kendzior (00:51:30):

She also was part of the 9/11 committee which was another exercise in selective narrative dissemination that buried a lot of important information—like Saudi complicity—from the American public. She oversaw that committee. She's also, as I've mentioned many times, Merrick Garland's lifelong best friend and mentor and is probably exerting some influence over the DOJ. But we don't really hear that, we just see her pop up in every propaganda piece about Merrick Garland. I guarantee you will find this name along with lies like "Merrick Garland solved the Oklahoma City bombing." The reason I bring this up in this context is because the January 6th Committee and all of its open hearings were a fantastic opportunity for Trump to firmly lose the coup by having the stakes spelled out to Americans.

Sarah Kendzior (00:52:22):

And by having the entire decades-long context of how Trump even got into a position to do what he did spelled out to the American public. And I actually think a lot of voters who are not Democrats, who maybe even hate the Democrats, would've been very interested to learn more about the role of FBI complicity over the decades, DOJ complicity, institutional failure. I know this because I write books about these things and every now and again I get emails that are like, "I disagree with pretty much everything else you say, but this was new information for me." Things like Trump's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein

or the fact that two heads of the FBI went on to work for the Russian Mafia; these are important, salient facts that I think most Americans don't know because most media outlets just kind of ban people from saying them on the air. They seek out former employees of the DOJ or the FBI who are not going to bring this up, even though this is very public information. You can get this from print news articles, Wikipedia, historical archives, what have you. There's nothing in doubt about anything I'm saying right now, but they just don't want that to be the point because they need to try to pretend that institutions aren't complicit and/or negligent in this disaster. And so, you know, that... I don't fully understand what happened with the January 6th Committee. I would love an exposé about what actually did happen. I suspect the presence of Liz Cheney, which everybody was vouching for at the time as this wonderful thing, did great damage because of course a Cheney family member is not going to want to have a historical look at institutional complicity and malice over the last few decades, which would lead directly to her father.

Andrea Chalupa (00:54:15):

Because we have questions about Iraq and how much money he made off that war.

Sarah Kendzior (00:54:20):

We have questions about everything and it's good to have questions about everything. I mean, that used to be thought of as an admirable quality of civic virtue; to question our authorities, to want investigation, to want transparency. And now, you know, now we are demonic troublemakers. But Liz Cheney's not gonna put her father's life or reputation in jeopardy which is why she's a very convenient person to have on that committee. And one of the people who she did not want the committee looking at was Roger Stone. Why is that? Because Roger Stone was heavily involved in the 2006 election, in particular, the contrived Brooks Brothers riots in favor of getting George Bush into the White House and therefore getting Dick Cheney into the White House. You can't tell the story of the rise of Donald Trump and leave all of this out.

Sarah Kendzior (00:55:09):

You can't pretend he just came out of nowhere and was some kind of anomaly. He was a product of this relationship between the GOP and intelligence agencies and a corrupt FBI and all of these outside actors, a lot of whom can be dated back to Iran Contra. It's very seedy and awful and frightening, to be honest. But they don't wanna talk about it. The thing is though, you can't solve it unless you talk about it. You can't discuss it, you can't come up with solutions, unless you know the extent of the problem. And I actually do have faith in the American people to come up with answers about what to do about this; sensible answers other than executing all of Congress. Because I think that a lot of times we're much more on the same page than the media and politicians want us to believe.

Sarah Kendzior (00:56:02):

This is a disillusioned country. We're sick of corruption, we're sick of kleptocracy, we're sick of elite criminal impunity. We're traumatized. Whatever your feelings are about the pandemic, we've all been suffering underneath it, it takes a toll. And I think watching people get away with horrific crimes and then try to frame that back to us as red states and blue states and Democrats versus Republicans—where it's obvious there's a unity in the level of this corruption and it's plutocracy, it's oligarchy—is demoralizing because it leaves us feeling like, well, you know, this is so powerful, what can we do? And we've gone over and over and again things that you can do locally or or in your own life. We have an Action Guide on our website on gaslitnationpod.com. But I think one of the most important things you can do is always tell the truth no matter how painful or horrifying it is, and always dig deep and follow the money and center the victims of this crisis, which means centering yourself. We,

Americans, we the people, we are the victims of this crisis and we have been betrayed and we do not deserve it. Yes, we got Trump out of office, but the coup won. And now it is time for the coup to lose.

[outro - theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:38):

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 (00:57:44):

We encourage you to donate to help rescue and recovery efforts in Turkey and Syria following the devastating earthquakes in early February. To help people in Turkey, visit the TPF Türkiye Earthquake Relief fund at tpfund.org.

Andrea Chalupa:

To help Syrians in need, donate to the White Helmets at whitehelmets.org. We also encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. In addition, we 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 and avoid products with palm oil.

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Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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