

Gaslit Nation Transcript
29 March 2023
"Accountability Theater"
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/accountability-80696110>

[opening song features ['Nickel and Dime' by Sofia Echegaray](#)]

[music up and under]

Sarah Kendzior (00:32):

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*.

Andrea Chalupa (00:44):

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, the film the Kremlin doesn't want you to see, so be sure to watch it.

Sarah Kendzior (00:59):

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

Andrea Chalupa (01:06):

The song you just heard was 'Nickel and Dime' by Sofia Echegaray. "Raised in the wild by feral graduate students, Sofia has lived all over the country and the world and as such, her musical influences cut a wide swath. They include flamenco, renaissance music, Texas singer/songwriters, and of course Tom Lehrer. Her accolades include semi-finalist awards from the Music to Life and New Song songwriting competitions. Sofia has been many things in life; a Harvard dropout, a software tester, a singer/songwriter, an essayist, and even a Muppet (long story there). Since 2009, she has also been a professional patient as a serious bout of Lyme disease left her disabled. As her body has changed, she has found new ways to express her creativity, which she believes is the birthright of all human beings. Sofia's statement about her song is the following: 'It all comes down to money.'"

Andrea Chalupa (02:05):

"A funk song with a singable chorus that breaks down how usury works will unfortunately always be relevant when you're talking about politics in America. As for creating, it helps me stay alive." We'll post a link to Nickel and Dime on our Twitter page and in the show notes for this episode on our Patreon page. You can find more of Sofia's music on SoundCloud. Exciting announcement! Sarah and I have the first ever *Gaslit Nation* book coming out this June! June 13, to be exact, is the big date. We worked on this book... [laughs] We worked on this book, oh, that's like... There could be a book about us working on this book.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

It's called *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think* and it's a wild ride graphic novel where you go on this journey, learning about the perks and the pitfalls of becoming a dictator.

Andrea Chalupa (02:59):

And there's this handsome Cary Grant narrator who takes you along for this bizarre fever dream. And at the end of the book, there's a big reveal on who he is. It's illustrated by an extraordinary, extraordinary feminist, politician, human rights activist out of Poland named Kasia Babis and she just nailed the spirit of us, the spirit of the show, of our really dumb yet hilarious jokes that permeate this book. And we go after everybody. So we look forward to sharing that with you. If you wanna join us in the rollout, the launch of *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think* and get access to the events we're going to do during this time of rolling out the book, make sure you're subscribed to Patreon. There, we're gonna share the behind the scenes of the making and events and all sorts of fun stuff as we celebrate the first ever Gaslit Nation book. And you can order that now. We'll drop a link on where you can find the book and pre-order on the show notes for this week's episode.

Sarah Kendzior (04:07):

Yes. And it is quite the ride. You know, one thing that's kind of sad and interesting is Andrea and I began working on this book in 2019 because graphic novels take a while to get made, especially during a global pandemic. And now, of course, we are rolling out our book about dictatorship in the midst of increasingly entrenched right-wing dictatorship, at least on the state level. So we'll see if we too end up on the banned book list.

Andrea Chalupa (04:40):

[laughs] We're going for it with this one.

Sarah Kendzior (04:42):

Then we'll write a book about that, you know, we called *My Gulag Diaries: The Story of 2024*. Anyway... So last week, if you're a regular listener of the show, you probably know I was not there. I was on a road trip across the country with my family. We drove out to the southwest. I stood in the four corners of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah—all of which is on Navajo territory—and thought about the incredible, destructive idiocy of labeling any state as red or blue, ignoring the history of the United States, the complexity of the United States, the diversity of the United States. This is something I always think about when I'm on these trips because when my family goes on a trip, we always drive and we leave from Missouri, which means that I have driven across the United States from the center dozens of times in every direction, passing through every type of community possible.

Sarah Kendzior (05:49):

So I know that these stereotypes do not hold. So anyway, one thing I did not expect to happen was to be in Oklahoma City on the day that Trump was giving his fascist speech in Waco. I had planned to be in Oklahoma City on that day just as a stopping point on the way home and I had planned to visit the Oklahoma City bombing memorial and share that with my family and teach my children about what happened there and why. And to pay my respects to the victims and their families and to the rescue workers. And it was unbelievably horrifying to be there on the same day that a seditious violent career criminal was giving his return-to-the-campaign-stage speech at Waco, at a place where the FBI did slaughter innocents; at a place of tremendous tragedy; at a place where the FBI should be accountable.

Sarah Kendzior (06:55):

And then Trump, of course, trying to present himself as the arbiter of justice, as someone who will bring about vengeance. And of course Waco is one of the things that inspired Timothy McVeigh to commit his act of terrorism in Oklahoma City and bomb the federal building in 1995, killing 168 innocent people. And so there are so many levels of exploitation going on and so much emotion. And then, of course, on top of that, you have Merrick Garland. You know, Merrick Garland, who falsely positions himself as somebody who played a role in catching McVeigh (he played no role in catching McVeigh) and he presents himself as the prosecutor of that case. He was not the prosecutor of that case. Joseph Hartzler was the prosecutor. All that Merrick Garland did was while he was working in the Clinton DOJ is he flew to Oklahoma City shortly after, did some photo ops, looked around, and then other members of the DOJ and also Oklahoma City officials took over that case.

Sarah Kendzior (08:02):

McVeigh, of course, was apprehended within 48 hours of committing the terrorist act. Unlike other seditious terrorists, he was actually held in prison immediately because people saw the urgency of the crisis and that he would strike again if given the opportunity. And he freely admitted this. He was unrepentant, he was proud of what he had done, and he was extraordinarily dangerous. And so we've gone over this in prior shows about how the myth of Merrick Garland being involved heavily with Oklahoma City was created, how it was created by the woman who mentored him, Jamie Gorelick, who is Jared and Ivanka's lawyer and who's also been involved in a number of basically of state crimes. You know, she's a coverup artist in the vein of Ray Cohn or Bill Barr or Alan Dershowitz, who is actually her mentor.

Sarah Kendzior (08:54):

They've created this. So I was feeling just such a level of disgust. Obviously the greatest disgust is with Trump and his exploitation of what happened at Waco, his attempt to get violent right-wing militias to once again attack federal government institutions. The fact that he wants to do it in his name when he is everything, he is the deep state that he rails against. He is the elite that he rails against. He has not ever been someone who has looked out for the interests of the American people. This is purely a career criminal who wants to get back into power both to state his backers, but also to protect himself permanently from any chance of prosecution. And I have to just add briefly—I'll get back to this later—the absurdity of leaving on a trip for about 10 days during which I vowed to not check the news.

Sarah Kendzior (09:53):

And as I was leaving, I was hearing reports that Trump was going to be indicted very, very soon, that it was definite, that it was on the way, that it was gonna be Monday or Tuesday. And I kind of rolled my eyes and thought, "Yeah, I'll believe it when I see it." And, of course, you know, by the end of that trip, he was giving a fascist rally in Waco. Of course, free from all indictment. And we'll get back to that. But I just wanna give a little more background about Oklahoma City and just describe what it was like to be there in general, not just on the day that Trump was giving this speech. First of all, if you are in Oklahoma City, I highly recommend going to this memorial. It's one of the most emotionally moving and honestly emotionally wrenching and beautifully designed memorials I've ever seen.

Sarah Kendzior (10:41):

It's a pool and at each end they have the time of 9:01 before the attack etched into this kind of column, you know, looking more like a bridge. And then on the other side of the pool is 9:03 and the attack took place in the middle. And so it forces you to think about that, about how many things can change in the blink of an eye, about how many lives can be lost so quickly. And then next to that are chairs. There are chairs to honor each of the victims of the attack. And one of the things that really broke me when I was

there was seeing the smaller chairs that they had for children, children who were in the daycare in the building, to mark that that had happened, that they were victims of this crime.

Sarah Kendzior (11:29):

And I was there when the sun was starting to set and the chairs were lit up. And it just... It felt like this very... It was a very somber... It felt like a kind of holy moment. And I felt haunted by what happened but I also felt a kind of relief that people were remembering, that this site exists, that people aren't forgetting that these were real lives and real victims because we live in this time with covid, with all of these other tragedies, with this normalization of mass death, with this "move on" attitude about January 6th and denial—continual denial—about the threats that we face. And another part of the memorial, there was graffiti that was preserved from the original day of the attack, from April 19th, 1995, that a rescue worker wrote where he says, "We search for the truth."

Sarah Kendzior (12:23):

"We seek justice. The courts require it. The victims cry for it. And God demands it." And I just think how the spirit of that often feels like it is lost today because we have lost so many battles over the last eight years but one of the greatest battles, I think, is that of our expectation; our expectation for truth and for justice. People are... I don't wanna say they're giving in because people are very exhausted and we've had to contend with a lot, but they're coming to rationalize a lot of atrocities that should never be accepted in any way. And one of the ways they do this is by rewriting history so that they can live in this fantasy world, so that they can pretend that somebody like Merrick Garland is actually on their side instead of out there protecting Trump and the syndicate behind Trump.

Sarah Kendzior (13:16):

And they wanna pretend that Trump can't win or that he won't be as bad this time, or that somebody like DeSantis isn't just, you know, posh Trump and that the systemic problems that gave rise to Trump have somehow been taken care of simply because we have a Democrat as president when obviously that's not the case. We had a Democrat as president and we had a Democratic Senate and House and look where we are now. We're in a worse position objectively than we were two years ago. And part of that is just the continuation of the policies that the Trump administration created and the Biden administration's refusal to counter them, to roll them back, and especially to pursue accountability. Because if you don't pursue accountability with a mafia syndicate backed by white supremacist militias, you are not going to be able to pass policy.

Sarah Kendzior (14:12):

You're not going to be able to create a future for this country which anyone wants or desires. All people want, I think, is the ability to live their lives in peace, with some sort of expectation of baseline justice, with the elimination of elite criminal impunity. Everyone is very fed up and part of the reason they're fed up is because of these endless fantasies, whether it's the revenge fantasy peddled by Trump in Waco when he actually symbolizes everything wrong with our system of government that he claims to rail against, or the fantasies that "justice is coming" that that QAnon peddles and that the Mueller/Comey/Bragg/Vance/Garland crowd peddles as well. And there's a couple of details about Oklahoma City because, you know, once I started debunking these myths about Merrick Garland, which by the way, I can't believe people believe this because if you were just alive in 1995, even if you were young, like I was 16 when the that attack happened, you know Merrick Garland wasn't involved in this.

Sarah Kendzior (15:22):

And you know he wasn't in the DOJ for most of the trial. These are things that are very easy to debunk so it's wild to me that people believe them. But anyway, one of the predecessor events to the Oklahoma City bombing that interests me is the Fort Smith sedition trial of 1988. Obviously folks bring up Waco

rightfully as a motivator for McVeigh to carry out this act and the date of the federal invasion of David Koresh's violent cult was the same. It was April 19th, 1993. So I'm not denying that that was a predecessor. But the Fort Smith sedition trial is one of these cases that has just been buried in American collective memory, but is directly tied to Oklahoma City and to McVeigh.

Sarah Kendzior (16:15):

And so Fort Smith is a city in Arkansas and in 1988, 14 white supremacists went on trial because they wanted to overthrow the United States government and they were going to assassinate federal officials. And then notably they were acquitted by an all-white jury after a very brief trial. And after this acquittal, the individuals involved went on to commit hate crimes, including murdering Jewish people in a terrorist attack in, I believe it was 2014. There's a long list. If you do not clamp down on these groups early, they will come back. But one of the people who actually was convicted for different crimes, for assassinating a Black Arkansas state trooper and also a white shop owner that he thought was Jewish, and that was the basis for his hate crime, is a man named Richard Snell.

Sarah Kendzior (17:09):

And Snell was in a white supremacist group called the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord. And so he was actually convicted and he was sentenced to death. And one of the things that he and his partners had been considering doing was blowing up the Alfred Murrah building—the same building that McVeigh ultimately blew up—in Oklahoma City. And they had been thinking about this since the 1980s, especially 1983. And this is another thing that's interesting: the day that the government picked for Snell's eventual execution, his federal execution, was in fact, April, 1995, the same day that McVeigh carried out the terrorist attack. And there are some claims that Snell knew about this in advance, that he knew of McVeigh's plans and he certainly was enjoying seeing them—seeing the results of his legacy before—he was executed.

Sarah Kendzior (18:13):

And I'm giving you a lot of history quickly, and I encourage you to look this up because it's a very complicated story, but it's worth discussing. One of the things I brought up before about McVeigh is that what Garland and others in the DOJ under Clinton did was try to present this as a lone gunman scenario; that it was just McVeigh and Terry Nichols, and they really played down the ties to white supremacists and other militant groups. I think it's in part because those groups often originated from Arkansas and were thriving when Bill Clinton was the governor of Arkansas. And often those groups claimed that they knew about other crimes being carried out in Arkansas, for example, drug smuggling at the Mina Airport in southern Arkansas that was involved in Iran Contra—again, when Clinton was governor. And I'm not claiming Clinton was involved in these crimes, but that as governor he would have an obligation to know about them and ostensibly to stop them.

Sarah Kendzior (19:09):

These terrorists claimed that they were using this as leverage. And, you know, you cannot trust the word of a terrorist so I would take this with a grain of salt. There was another member of this group named Jim Ellison. He was in a cohort with McVeigh later on. But notably, one of the things that I didn't know about is that he was in the Covenant Sword and Arm of the Lord terrorist militia group as well. That group was the subject of an ATF siege in the city of Elijah, Missouri, where they had built a large compound. And the date of that siege by the government was April 19th. It was April 19th, 1985; 10 years to the date before McVeigh attacked the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City.

Sarah Kendzior (20:01):

So you're seeing this date over and over again in some very well-known cases like Waco, but also in this siege of the CSA by the government—which was warranted—and in the execution of Snell. And it's

interesting to me because you put someone in like Merrick Garland as AG under Biden, who certainly would've known all this history or should know all this history, who was working for President Clinton, that of course would've known this history because he was governor at the time, then you bring him back under Biden and he's doing the same thing; this utter lack of accountability combined with historical inaccuracy and amnesia, not wanting to dig deep into the roots of Trump, Trumpism, his supporters, whether it is the white supremacists and militia groups in the US. You know, granted they have touched on to some degree the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys, but not to the degree that's necessary, not the historical roots of it.

Sarah Kendzior (21:06):

And then of course they ignore the organized crime component completely. They ignore transnational organized crime. They ignore the multitude of illegal acts Trump committed in office. They ignored the Mueller Report which laid out a lot of those acts, including obstruction of justice. And so I'm always left with the question of, you know, there are so many dangerous individuals utterly willing to take innocent American lives, utterly willing to destroy this country, and Biden knows it. And the DOJ knows it. And Garland knows it. And so the logical conclusion here is that they want this. They don't want the responsibility of doing it. They don't want to be blamed for it. Trump is happy to wear that mantle. He's happy to be that bulldozer. But they are letting it happen. And it has now been over two years since an attempted violent coup, since an attack on the Capitol.

Sarah Kendzior (22:01):

And as I've said many times, there's no precedent in world history for a violent coup to remain unpunished with the seditionists in office making laws. And then their leader running for president again, holding a rally at the site that has inspired right-wing militias and made them feel justified in their violence. Waco is what they point to—Waco and Ruby Ridge—to say, you know, “This is necessary. The federal government is an oppressive and violent force and it needs to be shut down.” And the irony with me is I actually agree that the FBI is a violent and oppressive force, and I agree that what they did at Waco was horrific. But who they are turning to for leadership, people like Trump, they are that state. If Trump actually wanted to help the American people, even this little band of would-be terrorists, he would've done so while in office for four years.

Sarah Kendzior (23:06):

He is a kleptocrat. He is a mafioso. He is a thief. On top of that, he is backed by extremely dangerous white supremacist forces who feel emboldened by the lack of action of Merrick Garland. And so, you know, I've gone on for quite a while here. The point I wanna leave you with though is do not forget the human toll of that day, of April 19th, 1995, because I fear we will see similar events again and again. And it doesn't take a lot to kill that many people. McVeigh was part of a network, but it just takes a truck and fertilizer and most of all, it takes a climate of inaction and inertia and people willing to look the other way because they don't wanna confront their own complicity or their own prior institutional failures. And if we don't start doing that now—if *they* don't start doing that now, officials don't start doing that now—we are in a world of trouble.

Andrea Chalupa (24:08):

Very well said. And I would like to point out that Sarah wrote to me yesterday saying, “I'm back from vacation. I'm gonna lean on you in this episode. You come out a bunch of stuff and I'll comment.” So I got like a whole page of notes ready and Sarah, instead, just gave me a little mini vacation here at *Gaslit Nation*. [laughs].

Sarah Kendzior (24:26):

Yeah. A really fun one. No, go ahead with your notes because from what I know we are on the same page here.

Andrea Chalupa (24:32):

I could have spent that time binge watching *1923*, but no.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

Alright, well, yes, I guess you save it all up. You go away on vacation, you get inspiration and then you just come out with it. And that was an essay and, and that was a powerful one.

Sarah Kendzior (24:48):

It's a lot of information. Yeah, I know. It's a lot to take in.

Andrea Chalupa (24:52):

It's Sarah Kendzior's Travel Guide of Americana.

Sarah Kendzior (24:54):

Yeah. Meanwhile I'm out doing fun shit but then in the back of my mind, this is all in the back of my mind. But seriously, folks should really research these Oklahoma City predecessors, especially as I said, the Fort Smith sedition trial. There still are articles publicly available about that. And it's part of that forgotten history. And also go back and look in the *Gaslit Nation* archives and our episodes about Oklahoma City, about Elihu City, which is one of the white militia compounds and so on. But anyway, get to the stuff that you've been working hard on.

Andrea Chalupa (25:27):

Yeah, all the stuff I sweated on. My blood, sweat and tears while you were out—

Sarah Kendzior (25:31):

Sightseeing and mourning, really. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (25:33):

Exactly. Taking your selfies of empire decay. Alright, so this was the big thing that was going on when you were out. There was all this fanfare, this breathless excitement thanks to Barnum Bailey himself, WWF wrestler extraordinaire Trump, announcing that he was about to be arrested. And you had everyone, as always, following his cat laser pointer and the coverage that dominated last week was, "Trump's about to be arrested. It's gonna finally happen!" All eyes were on Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg and all of the fancy legal pundit folks, the fancy folks, were saying, "Well, all signs do point to an indictment that's imminent. The grand jury is meeting again with all these witnesses. And let's look at all these other cases; Georgia, the shoe in Georgia might drop as well as DC's investigation as well as Jack Smith. Everything is ramping up, letters are going out, calls for testimony from Ivanka and Jared."

Andrea Chalupa (26:37):

“It's happening finally, folks.” And the whole sense was that, well, maybe the midterms that defied tradition, the historical trend, where the midterms are always a big old vote on the president's party—the party in power—and normally they swing towards the opposition. And this time that did not happen for a number of factors we talked about in the show. Of course, there was the shock and awe from the Republicans rolling back human rights when they overturned *Roe v. Wade* and that's led to a massive assault on women's rights in the states, an assault on women's healthcare, basic care and so on. It's just this atrocious fascist march towards greater and greater extremism that's gonna come not just for women, but for democracy generally. Women are one of those canaries in the coal mine, along with non-white people, along with LGBTQ people and other vulnerable groups, that once their rights are gone, it's going to come for everyone else.

Andrea Chalupa (27:32):

We saw that with the rise of Hitler and so on. It's just the good old fashioned dictators playbook. And so you really had this midterm election that electrified the base, that drove out the independents, as was perfectly summed up by one independent that I spoke to—I believe it was in Wisconsin—when I was joining with countless people across the country, bleary-eyed, tired, emotionally exhausted, a million other things we we needed or wanted to be doing but still making these phone calls to get out the vote. And one independent said to me, “I studied Germany, I studied the Third Reich. This is the first election in decades I'm voting in.” That summed it up. It was the first big federal election since Donald Trump and his big white cult tried to violently overthrow our election on January 6th. And all of the coup plotters are still walking around free, doing podcasts, inciting an another violent coup over in Brazil and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (28:18):

So all of that is to say that that big shellacking the Republicans took in the midterms, showing loud and clear that the Trump brand is toxic, all of the election deniers lost the key races in those states that Democrats need to defend in order to hold on to the electoral college in 2024; Arizona and Nevada, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania. And so Republicans, you know, there's this feeling of, okay, get him now. Stick the dogs on him. We need to go in for the kill. Trump needs to now finally go away if the Republicans have any chance of rebranding, rebuilding through a DeSantis or a Youngkin—a so-called posh Trump. Nicki Haley—in order to give Biden and the Democrats any run for their money in 2024 and then launching a strong presidential race, they can also expand their chances of congressional control. So there's a lot at stake right now.

Andrea Chalupa (29:14):

And so there's this idea that we're finally seeing justice in all of these local jurisdictions by these local prosecutors and even in this special council Jack Smith because the American people have their back, because the American people showed up, because the American people provided the mandate that was needed to give the prosecutors a shot of courage to finally do their jobs and a sense of protection. And that included, of course, Republicans. And so it was almost like the American people had spoken, the will of the people had spoken, and Trump was just toxic. He was just the kid that was going to get booed out of the cafeteria by everybody. But nothing's really come out of it just yet. It just turned out to be just some excitement that Trump ginned up for himself. And while the signs coming outta the Manhattan DA's office do look promising, Trump is doing his usual mafia threats and tactics like he did during his entire time in the White House when he wielded his powerful Twitter account to obstruct justice by threatening law enforcement from Bruce Orr to Lisa Page to Peter Strzok and so on, Mueller, the long list of people he went after who were tasked with investigating Russian mafia crimes and Russian mafia corruption.

Andrea Chalupa (30:38):

And, by extension, how the Russians help bring the Trump family to power and so on. So Trump just posted on his social media page a picture of himself wielding a bat next to Alvin Bragg's head. It was a picture of Alvin Bragg's head right next to Trump wielding a bat. And the bat was positioned facing Alvin Bragg. It evokes images of *Goodfellas*, like any mafia movie where somebody just gets bludgeoned to death. And so who knows if Trump and his Kremlin clown car can escape accountability yet again through threats overt/covert, through bribery. That's been the long trend it seems of his career of criminal corruption. But something needs to happen soon because, for the love of God, he can't go walking around free running for president because that creates, as we've said many times before in the show, a crisis of confidence in our country.

Andrea Chalupa (31:33):

How do you raise children? How do you educate children? How do you teach them right from wrong? How do you develop and mentor a new generation of leaders and public servants? How do you combat that when you have so many people openly getting away with corruption and incitement to political violence and how normalized that's all been? And that's the question we keep asking on the show. So something needs to happen. And whether people think it's fair or not, if you do not have some sort of accountability, that is naturally, understandably going to fall back on Biden and the Democrats in power because they're seen as the adults in the room. They're seen as the more mature party, the people who are in positions of power as well who could put on greater pressure, who could be more vocal about demanding accountability and calling out what a crisis of confidence in our political system and our justice system and the damage it does to strawberry cultural fabric when violent serial corrupt criminals walk around free—

Sarah Kendzior:

I just wanna add one thing.

Andrea Chalupa:

—and the poor get dragged off to prison.

Sarah Kendzior (32:39):

Just, this seems related. There's breaking news as you were talking, which is that Trump has now confessed to his sweetheart deal with the IRS in that they let him not pay taxes in exchange for a favor, and then he accused him of not upholding their end of the bargain anymore. I just wanna say—this goes to your point of a blatant career, criminal facing, no accountability—that the government could indeed expose and stop. You know, Janet Yellen and the Biden administration could release Trump's taxes. The IRS could. And it's very interesting for me to see this because I wrote all about Trump and his tax arrangement in my book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, referencing documents from the Czech secret services back when the Soviet Union existed and Czechoslovakia was a satellite state of it, in which it was claimed that Trump had a secret deal with the US government that he would not pay taxes and he had to follow through on a number of stipulations; have three children (which he did), stay married to Ivana, and run for president.

Sarah Kendzior (33:50):

It's a longer story than this but these documents were verified as real by Luke Harding, among other journalists who went to the Czech Republic and saw them. They illuminate Trump's lifelong ties to the

Kremlin, to transnational organized crime, and the fact that those two entities were working with factions of the US government, in particular in the FBI and then streamlined through the IRS. And it now seems like Trump's facing no consequences for any of this, feels comfortable simply confessing it, much as he confessed to obstruction of justice twice on tv and many other times and confessed to other crimes. And so, yeah, this is just yet another thing that now there's an opening for the government to act. There's an opening for the media to follow up. My guess is that they won't. They're just going to be like, "Oh my God, I can't believe he's making these wild claims!" I think this is one of these occasions where Trump is simply confessing. He's saying something true. Occasionally he does that because he loves to flaunt his criminality. He needs people to know that he has gotten away with it. He needs to rub that in everyone's faces. So you can kind of trust that. But anyway, go on. I just wanted to add that in since it seemed related.

Andrea Chalupa (35:05):

Yeah, no, I think the big headline here is local elections matter. I do have cautious optimism, cautious hope in Manhattan DA Alvin Bragg. He is somebody that has a long career of going after Trump as a prosecutor, unlike his predecessor, Cy Vance Jr., that, as we'll always repeat on this show because we were a monument to this fact: Cy Vance Jr. was investigating Ivanka and Don Jr. for fraud, investor fraud, in relation to the Soho Trump Hotel and let them walk when he got a campaign donation from the Trump family lawyer. And so obviously Alvin Bragg is cut from a different cloth. He came to power through the grassroots progressive engine in New York City. There's high hopes in him. And some of Cy Vance's people thought that Cy Vance was leaving him with a pretty wrapped up case with a nice, neat bow to go after Trump that Alvin Bragg was not pursuing.

Andrea Chalupa (36:13):

And what an outrage that was. One of these prosecutors even wrote a book about it. But now it looks like Alvin Bragg might be zeroing in. There might be something there in regards to the Stormy Daniels hush money case, which is a case carried out by Trump while he was president to silence a porn star, his affair. So it's all, you know, it all applies to a corruption charge for when he was in office. It's all stemming to his own election interference and doing something illegal to try to protect himself politically and do something illegal and corrupt stay in power.

Sarah Kendzior (36:49):

It's so piddling though. I mean, like, it blows my mind that this is the thing when he has, you know—

Andrea Chalupa (36:55):

Right, why don't they try people for being a traitor anymore?

Sarah Kendzior (36:58):

Yeah. When did treason not become a prosecutable crime? He should have been indicted back in 2016 for things he had done in the election; threatening private citizens, threatening public officials, etc. I mean, then he went on to basically commit like a crime a week for the entirety of his presidency and the fact that he had consensual sex—which is a rarity for Trump—with a porn star... Quite honestly, I think he wanted that story out because he wanted to be thought of as a man who a porn star would want to sleep with. He had two green card wives—Ivana and Melania—and then he had Marla Maples who was picked by his advisors because Trump was gonna run for president again as part of a southern strategy. Like, how does this New York pseudo tycoon win over the south?

Sarah Kendzior (37:47):

You get this southern bell. He has had very few actual romantic relationships. He's been accused of rape by Ivana and by other women. He's been accused of sexual assault and harassment by countless women. And he was also accused of rape by a woman who said that Trump raped her when she was 13 years old and she was forced into the Jeffrey Epstein/Ghislaine Maxwell operations. So, Stormy Daniels is really like, if it's true, if they paid off some hush money through Michael Cohen, it's the least of anything that he has done. And Michael Cohen, by the way, I mean... Michael Cohen was a career mobster. He was a lifelong friend of Felix Sater. There are emails between Cohen and Sater discussing how they had met with Putin to get Trump in power in 2016. Those emails are publicly available documents where they just, you know, freely confess to the fact that there is Kremlin interference in the election.

Sarah Kendzior (38:51):

And now Michael Cohen is hailed as this folk hero because he once testified to Congress about his role in Trump criminality. And granted he's like the only one who did it, which is in part how he earned that reputation. But this is someone who has many other interesting stories to tell. He could talk about the Mogilevich operation, he could talk about Sater, he could talk about those emails that I just mentioned. But instead he is going to talk about Stormy Daniels, which is—again—an incredibly minor, inconsequential thing. It's the kind of thing that everyone would like to think Trump was really about. *It's burying crime with scandal.* This is a scandal. He has committed incredible crimes against the American people—atrocities—and that is what he should be prosecuted for. But that is what this DOJ is ignoring.

Andrea Chalupa (39:40):

That is a clip we should blast out there. Put it on a rocket and let it shower down in a million pieces. That just nails it. And I wanna point out Stormy Daniels claims that Trump complimented her by saying, "You remind me of my daughter Ivanka."

Sarah Kendzior (39:58):

Yeah [sigh]. I feel like that was Stormy Daniels sending a little message to the world. I mean, there's more I could say on that, but go on,

Andrea Chalupa (40:08):

We'll save that for the bonus.

Sarah Kendzior (40:10):

We'll save that for when we're about to be thrown into the gulag for the upcoming graphic novel—

Andrea Chalupa (40:15):

By the way—

Sarah Kendzior (40:16):

—and we have nothing left to lose, like, by the way guys, something else we heard.

Andrea Chalupa (40:21):

Yeah, we'll do a Gulag special where we just let loose on everybody. Okay, so that brings us to, obviously, normalized corruption, normalized mass death, normalized political violence and so on. We've had another school shooting. The number one cause of death for kids in America is gun violence. Why is that? Because the gun lobby, the NRA, has bought off the Republican Party. If you wanna change things,

sign up to volunteer for Moms Demand. Moms Demand is a national group that trains and inspires and works with you to demand sensible gun safety laws where you live. And they also help candidates, including their volunteers, run for office because that's what we need. We need good, fact-driven, empathy-driven public servants to flush out this system and come to power. That's desperately what we need. And if you wanna know how to get started on that for yourself or someone you would like to convince to run for office, go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide at gaslitnationpod.com and you can get started there. So what is the Republican solution for another mass shooting? Let's check in with the Republican congressman for the Nashville District that just had a Christian school shot up by a former student, six people killed, including three nine year old children. What does Republican Congressman Tim Burchett think we should do to stop this other than send thoughts and prayers?

Congressman Tim Burchett(41:59):

Three precious little kids lost their lives. And I believe three adults, I believe. And the shooter of course lost their life too. So it's a horrible, horrible situation and we're not gonna fix it. Criminals are gonna be criminals. And my daddy fought in the Second World War, fought in the Pacific, fought the Japanese. And he told me, he said, "Buddy," he said, "If somebody wants to take you out and doesn't mind losing their life, there's not a whole heck of a lot you can do about it."

Andrea Chalupa (42:25):

Tim Burchett's solution, he goes on to say, you know, he homeschools his kids. Homeschooling, right? Homeschooling. That's hand-in-hand with Republican attacks on women's rights, including reproductive rights, where women are treated as second class citizens and vessels for producing babies even in cases of rape and incest. This is an aggressive, violent gateway to taking away the women's right to vote. This is just the start of it. Women are dying and losing essential healthcare services due to Republican legal warfare against women. They do not value the lives of women. And now they're going to capitalize on the gun violence epidemic they're creating by forcing women back into the home to homeschool children. Every school shooting is a success story for NRA-backed Republicans because these school shootings scare women back into the home to homeschool to raise their children that way and give up their jobs outside the home, give up their lives outside the home.

Andrea Chalupa (43:35):

Margaret Atwood famously wrote *The Handmaid's Tale* based on answering a question, "How do you force women back into the home?" How do you do it? And she based that novel, that work of fiction, on real life facts, real life research she pulled from extremist religious groups and their war on women and how they're trying to force women back into the home. So what do you think this gun violence epidemic fueled by the Republican Party is doing? It's part of their larger assault on women. It's part of their larger assault on normalizing mass death and mass violence so that they can justify and get away with rolling back regulations of corporations that are polluting us, that are creating these cancer clusters and so on. It's just sickening. And I wanna point out one thing you're gonna see on social media, one thing you're gonna see in the Rupert Murdoch far-right press juggernaut, including the *New York Post*, is that the mass shooter in this case was born female.

Andrea Chalupa (44:39):

It's Audrey Elizabeth Hale. They transitioned, I believe, reportedly recently into a man. They are Aiden Hale. That is how they identified. And unfortunately you're going to see this far-right machine—you're already seeing it—capitalize on this in their larger war against trans people, trans children, LGBTQ people generally, in their Nazi goose step march to consolidate power, to consolidate their far-right extremist base, and to get them all wilding out going into this election using all sorts of physical intimidation,

stalking polling places, basically unleashing a Pandora's a box of political tension and political violence. There's seizing the face that the mass shooter happened to be trans. Again, our gun laws are the problem in America. The gun laws, how easy it is to get these weapons of war. And everything goes back to the Republican Party and how they are corporate lobbyists for gun manufacturers who unfortunately benefit from these extraordinary luxurious laws that make it extremely difficult to near impossible to sue the gun manufacturers themselves for not keeping these weapons of war off of our streets.

Andrea Chalupa (46:05):

If whatever this manifesto by the trans mass shooter comes out, speak out on social media. Don't allow this—even though they're going to be doing this—don't allow this to be seized upon in the far-right extremist war against trans people, against LGBTQ people because, I'm telling you, that is the stuff of the Nazi movement. The storm troopers that came to power through violence and intimidation in Germany, they created this political atmosphere of violence in the air, of tension, of scapegoating others, because what it does is it forces your head to go down. It forces you to be neutral. It forces you to say, “I don't want any trouble. I'm going to stick to myself. I have a family to raise. Look, they're not coming after me, it's other people who are in the crosshairs, but I've gotta look out for myself and my family and I don't want any trouble.”

Andrea Chalupa (46:57):

And what happens then is neutrality takes over, this fake feeling of false comfort that if you just stay neutral, if you stay quiet, if you keep your head down, if you just let the streetfighting happen elsewhere to other people, then you'll be okay, you'll keep the temperature down. Things might be simmering, but don't get involved. Just keep to yourself. And really, neutrality is the enemy. Neutrality is the enemy. And in a time of growing fascism, everybody is forced to take aside as Audrey Lorde said, “Your silence will not protect you.” Your silence will not protect you. Don't you think that in the years leading up to Hitler's rise to power, when all the stormtroopers, the Proud Boys of the day, the Trumpist cult of the day, the scapegoating of the day, all the violence in the street, those stormtroopers would get in a lot of these drunken bar fights.

Andrea Chalupa (47:49):

They were stalking the streets looking for trouble. They were physically committing acts of violence and other intimidation against the Jewish population in Berlin and other cities in towns across Germany. The violence was heavy in the air, the violence in the intimidation. And what did the average German do? They kept their head down. They stayed neutral because they didn't want any trouble. And so I'm telling you, it's not just the fascists that are the enemies, it's the handmaids to the fascists, which is this pitiful idea of neutrality. You cannot be neutral when it comes to fascism. If you are quiet, if you keep your head down, if you stay on the sidelines, if you try to bow out of this fight, if you shove the work onto other people, if you expect savior syndrome, if you expect our institutions to automatically save us, if you think that there's some Batman out there that's gonna make all of this go away, if you basically give away your power, you're not committing an act of neutrality.

Andrea Chalupa (48:49):

You're committing an act of being complicit to violence, being complicit to the decline of our democracy. And we're entering this slippery slope. And we're only at the beginning. I promise you when I say this, we're only at the beginning. Things can and will get much worse. We have to refuse to be on the sidelines. We have to refuse the temptation and the seduction and the false comfort of neutrality. No one can be neutral now. So protect trans people, protect LGBTQ people, especially in the weeks ahead as you have the Tucker Carlson Kremlin machine going to make a huge deal about this, that the mass shooter happened to be trans. There's all sorts of mass shooters out there and they tend to largely be

white [cis] straight males who are inspired by Trump and his cult of violence. That's who the typical mass shooter tends to be in America.

Andrea Chalupa (49:42):

Okay? That's the average mass shooter. And that's who we should be paying attention to because all the signs, all the reporting, all the investigations, including by the FBI, have pointed to a rise in white supremacist terror in America. Okay? That's what we're up against. I want to close by saying, already, you're seeing the far-right bots on far-right troll Elon Musk's Twitter finding a connection between the trans mass shooter in Nashville and NATO, and NATO support for Ukraine and the Azov Battalion in Ukraine. So yes, the Kremlin, with Putin, who consolidated power through his own anti-gay laws and likes to hold himself up as being the bastion of white male patriarchy where he has this whole coterie of advisors who all sound like Michael Flynn saying that "in America trans people can marry animals and animals marry each." They have these bizarre conspiracy theories that are just a fever dream of YouTube comments. So yeah, you're going to see the Kremlin come in with their disinformation machine helped by Elon Musk and they're gonna throw gasoline on this fire. Don't allow it to get there. Don't allow it to get there. And just speak out. Donate to organizations that protect LGBTQ people, that protect trans people, and stand in your truth and just know who is really on the side of mass violence, mass death. It's the Republican Party and their gun lobbyist laws.

[closing song features ['Nickel and Dime' by Sofia Echegaray](#)]

[outro - theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth-teller level or higher.

Sarah Kendzior:

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 Turkiye 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 a razomforukraine.org. In addition, we encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you 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.

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 at our Patreon. It keeps us going.

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa (54:54):

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