

Gaslit Nation Transcript

17 May 2023

George Santos, Nikki Haley, the Kushners, Giuliani, and Other Ponzi Schemes

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[[Opening Clip](#) - 00:00:17]

George Santos:

I want to be remembered as somebody who stood up to everybody in the time of adversity. I want people to draw strength from difficult times. I don't want people to cave. I don't want people to fumble. I want people to look and say, "Look, times might be tough but there was always George Santos." And I mean that wholeheartedly. I think it takes a lot of resilience to go through what I've gone through.

[intro - theme music - 00:00:42]

Andrea Chalupa:

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, the film the Kremlin doesn't want you to see, so make sure to watch it. And this is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the United States and rising autocracy around the world. Our opening clip was well-known self-help guru George Santos, a Steve Bannon project propped up by dirty Russian oligarch-linked money who was indicted by the Feds for theft of public funds, wire fraud, and money laundering. Santos was released from custody thanks to a \$500,000 bond secured by three individuals whose identities are not public, according to the *New York Times*. Who would bail out a creepy serial liar who has no political future in New York in a district that went to Biden and only went to Santos because Jay Jacobs is terrible at running the Democratic Party in New York and needed to be replaced years ago? The fact that anyone would bail out Santos signals that he's still useful to the criminal far-right elite who have invested in him, which means George Santos is only the tip of the iceberg. We'll get to more of that, but first, a program change.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:15)

We're going to have the live taping of *Gaslit Nation* May 23rd at 1:30pm Eastern as planned, but this time we're featuring friend of the show, Olga Lautman, an expert on the Russian mafia who grew up in Brighton Beach. And instead of becoming a Trump Crime Family accomplice, she co-founded an anti-corruption NGO in Europe, hunting Russian oligarch blood money and their paid-off lackeys in the West. Sarah is taking a step back from the show. As Sarah has written on Twitter, she's dealing with a family situation which is difficult, even in the best of times. We wish her all the best, sending her lots of love. So it's just me for the time being, but in case you miss Sarah, here's a must-hear clip of her recent appearance on Jonathan Capehart's show on MSNBC.

[[clip of Sarah Kendzior on Jonathan Capehart's show on MSNBC](#) - 00:03:01]

Jonathan Capehart:

Sarah, what was on display at that CNN town hall was not only an authoritarian growling for a comeback, but an audience that was eating it up with laughter and applause. Was that the most vivid display yet of the erosion of our democracy?

Sarah Kendzior:

No, I think the most vivid display is the fact that we're having this conversation eight years later; the exact same conversation we had in 2015 and 2016 when he ran when America fully knew that he had this record as a career criminal with ties to hostile foreign regimes. According to *Puck* and other news sources, that audience was told that they were not allowed to boo Trump, that they had to applaud him, which is the kind of scene that you would see in an authoritarian regime. But what we're really suffering from here is a lack of consequences. This was not really a bad week for Trump, it was a bad week for America because of Trump. It was a bad week because he fomented a coup, committed obstruction of justice, abused the pardon power, allegedly committed multiple acts of rape, and if I list the rest I'll be here all day; and there has not been meaningful consequences. The first time Trump was investigated by the Department of Justice was in 1973, so we're now on the half centennial. He's been under investigation since before I was born and that's true for most Americans. And we've never seen real, meaningful consequences that constrain him and his backers from hurting the American people. It's the American people who matter. It's our rights, it's our suffering, and it's our future.

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:32):

And as an added bonus to discuss way to fight for our future and take back our democracy, as the Turkish opposition has been working so hard to do, sending strongman Erdogan into a May 28th runoff election, we're having a second live taping of *Gaslit Nation* next week featuring David Pepper and his new book, *Saving Democracy: A User's Manual for Every American*. He's going to talk to us about practical steps we can take wherever we live to push back against the fascist flood and their appeasers. Join us for that next Wednesday at 2pm Eastern. So we're having TWO live taping next week: Tuesday, May 23rd, 1:30pm as originally scheduled with Russian mafia expert Olga Lautman; and then a new one the very next day, Wednesday, May 24th at 2pm Eastern. You can get access to both events—come to one, come to both, whatever—by making sure you're signed up on Patreon at the Truth-teller level or higher. We'll post details on how to join those events the morning of on Patreon. We'll also share a sneak peak of the upcoming *Gaslit Nation* graphic novel, *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think*, which you can pre-order now. As a thank you, as a tribute to our community, we are selecting one Patreon supporter to get a copy of *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think* every month for the next year. Make sure you're signed up at the Truth-teller level or higher. Next week, we'll announce a new listener to receive the book. Thank you to everyone who supports the show.

Andrea Chalupa (00:06:01):

Now, a quick rundown of the news. There is a \$10 million lawsuit brought by Noelle Dunfy, a former aide to Rudy Giuliani, who says he was selling pardons for \$2 million a pop, a totally illegal fee that he planned to split with Trump, who he represented as a lawyer at the time. Her lawsuit reveals that Giuliani's appearance in *Borat* was completely tame compared to the Viagra pill-popping and aggressive sexual harassment and drunk racist tirades he regularly went into.

[audio clip]

Reporter:

Noelle Dunfy says she began working for Giuliani in January of 2019 when he was the private attorney of then-president Trump, but she claims she was put through horrible misconduct and has tape recordings, and that some of her exchanges with Giuliani are on that tape. We want to warn you these allegations are graphic.

Reporter:

Noelle Dunfy says she was hired by Giuliani for a salary of more than \$1 million a year to be his Director of Business Development, but instead she says she was subject to sexual assault and harassment and wage theft.

Attorney for Noelle Dunfy:

When they were supposed to be working, he would then—as our client alleges—grope her and try to initiate sexual contact.

Reporter:

Allegations about the former mayor of New York; that he drank morning, noon and night and was frequently intoxicated, and therefore his behavior was always unpredictable; and that Giuliani often demanded that Dunfy work naked or in short-shorts with an American flag on them that he bought for her; and that she never knew when Giuliani might force sexual contact on her.

Attorney for Noelle Dunfy:

She alleges that on several occasions, she objected—clearly—, that he did not respect those objections.

Reporter:

The suit claims Giuliani demanded oral sex while he took phone calls, including with then-president Trump, and told her he enjoyed it because it made him feel like Bill Clinton. Dunfy says she recorded many of the vulgar comments.

Attorney for Noelle Dunfy:

Racist remarks, comments about the genitalia of Jewish men, for example... Comments about different ethnic groups, comments about the bodies of prominent women like Hilary Clinton and Elizabeth Warren, imagining them in sexual scenarios.

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (00:08:14):

It must be noted that Giuliani did some work for Kremlin-linked politicians in Ukraine, worked with intelligence agents, where he tried to dig up dirt on Biden in the 2020 election and also on my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, the former DNC consultant who simply pointed out that long-time Kremlin operative,

Paul Manafort, was running Trump's campaign, which meant the Kremlin was helping Trump become president. She posted a warning to the world about this in the early hours of election night, 2016, which today reads like a summary of the 400-page Mueller Report because she was right, and vindicated, unlike that total taxpayer-waste-of-space-and-money known as the Durham Report that just came out, saying absolutely nothing except a bunch of Fox News gibberish, as intended, and yet we paid for this. There have been dozens of indictments from the Mueller Russia investigation, which speak for themselves, obviously. Unfortunately, several of them were pardoned. But now, given what we know about Rudy Giuliani trying to sell pardons for \$2 million a pop, all of Trump's pardons need to be reexamined, especially given what we know now. Really. Look at all of them. What was being exchanged there? That absolutely cannot be legal.

Andrea Chalupa (00:09:28):

And another disturbing development this week: Democratic Representative Gerald Connolly was the target of political violence when a man entered his congressional office in Virginia wielding a bat, seriously hurting two staffers including an intern who had just started in the office. This is another sign of the slow moving civil war discussed with recent guest, Jeff Sharlet, author of *The Family* and *The Undertow*, two must-read books to understand the times we're in. Since we started the show with that ridiculous clip of George Santos, let's go back to him. George Santos, as we've called him many times, is a mini Russiagate. We touched on this in the Florida super special we did in January. George Santos worked for a Ponzi scheme in Florida that went on to be investigated by the SEC. Santos lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in that Ponzi scheme; money given to him by Andrew Intrater, the cousin of Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg, who is a close ally of Putin. Vekselberg and Intrater were both people of interest in the Mueller investigation. Vekselberg, being so close to Putin and the Kremlin, was tasked with pollinating Russian corruption in the West, including by throwing money at tech companies and universities in the US under the banner of wanting to build a Russian Silicon Valley in partnership with MIT and leading tech firms. Instead, the FBI blew the whistle on this guy, warning that his influence was a form of spying, deepening his tentacles into sensitive tech areas for foreign influence campaigns. In 2018, he was sanctioned for Russia's invasion of Ukraine and in 2022, he had his private jet and yacht seized. Associates close to him, trying to move his money around in the US, have been arrested recently, including a New York City attorney who was caught by the Justice Department's recently launched task force, Kleptocapture—Klepto as in kleptocracy—Kleptocapture. It sounds a lot like a vacuum sold on TV. Simply put, Viktor Vekselberg is a bad guy mobbed up with the Kremlin. He's one of Putin's wallets, like Roman Abramovich and Oleg Deripaska, the guy who won the aluminum wars in Russia during the 1990s, which had an actual body count. Viktor Vekselberg's cousin, a private equity investor named Andrew Intrater—who likes to go by Andy—insists he's clean. When he had his own money impacted due to his cousin's sanctions, Intrater sued the Treasury Department in 2019. Now, he's working with the Feds to nab George Santos.

Andrea Chalupa (00:12:14):

CNN reports—I'm gonna read from this now, from CNN: "Private equity investor Andrew Intrater is one of the people federal prosecutors allege repped George Santos in dues to donate money as part of an alleged scheme that diverted purported political contributions to Santos' personal use, Intrater's lawyer confirmed to CNN Thursday. In a 13-count indictment, prosecutors allege that Santos and an unnamed associate duped two donors described only as 'Contributor #1' and 'Contributor #2' into giving \$25,000 a piece to support the Republican's candidacy last year." Funnily enough, Andrew Intrater is shocked the same guy who got him to throw his money into a Florida Ponzi scheme turned out to be a Ponzi scheme

himself. Really, Andy? Basically, Andrew Intrater was able to keep his name out of the Mueller Report and now he's able to help the Feds with George Santos. This guy has a very colorful history. You may remember him from the reports in the press of the hundreds of text messages and phone calls exchanged with Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's lawyer at the time in 2016. His investment company, Columbus Nova, sent \$1 million to Michael Cohen through a shell company to pay hush money to Stormy Daniels over her affairs with Trump, according to Open Secrets. You know, that case, that Stormy Daniels case that led to Trump's indictment by the Manhattan DA. That Andrew Intrater sure gets around.

Andrea Chalupa (00:13:54):

So I'm gonna read now from the *New York Times* back in 2019: "Mr. Cohen's critics suggest that Mr. Intrater may have been a front for his oligarch cousin to funnel Russian money to the president's inner circle, a theory Mr. Intrater denied. The special counsel's office, which interviewed Mr. Intrater about the issue, never accused him of any wrongdoing and did not mention him in its report." One thing is for sure though: Andy Intrater made tens of thousands in donations to George Santos and his super PACs, even after losing money in a Florida Ponzi scheme, thanks to George Santos. And now that George Santos is a PR disaster, Andy Intrater is out talking to the Feds and the press, wanting to clean up his reputation, even though he's still managing money for his Russian oligarch cousin, an operation he claims to be winding down since the sanctions. I wonder if Andy Intrater has any idea who believes in George Santos so much they secured a half a million dollar bond to bail him out of jail. Where there's easy money, including financiers shrugging off hundreds of thousands of dollars—a fortune to me and you—in a Ponzi scheme... So there are expectations here; favors in a culture of high rollers casually placing big bets. Where there's smoke, there's fire. And George Santos is smoke.

Andrea Chalupa (00:15:21):

There's an excellent piece you can find in the show notes for this week's episode by Brooke Harrington, the author of *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the 1%*. In it, she writes about how the Feds and policy makers need to target Western money managers. I'm gonna read from it now: "The United States has become embroiled in a costly and seemingly fruitless game of whack-a-mole with the Russian oligarchs. Seize or freeze their assets there, and the money ends up over here, right under our noses. This only enhances the international reputation those oligarchs have cultivated as untouchable elites. In our research, sanctions applied directly to the wealth managers serving Russian oligarchs collapsed the oligarchs' offshore networks completely, effectively cutting off their pathways to evade sanctions. Russian oligarchs, more than any other group in our study which also looked at elites from the United States, Hong Kong and China, concentrate their offshore assets in the hands of just a few wealth managers in the West. Having a small number of experts in the know helps preserve the oligarchs' secrets, but it also creates a distinctive weakness; a super fragility that can be exploited by policy makers. In our research, sanctions applied directly to the wealth managers serving Russian oligarchs collapsed the oligarchs' offshore networks completely, effectively cutting off their pathways to evade sanctions." If Andrew Intrater—this is me talking—if Andrew Intrater is serious about rehabilitating his reputation and wants to show real remorse for funding George Santos' campaign (when he should've known better!), he should now start talking to the Feds about which money managers in the West help oligarchs like his cousin evade sanctions. He could start by opening up his own books to the Feds, you know? As an act of goodwill.

Andrea Chalupa (00:17:28):

Now we're going to dive into an interview with Terrell Starr. Terrell is a longtime dear friend and the host of the podcast, *Black Diplomats*.

[transition music]

[begin interview]

Andrea Chalupa (00:17:42)

Welcome to *Gaslit Nation*, a family insider, a dear friend of the show and ourselves personally, Terrell Starr of the must-listen-to podcast, *Black Diplomats*. Welcome back for your third time to *Gaslit Nation*, Terrell.

Terrell Starr:

Oh, thank you. Is it a third time?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, the last time we spoke was a little bit over a year ago when you and Malcolm Nance were in Ukraine and together we predicted exactly what was going to go down. We were saying that Russia's fucked. Ukrainians are not going to... Ukrainians are going to resist. You're going to have babushkas throwing Molotov cocktails. You're going to have the university students building all sorts of gadgets that... I think you guys were calling it White Taliban, like it's going to be this guerrilla warfare.

Terrell Starr (00:18:29):

Oh, yeah, and here's the thing: they didn't have to really get down to that level because Ukraine is a legitimate modern military. And one of the things that we have learned over the course of the year is that the Ukrainians, you can make an argument that they're the most combat-ready armed forces in all of Europe because they have had the experience fighting the "second most powerful military on earth." Wow, the Russians have been exposed. But we really learned that. And it's so much of a lesson that deals with culture and how little the Western experts who spent all their time in Moscow and St. Petersburg and Samara gain all their knowledge about the republics, about Ukraine—because that's all... it was all generally reviewed but now we see that me and Malcolm, our analyses was spot on, and much of it had to deal with culture so much that, you know, a lot of these analysts didn't know. But I think that we're still dealing with a lot of these issues today and we're gonna talk about it on the show, you know.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, absolutely. And that brings us to the Durham Report: the Durham Report, which took longer than the Mueller investigation; a big waste of taxpayer money, granted, in part... I mean, it started obviously under Trump. Trump was determined to create some fake version of the Mueller Report to try to exonerate himself. It's all part of his big Lie movement. And when Biden came in, Merrick Garland as the new DOJ allowed funding for this Durham investigation to continue. You had people being targeted for simply coming forward and saying, "Hey, Russia is trying to get Trump elected and here's what I'm

noticing and I need to talk to the FBI. I need to talk to the intelligence community. Somebody needs to do something.” A lot of people stuck their necks out in 2016 for this very reason. One of these people, of course—as you know very well, Terrell, because you're a dear friend of mine and you've met everyone in my family, you've been over to my parents' house and all that stuff—is my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, who was an independent contractor for the DNC, a Ukrainian-American ([who has been on this show, so you could hear her story](#), we'll link to it in the show notes for this week's episode) when Paul Manafort was running Donald Trump's campaign—Paul Manafort being a longtime Kremlin operative who made his fortune furthering the Kremlin's interests in Ukraine, bringing a Ukrainian Trump to power and so on—and by sticking her neck out, she paid the ultimate price for what they did to her. She was a name that came up a dozen times, dozens of times I should say, by Devin Nunes in Trump's first impeachment hearing. The far-right propaganda machine, Fox News, Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, the Kremlin put a big fat target on her head and so did their little lackeys and their smaller smaller little like independent radio... The whole eco-slime-sphere of far-right media went after her, harassed her, and she's a mom driving a mini-van with three kids. My sister could rake in a fortune joining Dominion and suing Fox News for what they did to her; the lies they spread of her. And I'm now going to play a clip by a news anchor, a well-known news anchor on CNN, Jake Tapper, who, as I believe I've mentioned on this show, I've certainly mentioned to Terrell, I've certainly mentioned during an angry rant on Twitter... Jake Tapper of CNN was my sister's neighbor during the time she was going through the hell of being harassed by the Kremlin and the Trump regime. Jake Tapper knew very well what was happening to her in the spring, summer, fall of 2016, and he shrugged it off. My sister could have gone on his show. He had all this information that he could have taken and reported on. Instead, he shrugged it off and Jake Tapper didn't really rise to the occasion of understanding who Trump was until his local pizza parlor, Comet Ping Pong, got shot up. A kid from North Carolina, some young man, white kid of course, driven by Michael Flynn's Pizzagate nonsense, really believed the far-right Russian-fueled conspiracy that the Podestas/Clinton had some child sex ring in the basement of a pizza parlor in the heart of Washington, DC. There is no basement there. Jake Tapper and my sister happened to live nearby. My sister happened to be next door at the time being interviewed by the *New York Times* when they were doing their big deep dive into how the FBI fucked over the DNC by not bothering to really ring the alarm bells so the Russians were inside their systems. And here's Jake Tapper, who basically is coming across as both-sidesing this, really saying that there's a *there* there for the Durham Report, that it *does* make the FBI look bad. So we'll play a clip of that now.

(audio clip of Jake Tapper 00:23:21)

Jake Tapper:

President Trump appeared so confident of what Durham would find he openly pressured the special counsel to release his findings before the 2020 election. Regardless, the report is now here. It has dropped. And it might not have produced everything of what some Republicans hoped for but it is, regardless, *devastating* to the FBI and, to a degree, it does exonerate Donald Trump.

Andrea Chalupa (00:23:41):

All I want to say... The only way the FBI looks bad, the Durham report kind of touches on this very briefly, saying that even the FBI's own Russian analysts didn't know about Trump and Russia. Yeah, no

kidding, because they were asleep at the wheel and Comey was working his ass off to try to smear Hillary Clinton... Terrell, I know I have you on the show, but I need to vent because I'm like, this is like striking a nerve with me.

Terrell Starr:

A lot of people don't know the depth of how botched everything has been. So go ahead.

Andrea Chalupa (00:24:10):

Yeah, I mean 2016, James Comey did something out of protocol, totally inappropriate, where he held a press conference in July 2016 saying that Hillary Clinton acted irresponsibly, dressing her down, talking down to her, making her look like a corrupt, shady woman with something to hide, like some sort of suspicious stink should be on her, which the media ate up, screaming about her emails. And then, days before the election, he releases his letter knowing damn well it's going to get leaked; his letter saying he's reopening the Clinton email investigation. And that, along with the Russians, tipped everything over to Trump in the final hours of that election. And on top of that, when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was coming forward and the Obama White House was coming forward and saying, "Please, James Comey, join with other federal law enforcement and join with the intelligence community and let's all speak out about what you know about Russia's attack on our elections in 2016" and James Comey had multiple opportunities to do this and he refused. He refused. Putin and James Comey and Trump's entire goon squad will go down in history for destroying our democracy in 2016 by allowing this maniac to come to power, taking away reproductive health care, creating a horrific human rights crisis on the border, and so on and so on—I can go on—and there would have been no full-scale genocidal war in Ukraine if Trump had never come to power. It was Trump's chaos. It was how successful that coup was with the Kremlin's help that gave Putin the green light to do what he did in Ukraine. Now I'll let you jump in.

Terrell Starr (00:25:49):

Yeah, you know, it's one of those things where, when you think about the 2016 election—and I covered it, I went on the road to do this—all of us have been warning about what this would lead to because all you're doing is talking about the result of things that we've warned about. And I think that whether it's talking about, whether it's women who are talking about the sexism, whether it was Black people who was talking about this racism, but overall, even if the failures of democracy that we would be going to if he were to be elected, no one is listening to the people that they ought to be listening to, okay? And so when you really bring it home about the John Durham Report, that's not the report that people should be paying attention to. It's bullshit.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's Fox News.

Terrell Starr (00:26:40):

Yeah, that's ultimately what it is. And the thing about the Mueller report—and Mueller expressed it—is that he was expecting that it would lead to some type of prosecutorial result, but they didn't, and so he

just laid it to him and said, “Hey guys, you gave a pass. Are y'all guys gonna do it?” He was expecting them to do it, but didn't do it. He said that, essentially. And so no one listened to him. So there is just this whole culmination of people not paying attention to the right people. And what we are in danger with right now is a continuation of the kleptocracy that Donald Trump established, because officially that's all it is. Because we don't think that this can happen to America. Well, first of all, it did. It has.

Andrea Chalupa:
It's happening.

Terrell Starr:
Yes, it's *happening*, okay? Trumpism, because there is no Republican Party. It's the MAGA party. And everything that your sister is dealing with, it's very personal, it's very raw, it's very real, but you are right here talking about how this impacted someone's life personally, because she was operating in the organs of this system, working her ass off to try to correct it. No one listened to her, right? That's what this is about: listening to the wrong people, not heeding the warning signs. And quite frankly, we're in danger of moving into that again in 2024. We're not fucking prepared.

Andrea Chalupa:
Nope.

Terrell Starr (00:28:13):
We aren't, and that's the whole thing. There is a chance that we may get the House back. There is a chance by the hairs of our chinny chin chin that the Democrats can hold on to the Senate and that's not even tenable because we don't even know if Biden is going to beat Trump, because that's 50-50 as far as I'm concerned because Kamala Harris was the tie-breaking vote. So all these things are tied up together and I just really fear that unless we collectively as a society come together and understand that we are fighting for our lives just like other democracies around the world, forget about 2.0 with Trump. This is going to be 4.0 because he's going to come in on steroids because he's going to kick the scientists' ass. I mean, he is a... What do you call those insects that just consume everything?

Andrea Chalupa:
Locusts.

Terrell Starr:
Locusts, yes!

Andrea Chalupa (00:29:09):
Yeah, I mean it's Armageddon time. Jared Kushner's 666 Fifth Avenue, The Mark of the Beast, Ivanka, The Woman in Red from the Book of Revelations... Yeah, it's Armageddon weather out there and what's happening with Trump coming back around again is this time his MAGA army has been professionalized. They have learned how to run for office. They have learned how to dress themselves up. They have learned through their dark money, propped up by the Koch Dark Money Political Network, they have

learned how to take over school boards, local governments. It's this whole big old transformer monster that's coming at us. And the big rallying call for them, what's really going to give them greater gasoline is when they talk about Biden's age, what they're really saying about Biden's age, is that that means there's a chance in a second term a Black woman, Kamala Harris, the VP, could become president. And that is going to light such a huge fire under them. And so what I have my eye on, because I don't think... I know the media is falling over Trump again. They're pulling a Jeff Zucker. Jeff Zucker being a sportscaster, being a hyper capitalist, being a dumb ass, he just let Trump have CNN in 2016. They would show an empty podium and a big countdown to Trump coming out into the wrestling arena to do a rally. And now you have Chris Licht obviously doing that with CNN again—

Terrell Starr:

And he's worse.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:43):

He's infinitely worse and as demoralizing as that was for our country—what a dark day that was for our country—it did give the green light for other media to come forward and let Trump in. Trump went from being blocked off of many social media sites, including Twitter, to allowing Trump back. So they have their Trump back. They have their ratings machine back and they're going to milk that like hell because they also want to usher in this age of fascism and they want America to be theirs permanently. They want to shut out this growing demographic of young people (non-white voters and so on), they wanna keep America on lock in white male patriarchy and game over and there's no coming out.

Terrell Starr (00:31:24):

And here's the thing that I want people to really think about—and I know that your viewers understand this—is that Trump is responsible for the Supreme Court that we have right now, but also senior level judiciary, and the judiciary across our country, when you talk about the appeals court, when you talk about, of course, under Supreme Courts. His presidency in four years has put in place people who will be determining the most critical issues of our country for the next couple of decades, unless several of them die, which... I hate to be hardcore about it, which they do. But otherwise, he has already set that in place. Now, with this current election, what we also have to think about is these people have been experts at undermining every democratic practice that we know. With the Supreme Court under George Bush, for example, we understand what his electees to the court did with the Voting Rights Act.

Andrea Chalupa:

Mmhmm <affirmative>

Terrell Starr (00:32:36):

It was primarily why Stacey Abrams lost. Anytime people ask me about Stacey Abrams—because I covered both her races—she didn't lose in 2018. She didn't lose in 2022. She lost, and I forget the year, it was either 2011 or 2012 when Article 5 was struck down, whereby states had to seek permission from the Department of Justice before they could change their voting laws, our electoral laws in their respective states. And so the Republicans for all of their evil are very strategic, even if Trump is not.

Trump is a figure of that, to be quite honest with you. He's just a disastrous one that has a personality and you just vote for him. But the Republican Party is lock line and step with him. They are just not verbally as evil, as mean-spirited as he is, but the core of their party is essentially Trump. And so you also have Elon Musk, who took over the most important platform for journalists.

Andrea Chalupa:

Where you and I met, where our friendship came from.

Terrell Starr (00:33:27):

Right. And this has a lot to do with the presidential election coming up because it does not have the scale of a Facebook. It's not TikTok. But it wasn't, it shouldn't be, right? It was the number one platform where people like you and me could put out information. People saw us, they respected us, and they trusted us.

Andrea Chalupa:

To take back power.

Terrell Starr:

Yeah, to take back power, and so we were a critical component of the media ecosystem and neither of us pretend that every single American was tuning in to our social media feeds, but what we were doing was that we were a key verification aspect of that ecosystem that contributed to fair and really instructive content to be pushed out there. And that doesn't exist anymore because Elon Musk is Trump's homeboy. You notice that every single complaint that governments—Turkey, for example, China—has filed for Twitter, they answered all of them. Back in the day, pre-Elon Musk, they were 50%. And so Trumpism is a very global thing. When you look at what's going on with Le Pen in France. Brexit. You look at Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Trump has been a major galvanizer for this globally. And so it's an impact for us here in the United States, but Trump, his impacts are going to reach well beyond our borders. if

Andrea Chalupa:

Absolutely.

Terrell Starr:

If he's elected, which we don't want, but he has a damn good chance of being reelected... Not only being reelected, but reelected with the House and the Senate. That is very real.

Andrea Chalupa (00:35:35):

It is very real because of the slave state monument known as the electoral college that makes our presidential elections so scarily close. And I want to add to the Elon Musk bit, he just went on a anti-Semitic rant against Papa George Soros. Santa Claus George Soros, who funds anybody trying to do anything to protect human rights and social justice and equality because this man escaped the Holocaust. You know? Like, a dictatorship came into Germany in six short months. As soon as Hitler became chancellor, appointed by the establishment to crush the Left, to crush the Left opposition

because the corporate greed was so unchecked and immense—much like America today, same dynamics playing out here—and as soon as their friend Hitler came to power, he started building his first concentration camp. And that is where George Soros came from. No wonder he's throwing all his money at free press causes. And so at the start of this year, Soros pulled his investments out of Tesla because Tesla sucks. It's all just marketing hype and it's getting overtaken by other big brands out there, and it's management, it's poisoning the company, and so on. And the self-driving cars are suicidal.

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:25):

And so, Musk went out there with a very well-known anti-Semitic, far-right Republican trope used for a very long time now about how Soros is this, whatever this... Elders of Zion, you know, that anti-Semitic nonsense that came out of Russia, really, back in the day. Jason Stanley has a great book on how fascism works which talks about that. But, so Trump could very well happen again, as we've talked about on the show, but there's also somebody else to watch because I do believe there is an elite Republican whatever you want to call them, an elite fascist civil war where there are many Republicans, many former Trump supporters that do not want to deal with him, who find him too toxic to even deal with. They don't want to bring him back. And those fascists are aligning with Nikki Haley. And Nikki Haley was Trump's ambassador to the UN. Mike Pompeo, in his big old tell-all, talked about how Nikki Haley and Jared and Ivanka were trying to get her to be Trump's VP pick. And reporting out of *Vanity Fair* points out that the Kushner family, including Jared's ex-con father, did a big old meet-and-greet, hosting Nikki Haley with the Kushner extended family, and that Charles Kushner heralded Nikki Hailey as the first woman president. And there's been sites of her and Jared and Ivanka palling around. And that's really telling because Ivanka and Jared, they want to come back. They used to be the darlings of Manhattan media, now they've been socially shunned and now they're in the cesspool of Florida, DeSantis is growing dictatorship there. They want to come back into power. They want to get back into the White House. They want to have Ivanka be somebody someday. They're still young. They still have a lot... Unfortunately, they still have a lot of time ahead of them to do even more damage. Jared Kushner had a book as part of his rehabilitation tour. People in the media actually promoted it. I believe even Jake Tapper on CNN, our old friend Jake Tapper on CNN and others like him. And so I think they see Nikki Haley as a non-white woman who could be somebody to take on Kamala Harris, because really given Trump's age and given Biden's age, the 2024 election is really going to be between the two vice presidents. And so maybe there could even be... If Nikki Haley can't manage to win the primary, then maybe Ivanka and Jared will step forward and convince their Mussolini father to accept her as a running mate since Mike Pence is out. Trump tried to get his mob of supporters to hang Mike Pence. I don't think he's going to be coming back for the job. So what I'm saying is I think it's going to be Biden and Kamala versus Trump and Nikki Haley and that's going to be, you know what I mean? The two non-white women. What do you think of that?

Terrell Starr (00:39:16):

So first of all, the Kushners and Nikki Haley, along with Trump, they are the royal court of kleptocracy. That is who they are. They extract resources from every government entity there is in order to uplift themselves. It's interesting, you know, when you think about Donald Trump, he was sued by the federal government in the 70s for racist practices against Black tenants. When you think about the ways in which

kleptocrats get their wealth, he's the version—this country's version—of a Victor Yanukovich, right? You know, somebody who just extracted from the government—

Andrea Chalupa:

Down to gold! Down to loving gold mansions.

Terrell Starr (00:39:57):

They are. And by the way, if you've gone to that mansion, they both have similar taste, by the way. I mean, it is tacky as hell. Very verbose. And Yanukovich's mansion looks like somebody who's not used to money.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, like a Trump property. Like a Trump golf course.

Terrell Starr (00:40:14):

Right, because neither Yanukovich nor Trump come from money, right? And they're both criminals. That's another thing, they're both criminals, they're both thugs, and they both sell out their country. [laughs] They both do. Yanukovich sold out Ukraine to Russia, Trump sells out America to Russia whenever he can. They're both the same people, just different nationalities. In regards to Nikki Haley and Kamala, first of all, you don't have to be white to aid and abet white supremacy. I say this a lot. You do not have to be white to aid and abet white supremacy. And, you know me, as somebody who spent, you know, we've worked together on Ukraine for a lot of times, and you know I draw a lot of parallels with liberation and equality. And one of the things that I talk about is that in order to be evil, to be racist, or to participate in these structures, you can be a person of color and participate in that. And that is exactly what Nikki Haley is. Nikki Haley is somebody who defends the Confederate flag. She is somebody who is in a state that has a very searing violent history of slavery that has done nothing for Black people, does not think about Black people, and will never do anything for Black people, and you have people who are of Indian descent who critique her for essentially selling out their race. You can just Google "Nikki Haley sell out Indian" and you can find people of her community talking about that. And I call it nothing more than diversity in Blackface. You know, Nikki Haley, Ben Carson. All of these people, they are the same people. Ben Carson, there is nothing—

Andrea Chalupa:

Clarence Thomas.

Terrell Starr (00:42:04):

Clarence Thomas! The same thing. I look at them, I see them as equal participants in white supremacy. Nikki Haley, Clarence Thomas, and anybody that worked for Trump, that represent him as a person of color, they're not there for us. They're there to validate white people's feelings that they're not racist. That's the reason why they exist: to validate white people's feelings and to make them feel better about any grievances that people assign towards them. They're not there for us. But the good news is that we know who they are, right? And so they'll never infiltrate into our communities. But what we should be

worried about and the manner in which Trump has been effective is that he has been able to make people of color who have these racist views feel comfortable publicly talking about them because he's built a community around them. Now, here's the thing, it's something about community and when you're dealing with whiteness, once they're done with you, they're done with you. See that? That's something that I learned. Once they're through with you and you're no longer useful for them, they'll throw you away like an old rag. And it doesn't matter who you are, you are disposable to them because you're not them. And you never will be them because you do not come from the stock that is supposed to represent who they are. You are just a utility to get them to where they are. And if you can jump along with them, you're fine so long as you accommodate their needs.

Terrell Starr (00:43:41):

And so you are right about your assessment with Nikki Haley. She fits the profile of a minority that would accommodate whiteness. But that's the whole thing. I think that the really good news about all of this is that all of us, we can't defeat whiteness, right? We can't defeat this whiteness. And just as I said, you don't have to be white to aid and abet white supremacy. And in America, the way that whiteness works is you can be somebody who's white or somebody, you know, from a background that is generally considered to be white, you can reject it. That's what people who follow my podcast do. People who follow your podcast do. We can reject all of this shit and we are rejecting it. We just have to come out just as robust and as strident in our resolve like they are. So there's an opportunity to do it because we know who they are. People like us are constantly talking about it. We just have to drive it home. But going back to the original point, we have to force people to listen to the right people. We have to force, and it's not something that's inconsistent with activists throughout the history of America. We force people to listen to us. We are the people who are making this country better. Not Nikki Haley with her fake diversity, or a profile when Donald Trump and the Kushners who don't care about anything but themselves. And the biggest irony about the Kushners is that your father was an ex-con... I feel some type of way, just being a Black man who has all the type of stereotypes that you can think of assigned to me, that they can pass on generational wealth by stealing from the government. I go into a store and steal potato chips... Can you imagine? And I'm labeled for life. And that happens to so many Black men around this country. But this white man who steals, who's been in prison and passed generational wealth on to his children, they can steal from the government and it's considered legal business. And that's what we're dealing with. But the good news is we know who they are. We can beat the kleptocracy. We will call it out. We both are tired, but we can't be [laughs].

Andrea Chalupa:

We don't have a choice.

Terrell Starr:

No, we don't have a choice.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah.

Terrell Starr:

How are you doing? I always ask people when on my show about mental health. How are you?

Andrea Chalupa:

How am I doing? You know, I think all of us are feeling attacked by the threat of fascism in America. We're feeling attacked by an utter lack of safety guards for our democracy. I'm very anxious about the 2024 election. I think, like a lot of people, I'm very angry and frustrated with the establishment of the Democratic Party, that more isn't being done, that the Democrats, even if we give them the Senate, they're going to find a way to slow down the confirmation of judges to balance out the courts after what Mitch McConnell and Trump did packing the courts so they own 30% of the judges across our land. And Democrats are now asleep in their confirmation process in the Senate. So what I'm leading up to is this, is that I have a lot of anger. I have *a lot* of anger of how, you know, missed opportunities, lost opportunities, and how complicit the Democrats and the Biden White House have been heading into 2024. But at the same time, Jesus Christ, like, you know, I have family and friends in Ukraine. I can't afford to lose that country. That's a second home to me. It's a second spiritual home. And I know you know that because you're more Ukrainian than I am. You have your your friends and you're

Terrell Starr:

I live in Ukraine. I'm going to Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:17):

You're headed to Ukraine and you have your friends and your adopted family in Ukraine. So I think Biden, with everything combined, the fact that Trump's still free, the fact that Merrick Garland is still attorney general, even though he's been complicit in all this and dragging out the clock, the fact that Merrick Garland allowed the Durham Fox News weaponization of our government to go forward targeting innocent people, many of them just whistleblowers trying to come forward to alert the intelligence community to do something. We're all ringing the bell like, "Do something! Stop the Kremlin from helping Trump become president in 2016." And instead, they were helping the Kremlin, as James Comey was, as we've documented many times on the show. And so I have a lot of, like so many people, legitimate frustration and anger, like white... I don't want to say white rage anger, but like a white heat of anger towards a lot of the letdown from the Democratic Party establishment for a variety of reasons we have documented on the show. But at the same time, it's like we need the Democrats to keep control over the White House because if it's Trump, even if it's Nikki Haley, like, the Republican Party is a fascist branded party now. They cannot be trusted in any position of power, let alone the White House, when we are full-on faced with a global war of democracy versus fascism driven by a chaos agent, former KGB agent Putin. You know what I mean? It's like there's an existential crisis going on on a global level so I'm heartbroken and pissed off, but I'm going to work like hell to make sure that the Democrats keep the White House. And that's not because I condone everything that they've done or I'm a cheerleader for them or that I'm a centrist Democrat by any means, it's because, for the love of God, we're in a shitty situation as a country right now. You know what I mean? How do you feel about that? So I think that really... The genocide really wears on me. The fact that I can't... I'm worried about my parents' health in terms of Psychologically what it's doing to them. For instance, my dad was in great health and then when

the full-on genocide broke out, he had to go see a doctor. It really physically, psychically hurt him. And we have a family that refuses to leave the front line and this family is very significant for us. You know, it represents a deep, deep history for our family. And so I just feel fucked with. I feel like it's really hard to live in America right now with the threat of fascism. It's really hard to see no real meaningful protection against this rising flood of fascism other than the exhausted grassroots, which is going to fight on anyway because that's the only choice they have. And I feel heartbroken on such a soul level, like a soul-tired level over having dedicated so many years of my life—well over a decade and a half of my life—focused on the Kremlin's genocide in Ukraine in 1933, just to see it all repeating again today and destroying and threatening the lives of people I love, you know? So yeah, I'm not doing well. I think ... Who the hell is doing well right now? I don't think... If you don't have a genocide in your direct family, if you're a white male who's gonna be just fine under fascism, and you're making a ton of money some way somehow and you're comfortable, I don't... If you have a heart, if you've any sense of empathy, I don't think you're doing well, even if you're not directly threatened by everything happening in the world. So yeah—

Terrell Starr:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa (00:50:56)

It's hard to get out of bed some mornings. I do it because when you come from a family history that's been shaped by trying to survive a genocide, I know that there's people that would want me dead, right? Just because of who I am. And I live my life out loud to be defiant. You know, I will never self-destruct because there are people who would love for me to self-destruct. So it's sort of like the fascists' way to keep me motivated to keep living and to just live out loud.

Terrell Starr (00:51:26):

You sound like so many Ukrainians that I've talked to in country. When I was in Ukraine leading up to the second invasion, you saw a fear but it quickly turned into anger. And... Unless you are there, you don't really appreciate it, but I was there feeling it because for those of you who don't know, I live in Ukraine, that means I spent at least three to six months there at a time. This next trip, I'm going to be there for about a year and a half. So I'm into the comings and goings of what's happening. And you could cut the tension and the anger with a knife in the air. And so Ukrainians were just saying, "Fuck it. We're just gonna stay here and fucking fight." And people were asking me, do I feel safe? And I said, "Well, I'm fine because I'm not the person that's invading their country and that's going to wage a genocide against them." They're not angry at me. I would feel bad if I was somebody coming in and trying to fuck with them. You know, so your resilience is just indicative of the people that I've been reporting on for forever and going into this year. But, you know, you talk about the genocide and that touches on me because I've spoken to people for stories that are set to come out over the next year where they have witnessed the most horrific atrocities that human beings should never do to each other. And, you know, to come from that legacy of someone who will do everything in their power to kill you because they don't believe that you should exist—and that's what Putin tells people every day. If you look at Dmitry Medvedev's Telegram, he uses the word "exterminate".

Andrea Chalupa:
Mmhmm <affirmative>

Terrell Starr:

The same words are used towards Jewish people, particularly during World War II, during the Holocaust, towards Black people. Medvedev uses the same genocidal language about Ukrainians. And I subscribe to his Telegram just to only help people understand how demented this guy is in order to have this type of attitude towards people. And the thing about it is that with Trump... He supports Putin because if you really think about it, it may not be the term “genocide”... He doesn't want me to exist. He doesn't want people who are coming to this country to seek better opportunities to exist. Unless you are in a subservient role, which in the grand scheme of things Nikki Haley is, let's just be real. She's a servant to his white supremacy and she is a willing participant in it, along with Clarence Thomas, along with Ben Carson, along with all the other minorities that help aid and abet his white supremacy. That's who they are. So he doesn't want any of us to exist. And I definitely am tired as well. I'm burned out because we all have the bandwidth to do this. We do this for a living. This is our job.

Andrea Chalupa:

We were doing this before Trump. We were doing this, screaming into the void for a long time.

Terrell Starr (00:54:44):

Yeah, this is our job. This is our job and we disseminate information. So we have the bandwidth to deal with it even though we're fatigued. So if we don't do this work, nobody else is gonna do it. But I'm actually proud of you for being resilient. And I'm proud that we met to work on this issue in Ukraine, Maidan, that we all care about. And this is a friendship that's gone beyond friendship actually. I spent too much time with you to be a friend. I know both your kids' names, all this other stuff. And like, we, you know, we have a close bond because our histories are different, our family histories are different, but we both come from histories where people wanted to eradicate us for who we are, right? And we operate differently based on our race and appearance, but what draws us together is that—and this is the real spirit of my podcast, *Black Diplomats*—is that we are stronger when we link together. They can't beat us like that. They can't because it's more of us than it is of them.

Andrea Chalupa:

Exactly.

Terrell Starr (00:55:48):

And so I think that's the positive note that we can roll out with is that because we both recognize that, that's why I'm confident that we can win. It'll be difficult, but we have more than a fighting chance because what links us together with our different histories, even though they're similar, what makes us powerful is that we want liberation for everybody. We want everybody to be liberated. We want everybody to experience freedom. We want there to be/we believe in a world where we don't have to eradicate each other in order for some of us to thrive because it's just some of them. Nikki Haley is a minority. All these other minorities are working for, they're the minorities. They're the literal minorities

because the vast majority of people want to be like us and just exist and we can beat them. It's just making sure that we wake up each morning and just realizing that we chose this work. We chose this work to help inform the public and we're gonna be steadfast in making sure that as many people as possible will be informed, and we have the marching orders and move ahead with it. And we're on our way despite the challenges that are before us.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's a generational struggle.

Terrell Starr:

Mm-hmm <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:06):

And it's a generational trauma. There's a lot of danger-mapping that I did as a child and a lot of hypervigilance I grew up with because I understood how violent the world could be for no reason at all. And I know you have that. And so, you know, they don't want us to exist so we're gonna refuse to go. [laughs] Too bad.

Terrell Starr:

Too bad [laughs].

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs] Thank you so much, Terrell. You are the best ever and we're going to keep on talking. I'm going to keep on praying for you and I want to see you when you're in Ukraine and I want to see you at my table when you're back from Ukraine.

Terrell Starr:

No doubt..

[outro music - roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

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