

Gaslit Nation Transcript

21 June 2023

"The Merrick Garland 'We Told You So' Special"

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/merrick-garland-84873323>

[advertisement]

[opening song up and under — "It's Pride" performed by Lindz Amer, written by Amanda D'Archangelis]

Sarah Kendzior (00:01:02):

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*, on sale now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:15):

And I am 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 (00:01:28):

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

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:36):

The opening song you heard was "It's Pride" by Lindz Amer, who is back on the show this week to talk about their new book, *Rainbow Parenting: Your Guide to Raising Queer Kids and Their Allies*. In honor of Pride month, here's pro wrestler, CM Punk, delivering a heartfelt defense of trans kids in a time of genocidal, scapegoating to an arena full of wrestling fans. And

[clip of CM Punk speech]

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:25):

Thank you so much for that, CM Punk, for being a light in the dark. And we have a big announcement: We are giving away a copy of the new *Gaslit Nation* graphic novel, *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think*, once a month to thank a supporter on Patreon who keeps the show going. The winner for the month of June, 2013 who's going to get a thank you copy of our book is...

[drum roll]

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:56):

Ross! That's just the name. Ross. It's like Madonna. It's just Ross. Thank you Ross. Big thank you to you. Big thank you to everyone who supports the show. Thank you to everyone who is picking up their copy of the book. It's been number one on Amazon in its category. It's been number one in Fascism, beating out... I think the unabomber [laughs] and a bunch of other people. Reminder: next week there's a live

taping of *Gaslit Nation* featuring Russian Mafia expert Olga Lautman who will update us on the Kremlin's spy activities in the West. You can get access to that by setting up to support the show on Patreon at patreon.com/gaslit. That's patreon.com/gaslit at the Truth-teller level or higher. We'll send you access to that event the morning of the show. That is next Tuesday at noon. And that date, of course, is June 27th and the show starts at 12:00 PM Eastern sharp. And again, you can get tickets for that by supporting the show at the Truth-teller level or higher on patreon.com/gaslit to see the live taping of *Gaslit Nation* featuring Russian mafia expert Olga Lautman. And we'll do a Q&A in the chat and we'll answer your questions. Thank you so much.

Sarah Kendzior (00:05:10):

Alright, well, this was a big weekend for us. Every now and again, I go onto Twitter. I don't look at the news. I just look into my mentions. And then there's, you know, person after person saying, "Oh no, Sarah was right all along. *Gaslit Nation* was right all along. Andrea was right all along," and I'm thinking to myself, you know, "What terrible thing has happened now?" And so the thing that we were right about all along—unfortunately—was Merrick Garland and the DOJ's attempt to run out the clock in order to let a mafia cult get away with numerous crimes; the most egregious of which is the attempted coup and Capitol attack of 2021, but also the theft of classified documents and many other illegal dealings with other mafia cults from around the world.

Sarah Kendzior (00:06:03):

We have many, many, many episodes about this. We just tweeted them out in a [long list](#) on our Twitter account, @GaslitNation. There's also a Greatest Hits of Merrick Garland's greatest misses called '[Tweeter and the Monkey Man](#)'. Don't ask about the titles [laughs]. Our Traveling Wilburys tribute. It was a tough time last year to be alone out there discussing this institutional failure and so you can check out that episode to hear excerpts from all the other episodes. But now... Now we are no longer alone. There has been some [new reporting from the Washington Post by Carol Leonnig and Aaron C. Davis](#) in which they gave a little bit more interview and background into the claims that we were making based on observation alone.

Sarah Kendzior (00:06:53):

As we've said many times, if it looks like nothing is happening, it's because nothing is happening. So these savior syndrome fantasies of secret indictments, or, you know, "This takes time!" or, "This is just the way things are done when your country is attacked with a violent coup from within!"... It's not. It's all bullshit. And so we have been vindicated and we're not happy. It's a sad thing to be vindicated about something as dangerous as this. So I'm just gonna read a couple paragraphs from this article. It says, "A *Washington Post* investigation found that more than a year would pass before prosecutors and FBI agents jointly embarked on a formal probe of actions directed from the White House to try to steal the election. Even then, the FBI stopped short of identifying the former president as a focus of that investigation. A wariness about appearing partisan institutional caution and clashes over how much evidence was sufficient to investigate the actions of Trump and those around him all contributed to the slow pace. Garland and the Deputy Attorney General, Lisa Monaco, charted a cautious course aimed at restoring public trust in the department while some prosecutors below them chafed, feeling top officials were shying away from looking at evidence of potential crimes by Trump and those close to him, the *Post* found."

Sarah Kendzior:

So just a couple comments on this paragraph alone and the kind of language that is being used. This paragraph itself is being very timid, being very cautious because what so many... I don't even know if they're forgetting, they're just choosing to omit this information. When Trump was impeached for the second time—when he was impeached for the coup—he was impeached on evidence in the public domain alone because the planning of this operation was so open and the perpetrators were bragging about it and planning it and putting it together.

Sarah Kendzior (00:08:53):

And Trump was there and they were able to use his tweets and his speeches and his presence. And even that impeachment at the time, you know, we thought was very lackluster. They refused to call witnesses. They were ignoring the role of Roger Stone; Roger Stone, who famously said, "If Trump doesn't win, there's going to be a bloodbath". Of Michael Flynn, you know, who had been out there as a coup hype man, rallying people up for months. This was all out in the open. So this whole little line about looking at evidence of potential crimes by Trump and close to them, they're not potential crimes. The only thing that's potential is the indictment. These are clearly crimes. These are crimes that he continually confesses to. Another word to look for here—and this is always true in a Merrick Garland story—is the phrase "institutional caution", which is how Garland's mentor, best friend, and key propagandist for his media pieces, Jamie Gorelick, always phrases institutional corruption or institutional failure.

Sarah Kendzior (00:10:02):

They say it's a matter of caution, that it's a matter of working from the bottom up to get to the top. We already know that that's bullshit because first of all, the majority of participants in this have gone free. But second of all, the one person that's been indicted at the top is the top. It's Donald Trump, the former president of the United States, but the people most likely to organize a successor coup; a sequel to the coup, you know, Stone Flynn, Bannon, my guess would be Manafort having some kind of involvement, others like Lin Wood, etc, they are all being ignored and they are all involved in new plots and in new plans, some involving Robert Kennedy Jr., some involving dictators around the world. They've continued to do enormous damage and they are who I have always been worried about.

Sarah Kendzior (00:10:56):

As I've said many times, the biggest mistake you could make here is to say this is about one man and one day. This is about a network. This is about transnational organized crime and that's why this other little excuse that Garland's people seemed to give to the *Washington Post*, that they're worried about appearing partisan... This is the ultimate partisan action: to be this plotting, this timid, this much of a liar when you're talking about evidence that we all saw on live TV and on social media in real time. We were all real-life witnesses to this atrocity, so the idea that it was just too difficult for the FBI, for Christopher Wray, or too difficult for the DOJ and Garland to figure out the most basic, obvious crime—one which the perpetrators were all confessing to—is absolutely ridiculous.

Sarah Kendzior (00:11:52):

And the partisan action is protecting this institution, protecting the D O J and its failures. And the DOJ, as we've noted (especially the FBI), has been primarily a Republican institution. It's been Republican heads of the FBI for decades on end. They've never had a Democratic leader and many of those Republicans went on to work directly *with* the Russian mafia and with elements of transnational organized crime that Trump is also involved in. So, you know, partisanship is not really the point here, but if it is a matter of partisanship, it's the other way, very much like when James Comey threw the election to Trump by shit-stirring about Hillary about a week and a half before that. So that's my thoughts just about these paragraphs. I know you have a lot to say about Lisa Monaco, the Deputy Attorney General, in particular, so what are your thoughts, Andrea?

Andrea Chalupa (00:12:46):

Well, I wanna just point out just to highlight some characters in all this: one of the reporters of the *Washington Post* investigation that shares the byline on this is, of course, Carol Leonnig. She is the author of *Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of The Secret Service*, all about how the Secret Service is a ticking time bomb of a Trumpian culture which allowed Trump to nearly violently overthrow our democracy. And these are the agents we're trusting with protecting the president of the United States and his family at a time, of course, when Russian agents are trying to destabilize the West in their war of fascism against democracy. There was a story that just came out in *The New York Times* saying how Russian agents tried to assassinate a former Russian intelligence officer who became a CIA informant, helping the US break up a Russian spy ring that was trying to entrench itself.

Andrea Chalupa (00:13:47):

It was like straight up out of *The Americans*. It was a whole Anna Chapman spy ring where they took on totally new identities, trying to blend in with the goal of recruiting new assets to spread their influence deeper and deeper and deeper. It was a very ambitious project during a time when the Obama administration promised a Russian reset. And so one of the informants who had flipped... He nearly lost his life. And where did the Russians feel emboldened to try to carry out this assassination? The answer is very obvious if you've been listening to the show for a very long time now: Florida! The haven of all that is messy and dictatorial. So obviously they felt emboldened because as we explained in our big old Florida super special that we ran earlier in the year for our Patreon community, Florida has become a safe haven for a lot of Russian money.

Andrea Chalupa (00:14:43):

There is a community down there developed with Trump money that's become like the Brighton Beach of Florida. Just like Trump's dad, Fred, developed Brighton Beach and got the Russians in there and enriched himself and his family, building up the Trump Empire through Russian dirty money, Trump did the same by developing Sunny Isles, Little Moscow, in Florida. There's a lot of, like, LLC-owned mysterious apartments there, which are the Russian elite—all 6,000 of them—laundering their money over in the Russian parts of Florida. And as a result, you see it as a safe haven for wannabe dictators like Trump, like DeSantis, like Bolsonaro [laughs], like Bannon; the whole Trump cult of the Kremlin caucus. The Republican Party of today is camped out in Florida now and that is where the Russians brazenly tried to assassinate a Russian officer who had flipped. They were not successful, thank God.

Andrea Chalupa (00:15:41):

But that's also where Trump's court case is now going to play out in his first federal indictment with a judge, Aileen Cannon—that he appointed—who has shown loyalty to him, and she still has yet to recuse herself. And so Florida seems to be the center of gravity for corruption. America. If you're nervous waiting for that Trump case to play out in Florida, you have every right to be. As we keep pointing out, we've made correct predictions over the show from our episode titled [Robert Mueller Will Not Save You](#) to "[Merrick Garland's Eyes Wide Shut](#)" and we're gonna tell you now: don't hold your breath with Trump being convicted and going to prison. Obviously that would be a wonderful thing—and keep putting up the pressure and keep calling things out and pushing back against the cult of the DOJ on Twitter and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (00:16:27):

And I wanna focus with this reporting that just came out specifically on Lisa Monaco because I feel like she's an overlooked official in all this, because this isn't a reality show of horror that we're all living. There's huge stakes here. But Lisa Monaco, Deputy Attorney General, she is a key name. Michael Isikoff and David Korn, from their book, *Russian Roulette* on Russia's attack on the 2016 election where they

helped bring Trump to power, I'm gonna read now from insider.com looking at that book, specifically where Lisa Monaco fits in when she was back in the Obama White House as a Homeland Security Advisor. I'm gonna read it now: "The staffers on a cyber response team in the Obama White House were baffled when they were informed that they had been told to stand down."—Stand down in the response to what Russia was doing in our election in 2016.—"When they asked the cybersecurity director why they weren't taking action, Daniel—" a guy on the cybersecurity team"—reportedly told them that Susan Rice and the Homeland Security advisor, Lisa Monaco, were concerned that then-President Barack Obama would be 'boxed in' if news of their deliberations leaked to the press." The deliberations were over, "How do we respond to Russia's attack on our democracy?" And there was a lot of tension in the Obama White House over, "How do we respond to this? Do we deter the Russians with a show of force? Do we remind them that if they do anything to hijack our election, we'll destroy them?" Some sort of cybersecurity response during 2016 to show strength to the Russians, to push them off, to intimidate them back. And Lisa Monaco—who is a key subject in this *Washington Post* reporting that the DOJ slept going after Trump in his inner circle of insurrectionists for January 6th—Lisa Monaco was firmly on the side of doing nothing, of essentially appeasement.

Andrea Chalupa (00:18:22):

I'm gonna continue reading now: "A source familiar with the matter did not contest the characterization, but said the Obama administration 'timed its response so as not to provoke the Russians into materially affecting the outcome of the election.'" Dumb as hell. In Russia, you push, push, push, push, push. And the more weakness you find, the deeper you push you. You will never, ever, ever contain the Russians with appeasement, by being chill. They only respond to strength. I'm gonna keep reading: "The White House's internal struggle over how to address Russia's election meddling has been well documented. Last year, the *Washington Post* reported that when they were faced with the question of how best to respond to Russia's meddling, one senior official told the outlet, 'I feel like we sort of choked.'" Well, that's clearly what's happening here again under Lisa Monaco's watch, Lisa Monaco ensured an appeasement strategy of Russia in 2016 under Obama, helping Trump come to power. And Lisa Monaco insured an appeasement strategy under Biden, thwarting a meaningful investigation of Trump and his inner circle. Jack Smith, of course, may hit Trump with his first conviction, but Bannon, Stone, Flynn, Manafort, the whole Kremlin clown car, they're all still free.

Sarah Kendzior (00:19:35):

Yeah, no, I feel like she's been a very under-covered person in this. It's interesting to me that, you know, we have all of these terrible people, all these people who have failed our country, with Merrick Garland, Christopher Wray, Lisa Monaco. We have others in other branches. We have Louis DeJoy, who we've gone over many times, about how Biden can fire him by rearranging the Board of Governors. And they stay there. Monaco is somebody who, according to the *Washington Post*, began her career as a staffer chosen by Biden for the Senate Judiciary Committee. And then she rose to be the Chief of Staff to Mueller before going on to work for Obama, as Andrea just described. And so this is an insider with a lot of ties to a lot of administration's worst decisions, and who has proven herself to be dangerous; an internal threat to the country from within.

Sarah Kendzior (00:20:35):

And I think that there's this perception that inertia can't be a threat, that timidity can't be a threat, but when the other side are accelerationist, when the other side are emboldened by inaction—and we have seen this for decades on end with Trump. As we've noted many times, we're in the 50th year of the Department of Justice investigating Trump, but failing until very recently to indict him. You know, the more inquiries there are that are ignored or that are unfulfilled or decontextualized or so on, the louder

and bolder and crueller these individuals are. And so there's talk right now. Some folks, I think they see the *Washington Post* expose as a kind of DC code; public signaling for Biden to fire Garland and Monaco and others. We've been calling for him to get rid of Garland since 2021, because of all of this. Everything you are seeing in front of you was obvious from about May, 2021 going forward.

Sarah Kendzior (00:21:44):

Because an attempted coup, an attack on the Capitol is one of the most serious things that can happen in a country, one of the most serious crimes. And it is so important that it is immediately prosecuted because of plans for new attacks, because of collective memory, because of setting a precedent. They've already set a precedent that if another group of individuals were to do this again, they're gonna be like, "Yeah, it's not really that big a crime." The DOJ didn't act upon it. You know, we've seen people questioning their own memories because of this timidity. One of my fears is that if Biden actually does get rid of Garland and Monaco, which in many ways he should, I think he's just going to replace them with similar types of people, with other corrupt institutionalists whose role is to bury these crimes because they implicate the institutions themselves.

Sarah Kendzior (00:22:39):

This is not just about Biden just as it's not just about Trump. This is about decades and decades of failure to contain criminality and to contain the infiltration of American institutions with mafia actors and with corrupt plutocrats and all the other topics we discussed in the show. And the less that they were contained, the more extreme they became. We got more white supremacists, we got more violent radicals, more Bannons. These are all people who are out there, by the way, armed with classified intelligence, national security information and alliances with dictators around the world with whom they can trade this information. So we've been dealing with a very serious national security threat for a very long time; since before Trump, but certainly accelerated once he got into office, and certainly after he led an unpunished coup and then declared candidacy.

Sarah Kendzior (00:23:40):

And they basically just sat back and said, "That's fine. Vote out the mafia, vote blue, vote out the mafia." you can't vote out the mafia. You can vote and your vote will have an effect certainly for down ballot races and things like that. But this problem is deeply entrenched. And so I don't know what they're going to do. One of my fears is that the Jack Smith investigation, like, basically I see him as a hired hand who actually did the job that somebody should do when they are hired to be a special counsel. He moved quickly, he issued subpoenas, he forced people to answer them, and he indicted. So this shows *yet again* that yes, this is a choice Merrick Garland has made. He chose not to investigate, not to be aggressive and not to protect our country, not to protect our people.

Sarah Kendzior (00:24:34):

When they put in Smith, I think that was part of the general tactic of running out the clock. It took him a while to get back from the Balkans and to even get started, but once he got started, he moved relatively fast. I think there's a decent possibility that either Garland rejects Smith's report or just refuses to act on it, or that they'll demand more information and just continue this broader pattern of running out the clock. That is how these inertia operatives move. They move in a way that's not aggressive like the Trump camp, not overt, but that leaves people basically wondering what's going on. And there are people—some of whom are full of hopes and dreams, others are full of propaganda and bullshit—who lie to you and say that these delays are a result of a standard kind of process.

Sarah Kendzior (00:25:25):

And over the last few years, they found that lying to the American public about this is an extremely lucrative tactic. It's also one that has been embraced by the Biden administration itself. You know, they

invite these propagandists to the White House. And these are true propagandists, true grifters, many of whom have a record of fraud, of massive debt, of being embroiled in lawsuits, etc, that stretches back decades. Grifter is their occupation and being a cheerleader for the DOJ is just their current iteration. These are all people who worked in different careers beforehand, generally don't have any particular legal expertise, but do you have a history of fraud. And this would include Occupy Democrats, the Krassenstein brothers, Mueller She Wrote, who was debunked on a long thread that actually left out some of the lawsuits that they're facing. This may sound, you know, controversial, but I am out of fucks to give because they are out of valor to steal. They have stolen enough. They have lied enough, and it is time for everyone to set it straight.

Andrea Chalupa (00:26:42):

I wanna just point out really quickly what the pushback against this is, right? The DOJ cheerleaders on Twitter who like to yell at us for being doom agents and Russian agents and all that stuff [laughs]

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

So what their position is, is that the Durham report intimidated everyone from doing anything. And it was just this scary authoritarian power grab within the DOJ. But guess who agreed to finance the Durham report with our tax dollars? That was Merrick Garland. Merrick Garland could have said, "No, this is ridiculous. There's no merit there." And he decided to go forward with it. And the Durham report ultimately was a Fox News weaponization of our DOJ. Merrick Garland allowed that. And this is the same sort of catering to Nazis that allowed the actual Nazis back in 1933 Germany to turn Germany into a dictatorship within six months.

Andrea Chalupa (00:27:36):

What do you think the Nazis did first? They took over the legal system. That destroyed the chance of any brave lawyers from getting any justice, any accountability and meaningful investigations, obviously, as the concentration camps were being built immediately when Hitler became chancellor. So the Holocaust began with the Nazis taking over the legal system. And that's allowed to happen because of this appeasement mindset that if we're just catering to bullies, the bullies will be satisfied and suddenly be nice to us. And that's simply not how it ever works. It doesn't work that way in your personal life; it doesn't work that way when you're combating encroaching authoritarianism. So Merrick Garland has to go. The 2024 election is about to heat up. What Biden must be pushed on, especially with this reporting coming out, and this is from Carol Leonnig... She's one of the best journalists that we have out there.

Andrea Chalupa (00:28:26):

She's the one that's been covering a lot of the rot across the security forces of the US, including, of course, the Secret Service; the Trump cult that is in law enforcement, this whole civil war between the mostly bad guys right now and law enforcement; Christopher Wray's FBI, the Federalist Society, the Trumpians in the Secret Service and so on. And I'm sure there are good guys in there, good women pushing back, taking great risks, and so on. So the big question that needs to be on Biden entering 2024 and throughout the election is, "Will you appoint a new AG? Will you appoint a new attorney general?" And he has every right to do that. Just in a generous point, these jobs are very hard. So there is

changeover if Biden were to get a second term. It's very normal for a reshuffling of cabinet positions and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (00:29:16):

So the big pressure has to be on Biden to clean house and to get a more effective attorney general that meets the moment. And I'm sorry, we have to, and there we have to jump to Lindz Amer. And now, here is our interview with Lindz Amer. Lindz makes queer stuff for kids and families. They started on this wild and winding career path when they created Queer Kids Stuff, an award-winning original LGBTQ+ educational web series for all ages that has reached millions of families. They perform at libraries, schools and theaters all over the world, spreading queer joy and working on numerous projects that bring queer and trans representation into mainstream children's media. In 2019, they gave a viral TED Talk on the importance of talking to kids about gender and sexuality. They currently write for preschool television, and also host the parenting podcast, *Rainbow Parenting*, as well as *Activist You!* for kids, featuring interviews with youth activists. Their work has been featured by *Good Morning America*, *Kids Screen*, *Teen Vogue*, and *Parents Magazine*. Lindz Amer is here to talk about their new book, *Rainbow Parenting: Your Guide to Raising Queer Kids and Their Allies*.

[transition music]

Andrea Chalupa [00:30:29]:

Welcome back to *Gaslit Nation*, Lindz Amer.

Lindz Amer (00:30:33):

Hello, hello. Happy to be back.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:35):

Thank you for coming back. So, *Rainbow Parenting*, walk us through. What is that and what is the number one piece of advice that you would give parents today raising children in such a dangerous, hostile, politically-charged environment?

Lindz Amer (00:30:57):

Mmm. Okay. So, *Rainbow Parenting: Your Guide to Raising Queer Kids and Their Allies* is my brand new book. It's a book marketed as a parenting book, but it's really for anyone who has young people in their lives. So that's parents, but it's also grandparents, it's also educators, it's also caregivers and nannies, it's also uncles and aunts and ankles... Whatever non-binary term you prefer to use for that relationship. It's anyone who has a relationship with a young person in their life and that I would probably say anecdotally is like 99% of humans in this world. So it's really a book for anyone. And just one piece of advice... I mean, I wrote a whole book about it [laughs] so I've got a lot of advice.

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs] Read the book.

Lindz Amer:

Yeah, the advice is read the book. But also, I think the biggest piece of advice is just get out of your own way. A big part of the first kind of section of the book is really about talking to the reader and really stripping down any internalized anti-queer/anti-trans biases that they may have, especially when it comes to children, and just picking that apart and dissecting it and talking about the stakes of it all and why it's so important. So really getting ourselves out of our own way so that we can do this work at a very early age. I'm really talking about infancy, even pre infancy, of starting to build a philosophy yourself, for yourself and for your relationships with the children around you, for building a queer and gender affirming environment

Andrea Chalupa (00:32:39):

In terms of raising children today in this environment, as somebody that has studied genocide—Putin's genocide in Ukraine today, and Stalin's genocide in Ukraine in 1933—genocides always begin with scapegoating hate speech.

Lindz Amer:

Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

Hate rhetoric, hate propaganda, and that is very much the genocidal language I see across the far right, even so-called moderate options to Trump himself and DeSantis, like a Nikki Haley.

Lindz Amer:

Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

It's straight up genocidal.

Lindz Amer:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

Governor Youngen of Virginia. The Republican party establishment is trying to lay the groundwork out in the open for a genocide of LGBTQ people and they're using children as sort of like this very, very vulnerable group to do it. And they admit to doing it. It is very much a strategy that they are open about employing. My God. What do you have to say to that and what do you say to parents who are just absolutely sleepless over this?

Lindz Amer (00:33:45):

Yeah, absolutely. [big sigh] Oh, there's a lot to say. I'm Jewish, so... [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (00:33:51):

Oh dear. Okay. So you get it both.

Lindz Amer (00:33:52):

Yeah. So the understanding of genocide has been, I mean, that's generational trauma in my culture, right? That's something that we talk about every year at Passover, and talking about the enslavement of the Jewish peoples in Egypt and talking about the Holocaust, you know, every Sunday when I went to Hebrew school growing up. My education and my cultural background of just kind of understanding how that has impacted one piece of my identity right over centuries. But, you know, this idea and how this is proliferating for the trans community in particular and the targeting of children within it, because it's not like we're—yet, right?—being forced into concentration camps. That's not kind of what it looks like in our modern society at the moment, right? And that can also look other ways. But [laughs] that's a whole other can of worms.

Lindz Amer (00:34:50):

But I think when we're talking about genocide and talking about kids and transness and queerness, we can look at the lack of access to healthcare, gender-affirming healthcare for young people, and look at the statistics on mental health for LGBTQ+ youth, for suicide rates for LGBTQ+ youth and unhoused rates for LGBTQ+ youth, and the murder rates of LGBTQ+ adults, right? These statistics have not gone down in the decade-plus that we've been seeing research on it from places like GLAD and the Trevor Project and the Human Rights Campaign, right? So genocide in this day and age when we're talking about this topic doesn't look like Holocaust death camps. It looks like LGBTQ+ youth who are dying by suicide. And that being essentially forced by the legislation around them and the lack of support and the lack of knowledge from the adults around them who continue to perpetuate these rigid gender binaries and not accept the LGBTQ+ youth in their life.

Lindz Amer (00:36:03):

And it's not even just about whether or not you are accepting of LGBTQ+ young people, it's about affirming and supporting them and helping them navigate a world that is not built for them. And so that is kind of like the next level tier that I try and kind of take people to in my book, of like, Okay, it's great that you're accepting and supportive, but you shouldn't be coming to me when your child comes out to you and asking me how you can be validating and supporting of them because at that point, you're already kind of too late actually, and you're having to do a lot of the legwork to help them in their mental health journey when you could have kind of avoided it all together by being in conversation with them from infancy about the possibilities for who they could become, right? Because we're not seeing it in media, we're seeing it in a lot of picture books. And books are kind of where LGBTQ+ representation is starting to saturate, which is fantastic.

Andrea Chalupa (00:37:03):

The books that are getting banned.

Lindz Amer (00:37:05):

Books that are getting banned 100%. And that's another side of it. But I think that the work I'm trying to do in rainbow parenting is kind of like a little bit of a loophole to a lot of this legislation and an antidote, right? Because it's really hard to ban a book for adults. Because I'm not trying to get into school libraries, I'm trying to get into the librarian's brain, right? I'm trying to get into the parents of the school where the education is getting banned and say, "Okay, if the school is not supporting you, if the school is not providing that information, I can help you do that in your day-to-day life." And it takes a very specific kind

of parent and person to want to go down that journey, but I'm trying to make it as easy as possible to make those ideas accessible so you can do it wherever.

Andrea Chalupa (00:37:54):

Thank you so much for doing that. And in terms of helping during infancy and having sort of that parenting from the get-go—because obviously society's not going to do it, media's not going to do it—what are some steps that parents can take and how can you encourage them to have such an open mind when they themselves maybe weren't raised that way? What could you arm parents with to sort of get grounded in having that space for their child growing up if they themselves did not have one?

Lindz Amer (00:38:32):

Yeah, I think first and foremost, it's about getting out of your own way. It's about thinking deeply about your own gender and reconciling with these anti-queer and anti-trans biases that are ingrained in us from the get go. I mean, think of how surrounded we are even from childhood with cis-ness and heterosexuality. Every Disney movie, every fairy tale, every piece of media you absorb as a young person, everything is so focused on cisgenderedness and heterosexuality and that being the only possibility for how you can grow up and who you can be, right? So I think it's a lot about recognizing that and recognizing that imbalance and figuring out, like, okay, what can I do in my life to recenter the framework to show the full diversity of possibilities for young people? So I think it's recognizing that, becoming aware of that understanding and reckoning with your own gender, with your own relationship to sexuality.

Lindz Amer (00:39:33):

And *then* we can start kind of talking about how to build a queer and gender affirming environment for a young person that, yeah, shifts this kind of center of gravity away from only heterosexuality, only cisgenderedness. And I think a big part of the book is just the tone, of just being warm and inviting and making these ideas easy and accessible. They're not these big taboo topics. They're actually something that kids already do understand and can understand when, you know, you have someone like me who's been doing this for a long time who can give you some nudges and the language to approach it in a way that's age-relevant to a child. And I think part of the philosophy of getting into it is, it's okay to make mistakes. No one's going to be perfect in this.

Lindz Amer (00:40:27):

We have to model vulnerability within this because I think that that's something that gets people overwhelmed and anxious about these conversations because they think that they have to be perfect at it. They can't make mistakes, they can't show their fallibility to a young person. And I say, you know what? We're at the point in society where there's too many barriers to entry and we just need to be talking about it. And that is kind of the bare minimum we need to get to to be able to change things, right? So I'm saying, get out of your own way. Get outta your head. You don't have to know everything. If you don't know something, why not go on a journey of curiosity with your child? And that strengthens your bond, first and foremost, and you're learning something together. And I think that that's pretty cool.

Lindz Amer (00:41:11):

And it takes the pressure off of it. It doesn't have to be this big thing. I was at an event last night and I answered a question from a grandparent who was like, "Oh, when I'm like, you know, talking to my grandchild about wanting cookies, I say, you know, here's cookies, here's milk. Your grandma, she made these for you. She/her. Grandma uses she/her." And she was like, "Do I have to do all that and like do all

that gender stuff?” And I was like, Yeah, why not [laughs]? And I think that's my response to a lot of it is like, yeah, why not? What's the harm? What was the big deal

Andrea Chalupa (00:41:44):

And what kind of response, like what are you hearing when you do your book tour, what are you hearing when you talk to your readers, your audience in this age of DeSantis, you know, unleashing these anti-gay laws that are straight up what allowed both Putin—

Lindz Amer:

Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

—and Orbán to consolidate power? What are you hearing from your audience during such a horrific time?

Lindz Amer (00:42:10):

I'm hearing a lot of curiosity, for sure. I am hearing a lot of those kind of internalized obstacles of, “This is a big overwhelming thing. How do I talk about sexuality?”—which is really a question of do I have to talk about sex and queer sex with my kid? And the thing I keep saying to that is like, a toddler is not interested in having a conversation about intercourse. That's just not what they're asking you when they ask, “Where do babies come from?” They're asking, “What is the actual mechanism of that?” And that's sperm, eggs and a uterus. And there are so many different ways to make that process happen, to make a baby, that you're not talking about sex or intercourse at all. And so the excuse of, “I don't wanna talk to my toddler about sex when I'm talking about sexuality,” sex and queer sex is such a small sliver of what sexuality is and simplifying it down just to that is a disservice to what the full spectrum of sexuality is, what queer culture is.

Lindz Amer (00:43:14):

And I don't think that that's an excuse for not talking about sexuality with young people. And it's very interesting to be going on this book tour—interesting as a word for it—in this particular moment. And I have a little bit of a story actually from an event that I did, because I've been doing these adult book events/Q&As, talking about the book, talking about it to adults. But I also do family performances because my web series, *Queer Kids Stuff*, that I started in 2016 as kind of like a *Mr. Rogers/Sesame Street* LGBTQ+ lessons for preschool audience that is really kind of an all ages look at it. I do songs and stories and I talk to my cute little teddy bear from childhood. It's a fun time. Very wholesome, very queer joy.

Lindz Amer (00:44:01):

So I do family performances with songs and stories for that web series for kids and for their parents. And so I've been doing both kinds of events as I'm kind of on this cross country tour that I'm doing for the book. And yesterday, I had an event at a library outside of Chicago. A bunch of families came, it was just, it was a really, really wonderful event, but there was one person that I kind of caught out of the corner of my eye while I was mid performance who was sitting there. He wasn't doing anything really, but he was holding up these signs and I was in the middle of performing so I didn't read them thoroughly, but they said, “indoctrinating—”something, something yada, yada yada. And I was like, Okay, I know what that guy's here for.

Lindz Amer (00:44:47):

He's not a fan, clearly. And so he sat there for the whole performance and the kids didn't have any idea that there was someone there who wanted to bring down our joy, right? The parents, I believe, were aware, but he was fine. He was just sitting there. They didn't kick him out or anything because it would've caused a scene. At the end of my performances, I tell this story about going to the beach for Pride and how it was cloudy and it started to rain and our friends all huddled together. And then after waiting for a while, the sky cleared and a rainbow appeared over the ocean. And once I said, "rainbow," this guy, he just threw his head back in exasperation—"ugh!"— and he started saying stuff about, "What is a rainbow?!" And someone yelled, "Pride!". And he was like, "No, it's God's gift!"

Lindz Amer (00:45:35):

And started going off and heckling me, essentially. And I said, "I'm about to sing a song, sir." And I started going into my medley that I do of a mashup of "Over the Rainbow" and "Rainbow Connection" that's, I think, really lovely. And the parents and the adults in the audience started singing the first verse of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" with me to drown out the sound of his heckling. And I think it's just a really beautiful metaphor for what's going on right now, of people coming together through queer joy to just drown out this hate. And so experiences like that... First of all, that was just an incredibly beautiful moment. I'm getting goosebumps just thinking about it again. And it's just so emblematic of what's happening right now and why I have a lot of hope and optimism for the future, even though things are not great.

Lindz Amer (00:46:29):

Obviously, things are really difficult right now. And I am seeing people come together in queer joy to celebrate our community because, I mean, I started my web series in 2016. I had neo Nazis descend on my YouTube comments almost immediately. But there's something that's just so different in the energy right now, comparing from 2016 when all of this was still pretty underground, right? When this kind of festering culture was happening and people were kind of brushing it off, "ahh, you know, that's not really happening. Don't pay attention to them." And now we're seeing those comment sections come up in national/international public discourse and I'm seeing so many people see that and validate that that is true and that's happening and come up together against it. So I have a lot of hope for the future. And I think that story and what happened yesterday, it just gives me a lot of hope.

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:32):

Me too. And what would you say to a family raising a trans child in one of these so-called red states that's weaponizing the law in genocidal fashion? It's a genocide that we're watching play out. Do we pack up and leave? This is our home. This is, maybe it's a generational community that they've been part of for many generations. What would you say to them?

Lindz Amer (00:47:57):

[big sigh] I would say take care of yourselves. I would say, you know, hold your family close and have those important conversations and include your young person in those conversations and respect what they have to say about how they feel. If they're scared, that's valid. If they want to move, that's valid. Not every family obviously has the means to leave a state that is hostile and that is horrible. It's horrible to be stuck there. It's horrible to feel forced out of a place that is your home, right? There are lots of wonderful organizations that help LGBTQ+ people all over the world relocate from hostile environments. Rainbow Railroad is the first one that comes to mind, but I think there are other ones popping up. So I would say, look for your community, look for your people and take care of yourselves and try to do what you can to protect your family because it really is, especially in states like Florida and Texas, these are places that are not safe for LGBTQ+ people, trans youth in particular. And I don't want to see trans kids

be taken away from supportive homes, right? That's what breaks my heart. And if a child is actually getting the affirmation and care and support they need, and that's being taken away—that right to that is being taken away by their local government—[sigh] if you can try to find the resources to get out of there, I would recommend that personally,

Andrea Chalupa (00:49:31):

Obviously your book is *Rainbow Parenting*, but parents rely on teachers to raise children. What would you say to a teacher anywhere in the country? Because, you know, these idiots are everywhere.

Lindz Amer:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's not like a red state/blue state problem, but of course blue states obviously have more resources in confronting these demons. But what would you say to a teacher or a librarian or school counselor who sees the truth, sees what's going on very clearly and wants to be able to help children and protect children, but their job is on the line, their livelihood is on the line? And what would you say to them in terms of what they can do to, under all that immense political pressure, which is authoritarian pressure, how would you advise them?

Lindz Amer (00:50:18):

Yeah, I get this question a lot of like, what do I do, my school isn't supportive. The children in my class, their parents suck [laughs]. And it's a complicated situation. You're dealing with a complex bureaucratic system, especially in the public school system. You're dealing with administration, you're dealing with power dynamics, you're dealing with just your job and the safety of your livelihood. So for educators, it's a much more complex situation, certainly. And the advice that I've kind of been giving to educators who are asking me these questions about, you know, What do I do? How do I confront this? My take on it is, What do you have control over? You have control over your classroom, your space. You have control over yourself and your autonomy. You can communicate your values and what you believe to the children and the young people who are in your spaces and who are in relationship with you through your educational occupation, right?

Lindz Amer (00:51:20):

So I would say communicate that to the young people in your lives. Communicate that to the young people in your classrooms to whatever extent you feel safe. So especially if you're a queer or a trans educator, if you don't feel comfortable being out of the closet, if you don't feel comfortable in your space, in your school, protect yourself first and foremost to whatever extent you feel comfortable. But if you do have an administration that is okay with you being queer and trans out in your school, I think that being able to talk about yourself and talk about your values in particular and what you will and will not allow in your classroom, I think that that's what you can do, right? That's where you do have power within that dynamic and how you can communicate that to the young people in your lives. And every situation is different. Every educator has a different level of safety that they feel within their institutions. So take my advice with a grain of salt because this is generalized advice [laughs] and not individual advice. And you know your spaces and you know the kids in your classroom. This is hopefully giving you the confidence and empowering you to take control over what you do have control over. So that's kind of my advice to educators.

Andrea Chalupa (00:52:48):

And obviously we're having this conversation in June, which is Pride month. What do you wanna say to people in terms of committing to LGBTQ protections, allyship throughout the year? What are some ways that we can keep this front and center, especially as we're about to go into what is inevitably going to be a toxic presidential election?

Lindz Amer (00:53:10):

Mmhmm <affirmative>. Oh my gosh, yeah. I personally am a queer and trans person who exists outside of June.[laughs]. And most other queer and trans people also exist outside the month of June. I love Pride. Pride is fun. It's where I get my most work. It's where I feel like I have a bit of a soapbox that I can step on and people pay attention. But it would be nice to have school gigs and to have panels that I do in other months of the year because I still have to pay my mortgage the other months of the year. So make sure that you're not just paying attention and having these conversations and interacting with queer and trans people and social media accounts just in this month. Keep tabs on those spaces throughout the year. See where you can add queer and trans folks to your feeds in any month of the year.

Lindz Amer (00:54:07):

See where you can support queer and trans owned small businesses. Giving queer and trans people economic power, especially outside of June, is absolutely paramount to making sure that important representation happens in Hollywood. Making sure that we're making more queer and trans books, making sure that young people are seeing themselves and that we can have an influence in this, you know, capitalist hellscape that we're living in, right? Where, I mean, there's no ethical consumption under capitalism, but if you can support and give money to an individual queer or trans person, that is empowering our community. I think that those are kind of like the biggest things. I mean, we're seeing rainbow capitalism kind of rear its ugly head with Target and Bud Light and other large corporations that are putting the rainbow on their avatar and seemingly doing the right thing by hiring graphic designers like Ash + Chess who are queer and trans.

Lindz Amer (00 :55:14):

But then, you know, taking it down from their stores, taking it down from their websites as soon as someone kicks a rainbow in one of their stores, right? When that organization, especially something like Target, as large as Target with so many resources, they have the ability to put money into security, to put money into cyber monitoring threats, to back up what they're doing. And they have chosen not to because they freaked out about it and it's something new that they don't know how to deal with. When there are infrastructures to monitor that, to navigate that, and they just are choosing not to invest in that because they don't know how to properly invest in the queer and trans community.

Andrea Chalupa (00:55:58):

And they need to be called out for what they're doing because they're buckling—

Lindz Amer:

Oh, yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

—to a genocidal mob. I know I keep using the G word, but that's because I'm telling you as somebody who has studied this.

Lindz Amer:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's plain as day.

Lindz Amer (00:56:12):

No, it's important to use that word, too. It's important to use that rhetoric.

Andrea Chalupa (00:56:15):

Absolutely. So I wanna end on a hopeful note because people like you give me hope. And thank you so much for what you are doing. Everything you're doing is lifesaving and planting seeds of hope. And anyone that lives their joy out loud, their life out loud is extraordinarily powerful, infinitely powerful. We need more people like you across the board. So please everyone, read Rainbow Parenting. Just read it just to be a better ally and just understand what the stakes are in this moment that we find ourselves in and how we ultimately win.

[closing song up and under— “It’s Pride” performed by Lindz Amer, written by Amanda D’Archangelis]

[outro theme, roll credits]