

Gaslit Nation Transcript

08 November 2023

“End the Era of Human Sacrifice”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/end-era-of-human-92497406>

[opening clip]

Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan (00:00):

This is an avalanche of human suffering that's a hundred percent man made. It is the worst humanitarian catastrophe I've experienced in my lifetime and in my growingly long career in humanitarian medicine. And it's burning through the hearts of every single humanitarian that I know. I'm going to paint a picture for you of the degree of suffering that we're seeing. People keep asking me about medical aid and hospitals and the situation of the hospitals... The entire hospital healthcare system collapsed almost a week ago. It was announced on TV for the whole world to see. And in that week, there has been indiscriminate bombardment, and I don't even know if indiscriminate is the right term because it's targeting healthcare facilities, ambulances, churches, mosques, schools, refugee camps—densely populated refugee camps, wiping out entire families in a second—entire multi-generational extended families in a second. There are almost 1,000 families in the Gaza Strip who have had at least two members of their family—at least two members—killed in the last three weeks.

Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan (01:11):

There are almost 4,000 children who have been killed and identified, excluding almost a thousand children whose bodies are still trapped under the rubble. Some of them may be alive for a long period before they ultimately die under the rubble. And I'm sorry if there are any young children watching this. Perhaps this is a good time to ask them to leave the room, but I think it's important that I paint a picture, particularly when I'm following a news narrative that almost dismisses this avalanche of suffering that is unprecedented in modern times. There's an acronym in the Gaza Strip right now. I'm a pediatric intensive care doctor. I see a lot of suffering in my career. There's an acronym that is unique to the Gaza Strip and it's W-C-N-S-F: Wounded Child, No Surviving Family. And it is used not infrequently in the last three weeks.

Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan (02:12):

It was coined in the last three weeks. One physician told me two days ago, or a few days ago that a little girl came in wounded and she had a piece of paper in her pocket that she handed to him. He sent me a picture of the piece of paper. It had 27 names on it and she said, “These are the members of my family that were with me in my home. Please look for them. Please look for them under the rubble. Don't look for this one”—and she points to the name of her sister—“I know she's already dead.” This is a 10-year-old little girl. Wounded Child No Surviving Family should not exist as an acronym. And to follow President Biden as he continues to justify and to warmonger... All I can say is this has to stop. It's a collective stain on our humanity. It's a stain on our collective humanity.

BBC Interviewer (03:13):

Tanya, let me ask you. You paint such a vivid and horrific picture. You really do. And I understand that these are your friends who you've worked with and how difficult that must be. You're not alone. I've been hearing today, reading testimony today from Philippe Lazzarini who's the Commissioner General of UNRWA. He's been speaking to the UN Security Council. He said this: “The sanitary conditions are appalling. People live on very little bread and whatever is left of some water.” 70 of their staff members

have been killed and they're looking after 670,000 people in their refugee centers. Is there any sign from what you're hearing of a humanitarian pause or pauses that could be negotiated?

Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan (03:59):

I'm not a politician, but the word "pause" to me makes no sense, you know? You pause to nourish and hydrate a population before you kill them? It just doesn't make any sense for me. You stop the bombardment. That is what the entire global community should be pushing for and should be insisting on. And I think in leading up to my introduction, I think you interviewed somebody who said something very similar, a Gazan who said something very similar. The priority is not giving US aid, you need to stop the indiscriminate bombardment. So I think yes, what is needed is a humanitarian truce or a ceasefire, global intervention; things that were voted for by the overwhelming majority of countries on this planet a few days ago in the general assembly of the United Nations. Yet they're not adhered to and are completely disregarded by the powers that be. Two powers, to be specific.

[transition music]

Andrea Chalupa (05:07):

Our opening clip was Pediatric Intensive Care Doctor Tanya Haj-Hassan of Doctors Without Borders and a co-founder of Gaza Medics Voices. Today is Tuesday, November 7th, election day in America. Control of four state governments, one key Supreme Court race in Pennsylvania, an abortion measure in Ohio and more will be decided. For an analysis of the election results heading into 2024 and everything we're up against—yes, that pesky Project '25 and how to overcome it—look out for this week's bonus show only for Patreon subscribers at the Truth-teller level and higher. You can sign up for that at patreon.com/gaslit. Thank you to everyone who supports the show. Welcome to Gaslit Nation's world of nuance; where we strive for nuance because it's a beautiful word. Nuance, nuance, nuance, nuance. And the tribal politics and culture wars, they're deliberately engineered to make us fight instead of unite, and the only way we overcome the forces we're up against, as we were reminded in the victory against the Trumpian government in Poland, the power the people have is through coalition. We must build together.

Andrea Chalupa (06:31):

So welcome to this world of much-needed nuance in a time of extremism. The lesson is to be kind to yourselves and others. Join me in staying above the toxic mess and keep your head down and work. For instance, I set out to make a thousand phone calls for Virginia this month. With the devastation in Israel, with the devastation in Gaza, with a close loved one suddenly in the hospital for several weeks, I did not think I could do it. I just... There's no emotional bandwidth to do it. And I finally got the courage. I pulled myself together and now I'm up to 530 phone calls and counting. The reminder here is Glenn Youngkin wants me to be demoralized and distracted, but you know what? Fuck Glenn Youngkin. I'm going to keep my head down and work. We're long distance runners, so do whatever you can wherever you are because we need you, we need you.

Andrea Chalupa (07:35):

So if you don't know where to start, check out the Gaslit Nation Action Guide at gaslitnationpod.com. We're going to continue to update it, but there's so many options there. And that's where I often go to if I just need a reminder. This is where I can put in some emotional energy, I feel like bashing somebody's face in, I feel like throwing objects at the wall, I'm going to check out the Gaslit Nation Action Guide at gaslitnationpod.com, and that's where we need to channel our energy now more than ever because it's

an all hands on deck moment for not just America but the world, and we're going to go through it all today. In this episode. We're going to be looking at the Israel-Hamas war in the context of the global war of autocracy versus democracy, including, yes, the 2024 election. As always, if I get anything wrong, if I leave out much-needed context, kindly let me know over social media. The show's on Instagram, Threads, BlueSky, Mastodon, Post, Spoutible, Facebook as we wean ourselves off Twitter.

Andrea Chalupa (08:34):

You can also send a message to gaslitnation@gmail.com. Corrections will be in the show notes available wherever you get your podcasts. Now, let's begin. I am going to try to hold it together for this episode because I don't want a drinking game to start where people take a shot every time I start tearing up. My reactions, of course, on the show are a human reaction and I share them with you because how can you not break down watching everything that's happening and obviously where everything is headed if we don't join together, raise our voices for the voiceless and stop it, which is very much in our power to do? We are living in a time of normalized human sacrifice. Putin's war and genocide in Ukraine, that's been going on since 2014. That's the price of doing business with Russia. That's how all those deaths of civilians are seen. Now standing with our ally Israel, as it's being led by a Putin-aligned Trumpian genocidal maniac trying to overthrow democracy in Israel, surrounded by Stephen Millers as they gaslight people into thinking dropping well over 7,000 bombs in a few short weeks in a densely packed urban area is the only way to free hostages. That's how many bombs the US dropped on the entire country of Afghanistan in 2019 under Trump during its heaviest year of fighting. Don't you think that absurd level of bombing puts the very lives of the hostages at risk? This does not add up. I spoke with a military expert who confirmed you do not need a military expert to know that this does not make sense. There are other ways to free the hostages. What is going on now against Gaza is Netanyahu's scam to cling to power. And this administration and everyone who asks for so-called humanitarian pauses are legitimizing this strategy that is going to go down in history as one of the worst atrocities committed ever. Do you understand? Ever. It's a historic level of bombing.

Andrea Chalupa (10:52):

It is a historic level of bombing and it is all driven by one man and his cruel, corrupt coalition to come to power, stay in power, and overthrow the very democracy of Israel. I want to be very clear: If you don't trust Trump, if you don't trust Putin, you cannot trust Netanyahu. That should be obvious. Please understand there's no military solution here. I want to see the hostages home safely. That nonsense, horrifying video Hamas released showing terrorists cradling kidnapped Israeli children is sickening. Those children, if they are alive still, are deeply traumatized. We need to get them home. But Netanyahu has shown total disregard for those hostages—with his carpet bombing—and their families. He's ignored the families. He's had his forces roughly break up their protests. They've called him out on TV again and again. Meanwhile, Netanyahu is busy hiding, busy putting up propaganda images of himself.

Andrea Chalupa (12:01):

He's busy fighting the military and the intelligence community, just like Trump fights with our military and intelligence community. Netanyahu, I promise you, does not give a shit about those hostages, and we know this because dropping well over 7,000 bombs puts their lives in danger. Those bombs may kill those hostages directly, or at the very least, that massive carnage is creating such chaos that in that chaos, those hostages may easily be killed, their urgent medical needs not attended to. They're dead. Do you understand the absurdity of this massive historic bombing campaign the corrupt criminal Netanyahu is carrying out just to cling to power and carry out a genocide, delivering on promises to his coalition of Stephen Miller racist terrorists? And the US not being forceful and public to try to put an end to Netanyahu's chaos legitimizes his scheming. Yes, Israel has a right to defend itself, but it doesn't have a right to break international law, and that is what it is doing.

Andrea Chalupa (13:11):

I've never in all my fucking years covering the worst human rights crises, seen so many—so many—humanitarian aid groups united in calling out a country, not since Russia. And Netanyahu is aligned with Russia because they're both genocidal, corrupt regimes. If you love Israel, this is your moment to protect it by demanding Netanya, go now. And that ceasefire allows the country to move towards a path to peace. How the... This is common sense. Do you understand me? This is common sense. I want to speak to people that have some sort of personal cultural connection to Israel. I do, too. I grew up with a family that's now in Tel Aviv. I understood this history of the crisis through their eyes. Part of the village that raised me and made me the person I am today is an Israeli family, including a strong ballbusting Israeli woman; a lawyer in Tel Aviv.

Andrea Chalupa (14:06):

I learned how to dive in a public swimming pool in Tel Aviv. And I'm telling you, for their own protection, for their own dignity, for the future of that country, we were told growing up that Israel's supposed to be this fucking democracy, that it's a shining light in that region. Netanyahu is making a mockery and has for so long under all of this, and he's leaving a long lasting scar of genocide on Israel's history. And I don't want to go into the details of all the history. I've done all that on other episodes. So you can go to that if you think I'm leaving stuff out. I'm not going to keep repeating myself over and over and over again in every single episode. Go back to the several episodes we've done already on the long history, on the long horror of this story. But right now in this moment, we need a ceasefire.

Andrea Chalupa (14:51):

We need a ceasefire. We need a ceasefire. We need to stop the gaslighting of allowing this Trump/Putin ego to move the region into a long war, a forever war, just so he can die in power. That is what is happening now. And the US foreign policy team needs to wake the fuck up and stop being complicit in this. And to all the people who are heartbroken, who are in a fetal position, who want off this planet, who can't stand this anymore: I am with you. My internal monologue is horrifying. I see the videos, the children... It's horrifying.

Andrea Chalupa (15:32):

I just want to tell you, as a parent, as a mother, one of the most joyful things you get to experience is watching your child eat. There is something so cute about watching your baby eat. It's like seeing a little squirrel munching on its food. It's something... It's like music to the soul. You feel such a sense of relief seeing your child eat. It's just a joy to watch. And right now in Gaza, you've got countless children without food who are starving. You've got countless children who are being killed. Some estimates are one every 10 minutes. One every 10 minutes. And don't come after me about saying, "Oh, that's Hamas propaganda" because that sounds as nonsensical as those Arab nations that are claiming that Israel made up/invented October 7th, that it was a false flag, that it was crisis actors or whatever. The reality is, all of those humanitarian aid groups that are extraordinarily credible, that do lifesaving work around the world, that have very strong track records, for the most part, yes, they get shit wrong.

Andrea Chalupa (16:30):

Yes, they have some tankies in their midst that want to fight the US and US military through Russian disinformation. I've been all over that. I've covered how Amnesty did some both-sidesing nonsense against Ukraine, okay? I've covered those protests carefully. I understand the track record of humanitarian groups having political agendas. But right now, objectively, the documentation is extraordinarily high and consistent. And that is not Hamas propaganda. Those are facts. Dozens of journalists have been killed in Gaza. Several, several United Nations aid workers have been killed in Gaza. Okay? There's a long history of genocide against Palestinians being committed/carried out by

Netanyahu's government. And the West Bank in recent years has seen a surging death toll of Palestinians in the West Bank by settlers, by a culture of criminal impunity driven by this government of Stephen Miller's, and it all adds up. This is not Hamas propaganda.

Andrea Chalupa (17:40):

Do you understand? Okay? This is a crisis that has been created and driven by a singular ego that will do anything, as we've seen again and again—remember when people tell you who they are, believe them. That is where we are now. So what should be done instead of carpet bombing to free the hostages, end the war and contain Hamas? It is surprisingly simple. Why? Because the good news is there's so much massive room for improvement here. Famously, before October 7th, Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said before October 7th, “The Middle East is quiet,” meaning the US was on autopilot when it came to Palestine and Israel as extremist violence was ramping up in the West Bank. Okay? So there's so much more that can be done now. There's so much more, just like the basics that can be done now and here is what needs to be done.

Andrea Chalupa (18:38):

It's a five step process. One, the US must call for a ceasefire. A humanitarian pause is not a ceasefire. There's no military solution for this, okay? There's no military solution for this. The US must call for a ceasefire and yes, make aid conditional. How can we aid a country openly, blatantly carrying out war crimes? That makes the US in breach of the Geneva conventions. We are legally obligated to follow international law. Plus, we need to set an example for the rest of the world to follow. Hold Israel to the same standards you hold Ukraine. If Ukraine started mass murdering Russian children, do you think Ukraine would get the aid it needs from the world? No. So hold Israel to the same standards you hold Ukraine. Two, through back channels, the US must pressure the Israelis to replace the current government through a new coalition forming in the current parliament.

Andrea Chalupa (19:33):

You don't even need to hold elections. The back channels are just going to force, you know, really put the pressure on that a new coalition is formed in the current parliament. Netanyahu is enemy number two in Israel right after Hamas. His polling sucks. He must be forced out now. Now is the time to do it. Step three, the US must call for Israel to work with the Palestinian Authority, its partner in the Oslo Accords, because they share a common enemy: Hamas. Keep in mind, Hamas came to power, yes, through an election all those years ago—17 years—then staged a coup and a war against the Palestinian Authority for being too moderate. The Palestinian Authority needs protection. It needs infrastructure. It needs new talent. Israel can guarantee that protection. There are credible grassroots groups which are swelling in numbers in response to this crisis that can be brought in to help develop new leadership, young leadership in the Palestinian Authority.

Andrea Chalupa (20:37):

The current leader, Mahmoud Abbas, is 87 years old, okay? 87 years old. So Israel and the Palestinian Authority can continue the work of the Oslo Accords, bring it back, and have an alliance. Have an alliance. The US allied with the communists in World War II. So if you want to defeat Hamas and Iran, just ally with the Palestinian Authority, Israel. Promise them protection. Israel says they don't want to occupy Gaza, they don't want to deal with that headache, well, then work with the Palestinians to build up a new coalition to bring quality of life back to Gaza because the Palestinian people have suffered under Hamas. Hamas drove that place into the ground, put all of its attention into the terrorism. The Palestinian people suffered, okay? They're caught in the crossfires of Hamas and Israel. So now there needs to be new thinking, new innovation, new leadership, and an alliance must be formed now.

Andrea Chalupa (21:32):

Now, four: Hamas, like Hezbollah, like Iran cannot be defeated. Just like there will always be Russian genocidal imperialism and the Ku Klux Klan, Iran and other proxies will forever call for the destruction of Israel. Terrorist groups will always be there. They can only be contained. That can be brokered by the US and its partners in the Middle East, like Turkey. It'll be messy. It'll take time. But that process can only meaningfully begin with a ceasefire, which cannot happen until a new coalition forms in government putting Netanyahu out of power. Step five, how to free the hostages—if they're still alive after Netanyahu's carpet bombing... Step five. Okay, I just want to be clear. These aren't, like... You don't have to do these steps in order. You can do this step I'm about to list first. So number five, how to free the hostages if they're even still alive after Netanyahu's carpet bombing.

Andrea Chalupa (22:28):

It comes down to special ops and high level negotiations led by the US. Freeing the hostages requires a surgical mission, not genocidal carpet bombing, which makes everything worse. And I want to say to the people who are heartbroken and deeply demoralized and don't even want to hear me say what I'm about to say next: If your heart is broken—and I feel that way too, of course, I do. But I know ethically, morally, we have no choice but to choose our fighter in 2024. Who would you rather negotiate with? A Netanyahu or someone who can be pushed? We have no choice but to vote in 2024 or that choice will be made for us. And I promise you, if you hate his guts, if you hate “genocide Joe”, from my years of experience on Ukraine, pushing and pushing, years of crying on this show, I promise you, Biden and his team can be pushed.

Andrea Chalupa (23:37):

Trump cannot. Congressman Ryan Zinke of Montana, who was Trump's interior secretary, already introduced a bill that would ban all Palestinians from America. It already has several co-signers in the House, because of course it does. Things are bad now. This can become a whole lot worse and it will take generations of human sacrifice to build our way out that black hole. Trust me when I say from my own painful experience, Biden's team can be pushed and we must push them. I've dealt with the hell of this foreign policy team. I watched with my jaw on the floor when Biden held that summit with Putin in his first spring in office. And then Putin writes that essay right after that saying, “Ukraine doesn't exist, doesn't have a right to exist” as he's amassing his nearly 200,000 troops on the border of Ukraine, right? The clock was counting down to a genocidal total invasion and Biden with his Putin summit, cheerleaded by the idiots of the EU at that time...

Andrea Chalupa (24:41):

That was the green light. And then when the total invasion broke out, Biden's team was like, “Get out Zelensky! And here's a bunch of information, intel, training on guerrilla warfare. Good luck!” And everyone's like, “Oh, Ukraine's gone. Let's all mourn the death of this country in real time. Let's all watch it.” And what did Ukrainians do? They said, “Go fuck yourselves. We're going to stay here and fight. It's our country.” And they entertained the world, thank God they did, with their memes and Zelensky becoming a meme. Everyone's like, “Oh, they're so cute. They're like shelter dogs.” And they're like, “Let's all give them money. Let's all rush to support them.” And that's what turned the clock around. That is what turned the clock around. And I was the one coming right out of the gate going on cable news, amplifying the voices of my terrified friends saying things like, “No fly zone now.”

Andrea Chalupa (25:30):

“No fly zone now. Here's how we can do a no fly zone.” And so many of you out there listening now were, like, politely humoring me or just rolling their eyes at me or just thinking, “Oh no, we're not getting... tThat's too involved. World War III, nuclear bomb.” And did we get our no fly zone? Did I get my no fucking fly zone and protect all my friends and their friends and their children? I didn't get my no

fly zone. And how many have been killed since then? But we pushed and we pushed and we pushed. And finally those idiots in DC gave us long range missiles and F-16s. But how many people had to die before we got that? So I'm telling you, if you are all about the Palestinian cause and ending this genocide, you need to push right now. You need to raise your voice right now.

Andrea Chalupa (26:15):

You can work with the idiots of the Biden team. They're slow as fuck. They're complicit in their own ways. But you can push. You can name and shame and you can push them. I promise you, you cannot do that with Trump. You can not do that with Trump. And Trump in power is going to make Netanyahu even more powerful. You need to push Biden and his team now, and you need to vote whether you want to or not in 2024. And I know it sucks, but we are clawing our way out of a black hole here in America. And it's a generational battle. We fight for urgency in our lifetime. We fight with our hair on fire in our lifetime, and we fight and we fight and we fight and we build that ladder out of the black hole, hoping to God the next generation has it easier, but that's never a guarantee.

Andrea Chalupa (27:00):

Okay? So we're going to stay together. We are going to fight. It's like that video game that was like in every movie theater when we were growing up as kids. You know that one? Mortal Kombat or whatever. It's like choose your enemy, choose your opponent. That's how you vote in 2024. Who would you rather negotiate with? You demand better now, you demand accountability now, you demand a ceasefire now, you demand an end to this genocide now. You name and shame. I went through that hell for Ukraine. You heard it here on the show. There's a public record of it on our transcripts page on gaslitnationpod.com, and now it's your turn. For everyone that cares about the Palestinian cause, for everyone who's finally woken up to the Palestinian cause, it's your turn now to join that fight, to push, push, push. It can be done.

Andrea Chalupa (27:45):

And we all have to do that together. Now I want to speak directly to my old friend, Jake Sullivan. Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor. You've heard me go off on him so many times on this show, and I'm going to speak directly to him now. Dear Jake Sullivan, remember the George Floyd protests? How that awakened people, especially white people who finally understood why we must say Black Lives Matter because the authoritarianism that built America through genocide and slavery treated non-white bodies like they belong to the state? A Black man was casually executed on the street by a police officer, chatting away with his indifferent colleagues. And when George Floyd called out for his mama, mothers everywhere answered him. One child is being killed every 10 minutes in Gaza. Every mother hears that, Jake Sullivan. Every mother hears that. You've heard me go granular on the history of this conflict on this show, but I want to just say right now, one child is being killed every 10 minutes in Gaza.

Andrea Chalupa (28:52):

"But what about the history?" One child is being killed every 10 minutes in Gaza. "But what about all the Arab states that don't really give a shit about the Palestinians?" One child is being killed every 10 minutes in Gaza. That is waking people up to this crisis unlike ever before. The status quo that you are trying to work with in Washington DC is dead, Jake Sullivan. It's dead. One child is being killed every 10 minutes in Gaza, and that is energizing people across this country unlike ever before, especially the Black base that Biden needs to win Georgia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan in these very tight races with this very tight polling. So if you are serious about winning the war of autocracy versus democracy worldwide, if you are serious on defeating Iran-backed Russia, you need to reign in Russia-aligned Netanyahu. You need to bring him to heel.

Andrea Chalupa (30:02):

I outlined the five things you can do. There's so much room for progress here, given how so-called quiet. This region was before October 7th in your eyes. There's so much you can do and you need to do it now, not just for the sake of those children and those mothers, but for democracy here at home and therefore democracy all over the world. If you think things are bad now, oh, trust me, as someone who is an expert on the year 1933; the year that Hitler came to power and Stalin got away with mass murdering millions of people, I promise you things can get a whole lot worse. So wake the fuck up, Jake Sullivan. You get us that ceasefire. You get a ceasefire and you get Netanyahu out of power now. There is no other way. The status quo is dead. Netanyahu and his coalition of terrorists killed it just like they killed Rabin all those years ago. I want to play a clip now of Biden recently meeting with the president of Chile, Gabriel Boric, who is 37 years old, a massive fan of Taylor Swift, and sending aid to Ukraine because it's in everyone's interest. Here's Biden's off-the-cuff remark during their recent meeting in the White House.

[begin audio clip]

Joe Biden (31:16):

There comes a time maybe every six-eight generations where the world changes in a very short time.

Gabriel Boric: We are at that time now.

Joe Biden:

We are. And I think what happens in the next two/three years, we're going to determine what the world looks like for the next five or six decades and so together, maybe we can make it better.

Gabriel Boric:

Let's work for it.

Joe Biden:

Alright, we'll do it.

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (31:40):

Damn right. That's why we must demand better of our governments. Netanyahu must go now. Ceasefire now. To remind us of our power, here is Starbucks union organizer, Jasmine Leli.

[transition music]

Andrea Chalupa:

It is such an honor to have you here. Jasmine Leli is a Buffalo Starbucks barista and member of Starbucks Workers United. Welcome to *Gaslit Nation*. Tell us about your story. How did you get involved with unions?

Jasmine Leli (32:10):

So I started at my store a week after they had their vote count, so I wasn't a part of their initial organizing. And I want to say I was there for about two weeks. And before I started, I had heard Starbucks' first union in the country was in Buffalo, New York. And I was like, "What?!" My store was the second store to unionize. So I'd say, like, two, maybe three weeks in, I asked my shift supervisor, Lexi Rizzo. I was like, "So tell me about this union stuff." And they didn't know what to do. They were like, "Uhh, is this a trap? Are you a spy?" [laughs] And I was like, "No, I'm just a very genuinely curious person. Tell me everything and add me to any group chats that you can." So I immediately got involved with bargaining and all of that stuff from the beginning. And since the campaign started, I've been involved in helping other stores organize. I'm a part of a group called POCKET, and it's called People of Color Keeping Everyone Together. So people of color that are on the campaign, we teach them different things, like how to organize your store. We've had a bunch of people in our group that have organized stores in their area. I love bargaining, so I participated in bargaining.

Andrea Chalupa (33:31):

What is bargaining?

Jasmine Leli (33:33):

Our campaign is very worker-led. So when we have bargaining sessions with the company, what that means is it's baristas and shift supervisors, just like myself, all different lengths of time with the company, we meet with representatives from Starbucks. So it would be two attorneys from Littler Mendelson, which is the firm that they're using. In the beginning, it was the district manager was involved and just us partners from around the country on Zoom talking to the company, reading them our proposals that we had, that we had come up with.

Andrea Chalupa (34:11):

Okay, great. And what sort of... I thought it was really interesting how you mentioned the suspicion that your coworker felt, like, "Are you a spy?" That's the sort of paranoia and lack of trust that authoritarian leaders breed among the people, spread among the people, so that they do not organize and come together. That utter lack, that attack on the very fiber of trust that brings people together so they can become more powerful together and build together, that's an authoritarian tactic and it's used by CEOs. It's used by the corporate greed machine to protect their extraordinary record profits in a time of historic levels of income inequality. And you just described a wonderful way of how you overcame it. You work very closely in groups like POCKET, where people of the same community with the same shared background can really watch each other's back and build trust that way. Could you talk a bit more about how you overcame that? Because it's also an internal struggle as well; the distrust, the fear, and fighting for your self-worth when you have these giant forces telling you, "You're just not worth it and we're going to control you and treat you however we want."

Jasmine Leli (35:21):

Yes, it's very scary because when you first start out organizing, especially if you're new, you don't know who you can trust. You don't know who is kind of listening in and engaged and will maybe take that information back to management. And for me, it's like I'm constantly stepping out of my comfort zone because you don't know if something you do is going to get you terminated. So I really rely on the close community of people that I've met throughout the country on Zoom. We've become great friends. And I listen to the stories of the people that say, you know, "My hours were cut and I don't know how I'm

going to be able to afford rent. I don't know how I'm going to feed myself. I love working for this company. It's a good job, but I just want better for myself." So I really channel that when I get scared because I'm like, Okay, there's 360 stores now. Everyone had to be brave and just go for it. And I think you just have to find inner strength in yourself, which can be hard. So it's really just about building close relationships with people and having people that you can lean on that are going through the same thing as you, I think has definitely helped me.

Andrea Chalupa (36:44):

What are some ways Starbucks and Howard Schultz pushed back on your unionizing?

Jasmine Leli (36:50):

When we started bargaining with the company, we had pushed forth proposals. Some of those were a relaxed dress code, credit card tipping, a health and safety committee, and the company essentially took those proposals and gave them to all of the non-union stores. So they were not offered to us. So, the non-union stores were not eligible to have those benefits, but it definitely didn't stop us at all. We keep fighting every single day. They also implemented seniority pay and they raised the pay across the board for everyone that worked at the company. So essentially the proposals that we had passed, they were like, "Great, we're going to use this" and passed them on to all the other stores.

Andrea Chalupa (37:40):

So where do things stand now?

Jasmine Leli (37:43):

So right now we're waiting to bargain with the company. We have our proposals ready to go, and more stores are joining the fight every single day; more brave people are coming forth. We're at 360 stores now, which is roughly about 9,000 partners that have joined this fight with us.

Andrea Chalupa (38:03):

Wow. So your union at Starbucks is 9,000 workers strong?

Jasmine Leli (38:08):

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa (38:09):

How does Howard Schultz sleep at night?

Jasmine Leli (38:13):

[laughs] Not very well, I don't think.

Andrea Chalupa (38:16):

Can we talk about him for a minute? Because he had that vain bid for president. He was going to get a bunch of attention for himself and spout off running for president. He's someone... Howard Schultz came up thanks to the generosity of American taxpayers. He had public housing, public schools, and then when he amassed his fortune as CEO of Starbucks, he wanted to pull the ladder that he climbed up on away from anybody else following his footsteps. He just showed such extraordinary greed in his run for

president, in his fight against unions. Where do you think that comes from, where these individuals who did not pull themselves up by the bootstraps—they had our American taxpayer community-driven help, and yet they want to chip away at that very security net for the rest of us—what do you think is driving that in people like Howard Schultz?

Jasmine Leli (39:08):

My personal opinion on it is that he doesn't want a union at Starbucks at all. He wants the relationship to be between us and the company, and greed is a hell of a thing. You don't want to share the wealth with the people that are working on the front line making billions of dollars for your company every day? I just will never understand it, especially from someone that's come from humble beginnings. Why wouldn't you want the same for the people that work at your company?

Andrea Chalupa (39:41):

What about your advice for people that are listening to this and they feel beaten down, their self worth has been pulverized. It's workplace bullying, what we're experiencing in demanding fair pay and demanding a supportive and healthy working environment. It's bullying to try to push for that, advocate for yourself, and get gaslit and emotionally abused and have all these threats against you. What advice do you have for people who are in that situation now and where should they start if they want to join a union or build a union if one doesn't exist for them where they are?

Jasmine Leli (40:21):

If you want to build a union in your workplace, the first thing that I would recommend is talking to someone that you work with that you trust. And understand that as a worker, as a laborer, you have more power than your bosses do. And I think a lot of times these managers are just... They're afraid, and so they think that by intimidating you in the psychological warfare that you'll just quit. And there's so much strength and power in you coming together with your coworkers and wanting better for yourself. So I would keep a strong network of people around you. Talk to people in different industries. Just gather whatever information that you can and keep in the back of your mind that you are changing history for generations to come and that this is bigger than you. That's what gives me hope every day because you're really changing lives. We're all standing up right now and we're saying, "Enough. We've had it." We deserve to make a living wage to be able to save to go on vacation and not work to live. We should all just share the wealth.

Andrea Chalupa (41:34):

Exactly right.

Jasmine Leli (41:35):

And I think if you keep a strong circle of people around you to lean on, I think that's most important because you're absolutely right. It's mentally and physically exhausting, but I think that power in numbers, having your coworkers behind you, it's so powerful.

Andrea Chalupa (41:54):

Absolutely. And this is really a moment for unions. They're finally coming, they're finally building back again. What do you say to those, including the mainstream media spin on it, that call unions or use dog whistles to try to paint unions as socialist and entitled?

Jasmine Leli (42:14):

I would say that we all just want our fair share and we want to be treated with dignity and respect. A lot of managers, it's almost like they're on this power trip because they have a different title than you, so they think that it's okay to push you around, bully you just to try to get you to leave. And no, I'm not leaving. I deserve to be here. We all deserve respect, dignity, and to be treated fairly. We've tried to work with management and there's only so much that they can do. They get their directives from someone else. So it's like, Okay, now we want a seat at the table and we want a say in how our workplace is run because a lot of the decisions come from up top. These are people that are not working on the floor or working in the farms or cleaning the buildings. So when decisions come down, it's like, that doesn't make sense. And we just have to take it and we're like, No, we're taking our power back.

Andrea Chalupa (43:14):

It's incredibly destabilizing and disruptive to your lives, and it chips away at the quality of life that you live, and that disrupts and is intrusive on your own home life. And if you have a partner, a husband or a wife, kids, you have to be strong for that family unit. You need to have downtime. You need to have quality relationships to sustain you for your own mental health, your own physical health and wellbeing. And economic justice is the foundation of that.

Jasmine Leli (43:42):

And I also think that it helps to step away and do something totally different. I love to cook. I love to talk to friends and family. Just get out and do something different, something that's just for you, even if it's 10 minutes, 15 minutes, whatever. Just a little something that'll bring you joy.

Andrea Chalupa (44:05):

Absolutely. You are so inspiring. You need your own podcast—

Jasmine Leli:

Oh, stop.

Andrea Chalupa:

—Even if it's your own YouTube channel. Five minutes of Jasmine.

Jasmine Leli:

[laughs] Yes!

Andrea Chalupa:

Hit send. I wanna just talk specifically about servers, the dining industry, waiters, baristas, and so on. That is an industry that's in flux. So you have times of feast and famine. You have the seasons, right? Where in the summer, business is high and then in the off season it plummets, and then suddenly these servers have their hours drastically cut or they're just suddenly fired. That is such an anxiety-ridden way to live. Could you speak to that? I mean, you've written about that in your experiences, but how can unions help bring greater stability with that?

Jasmine Leli (44:55):

With unions, there's a contract that management has to follow. Right now, management is writing their own rules. Every business is kind of run like its own little operation. And with a contract, you have things that are set in stone that says, "No, you are going to respect me. This is my availability. I need consistent hours to be able to work and live. These are the guidelines that you are to follow, not some vague handbook that is up for interpretation."

Andrea Chalupa (45:26):

Yes, absolutely, because when you don't have control over your own life, it's just anxiety that produces in you. You're just completely vulnerable to these much larger, more powerful forces. What is your hope in this moment in America as you have these strikes, people unionizing? What do you want to happen in the coming years to secure our democracy through economic justice? What do you hope to see?

Jasmine Leli (45:53):

I want everyone to join a union. [laughs] Unionize your workplace. I think the climate right now is super hot for unions. You have all of these companies that typically don't go on strike, haven't been on strike in years, using it as a last resort to show their power and it's working. And I think the most important thing to realize is that it's oftentimes a marathon. There's no quick fix at all, so you have to prepare yourself for that on the front end because if you don't, then your feelings get hurt. Management and these corporations think that they can just bleed us dry because they have more money than we do, but we are the ones that are running the stores, working in the farms, cleaning the buildings, and if all of that stops, they're not picking up a mop or a broom or coming to make drinks or pick produce at the farm. So I think there's so much power in withholding your labor.

Andrea Chalupa (46:56):

Just for the disinformation war that the 1% is waging against the people, again, during a time of historic obscene levels of income inequality. And remember, our dear listeners: economic instability, like what I just described, that is a breeding ground for authoritarianism. This is so dangerous to our democracy. Just to sort of guard us against the disinformation, what are some ways that the CEOs, the corporate fat cats, like to play the victim and gaslight and blame unions? What should we look out for there?

Jasmine Leli (47:29):

I think first and foremost, you need to... Knowledge is power. Knowledge is power. Keep in mind that most of these managers don't know the law. And when you're armed with knowledge, it's like your shield of armor. No one can take that away from you. So if your boss is challenging you about... I can't even think of an example off the top of my head. You can say, "No, I know what my rights are. This is not legal." And a lot of times that pushback gets them to back off because they don't know either. They're just kind of following whatever vague directive they're getting from corporate. So I think you need to keep yourself informed of what your rights are first and foremost.

Andrea Chalupa (48:19):

And also the corporations like to blame unions, the workers on rising prices that they pass on to the consumers to try to pit the workers against each other.

Jasmine Leli (48:30):

Yes. That's a big one. And a lot of times if you do the math, it's like, well, if you were just to pay your workers a living wage, you would still have millions of dollars at your disposal anyway. They will paint the union in a negative light, like, "Oh, they just want your union dues" or, "Just work with us. We're a family. When you join the union, we can't talk anymore. We can't work with you." And it's all tears, fears, and smears. They're just trying to dissuade you. A lot of times the managers don't really have any power at all. They don't have the power in deciding what your schedule is. That's probably coming from someone corporate. You know, "Well, we need to cut the labor." No, no, no, no, no. We know that we have earned this much labor for this store. Why aren't we being scheduled for that labor?

Jasmine Leli (49:21):

I think it's so important to just keep yourself informed, keep your coworkers informed, because management will do whatever they can to try to get in your ear, make you feel sympathetic. And a lot of people think that joining the union is something against their manager. No, it's empowering for you and for your coworkers to have a contract, something set in stone so that you can control the hours that you work and the wages that you make, because if you have a bad manager that doesn't care if you eat or are able to pay rent, there's nothing you can do about that. When you have a set contract and you have thousands of people behind you, that is everything. They can't dispute that.

Andrea Chalupa (50:04):

In terms of resources, where should people go? Is there a website or a book that really helped you?

Jasmine Leli (50:11):

I love to talk to people, so I will talk to anyone. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (50:16):

You came to the right place.

Jasmine Leli (50:19):

[laughs] And pick their brain about where to start. If you're thinking about starting a union at your workplace, what you want to do is you want to talk to your coworkers that you trust first and talk to them about the workplace. And you really want to... It's called agitating them. Like, "Hey, how did your shift go? Are you getting enough hours? We haven't seen a decent pay raise in years." And then you can say to them, "We can change that by starting a union at our store. We can set the terms and conditions in which we work and our pay." And then what you want to do is you want to research a union in your area and contact them. And you want to make sure that you have buy-in from your coworkers as well.

Andrea Chalupa (51:08):

Strength in numbers.

Jasmine Leli (51:09):

Strength in numbers. I think people underestimate the strength in numbers because there's more of you than there is of management.

Andrea Chalupa (51:18):

And they know that. They're actually more scared of us. That's why they have to resort to these terror tactics, I think.

Jasmine Leli (51:24):

Yes.

Andrea Chalupa (51:25):

So all this reminds me of Ukraine's Euromaidan 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity, where it was this popular uprising, people from all walks of society. You had graduate students, you had workers of all kinds. You had even small business owners and executives, mothers, fathers, children descend on the square for months-long protests. And they were fighting the extreme corruption in Ukraine. They were extremely organized in forcing out the Ukrainian Donald Trump who then fled to Russia where he's been in exile ever since. But the revolution was called The Revolution of Dignity. We're tired of the corruption. We're tired of the greed. We want to be able to live healthy, balanced lives and not just fight for survival. And it's so amazing to see America undergo now its own revolution of dignity through all of these unions that are building and building and building. And I know it's going to be the future. And one final question for you. Do you think we should start having conversations or treating greed like an addiction? Just as sex can be an addiction. If there could be such a thing as sex addiction, why can't there be a greed addiction or a hoarding wealth addiction to address all of the Wall Street run amok, the CEOs who think they're entitled to force their workers to fight for survival? What do you think of that? Because I'm pushing that now.

Jasmine Leli (52:50):

I think that's brilliant because what are they doing with all of this money? You can't take it with you. Why wouldn't you want to share it with the people that are making you all of this money? Because let's get that right. We are the ones that are making the money for these millionaires. They wouldn't have it. If we all went on strike tomorrow, they're not making a dime. So I think it's like you said, power in numbers. And greed *is* an addiction. Because why don't you want to share? Didn't you learn how to share? Isn't that what you learned when you were little, one of the first things that you learn? And they say that, you know, how dare we want more for ourselves? To me, it's not normal to have to work three and four jobs just to be able to feed yourself. You should be able to work one good job. And most people, they love the job. I love working at Starbucks. I think it's so much fun. But you need a livable wage, and these managers and corporations need to come to grips with inflation. You're not paying us any more than you were during Covid. Or maybe you gave a little bump during Covid and then it quickly went away. I've never heard anyone say that greed is an addiction, but yeah, I agree. This is mine. And you can't take it. Yeah, no. We're going to fucking take it.

[outro theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (54:22):

Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth-teller level or higher. To help people in Maui rebuild after the fires, donate to the Maui Strong Fund at hawaiicommunityfoundation.org. That's hawaiicommunityfoundation.org. Since Matt Gaetz and the rest of the Kremlin Kaucus want to hurt Ukraine, Ukraine needs all the help it can get as Russia's genocide continues. Donate to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. We encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to The Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.

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