

Gaslit Nation Transcript

15 February 2023

“East Palestine, Ohio”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/east-palestine-78708812>

[opening clip]

News Reporter Jennifer Rodriguez (00:00):

We now know three more chemicals that were on board the Norfolk Southern train that derailed here in East Palestine just over a week ago. And we're being told that some of those chemicals are dangerous

Hazardous Materials Expert Sil Caggiano (00:11):

We basically nuked a town with chemicals so we could get a railroad open.

News Reporter Jennifer Rodriguez (00:16):

The US Environmental Protection Agency sent a letter to Norfolk Southern stating that “ethylene glycol monobutyl ether, ethylhexyl acrylate, and isobutylene were also in the rail cars that were derailed, breached, or on fire.” Caggiano says ethylhexyl acrylate is “especially worrisome.” He says it's a carcinogen and “contact with it can cause burning and irritation in the skin and eyes; breathing it in can irritate the nose, throat, and cause coughing and shortness of breath.” Isobutylene is also known to cause dizziness and drowsiness when inhaled.

Hazardous Materials Expert Sil Caggiano (00:48):

I was kind of surprised that when they quickly told the people they can go back home, but then said if they feel like they want their homes tested they can have them tested... I would've far rather they did all the testing.

News Reporter Jennifer Rodriguez (01:03):

Caggiano says it's possible some of these chemicals could still be present in homes and on objects until you clean them thoroughly.

Hazardous Materials Expert Sil Caggiano (01:11):

Oh, there's a lot of “what if”s and we're gonna be looking at this thing 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the line and wondering, “Gee, cancer clusters could pop up, well water could go bad.”

News Reporter Jennifer Rodriguez (01:22):

Caggiano recommends anyone who's in the East Palestine area get a health checkup. He says, “get a record of where your health stands now so that moving forward you have documentation of any possible related effects to the train derailment.”

Sarah Kendzior (01:43):

I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestsellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight*, and of the book, *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent*, out now.

Andrea Chalupa (01:55):

And I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, the film the Kremlin literally does not want you to see, and now you have a chance to see it with me on Saturday, February 25th for a special Q&A discussion. We're gonna watch the film, then we're gonna get together over Zoom and chat away. And if you want to RSVP for that, it's free. It's an event we're doing with the wonderful Media and Democracy Project—listeners of *Gaslit Nation*. And it's an event we're doing to mark the one year anniversary of the total genocide reinvasion of Ukraine. We'll have details on our Patreon page on how to sign up.

Sarah Kendzior (02:43):

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

Andrea Chalupa (02:51):

So, you know how Sarah and I have these episodes where we're like, "Please pretend we're white men and listen to us."? We very early on in 2016 pointed out, "Hey, Trump is mobbed up with the Kremlin. Paul Manafort's here, that means the Kremlin is here. Trump is going to come to power with the Kremlin's help." And people attacked us and tried to ignore us and then we had all sorts of investigations from a Senate intelligence report to a 400-page Mueller report, and so on and so on, and lots of investigative journalism. And then, of course, [laughs] an arrested traitor in the form of the FBI scumbag McGonigal arrested for doing what we knew he was doing in plain sight in 2016, which was helping the Russian mafia bring Trump to power in 2016. So we were right back then.

Andrea Chalupa (03:45):

We're not saying that to be like, "haha, we were right. Everyone, throw flowers at us." We're saying that to be like, "We're right about this." We're right about this episode we're about to break down for you. This is a very serious conversation. This is horrifying. Yes, this is really happening. Yes, we need to all have, as a Danish, say, "strong stomachs" to face this conversation because it has very serious implications for us here in the United States and politically, it's gonna have ramifications for many years to come. It's going to be a story we're unfortunately stuck living with now. It's a traumatic event and it's extremely eerie that there seems to be some media blackout on it. There's just simply not enough reporting going on on this story. And of course we're talking about the Norfolk Southern train disaster, the so-called "controlled release" in East Palestine, eastern Ohio, which is impacting—as far as we can tell so far—at least a 50 mile radius, of course likely larger than this, given how nature works and how we're all interconnected and so on.

Andrea Chalupa (04:52):

So, just to break this all down, I'm gonna start by reading from *NPR* and then we'll go into what this all means and so on. And Sarah, obviously you're as horrified as I am. So jump in as I go through this. Don't be shy [laughs] which I know you're not.

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs] Yes, a big problem for me.

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs] Yeah. So from *NPR*: “On February 3rd, about 50 cars of a Norfolk Southern train went off track in Ohio, causing a days-long fire in the area. 10 of the 50 derailed cars contained hazardous chemicals including butyl acrylate and vinyl chloride, which were among combustible liquids that authorities feared could set off a major explosion. Residents of East Palestine were later asked to evacuate out of precaution. On Monday, February 6th, crews conducted what officials called a ‘controlled release’” — That’s a gaslit nation—”a ‘controlled release’ of the hazardous chemicals, which caused a large plume of black smoke.”

Andrea Chalupa (05:54):

“The evacuation order was lifted on Wednesday and since then there have been a growing number of reports about people experiencing a burning sensation in their eyes, animals falling ill, and a strong odor lingering in the town.” Now, it’s not just animals falling ill. Animals are dying. One local reported his chickens died overnight. If the “controlled release” could kill chickens overnight, what is it doing to humans? To tap water? To the soil? Again, the 50 mile radius of the gaslighting “controlled release” includes Western Pennsylvania, including the major city of Pittsburgh, and West Virginia. That’s three states, minimum, impacted. There may be more states, including New York State when you factor in acid rain, the chemicals getting into the Ohio River, products grown in the region, sold in other states, and so on and so on. The list goes on. Again, reports of pets, livestock already dead or dying.

Andrea Chalupa (07:03):

You have people overwhelmed, trying to get their pets euthanized to kill the pain. They can’t afford to, you know, spend thousands of dollars in medical bills on trying to save their pets who are going through this horrific chemical attack. And then, of course, what happens to humans with cases like this, the cancers and so on, and other ailments can show up years, decades from now. And what has Norfolk Southern—a Georgia based corporation worth \$55 billion—what have they offered so far? They offered a measly \$25 grand total to residents, alright? \$25 grand.

Sarah Kendizor:

For all residents combined.

Andrea Chalupa:

All residents combined. That’s like five bucks each, or some bullshit like that. As we’ve said on the show many times, we’re going to be living with the fallout of Trump for generations. This is just one of many examples of this, nevermind the classified documents on American nuclear secrets that are out there floating around being sold to the highest bidder. Nevermind Jared Kushner raking in billions from the Saudis, you know, financial genius wickid Jared Kushner [laughs], who moonlights as a slumlord, right? Getting billions from the Saudis and so on. So the list is long on the Trump regime fallout. And of course the regulations pushed through by Obama during his time in office were rolled back under Trump because the train industry, including Norfolk Southern, lobbied successfully to get rid of all the safety measures, including modernizing the braking systems on America’s atrociously old horse-and-buggy train system that makes us look stuck in the stone age compared to speed rail trains of European Union countries like France. And China, right? America likes to beat its chest when it comes to China; China is humiliating us when it comes to how advanced their rail systems are, okay? And now here we have just this neanderthal level of greed and stupidity that is like an Ohio Chernobyl that we’re gonna be stuck living with the fallout for generations.

Andrea Chalupa (09:20):

So again, all of this could have been avoided if the billionaire companies of the train industry just invested some money into their workforces, their workforce and simple, simple, simple safety modernization. So instead of doing that, Norfolk Southern provided a \$10 billion stock buyback—oh, that's fancy—choosing profits at the expense of people, their homes, the real estate value of their homes in East Palestine, and then the surrounding areas, their beloved pets, their livestock, their medical bills for years to come, and the list goes on. All of this is so gut-wrenching because, you know, Sarah and I, we came together, we launched the show, we saw what was happening very early on, and we stuck our necks out to scream about it because of our background in studying authoritarianism. Fascism, authoritarianism, it's just corruption. It's just organized crime. It's mafia.

Andrea Chalupa (10:18):

It's mafia states, essentially. And seeing this oligarchy that America has become, it's horrifying. It's a form of dictatorship when people are too powerful to force any accountability, across the board. This Norfolk Southern disaster is just one of many disasters of this crisis of accountability, this crisis of elite impunity that we're talking about. The list is very long. It, of course, includes that apartheid trust fund kid, Elon Musk, who made his fortune with the help of government subsidies and is now abusing the very country that helped bring him great wealth, including turning off his Starlink internet system that Ukraine's military depends on in the fragile frontline, where they're fending off a genocidal invasion. Elon Musk is saying, "I'm turning that off for them now because I wanna avoid World War 3," once again, parroting Kremlin talking points as he's known to do. There are now reports that Starlink is operational again, but still, Elon Musk is spreading Kremlin propaganda on his massive Twitter platform.

Andrea Chalupa (11:26):

And then of course you have Trump who masterminded—along with Bannon and others in a full-on war room in the Willard Hotel, right outside the White House, steps from our capitol—they organized a violent uprising against our democracy. People were killed. People died by suicide in the weeks after and so on. And he's now running for president and he's the man to beat in the show for president. So what I'm saying is this oligarchy that we're stuck under, it's very like the corruption that Ukraine has been trying to fight out from under after the decades of trauma during the Soviet terror. The reason why Ukraine became so corrupt is because society fell apart. Institutions eroded from within. People grabbed for a free-for-all. You had an oligarch system that existed under the Soviet Union. It was *Animal Farm*.

Andrea Chalupa (12:17):

There was no communism there in Marx's utopian dreams. It was *Animal Farm*. And when the country voted overwhelmingly for independence—overwhelmingly, like 92% of the country, including the Russian-speaking regions, voted for independence from the Moscow Empire, from a Russian genocidal empire—what were they reacting to at the time? In part the Chernobyl disaster, which treated them like the shit we grow our money in, as I've said before. In my early days of living in Ukraine, traveling to Ukraine, somebody said to me that the oligarchs see the people as "the shit they grow their money in." And as a result, you have this black hole of corruption in Ukraine that is so hard to climb out of, but Ukraine has been doing an extraordinary job, including human sacrifices, including journalists. Several journalists risk giving their lives or risking their lives to fight that corruption, including reformers, including opposition leaders.

Andrea Chalupa (13:23):

They haven't made progress without human sacrifices. That's why we're telling our elected leaders here in the US, including local offices, large and small, to please fight corruption so we can avoid having to have a generation sacrificing themselves, committing human sacrifices in order to pull us back out of the abyss. And I'm so afraid by the tone deafness of what we're seeing from our elected leaders that we're

headed there. What has happened in Ohio... No, it's not the Bhopal disaster of India, which again was another American-led disaster and the CEO escaped accountability there and lived out his comfortable life to a ripe old age in Florida, because that's where all the corrupt criminals go to die. No, it's not that, where like 500,000 people were poisoned and it's still a cesspool of contamination in Bhopal, India and so on. It's not that. But it's still a massive man-made disaster.

Andrea Chalupa (14:21):

It's an Ohio Chernobyl. It's a big turning point in our country because it has to serve as a wake-up call that it's gone too far with the oligarchs. It's gone too far. And I don't know how we get our power back because no one seems willing to have the political fight in them to stand up to this genocidal corporate class. It's not gonna be Hakeem Jeffries, it's not gonna be Pete Buttigieg, it's not gonna be Chuck Schumer. It's not gonna be Joe Biden. And you know that because what they're doing is employing this rosy-colored glasses Reaganism, which is the same that Chamberlain employed when he was trying to reassure everyone that, "No, we're not gonna go back into the trauma of another great war. We had a great war. Europe will never do that again. Everything's gonna be fine. We're gonna just sacrifice parts of Czechoslovakia to Hitler and we're gonna avoid war."

Andrea Chalupa (15:10):

And people really bought into that rosy-colored glasses messaging. History condemns Chamberlain, but at the time, people of Europe and America breathed a massive sigh of relief because they wanted to believe that everything was gonna be okay, that if you just spoke in a soft, reassuring voice and said, "Hey, pal," and put your arm around each other, that we would get through it and that everything would be okay. That was the energy of that moment. History, of course, now remembers it differently. And so what I'm saying is this whole, "everything will be okay" messaging is fuckin' crazy to me. It's like... I feel like I'm the animals in *Animal Farm* and they have their eyes popping outta their head going, "What the fuck is happening with these pigs? Like, we're all gonna die." And they do. And so what I'm saying is that Pete Buttigieg, Joe Biden need to hold a public address and be clear with the public because we see what's happening left, right, and center.

Andrea Chalupa (16:04):

I was up all night reading Twitter and it's people on the Right who are posting about what happened. It's people on the Left that are posting about what happened. It's moderates, it's moms like me who are wondering, "Is this gonna go into my water supply every time I make a bottle for my kid? Or if I drink water myself? Am I poisoning myself? Am I poisoning my children? Do I have a government that's gonna fight for me and stand up for me? Or do I have a government that has no problem poisoning me because it makes the people that keep them in power even richer?" How much money do you need at the end of the day? How many fuckin' yachts do you need at the end of the day? How many private planes do you need at the end of the day? Life expectancy in the US is on the decline.

Andrea Chalupa (16:48):

That is a national humiliation and a national tragedy. And as much as I care so deeply about my family and friends in Ukraine who are facing a fucking genocide, I would like to see Joe Biden primaryed by his old friend, his genuine friend, Bernie Sanders. I've been critical of Bernie on this show. I've called him out for not voting for the Magnitsky Act. I called him out for having that fucking loser, Tad Devine, who is Manafort's buddy in Ukraine, emailing with Yanukovitch and Manafort when Yanukovitch is having pro-democracy protestors killed in Ukraine. And then Tad Devine goes off to be a top advisor for Bernie's campaign. I've called out Bernie over the years on this show, but one thing that he does is he forces conversations. We need him now to step up and force a conversation going into the 2024 election and force Biden to confront what happened in Ohio—the Chernobyl in Ohio—because I'm tired of this

hostage situation that we're in where the Democrats can skate by, letting mass murder happen because the alternative is fuckin' fascism.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa:

It's like, "You have to vote for us or else America's gonna be the Third Reich," right? Fascism is great for business. Fascism is great for keeping us in check because we will vote for the Democrats out of fear. Pennsylvania is a must-win state in the electoral college. I am very curious to see how Pennsylvanians react to this, especially those in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is a braintrust in America. A lot of innovation is coming out of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is an extremely brilliant university town. They do not suffer from a lack of information and a lack of media literacy and Fox News brainwashing in Pittsburgh. They know what is going on in Pittsburgh. I wanna see those thought leaders in Pittsburgh ring the alarm about what is happening to their tap water and the water they bathe in and what they're gonna be living with for the years to come.

Andrea Chalupa (18:53):

Because they know. They're smart enough to know over there, and they're the ones that have to rise up and put pressure. If Biden wants to win Pennsylvania, because what they are facing now is, you can come out and give whatever rosy-colored glasses messaging you want, but people are gonna stay home. People are going to stay home. You're gonna be the Governor Kathy Hochul wherever you go. People stayed home because of her because she was uninspiring. She depressed the vote. She sucks. And they're gonna do that to you, Biden, in Pennsylvania. And you're gonna have DeSantis coming out, rallying the fascist base against the "woke mob", against the "socialists, the Commies," whatever. He's gonna excite the base and it's gonna be a very close election and you're gonna lose it because you are not honest with the American people about what is happening in East Palestine, Ohio and how many people across the country are gonna be impacted by this.

Andrea Chalupa (19:49):

And for how long and what we can do about it. And right now, as we're speaking, this can happen again. We're talking about deregulation. There are no rules forcing these train companies to fix their woefully out of date braking systems. There's no rules stopping them from allowing this to happen again. I even saw reporting that it was cheaper for them to unleash a mini Chernobyl than to invest in the work and the workers needed to bring out containers to carefully, safely remove the toxins. It would have stalled transport on the rail systems. It would've caused a serious delay, but at least it would've gotten rid of the waste responsibly, safely, and we would not be living with this carcinogenic fallout for years to come. Pete Buttigieg, you are brilliant when you're on Fox News. You are a rising star in the Democratic Party. You are selling yourself out and you are betraying your greatest hopes, dreams, and ambitions for yourself, for your family, for this country, if you sit this one out. You must be full throated now.

Sarah Kendzior (21:02):

Yeah. No, just... God. Everything you said, but one point that really sticks with me, because I noticed this too when I was reading social media reaction, is that you really do see across the political spectrum from ordinary people left and center and right outrage and horror and desperation. And what is so maddening is that you see that mirrored in our reflection in an inverse way, in a sort of funhouse monstrous way,

because left, right and center—with exceptions like Bernie Sanders—are apathetic to suffering, apathetic to mass death, and unified in the coverup. It has been so difficult to get information, to get reporting. You know, you get observations that this is happening. You get firsthand accounts from people who may or may not be reliable, either living in the area or living outside of it, just trying to piece together what's happening.

Sarah Kendzior (22:00):

You are not getting a state response and certainly not a federal response that you should for a disaster of this level. And in this way, it is very reminiscent of Chernobyl and the way that the Soviets reacted then. It's also reminiscent in the utter disregard for human life. And this is something I'm accustomed to seeing as a person who lives in the industrial Midwest, living in St. Louis. I live near a slow moving, underground fire that has been making its way toward buried nuclear waste for decades. And every administration has blown this problem off. If you wanna look this up, it's the Westlake Landfill. It's Coldwater Creek. You know, because we're "just Missouri," and they don't care what happens to people in "just Missouri." And one of the things that's notable here, like, I hate talking about this in these terms because I think it's so dehumanizing and grotesque, but as you noted, this is three states, including the heavily gerrymandered state of Ohio; and Pennsylvania, a swing state that they pretend to care deeply about.

Sarah Kendzior (23:10):

I don't think they actually do. I don't think that Joe Biden cares, even though it's his home state and he likes to play up these Scranton roots, because people who care about this country beyond its plutocrat class don't do the kind of things that Joe Biden and his administration have done. This started—or I guess continued Reagan's policies of deregulation—through Trump and Trump's decision to rescind rules about braking systems and safety, but for the last few years railroad workers and railroad unions have been pushing for better safety levels and for sick days and all these other things to the extent that—and we covered this when it was happening—they were about to go on strike, on a national strike in December, 2022. And this was one of the rare occasions where a president actually had some power.

Sarah Kendzior (24:11):

Usually presidents can't intervene directly one way or the other in a labor negotiation, but Joe Biden had that choice to do that, to grant sick days, to improve safety conditions. And instead, he chose to continue to punish these workers. And I just wanna emphasize how much information was in the public domain not just about the working conditions being so arduous and so horrific, especially during the pandemic, but about this exact issue of the potential of toxic chemicals being released through an accident. And I'm gonna just quote briefly from a December 5th, 2022 article by Aaron Gordon at *VICE*, who was covering the situation continuously throughout the year. And he says, "I started covering freight rail labor issues in early 2021 because I came across a YouTube video by a union official named Jason Cox warning basically anyone who would listen that freight rail companies were slashing staff to the bone, cutting safety inspections, and closing inspection in repair facilities."

Sarah Kendzior (25:21):

"There were no longer enough qualified people to do the job well." And then this is a quote from Jason Cox. "Over the last 11 months, the railroads have used the pandemic to further reduce manpower at the expense of safety. Our men are fatigued, yet expected to maintain the standard of unrealistic inspection policies as if fully staffed." And then he ended the video by saying, "I implore anyone who might be watching who has the authority to please act now." And then this is Aaron Good, the reporter, writing again: "At the time I watched the video in February, 2021, it had nine views. Between then and when my first article on the subject was published a month later, there were six main line freight train derailments reported by local media across the country and many more that went unreported." So this is an issue

that, of course, Buttigieg as the transportation secretary should have been on top of. Of course Biden as the president with the capacity to intervene should have been on top of. I mean, this is a man who's been advertising himself as the infrastructure president from his campaign to the present day.

Sarah Kendzior (26:31):

He just did this in the State of the Union, which I don't think acknowledged East Palestine at all. If it did, it certainly was brief. And just the utter lack of empathy, the utter lack of forethought about where this is going to go. As you noted, it's allegedly in the Ohio River which then feeds into the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River feeds into other rivers. And we don't know... I mean, that's the thing. I know there's a lot of folks online kind of mocking the idea that this is under-covered because there's this giant chorus of people saying, you know, "Look what happened. Look what happened." And it's under-covered. But it's just more the depth of the lack of accuracy, the lack of data. The lack of concern from the people at the top is chilling.

Sarah Kendzior (27:23):

It mirrors the way that they have responded to covid, which involves a deletion of data, a continual erasure of data. And whenever you see that, you are not living in a true democracy. You should be deeply alarmed because that is a hallmark of autocracy when federal officials delete or manipulate public health and public safety data. And we've seen it of course beforehand in the response to climate change and to climate disasters. This is a horrifying event. And to Andrea's point, you can't see a mushroom cloud through rose-colored glasses. You can go on and on about your little campaign desires or 2024 trying to defend the indefensible when it comes to Biden and Buttigieg and this administration and their refusal to clean up the corruption that was exacerbated to an incredibly alarming extent by the Trump administration.

Sarah Kendzior (28:29):

But the facts are the facts, and the fact is that the American people are suffering. We are suffering across the board, and now we have yet another crisis dropped into our laps, obviously most profoundly affecting people who live in the region but this will continue to happen again because they don't have any intention of fixing the mechanical conditions that cause the problem. They don't appear to have any intention of elucidating to the public exactly how dangerous this is. And I agree with Andrea that they need to have regular press conferences on this, but my god. I mean, we've been asking for regular briefings and updates about so many issues for so many years; about covid; about treason; about the coup. We are kind of shocked with this administration that it didn't right off the bat, start issuing updates about, "okay, you know, here's how we're handling that unprecedented attack on the Capitol by a mafioso former president staging a coup." Instead, they're just like, "look forward, look forward." But, you know, you get sucked into the vortex of cruelty and annihilation if you look forward with a blind eye. And that unfortunately is how this administration and also how a number of state officials as well are operating

Andrea Chalupa (29:57):

Oligarchy is dictatorship. It's just another form of dictatorship because it's unchecked power and it's just rampant abuse of power. In a fascist state, in a mafia state, whether it's Mussolini or Hitler or Stalin or Putin, you have the intelligentsia being liquidated, being killed, being locked up, being driven to die by suicide and so on, or being forced abroad. In the US, in oligarchy, the intelligentsia is forced to work in an Amazon warehouse really late hours overnight instead of being employed in a newsroom, instead of being employed at a research think tank that's trying to dig in and analyze the threats that we're facing today. When Sarah and I entered journalism, it was on the way out already. We were young kids trying to, you know, cut our teeth in a newsroom, were cutting our teeth in a newsroom and learning the ropes

there from veterans and so on who—I don't know if you had this experience, Sarah but the veterans in my newsroom when I started out—were like, “You need to get on another job. The jobs are disappearing.”

Sarah Kendzior (31:08):

Oh, absolutely. 100%.

Andrea Chalupa (31:09):

And the journalists that I learned under, the old timers who had written, worked, edited at *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Chronicle*, and so on and so on, they're now in PR, or corporate PR, working for the genocidal corporate class rather than holding it accountable. So that is how you liquidate the intelligentsia in American oligarchy. You have hedge funds buy up and destroy all the newspapers, including the super expensive and time consuming investigative journalism units that are always the first to go. And then you replace it with Kim Kardashian clickbait because that's what the advertisers want. And then you destroy the barrier, the dividing line between the advertising section and the editorial journalism section. I remember when I first started out working in a newsroom, the advertising, the business guys would stop by my cubicle jokingly to be like, “Could I interest you in covering this, that, and that?”

Andrea Chalupa (32:06):

And I'd be like, “Go fuck yourself. No.” [laughs] Right? Because that was the joke. You don't deal with the business side as a journalist, you don't deal with the ad guys because they're there to make money. Your job is to find the good story and speak truth to power and name and shame corruption and all that. That's your job. Journalism is a public good. It's a public service. Then when we all got laid off [laughs] because George W. Bush deregulated Wall Street and they crashed the global economy and we all lost our jobs, I had to go refugee at AOL Money and Finance and what do you think I was doing at a bullshit company like that? My pitch meetings included the business guys, the advertisers and so on. I was working very closely with them because journalism became content, essentially.

Sarah Kendzior:

Mmmhmm <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa (32:52):

It was all replaced with content, “How do you get page views? How do you sell these ad packages? How do you make money?” That's what's happening. And that is how you liquidate the intelligentsia; the very people, the progressives, the reformers, the journalists, the investigative journalists, the activists. That is how you silence those people, force them into low paying jobs, essentially, that they need to struggle just to put food on the table. One of the smartest people I know, who is an extraordinary voice, this person could not get a job in a newsroom, could not get a job in a think tank. They had very little money left to pay for food for their family. They had to drive a very long distance to go work in an Amazon warehouse through the middle of the night. That's what's happening to some of the best and brightest right now, who we desperately need right now in this time. I'm happy to say they finally got a job. I helped them with that. And that was one of the proudest accomplishments of my life. And they're well on their way and they're fighting corruption where we need them to be. But for a while it was very dark and troubling. And they're not alone. That is a very common story and I have no doubt there are people listening to this now who are experiencing that as well.

Sarah Kendzior (34:07):

Agree 100%. There aren't jobs. The jobs, when they exist, tend to go to privileged people because they're often underpaid jobs in very expensive cities. And then the repercussions of that, you know, for a place like East Palestine, you have the gutting of local media that's been going on for two decades. It really accelerated after the 2008 economic crash. But the other results of that is that, you know, we can't find information because the way information is presented is a mix of gated communities through paywalled sites or just total news deserts. And so even when there are people covering it, it's often barricaded behind that paywall. And I understand why people need paywalls, why struggling local newspapers are trying to create revenue, or why journalists who are in this situation where they are well qualified—often absurdly qualified—and yet cannot find steady work.

Sarah Kendzior (35:09):

They create a Substack or they create some other place where they can disseminate information about things like corruption that the world needs to know and that corporations don't want people to hear, but then they have the paywall as well. And then on top of that, you get what Musk just did to Twitter. You get what's happening with Google and with other search engines where most of the results are advertisements or AI-written garbage. It's becoming very, very difficult to ascertain what's going on. And then when you get a disaster like what happened in East Palestine thrown into the middle of that, it's really horrific. We have exited the golden age of social media and free information and news. That was never a golden age for the people who actually worked in it.

Sarah Kendzior (36:01):

As Andrea was saying, we were underpaid or losing our jobs or struggling to survive. But in terms of the readers, that was a golden age. You could get information easily on pretty much anything and you could weigh that information against other information and make an informed perspective and so forth. That is not the case now. Now, it's desperation, it's click bait ramped up to a thousand, and it's the total abdication of officials to clarify where the information that needs to be known, which when it's about life or death issues, is just unforgivable.

Andrea Chalupa (36:42):

Absolutely. Something has to be done to take us back from this abyss. We need to get rid of too big to fail, whether it's Wall Street (which tanked the global economy), whether it's Trump and the Trump family (Jared and Ivanka), whether it's Elon Musk, we need to end elite criminal impunity. We need to see people in jail. We need to see Bannon locked up, not out there inciting more violent coups like he did in Brazil with his podcast and so on. We need to see accountability. We need to see regulations. We need to see our quality of life improve across the board. We need to no longer worry whether the government is allowing the genocidal corporate class to kill us, to give us cancers, to poison our children and so on. That has to end. One point I wanna make is that one of the really existential crisis reasons why we have to come up with a solution to end American oligarchy is because guess what? As we see from Chat GPT, we're entering the age—we're already there—we're in the age of AI, artificial intelligence. And with the singularity, you're gonna have technology advancements exponentially growing and growing and growing, and who is going to control that technology? Remember, technology is only as helpful or destructive as those controlling it, as we see with social media, which is a preview of what the full-on singularity age is going to be like. So if you have oligarchy like Elon Musk in charge of massively advanced AI, what does that mean for us? You know what I mean? Like, are we gonna get farmed now? You know the alternative title we wanted for a moment for my film, *Mr. Jones*? Agnieszka Holland, the director, wanted to call it "Human Farm." "Human Farm" because that's how Stalin and Russian imperialism

treated Ukrainians: they farmed them. They mass murdered them through starvation because nuclear weapons weren't available to them at that time.

Andrea Chalupa (38:41):

So they organized a famine, mass murdered them off, stole their land, stole their grain, got all that money, they farmed humans, basically. Are the oligarchs gonna farm us once the AI explodes and there's no putting that genie back in the bottle? Do you see what I mean? We've got some real big problems on the horizon and so we need to step up now and end the oligarchy by forcing accountability and forcing safety rules and regulations. It's that simple. And again, to Biden, I want to call on you and your whole team to wake up because in 2016, it wasn't just the Russians that helped tilt the scales, obviously, like they did with the very close Brexit vote. It was also a very big story in 2016, which were the protests at Standing Rock that Obama just allowed fascist, corporate military to clamp down on those protests where you had a tribe at Standing Rock protesting the Keystone Pipeline from running under their lake, their water source for their reservation, which is perfectly understandable considering that Keystone Pipeline had had major oil leaks. They were vindicated in their concerns.

Andrea Chalupa (39:49):

Major oil leaks, including 380,000 gallons of oil spilled in North Dakota. That's the size of an Olympic-sized swimming pool. And so that was the big story of 2016. And that, I have no doubt, depressed the vote. It made the young kids not wanna vote for the Democrats. It made the independents watch this and go, "What the hell is going on? That's disgusting." It made all the people in these very, very tight must-win counties think Democrats are just as bad as the Republicans. "They're the same party. Why? I'm just gonna stay home." So we're entering that territory again. I'm telling you, what happened in East Palestine, Ohio cannot be ignored. It's going to be a major specter over the 2024 election and Biden and his whole team is just going to self-destruct unless they deal with this crisis head on and reassure the American people safety rules and regulations have been put in place by executive order and this will never happen again unless you elect the Republicans again to roll back these regulations. That is what they need to do right now. That's very common sense. And they need to be front and center with that and stop with this media blackout nonsense and Pete Buttigieg posting the bare minimum on Twitter and so on. I wanna just close with this section on Georgia because that's where Norfolk Southern is based and that's also the site of Cop City, which is a massive plan to develop a massive area of forest—beautiful wilderness in Georgia—and turn it into a boyhood fantasy of cops and robbers; a full-on virtual world for cops to play out their first person shooter video game fantasies, including an advanced explosives testing site. All of this would have to bulldoze forest to the ground to create a dystopian cop city for cops to act out their war games.

Andrea Chalupa (41:57):

Cops who are already so militarized there is a widespread problem across the country of non-white people just being casually assassinated by over-militarized and overly aggressive cops, right? And so now they get a cop city. One of the backers of Cop City (because it's a \$90 million project) is who other than Norfolk Southern, right? They lobbied against these safety regulations and now they're financially backing a \$90 million project of Cop City because of course they are. So it's all connected. Do you understand? And already, a protester at Cop City, an environmentalist protester who was camping out there, trying to stop this from moving forward, was shot multiple times by police and there's no body cam footage. He was an environmentalist, a really sweet looking kid from a family of Venezuelan immigrants who work in social work, who got a knock on their door one day in Chicago and was like, "Hey, your son was killed. And the cop just left." And that's all reporting in *The Guardian* that you have to read about. It's heartbreaking. So that's what we're up against. It's corporate militarized fascism. And

Biden and the Democrats, I don't know what the hell they're doing, but they're playing into it. And they're endangering our lives in the process.

Sarah Kendzior (43:12):

They're embracing it. And on that note, I wanna talk about some changes in the administration in terms of personnel and who's going to be taking on these problems in the future. And so I'm gonna start by reading a tweet from a key long-time Biden advisor. This is from January 24th 2023. The tweet says, "Death is a loss, but living too long is also a loss. It leaves most of us debilitated and unable to contribute to society. We are no longer remembered as being vibrant and engaged, but instead as feeble and ineffectual." And so that is a quote from Biden advisor, Zeke Emanuel, a former head of his covid response team from the campaign days, of course, the brother of notorious political operative Rahm Emanuel. And he is a eugenicist. He's been accused of being a eugenicist for a long time.

Sarah Kendzior (44:14):

About a decade ago, he wrote an article for *The Atlantic* arguing that people should not live past the age of 75, which is the same point that he is arguing now in the year 2023 while advising the president. At the time, Emanuel's writing about this issue was used by the GOP to claim that the Obama administration was creating death panels, which is basically like a buzzword that they came up with to try to dissuade the country from embracing Obamacare. It didn't really seem to have a lot of validity. Ironically, now it not only does have validity, but the GOP also embraced this perspective multiple times during covid, saying that people should die for the economy, and functioning essentially as an apocalyptic death cult. What we're seeing increasingly in the Biden administration is a polished, respectable version of that death cult.

Sarah Kendzior (45:19):

And so, you know, here are some of the recent developments that are alarming me regarding this. And you can take all of these conclusions, by the way, and transfer them to environmental disasters, climate change, disasters, and so on, because what this is is apathy and a kind of sneering cruelty toward mass death and suffering and disability. So in January, 2022 (this was a year ago during Omicron and the number of covid deaths was approaching 1 million), Zeke Emanuel told the Biden administration to stop counting the deaths because, you know, if you don't count them, then they didn't happen. And as I said before, this is what dictatorships have always done. And I'm not saying they are a dictatorship, but that they are embracing the tactics of one, and that should alarm you. He is likely one of the people who has contributed to us being unable to get accurate information about the number of people who are dying of Zeke Emanuel covid, are hospitalized, who contacted it.

Sarah Kendzior (46:23):

He just simply calls it the "new normal" and this ghoulish approach has been embraced by others in the Biden White House, in particular, Rochelle Walensky, who has had to repeatedly apologize to disabled people for characterizing them as disposable. And so you have a CDC that is easily as bad under Biden as it was under Trump, and you should really see this as a continuum. This is the overt transformation of an institution that is supposed to be protecting Americans into an institution that harms Americans. And one of the most disturbing developments on this is the recent declaration—you know, I think at this point it's happened—that Ron Klain is no longer Biden's chief of staff. He has been replaced by a man named Jeffrey Zients. And we've covered him on the show before because Zients was appointed by Biden as his "Covid Czar" during his 2020 campaign.

Sarah Kendzior (47:27):

And he remained in that position through March 2022, making disastrous decisions, really weaponizing the “pandemic of the unvaccinated” rhetoric, which pitted Americans against each other; and also lied about the extent of breakthrough covid, and expressing the same deference to corporations and plutocrats that individuals on the Trump team displayed. And that's not surprising because Zients was not a public health expert. He was an investment banker who built his career off of Medicare and Medicaid fraud. And that's who Biden decided to appoint into the “Covid Czar” position and that is who is now the chief of staff. And so, you know... I've been looking into this for a few weeks, meaning to get to it on the show, and it's like every week things get worse and worse. I was researching this before the State of the Union in which Biden blew off the fact that we are living in an ongoing pandemic and we need basic, uncontroversial remedies.

Sarah Kendzior (48:38):

Things like better ventilation systems in schools and nursing homes and buildings, things you would expect an administration that's priding itself on its infrastructure accomplishments to want to provide. But this is not the kind of thing that Zients would ever be interested in providing. The only kind of remedies that they recommend are the vaccines and booster shots, which of course is just a windfall for Big Pharma. I don't think they want this pandemic to actually end; one, because it gets rid of people who they seem to characterize, certainly Zeke Emmanuel seems to characterize, as useless eaters, to use Nazi terminology. You know, they see people who are elderly or frail or disabled not as full human beings who are loved, who should be respected, who are entitled to the same rights as all Americans, but as people who are burdens on the economy and people who should be removed from our society.

Sarah Kendzior (49:42):

And then this is a way of that happening. It's very frightening. It's social Darwinism constructed upon their own conception of human worth, and their conception of human worth is determined by personal wealth. And so we're seeing life expectancy plunge while they're saying they're going to raise the retirement age to 70, meaning that we all will work until we literally die. And that day may come sooner than later. So given what's happened in East Palestine, the fact that Zients is there instead of Ron Klain, that he's now Biden's closest advisor and he's going to be choosing other advisors who may handle this crisis, is very, very alarming. Folks should be asking why Biden keeps choosing these ghouls to guide him.

Andrea Chalupa (50:36):

Speaking of ghouls, Sean Patrick Maloney is gunning for the job of Secretary of Labor. Keep in mind, this train explosion in Ohio, that was—

Sarah Kendzior (50:48):

a labor issue.

Andrea Chalupa (50:49):

Yeah, that's a labor issue. So Sean Patrick Maloney, you may remember, was the chair of the DCCC that knifed progressives in the front and lost us a bunch of must-win winnable races in New York state, which is why the fascists now control the House, okay? And he wants to reward himself, like a typical white man failing upwards? It would be a total disaster for the strong labor unions that we need and a betrayal by Biden, with his pro-union messaging, if Sean Patrick Maloney—a total flunky that actively, again, worked against winnable progressive races in a political environment that massively favored the Democrats, it turned out, because of the loss of abortion rights, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and so on, and being the first big major election since the violent attempted coup, right? It was a big referendum against that. He again chose civil war in the Democratic Party, gaining up on progressives,

starving their campaigns of must-win money. There were very, very, very, very close races that could have used more of his support. And instead he was pumping that money into his own race that he was desperately trying to win and he ultimately lost. Do not reward that flunky with an extremely sensitive post as labor secretary, especially when we need unions desperately now to counter and claw our way back from the oligarchy. So if Biden is serious about taking on China right now, instead of this bravado of shooting down these Chinese spy balloons, take on China like we took on the Soviets with a space race and putting a man on the moon, having a big old moonshot. Take on China by giving us an advanced rail system like the Chinese enjoy. Biden is Mr. Train president. He's Mr. Amtrak. He loves his Amtrak. Well, your Amtrak is a horse-and-buggy, Mr. President, compared to what the Chinese have. We can and absolutely must do better. That's how you take on the Chinese.

[\[closing clip\]](#)

Speaker 1 (52:53):

These aren't storm clouds. This is the fucking shit that they burn off, the fucking shit they burn off in East Palestine. This is not fucking storm clouds. Look at it. This is over Darlington. This is their fucking success. That ain't no fucking storm cloud. That's the fucking shit from East Palestine. Their fucking controlled burn.

Speaker 6 (53:26):

You ready?

Speaker 5 (53:27):

I'm ready. Let's get outta here. I wish we could get the fuck outta here. Motherfuckers. You fucking greedy motherfuckers. Impatient bitches. You could have fucking waited. You could have fucking called the tanks. You could have transferred the contents. You didn't have to do this. You did it because of time and money. That's exactly why you did it.

[outro - theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

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

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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

encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization, helping refugees from Ukraine, Syrian, and Afghanistan. Donate at [Rescue.Org](https://www.rescue.org). And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at [theorangutangproject.org](https://www.theorangutangproject.org) and avoid products with palm oil.

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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