

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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“2016 Redux”

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[opening clips]

Niecy Nash-Betts (00:00:20):

I'm a winner baby! Thank you to the Most High for this divine moment. Thank you Ryan Murphy for seeing me. Evan Peters, I love you. Netflix. Every single person who voted for me, thank you. My better half who picked me up when I was gutted from this work, thank you. And you know who I want to thank? I want to thank me for believing in me and doing what they said I could not do. And I want to say to myself in front of all you beautiful people, go on girl with your bad self. You did that. Finally, I accept this award on behalf of every Black and Brown woman who has gone unheard, yet over policed, like Glenda Cleveland, like Sandra Bland, like Breonna Taylor. As an artist, my job is to speak true to power and baby, I'ma do it the day I die. Mama, I won!

[opening theme music up and under]

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:32):

Welcome to *Gaslit Nation*. I am joined... And by the way, I'm Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*; the film the Kremlin doesn't want you to see, so be sure to watch it. It's about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, a history that is repeating today and that the world must stop now. So Jake Sullivan, get the long range missiles. Stop trying to give Putin an off-ramp. Stop trying to give Putin land for peace. Just end this war now by giving Ukraine everything it needs now. Listen to Ukrainians. Honor their agency. Let them lead, alright? Our opening clip was Niecy Nash-Betts accepting her Emmy award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in the series, *Dahmer — Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, and ringing in the energy and human rights we need in 2024 and beyond. And with me is one of my favorite people in the whole wide world and a favorite expert of many of our listeners.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:29):

And that's the star of the essential *Black Diplomats* podcast and the Substack *Black Diplomats* that just launched this week, so be sure to check it out. Terrell was over this weekend for a marathon hangout session where he cooked gnocchi and we watched the extraordinary film *Anatomy of a Fall*, which took the Golden Globes for best screenplay. It was directed by Justine Triet and written with her husband. And the plot is just so tense, so streamlined, and the dialogue just pops. It's so natural. It's like they grabbed this dialogue from their own lives and just put it in this powerful film. So Terrell and I were... [laughs] Anyway, we had quite a weekend and we're ready to talk to you. There's so much going on. Okay, Terrell, you've been to the Iowa Caucus for the Democrats, I believe, because I remember you came over for dinner shortly after coming home from Iowa and you were pantomiming for us what it was like.

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:29):

You were getting up from the table and getting in our faces to show you how people caucus in Iowa and the intensity of it because it's so high stakes. It's just sort of more... like, a fanfare thing. It's more PR. It's like whoever does well in Iowa fresh off the gate gets the momentum that could lead them into other states. There's been some upsets at Iowa and some false starts at Iowa. And so far tonight at the Klan rally of the Republican Iowa Caucus, Donald Trump was a sure thing. People were singing his praises, burning crosses—rhetorically, of course. And Ron DeSantis was fighting for his ego just to not embarrass himself. He's a non candidate at this point. It's all just, you know, reptilian ego for him. We know that the second place is going to be Haley. I've been saying since May, look out for Nikki Haley. Why?

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:21):

Because the Kushners need her to launch their political comeback to get back into the White House. There's all this reporting that Charles Kushner, the whole Kushner clan—and I mean that literally Klan—is rallying around her and trying to make her the alternative to Trumpism to save the Republican party and bring back this false sense of normalcy and sort of bring back this Posh Trump era that will be sort of more palpable for the normies across America, the independents needed to win the electoral college. So Trump... Ha! So Terrell, walk us through. Massive apology for that. Walk us through the Iowa caucus. What does it mean? What was it like when you were there and what do you think all this really matters for us when we're up against a white supremacist terrorist traitor who wants to overthrow our democracy on day one?

Terrell Starr (00:05:11):

Here's an interesting history behind the Iowa caucuses, right? Jimmy Carter, when he was running in the '76 race, he was one of those people. He left Georgia and moved to Iowa because he felt like a catching up from behind kind of guy, the underdog. So he just went there and moved. And his idea was that the more time that I stake out here, the better chance it'll work out for me. And it did. He eventually went on to become President of the United States. So since then it's become that stomping ground. A lot of people don't know that aspect with Jimmy Carter. But I think that it's a test for how white America will view you and are you electable? It's the same question that former President Barack Obama had. And when he won Iowa, the energy that, "Oh, he can not only beat Hillary, but you can get a wide contingency of America that will go and support him."

Terrell Starr (00:06:04):

And so it's a litmus test in a wide range of ways that's lasted decades. And so now you're starting to see this shift with more Black people gaining their agency to say, "Hey, we won Georgia and in the case of Biden in 2020, we got you South Carolina." So you need to shift that thinking." But that was the genesis of this hoopla over Iowa. Now, what's happening right now is that Donald Trump won. He has more than 50% of the vote so far. And so the vast lion's share of the delegates have gone to Donald Trump. And so right now the numbers are being tallied and DeSantis at this point seems to be in second place. But it seems like there's a chance that Nikki Haley could come in in second, but this has always been a race between who's going to come in second, what's really unique about this caucus, and I'll tell you the energy that I experienced when I went in 2020, you know, Pete Buttigieg, at least from the Democrats one... So it's this notion that a gay man from the Midwest can win. And so depending on which side of the aisle that you're on, the voters there can surprise you. But as far as the—

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:14):

I remember, I just want to say I remember there was some exit poll interview with a white woman at the Iowa Caucus who loved Pete, loved Mayor Pete, thought he was just the cutest; this all American white

boy. And then someone who was like, “You don't mind that he's gay?” or something and she was like, “He's gay?!” And it kind of makes you wonder how she rethought her support for him.

Terrell Starr (00:07:35):

Well, here's an interesting thing with that though. But when you see with Vivek Ramaswamy, for example, I don't know if you saw the NBC report in which his wife was asking questions to voters, saying, “Hey, is there anything we can clarify or anything that we can do?” And one person said—

Andrea Chalupa (00:07:54):

Or any dark Russian money we can share with you?

Terrell Starr (00:07:57):

And somebody told her, well, I can't recall who told me, but... “Is this guy American?” And I'm really surprised that you did not see that. Yeah, it was a whole thing. So his wife's name is Apoorva, so that's her name. And so here's the quote verbatim from NBC News, Apoorva's question to these Iowa voters. She says, “What answers can I help you provide?” Here's the response: “Well, the only one I have, and I couldn't even remember who said it to me, but they mentioned his dark skin. They think he's Muslim. A supporter named Theresa Fuller told her at a restaurant meet-and-greet Thursday. I kind of set them straight on that. I don't know if they believe me or think I was covering for him. I don't know.” So...

Terrell Starr (00:08:49):

And there were other people who were asked about Trump and democracy and they were saying that, well, you know it's kind of like—and I'm quoting one of the people who was asked—“Well, it's kind of like the principal needs to come in and put people in line and we just need someone to put us in line and everyone's not perfect.” So the bottom line is that there's no negotiating with these individuals. They're going to vote for him no matter what. When Trump said in 2016 that “I can shoot someone in the middle of Times Square and people still support me”, that's true. And I think the closeout here is that it takes me back to a newsletter article written by a political scientist named Lincoln Mitchell, and he said that one of the problems of the discourse in media, it talks about Trump versus democracy and no one's asking if his supporters even want a democracy. That's where we are right now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:09:45):

Yeah, we're not going to do the normal horse race coverage of the Iowa Caucus. It is... When I was listening to the news of these Trump supporters standing up and praising Dear Leader, praising their fuhrer I was getting images flashing in my mind of the 1930s Nazi rally in Madison Square Garden with over 20,000 Nazis in Madison Square Garden. And this was obviously mostly men. And that's what this Iowa Caucus felt like. I think people have to understand this is normal. I know it feels abnormal, but in terms of America's history, we've been here before. Look at the 1941 essay in *Harper's* that went viral when Trump first came to power in 2016. This was written in 1941 by Dorothy Thompson for *Harper's*. And the essay is called *Who Goes Nazi?* And the whole joke of the essay, the very morbid joke was Dorothy Thompson writing to you, saying, “Here's how to tell at your next dinner party, look around.”

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:01):

“Here's how to tell who among you would go Nazi, who among you would turn Nazi.” And she goes through the different psychological profiles. She describes the self-hating Jew (the Jared Kushners). She describes the trust fund kids that are convinced they're geniuses (the Elon Musks), the self-hating women and so on and so on. And she tells you, “I know how this game works. I know who among me will

become a Nazi because I've seen this happen in my beloved Austria. I've seen this happen in my beloved Germany." She didn't say all that in the essay, but because I know her so well from her being one of my historical mentors, she—Dorothy Thompson—came up in the world as a rare female correspondent in the interwar period covering the rise of Hitler, covering the rise of the Nazis. She was massively in love with the German spirit; the freedom, the liberation, the creative expression, the openness, the open mind of the Weimar Republic of Germany, of Berlin.

Andrea Chalupa (00:11:56):

And she saw all of that slip away so easily, and she saw so many “respectful” people succumb to it. So she had seen democracy die overnight. People self-destruct by supporting Trump, by being brainwashed, by the propaganda, by going willingly because it meant destroying the Left and not having to pay more in taxes. And that's what we're witnessing with this Iowa Caucus. It's part of a larger history. It's human nature what we're witnessing. Yes, there are people that are so greedy, that are so dark inside that they'd rather pay less in taxes. They'd rather not share. They'd rather not have a giving spirit. They'd rather succumb to fear and the rod of the mind than have any sort of sense of charity and community. And they see those as violent evil words. So when they're standing up there and caucusing for Trump and they can't list a single thing of policy of how Trump has impacted/changed their lives, improved their quality of life, they can't talk in specifics because it's not about that. These are people that are just set to destroy. It's their insides that they're revealing to us. And that's what we have to understand, that we're up against another dark chapter of human nature that's being released.

Terrell Starr (00:13:13):

There are so many different political constituencies within the Democratic party, including the foreign policy dynamic, which I don't think many people foresaw coming. And so when you had these protesters who protested Joe Biden in this Black church where nine people were killed and one injured by a white supremacist back in 2015, he was speaking to his own base that always gets him through elections and got him the nomination in 2020. What's different now is that in these swing states, his foreign policy is alienating Arab Americans, and when you're thinking about the hundred thousand people who live in metropolitan Detroit, the tens of thousands that live in the state of Georgia, the tens of thousands that live in Arizona—three of those states which he won by a thread have constituencies that are pissed off. And so in one sense, you have Trump, a person who doesn't care about anyone or anybody, he's just gone straight fascist, right?

Terrell Starr (00:14:18):

And you have somebody like Joe Biden who I think in his spirit has a heart, but he doesn't demonstrate it for all of his constituencies. And so if he does not reach out to this particular group of Arab Americans, well, he can very well lose these key swing states that he won in 2020. Whereas with Trump, he can just go straight racist, appeal to these straight white people who care about white supremacy, LGBTQ rights, women's right to choose, and he has their full complicity. Whereas with Biden, he has to navigate a far more challenging labyrinth of political alliances and trust and building trust relationships in order to get through. And so this caucus is showing us how little Trump has to do and how much Biden does.

[advertisement]

Andrea Chalupa (00:16:38):

Yeah, I mean Biden is the Ginger Rogers in this matchup. He has to dance backwards and in heels, and Trump gets to just float like Fred Astaire. And obviously Democrats being the big tent that we are, there

are Democrats out there that are proud to vote for Biden, that cannot wait to vote for Biden, that really genuinely feel connected to them. And then you have this growing schism, especially on the progressive side, and it's coming down to the genocide of Gaza. It's just an extraordinary, horrific mass murder, collective punishment, war crime crisis that Netanyahu has unleashed and is the latest coup to cling to power. And it's going to have ramifications, obviously—as it is already—on the 2024 presidential election. Obviously, our first thought is with the civilians. Our first thought is with the Palestinians. Our first thought is to end the cycles of violence, end the generational trauma, get the Palestinians all of the resources they need to live now, to survive now, to demand a ceasefire now to end this war.

Andrea Chalupa (00:17:54):

Because it is very clear as we've been saying, and you and I have been saying since the jump, since days after October 7th when people were afraid to even speak. Remember? We talked about that on the show. We came out and said, 'This is the latest coup by Netanyahu. His whole court hijacking didn't work. His whole attempt to weaken the courts at a time when he was being investigated for corruption and these same courts were going to come after him and finally end his political career, that wasn't working out. That led to the largest protests in Israel's history. That awakened a sleeping giant of civic society across Israel. And so Netanyahu really needed a Hail Mary pass to survive. He had done the unthinkable for the broader, moderate Israeli society, which was to align himself with the worst of the worst of these proud terrorists like Ben-Gvir and others.

Andrea Chalupa (00:18:50):

And he did that all to cling to power even though he was very much of that movement himself. But it was a shock to the moderates (the white moderates, if you will) of Israel when he did that. And this is just his... Having this long war, beating his chest about it, saying, "No, we're not going to back down. South Africa can go to hell. We're going to keep exterminating. We're going to push them all out." He's proudly carrying out a Nakba 2.0 and it needs to stop. It needs to stop. And there's reports, of course, that there's friction/tension with the Biden administration, but that's not enough. Biden needs to come out and say, "Ceasefire, ceasefire, ceasefire." Why? Because if you are against Trump, you have to be against Netanyahu. It's the same enemy. It's the same enemy. If you don't trust Trump to carry out a war, if you don't trust Trump to oversee a democracy, then how can you trust Netanyahu? So Biden has carte blanche here to point out the obvious that the emperor has no clothes on, and that's Netanyahu. And why do you think he's not doing it, especially with so much at stake here at home with his own election because it's dividing the left?

Terrell Starr (00:19:57):

This is a lot more complicated politically than any of the US invasions, to say Afghanistan, Iraq, for example, because it was the United States versus... You know, the United States went under the guise of terrorism, versus right now what's happening is that you have a terrorist act that was carried out by Hamas against civilians. That was clear. And then it got into the response from Israel where they disproportionately responded and targeted civilians and recklessly hurt and killed civilians, something that this White House does in fact acknowledge, which is a war crime. And the 23,000 civilians who've been killed, roughly half of them being children, around 80 or so journalists and media workers who've been killed, and the Biden administration isn't saying anything, keep in mind that this is a clash with the longstanding Zionist policy of both the Democratic and the Republican parties is to stand by Israel. And so how do you deal with these competing narratives where the South Africans are saying, "Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people." but the whole foundation of American support behind Israel has been under this guise of, "We're going to defend the strongest democracy in the Middle East."

Terrell Starr (00:21:23):

Even though we know that's not the case. But then most importantly, these are the people who now have their own state after experiencing their own genocide. And so they've been able to hang on to that for years. And so now the Biden administration is going to have to communicate—if they're going to do this the right way, and they're going to be honest about it—to say that, “Hey, what Israel is doing is wrong. They need to reverse course. We're no longer going to support Israel with aid. We're going to pressure Benjamin Netanyahu into a ceasefire,” something that we can do with Israel much easier than we could do with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Okay? That's the whole thing. Because the United States can legitimately leverage Benjamin Netanyahu. But politically, if you're looking at the landscape that Biden is dealing with and him being a Zionist himself, that is a very difficult terrain to carry because you don't know what the results are going to be. You may maintain the support of the Left that you need in order to win, but what about the other parts of the country that lean Democrat but they're Zionists? I'm not even talking about people who identify as Jewish. I'm talking about people who take on a particular Zionist politic. And this is very, very untraveled terrain. And so it's just a political minefield. He ought to do the right thing. But I'm just saying, I'm pretty sure this is what's in the calculus of the Biden administration's mind right now.

Andrea Chalupa (00:22:49):

But we're not even being Pollyanna-ish. It's like... How do I say it? To be pro-American is to be anti-Trump. To be pro-Israel in this day and age is to be anti Netanyahu, given how destructive he is. He's the Israeli Trump. It's just on a silver platter for Biden to be like, “This guy's corrupt. This guy's out of control. He's just trying to do a court purge. The court purging didn't work so this is the latest thing. He's trying to cling to power.”

Terrell Starr (00:23:17):

No, that doesn't, and I'm sorry, but it doesn't matter because everyone is going to revert to Hamas. We can get over Benjamin Netanyahu, but the main thing is that Hamas has been set loose and they are the perpetrators because anytime we talk about the disproportionate attack, people will call us Hamas supporters.

Andrea Chalupa:

Right.

Terrell Starr:

And so that's all you have to do and push out there. It's almost like a Trumpian response. There's no negotiating with it. Sometimes, quite frankly, it's at the point where Biden just, if you're going to operate on integrity, you're going to have to go balls deep with it. And he's not ready to do it.

Andrea Chalupa (00:23:52):

Let's just ask the big question here. Do you think it's going to cost him the election?

Terrell Starr (00:23:57):

I hope not, but here's why I think it reasonably could. And I go back to those three states: Arizona, Georgia, and Michigan. I see so many people DM me—Muslim, Arab Americans—that say, “I understand

that not voting can hurt Joe Biden's presidency, and I know that it will impact me, but when I see so many of my people who look like me being butchered and slaughtered and my government doesn't care, then it doesn't matter." And so there's a lack of emotional empathy and emotional intelligence, specifically emotional intelligence. People are just emotionally dumb when it comes to this issue and they try to use this linear thinking of two plus two equals four. Last time I could check, there are plenty of highly intelligent PhD-earning Harvard Business School-attending Arab Americans who can add two plus two and know what the conclusion is.

Terrell Starr (00:24:57):

That's not what this is about. This is about a group of people who feel terminally hurt and shattered and they're not being spoken to so an election is inconsequential to them in the grand scheme of things. So yes. And that variable alone, with every vote being essential. We have to remember, on each side in the 2020 election, more than 70 million people voted. It was a record. You're going to have to have that same enthusiasm to come out in this election. Can that change over time as Biden learns how to better convey the importance of what this election means and then just having a heart to speak out and say, "I'm finally going to do what I need to do in order to address Israel's genocide" even if he never says that? He may do that, but at this point, do I think that it will cost him the selection? Absolutely.

Andrea Chalupa (00:25:51):

If it's not enough for him, for his foreign policy team, to just wake up to the fact that at least 10,000 children are going to die from starvation in Gaza, a Palestinian Holodomor, if that's not enough... Dying from hunger is one of the worst ways to die. It's an excruciating, slow, painful, torturous death. And the aid trucks are right there, and the Israelis are just not allowing the aid to come in. They're controlling it to the point where it's creating greater destruction. It's losing more lives and it feels very deliberate. I know they could say, "Oh, it's security. It's security." But we've seen a lot of soldiers, IDF soldiers, videos coming out, and it's hard to tell whether I'm watching a Wagner soldier or an IDF soldier because just the way they—

Terrell Starr (00:26:42):

They operate in the same vain.

Andrea Chalupa:

Exactly right.

Terrell Starr:

I watch a lot of Wagner videos.

Andrea Chalupa:

It's genocidal.

Terrell Starr:

Yeah. The same way that these guys operate in Ukraine, they're doing it in Gaza. And so if you look at the International Court of Justice hearings between South Africa and Israel, and you see how the South Africans laid out their case—and by the way, I think it's something close to 80 countries now that are

supporting South Africa in its claim against Israel. And so if you look at those trials, the way in which South Africa opened up was brilliant. And they did something that Joe Biden didn't do, which is speak to the humanity of everything that went on. And so they just pulled you into the scene and you felt like you were there. And you saw the spirit of Nelson Mandela and the decades-long resistance against the South African occupation in the early '90s.

Terrell Starr (00:27:35):

And Israel's response was very petulant. It was essentially mocking the South African lawyers. And so not only did they do a poor job of defending themselves against the genocide accusations, they came off as being flat out racist. So they didn't help themselves. And what's happening now is it could take years for a ruling to take place. It took around 12 years for the genocide case between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. It took more than 12 years. But I think what we see right now is that the world is turning on the United States. or challenging its hypocrisy; the global south for a lack of a better word. And so I think that people are really not appreciating how these foreign policy dynamics are honing in a new light on America's claim that we uphold human rights and values. And it's trickling into the psyche of the average American where we're asking questions now.

Terrell Starr (00:28:36):

And so Biden came into 2020 as being the senior statesman, the senior diplomat. He knows how to cooperate with NATO. He's doing a good job on that. It's the Republicans that's undermining the support that Ukraine needs for military aid. But he has this wider problem right now. So a man who's supposed to be the sharpest foreign policy mind that can have that position, he's coming across as not knowing what to do. He looks like he's asleep behind the wheel because he pretty much has had his set on Ukraine, which he should have been. But it's these other world issues that are coming up. And now meanwhile with Trump, all he's saying is, "I can make a deal. I know how to end this war with just one phone call" in regards to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That's all he has to do. And so as critical as we both are of Biden, Biden was not built to deal with these types of problems. He was built to be a placeholder. These are very complex issues that require a new paradigm shift in thinking that neither he or the people he hired on his foreign policy team are equipped to do.

Andrea Chalupa (00:29:48):

Or are ready for. They're status quo. They're institutionalists. They came up in a different world and when they finally came to power, the world was falling apart and they got jacked by Russia.

Terrell Starr (00:30:04):

They're Kissingerites.

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:05):

Yes, exactly right. I mean, Blinken was at Kissinger's hundredth birthday party back in the spring. Ayiyi. Okay, so let's go to South Africa. So South Africa, we're going to play a clip. We're going to play a clip of one of their powerful statements.

[begin audio clip]

Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, South African Lawyer (00:30:19):

Israel has a genocidal intent against the Palestinians in Gaza. That is evident from the way in which Israel's military attack is being conducted, which has been described by Ms. Hasim. It is systematic in its



character and form. The mass displacement of the population of Gaza headed into areas where they continue to be killed, and the deliberate creation of conditions that “lead to a slow death.”

[end audio clip]

Andrea Chalupa (00:30:57):

Now, here's two things I want to point out about South Africa because we're talking about moral consistency with this crisis. South Africa has given lip service to Ukraine, for instance, but they're allied with Russia and some of their leaders have a history with the Kremlin going back to the Soviet Union. And Ukraine has called them out. There was a delegation from South Africa that was visiting Ukraine during air sirens going off.

Terrell Starr (00:31:29):

I was there.

Andrea Chalupa (00:31:29):

And the Ukrainians were saying to the South Africans, “How are you not waking up to what your friends in the Kremlin are doing to us?” So where is the moral consistency of South Africa? And another thing I want to point out was when the group was being interviewed, South African officials were being interviewed, they were questioned about whether they saw Hamas as a terrorist organization. And Hamas is a terrorist organization. Hamas is backed by Russia, which is a terrorist regime. There are extraordinary children who are bright lights for this world who have been killed and tortured by the Iranian regime. The Iranian regime can just go straight to hell. It's evil. And Hamas is evil. And so I'm sorry, but the conversations you and I have is we're staying grounded in moral consistency. We're staying grounded in moral consistency. We do not follow tribal politics. We do not follow media cliques.

Andrea Chalupa (00:32:22):

We do not care who wants to sit with us in the high school cafeteria, you know, making our way in life through all the noise out there. You and I, we have stayed grounded in studying history, clinging to our historical mentors and wanting to be on the right side of history ourselves. And the way you do that is by focusing, prioritizing the people caught in the middle. The people caught in the middle. The civilians. The people like you and I who are just trying to live their lives and build their dreams and be left alone. That's who we try to speak for. And I'm sorry, but South Africa, thank you for, yes, doing the right thing, standing tall on the world stage and bringing this case (and more states need to sign on) but where's the moral consistency when it comes to Ukraine? Where's the moral consistency in calling out Hamas for being a terrorist regime backed by terrorist regimes?

Terrell Starr (00:33:12):

Yeah, I definitely agree with you there. One of the things that... You're totally right about that. The only thing that I would like to add just from the perspective of the global south for example, is that no one in the grand scheme of things is really being as morally consistent in their values as you want them to be because all the things that you 100% were right about in the case of South Africa, people can point it in the direction of the United States. And we've been talking about that hypocrisy, right? And I think the issue with South Africa is that they feel like their lack of moral consistency that we're both talking about, there's a far greater critique on them than the moral inconsistencies of people who are not operating

their benefits. So with the USSR, they're one of the few major countries that were supporting African resistance during the apartheid era.

Terrell Starr (00:33:58):

That means something. And so the South Africans have their historical memory. And so just as we are requiring everyone to respect the historical memory of Ukraine and the Holodomor and the decades of Soviet occupation, the genocide of the Soviet regime, and going back into the czars when Catherine the Great came in and turned Ukraine into a settlement. So they have their own historical memory. I know because I lived there and I focus on that country pretty much exclusively. But the South Africans have their memory too, and that means something. And Nelson Mandela famously was on a national television show when he was touring the United States, and someone asked him a question from the audience about his support of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and the person asked, "Well, we really appreciate your efforts for liberation in South Africa, but why are you supporting these people and Fidel Castro?"

Terrell Starr (00:34:58):

And Mandela said, "The major mistake that's made by many in the West is that you think that your enemies have to be our enemies. And so we can point to just as many examples of how the West works with regional adversaries of some of the same people that we criticize and do the same thing. You get what I mean? And so when we are navigating these morally inconsistent trends, we have to be very mindful of how US relations around the world create the problems in which South Africa may have to align themselves with a country like Russia. And the simple response that I have to that is easy: Can the United States be a better partner to South Africa? No one talks about that. So I think as right as you are, 1000% correct, if we are really about moral consistency then we need to come up with ways to talk with our listeners and our audiences about how that moral consistency could be applied to all parties involved.

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:00):

Absolutely. Without question. I want to just say Gaddafi, absolute monster. He would handpick girls in the crowd that he would then have his security forces bring to him to rape. He would tenderize his meat before raping them. He would do horrible things to the girls before... He's a monster.

Terrell Starr (00:36:20):

Yeah, absolutely.

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:21):

I'm glad he got sodomized to death and I'm glad that that video haunts Putin. There's reports that Putin has made the people around him watch Gaddafi's final moments being overtaken by his own people and just sodomized to death and Putin makes people watch that to be like, "Look, if you don't use terror, if you don't use KGB tactics, that will be you next." I'm glad that haunts Putin, and I'm glad that our shows haunt Putin. So I want to just say, yeah, no, of course. It's like, the US gets to hang out with scoundrels and do deals with scoundrels, so why can't South Africa and so on? Yeah. Jake Sullivan, core of Biden's foreign policy team, Anthony Blink and others, they came up in a world where the institutions carried a facade of working. It wasn't until Trump came in and just blew the lid off the whole thing.

Andrea Chalupa (00:37:14):

It was like, "Surprise, America's deeply corrupt and the Russian mafia is here and my dad was instrumental in getting 'em all set up, and I'm carrying on in that legacy and we're all getting rich." And

so that was a different world. 2016 woke everyone up, thank God. And unfortunately, we could have learned these things in other ways; by really listening to historians and anti-corruption reformers instead of that trauma of Trump. But it is what it is. It happened. We all woke up and now we know. But what's really interesting about Biden's foreign policy team is in 2016, they did not see the Russian threat coming. They did not see Russia attacking our democracy right in front of their faces. They did not understand Paul Manafort, the Kremlin's longtime operative running Trump's campaign, what a siren that was blazing in their faces. They completely just let that go, just too Cool Hand Luke about the whole thing.

Andrea Chalupa (00:38:10):

And democracy got jacked. And it led to the Mueller Report and the Senate Intelligence Report and just an international crisis of all our allies, and possibly the end of NATO if Trump had gotten in and again and ended American democracy. So what's happening again is the same dynamic is playing out where Biden's foreign policy team is maintaining the status quo, which is that the US is a staunch ally of Israel, nevermind that Israel is being driven off a cliff by an autocrat, a wannabe autocrat like Trump, a close ally of Trump and Putin. It's the same mistake they made back in 2016 where the enemy was at the gate, all the signs were there, and yet they didn't show any bold action, bold mind changes, bold strategy. They were just sleepwalking into the end, into crisis for America.

Terrell Starr (00:39:02):

Yeah, you're absolutely correct. I covered that 2016 race and I think I was one of the few people who believed that Trump would win. And when you're out on the road, you see it. I saw these people in their fervor. It felt like a klan rally version of the enthusiasm that people would have for Barack Obama when he ran in 2008. And it was very troubling and disturbing. And you didn't feel like people were all in the case with Hillary Clinton. Beyond the sexism and the stupid email drama and all of that, she just was unfortunately not the right person for the particular type of mood that we were all in, right? Because even though she was the far better person to run the country, none of that mattered. It's one of those things where somebody says that we're going to have a mud fight and the opponent comes dressed in white like they're not going to go to the ground.

Andrea Chalupa (00:40:04):

[laughs] White pants suit.

Terrell Starr (00:40:05):

A white pants suit. And the opponent in Trump, for example, using that metaphor, he's coming out like Hulk Hogan. He's ready to roll. And so I think there are too many people who are coming out in the white suit not expecting to get down in the mud, and the only people that you see getting down in the mud are minority groups. It's women. It's people who feel like they personally do not have the protection of white maleness to preserve them through. And until the power structures that are going to be okay whether Trump wins or not realizes that, then we're going to be in a world of hurt. I think that it's more than a tossup right now. I think that Trump's hatred is leading the pack and the Democrats do not have a singular message to do this. And Biden does not have it in him to do it.

Terrell Starr (00:41:03):

And it is not because intellectually he can't. He's not built to do it. It's like taking a donkey and trying to make it into a racehorse. It's built to do a particular thing. It'll take your products, it'll take all you need from one place to another. It's got a strong back. It'll get the job done. But we need a race horse that's going to push us through. In the very... I hope to be the lucky chance or the fortunate chance that Biden

wins, if he wins, it's gonna be a whole bunch of wheels. It's going to be a whole bunch of people behind that donkey pushing it through the finish line because it's not going to be him. I think that Biden, if he wins it'll be despite himself, not because of him in particular.

Andrea Chalupa (00:41:48):

Here's some things that are going for him, and I would love to get your comment on this. So number one is the abortion issue. The numbers are off the chart. You just see a record number of women showing up to the polls, especially in these special elections like in Ohio, the big abortion vote. The women across the spectrum are there and they're dragging, they're making their husband's vote with them. So we saw that in the special elections. We saw that big upset in the 2022 midterms where the Democrats defied history, and that was the *Roe v. Wade* backlash. That's still strongly there. With every story of a crying white woman out of Texas saying, "I'm about to lose my fertility. I'm about to die. Please, I'm begging you to save me. Let me have my abortion." And the state of all these men saying, "No." That's waking up a lot of independent voters across America and a lot of conservative men.

Andrea Chalupa (00:42:47):

There's polling showing that conservative men just accepted the abortion debate for the culture war that it was. And now that they're seeing the reality of it, they're horrified. And so you are seeing a shift out there. And so the *Roe v. Wade* backlash is massive because one thing Americans do culturally have going for them, to some extent, one could say, depending on what the issue is... They have this feeling of like, government, get out of my bedroom, government get out of my life. This whole putting government in the bedroom, that's really this 30% evangelical population, this fringe extremist death cult of the evangelicals and extreme Catholics, keeping in mind that our Supreme Court, out of the nine justices, six of them are extreme Catholics. The Federalist Society that is packing these courts, the ideologues are extreme Catholics. This is a really deeply funded, well organized but not large in numbers compared to the general population religious extremist effort to try to turn America into Iran, of these mullahs dictating our lives.

Andrea Chalupa (00:43:52):

And there's enough Americans that don't want that because we're the land of the free. We're the land of, you know, endless creativity, entrepreneurship. We can make our dreams come true. We love the underdog stories, the Cinderella stories and so on. And what they're trying to do to us, these restrictions fly in the face of that. So that is a strong cultural spirit here across the US. And the other thing is that you have this blue wave that happened in 2018 which created infrastructure that's still in place and defying historical trends. So in the most recent election of November, 2023, Glenn Youngkin thought that he was going to cement his political future by taking control of both chambers of Virginia's government and ushering in an abortion ban. And instead, he got spanked. And instead, the first trans woman entered the Virginia Senate and Virginians are now protected. And so again and again. And it was an extraordinary election night across the country where there were races for Democrats in 2023.

Andrea Chalupa (00:44:51):

So my point is that we've been educated through national trauma, that trauma being Trump and the voters on the ground in these hyper-local races, they know their communities, they know where they vote, they know why they vote, they understand civics now unlike ever before, and they know that the quality of life issues, the real war for our democracy is right in the states where they live, where they live; who represents them in the state government, and that's not Biden. Biden's the federal government, Biden's the judges, right? Biden's the foreign policy. But we understand now, we're more civically minded, we're more activated. Our communities are protection. So I do think, to your point, Biden is going to get shoved across that finish line by a massive hoard of people who are pissed off and deeply

organized and very motivated. And I think at the end of the day, I hate to say it, but Black women, the quote of Black women being the most disrespected group in America, Black women have been historically voting for Democrats consistently at massive numbers, like in the nineties percent. And they're pragmatic voters. They know they're going to continue to vote Democrat even though they're not going to get what they need all the time consistently from the Democratic party, they know that they are the heart and soul of Democratic party. And there's a pragmatism there that I think is going to continue to show up because they see Trump as the greater existential threat.

Terrell Starr (00:46:16):

I... [laughs] All I can add to that is that I hope that you're correct. And I want Biden to win for all of those reasons that you mentioned. I am an optimistic person. I will always remain optimistic. What I hope the optimism will manifest into eventually is that these frictions, again, with these Arab American voters, and you also have to keep in mind, there are a lot of Latinx folks that are here as well and they're seeing the cruelty of this busing policy coming out of Texas that are going into these large cities that are run by Black people as well, right? So you have that whole dynamic that's in play here. Biden has so many different communities in order to get support from, and so it's a very complicated stage. 2020 was different in the sense that there wasn't that much division that was causing all these challenges and messaging that he has to do because he has to form this one message of unity.

Terrell Starr (00:47:15):

And the dynamics are not constructed in a way for him to cleanly do that like he could in 2020. 2020 did not have the Hamas situation. It didn't have the Israel reaction. It didn't have this busing policy that's just become far more perverse day in and day out. And then when you talk about the abortion issue, you're absolutely correct that on a local level, you saw these white women rebel. But a really bad habit with white women is that they can take that one issue and say, "Okay, you're not touching my body." But they'll still support Trump because as you saw in Iowa, they will tap dance and do a lot of mental gymnastics around why they would say, "I'm going to support *Roe v. Wade*," but then at the same time cast a ballot for Donald Trump. There's a guy I know who told me that, "I would not invite Trump into my home, but I'll vote for him." You get what I'm saying? And so how do you respond to that? So all I can say is I hope that you're right, and I hope that whatever dynamics take place between now and election day that we'll be able to heal these fractures with these very different communities, that'll be healed. Because at this moment right now, if you were to tell me who do I see winning? Trump.

Andrea Chalupa (00:48:42):

I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. One thing I want to point out is that normally with this show, we would reach out to, let's say, Indivisible, Sister District, and get our phone banks up and running in September. And we'd get the October phone banks set, promoting. That's how we normally do it; to organize the big get out the vote campaigns that *Gaslit Nation* does, which do have an impact. And I'm telling you all, I got an email from Sister District about "We gotta start now" the other week. You know what I mean? We're starting now, January, 2024. And I'm getting emails from all sorts of people like, "We need to start now." And so people are scared. If you're listening to this and you're scared, you're not the only one. And so people have to channel that fear and not sleep on this.

Andrea Chalupa (00:49:34):

Don't be caught sleeping on the 2024 election because you'll wake up with heartache. Do not take your vote for granted. If you can't stand Biden, it's lesser evil time folks. And I know that's become a meme over images of hell in Gaza. I understand. "Look at what the lesser evil is allowing to be done to children in Gaza." I understand that. I watch all those videos. I cannot turn away from what is going on there. It's

what the Soviets did to my ancestors. It's evil and it needs to stop. And Biden and this team are just knifing themselves in the chest again, like these same people did in 2016 when they let Paul Manafort break the law, blatantly break the law to help the Kremlin get Trump elected in 2016. And it's a repeat. It's a repeat. They're just asleep. They're letting... Because Netanyahu wants Trump back. Netanyahu wants Trump back. Netanyahu wants Biden to lose. Netanyahu wants his war with Iran. Netanyahu wants his regional war, and that's what this is about. Netanyahu is doing what he's doing not just to cling to power, but to also tank Biden's chances. He knows. He's close with Kushner,

Terrell Starr (00:50:47):

And I'm going to say this on the show now, and mark my words: When Nikki Haley becomes the VP, I'm going to tell you what her game is going to be. Nikki Haley is going to create safe cover for the Kushner's kleptocratic use of the White House. That's what she's going to do. She's going to be the queen of kleptocracy. That's going to be her hustle as the number two, alright? Because remember, besides being a two-time governor, she was also the ambassador to the United Nations. And so it would be interesting to see what type of relationship-building and manipulating that she would be able to do in that capacity in service of the Kushners, in service of Donald Trump, because this is all a cult. And people are talking about what are the variables of someone like Nikki Haley winning, for example? All she would be is a different variant of the Trump form because everyone in the Republican party wants Trumpism. They may not want it that potently. Well, the Iowa voters certainly do because they backed him in the kickoff of their primary. But she's going to really put a really nice curtain, make Trumpism look really pretty and nice. And so her Trump diplomacy is going to be a lot smoother. It's going to have a little bit of sophistication and edge to it, but it's still going to be Trumpian and it's going to be kleptocratic. That's going to be Nikki Haley's role.

Andrea Chalupa (00:52:21):

Oh, she's Trump in heels. She's posh. Yeah, she's Barbie Trump for sure. And I know people are wondering, well, what about the court cases? What about Jack Smith and his square jaw? I want to say, one friend of mine who is a staunch lawyer for good, she's a lawyer fighting the good fight for the little guy, and I love her dearly. And she comes from a group that has a big target on their head with growing fascism in America. She's from a marginalized community under threat of genocide in America, and she herself used straight talk with saying, "The cases against Trump are moving very fast. If this was just your average person, just your average corrupt, wannabe billionaire going through these trials, they would not be moving this fast." So she was making the point that it's very clear that the legal system is out to stop him because he is so dangerous.

Andrea Chalupa (00:53:14):

He is putting targets on the heads of judges, their families, and the jurors. He's authoritarian right now. When Hitler came to power, one of the first things he did was purge the courts, go after the courts. And so my lawyer friend was saying, "No, these cases are moving very fast." But do not put your trust in those cases because the other thing another lawyer friend pointed out was that people with war chests—and Trump has a huge war chest, the Heritage Foundation, Ginny Thomas, mullah, Thomas's wife on the Supreme Court, that whole Project 2025 plan, they have to do a lethal purge of our government where they want to mass purge and replace all these civilian roles, nonpolitical roles with ideologues that they're already networking with now. So they have it all mapped out; the blueprint to establish a Trump dictatorship on day one, including pardoning over a thousand white supremacist terrorists that tried to violently overthrow our democracy on January 6th. My larger point was this: the

courts are not going to save us. These cases are not going to save us. The only thing that is going to save us, it's the grassroots power. Grassroots power is the most reliable power we have left.

Terrell Starr (00:54:24):

I think so because that's what America has always been about for good and for bad. And so I think that that is one thing I am optimistic about. And one person that we definitely have to have on the show—we talked about this—is Latasha Brown, who is the preeminent Black Voters Matter. I went out on a campaign trail with her. You're talking about somebody that can convert a voter. If you want to get a masterclass, that's the next show, the masterclass of converting a voter. She is the best.

Andrea Chalupa (00:54:55):

Yes. Let's talk to her.

Terrell Starr (00:54:56):

She is like the Michael Jordan of Let Me Convert a Voter. She's a bucket in that regard, right? I mean a straight bucket. And it's those types of people. But she'll tell you, "I don't fuck with those people in DC." She'll tell you. [laughs] I mean, she's like, "I don't mess with them at all." She has her whole thing and her antipathy about all the things that we're talking about in regards to the old kind of Kushner guard, the Kissingerites and all those folks, she has a word about that. And so I think that it's people like her who are moving regardless of how Biden is operating, because again, it's going to be people like her that's going to carry Biden over the finish line despite himself. And as tired as they are of doing it, it's like they're doing it for themselves. And so the common refrain from Black women is that, "We're not there to save democracy. We're saving ourselves."

Terrell Starr (00:55:51):

And it's an interesting wording because essentially they're saying, "Yeah, naturally, of course it is about democracy. But in the grand scheme of things, we've had to fight in order to have this democracy respect us." And so the biggest irony of all of this stuff is that for all of the negative talk that Donald Trump has about Black people, it's been Black people that care about this country the most, who've gone through hundreds of years of chattel slavery and still have faith in this country. I don't care if they're a soldier. I don't care if they're the butler, for example. I don't care if they're the taxi person or the middle class guy that works at the plant or Latasha Brown or anyone else. They all care about the democratic principles of this country. And time and time again, that group, which votes are more than 90% for Democrats, the most consistent and most powerful block of Democrats in the party and have been for decades, those are the people that are going to bring us through.

Terrell Starr (00:56:53):

And you're correct. I just hope that the other groups of people who I keep on saying, this Arab American vote, and I know people may be tired of it, but I'm telling you it's everything. Michigan, Arizona, Georgia. Stacey Abrams, when she ran the 2018, I was on a campaign trail with her. The reason why she was so close in votes was that she tapped those new Americans, those people who had just become US citizens. A lot of them come from the Middle East and she was hitting them very, very hard. And she was speaking a very particular type of language to them in a voice and a message that you didn't usually hear in a statewide race, particularly in the South. And so Stacey had that global inclusive mind when she was running in her first race. And so those dynamics are going to make it more complicated for the grassroots organizers to really pull us through, because it's going to be a lot of coalition building that's going to be required. That's already happening. It's just going to have to be at its best in order to get Biden through

it. And look, I pray that that happens. I just have to say, is it going to happen now? No, but I'm praying. I'm going to be optimistic that it happens come election day,

Andrea Chalupa (00:58:12):

Let me just tell you, if Black women carry Biden over the finish line, it will be another chapter of the *1619 Project*.

[closing clip]

Mike Douglas (00:58:21):

Dr. King, do you think that the war in Vietnam could be stopped now without harm to this country?

Dr. Martin Luther King (00:58:26):

Well, there are two ways to deal with it. One is a unilateral withdrawal. I don't oppose that because I feel that this is a possibility. After all, France withdrew unilaterally from Algeria, withdrew without a military victory, and this did not lessen France's prestige or influence in the world. If anything, it increased its prestige in the world.

Mike Douglas (00:58:52):

France has not the power that this country has.

Dr. Martin Luther King(00:58:54):

Well, I think that's an even greater reason why we should restrain our power. There's always the danger that any nation will abuse its power. And I think our power must be much more than military power. We don't need to prove to the world or anybody our military power. I think we've got to prove our moral power.

[closing theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa:

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