

Gaslit Nation Transcript

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“Team Human on Gaslit Nation”

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[opening theme music up and under]

Andrea Chalupa (00:01:00):

Hey everyone, welcome to *Gaslit Nation*. I am your host, Andreea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*; the film about Stalin's genocide famine in Ukraine, which the Kremlin does not want you to see. They shut down a screening in Moscow and then liquidated the organization—the renowned human rights organization—Memorial that dared to show it, so make sure to watch that film. Alright, everyone, so we are going to share a special interview I did with the great Douglas Rushkoff for his podcast, *Team Human*, at the end of September, 2023. I'm sharing this all with you to make sure you caught this conversation. It's still obviously relevant to the hellfire we're facing together today. Douglas Rushkoff is an amazing thinker. I love him dearly. He is the author of several books, including *Team Human*, *Survival of the Richest*, *Life, Inc.*, *Media Virus*, and so many other books. He's a documentarian, he's a graphic novelist. He came up in the early cyberpunk culture advocating for open source solutions to building greater equality and fairness in this world and living a better world. And he's hilarious too, because he really confronts the billionaire class that thinks they're going to just burn it all down and then hide from us in their bunkers.

Andrea Chalupa (00:02:37):

That logic is so deeply flawed. And if you want more on that, go back to the conversations Doug and I had here on *Gaslit Nation* last summer as part of our Future of Dictatorship tech series that we did over the summer featuring him and so many other great thinkers. So if you love what you hear, go subscribe to Douglas Rushkoff's podcast, *Team Human*. Support his work on his Substack, *Rushkoff*. I'll link to those on the show notes for this episode. We'll be back with an all new *Gaslit Nation* next week. And don't forget to join us for the live taping of *Gaslit Nation* on February 12 at 12 pm Eastern featuring the former prosecutor that led New York State's team bringing Trump and Trump University to justice. His name is Tristan Snell. You may know him from social media where he's very active with all his viral posts on the social media platform that shall not be mentioned.

Andrea Chalupa (00:03:34):

So Tristan Snell is the author of the new book, *Taking Down Trump: 12 Rules for Prosecuting Donald Trump by Someone Who Did It Successfully*. Bring your questions to that. You can either drop them in the chat on the day of the event, or you can send them to me on Patreon. This event is exclusively for our community of Patreon listeners who keep the show going. You can grab your ticket by subscribing to the show at the Truth-teller level (the \$5 level) or higher on [patreon.com/gaslit](https://www.patreon.com/gaslit). That's [patreon.com/gaslit](https://www.patreon.com/gaslit). You can always cancel that subscription after the event, but that's how you buy your ticket to join us. I

look forward to seeing our listeners there. I have a lot of questions for Tristan Snell. I know you do too. So let's all figure this out together on how we finally nab this guy. But remember, the only thing that's ultimately going to take down Trump is us. It's us. It's our phone banks that we do together.

Andrea Chalupa (00:04:30):

Grassroots power is the most reliable power we have left. That's where we're going to put our focus and our energy and we're going to do it all together and we're going to win and win big in 2024. When you are scared, when you are anxious, when you're angry about where we find ourselves in human history, channel all of that rage and grief and fear into the Gaslit Nation Action Guide and the Gaslit Nation 2024 Survival Guide on gaslitnationpod.com. Join me. That's how I have made it all these years doing this work, is I channel it all to planting seeds of hope and change, and that is how we win progress. That is the generational, urgent fight that we are all in. Whether we want to be or not, we're in it. So come join me. We're doing the good work. We're fighting the good fight. And we are going to absolutely win. And now that further ado, here is *Team Human on Gaslit Nation*.

[transition music up and under)

Douglas Rushkoff (00:05:32):

Our guest this week, the extraordinary Andrea Chalupa. She's a journalist, filmmaker, author and activist, the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, and the author of *Orwell and the Refugees: The Untold Story of Animal Farm*. Andrea co-hosts the popular civic action podcast, *Gaslit Nation*, with Sarah Kendzior, with whom she also wrote the graphic novel, *Dictatorship: It's Easier Than You Think*. Andrea is energetic, inspirational, and indefatigable. She's someone you may not have known about until today, but she has your back. Please meet my new friend and teacher, Andrea Chalupa.

Andrea Chalupa (00:06:22):

One thing I wanted to run by you... So our interview got a massive amount of response from our listeners. There was... I don't want to call it backlash because I feel like it may have just been a misunderstanding.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

Because you and I went for like an hour and a half, which is a very long conversation. And so towards the end, where we're probably just, like, speaking shorthand between each other by that point, you mentioned something about, "Wouldn't it be great, a world without presidents, a world without governments?" That spooked some of our listeners because, I believe, of the libertarian threat to our democracy, where those guys want the same thing. And I didn't think that's what you meant at all. I thought you meant more of just, like, we have to look locally for it, you know, which it makes sense for our protection.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:07:03):

Well, yeah, I mean, I'm saying something really specific, which is that the more of a local social infrastructure we have, the less dependent we are on giant top-down centralized governments or corporations, or anything. I think the easiest way to disempower Walmart in addition to (and it's great) protests, stand in the parking lot, yell at people, get regulation, but the easiest way is to borrow a drill from your neighbor instead of buying one at Walmart. And the reason we don't do that is because we're afraid of each other, you know? And so yeah, I'm into radical re-socialization. You know, socialism... Put the social back into socialism is sort of my thing. And I don't really... And I care way less, I personally care way less about the ism. And personally, how am I going to get more people like AOC into positions of power so that they can get the government? I'm just spending 90 % of my energy on, How do I get the people in my own fucking town to engage with each other? And yes, they should spend, everyone should spend at least 5% of their activity, get to the polls, vote for the right people and all that, but then go back and work.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:08:17):

For me, interestingly enough, my fear is less the libertarian version of that kind of accelerationism than leftward accelerationism which is also scary to me. Sometimes Zizek, or I don't know... That book, and I get it, how to break a pipeline or whatever, how to blow up a pipeline—yes, *but*... [laughs] I get scared at that one. In other words, when the Left is saying we should tear down government is scarier to me than when the Right says it because the Right, they're just fucking idiots anyway. But no [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

The extremes.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Right.

Andrea Chalupa:

The outrage merchants, the outrage merchants of the extremes. That's what I call them because they're profiting off of this. They're going viral. It is so much easier to make a ton of money, go viral, by saying, "Burn it all down." That's what people want right now because it feels good and it tempts you into an easy solution, but it's not realistic and it's not how our rights have been won historically.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:09:20):

It's not, right? I mean, I guess people imagine—what? The French Revolution? Storming the Bastille? We've talked about this on a recent episode. To a point, yes, it works. The threat works. But with the Bastille, what they ended up doing is it became terror, bloodlust. The sadists took over. And they even tortured the children of the dethroned. They tortured children. So really, what I've been telling our listeners: violence is attractive because we're all frustrated. We're angry and we're scared. It's a fear response. It's reactive. It's just like the reactionary forces of Musk and the others and the Peter Thiels that we're up against. But the reality is nothing that we enjoy today, none of our rights have come to us that way—with the exception of the American Revolution. That was imperfect, as we know, and it absolutely depended on the strategic minds of a few key personalities, as we know now; Alexander

Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin and others, who also were imperfect. Who do we have today that has that willpower, that has that charisma, that has that bold strategic mind? It's more decentralized. As you said, we have these activists, these people on the local level that are connected with their community, they're of their community, and they're fighting locally, and they're sharing best practices across communities. There's no substitute for that.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:10:46):

Right. So then... You know, it's funny. I was just at... They did climate week in New York and I'm speaking at this thing that shall remain nameless, but their theme of the event, they call it "Climate Solutions at Scale". And so I got up there and I was saying, "Well, what if scale is the problem?" And I understand because if there's a solution to scale, then you can make money. It's investable and it sounds good. You just throw some sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere and solve the whole thing. But it's going to be many, many little solutions at local scale.

Andrea Chalupa:

Absolutely. And one thing I want to correct myself on in what I just said, the rights we enjoy came through just persistent, persistent organizing over generations. Yes, that's true. But then, yes, you had the American Revolution, a dramatic event. But then we had the Civil War, which I left out, which was sort of a point of no return that we were driven towards because of the immense wealth of the southern states not wanting to give that up. And yes, we sort of pushed that moment, but those are the extremes. I do not think we're at that moment now. I think the civil war we're up against is a slow moving civil war. I think that, you know, we're seeing it through all this incitement of violence (January 6 and so on) but we can work through and organize ourselves past this moment of tension. Demographics are changing. Gen Z is increasingly gaining power. They're soon going to be the largest voting bloc in the country. You have success stories in states like Michigan and Minnesota that are leading the way with thin margins of power, but they're using the power that they have. So I'm telling you, unless there's a very extreme tipping point, I do not believe we're there yet by any means. We want to avoid that point as much as we can by pushing as hard as we can right now and building as much political power as we can now. That is how you win. There's no substitute for building that political power. That's my larger point.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:12:42):

Right. When you talk like that, to me—and maybe it's because I'm past 60 and I've been working so hard on so many things for so long—it sounds like (and I'm sure people talk to you about this a lot) there's so much energy. It's so much work. Right?

Andrea Chalupa:

Mmmhmm <affirmative>

Douglas Rushkoff:

And when I listen to you... I can be a fanboy for a minute. When I listen to you, the first minute or two, especially when you do one of the monologue ones, I'm thinking, "Oh shit, oh my God, it's so much, it's so much." But by the end, you've modeled so much persistence and energy that I feel like, well, you know, actually, maybe we can do this. You know what I mean? It's transformative on that level. And I

guess... And people ask me this because I sound like one of those people too, but your tremendous energy, you've got kids, right? You have a job. You do stuff. Where do you... What's your source, where's your well of hope and energy to even construct thoughts in this way?

Ansrea Chalupa (00:13:47):

My energy, what people hear on the show, it comes from having an extremely strong and honest and loving relationship with myself and knowing how to talk to myself when I need it, and knowing what I value and who I value, and just feeling this larger connection with my history, with humanity, being able to just sit in a museum and stare at paintings of historical figures and go back in time in that moment and spend time with them and really jump dimensions, jump lifetimes. That's sort of my self-care place and things that I love to do in my own vast inner weirdness that sustains me. And it's that relationship. I can assure you that I've had to fight my way into a lot of rooms that simply do not want me. And it's been for all sorts of reasons, like I'm not important enough, or there's some catty dumb petty reason—you know, ultimately I don't bring enough money or enough social media clout, whatever. So everything I've ever done, I had to build and fight my way into that and through a lot of dark turning points in those moments.

Andrea Chalupa (00:14:56):

When I've had people around me, especially people I'm emotionally dependent on, telling me, like, "Just sign the contract and sell your script and walk away and be done with it. You put in all this work." And I said, "No, I don't think they really get it. I really don't trust them. There's something there." And I'm telling you, you have to have that inner relationship. And part of that is intuition. I think intuition is one of the most significant skills and gifts that we have as beings. My father is a neuroscientist. So I grew up around neuroscientists and one of the things he told me is that—and you understand this—but one of the things that people don't know about science is how little we actually know. If you take the study of the mind, we're only getting started in understanding the human mind. It's like the early years of space exploration. We're at that very, very tiny, tiny start of understanding how the mind works. And so my father's always instilled in me this humility of understanding that our minds are vastly more powerful, that even science right now can understand and explain.

Andrea Chalupa (00:15:58):

And so I've always worked that muscle of accepting the power of the mind, accepting this intuition, accepting that my mind is the strongest gift that I have and that I must develop it, I must own it, I must cultivate it because if I don't, then the darker forces will. And so that's what it is. It's just protecting your mind, owning your mind, understanding that the greatest gift you have is your mind and you must protect it. You must cultivate it.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:16:21):

But the interesting thing is intuition is the first thing that gets attacked by the gaslighters, right? Because your intuition, you don't have the evidence. You have the spidey sense that, Wait a minute, this isn't right, and something seems this and maybe you're starting to do a little bit of pattern recognition, which

is sort of what I do. After intuition, I do pattern recognition in order to sort of see the underlying truth that I'm intuiting. And that's when people are like, "Oh, that's conspiracy theory. Oh, that's estrogen!" So it's our power. If our core power starts with intuition, then, well, then duh, gaslighting is the ultimate WMD against that.

Andrea Chalupa (00:17:02)

Yeah, without question. I mean, I always say, believe your eyes, believe your ears, believe what you see, that's everything.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Didn't Trump say the opposite to that? Didn't he say, "Don't believe what you see, don't believe what you hear?"

Andrea Chalupa:

"Believe me, I am truth." Yeah, that's Trump. But one thing that I've always had—and I don't know where this came from, I had it as a kid—I always admired outcasts. I always admired those that went against the grain and were exiled for it or burned at the stake. Growing up, Joan of Arc was a hero of mine. And Gareth Jones, who I made my film, *Mr. Jones*, around, he was blacklisted by the media establishment, the halls of power of London and Washington, D.C. Even Dante, you know, in *Dante's Inferno*, he wrote that in exile.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:17:46):

Yeah. Maimonides, Spinoza, all my heroes. And that's because... It's interesting, Huizinga, this guy who wrote a book called *Homo Ludens* about play wrote about this. And he said, you know, "Society hates the spoilsport worse than the cheat." The cheater at least is acknowledging the importance of the game. The spoilsport is standing outside the game and saying, "No, no, no, this is all bullshit."

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, without question. And so that's... You just have to understand that all of us are here because of heroes that dare to stand outside and just say what needed to be said. And they paid the price and that ultimately served all of us for generations to come. And so don't be afraid to be that person because the work you do, the truth will ultimately win. I really do believe that. That's my spiritual conviction and that's what sustains me. And that's where my energy comes from. And I really float through... It makes life easier feeling that way. Like, I really feel as hard as it is, as much as it's a grind, as much as sometimes I don't want to go to work, I don't want to make these phone calls and be yelled at by strangers or I'm phone banking in Arizona to stop the fascists from coming to power in Arizona, I do it anyway knowing that every little act of faith that I take is just a drop of water eroding away at the nonsense in the world and that I'm an important drop. I'm an important drop in this ocean of all of us just chipping away at them, chipping away at them over time.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:19:09):

And you're doing both, though. You do the drop. I mean, you're doing the show and talking to other people and motivating us and all that. But then like Jerry Lewis at the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, he

goes to the phone bank and he's sitting there, you know, doing that at the same. I feel like so many people who are involved in podcasting and media and writing, it's like they feel like, "Well, my job is to motivate the others, but they don't actually fill the sandbags against the flood."

Andrea Chalupa (00:19:38):

No, not at all. It's like they're more on a perch. And I really don't trust the analysis of people that aren't out there among the people doing the damn work. How can we really trust your analysis if you're not out there among people, talking to organizers, talking to people across the country doing any sort of actual not just reporting. When I was coming up in media—and I know you know this—there's this whole sense that you're a journalist. You are a journalist. You're a journalist, you are not an activist. And to cross over compromised you somehow. And I understand that because, you know, my film, *Mr. Jones*, looks at Walter Duranty who became this power broker for the Soviets and surrounded himself with activists for the Soviets. So I understand how that can absolutely corrupt a journalist and it's very dangerous to do so. But I think the heart of journalism, the heart of activism is the same: You follow the truth wherever it goes. You stand up to the vulnerable no matter who they are or how they're being scapegoated. And that's what you do. It's the same heart muscle in both of those fields. And so today, when everything is on fire, when humanity and civilization has never faced a greater threat, I don't understand how these so-called scholars, journalists, these academics, these thought leaders from their high-up perches behind their Substacks with their massive Twitter followings can look down at us and peddle their outrage machine and act like they are the voice of truth, like they are the one person standing up for you, like they are the anti-establishment warrior when they're not doing the damn work.

Andrea Chalupa (00:21:16):

Because I'm telling you, if you do the damn work and you're out there in the field, you're talking to organizers, you're making phone calls, you're knocking on doors, it shows you reality. You meet reality.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Right.

Andrea Chalupa:

And it balances you. You actually get a feeling of courage that we might actually get through this, and you get a feeling of, dare I say, even hope, because you see these remarkable people across our country who are rolling up their sleeves and fighting like hell. And it's the most depressing people out there in the thought leader space that are most removed from doing the actual work. And I don't see how you can trust those people right now.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:21:53):

Right. And again, they end up being on both sides of the spectrum. So the first ones I was thinking about were some of my friends who've kind of gone from left to right. Now, they're champions of between the coasts and they take road trips through red country and see the great Americans in their cafes. And it's like—

Andrea Chalupa:

The real Americans.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah. And you're like, "Well... so you took a vacation through the middle of the country and had eggs with people, you know, or went hunting with someone." Again, you're not doing the work. You're not figuring out, well, what do we do? How do you help these people who are just laid off from their factory jobs? What about these, you know, tens of thousands of Mexicans living in their cars? You know, the US citizen Mexicans or Mexican-Americans who are living in their cars in Texas and Oklahoma and North Dakota. And then on the Left too, there are those of us who have trenchant analysis of the meta crisis and how to bring systems thinking and psychedelic microdosing to our organismic consciousness [laughs]. But it's like, Dude! Your neighbor is sitting in a pile of mud because their house just got run over by a climate flood. Where are you? So you're so right. It's like the hands... And that's for me, when so many of those those barriers disappear, you know, I was digging people out of the flood here, you know, and we're doing a line with just handing garbage to each other and I'm between two Trumpies, and all of a sudden, boy, the solidarity between us... It so overshadows which television channels we watch, you know, which reality, which reality show version of the story we're getting.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:23:33):

But I want to go also to the thing you were saying about journalism. And yes, originally journalists had sides and then we had the fake sort of balanced media of national publications and now maybe we're going back to that. But I find—and I don't want to get absolutist and get people mad—but I find I can't rely on almost any journalism anymore. Any story I know, no matter who covers it, they get it wrong. And it feels to me like 90% of journalism is kind of gaslighting. It's like anything written about, say, Netanyahu and the Israel conflict—I don't know if it's real, or if their actions are real. Does he really want to go to war or is he saying he wants to go to war because he wants someone else to stop him from going to look like this to those people? So I get to the point of why read any of it if I have no idea whether it's true.

Andrea Chalupa (00:24:21):

Yeah, I mean, I hear you. I think what we just said in this recent episode was you center the most vulnerable. You look at, like, well, who's being killed? Obviously there's been an uptick in mass murder since Netanyahu's come into power and there's been massive protests. And so I think there's some really incredible journalists—Israeli journalists and Palestinian journalists—who are doing some really heroic work on pushing back against Netanyahu's far right extremist authoritarianism there in Israel, which is a danger not just to Israelis and Palestinians, but the larger region. And so for me, it's always... I would also look at the trans issues too, trans rights, because the *New York Times* and *The Atlantic* have been horrible at demonizing trans people and playing into the right wing's deliberate strategy of making trans children a key boogeyman issue going into 2024. They're deliberately, openly among themselves talking about this because what they're hoping to do is drive out the white suburban women in the key swing states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Arizona and so on. And so that's what they're trying to do. Like, "The Left wants to force your children to become trans and it's deadly." And you have the *New York Times* and *The Atlantic* doing some criminal... I wouldn't even call it journalism, but they're burning sources. They're invading people's privacy.

Andrea Chalupa (00:25:46):

Again, they're parroting the right-wing talking points on this. And I would hold that up as a key issue of where mainstream media certainly is failing and actually harming lives and making the problem worse.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:25:57):

Right. Right. These fake stories about "kindergarten teachers forcing children to declare their genders and stuff." It's like—

Andrea Chalupa:

Right, exactly.

Douglas Rushkoff

This stuff that does not exist.

Andrea Chalupa:

Right, right. And like, you know, as a mom, you know... I'm as paranoid as they come [laughs]. I'm just the typical mom that will get the lead kit from the city of New York and test my water for lead, even though the map of New York City shows there's no lead in my building and my baby's not... You know, I am that mama bear. And so when I've gone down the rabbit hole looking at all the disinformation they're targeting to white women like me, because this whole movement of far-right white women trying to take over our schools, that exists in New York City. And as a mom trying to protect my two little girls "from becoming trans against their will, of course, to get these hormones," [with sarcasm], I trust from all that I've read from the experts, I trust the American Association of Pediatrics, I trust that by having open conversations about this, by having our most credible and trusted institutions talking about this and having resources for families, and having schools, having a place for kids to go to talk about this. What you're ultimately doing is saving lives by having a place where children with questions can go so they can feel safe and ask their questions and just have a place for themselves.

Andrea Chalupa (00:27:20):

And what you're ultimately doing is saving lives by hopefully, hopefully reducing the high suicide rates across not just LGBTQ+ youth, which are significantly high right now, but generally across adolescents right now because of all the hell fire they're being hit with and the dangers of social media. So the more resources that we could provide our children so if they have any questions, any questions at all, they have a place that they can go and that's how they can learn to become themselves and self-actualize and know that they have adults with maturity and expertise to watch their backs and guide them through an extremely challenging time.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:27:26):

Right, but the right wings or whatever, the corporate left wing's abuse of the trans issue has nothing to do with helping people reach that. It has to do, again, with leveraging and exploiting your mother spidey sense that something is wrong. And yes, something is wrong hormonally, you know, between the hormones in the meat and the hormones in the milk and the pre-estrogenic function of the BPA plastics

in the plastic bags that the lunch is going in and the packaged food and all that. Yes, there is something going on hormonally. Yes, little baby boys are being born with tiny baby little testicles and stuff. I mean, there's.... And we, ugh, it's uncomfortable. And they can just redirect all of that beginning sense that we have to change something about the industrial complex to, uh oh, the kindergarten teacher. And it becomes, you know what I mean? It's the purest form of gaslighting. It's redirecting your well-founded concern, rage, confusion, discomfort, and finding the fastest, easiest target that they can make money off or get votes off.

Andrea Chalupa (00:29:06):

Yeah, exactly. It's a cult of violence. And unfortunately, it works. And it's because of the electoral college in the first place that they even stand a chance by doing this.

Douglas Rushkoff:

It's funny. I thought you said troll college for a second. It's like, perfect.

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs]

Douglas Rushkoff:

Elec-troll College. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs] Yeah, that's an upcoming... Yeah, I'm going to steal that for a headline for *Gaslit Nation*. Troll college.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:29:26):

Wasn't the last episode of *Gaslit Nation* the hypernormalisation one, right?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Which is just crazy good. So you didn't come up with hypernormalisation, that was around as—

Andrea Chalupa (00:29:40):

The Soviet Union. The Soviet Union came up with it. It was a Russian-born anthropologist who's based at UC Berkeley, he wrote a book about the collapse of the Soviet Union, how it was very clear the system was decaying from within due to corruption and greed, but everyone carried on as normal. And by doing that, it became the new normal. Eventually, it just shut down. And that's what it feels like today in America, this hypernormalisation where you have this Republican debate stage where they're all trying to out-fascist each other. And we all know that the ultimate fascist is going to win. And that's the guy that tried to violently overthrow our democracy who, for whatever fucking reason, isn't behind bars yet.

And so that's what it feels like is this hypernormalisation. And his foot soldiers are running for office, running for school board, running for dog catcher, to try to, like, capture our democracy that way on the all important local level.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:30:36):

And it's just... I'm still amazed that it works, you know? That we're like in modern times. It's like, it's like this stuff... I've been watching *Vikings*. I got a bad cold and I started watching the whole Viking series and I feel like this wouldn't even have worked on the Vikings, right? You know, it's just like, oh, it's so off. But then I realize it works on me. So you did this thing on Merrick Garland, right? So I looked at Merrick Garland. I can admit I'm stupid. I'm allowed. It's my show. It's even better. I'm allowed to do it. So I watch him and I hear him talking about "the founding of the Justice Department was for the former slaves to fight for their voting rights." Like, the whole thing was founded as an anti-racist legal option. And I'm like, "Oh, that's why the Right is still attacking it because it still has fundamentally anti racist roots." And then you're like, "Well, look, look at what Merrick Garland cares about and what he doesn't." I mean, you could repeat the logic better than I can. And then I was like, "Oh, I just went in and I bought his whole thing. The good guy. He's our guy. He's our team." And you're like, "Well, yes, *but...*" I mean, if you could share... I guess share how you saw Merrick Garland and how do you... On the one hand, you're more enthusiastic about things and you can speak more positively about Biden than I can. But on the other hand, you also have the ability to maintain critical distance to see what they're saying and what they're not.

Andrea Chalupa (00:32:05):

Yeah, exactly. I mean, my hope is not so much Biden or any sort of Democrat leader. It's what I always say on the show since the start of the show—and *Gaslit Nation* was launched in 2018 to get people activated, to really push for what we needed, which was accountability—and we launched with doing get out the vote contests and giveaways and trying to get people to knock on doors for the first time and make phone calls. And so what I've always said since the start of the show is grassroots power is the most reliable power we have left and we as the grassroots as the public it comes down to us. And what I called out Merrick Garland on was, you know, he had this eloquent opening statement of his typical shtick now which is he talks about his personal story and civil rights in the whole long proud history of the Department of Justice begin being a civil rights watchdog. And then, you know, I pointed out though how in his recent congressional hearing, he was called out by a Democratic member of Congress, a Black man from Georgia, Hank Johnson, who joined with AOC and others in sending a letter to Merrick Garland saying that given all the explosive reporting into corruption on the Supreme Court, namely how a far-right mega donor and Nazi memorabilia enthusiast, Harlan Crow, essentially had Clarence Thomas on his payroll, spending on lavish vacations for Clarence Thomas and his family, buying up properties, paying for schools, and all sorts of lucrative deals for Clarence Thomas, while cases that he had a vested interest in and that his buddies had interests in were appearing before Clarence Thomas. And Clarence Thomas was even being used as fundraiser bait, appearing at these fundraisers for all these far-right organizations that had cases before him.

Andrea Chalupa (00:34:06):

And all of that brilliant work was being done by Jesse Eisinger and his team at *ProPublica*. And I talked to

Jesse for *Gaslit Nation* and I asked him, you know, I said, in the movies that I grew up on, the truth would come out. There'd be some hard scrabble reporter who'd get the truth out and then the public would know and that would be the happy ending. "So Jesse, what's happening with your reporting?" And Jesse's like, "Well, that's up to you. That's up to the public. That's up to the government."

Douglas Rushkoff (00:34:35):

Right, it was even before that. It was like the person would get the manila envelope through the transom at the *New York Times* and the movie's over.

Andrea Chalupa:

[laughs]

Douglas Rushkoff:

As if that's gonna be... You know what I mean? That's it! But now it's like, it can even go from *ProPublica* to the front page of the *New York Times*, and it's like nothing happened. The *New York Times* might run it a second time, which they've done. You go, "Wait a minute, nobody? Alright, let's try it again." And it's, like, still just like a thud.

Andrea Chalupa (00:35:01):

Exactly, and it's all part of what Steve Bannon calls "the firehose of shit" where they just try to overwhelm you. They "flood the zone with shit," which is scandal after scandal. And they created a culture where they encourage each other. It's a culture of George Santos's where they all are just larger than life, corrupt and unapologetic about it. So it just overwhelms you. It overwhelms the government watchdogs, it overwhelms the public that's getting exhausted and beaten down by this. And so Merrick Garland was given the *ProPublica* reporting on a silver platter in this letter from a group of Democratic members of Congress saying, "Please, Merrick Garland and DOJ, open a federal investigation, an ethics investigation into Clarence Thomas because of this explosive corruption reporting." And when he was asked about this, and this was a follow-up, this was a follow-up, right? Because he had already been given this letter. And when it was brought to him in the recent hearing, in the House, he basically was like... He got annoyed at the questioning and he's like, "Well, yeah, okay, I'll look into it."

Andrea Chalupa (00:36:01):

And it's like, this is one of the most important stories of our time, and he just gave it no care and came off as this was just sort of some partisan hatchet job. He was very dismissive. And that was my comment; how can you wax poetic in your opening statement and then when you have this moment given to you of such importance for our democracy, where the highest court in our land that can shoot down all of these other state cases, like stopping gun violence in New York state, when the Supreme Court shut down that important legislation for us here in New York state, when you have this Supreme Court of corruption that's holding our democracy hostage, holding our consumer protections hostage, holding our gun safety laws hostage, and you can just roll your eyes at it and dismiss it and treat it like it's just some partisan point taking? And that to me was, like, the real Merrick Garland. And where he comes from, unfortunately, is a long tradition of the DOJ being broken and timid and leaderless, essentially. Jesse Eisinger, the *ProPublica* reporter who's leading all those investigations, wrote a brilliant book that

exposes the DOJ, that exposes the Merrick Garlands or our justice system. And that book is called, perfectly, *The Chickenshit Club*, about why the DOJ didn't prosecute any executives for the Wall Street crash. And it goes into the forensics of that, and it just shows a deeply corrupted system in the DOJ and the SEC and the FBI to an extent.

Andrea Chalupa (0037:33):

And it sort of explains to you why, for instance—a very big instance—why such a mobbed up, corrupt, career criminal like Trump, who Andrew McCabe described as a mob boss, why he was even able to come to power, why the FBI and the DOJ never bothered to nab that guy. So I can go on and on about that. And I feel like this episode could turn into like a huge Jesse Eisinger fan club because I want to point out another thing that Jesse for *ProPublica* also broke the story that Trump's kids, Don Jr. and Ivanka, were let off the hook, where they were nearly indicted in New York state by the then Manhattan DA, Cy Vance Jr., an ultimate nepo baby, who looked the other way. He actively stopped an indictment of Don Jr. and Ivanka after receiving a campaign gift from a Trump family lawyer. So Jesse's reporting from all these stories tells our collective recent history of corruption, how we got to this point, and who the real Merrick Garland is.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:38:36):

So then, when you... One approach is, well, let's get... It's hard for it to come out of my mouth the way it does yours. And this is, I guess, what I'm working on. It's hard for me to say, well, let's get Democrats in office. Let's fight for Joe Biden. I don't think Joe Biden is taking money from Burisma. That's a whole nother gaslighting, but to create the structure of an impeachment hearing in order to create a false equivalency between Biden and Trump is just... It's clever and it will probably work for a whole lot of voters, but it's just, it's off. And I hesitate to criticize, you know, Biden or Democrats in this context. But when Hillary was running against Trump, the only communications I got from the Hillary campaign were emails to attend thousand dollar a plate minimum chances to, like, pose with Chelsea for a photo at a rich person's house. And the communications themselves made me think, Who are these neoliberal assholes? They have nothing to do with me and Bernie and Jamal. And I understood at that point the appeal of a Trump who at least is saying of the little guy, so I do like a lot of what Biden's done and I certainly know he's not an authoritarian leader and all that, but I find it hard on *Team Human*, for example, to talk about Biden and voting and democracy the same way you do because when I say the word Biden, part of me just feels, ugh. I mean, he's so not Bernie.

Andrea Chalupa (00:40:24):

He's so not Bernie. He's so not Elizabeth Warren. But there are proteges like Lena Kahn, who's an Elizabeth Warren protege who runs the FTC. There is a group of reformers, Bernie and Warren reformers, who are in the Biden administration fighting the good fight. And the reality is, if you take the long view, as you know, we used to be... Under Bill Clinton, like... Clinton's presidency was a far-right presidency. You know? He was a far-right... And our country's come a long way in terms of becoming more progressive culturally, more open and tolerant. And it doesn't feel that way because the far-right ecosystem has expanded and newsrooms, actual newsrooms have shrunk. And so we don't feel that. But if you look at the polling of the average American, we're a lot more progressive than our federal government allows because of the structural inequalities, like the existence of the Senate and the

electoral college. But the average American is progressive and tolerant and open and wants workers' rights and unions. And I wish we had... Bernie and Elizabeth are key to protecting our democracy because their supporters are key. Again, it's grassroots power. And I agree with you.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:41:38):

Yeah. And to his credit, Biden did make an appropriate deal with Bernie. He didn't just... I don't think he just did it because Bernie had votes and he needed his support. I think he also knew—as an old man, perhaps he knew—“Bernie has something that I don't and Americans want this thing. I'm going to try to do some kind of student loan forgiveness thing. I'm going to try to do some Bernie stuff.” I think because he knew it's right, even if it wasn't himself.

Andrea Chalupa:

Mmmhmm <affirmative>. And I want to also agree with you that Hillary Clinton in 2016 ran a shitty campaign. A shitty campaign. And part of that is what you described. You know, Trump was willing to go out there with all sorts of groups, grassroots groups, to meet with them, sit down with them, where Hillary Clinton stayed far away in an ivory tower and wouldn't meet with you unless the money was there. And that was as damaging to her as whatever the Russians did with Jared and Ivanka and Trump and Don, Jr's blessing. So yeah, she ran a shitty campaign in 2016 and everyone thought that she was going to win. And it's like the nightmare that we keep living because if Jim Comey had done things differently and not gone after Hillary the way he did, breaking protocol and being totally inappropriate. And if Hillary had seen Bernie's campaign... I mean, she should have made him the running mate. She should have made him the running mate. She should have been like, listen, Bernie, you've got your supporters. I've got mine. This is a dangerous moment in our country. Let's bury the hatchet. Let's share power. We're going to need each other's energy and ideas for this critical moment.

Andrea Chalupa (00:43:26):

She would talk on the stage about green energy and green jobs. “I'm gonna give you green...” Bernie could have brought the brain trust in order to see that through. And so it's not that she was just this perfect victim of history. There is a lot that she did in 2016 that we're paying the price for today. That's without question. And I think, you know, what do we do with where we are now heading into a 2024 race where Americans who are being polled see Biden and Trump as essentially corrupt and this House impeachment trial, it's a show trial. They don't care about the truth or the facts, they're playing for optics. And it's going to work, unfortunately. And what I tell people, it's not, when you go vote in 2024, and it's so important that no matter where you are, whether you think your vote matters or not, whether you're in a so-called blue state or a so-called red state, we absolutely need you to vote because who you're ultimately voting for in this presidential election is who would you rather negotiate with?

Andrea Chalupa (00:44:26):

Would you rather negotiate with Trump, who's a straight up proud Nazi, who has consolidated power of Nazis across this country, or would you rather negotiate with a centrist Democrat who we have seen again and again buckle to pressure from Gen Z on TikTok and other organizers, and has entered into power-sharing agreements with the progressive left? And so that's who you're voting for is who would you rather sit across a negotiating table with?

Douglas Rushkoff (00:44:58):

Right. But that only works for people who are into negotiating, as opposed to people who see buckling as itself the weakness and want just a strong daddy to make all the scary things go away or who watch *Godfather 2*—

Andrea Chalupa:

I love *Godfather 2*.

Douglas Rushkoff:

And see Robert De Niro walking around and going, you know, he did take care of the neighborhood. He did take care of the people. And that's America being great again, right? When you can go to Don Corleone and he'll kill the guy who attacked your daughter., you know?

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, the good old days, right? Where you could pay a guy.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah. No, it's like it is, but it's a violent urge. It's an urge for violence because it seems like somehow the way to get retribution. But the experience of your show is this validation that you are not alone. Other people see this. It's like, yes, you're not wearing crazy They Live glasses. You are seeing what is happening and you're articulating it in ways that we're afraid to articulate it, because one, it's too horrific if you say it out loud. It's just, oh my god, this is real? This is actually happening? It's too horrific to admit and to put into words But second, because you think people are gonna think you're crazy or paranoid or something. And it's like you say it and it's validating on the one hand, and then as soon as you get through the validation, you're like, Oh, well, it's bad, but this is workable. This is not rocket science. This is people rolling up their sleeves, finding each other... You can do it. And then you say, "And I'm going to be at the phone banks on Thursday night, from 8 to 10. You can go call this number, go to this website, take this action." And it's like, oh, fuck, this is, this is actionable. You know, and it has felt so unactionable. It has felt so hopeless. I bought the idea that there's nothing I can do, so make friends with my neighbors—I mean, which is better than nothing—make friends with your neighbors and be resilient and create the communities and be ready for the fascists when they come. [laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:04):

Exactly. We're going to get through the worst, if it should happen. It's not going to be pretty. It's going to be violent and ugly and scary and a lot of good people that we need are going to flee abroad because they have the means to.

Douglas Rushkoff:

They do. So many people. "Oh, if Trump gets elected again, I'm really going to Holland. I'm going to Canada." And I'm like, I'm a privileged white Jewish American boy who got so much out of this country. How dare I run when the going gets tough? I know, I'm a Jew. Jews are supposed to run right before they come for us, right? But fuck it. I'm going Warsaw. I'm going Warsaw style in this one.

Andrea Chalupa (00:47:38):

Oh, I have a book on Jewish resistance. I'm ready. I'm reading it, taking notes, and highlighting. No, we're going to get through it. It's going to be dark, but we're going to get through it. And we have to also prevent that point because look at New York City. People, the left hated de Blasio. And now look at what we're stuck with. We have this Republican cop as mayor who's feeding into the disinformation echo chamber on the human rights crisis at the border. And he's destructive as any Republican person in power would be. And so, you know, we all miss de Blasio now, who gave us free preschool, which saved tens of thousands of dollars for parents in New York. And New York is a working class town. I know we've got the Saudi and the Russian and the Chinese laundered money taking up Manhattan, but the outer boroughs are working class neighborhoods filled with strollers and kids going to public school. And so let's not let ourselves get into a de Blasio versus Eric Adams situation here. We're going to miss Biden if Trump gets in. We're all going to be singing Biden's praises if we're stuck under Trump. And you're going to see a lot of people on the Left hating each other and having these blood feuds over what people did or didn't do in these months ahead.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa (00:39:59):

And so I think it's up to all of us to just roll up our sleeves and do a little bit to fight for our democracy in 2024, knowing that by doing so you can save a life. And a lot of the longer term struggle that we're up against is the struggle that came before us. And that is creating a cultural shift. For instance, one show that you should absolutely do, we're having them come on the show. There's an excellent Peabody Award-winning documentary called *Missing in Brooks County*, and it talks about how President Clinton deliberately engineered a cruel mass murdering border crossing of the southern border, which today is considered the deadliest border crossing in the world by the United Nations. Tens of thousands of people lose their lives trying to come into America because they're escaping mafia corruption and violence back at home—unimaginable violence for us to even really wrap our heads around. And so that's why they take their lives in their own hands and take the risk of this extremely dangerous crossing. And I interviewed the filmmakers behind *Missing in Brooks County*—it's Brooks County, Texas—and they presented all of these common sense solutions. We need to stop having Trump cultists. We need to stop having these wannabe cowboys overseeing the dystopian infrastructure and technology of brutally policing our southern border and instead have the nerds come in and managers come in and create smarter systems and also have these refugees who are paying a massive amount of money to so-called coyotes to smuggle them into America, instead, have them pay that money to the US government on the border as a bond that will be held by the government so they can go in and see their families, get some work, make some money, and have a work visa that allows them to go back and forth, like the EU does with EU nations.

Andrea Chalupa (00:50:46):

And by doing that, you're going to create more wealth and stability in those countries that they're fleeing from. The American taxpayer is going to benefit because they're going to be working legally, paying taxes

legally, and we're going to have to spend less money trying to hunt down and collect all the dead bodies that are rotting on all of these private ranches on the southern border. And you're going to need less money for these cowboys and wannabe militias, right? So we need to chip away at a cultural shift right now. And we're going to do it. We're ultimately going to do it. And so the first thing is, what we try to do in *Gaslit Nation*, which you called out, is awareness. There's a problem. We all see it. So here's the cultural shift that needs to happen. And you just keep repeating yourself over and over and over again. And over time, the changes start to happen and you normalize these things. There's so many things that are normalized right now that weren't when I was a kid. When I was growing up, as a kid, you had kids in the playground that would say horrible things. They'd call each other "gay". You know that. And now people are losing jobs for having ever done that. And I'm not, you know... So we're basically learning that we cannot treat each other that way anymore. So an extremely important cultural shift is happening and that is building into the political power, because we don't have anything without that political power. So all of us that see these issues, feel these issues, we have to also take it a step further and yes, make calls for a candidate that speaks to you. Go out and vote. Make sure you're registered to vote. Talk to your families about the election. Make sure everyone around you is registered to vote. Come join me and *Gaslit Nation* on a phone bank. We, *Gaslit Nation* listeners, we made 15,000 phone calls for John Fetterman and now he is in the Senate dressing however he pleases and fighting to feed children and wipe out lunch debt for kids in schools. That's what we're talking about when we talk about making calls, vote, get out there, because all the stuff that we talk about doesn't matter unless we build and fight for political power.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:52:38):

Right. But the way most people experience politics in America now, I mean, you think, you know, Neil Postman and *Amusing Ourselves to Death* as a form of entertainment. So the choice of president is more like the choice of which Netflix show you're going to watch. Trump's fans want the indictment because it's better TV. They want the trial. That's like season two, you know? *Westworld*, except it's season two... It is. I mean, good government, well -functioning government's not going to be good TV.

Andrea Chalupa:

Right.

Douglas Rushkoff:

I mean, that's why people didn't run for student government. It's boring. You got to figure out where does the money go? How do we fix this? It's all problem solving, ugh. And to retrain—I mean, it's hard—but to retrain Americans to not think of a presidential election like *American Idol*. It's not whose image you want to see on TV; it's who's going to actually address the basic needs of you and your neighbors and your country. It's tricky. Which is a better show, right? Which is a better show? Mexicans and El Salvadorians coming on temporary work visas, mowing some lawns, collecting some money and going back home or a gang of whatever they are, MI 13 people coming in. And as they said last night on the debate, killing 70,000 Americans with fentanyl that they're bringing from Mexico. And the new thing is they're going to be, Mexicans are going to be giving out fentanyl to our children on Halloween. Right? They're going to give out... from what houses that they don't have, right? So they're going to... Do kids trick or treat on the streets of New York to homeless people? Right? It's like, even the basic logic of how

they're giving the children fentanyl doesn't quite [add up]. But boy it's a better show, right?

Andrea Chalupa (00:54:29):

Yeah, and we need warning labels on what they're saying. If you go on Youtube now and you type in something on covid and a covid video pops up, or on climate change.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Right, or an anti-vax video.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, you'll see now these labels saying know that here's objective information that's largely agreed upon by all leading experts, go here for that. And I really do believe that the government should pass that for some of these more outlandish cable news shows—left, right, doesn't matter, the extremes, because they're all dangerous if they really incite people to being hyper paranoid. And hyper paranoia leads to violence, whether it's the Left or the Right. Hyper paranoia leads to fight or flight response. And then you get a guy—a Fox news viewer—shooting some innocent people because they turned into his driveway to flip a U-turn and turn around. You know, that's what you get.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:55:22):

Right. But it's tricky because you do that and then you get—and one of my friends is one of the journalists who wrote one of these things—these Twitter files that say, “Oh, look, the government is in collusion with Twitter to prevent covid information that may have turned out to be true in the long run, or partly true. And how dare they?” And if anything, it activates the crazy stuff rather than the at least honest efforts at consensus reality.

Andrea Chalupa:

Yeah, then you just correct. You correct. You issue a massive statement of correction. Say, “This is what we know now. We made a mistake. Here's the correction.” And it's all on the same website so people understand that that's that one website where we're going to be providing you with most objective, peer-reviewed information. And there it is. Transparency.

Douglas Rushkoff (00:56:10):

It's just, it's hard when even good government is corrupt, or the gooder side, the better side is corrupt. And that's when you look and you see, okay, Tony Fauci, they did have this lab in China and we were sending stuff. And he is in charge of public health, but he's also in charge of sort of military germ warfare research at the same time. And he's been doing it for 50 years. And it's a corrupt system where he wielded his power on who gets money and who doesn't. It's like, it just gives so much ammunition to the tear-it-down-side, to the sort of the Bannon side of accelerationism.

Andrea Chalupa (00:56:45)::

Yeah, no, it absolutely does. And it wasn't... The pandemic was a bunch of imperfect people just scrambling to do in that moment what they thought was best. It was a horrific time and certainly looking back, a lot of other decisions should have been made or could have been made. And we absolutely

should put a light on those and learn from that. And we should all be prepared for the next go round, especially to build public trust. I mean, the best thing that the White House should be doing is coming up with some sort of report saying, "Here's the mistakes that were made by our administration, the one in power at the time, and here's what not to do next time." It's just all learning. These are human beings. I'm always reminded that the people I'm railing against probably have their own kids that they have to come home to. And suddenly their preschooler is stuck at home with a bad cold and they're not getting any sleep. So I'm always reminded that these are human beings. And yes, the system is absolutely corrupt. Yes, you have a Congress that's full of lobbyists. You have a lot of the same talentless, money-driven hacks that are in positions of power again and again because of their crony relationships with the machines of politics. Yes, that's all true.

Andrea Chalupa (00:57:57):

But it's also equally true that you have a culture of reformists—a grassroots powered movement of reformists—that is growing every day because unfortunately we're at a point where reality is radicalizing people and that's only going to increase as the climate crisis worsens and breaks through the far-right coal sponsored, big oil sponsored ecosystem, ecosphere, or whatever. As you said, you helped working side by side with Trump supporters. That's our future. You have farmers today who are historically conservative, who are working with the Biden White House on all these climate crisis initiatives. That's new. That's a cultural shift.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Right, because they see it.

Andrea Chalupa (00:58:39):

Yeah. You have young Republicans. You have young Republican voters that are staying home, that aren't voting Republican. And when they're polled, they overwhelmingly accept that this is a climate crisis. They're completely out of lockstep with the elders of their movement. Meanwhile, you have Gen Z that's not only activated, but they're running for office in larger numbers than any generation before them. When I started off as a young youngin, I was just seen as a foot soldier. No one was trying to recruit me to run for any office at all. That would have been a pipe dream for my generation coming up. And now it's a given for these kids. Like, please, we need you to run for office. And so that's different. So there's a lot of things that, again, I'll say this again and again, reality is radicalizing us unlike ever before. So that's kind of where my faith lies; that we're ultimately going to—

Douglas Rushkoff (00:59:26):

Have you thought about it?

Andrea Chalupa:

Have I thought about running for office?

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah.

Andrea Chalupa:

I fantasize... When I go to sleep at night, sometimes I'll fantasize about taking over—and I've told people this too—that I want to take over the job of Jay Jacobs, who is the useless, Weekend at Bernie's, dead on arrival, Democratic party state chair in New York state who has been responsible for colossal failures that led to the Democrats losing historically in New York state. And I do have this like warm milk, soul-warming fantasy of kicking him out, taking him on, and coming into power with the coalition of people like me, and doing like a power-sharing thing where all I am is just a figurehead to get rid of this guy and let the others come in and do what work they need to do for their counties. So that's like a fantasy I have. I'd love to do that. I've told the organizers of the Replace Jay Jacobs movement, I'm like, "If you can't get anybody to get rid of this guy, when my kids are old enough, I will do it. I don't care what dirt they have on me." You know what I mean? Like, my husband's French. You know, they could hold that against me. I'm married to like a French feminist socialist.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Oh, no.

Andrea Chalupa:

They'll have a field day with that one. But I really want to do that because there's so much untapped power in New York state, where we could really make this place like a Scandinavian country if we wanted to. And we just need stronger, smarter organizers, unifiers across... We need to free the coalition of talent in New York state and Jay Jacobs simply is not the person to do that. And he's actually in power not to do that, to keep us divided.

Douglas Rushkoff (01:01:02):

No, and he so screwed... They so screwed up on the gerrymandering of the state. Oh my God. To do a reverse gerrymander while you're in power is just odd. So finally, the one thing I was going to say is I had a flash... This is not to be negative. When I was first discovering you, I had just reunited with Maria Ressa, who had to stand up to a dictator, author, a Nobel Prize-winner. We went to college together. We did theater together.

Andrea Chalupa:

Oh, wow.

Douglas Rushkoff:

But I started to have fear for you. I mean, if you were a guy, we wouldn't use a word like this: You're an outspoken woman, sticking your head above the horizon, putting a flag in the sand. How do you deal with fear and how are you seeing us best... I remember you talking a little bit about this because of the attorney general in Georgia getting all these threats, that we've got to protect her and the courage it takes for her to do what she's doing in a world where people are walking around with guns that have Trump engraved on them. How do you think about security and life and violence and threats and moving forward? Are you ever afraid?

Andrea Chalupa (01:02:12):

Yeah, absolutely, without question. But for me, a decision I made years ago... And my sister, Alexandra Chalupa, who the Republican and Kremlin machine took on and put her through hell. And she sat through nine hours of interrogation for the Senate intelligence report on Trump and Russia. And she ultimately relocated with her family abroad to Australia because of just the PTSD, the trauma they put her through. So she and I very early on just understood that in the work we were doing, we could get killed. We could die. And I think if you do this work, you have that conversation with yourself very early on. Death's on the table. An untimely death is on the table and you're not gonna be there to watch your kids grow up and that sucks. And my attitude is that I want to live an extremely long life. I wanna be an old cackling woman with my whiskey bottle, like, fighting these assholes. They can't get rid of me. I'm gonna be here to the bitter end. I don't care. I'm gonna go down fighting in the gulag. And if they take me out early, then I know that my death is going to... I know that a lot of people that don't like me are gonna suddenly pretend to like me [laughs].

Douglas Rushkoff:
[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (01:03:25):

And martyr me and everyone's going to give eulogies to try to get some camera time at the funeral. No. But so my whole attitude is that like you got to just fight, you got to just live and they can never ever get rid of you even if they try.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Right. And it's not actual... I mean, what we're really talking about is not actual death, because it's not really... At least in our current environment, that's probably not really on the table, but it's more that living in that cloud of negativity and Twitter, it sounds like nothing, but it's not nothing. When they put the picture of your house on Twitter or your kid on their 4chan, and it's just like, oh man, it is... It just... What they put the two election workers through, the mother and her daughter, I guess that was, in...

Andrea Chalupa:

It was Georgia. Yeah, they did it everywhere. I mean, they did it to all... You know, that's why we have a crisis of not having enough election officials, trained ones.

Douglas Rushkoff (01:04:25):

Who would? In the end, who would? I mean, this is where I come back to my whole team human-y soul thing. But it's people who decide that nurturing their soul and its natural expression while they're incarnate is what matters and anything else... And once you start compromising that soul, you start winding down. Do you know what I mean? Part of the joy of listening to your show is like politics aside is here is a soul manifesting unencumbered, refusing to be encumbered by fear, gaslighting, anything else. I'm just going to manifest here. Fuck all y'all and watching a person do that makes it okay for the rest of us to go you know I'm coming out of the closet too as, I don't mean as gay or straight, I'm just coming out of the closet as me. You know, as me.

Andrea Chalupa (01:05:12):

Yeah, exactly right. Exactly right. It's about having a big soul right now and just like expressing that big soul. And I love it. I absolutely love it. I think part of going inside, being internal and just shutting off all the noise and the toxic people and the Twitter is you go inside. You go inside and hang out with some of your historical mentors. I have historical mentors that I spend time with in my reading, in my writing, and I hang out with them when I need it. And that gives me camaraderie. That gives me a sense of place. And I love it. It's my oxygen. And making art, being creative, consuming art, it's my oxygen. So turn inside when you feel you need it, when you start sort of like, what's the word?... When you start sort of getting glitchy. And yeah, so I turn inward when I need it.

Douglas Rushkoff (01:06:01):

I like that. But it's also find the others. I mean, find the others can mean find the others you're in solidarity with and all that. But find the others is also find the shoulders that you're standing on. Find your lineage. Find your, you know, and it's like, boy, is that empowering when you go back and you read... I mean, it could be anything. For me, it could be Mumford or Harold Clurman, the theater director or Artaud. And you realize, oh, these are my people. I'm just this generation of that. And boy, it helps.

Andrea Chalupa (01:06:32):

Exactly right. Well, what are you working on creatively? Because you come from this incredible theater and all this exciting stuff.

Douglas Rushkoff:

You know, two things. I've had so little time because I'm so busy servicing whatever this is that I've become. This... And I'm thinking actually of kind of retiring *Team Human* as *Team Human*, doing something, maybe just calling it like Rushkoff Radio. So I'm not obligated to the thing. Everybody got the team human meme by now. We're humans. Yay. Let that go and even be happy for people who plagiarize my ideas because that's one thing I don't have to worry about because someone else is doing it now. It's all good. So I wanted to do this theater project, a kind of a distributed theater project where I write these very skeletal scripts that you don't even know what they're about. But it's like between worker and boss or cop and suspect. And I distribute them to the 10,000 community theater groups, children's theater groups, school groups, and they have to figure out, well, this worker and boss, is it Walmart worker and his assistant manager? Is it Hagar from the Bible, you know, the slave of Abraham? Is it a stockbroker talking to the algorithm that's his boss? And you figure out the scene and then you turn the page and it's the same scene with the lines reversed.

Douglas Rushkoff (01:07:48):

So now you have to figure out a situation where the worker would say this and the boss would say that or the mother would say this and the child would say that. So it's all these sort of power relationship scenes, and distribute them all over. And it's sort of my version of Clifford Odet's WPA leftist theater, where instead of me making the arguments, the arguments emerge naturally. We discover power relationships and you end up with a middle school girl in a red state doing a scene about power relationships for her father in the audience and people's guard will be down to the ideas. You know what

I mean? So it's more a process of discovery of power relationships and underlying assumptions and how our roles roles in society work, but to do it as a play that's not like "I'm going to direct a play and it's at Lincoln Center." It's more just everywhere and everybody doing it and it sort of seeps in from the bottom because you're discovering the scenes instead of being told by Rushkoff what you're doing. So that's one thing. And then I'm supposed to do a graphic novel that's going to be kind of about tech bros versus mushrooms.

Douglas Rushkoff (01:08:51):

Someone told me that I wrote this book a long time ago, *Media Virus*, which kind of launched viral media. And he said to me, "Doug, you know, you should have called it media fungus" because it's all connected rather than it being like a virus, you know, invading and conquering something else or infiltrating. It's more like, no, the media, it's the process through which we discover the interconnection. So I want to sort of go back and have mushrooms colonize the colonizers, you know? Flip these guys. So I'll see what happens. But yeah, I want to play again. And it's just hard. I mean, it's always for me the question—you know, and that's what I was talking to Naomi Klein about, too—it's like, the work is the work that needs to be done, the phone banking, the politics, the social justice—how dare we take time away? But look what you did. You wrote a friggin beautiful movie that changed as many people as any.

Andrea Chalupa (01:09:44):

Thank you so much. Well, the art, like making art is my self-care. And we do all sorts... We're doing a playwriting contest for Halloween, a radio playwriting contest we do every year for Halloween. And you should submit. We'll go ahead and produce your play as like... I'm serious, we'll produce it. You are an instant winner of the Gaslit Nation radio play Halloween contest. Oh my God. And then we'll produce another one from a listener, just to be fair. So we'll run both. But make your art and you could also... *Team Human* is iconic. I don't think you should stop that. I understand that feeling where it's a huge relief, where you see other people carrying on the torch, even under their own banner. But keep *Team Human* going and maybe launch a series where you're workshoping your own projects, the two you described through the show. You can just give an update on it, have some cool transition music and audio clips that illustrate your source material, your inspiration. So maybe you could journal those projects through the show.

Douglas Rushkoff (02:10:43):

Hmm. Yeah, it could be fun. Bring it together rather than everything competing with each other.

Andrea Chalupa:

Exactly.

Douglas Rushkoff:

Yeah. Alight. I'll play with that. Thank you. But gosh, thank you. But thank you so much for *Gaslit Nation*, for being there, for shouting the shout and fighting the fight and and boy... And giving us, you know, I hate to use a word like validation, but it turns out we really need it. You know? Once you get it, It really fills so deep. So thank you so much for doing that and for being on *Team Human*.

Andrea Chalupa (02:11:13):

Oh my god, I'm so honored. I'm so thrilled. Thank you so much. Anytime, anytime.

[outro theme music, roll credits]

Andrea Chalupa (01:11:25.39)

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