

Gaslit Nation Transcript

17 August 2022

“Devil’s Been Busy”

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/devils-been-busy-70622804>

Ivanka Trump (00:00):

My father taught my siblings and me the importance of positive values and a strong ethical compass. Politicians ask to be judged by their promises, not their results. I ask you to judge my father by his results. Judge his values by those he’s instilled in his children.

[intro - theme music]

Sarah Kendzior:

I’m Sarah Kendzior, the author of the best sellers, *The View from Flyover Country* and *Hiding in Plain Sight* and of the upcoming book, *They Knew: How a Culture of Conspiracy Keeps America Complacent*, which is available for our pre-order now and out on September 13.

Andrea Chalupa (00:45):

I’m Andrea Chalupa, a journalist and filmmaker and the writer and producer of the journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*, about Stalin’s genocide famine in Ukraine, a film the Kremlin does not want you to see because they’ve so far shut down two screenings.

Sarah Kendzior (01:02):

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

Andrea Chalupa (01:10):

Our opening clip was aspiring American princess Ivanka Trump reassuring the American public from the stage of the Republican National Convention in 2016 that they can trust her father as president. Ivanka Trump’s father went on to lead an attempted violent fascist overthrow of our democracy on January 6th and stole several highly sensitive classified documents, including materials, exposing America’s nuclear weapons secrets at a time when Russia continues to threaten us with nuclear war, and a nuclear threat public service announcement was recently issued in New York City. Yes, New York City put out a public service announcement, reminding New Yorkers what to do in case of a nuclear attack. The classified documents also contained highly valuable information about informants abroad, risking their lives to help keep America safe from our enemies. That’s just the tip of the iceberg. After four years of corruption that enriched Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, to the tune of \$640 million.

Andrea Chalupa (02:32):

That’s how much money they made during their time in the White House when the three of them—Ivanka, Jared and Donald Trump—were the unholy trinity that ran the White House and therefore the world as a trio president of the United States. That massive windfall that Ivanka and Jared made while in power was surpassed only by Jared Kushner striking a \$2 billion deal with the Saudis. Now, let me tell you something about the Saudis. They do not give anything away for free, alright? They are shrewd investors, extraordinarily shrewd investors. Jared Kushner, who was investigated for running a slum village, for being a slumlord of broken down apartments, who is not known as a genius

businessman—he took over, for instance, a popular local newspaper here in New York City, *The New York Observer*. It used to be a big presence here in New York. A lot of influential writers cut their teeth there and made their way through *The New York Observer*.

Andrea Chalupa (03:42):

Jared Kushner ran *The New York Observer* into the ground. It used to matter. It doesn't matter anymore. And then, of course, there's 666 Fifth Avenue, which was a weird, symbolically morbid, disastrous investment that he was desperate to unload. So here's the question: Jared Kushner, being such a dope when it comes to the wily world of business, why in the hell would the shrewd investors of the Saudi Royal Family, why would the Saudis give Jared Kushner—hapless trust fund kid who bought his way into college (his dad made a huge donation and basically bought Jared a diploma like so many rich kids)—so what did the Saudis get in return? That's the big question. And that needs to be the focus of everything that we know now of the big FBI raid on Mar-a-Lago.

Sarah Kendzior (04:36):

Yes, exactly. I just wanna emphasize that this information is not new. Kushner's dealings with the Saudis are not new. As Andrea pointed out, he was making money from illicit foreign financial transactions, abusing executive privilege during his time in the White House. He did it before he was in the White House and he is very likely doing it now. You know, he is doing it now through that \$2 billion deal. But the raid on Mar-a-Lago and the documents that were uncovered should be looked at through that lens. And I just wanna remind everybody that back in February of 2019, the Oversight Committee—remember that? Remember when we had an oversight committee that did stuff?—prepared a report. This is the title of it, it says: “Whistleblowers raise grave concerns with Trump administration's efforts to transfer sensitive nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia”. And then it goes on to say that the person they are deeply worried about is Kushner and Kushner's relationship with MBS and horrific incidents like the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

Sarah Kendzior (05:45):

And I'll just read one line from this to you. It says, “Experts worry that transferring sensitive US nuclear technology could allow Saudi Arabia to produce nuclear weapons that contribute to the proliferation of nuclear arms throughout an already unstable Middle East.” So you can't really get a concern more serious than that: A dictatorship with nuclear weapons, weapons that may not stay in its possession, weapons that may be sold or traded, technology that may be sold or traded, and a traitorous administration that is pushing those objectives forward. And you would think that this would've been tackled with the utmost sense of urgency back in February, 2019. Instead, what happened? This was yet another investigation led by Elijah Cummings, who had opened a number of investigations into the Trump administration, including into Michael Flynn and his own traitorous actions, his illicit relationships with Russia, with Israel, his attempts also to sell the Saudi's nuclear technology. He was investigating that

Sarah Kendzior (06:58):

He was investigating Black Cube, the mercenary intelligence group out of Israel that had participated in everything from the stalking of Harvey Weinstein's victims to the stalking of past Obama administration officials working on the Iran Deal, and he was overseeing this as well as, as head of the Oversight Committee. He died somewhat unexpectedly in October, 2019, and these investigations seemed to have died with him. At that point, they had long stopped investigating Kushner. In March, 2019, Nancy Pelosi, infamously proclaimed that Trump was not worth impeaching, that basically nothing he would

do—including this, which they knew about—was worth really looking into. Eventually, she was dragged to impeachment by her caucus. Then we also had other things happen that month, like the Mueller probe was shut down. The Bill Barr lie summary was shortly issued thereafter.

Sarah Kendzior (08:01):

Manafort was proclaimed by a judge in his trial as someone that had led an “otherwise blameless life” and given a very short sentence. SDNY investigations were curtailed. All of this happened right after this investigation of Kushner was launched. And I've always wondered about that in March, 2019. Andrea and I have discussed that month and all the things that happened at once, all of the shutdowns simultaneously of avenues of accountability, and we've wondered what prompted it. We still don't completely know, but I think it's worth looking into this aborted Kushner investigation and the fact that obviously it was desperately needed because it has continued into the present day and is very likely tied not just to these documents in Mar-a-Lago, but to the selling of classified information and state secrets in general. And I would say not just to MBS and the Saudis, although that's the most likely recipient, but to Netanyahu, a longtime friend of the Kushner family going back to Jared's childhood, likely to the oligarchs who both Jared and Ivanka have built very tight ties with, and just to whoever the highest bidder is.

Sarah Kendzior (09:15):

That was the guiding ethos of the Trump administration, which was really a Trump/Kushner administration. It was like they put a “going out of business sale” sign on the White House lawn and then just offered up anything—state secrets, resources, land, what have you—to the highest bidders, both domestically and abroad, with absolutely no regard for our national security. And so you have to ask, why wasn't this treated with urgency back in 2019 (including by the House, which, you know, the Democrats held then) and why is it not being treated with the utmost urgency now, when there may be rogue nukes or nuclear material or documents related to nukes floating around held by hostile malevolent actors?

Andrea Chalupa (10:01):

Yeah, and you can't leave out Ivanka. It was a Donald Trump, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump presidency. Those three together were doing a cash grab. You know those old school game shows from the '70s or whenever, where they'd put someone in a giant tank and then a wind machine would blow up and they'd have to grab as many dollars as they could? That was the Donald, Jared and Ivanka White House. I want to also point out from our opening clip that there's that infamous photo of longtime Kremlin operative, Paul Manafort, with his hands on Ivanka, guiding her, because he was chairman—handpicked by Ivanka and Jared—to run Trump's campaign for president and he was overseeing the entire Republican convention in 2016. And there's that photo of him coaching Ivanka on stage, basically, you know, making sure that she delivered this incredible speech. And Ivanka goes on to give a speech where she sounds like a Democrat, where she's saying how her father's practically a feminist, how he's going to protect mothers and working mothers and working women—

Sarah Kendzior:

[laughs]

Andrea Chalupa (11:10):

—he's all about equality, all this stuff. And you had so many idiots across the board falling for this and saying, "Oh, Ivanka's gonna be a moderating force." You had the *Morning Joe* crew falling for it. People really took her to be a Democrat. Well, guess what everyone? That is exactly what Paul Manafort's gaslighting looks like. That moderating force that was presented on that stage, that is exactly what Paul Manafort did to Viktor Yanukovich when he ran for President of Ukraine: gave him that same coaching, presented him as a moderating force, and that is how he became president. And as soon as he became president, he pulled a Donald, Jared and Ivanka and started treating Ukraine as a big old cash grab, enriching himself and his family. And he had to finally be ran outta town by a popular uprising.

Andrea Chalupa (12:04):

And he's been living in exile in Russia ever since, okay? So remember when you hear Ivanka's speech, as you heard in this earlier clip, if you listen to that full clip, that full, full speech, it's Paul Manafort's dark arts gaslighting in action. Anyway, moving on from that. There was other news that people should be aware of which is troubling as well, of course, because that's what we do on this show is stare into the abyss, and the abyss likes to stare back. So Eliza Orlins, who we had on the show when she was running for Manhattan DA, Eliza Orlins wrote on Twitter: "Allen Weisselberg, the Trump CFO, got a plea deal of five months with no cooperation from the Manhattan DA. As a public defender," Eliza writes, "I wish you could see the things the Manhattan DA refuses to offer a sentence of five months for. Two systems of justice continue with Cy Vance 2.0."

Andrea Chalupa (13:03):

It should be noted, of course, that Eliza Orlins was on our show when she was *running* for Manhattan DA. She did not win that race. Alvin Bragg instead won the race for Manhattan DA. He's somebody that sued Trump around a hundred times. A lot of progressives got behind Alvin Bragg, thinking that he would have gravitas, he'd have the weight of all his experience behind him, that he would bring a progressive spirit to finally take on elite criminal impunity, something that Cy Vance, Jr. of course protected, including tossing out an investigation of Ivanka Trump and Don, Jr. for scamming investors in Trump Soho. So yeah, it turns out Alvin Bragg is just more of the same. He's just continuing on with Cy Vance's legacy. It's very odd. It's a big progressive betrayal here in New York City.

Sarah Kendzior (13:58):

Yeah, I just wanna emphasize that the issue with Alvin Bragg is not only Bragg's individual failures, but the fact that Vance did not act when he held this position for over a decade not just on holding Don, Jr. and Ivanka accountable, but holding all sorts of criminal elites accountable, including Epstein, Weinstein, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, later on in the Trump administration, both Manafort and Bannon got a pass from Cy Vance. These are the dirtiest institutions. These are the most grotesquely corrupt institutions, these district attorney offices of New York City, to the point that... You know, this is just a random anecdote: I've been reading this book about the son of Sam murders. I think I've mentioned this in our bonus show. And every now and again, somebody will pop up in there and I'll be like, I wonder what happened to this guy, you know, or this person.

Sarah Kendzior (14:57):

And one of them was the Brooklyn DA Eugene Gold, who botched the investigation of the son of Sam murders and suppressed evidence and followed this very familiar pattern. And so I of course was like, well, what happened after that? And of course he's a pedophile. Of course he's a pedophile who was sued and I think arrested for aggravated rape of a child of another prosecutor and then was just let off

the hook by the DA system. All he did was resign and then he went free. So this seems so common. There is something really wrong with the New York elite legal system, these people who rise to great perches of power. I haven't seen any of them acting with even baseline integrity. Instead, you just find monster after monster. It's truly horrific.

Sarah Kendzior (15:56):

And so Alvin Bragg is inheriting these broken institutions with seemingly no desire to fix them at all. There's some speculation, like, was he threatened? Was he blackmailed? And I'm sorry, there's no excuse here. If you're going into that nest of depravity, you should expect to be threatened and blackmailed. That doesn't excuse it. You know, in a non mafia state culture, you would not have these things happen. But it's like, geez, man, where have you been? What did you think they were gonna do? Either go in fighting—which I think Eliza Orlins would've done—or don't go in at all, because all you're doing is continuing the decades-long streak of elite criminal impunity that is hurting people very badly. It's not an abstract thing. It's not a game. Anyway, go on with what you're saying.

Andrea Chalupa (16:44):

So basically Weisselberg is getting a slap on the wrist and there's no cooperation. That, of course, a reminder again is the Manhattan DA investigation is different from Latisha James and Latisha James obviously just had her big deposition of Trump where he just pled the fifth the entire time. The fact that he even was allowed to become president of the United States, he wasn't stopped—not even sooner, he hasn't been stopped yet—just shows you once again that our institutions are not cut out to protect us from a wannabe Hitler. Right? And I think that is the larger issue here that people really aren't addressing. And those that do—like us—get all these horrible names thrown at us for being like merchants of doom or whatever, as though we enjoy this. No. Sarah and I, our first love, our self care, is talking about nerdy stuff like *X Files* and UFOs. Once again, America, we would love to transition this podcast into that kind of a podcast [laughs]. But we cannot until we overcome this fascist threat that is extraordinarily real and immediate. It's not a spectator sport. It's not a spectator sport.

Andrea Chalupa (18:05):

This is real life and it's happening to us and yes, it can happen here. We even had this homegrown threat during the rise of the first Hitler where you had Madison Square Garden packed for a Nazi rally in the heart of New York City, where you had giant banners of general George Washington and men on stage giving the Nazi salute. They did a full blown Nazi rally in Madison Square Garden. Then you had the America First Committee, which was backed by American corporations. They were all about keeping America out of the war, "America first". And Charles Lindberg, the great aviator hero, he was sympathetic towards Hitler and giving all these speeches and seen as presidential material and so forth. You had Hitler youth type camps, gatherings, in the United States. So it was an extraordinarily scary time during the rise of Hitler in Europe, as Hitler was devouring Europe in his pact with Stalin, where they did the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact where they agreed to carve up Europe together.

Andrea Chalupa (19:12):

Those two mad men, Hitler and Stalin, were doing that, destroying countless lives in the process and no one was stopping them. And meanwhile, the homegrown threat was growing stronger here in the United States. So the homegrown threat is back in a very big way. It's running for office on a local level. It's going to be overseeing our elections, including in 2024, where we're completely dependent still on the electoral college which is, of course, maddening. So what is going to be done to stop this? How can you

stop the wannabe Hitler? The guy who, according to his ex-wife, who was very forthcoming, who's now allegedly lying in a privately owned golf course in New Jersey, Ivana Trump, who was very forthcoming in sharing that Donald Trump kept a book of Hitler speeches by his bed, a book of Hitler speeches, because he wanted to affect people the same way. He wanted to raise his own army the same way.

Andrea Chalupa (20:13):

That's what Hitler's rallies were about. They were a recruitment tool. One observer at a Hitler rally, who was Gareth Jones, the journalist who inspired my film, *Mr. Jones*. Gareth Jones witnessed a Hitler rally. He described it as "primitive". There's something primal that Hitler tapped into. He just unleashed people. He unleashed something inside of them and justified in their minds this violence, this anger, you know, your own God given right to dehumanize others at your own will. And he made this unapologetic beast come outta people. Well, the beast is back in a very, very big way and Trump's their guy. Trump is the Republican Party base now. And so all of this points to that, we, our institutions, which allowed this guy to become president in the first place even though a well known criminal operative was out in the open running his campaign, what are our institutions going to do now to protect us from this wannabe Hitler? What can the DOJ do?

Andrea Chalupa (21:07):

What can the FBI do? We know that the FBI is investigating Trump for violating obstruction of justice laws, as well as the Espionage Act. The FBI took 11 sets of classified materials from Mar-a-Lago. 11 sets. So why did Trump have those materials specifically? Who told them, who told him to take that? Who told Trump what would be most valuable? The Russians, the Saudis, a combination of both? This is a guy who couldn't even be bothered to read. There were all these reports coming out of the White House during his time in power that to get Trump's attention, you had to show pictures. He liked maps. This was a visual guy. He doesn't like to read. He could not be bothered to read. He's not a reader. He has ADD. He'd be on Twitter. He'd be yelling at Fox News. So who told him what to take? Who was driving those decisions? Was it Jared Kushner? Was it Ivanka? Was it his Russian friends or was it members of the club? Because remember, Mar-a-Lago itself was a national security risk. Our enemies could swarm it and have their spies buying up memberships and getting access to the President of the United States and his inner circle. That is extraordinarily valuable to our enemies, people that wanna bring us down from the inside. That needs to be answered. How did he know what to take?

Sarah Kendzior (22:29):

Yeah, absolutely. The thing with Trump is that, you know, I doubt he read the documents. I doubt he needed to really read the documents on any deep level. He just needed to know whether they were important and he could tell whether they were important based on the topics that they describe and on the level of classified information. If something is a top secret document, if something is marked as extremely sensitive material that cannot be shared, then that is obviously the most valuable thing to share, in Trump's view. It's the thing that he, as a former president, would have the greatest access to. It's marked with that level of sensitivity for a reason. And so you have to ask, why did the Biden administration and the DOJ feel so comfortable letting Trump have these documents in his home for 18 months?

Sarah Kendzior (23:28):

We know that they knew about it at least as far back as February, 2022 because that's when we knew about it and the National Archives had been trying to hold them criminally liable for taking these

documents for a long time. It would be poetic justice if it's the National Archives that ultimately brings accountability about, because an archivist, a historian, etc., they're the people that know Trump's past. They're the people who do the reading. They're the people who do the homework that apparently the Department of Justice and the FBI either don't want to do, or they are complicit in the plot. And here I'm thinking more of people like Christopher Wray, a Trump appointee who refused to prosecute this rotating carnival ride of criminals during the Trump administration and then for some reason has been allowed to remain as head of FBI after failing to prevent an openly plotted coup in January, 2021 and an openly plotted attack.

Sarah Kendzior (24:35):

There are a lot of questions here. Andrea and I are kinda... It's like on one hand, we have déjà vu because we've been discussing these individuals and these acts and these mafia state alliances for over four years now, and we've been waiting for accountability for over four years. But we also are dealing with just incredible confusion about what exactly happened in this raid and that, of course, is due to the fact that the main source of information about the raid is Trump. That was true when it initially happened—he was the one who announced it—and it's true now as new details come out and then are debunked, but not after wasting everyone's time and attention and dominating a news cycle and taking people's focus off topics that are deeply important, like the theft of nuclear materials or what role Kushner and Flynn and these other backers play.

Sarah Kendzior (25:34):

And instead looking at things like Trump's claim yesterday that the FBI stole his passports. He threw that out there. There was nobody backing up this claim. I came onto Twitter and the mainstream media was all over this, as were former FBI people, former DOJ people, with none of them—or not none of them, few of them—asking, is this true? What actually happened? Do we have a secondary source for this information, one that is more objective than the pathological liar career criminal whose compound just got raided? I did not think that this was necessarily true about the passports. First, I don't think Trump actually is as much of a flight risk as people think because this is not a guy who wants to leave the United States. You know, he hates the United States. He's a traitor to it. He's also very comfortable in it.

Sarah Kendzior (26:30):

This is the guy who didn't like leaving Trump Tower. He doesn't like leaving Mar-a-Lago. He doesn't like to be anywhere where he doesn't completely control the situation, which is very typical of someone who has spent their entire life in organized crime and then set out to be an aspiring autocrat. So if Trump were to flee abroad, my guess is that he'd go... probably Israel would be his first choice, maybe using connections through his old friend Netanyahu because it's the most Western, it would be the most familiar to him. I guess the second choice after that would be Saudi Arabia. It's hard for me to imagine him fitting in there. I don't think he would wanna go to Russia anymore because it's become, to quote Trump, “a shithole country” and that would just be, you know, too much givin' up the game.

Sarah Kendzior (27:19):

So I think he just wants to stay here and ride it out and he doesn't think that anyone is going to hold him accountable for his multitude of crimes because he's been committing crimes for five decades and no one has held him accountable. And now on top of that, he possesses a treasure trove of state secrets, digital ones and things he's simply witnessed in addition to the physical documents that he stole. He has a great deal of leverage and we have a DOJ that's been unwilling to hold him accountable. But anyway, to

just get back to this passports thing: It was depressing to see how quickly people fell for that and how much baseless speculation there was without the kind of disclaimer of like, hi, I'm making speculation. I mean, I think speculation is fine as long as you say that's what you're doing.

Sarah Kendzior (28:09):

But people were treating it as a hard and proven fact and then, of course, by the end of the day, the DOJ and the FBI were like, "actually, we didn't take his passports. We examined them and then we gave them back." And while I tend on the whole to not trust the FBI or the DOJ as institutions, that makes sense to me. But it worked though. It got Trump's base revved up. It allowed Trump to test who's gullible. It allowed him to see who either domestically or abroad would offer him aid if this passport theft actually occurred. I mean, the thing is, if he did wanna leave the country, he would just go. This is not somebody who's deferential to protocol. He's not gonna be like, "Oh, no, I don't know if my passport!" He's gonna get on the private jet or a yacht of some oligarch who will whisk him away.

Sarah Kendzior (29:01):

And then he'll become, you know, some kind of... I guess, fugitive, but they're not even holding him accountable for the theft of nuclear materials so I'm trying to imagine the situation where they actually try to force an extradition from another country, particularly if it is Saudi Arabia or Israel, where we have these very questionable "friendships", where we don't hold either of those countries accountable for any of their atrocities. We likely would not hold them accountable for housing Trump. So just to wrap this up: Please be careful when you're seeing stories about this raid and the sole source is Trump. And then if there's a secondary source, make sure it is not one of Trump's current crime partners, one of Trump's former crime partners, one of Trump's relatives (who may also be a crime partner), one of Trump's lawyers (who, again, might also be a crime partner) or, for example, the daughter of Trump's former publicist throughout the '80s and '90s. I think y'all know who that is.

Sarah Kendzior (30:09):

When you see stories from these individuals, they obviously have a vested interest in a certain narrative, in containing that narrative, in controlling that narrative, and they are doing it for their own benefit and for Trump's benefit as well. We're all out here struggling to find the truth, struggling to find objective sources that are willing to challenge power, whether that power is the Trump crime cult or whether that power is the FBI and DOJ who have also proven untrustworthy. It's quite a challenge, I have to say. So we don't fully know what's going on, but we do know the broader context of how these people behave and what they've been doing, and that this is not a fluke. This is a culmination of long term plots that were launched prior to the 2016 election and are continuing to the present day and have left our country in incredible danger, a danger that the Biden administration and in particular Merrick Garland will not respond to with proper urgency.

Andrea Chalupa (31:12):

I want to point out that this show could have been one of those *Gaslit Nation* montage episodes where we compile clips from over the years, including when we warned that all the corruption we're seeing coming out of the Trump White House is just the tip of the iceberg. Think of what we know. Now consider that what we don't know is just so much worse, right? And that's what this whole thing reminds me of. And the materials, who helped him select the materials of the classified documents? The other thing I want to point out is that the United States by far has the most powerful military in the world. It's nothing compared to what China and Russia have. Obviously, we see Russia getting its ass kicked in

Ukraine. What the Ukrainians are doing to Russia is just... They're outmanned, outgunned, and yet they have Russia on the ropes because that's just how bad Russia's military is.

Andrea Chalupa (32:13):

You see also with the now multiple strikes that Ukraine is making and Russian occupied Crimea, that's significant for a number of reasons. It extends the front of the war. It forces Russia to spread itself more thinly or whatever. But on top of that, it makes a mockery of Russia's big weapons industry because in last week's big hit (an airfield of military planes in Crimea), that whole area was protected by Russian defense weapons that Russia has sold to countries like India. And those customers are now looking at the failure of Russia's air defense systems and going, "Wait a minute, we just purchased those? And they were just easily bypassed?" What I'm saying is that the United States has been supplying Ukraine with some extraordinarily powerful and precise long range missiles that Ukraine has been using to take out the Russian war machine. We're talking ammunition, warehouses, and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa (33:23):

This has been a reminder to the world that the United States has the most powerful military by far. Now, imagine those military secrets—specifically on our nuclear weapons—getting into the hands of the Russians and the Saudis. That's what's likely happening here. And people who are doing these interviews and trying to say with a straight face that, "Oh, certainly it's the realm of possibility," it's not just in the realm of possibility. This is without a doubt what has happened here. And this needs to be underlined by the fact that the Department of Justice waited 19 months to finally go into Mar-a-Lago and take back these highly sensitive classified materials. 19 months. Now, I understand that when you go before a judge, a judge is going to look at both sides of an issue and see which side acted prudently, appropriately, and showed restraint to try to not escalate the situation.

Andrea Chalupa (34:27):

Right? I understand that you must handle any sort of issues that come up with a fair amount of restraint, but 19 months is not restraint. That's its own form of criminal negligence. 19 months Trump was allowed to have these documents, these materials. And that brings me back to another point that we've been hitting home on *Gaslit Nation* for years, since the start of the show, and that is this: We are going to be living with the disastrous fallout of the Trump regime for many years to come. It's like a landmine. You know how after a war, you have to go in and get rid of all the landmines and how that process can take many years? That's what we're stuck with thanks to Trump. Right now, you have this assessment where the intelligence community is looking at the overall risk and the fallout and what is going to happen from these highly sensitive documents that Trump had in his possession for well over 19 months, right?

Andrea Chalupa (35:24):

So what's gonna be the fallout of all that? I want to go into a room and bash a chair against the wall repeatedly. I cannot tell you how infuriating this is. And then there's reporting coming out saying that Merrick Garland "struggled" with the decision to search Mar-a-Lago. He struggled with it? Are you outta your mind? What I'm saying is I understand that the DOJ has to conduct itself to extraordinarily high standards and they must maintain this culture of certain norms because if they don't, the next thing you know we become a banana republic. But I can tell you that the DOJ, all the boyscouts and the girl scouts at the DOJ, you are not prepared for what's coming. You are not at all prepared to protect the American public from a wannabe dictator because we're seeing this play out in the open.

Andrea Chalupa (36:13):

We understand that you have the utmost respect for the DOJ. We understand that you pride yourselves on protecting the legitimacy of the DOJ, by holding yourselves to this high standard that must be met. But William Barr did not live up to that standard. William Barr allowed the DOJ to become politicized, certainly not as much as Donald Trump would've liked, but he completely drove us down that path. He was like dictatorship light, flirting here and there, politicizing it. If Trump ekes into office—because he almost won the electoral college in 2020 and people forget how close he came in some of those key states—if Trump ekes through in 2024, thanks to so many Trump wannabes taking over local election offices and the Big Lie coming to power as election officials now in key states, thanks to the Supreme Court and so forth, if Trump ekes through in 2024, he's not going to waste any time.

Andrea Chalupa (37:12):

He knows where to purge first and how to do it. He's going to correct the mistakes that he made the first time around. It's going to be a totally different horror show than what we survived his four years in power. It's going to make the first term of Trump seem like a cake walk and I'm telling you, you're not going to be able to stop him this time. So I just want to call on people, you know, you've heard us on this show, you've heard Sarah breaking down all the research into the problems with Merrick Garland and the problems with his mentor, Jamie Gorelick. Let's pretend that none of that is true for a second, just for argument's sake. Let's pretend Jamie Gorelick is American Patriot #1 and we're all friends with her and we go out and get girl drinks and discuss the show, *Designing Women*.

Andrea Chalupa (37:56):

Let's pretend we're all pals, right? But why don't we consider this? What we're seeing—believe your eyes and your ears—the DOJ, whether it's Merrick Garland's DOJ or Bill Barr's DOJ, the DOJ as we know it simply is not prepared, does not have the culture, clearly does not have the legal mechanisms to protect us from a career criminal wannabe Hitler. If they did, they would've done it by now. Trump would be in prison by now. The fact that he's still walking around free after blatantly, out in the open, trying to steal the 2020 election, trying to engineer a violent coup, all of those things, and now stealing America's nuclear secrets at a time when we're being threatened with nuclear war... I'm sorry, but this is... You guys don't know how to protect us from a wannabe Hitler. We see that very clearly. I want to just underline that point a million times over, but I also wanna end us on a good note. [laughs]

Sarah Kendzior (38:57):

I have some things to say before the good note. I just want to throw in a little bit of context and history here. I think it's not just that they lack the legal mechanisms to hold Trump accountable in what is an unprecedented situation where you have a president who may be charged with violating the Espionage Act, a president who is a Kremlin asset who has committed treason. They clearly have not risen to the occasion, but I think it's in part because they don't want to. It brings us back to our age old question of, is this complicity or are they threatened into silence? So just a few things to remind everybody about Trump's well documented history, all documented in the public domain. Trump has been obsessed with using nuclear weapons for 40 years. The first interview where Trump expressed his desire to use nuclear weapons and to manage nuclear policy was in 1984, where he was a private citizen.

Sarah Kendzior (39:54):

And he credits his interest to Roy Cohn, his mentor, who was the infamous mafia lawyer, McCarthyite, you know, we've gone into Roy Cohn many times, but he continued with this. During the 2016 election,

he told Joe Scarborough, “If we have nukes, why aren't we using them?” In 1987 and in the late 1980s in general, he gave interviews talking about how the US should partner with the Soviet Union—this was shortly after his July 4th, 1987, visit to the Soviet Union—to act against third countries. And among the targets he mentioned were Pakistan and France. I mean, this is a guy who just wants to nuke things and who has a firm belief that the world will end in nuclear annihilation. He told *Playboy* that in 1990 in yet another interview that is just oozing with this fatalism, with this sense of, he can't believe the world could just go on without him so if he has the chance to end it, he will take that chance.

Sarah Kendzior (40:58):

That is, in fact, how he behaved in office. That's why he let COVID spread. That's why he let many disasters occur. He embraces disasters. He's admitted that. He says that “when bad times come, it's good for me.” Just a couple other things to note here is that as Trump was honing his interest in nuclear warfare, he was also building his contacts with the Russian mafia, which came to supplant the Italian American mafia in New York City. And those ties grew greater over time as the Russian mafia bailed Trump out of bankruptcy. And what was the Russian mafia doing besides building back Donald Trump's real estate projects and using them as money laundering operations? They were working with terrorists. Semion Mogilevich, who Jim Comey removed from the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list in December, 2015 for no apparent reason, he's the head of the Russian mafia.

Sarah Kendzior (42:00):

And he has been accused of many crimes, including sex trafficking, arms dealing, and including an interest in nuclear weapons and in terrorist activity. The person who brings Mogilevich and Trump together in the most blatant way is Felix Sater, who was Trump's business partner but was also an FBI informant between 1998 and 2001 when September 11th occurred. And I'm going to very briefly read from my own book. This is honestly for the sake of time because it's just easier to give the summary than try to go through it. This is about Sater being an FBI agent. This is for my book *Hiding in Plain Sight*: “Sater told *The Los Angeles Times* that he freelanced as an informant to the US government during the 2000s and spent the decade ‘building Trump towers by day and hunting bin Laden by night.’”

Sarah Kendzior (43:02):

“An interesting claim given the rumored connection between Al Qaeda and the Russian mafia operation run by Sater family associate Mogilevich. Former KGB officer, Alexander Litvinenko, who was murdered by Kremlin agents in 2006, claimed in 2005 that Mogilevich has a good relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin since 1994 or 1993 and that Mogilevich is in contact with Al Qaeda and sells them weapons.” And then I added, “Given that Sater had worked as an FBI informant during the crucial years of 1998 to 2001, that the FBI had named Mogilevich their top priority in 2011 and that Sater had worked with the Trump family in a project that appears to have involved significant money laundering, it is disconcerting at best that the FBI did not raise any concerns when Trump ran for office and won the nomination.” And so my point here is that this bigger threat beyond just Trump being a demagogue, a bigot, a kleptocrat even, you know, Trump was a potential terrorist. And he was a potential terrorist the entire time.

Sarah Kendzior (44:18):

And the FBI knew it and they chose not to stop him. And they knew full well of all of these ties that Trump had with the Russian mafia. They had his business partner from Bayrock, Felix Sater, as their informant. They knew. They knew all of this and they did nothing. And it is very disconcerting that at the

moment they are still doing very little when for all we know we are facing an existential nuclear threat. And I'll just add one final note here, which is Andrea's absolutely right that if the Republicans get in and especially if Trump returns it will be so much worse than everything we have had so far. Right now, the Trump goon squad is banding all these signs and slogans about defunding the FBI. And to a certain extent, I agree. I think the FBI is a deeply, deeply corrupt institution that has done more harm than good, but they don't wanna defund or get rid of the FBI for the good of the American people.

Sarah Kendzior (45:20):

What they want is an FBI that will work as their personal stormtroopers, that will have absolutely no obligation toward the public and not even the pretense of seeking justice. They want to fully purge the FBI. When Trump got in, one of the first things he did was fire the experts in the FBI on the Russian mafia and on the crimes that Trump had committed. They want a gestapo. They want show trials. They want the full-fledged Nazi experience. That is what they're going for. So if you are also someone who distrusts deeply the DOJ and FBI, I 100% am with you on that, but do not fall for these Trumpian tactics. They're not going for anything good. They are not going for transparency. They're not going for accountability. They just want their unlimited crime spree, uh, to continue indefinitely with the support of a state surveillance and enforcement apparatus.

Andrea Chalupa (46:22):

I do worry about the threat assessment that is going on now, just to see what's gonna be the fallout of all these highly classified materials in the hands of the wrong people who got their hands on it and so forth. I do worry about that because what it's going to point to, ultimately, as we keep saying on this show, is that the DOJ and the FBI have failed us. So I worry that in that threat assessment, they're going to hold back, because really that whole threat assessment is an indictment on the FBI and the DOJ letting it get this far in the first place. They failed to stop Trump and his goon squad planning a violent coup attempt out in the open. They failed to stop that. That they failed to stop a Kremlin asset and the Kremlin bringing Trump to power in 2016.

Andrea Chalupa (47:12):

And so I think the question, again, what's central to all this is, do the DOJ and the FBI have what it takes to protect us from descending into a dictatorship? And the answer continues to be no. That's central to all this and anybody who's not having that discussion isn't being honest with you. I do wanna end this on good news and also to remind everyone that when you have such a great existential threat as this, it's an all hands on deck moment. We fought like hell in all the elections in recent years to ensure that we got enough Democrats in to stop the bleeding, to stop the descent into total madness. And we did it. We did a lot of extraordinary work thanks to our hard-fought organizing, our votes and so forth. And we have to do it again. We have to be major players, MVPs, to make up for the failures of the other players in our big coalition to try to protect democracy.

Andrea Chalupa (48:09):

Unfortunately, that's what it comes down to. It sucks, but it's true. And I'm going to be there making phone calls, doing what I can to get out the vote cause it's so extraordinarily important. One thing you could do is join me. I joined a giving circle through the States Project. You may remember them. We featured them in two episodes during our important spring series on fighting fascism in America. The States Project came on *Gaslit Nation* and talked to us about how to launch a giving circle to raise money for the all-important local races in the states. The local races oversee our elections in those states and

also gerrymandering on the local level, \what to do about that. So inspired by those conversations, I joined a giving circle with some friends and the state that we adopted with our giving circle, which is just a way to raise money for local races in the state, the state we adopted is Pennsylvania.

Andrea Chalupa (49:03):

Why? Because Pennsylvania is one of the most important states to win in the electoral college. And you have a Trumpian candidate running for governor of Pennsylvania and he's gonna get to appoint a secretary of state and together they could steal Pennsylvania for Trump or whoever the Trumpian candidate is inevitably going to be in 2024. So it's all hands on deck for Pennsylvania. So if you wanna join me and my friends in the giving circle and get access to a lot of fun updates and events we're going to have along the way as we head toward election day in the midterms in November, you can find the link in the show notes for this episode. It's very important. Any little bit helps. There's no donation too small. We've already raised something like 70% of our goal.

Andrea Chalupa (49:52):

Our goal is \$100,000 for Pennsylvania, for local races there. And we're at 70% of that goal. So help us close the gap so we can get that money to where it needs to go. And we can help secure Pennsylvania for the Democrats. Remember, if you wanna protect the electoral college, the 2024 presidential election, if you wanna protect the White House, keep the White House in good hands, then you need to fight like hell in the midterms. You've got all these key local races that are going to oversee the integrity of our elections in 2024. Those elections are happening now. Win in the midterms in order to protect the White House in 2024. There's so much at stake this year. Just to give a summary of a reminder of the impact that our votes have, the impact that getting out the vote can have a reminder of all the wonderful things that we together created, thanks to fighting like hell and doing all we can to protect our democracy. As a reminder of all that, that our votes really do matter, that we do matter, that the work we do matters, we're going to share this summary provided by Rachel Maddow. We shared the same exact summary on last week's episode, but just so you don't have to hear me run it down again, we'll bring in a new voice. And here's Rachel Maddow, once again, ticking off all the incredible legislation, all the wonderful things that are happening, thanks to us. We made this happen and we're gonna show up again and fight like hell because defeating fascism depends on us.

Rachel Maddow (51:26):

In April, following the historic nomination that he made, he got the first ever African American woman Ketanji Brown Jackson, confirmed on the United States Supreme Court. In June, President Biden signed the biggest gun reform bill into law in decades, breaking a multi decade gridlock on that issue. Two weeks ago, in a counter-terrorism success, the US finally got Al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, after two decades-plus of chasing him. Just last Tuesday, President Biden signed the membership protocols to add Sweden and Finland to NATO, expanding and strengthening that alliance in the face of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. That same day, he also signed the CHIPS Act into law. That's a \$280 billion piece of legislation that'll kickstart the production of semiconductor chips here in the United States. It's a big deal in terms of competition with China economically and on national security grounds. That was all on Tuesday.

Rachel Maddow (52:23):

Then on Wednesday, he signed another huge bill to provide health coverage for up to three and a half million US veterans who were exposed to toxic burn pits when they were deployed in Iraq and

Afghanistan. Also, gas prices have now dropped for 62 straight days. Tomorrow, President Biden will add his biggest legislative achievement yet to that list: the Inflation Reduction Act, which is filled with stuff Democrats have been trying for for a generation. This is the bill that empowers the administration to negotiate drug prices using the Medicare program. It's the first time they'll ever be able to do that. Democrats have been trying to get that into law for 30 years. Biden finally got it done. The bill also caps out of pocket medication costs for seniors who are on Medicare. If you're on Medicare, your drug costs—the out of pocket amount that you pay per year—will no longer exceed \$2,000 a year, no matter what your drugs cost.

Rachel Maddow (53:17):

There's never been a cap like that before. It also closes tax loopholes and establishes a 15% minimum tax for corporations that make over a billion dollars a year. Perhaps most significantly of all, the bill also is the biggest climate investment in the history of the country. And somehow all of that has managed to pass in a 50/50 Senate that includes folks like these; Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Joe Manchin, who get up and say “no” in the morning before they do anything else, just because it makes them feel good. Tomorrow, the president is expected to return home from South Carolina where he's been on vacation. He's gonna sign the Inflation Reduction Act, this big new bill, at the White House. He believes it will be his signature legislative achievement. In the coming weeks, President Biden and Vice President Harris and members of the cabinet are all expected to hit the road to promote this thing. They're planning 35 different trips planned to 23 different states. In a technical sense, in political science terms, this is called being on a roll.

[theme music - roll outro credits]

Andrea Chalupa (01:12:33):

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

Sarah Kendzior:

The St. Louis metro region has been decimated by record floods. My area, University City, was especially hard hit. To help flood victims in University City, donate at [ucityschools.org/flood relief](https://ucityschools.org/flood-relief). Another place to give aid is the St. Louis food bank at stlfoodbank.org. Climate and economic crises are everywhere so continue supporting your local food bank as well.

Andrea Chalupa:

We encourage you to help support Ukraine by donating to Razom for Ukraine at razomforukraine.org. We also encourage you to donate to the International Rescue Committee, a humanitarian relief organization helping refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. Donate at rescue.org. And if you want to help critically endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry, donate to the Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.

Gaslit Nation is produced by Sarah Wilbury and Andrea Wilbury. If you like what we do, leave us a review on iTunes. It helps us reach more listeners. And check out our Patreon, it keeps us going.

Sarah Kendzior:

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

Andrea Chalupa:

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Sarah Kendzior:

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Andrea Chalupa:

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