

Gaslit Nation
The Alexandra Chalupa Interview

Andrea Chalupa
Alexandra Chalupa
Sarah Kendzior

Theme Music

Andrea Chalupa: Welcome to Gaslit Nation. I'm Andrea Chalupa, a writer and the screenwriter and producer of the upcoming journalistic thriller, Mr. Jones. My co-host, Sarah Kendzior, scholar of authoritarian states and the author of *The View from Flyover Country*, and I are back today with part two of our discussion with my sister Alexandra Chalupa, the former DNC contractor who blew the whistle on Russia's attack on our 2016 election.

Malcolm Nance, in his book *The Plot to Hack America*, explores how the Russian hackers who spent months inside the systems of the DNC zeroed in with special interest into one particular target: opposition research into Donald Trump who was not yet the Republican nominee. That opposition research was put together by our special guest today, who shares her story, which includes aggressive and ongoing harassment, including at her home, and ongoing attempted hacking of her email by state-sponsored actors, as well as targeting by the president's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, among other far-right attack dogs for Donald Trump and his family.

We pick back up today with her discussion on how Manafort was on her radar several years leading up to the 2016 election, given his pro-Kremlin work in Ukraine, where he deliberately weakened democracy and furthered kleptocracy. We recorded this interview on May 30th. Today, June 4th, it was announced that Manafort will be moved from a comfortable, low-security prison in Pennsylvania, where he's serving a seven-and-a-half-year federal prison sentence for financial fraud and conspiracy charges brought by Mueller's investigation, and will now be moved to New York's Riker's Island, where he'll likely be kept in solitary confinement while facing state mortgage fraud charges brought by the Manhattan district attorney. Manafort, a longtime friend of Donald Trump's, is of course no stranger to New York City, as we discuss on today's show.

Music

Alexandra Chalupa: Given that our grandparents came from Ukraine, our grandparents on our mother's side lived through a famine that took the lives of millions of Ukrainians and many of their friends and loved ones. After that, our grandfather became a target of Stalin's purges and was imprisoned and tortured for 2 years and declared an enemy of the state, and it's all feeling very familiar these days. Now it's happening here.

Andrea Chalupa: And now it's your turn!

Alexandra Chalupa: And now it's my turn, so at first when I saw this, I was like, "Who is this jerk who's going in our grandparents' homeland and working for Moscow's interest?" Like, who is this guy? Then I started seeing him from the political strategy perspective, and I said, "Who is this guy that is able to get away with this and is running this entire operation and going unchecked?"

I couldn't get journalist to...and granted, I didn't have a big network of journalists at the time, but I did sit down with a couple, including an editor for a couple hours, and said, "This is who we should be reporting about." Because at the time there was very little about Paul Manafort. He was operating in the shadows, and so I relied a lot in my early online research looking at articles in Washington Post, New York Times and other articles from the 80s, or Spy Magazine.

Andrea Chalupa: Spy Magazine!

Sarah Kendzior: Spy Magazine is one of the best sources on that. I mean seriously. They broke the torturers' lobby story, to my knowledge.

Alexandra Chalupa: They did, and so everything I had about him was through these early sources through the 80s, and understood how we operated, and really understood from being on the inside of Washington how this is the guy with his team, like Roger Stone and Atwater and others, who created this type of concept of a firm that you don't just behave like a political cooperative and prop up candidates, you actually also then get some money from it, and government lobbying jobs afterwards, and how there were things that were said in these articles how there were complaints from their clients on the Republican side that they would come into the partners of the firm. And it's like in one primary there would be three different partners, and the firm would be representing everyone in a primary race, practically. And that one person made a remark in this one article the 80s and said it would have been so much easier if the candidates who wanted to run would just go to office to be like, "Okay, which one of us do you want to win?" You know, because it was like then the firm practically choosing.

So they had this entire operation that then went overseas, and it was during the time, you know, I think people need to pay attention to who were the intelligence director was, Bill Casey at the time, but they took this entire operation and started doing this overseas. And Manafort especially, and I started suspecting that he was helping Putin target our democracy in late 2015. I went back to the DNC, eventually, as a part-time consultant, running the Ethnic Engagement program as I was transitioning back into the workforce.

Andrea Chalupa: Because you had three kids. You were a mom of three kids, which is unheard of. It's very rare in Washington, D.C., where people, especially in your line of

work, which is politics, tend to be married to their jobs, and children tend to call their nannies Mommy, and here you were sort of bucking the trend and making time in your life, because you're the firstborn child, and our parents really needed grandchildren. Let's be honest. So you had to, like, give them three grandkids, because one was not enough. So you had three kids that you were shuttling around in a minivan while working part-time for the DNC, because you've been at the DNC forever, and the DNC didn't want to let you go, because you work tirelessly.

Alexandra Chalupa: Because I was the senior advisor at the DNC to, I was one of Debbie Wasserman Schultz's, one of her senior advisors who she brought in. She was my vice chair at the DNC. I was a director to the office of the vice chairs, and I was on the senior leadership team, but I burned out.

I helped transition her during the first DNC meeting, but I was at a point in my life where it was too much. It was just an on-call 24/7 hour job, and I started losing my drive for it, and it was because I felt that the DNC that I had joined as one of the first hires for it with Howard Dean when I was Executive Director of Democrats abroad had deteriorated a lot. And once Obama won the White House, it wasn't the same committee that it was before, and it was just too much, and I did leave because I needed family balance. I was just burnt out, and they did offer me a lot of money to stay, and it was a point where there wasn't enough money in the world, and I really wanted to just be with my kids, and it was a personal choice for our family, and important to my husband, because he had received a new job opportunity that I wanted to give him the flexibility, because we actually moved out to Washington because I was like, so the political animal wanting to get involved in politics.

I was planning to take a few years off, and I did run a Congressional Campaign for a friend from law school during that break for a few months toward the end of his campaign, but for the most part I was planning to take another year off with three little kids. Instead, the Ukraine crisis happens, Manafort gets on my radar, and I'm spending a lot of my free time working with working to help, whether it's going to State Department meetings and pushing out information to combat the Russian propaganda, because there was so much of it, and then also creating these meetings to address the human rights crisis that was going on and trying to be helpful to the White House, the administration. There were a lot of leaders in Ukrainian-American Community organizations, and most of these are Republican-run, who were putting together rallies in front of the White House to urge President Obama to do more, but I was trying to operate in partnership with the White House in the sense of bringing these individuals with important information to the table and being more connected. And working with Vice President Biden's team, too, setting up conference calls with his staff with ethnic leaders so that they can get a first-hand briefing of what the developments in Ukraine were, what the White House was doing to support, what Congress was doing to support. And it was done in a non-partisan way, and it was just done so that they had a stronger connection and understood how they could plug in and help. And that's where a lot of this background came from. But I kept my eye on Manafort, because I was still

puzzled by this guy and how he able to operate this way, and there was no accountability. And I would, even when I was a part-time consultant at the DNC in 2015, I had a friend in New York reach out to me about meeting with a delegation that was coming to Congress to speak about some human rights issues that were going on in Ukraine. They asked if they could meet with me and discuss political parties, and I asked them, I said, "Do you know what Paul Manafort's doing?" And this is early December 2015. They said, "Well, his people are already mobilizing in Ukraine." And I said, "What? What do you mean?" And they said, "Yeah, his people are getting stronger and remobilizing in Ukraine."

I thought that was very odd, given that the Western support and backing, financial and other aid of the United States and the EU for Ukraine that Putin's guy would be making another political play. And at the same time, that Ukrainian oligarchs and chief rabbi had reached out to say they were coming to Washington, and the American organization that was putting their trip together asked if I could help set up a meeting with the White House, which I did, and I attended. And they were talking about the human rights conditions that were going on, that they were worried about in the winter, and what was happening. And Putin came up not meeting, and I was surprised that the reaction of the administration when Putin came up was, "Well, Putin's moved on to Syria, so that's where his real focus is." I emailed a friend of mine, my mentor Jim, and I said, "I think we have a problem here. The White House things that Putin is done with Ukraine and moved on to Syria." As if he can't multitask, you know?

Sarah Kendzior: What was the months and year for this, just to make sure our audience gets it?

Alexandra Chalupa: These meetings happened when the Ukrainian delegation came in, and then the patriarchs, was December 2015.

Andrea Chalupa: So Trump has already announced that he's running, and Manafort's about to be announced his campaign chair.

Alexandra Chalupa: [Inaudible] are already in the campaign system. And the DNC asked me to do a hit on Trump when he did a Ukraine speech in September 2015.

Andrea Chalupa: You have to clarify. People think you're like the Illuminati, Ali. You can't just say the DNC asked me to do a hit. What does that mean?

Alexandra Chalupa: Not a hit, sorry. September 2015, Trump was invited, this is part of Mueller's investigation, to speak via livestream, he got paid \$150,000, his foundation, to speak at a conference in Yalta. And so he did the livestream, and the DNC asked me as the ethnic engagement director and also in the official position I had in ethnic engagement, was asked to do a statement to react to his messaging at that event. I went public and criticized him for some of the things that he was saying, and also was telling the DNC that based on everything that I was seeing from these different listservs,

some of the Republicans had a bad reaction to some of his messaging, and the fact that he kept calling it the Ukraine and not Ukraine. The Russian intelligence was already in the DNC system, and watching everything that was happening. It could have been they that they were looking to see who responded and how and why, but I basically worked with the communications to do some of the push back on that.

Andrea Chalupa: So how did it feel for you in March 2016 when Manafort was announced as joining the Trump campaign?

Alexandra Chalupa: Well, I had already had meeting with heads of Ukrainian-American organizations and leaders that are non-partisan, saying that I had a very bad feeling that Manafort was working with Trump. I alerted a friend of mine who was one of the executives of the DNC, and I said, "There's this guy Paul Manafort, and I think he's working with Donald Trump, and he basically influenced polls for Putin." And I told him, I said, "I'm concerned that Putin is targeting our elections, and that it's through Trump, and if I'm correct, it's going to be this guy Paul Manafort who is helping him." And so I remember exactly where I was when the New York Times broke that. It broke online first, and I was standing in my kitchen, and I said, "Oh my God." I was shocked that he was so public. That's what threw me off, because he was so private and operating in the shadows until that moment. I immediately texted the executive who I talked to, as well. I texted her and the DNC CEO Amy Dacey, and said, "This is everything."

And I posted on Facebook, and I said, "We need a congressional investigation immediately. This is who Paul Manafort is." And I was pushing it out. And then the next morning, DNC CEO Amy Dacey said, "Ali, please touch base with our communications director, Louis Miranda." Which I did. And he said, "Oh, yes, I saw your post on Facebook." And I said, "No, but do you understand what this means?" He asked his team to just take a moment and just huddle very casually for me to brief them about what I knew about him. And I did, and then I also told him, I said, "I have some concerns, given we need to take a stronger look at Tad Devine." Because he worked with Tad in Ukraine as well, and there's a similar playbook here going on. And he goes, "Oh Ali, you know Tad, you worked with him on the Kerry campaign. A lot of us go overseas in off years and work overseas." And I said, "I don't, and I don't remember, I know Tad worked on the campaign, on that Kerry campaign, but I didn't know him, and it doesn't make it correct even if I did." There were some concerns, I think, that needed to be looked into, but Manafort was really the one that I was the most concerned about, because he's always been one to get his tentacles on both sides of the aisle.

That's how he's operated in Ukraine and different political parties. He's the guy that I believe Putin cares about the most, especially given the retaliation I've received by going after him.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, Manafort is Putin's pollinator. Putin can't show up at these places. Putin can't take these meetings. So he's got guys like Manafort doing that dirty work for him.

Alexandra Chalupa: Well, yeah. The basic line is yes, the Russian Federation attacked the United States election and our democracy, but they were able to do so with the help of Americans. Some Americans played a stronger role than others, and the one that I've always seen playing the strongest role in this political warfare against our country is Paul Manafort.

Andrea Chalupa: Oh, without question. I remember March 2016 stood out because of the big announcement, and just to summarize, you saw Manafort coming with Trump, because you had dug into the history of their relationship, right?

Alexandra Chalupa: Yes, and that was even back in 2014 that I saw the connection between the two of them.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, they've known each other for years, and the media in 2016 was acting like they just ran into each other, thought it was a good idea, and went with it.

Alexandra Chalupa: These guys were buddies. Once Roy Cohn introduced Trump to Manafort and Stone, I mean these guys were partying together. They were friends. They are friends. I mean, they're like, you know, they've got this...

Andrea Chalupa: They've got like a Kavanaugh-style yearbook together. That's how deep their stories go.

Alexandra Chalupa: But what was interesting and fascinating to watch from the lens of Russia attacking our democracy, is to understand how Manafort worked. And what scared the DNC a little bit is that I was able to call his play book before he did it.

I would get [from them], "Ali, you're freaking us out!" Because at that point, I was like "Manafort urgency!" Like I reached out to Marcy Kaptur in Congress, her office to see—

Andrea Chalupa: The congressman from Ohio.

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, from Ohio, who is a friend and someone I really respect, her knowledge and all the work she's done for Ukraine and Eastern European countries. Basically, it was it was very interesting to see the next day, expecting Manafort joining the campaign to be a very, very big deal—this was like the red flag of red flags with them. But instead, the media was all focused, it whitewashed his work in Ukraine, or what he was doing. And the media focused on reporting on another story that just dominated the airways for 48 hours. And that is that Corey Lewandowski turned himself in that morning, the morning the New York Times went to print, because I saw it online the night before, and he turns himself in for assaulting a Breitbart journalist three weeks earlier.

Trump even weighs in, and that ends up dominating, and then on the third day when

that story dies is when the Panama papers drops, and Fonseca goes on the website, and he was in Washington. So that dominated the story after that. And so I could see why certain things were burying it.

Andrea Chalupa: Even if it was a slow news week, the media, the Chuck Todd industrial complex, would still miss Manafort as The Smoking Gun of Russiagate. They would still miss it.

Alexandra Chalupa: One of the things that infuriated me the most, and I would watch it over and over again, because I was so angry, was Chuck Todd scored one of the first interviews with Paul Manafort, and he completely got run over. I posted about this. I made it public and I pushed that before, but literally Chuck Todd asked him, "Well, weren't you in Ukraine working for Yanukovich, who Putin supports?" And Manafort goes, "I was working in Ukraine helping it become part of Europe, and succeeded."

And Chuck Todd goes, "Thanks. We'll leave it at that." Manafort gets a smile on his face, this little grin, like "Was it this easy?"

Andrea Chalupa: Yes, it was. Manafort basically flossed his teeth with Chuck Todd in that interview.

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, and so within a few days, in early April, I finally, I had trouble connecting to the press, because the role I had in my job at the DNC, because I wasn't doing this as a DNC person, I was doing this as an American who was worried that our country was being attacked by a foreign, hostile government. At the DNC, I always relied on the communications team for anything I did. There was always a process. I didn't have a strong rolodex of journalists, but a friend of mine connected me with Michael Isikoff in early April 2016, and we spoke on the phone at first. I said, you know, "There's Paul Manafort, and this and this," and he goes, "I'm actually working on a story on this right now that's going out tomorrow, but it's not Ukraine-related." And it was a story about his work in Pakistan that dropped the next day.

But Isikoff at first thought it was a conspiracy, that what I was telling him was a total conspiracy, but he was open-minded enough to look into it and did some good reporting around it. I was trying to get more focus, and getting the Ukrainian-Americans to focus on this, because they were so good, as you know, Andrea, during the Ukraine crisis in terms of coming together as Americans who are trying to work and get attention on behalf of the developments of what Putin was doing in Ukraine, and I expected that type of same response when the same guy who caused the Ukraine crisis, the American political operative Paul Manafort, is now working for Donald Trump, that they would see a sense of urgency. So one of the things that I did was I helped organize a protest in Paul Manafort's hometown of New Britain, Connecticut, and we had a lot of the Republican Ukraine-Americans wouldn't participate. They wouldn't help out. A lot of the organizations wouldn't get involved, but there was a good showing of people who did come out, and they had signs. In April 2016, they had signs that said, "Putin, hands off

the U.S. election,” you know, and they knew what was happening back then. That was the messaging that we were pushing out in April 2016, knowing how significant Manafort’s presence was on the campaign.

Andrea Chalupa: Right, well, a lot of Ukrainian-Americans tend to be conservative because Reagan brought down the wall, so to speak. I mean, that's Reaganism. Our grandfather was like that because he suffered with a Communist.

Alexandra Chalupa: I totally get that, but I don't see Trump as someone who is a conservative. He was an outsider who was literally destroying their party, and I think that's a big piece of this: he was brutal to the Republican party. He was bulldozing it with Manafort and Roger Stone, and threatening delegates at the convention. I mean, he did a lot of damage to the party.

You know, that campaign was full-on accusing the RNC chair of rigging the election, and that rigging narrative got introduced on the Republican side the same time as being introduced through Bernie on the Democratic side, and then it took full effect once Wikileaks dropped, and then the rigging narrative had been so seeped into our discourse that in the general Trump just decided to keep going with it against Hillary. And then he had this backdrop of WikiLeaks cherry-picking emails to try to show a rigging of the election.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, so at this point you were like Moby-Dick with his white whale, and you went to Manafort’s hometown and started digging around there, and when you got back, that's when all the weird stuff started happening around your house.

Alexandra Chalupa: It was. Not just the day I got back. The first state-sponsored warning that I got from Yahoo, was not that I'd been hacked, but that state actors were targeting my account for Yahoo. Which is a very serious high-level—

Sarah Kendzior: What do you mean by state actors? What does that mean?

Alexandra Chalupa: It means that it's basically a foreign government, and I confirmed it with Bob Ward later on, and through Michael Isokoff as well later on, that this type of warning is reserved for the highest level of attack from a foreign government, basically, that they were targeting my Yahoo account. So I got that morning a few days before I went to Manafort’s hometown. However, it was until after the election, because it was a pop-up window, it was an email from a pop-up window, but I had missed an email from Yahoo and December 2015 of the same type of warning, but they had just created that warning for Yahoo in December 2015, and they didn't have a pop-up window yet.

Andrea Chalupa: Dear God! A hacking warning from Yahoo went into your spam?

Alexandra Chalupa: It didn't go into my spam. I just missed it. It wasn't an account that I was using that often, and so I didn't discover that until I went on background with

someone from The New York Times about the DNC hacking after the election and did an interview with them. And when I pulled up everything, I said, "Oh my gosh. This is an unopened email from December 2015 of the same type." But I did go to, I would go to round table meetings of a friends of Ukraine group that includes former ambassadors and different Think Tank folks that is put together by one Ukrainian-American organization, a lot of Republicans. And they were interviewing some journalist coming in from Ukraine, and I came to the meeting, and said, "What about the elephant in the room?" This was in April 2016 again, before the protest. I said, "Paul Manafort, we all know who he is. This is Putin's guy. We should be warning everyone. Those of you with Republican contacts need to warn all the campaigns. Trump needs to be called out about this and stop this. This is a big warning sign." And they agreed with me. They agreed with me, and there was someone in that meeting who works for open society, and said afterwards, she goes, "I totally agree with everything you're saying, and as a matter of fact, I have a delegation of these journalists coming to D.C. from Ukraine, and I would like for you to do stand-alone non-partisan remarks about Manafort and why you're concerned and what you think is happening."

And so I did, and I didn't tell the DNC about it beforehand, because I was doing this is a private citizen. I was a part-time contractor. I mean, I could have taken on other clients, but I didn't. But I went to the Library of Congress, and I invited Michael Isikoff, because I told the journalist the concern, and that Manafort is someone who plays very dirty, and that Donald Trump will be elected the nominee and will likely win the general election, because Manafort does not play by the rules, and that these journalists know better than anyone who Paul Manafort is, and they should not assume Americans do, and they should actually team up with their counterparts, with American journalists, to let them know what he did in Ukraine. Because they just don't understand.

And a couple of them did talk to Michael Isikoff, and work with him a little bit. And so then Luis Miranda, the communications director, sent me some link afterwards—the DNC communications director—about Manafort, some kind of article. I said, "Yes, and there's more that I think will come, you know, that's coming down the pipe, meaning that I think people are going to realize who he is." And that was one of the emails that WikiLeaks not only dropped on me—they dropped 28 emails at the convention—but they also promoted this email even in the last eight months again.

Sarah Kendzior: One of your emails, you mean? Like spelling this out?

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, Wikileaks has still been going after me. They still continue to go after me a little bit. They use this particular email again, that they tweeted out at me. This was in 2018. That was the email that when Wikileaks dropped the email, I was in the convention in Philly. There was an attachment, and it showed a picture that I took of the state-sponsored tax. That was a perfect image, because the two tabs I had open, one was my name, because of my Facebook thing, and one was Paul Manafort's name next to my name on the other tab, because of the article I was reading on him. And so when Wikileaks did drop at the convention, Michael Isikoff called me, because I had met

with him three weeks before, because I told the DNC, “I know how Manafort works. They took our emails. I know they took our emails after we discovered there was a breach.” And they said that there was no indication; the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike said they didn't see anything that was taken, but I was telling everyone in my neighborhood, at block parties, “They're going to drop our emails at Convention!” And I didn't know it was Wikileaks that would do it. I just said, “I know how this guy works. They're going to do something big at the convention.”

Andrea Chalupa: I remember you telling us a bomb was going to go off right before the Democratic Convention in Philly.

Alexandra Chlaupa: Yeah, and I didn't mean a physical bomb. I meant it was going to be, like, very explosive. And I sat down with Isikoff, and he says, “What is you keep talking [about]? Our friend says that you said something about that they stole the emails and stole everything.” I said, “I'm telling you. I know how Manafort works, and our emails are going to be released when we get to Philly, and they're going to cause all these issues, and this is how he thinks. This is what they're going to do.”

And so when it happened, Isikoff was like, “Oh my gosh.” He called me, and I said, “Yes, and did you see the email that mentions the two of us?” Because it says in the email that I invited Michael Isikoff to this Library Congress event to meet with these Ukrainian-American journalists. I directed him to the emails, and then I said, “Look at the attachment.” The attachment was basically exactly that, the state-sponsored. And he ran this story, because he called Yahoo and he confirmed that was a very serious hacking attempt that's reserved for only certain high-level intrusions that are very scary. It's a very scary type of threat on your email. So he ran the story, and then the FBI responded about an hour later and said that they were now investigating and realize that this breach may have gone to more than just the committee's, but your personal accounts. A few weeks later, I believe it was the New York Times broke the story that it was about a hundred political operatives that had been targeted with their emails like this with state-sponsored attacks, and that included Podesta.

Music

[Commercial break] Sarah Kendzior: Hey, Gaslit Nation job seekers. Finding a new job is a lot of work, especially in an economy marked by trade wars, low wages and kleptocratic elites. What if you had your own personal recruiter to help you find a better job? Now, ZipRecruiter's technology can do that for you. Just download the ZipRecruiter job search app, let it know what kind of jobs you're interested in, and its technology starts doing the work. The ZipRecruiter app finds jobs you'll like and puts your profile in front of employers who may be looking for someone like you. If an employer likes your profile, ZipRecruiter lets you know, so if you're interested in the job, you can apply. Our listeners should download the free ZipRecruiter job search app today and let the power of technology work for you. Don't wait; the sooner you download the free ZipRecruiter job search app, the sooner it can help you find a better job. [End commercial break]

Andrea Chalupa: And so all of this was horrifying at the time. It's obviously deeply horrifying for you on a personal level, and it was also a pretty obvious threat to our country on multiple levels. You had Wikileaks, you had hacks, you had Manafort, who as we said, you could read his biography online through any kind of archival work, you had Trump at the same time as WikiLeaks asking Russia to get Hillary's emails, doing all these other things that showed his allegiance to Putin. Why do you think the media and the intelligence community and the Obama Administration, none of them seemed to respond with the level of urgency warranted for a situation like this? What do you think was happening?

Alexandra Chalupa: I think the intelligence community was doing a lot behind the scenes at this time that they wouldn't necessarily be able to publicly speak about, and I know that President Obama did try to get the word out that the Republicans were playing hardball back then, and I know Nancy Pelosi warned them not to use any of the stolen information in her campaign commercials. And I think a lot of people forget that there were quite a few House candidates that were using stolen information, stolen emails, and using it to promote themselves and their races. And there was no coming together as a country, because there were other emails related to D.C. leaks that included our NATO General and Lindsey Graham and McCain was targeted in those, and others. What was shocking was there was no willingness to all come together.

I do think based on the climate, because I quit the DNC the morning that Wikileaks dropped the emails. I had three major events that week of the convention, and I'd told them I would see them through the convention, but then I had to leave. They were trying to get me to stay, but I really felt that I was better off trying to warn people what was happening on the outside, because the committee was so broken. It was broken what they had to go through, and what the staff went through, and I was pretty pissed at that point, too, and also terrified. But from the reaction that I got, a lot of people just saw that they really did think that Hillary was going to win, and there was also the setup that that Trump and Manafort and others got ahead of by accusing because, this attack their have now investigators started in 2016. They were accusing Obama of rigging an election. They were accusing Hillary of doing foul play. She walked into a trap when she was debating Donald Trump. He threatened not to concede, and she said how horrified she was, and then it basically closed the door on her being able to have the optics needed to actually not concede a contested election without him completely smearing it.

As for the journalists, there's several things. One is I don't think a lot of people could wrap their heads around how big this is. This has never happened before. They weren't paying attention to what Putin does or how he operates, and I think a lot of them are also like, "Wow, this is great for our ratings. Look at this, and look at this email says." And getting caught up in the chaos. They just didn't understand. I don't think they understand there were some that were maliciously promoting things to journalists and misinformation intentionally. There was just an inability to understand what is going on here. Is a foreign power, a hostile foreign power, that we haven't really spent a lot of

time and resources paying attention to, actually attacking our country, and why? There were just so many questions that they didn't understand what was happening, and they also believed. Even Michael Isikoff I said, "I'm very worried, and she's not going to win. She's not going to win." And he said, "Oh, no, no, she'll get this."

In the campaign, it was, "If we win by one percent, it's good enough." In that situation, it's not. You have to treat this as a national security crisis and figure out a way to bring the country together and address this, but there was no willingness. On the Dem's side, they just didn't get it. I went to organizations with a donor who really understood the significance, and I would go with her to some of these organizations that wanted her money, and she would basically be on message saying what was going on, and they still did not...they'd be like, "Oh, we're really focused on Supreme Court Justices." A host of one of these events, when I kind of briefed him on what was going on, he goes, "You seem hysterical, like you can use a drink." That was the reaction. People just thought this is hysterics, like, this is hysterics. You're being hysterical. I think for some of my stuff, and I know you guys discussed this, before the convention, there were a lot of strange things going on at my house, with these crazy types of break-ins that just seemed very bizarre. Break-in attempts, and the song being put on my phone, and things are going on that probably make me sound even crazier, even though I was like, "Hey guys, I know I'm right, because they're coming after me. I know what I'm seeing is correct, because they're retaliating, and someone is trying to silence me." But instead, they're like, "Okay, crazy lady."

Andrea Chalupa: Right, well I want to say they were using active measures against you, not just hacking your email, but it was when you returned from—I remember this, because it's the pattern of physical harassment, not just a cyber intrusion, or the attempted hacking, but the physical, in-person harassment at your home. That pattern emerged, and at first you laughed it off, because I think at first it was even out of the realm of your imagination, that it would get that bad. And it did get that bad, you know, attempted break-ins on your home in the middle of the night, broke into your husband's car and trashed the inside just to send a message. And they would repeatedly do that to your car at sort of key times in their own cover up. For instance, in June 2017, when the New York Times bombshells dropped that Don, Jr. had the Trump Tower meeting with the Russians, they went after you then. When Whitaker came in, they went after you then. So it hasn't stopped in 2016 is what I want people understand. And the song you mentioned, on Sunday, I think it was Sunday, July 10th, 2016, a few days before the convention, you were just another lazy Sunday and you pull out your phone and put on iTunes and suddenly on its own pops up this death metal song that you certainly did not buy, by a band in Europe called Avatar, and the song's called "Regret," and it's about a woman owl, a female owl, her final moments of regret, as she lays dying after losing a battle with the Mighty Eagle, the eagle being the symbol of Russia.

["Regret" plays]

When I repeated all of that to Russian friends of mine, and I said, "Yeah, and the owl

will lose the battle to the Mighty Eagle,” their eyes just popped open. They knew exactly talking what I was talking about. So that song kept popping up on its own for weeks, and I even witnessed it one time while you asked me to man your phone, because you were getting so many calls from reporters who knew that you knew what was going on.

Alexandra Chalupa: Well, yeah, and the song was popping up on my phone when the White House was attacking me for those two weeks in 2017, too.

Andrea Chalupa: Are you serious? You never told me that.

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, it did. But how do you prove any of this, right? That’s why I don’t get caught up in a lot of this. I mean, it was horrifying, what was happening around our house, and I didn’t laugh it off. I felt like it was, you know, especially when this woman was in my backyard at one in the morning, with white flowers in her hair, like a Ukrainian headpiece, and I was with a friend of mine, and she’s just appeared out of nowhere, and she tried to break into my house. Because I locked the doors, we called 9-1-1, and it woke up my husband. Our daughters were having a sleepover upstairs. As she was walking around, we thought she was on drugs, right? Like this woman was a danger because she’s on drugs, and then she tried to throw her body against my kitchen door and move the handle and throw a flower pot off the window sill. I would call 9-1-1 the second time when she did that, and there were like six cop cars that came, and they couldn’t find her. Then a couple days later, another young woman appeared and lured my cat off the lawn and start taking photos, and was taking photos of walking backwards with the cat, and this woman would appear and case my house for the next few weeks. And then the Saturday night before the song was put on my phone, I was sitting on my porch and reading some text messages, and I didn’t notice that the same young woman was walking down the street, until like she was right in front of me on the sidewalk, not looking at me, but she started singing very loudly, and then she walked over to the neighbor’s house, turned around abruptly, and just stared at me for like 7 seconds, and then disappeared. The next morning, it was just bizarre. It’s like, I don’t know what to make of that, but the next morning I went to Starbucks, then I often at this point would take walks and listen to my personal playlist, and then on my personal library, the song by Avatar, a group called Avatar popped up that was there that I didn’t recognize. I played it, and right away, I said, “Okay.”

I texted my friend Nora across the street who’s connected to a lot of people in the intel community and has been kind of on this journey with me and witnessed a lot of this, and I said, “Oh, look how they’re trying to scare me. This isn’t going to work.”

It was just a bunch of stuff that was strange. It was strange, and I didn’t know what to necessarily make of it. I would post this stuff and put it on Facebook, just to mark it. Even right after we called the police, and the police were on the hunt for 30 minutes that night and couldn’t find her. She just disappeared. Like, they were on foot, on patrol, they couldn’t find her. My friend Jen was like, “Officers, she was just here a few minutes ago. We called 9-1-1 twice. She was just here a few minutes ago.” And they’re like, “We

cannot find her.”

And so they kind of dismissed it as maybe it's a party, and we walked around the next day and there were no parties that anyone heard ever. No one saw anything. But the bigger thing is that it was just like strained psychological warfare. That happened leading up to the convention, like the state-sponsored text. You know, I received another one just a couple months ago. I'm still getting them every once in a while. I have to keep that account active so I don't lose it, but I check it every once in a while. Right before New Year's Eve, like hey, Happy New Year!

Andrea Chalupa: They tried to hack you on New Year's Eve?

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, there was one on New Year's Eve. There's been about over a dozen of them, I think, in the last 2 years.

But the strategy shifted. It was like these weird intimidation tactics of some kind leading up to the convention. Summer 2016 [there was] cyber-hacking, Wikileaks, dropped emails. My stuff is exposed in the emails, along with so many other people. And then after the election, everything shifted, and after the election, I started getting these strange tweets. First of all, the first thing that happened after the election, we were right in the middle of recount stuff, but I was shocked when the Kremlin, actually a spokesperson for the foreign minister of the Russian Federation made a statement at a press conference when reporters were asking about Russian meddling. Not only did they deny doing anything, but then they scolded Ukraine and accused Ukraine of meddling, and accused Ukraine of meddling by going after Paul Manafort.

You had the Russian Federation upset about Paul Manafort and accusing its neighbor Ukraine of meddling, and denying that they're meddling. It was Ken Vogel on Julia Ioffe who broke the story for Politico, and right away, I was like, "Un-oh, this is nuts." But that was the beginning of the Ukraine collusion narrative.

Then a friend of mine alerts me that this guy, a low-level staffer at the Ukrainian embassy who got fired, had come down to meet with the Trump transition people, people of the Trump world, whatever that means, of the transition team. He tried to bribe my friends to go out to dinner back from Kyiv in Washington to have a meeting. In the meeting, the Trump people were very interested to know everything I was up to: What do you know about Alexandra Chalupa? What conversations have you ever had?

I found out later that my friend told me that he also tried to bribe her to collect a lot of dirt on me. He told her, "You could make good money." This was December 2016. I started getting these strange tweets from these big accounts, including one in London, supposedly, saying, "DNC wonder op is feeding Washington Post fake stories." That kind of took me aback, because I did talk to several reporters on background, including want the Washington Post in September 2016 about what was happening and what I was seeing. And the Washington Post had to reached out to me because they were

going to do a big story that was going to drop in December 2016. They interviewed Donna Brazile and Debbie Wasserman Schultz for it. So I was wondering if they knew about that, or if they were pushing something else. Then I would get these tweets: You're about to become famous soon you cunt . . . justice is coming. I would just basically take a screenshot of them and post them on Facebook, like, "Oh, look at these nice threats I'm getting today." Just to record it. Then I told the FBI about it, because I met with them and I reached out to them and finally connected with them in September 2016. And I said, "Hey, I'm getting his threats, and it looks like it's going to be some sort of PR hit." And they said, "Yeah, we don't think, you know, it's imminent danger. You're probably right. It's going to be a PR hit."

And then Ken Vogel calls me for the story that feeds his Ukraine collusion narrative that these guys Giuliani, Manafort, and this fired employee from Ukraine Embassy planted. It gets buried, because it drops on January 10th or 11th, the day the Steele Dossier drops, so it got kind of gets buried, but I met with lawyers, because I said that I know how Manafort works, and this is going to be used against me. The way they wrote this is too...it had me very worried about how they took all the money by the DNC over a 10 year period from FCC reports and bundled it to make it look like I was being paid that to go after Paul Manafort, when I was never being paid to go after Paul Manafort.

Andrea Chalupa: The RNC, the Republican National Committee even used your lump salary over several years in a meme to their followers to make it look like you were this female Paul Manafort. What's really funny is that you and I always say that Paul Manafort's more Ukrainian than you are, because he's actually been to Ukraine, lived in Ukraine. You never have. You're just like a mom with all these kids strapped to you.

So Trump had already won the election, and you knew in Fall 2016 that the transition team was asking about you, and trying to dig up dirt on you, and then in comes Ken Vogel to interview you and I don't think in a million years you thought that Politico would throw you under the bus the way they did in essentially publishing this Manafort narrative to try to turn the tables that its Ukraine that's in fact colluding. And as you pointed out, no one really took that bait, because Vogel's story dropped when the Steele Dossier dropped in BuzzFeed, and that was a much bigger story. And what was really crude was that in June 2017, when Don, Jr. gets outed for his stupidity, and the Trump Tower meeting with the Russians, Don, Jr. Breaks his silence on Twitter by sharing, essentially, that narrative launched by Ken Vogel in Politico, that Ukraine, meaning you, colluded in 2016 and helped Hillary. What was really disgusting watching this was that Vogel had his moment in the spotlight and started sharing that the only proof of collusion is you and Ukraine, and really milking all this attention for himself. What was really nuts was that he, weeks prior, had published a story in Politico basically saying that Manafort was advising Trump on how to turn the tables in the Russia investigation by framing Ukraine and the Democrats. But for whatever dumb reason, Vogel does not clear your name and mention you in that report. For whatever dumb reason, Vogel doesn't say, "Hey guys, wait. This Ukraine-DNC collusion story is a Manafort narrative that he's planted. Here's my article on it." No, Vogel, for whatever reason, doubles down

on that Ukraine collusion propaganda. Do you have any idea why he would do such a thing?

Alexandra Chalupa: You know, it really shocked me all the time how many journalists went with it, and how Sean Hannity literally had my face on his show every day, and my husband was getting calls from his Republican boss saying, "Is it true your wife money launders?" They're pushing the story just as much as they could, to the brink, to interject questions, to really go after. It was CNN that reached out to me, which was shocking, because the first time Ken Vogel's piece hit, I had a lot of people that were calling me from newsrooms, saying, "Can you work with our reporters? Because they need to get briefed up about Manafort and Ukraine, what was going on." I spent many, many hours working with reporters on background, directing them to contacts and sources, and giving them information, but when this story was used the way it was, there were too many that were fueling it, and that's kind of what shocked me, and especially that Ken Vogel had this piece before that he wasn't pushing. And Marie Watts did a follow-up in Vox in December 2018 saying that Manafort called at the White House and advised them to go after me by name, Special Counsel Mueller, the FBI. He was part of the strategy that the White House is executing playing offense, which they're still executing with Giuliani and still working with Paul Manafort, like he admitted to Ken Vogel.

I want to say that Ken Vogel, his role shocked me, because I was working on a 100-page paper after the election in addition to the recounts, trying to capture all the great journalism out there to piece together, you know, before there was a Russia investigation, to piece together how Putin attacked the election, and it end up having four hundred different citations, and all this great stuff was right ahead of us. There were a lot of gaps on what Trump campaign's role was; this was just Manafort, and a lot more is obviously now know. Vogel was one of the best journalists when it came to reporting on Paul Manafort and some of the Russia stuff. He was one of the earliest. And so when he called me, I was like, "Oh my gosh, I was just footnoting you!"

He was quoted probably the most in some of my documents because he had done such really good reporting, but worried me about the conversation and the bigger picture is when he called me, I was sleep-deprived, and that probably didn't [help], but I clarified everything about the truth, that what he was saying was like some sort of propaganda. It doesn't make sense. Here's the truth, and here's everything else. And he twisted stuff, and made this case did not just hurt me, but the story was meant to hurt Ukraine.

The story was meant to hurt the ambassador of Ukraine to D.C., because my guess is they wanted to pull him, because he was very close to President Poroshenko then, and they wanted to put in one of their own guys as Michael Cohen and others are shopping around Kremlin-backed peace deals. They probably wanted one of their puppet ambassadors to force the hand of Ukraine or something.

When the White House revived the piece to distract from the investigation and use it again, Trump himself alluded to it in a tweet, and I had Kellyanne Conway, they were all

going after me by name for two weeks. What the media missed then was that the President of the United States was stalling on signing a bipartisan sanctions bill on Russia for its attack on our democracy. And it was like he was using the story to not only distract but to have an excuse of, "Why should I sign this Russian sanctions bill when it's Ukraine that meddled?" Which wasn't true, but that's part of the narrative that they were trying to set up, and now they're trying to revive it, and Giuliani met with this guy who got fired from Ukraine Embassy, you know, it was reported on Friday by the Washington Post that he met with him last week, and had a five-hour meeting. This guy from the Ukraine Embassy, who I don't even mention my name, because he reminds me of like when you have an infant that you're trying to take to the park, and you have everything planned, and next thing you know, you have a blowout diaper and you have crap everywhere.

Like, this guy is like the dirty diaper of my life that you just can't get out. You know, you just don't mess with it because it stinks even more. So I don't mention him by name, but he basically had been courting these efforts. I've had journalist who have told me that hey, you know, in 2018 before the midterms, we understand this guy's been spending a lot of time, this foreigner, no less, has been spending a lot of time on the hill trying to get Republicans to subpoena you. I was like, "Well that's nice to know."

So he's working with Sputnik and Infowars, he's working with a Russian agent, Sputnik, to feed this information, that is harmful not only to me and targets me, but it hurts his country. It hurt Ukraine. It was literally like, who needs pooping when you got this Ukrainian doing all the dirty work with the Russian propaganda for you?

Andrea Chalupa: And that's Giuliani's source that Guiliani keeps parading around to try to keep this narrative going. Where are you now with everything? So in 2016. I know you put together a huge report. You gave it to the FBI. They had everything. You gave it to members of Congress. You continued to meet on the Hill, continued to fact-check Trump's lies, and help journalists and members of Congress and their staff piece all of this together. So where are you currently? Especially as Barr is having the DOJ investigate the FBI's investigation of Russiagate and so forth. So, where are you now?

Alexandra Chalupa: Now that we've had Congress on the House side, since then is when I really started doing more hands-on work, meeting with key committees, because before we didn't have that, which was such a national security threat, and now, you know, Giuliani with his hit, I've been proactive about it, because I saw this coming back in March. I've been documenting it. I document everything, and I've given this information, including how the Ukraine collusion story originated with a Kremlin and made its way to the White House and now is being revived again by the president's personal lawyer, I haven't backed down with these guys. I'm hitting them hard directly on Twitter. But I've been giving the documents to the appropriate committee on the Hill. You know, as a D.C. resident, I don't have representation, but Marcy Kaptur is someone I considered one of my adopted members, and she's been instrumental. I've had some good meetings there, and giving them this information and piecing it together so they

see the big picture. If they're going after people like me, that just shows how desperate they are. The President of the United States has been tweeting, and I have this documented as well, this Spycgate. The first time he tweeted Spycgate was weeks after the Helsinki meeting, thinking no one knows what he was talking about. But a couple months later, a book called Spycgate comes out, and Chapter One in first few pages start with me and Paul Manafort. So, they're blaming this investigation on a on a handful of us, as even Russian media did in 2017 when they use photos of your clip, your interview, Andrea, that you did after the convention, and then the footage of me speaking.

Andrea Chalupa: Oh, yeah. Putin's chief propagandist did an entire segment about how you created the whole Russiagate scandal, and they said that I was an accomplice, and they pulled video footage of my interviews and things.

Alexandra Chalupa: Yeah, they said that this was all coordinated, and they said I was... Julia Davis alerted me when I was making pancakes with my kids on a Sunday, and I was like, "Gosh, things have been very quiet since the inauguration. Maybe the Russian Federation forgot about me." And all of a sudden Julia Davis is like, "Oh look!" And she tweets it at me, and they had photos of my daughters that they use in this clip.

Andrea Chalupa: On Kremlin State TV.

Alexandra Chalupa: On Kremlin State TV, they accuse me of being the chief person discrediting Donald Trump, causing Russia hysteria. It's absolutely crazy. And so, you know, this is all Paul Manafort. What journalists need to look at more, is in the coordination, nothing has changed. Paul Manafort is in prison, and he's fully operational. Giuliani admitted this to Ken Vogel. I know a lot of people got upset at some of Ken Vogel's latest reporting, because he's the one who took Giuliani's story, because Giuliani was literally having meltdowns on Twitter. Why isn't anyone picking up the Ukraine collusion story? He was really struggling, really struggling, because the media is not buying it. And I think that's a very good test of the health of our journalists. They weren't buying into it the way that they did before, so that's a good measure. And then when Ken Vogel reported on it, I found some of the reporting fascinating, because he disclosed something I was trying to get journalists to look at for a while. Is Paul Manafort still courting with Rudy Giuliani that had the defense legal agreement this time with the president, and Manafort. Is it still active? And Giuliani literally confesses just a couple weeks ago, yes, this Ukraine trip I was working with Paul Manafort on, through his lawyer.

I mean, are you kidding me? He's in prison. He's still running defense and offense strategy. But Giuliani is someone who really needs to be investigated, because what the media needs to understand is that when the White House was going after me, starting July 10th, 2017, Whitaker goes after me with a public letter saying for me to be investigated, and the Senator Grassley goes after with the DOJ. Giuliani had just left Ukraine, and all of the sudden I find out from an editor of a respected U.S. publication

that his freelancer heard that a member of Parliament in Ukraine was all of the sudden pushing an investigation on me and Hillary Clinton in Ukraine, for the Ukrainian government's prosecutor to investigate us. That originated right after Giuliani was in Ukraine. That's when I got the heads up a couple weeks later that that member of Parliament was pushing the story. When I did research on the member of Parliament, his father was a KGB official who works for Russian intelligence, and he himself was trained in Russian intelligence in Moscow, and that he represents, basically, an advocate for the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine with the Parliament.

So these guys are just full on coordinating efforts here left and right. I knew that this other hit was coming with Giuliani and everything because Sputnik let me know it was coming. They tweeted at me and this Ukrainian anti-corruption official in Ukraine, and said that we were the two responsible for the reason why Paul Manafort is a political prisoner, is how they put it.

Sarah Kendzior: I mean, this is so, as you were talking I started writing down the names of all of the notable people and outlets that have targeted you, and I wanted to reiterate this for our audience that you are a private citizen. You are someone who, out of the interest of protecting your country, investigated Paul Manafort, who is now confirmed to be a convicted felon, implicated in this plot against our country, and as a mother of 3, as an independent researcher merely speaking out, you have been targeted by Paul Manafort, Rudy Giuliani, Matthew Whitaker, Wikileaks, the Russian Federation, Sean Hannity, Fox News, various Russian outlets, Chuck Grassley, the White House, Donald Trump, through the book that he alluded to in his tweets. I mean, that is horrifying, and I hope that people grasp both the sacrifice that you have made as a citizen, but also what this means for all of us, for all citizens and journalists and patriotic Americans who are willing to call out this corruption in plain sight, because quite honestly, you should be protected, not prosecuted, not persecuted. And the fact that we even have this situation, I mean, it's just so awful, and I'm so sorry.

Alexandra Chalupa: Our grandparents taught us the importance of gratitude, and I have to tell you, it has been a horrifying experience, but I met such amazing people through this journey and so many people who are doing this fine work. I mean, what you two are doing, and so many friends who came into my life through this, that like, it's what they're doing to hurt our country, our intelligence community. It's the bigger picture, you know? It's the bigger picture of what they're doing to our country.