



Gaslighting the Public: A Recap of Media Misdeeds

The efforts by the mainstream media to deceive the American public about what they have seen with their own eyes intensified before the 2016 presidential election and escalated during Trump's first administration and the Biden administration. As incontrovertible evidence of this sorry history continues to surface, let's review how mainstream media worked with political operatives to dupe the American public over supposed Russian election interference, the Covid-19 pandemic, the Hunter Biden computer and Joe Biden's competency.

The American public needs reminding of these deceptions in order to understand how the media and public officials work to manipulate them. The lesson to be learned is the importance of alternative conservative media.

The Encyclopedia Britannica *describes "gaslighting" as an elaborate and insidious technique to deceive and psychologically manipulate a person over an extended period.*¹ The goal is to undermine the person's ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, making that person dependent on the manipulator in deciding what is valid. The effect is to turn the victims into intellectual and emotional slaves of a narcissistic manipulator.

The term "gaslighting" is rooted in the 1938 British stage play *Gas Light*, which was turned into a 1944 Hollywood film called *Gaslight* starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. The thriller involves an evil man who marries a woman with the intention of convincing her of her own insanity so he can institutionalize her and take control of her house and its valuable contents. A deception involving flickering gas lamps is designed to make her think she is imagining things.

Gaslighting, however, did not become a popular political term until more recently. Today, gaslighting is more than just an individual act perpetrated by a single actor, but a mass phenomenon perpetrated by politicians and government officials working with mass media.

Gaslighting emerged as a major weapon to undermine Trump even before he won the 2016 election, through what became known as the Russia hoax. The campaign against Trump began when the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee hired, through intermediaries, a former British intelligence officer, Christopher Steele, to conduct opposition research on then-candidate Trump. Steele's memos detailing explosive, unverified claims about Trump are known collectively as the Steele dossier.²

The Russia Hoax, Riots, and Covid

On July 23, 2025, the House of Representatives select committee on intelligence issued a detailed refutation of the Russia hoax. In releasing the report, chairman of the committee Rick Crawford (R-AR) told the press, "The Russia hoax will go down as one of the most troublesome events in U.S. history. A President of the United States was falsely accused, and a nation had to endure lies fabricated by rogue personnel within their own Intelligence Community."

Rep. Crawford added, "A handful of unelected bureaucrats at the CIA, with approval and encouragement from CIA Director Brennan and FBI Director Comey, were able to cobble together pieces of 'intelligence,' in some cases unrelated and unsourced, lacking credibility—to create a 'Frankenstein' report that supported the political story they wanted told."³

Finally, the public officials involved in this hoax are being confronted legally. In November 2025, a federal grand jury subpoenaed former CIA Director John Brennan and former FBI officials Peter Strzok and Lisa Page, who allegedly played major roles in the Russia hoax.⁴

During Trump's first administration, media gaslighting became all too apparent in the Covid pandemic and the George Floyd riots in the summer of 2020.

In March 2020, public health officials warned of a noxious virus, SARS-CoV-2, spreading across the United States and globally. The Washington, DC public health establishment, headed by Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, urged the nation to “follow the science.” Fauci and other establishment public health officials denied reports about the Wuhan Lab origins of the virus, asserting that the virus had emerged in Chinese open-air markets.

The media hopped on board this claim, denouncing those who called Covid-19 a Chinese virus. Whatever the origins of the virus, public health officials ordered lockdowns, face-masking and social distancing.⁵ State officials mandated even lengthier shutdowns which included public schools.

When dissident health officials questioned the efficacy of these measures, the Washington, DC establishment unleashed a campaign to gaslight the American public. Specifically, Fauci and Collins vilified what was called the Great Barrington Declaration, in which Martin Kulldorff (Harvard), Sunetra Gupta (Oxford) and Jay Bhattacharya (Stanford) questioned the blanket pandemic lockdowns. Instead, they urged “focused protection” of high-risk populations such as the elderly and those with specific medical conditions.

Eminent Scientists Disparaged as ‘Fringe’

We now know from emails released through a Freedom of Information Act request, filed by the American Institute for Economic Research, that Fauci and Collins privately exchanged emails to orchestrate a campaign against the authors of the Great Barrington Declaration.⁶ Collins and Fauci launched a media effort to attack what they labeled as the “three fringe epidemiologists.”⁷

The takedown involved stigmatizing three distinguished signers of the Great Barrington Declaration. Collins told the *Washington Post*, “This is a fringe component of epidemiology. This is not mainstream science. It’s dangerous.” Other news outlets followed suit, including *The Nation* and *Wired*, a tech-news site. Fauci told the press that there was not any serious scientific divide, and the lockdowns were to be only a few days. (They were not. When Covid cases rose, restrictions returned.) When a few Republican governors such as Ron DeSantis in Florida refused to go along with the shutdown, they were called science deniers.⁸

While the public was being told to mask up, riots broke out across the United States in May 2020 following the death of George Floyd during an arrest in Minneapolis.⁹ Protests erupted in 120 cities and the National Guard was called out in at least 21 states.

Americans laughed bitterly when a CNN reporter appeared on the air that summer to tell his viewers that the protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin were “mostly peaceful.” In the background was a burning building.¹⁰ At the Democratic Party National Convention later that summer, party officials praised the “Summer of Love” protests and applauded the role Black Lives Matter, a radical organization, played in the protests.

Gaslighting a Laptop

The gaslighting carried over to the 2020 presidential campaign. The *New York Post* announced on October 14, 2020, that a computer belonging to President Biden’s son, Hunter Biden, had turned up containing evidence of dirty business dealings with foreign entities, as well as graphic pictures of him having sex and ingesting drugs. The mainstream media and social media networks moved to counter the story. The first responses by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other media outlets smeared the report as false.

Two days after the *New York Post* article, the *Washington Post* reported that the sourcing for the *New York Post* came from Trump allies Rudy Giuliani and Steve Bannon—and therefore should be doubted. Facebook and Twitter suppressed the article, and the *New York Post* had its Twitter account locked out for two weeks. Nonetheless, a viral video from the laptop, posted on Twitter by KanekoattheGreat, gained more than 28 million views.¹¹

Suppressing the laptop story proved impossible. Too many people watched the video of Hunter Biden’s escapades. With the Trump-Biden debate only a few days away, the response came quickly. Former CIA Acting Director Michael Morell, encouraged by the Biden administration, organized a letter signed by 51 former intelligence officers, including ex-CIA chiefs John Brennan and Leon Panetta. The letter stated that the laptop had “all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation.”

James Clapper, the former Director of National Intelligence under Barack Obama, went on the air on CNN to describe the laptop story as “classic, textbook Soviet tradecraft at work.” Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), then a member of the House Intelligence Committee, and Rep. Adam Schiff

(D-CA), who was then the panel's chairman, dismissed the credibility of the laptop as "Kremlin propaganda."¹²

The gaslighting worked in the June presidential debate. When Trump brought up the laptop, Biden came prepared, brazenly countering, "Five former heads of the CIA, both parties, say what he's saying is a bunch of garbage. Nobody believes it except his good friend Rudy Giuliani." Later, appearing on CBS's *60 Minutes* with Lesley Stahl, Trump brought up the Biden laptop, only to be dismissed by Stahl, who giggled in response to Trump's charge.¹³

After the election, the FBI acknowledged that the Biden laptop was authentic and the hard drive had not been tampered with. The laptop was Hunter's. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other news outlets belatedly acknowledged that they had been misled and apologized for their mistake. A House Judiciary Committee subcommittee report in October 2024 revealed that Facebook and Microsoft were pressured by the Biden campaign to squelch the Hunter laptop revelation. Emails showed that Facebook executives discussed calibrating censorship decisions to please what they assumed would be the Biden-Harris administration.¹⁴

*The 51 former intelligence officers who signed the now-infamous letter, however, refused to back down. Even today they claim that Russian intelligence was involved and computer hard drives can be tampered with, even though the FBI confirmed that the hard drive had not been tampered with.*¹⁵

Biden's Cognitive Decline

Gaslighting continued in the Biden administration in its efforts to convince the American public that the southern border was secure and that inflation was only "transitory." Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas appeared over and over on news programs declaring that the southern border was secure, while Americans saw with their own eyes thousands of people crossing into the country every week.¹⁶

The most flagrant attempt to gaslight the public came with efforts to convince Americans that President Biden was as sharp as a tack. Biden apologists told us that clips of Biden shaking hands with the air, wandering off at official events, being escorted around by a bunny at the annual White House Easter Egg Roll, and losing track of his speeches even with a teleprompter, were taken out of context and were just right-wing hit jobs.

This all came to a crashing end in the June presidential 2024 debate with Donald Trump. In the debate, Biden spoke in a raspy voice and struggled to utter cogent sentences. At one point, viewers heard him declare nonsensically, "We finally beat Medicare." Suddenly, the narrative changed. Celebrities such as George Clooney, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, and, behind the scenes, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urged Biden to drop out of the race because his mental and physical health disqualified him from serving a second term.

The first response by the Biden campaign to this disastrous debate was that Biden had a cold. Later, Hunter claimed that his father was suffering from the effects of air travel and zolpidem, a sleeping medicine. Even now, Kamala Harris in her memoir continues to assert that her former boss had the mental capacity to "discharge the duties of president."¹⁷

The June debate left mainstream media, who had parroted the fit-as-a-fiddle Biden narrative, with egg on their faces. After the election, CNN host Jake Tapper contended in his book *Original Sin* (2024) that the media were fooled by the Biden administration as to the president's mental competency. Tapper had lectured Lara Trump in 2020 for questioning Biden's mental faculties.¹⁸

Gaslighting in 2024 and Beyond

During the 2024 presidential campaign, critics accused Kamala Harris, the Democratic Party nominee, of taking gaslighting to another level. She had promised that if elected president she would prosecute illegal border crossings. In an interview with CNN anchor Dana Bash, Kamala Harris stated, "We have laws that have to be followed and enforced, that address and deal with people who cross our border illegally."¹⁹ Harris's claim contrasted with her previous statements. In 2017, she said unequivocally that crossing the border illegally was not a crime.²⁰ She decided simply to deny her past record in support of open borders. It did not work.

*More recently, an insidious attempt to gaslight the American public by foundations and the Biden administration about the alleged threat to democracy from right-wing extremism has been exposed.*²¹ Beginning in late 2024, USAID employees began electronic chats about ways to subvert the incoming Trump administration. Out of these exchanges, the Inter-Movement Impact Project was formed. This group reached out to other global actors to mobilize against Trump. The goal was to convince the public that right-wing extremism was a real threat.

Further investigation by @DataRepublican found that this effort went back much earlier to mid-2017, when Mark Gerzon, president and founder of Mediators Foundation, organized a secretive private conference involving key foundation actors. At this private meeting held at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Pocantico Center, Gerzon formed a group called "New Pluralists." The group included the Charles Koch Institute, the Anti-Defamation League, the Ford Foundation and the Soros Fund. The initial project called for "bridging divides" by censoring populists and installing a "new democracy."

In 2022 President Biden hosted the "United We Stand Summit" to counter the alleged effects of hate-fueled violence in America. Biden instructed federal agencies to strengthen resources in schools, law enforcement agencies and public institutions to combat hate.²² Attorney General Merrick Garland announced a nationwide initiative to combat hate speech. The Anti-Defamation League came on board by listing Turning Point USA in its "Glossary of Extremism and Hate" database, which was retired in October 2025 following the assassination of Turning Point's founder, Charlie Kirk. Major media networks and journalists were induced to denounce populism and authoritarianism.

These efforts aimed to convince Americans that right-wing populism poses a serious threat to the nation, which it manifestly does not. The full details of this effort to gaslight the American public about the threat of right-wing extremism are only just now being exposed.

The moral of the story: Don't count on legacy media and their manipulators to stop gaslighting the American public. *Support conservative print, digital, and social media, including newsletters such as ours, in their efforts to inform the public of the truth.*

Mindszenty Report Reprints

1 copy	\$1.50	20 copies	\$15.00
10 copies	\$8.00	50 copies	\$25.00
		100 copies	\$35.00

A YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN REPORTS FROM A LARGE CAMPUS. After giving a young man's perspective in our November *Mindszenty Report*, we offer a young woman's take on campus life. Ask for 12/25

GEN Z, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ENVY. A college student reports firsthand: Social media is a toxic brew that fuels pessimism, envy and outrage. Ask for 11/25

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/story/what-is-gaslighting>.

² <https://www.politiifact.com/article/2018/aug/02/fact-checking-fox-news-analysts-pro-trump-book-rus/>.

³ <https://intelligence.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2576>.

⁴ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/brennan-strzok-page-subpoenaed-part-federal-russiagate-probe-sources>.

⁵ <https://www.science.org/content/article/house-panel-concludes-covid-19-pandemic-came-lab-leak>.

⁶ "How Fauci and Collins Shut Down Covid Debate," *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 2021.

⁷ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/columnist/2025/03/25/democrats-trump-biden-inflation-national-debt/8259100007/>.

⁸ The March 2020 shutdown of the economy and state lockdowns shuttered business, set back learning among the young, and fueled inflation. The government under President Trump and his successor President Biden poured billions of dollars into the economy to assist faltering business, displaced workers and American families. Many of these federal and state programs became easy targets for scammers, some of whom received hundreds of thousands of dollars through fraudulent loan applications.

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html>.

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cekj4ceH7WE>.

¹¹ <https://x.com/nypost/status/1798795644686967082?lang=en>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <https://www.bostonherald.com/2020/12/12/curley-hey-democrats-whos-gaslighting-whom/>.

¹⁴ <https://judiciary.house.gov/media/in-the-news/facebook-execs-suppressed-hunter-biden-laptop-scandal-curry-favor-biden-harris>.

¹⁵ <https://nypost.com/2024/10/02/opinion/hunter-bidens-51-spies-who-lied-are-well-overdue-for-their-day-in-court/>.

¹⁶ <https://www.star-telegram.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/other-voices/article266451511.html>.

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq5jgg1491do>.

¹⁸ <https://x.com/FoxNews/status/1895148785728192995>.

¹⁹ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/for-election-purposes-critics-balk-harris-claim-she-enforce-our-laws-southern-border>.

²⁰ This repeated her statement to the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2015 that "an undocumented immigrant is not a criminal." In 2019, appearing on *The View*, she reiterated, "I would not make it a crime by jail. It should be a civil enforcement issue but not a criminal enforcement issue."

²¹ <https://x.com/DataRepublican/status/1986318086669279249?s=20>.

²² <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/09/15/fact-sheet-the-united-we-stand-summit-taking-action-to-prevent-and-address-hate-motivated-violence-and-foster-unity/>.

The Mindszenty Report is published monthly by

Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation

7800 Bonhomme Ave.

St. Louis, MO 63105

Phone 314-727-6279

Subscription rate: \$25 per year

Outside the U.S.A. \$35

We accept credit card payments.

Contributions to the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Website: www.mindszenty.org

Email to orders.inquiries@mindszenty.org

Visit us at [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) and [Substack.com](https://www.substack.com)

(<https://cardinalmindszentyfoundation.substack.com/>)