





Illustrations by
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A STAR REPORTER'S BREAK WITH REALITY

Lara Logan was once a respected *60 Minutes* correspondent. Now she trades in conspiracy theories that even far-right media disavow. What happened?

By Elaina
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The footage is shown before she takes the stage: Lara Logan in a headscarf, addressing the camera from the streets of Mogadishu. Logan ducking for cover as bullets crack overhead in Afghanistan. Logan interrogating a trophy hunter in Texas. Logan walking with Christine Lagarde, Justin Trudeau, Mark Wahlberg, Jane Goodall.

It is a tour through Logan's past life as a journalist for CBS's *60 Minutes*, a glimpse at the various exchanges and explosions that earned her the awards and a "prominent spot," as her former network once put it, "among the world's best foreign correspondents." Then, three minutes and one second later, it is over. Cut to right now, February 27, 2023, in Fredericksburg, Texas: Logan looking out at 200 people gathered in a creaking church auditorium for the inaugural meeting of the Gillespie County chapter of Moms for Liberty.

"If you want to know why it's called social media," Logan says, "I'll tell you why: Because Karl Marx was hired by Henry Rothschild, by the Rothschild family, to develop a system of social control. So when you see *social*, it is a form of control—that's all it is. Social media is a form of controlling us all."

She goes on, picking up on the title of a recent book by a friend of hers, retired General Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser and a far-right

conspiracy theorist: "So what does *fifth-generation warfare* really mean?" It means that "you're meant to believe the narrative, regardless of the truth."

For the next 45 minutes, Logan, wearing a floral wrap dress and a cream-colored cardigan, lays out what she sees as the true narrative: for instance, that by aiding Ukraine, America is arming Nazis; that the events of January 6 were not an insurrection at all. Turning to *The New York Times* to understand this moment, Logan warns, is "like being in the battle of Normandy, on the beaches of Normandy, Dunkirk, and going on your knees every day and crawling over to the Nazi lines and asking them to please write nice things about your side in German propaganda." Her dress is decorated with two identical navy-blue stickers reading STOP WOKE INDOCTRINATION.

As Logan talks, her words at times eliciting applause, the final frame of the introductory footage hovers ghostlike in the background. Logan's success at events like this—she now features at many—turns on her ability to shrink the distance between her past and present selves. She needs the people in this auditorium to believe that the woman on the projector screen is the same one who now anticipates their fears of woke indoctrination. She needs them to trust that when she talks about subjects like the "little puppet" Volodymyr Zelensky, or how COVID vaccines are a form of "genocide by government," or how President Joe Biden's administration has been "participating in the trafficking of kids," it is with the precise rigor and dispassion she once displayed on the front lines of America's wars.

Logan, who is 52, is still, after all, a war correspondent. That is how she sees it. The fighting may not be in Afghanistan or Iraq, and she may not be winning Emmys for her coverage anymore, but in her mind this is her most crucial assignment yet, uncovering this "war against humanity." And she must be getting close to the real story, because the American media have tried to silence her from all sides.

First CBS, and then Fox News. Not even the far-right Newsmax wants journalists who risk piercing the narrative. In October, during an appearance on that network, Logan declared that "the open

border is Satan's way of taking control of the world" and that the global elite "want us eating insects" while they "dine on the blood of children." Newsmax condemned her remarks and announced that it had no plans to invite Logan on its shows again.

Logan's life has been rife with personal trauma, some of it well known. In 2011, she was gang-raped in Cairo's Tahrir Square. In 2012, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. In 2013, a story she reported for *60 Minutes* was publicly disavowed. I went to Fredericksburg, where Logan now lives, on that February evening because I wanted to know what had happened in the decade since. I wanted to understand how, after years of association with the *tick-tick-tick* of *60 Minutes*, she had slipped into a world bracketed by MyPillow discount codes and LaraLoganGold.com. How a career built on pursuing the truth had become so unmoored from it.

When I had contacted Logan about an interview, her response, via text message, was: "Unfortunately I have no doubt this is another hit piece desperately seeking to discredit several decades of award-winning work at *60 Minutes*, CBS, ABC, NBC and beyond and you are only seeking my voice to add legitimacy to the anonymous cowards you will use to attack me once again. Feel free to use this statement if you are sincere." She then shared a screenshot of our exchange with her 530,000 Twitter followers.

And so I braced for an unpleasant encounter when I approached Logan at the end of the night, after the long line of grandmothers and mothers and teenage girls who wanted a photo with her had finally dwindled. I introduced myself and said that I had seen probably every story she had ever done for *60 Minutes*. "But here you've come," she said. "Here you've come to destroy it all."

SHE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED in terms of hazardous weather. A tornado whipped through Midtown Manhattan and there suddenly was Lara Logan, June 2008, striding high-heeled from the wings of *The Daily Show*. "She is the chief foreign correspondent for CBS News," Jon Stewart announced, the studio audience cheering as he shook Logan's hand and guided

In 2005, *The New York Times* christened her the “War Zone ‘It Girl’”; in 2006, CBS elevated her to chief foreign correspondent.

her to center stage. “You remind me of a young Ted Koppel,” he said.

Logan tilted her head back and laughed. “Dan Rather used to say that about me!”

Logan had begun her career as a full-time journalist 16 years earlier, fresh out of college and with a résumé consisting of two part-time newspaper gigs in her hometown of Durban, South Africa, along with a bit of swimsuit modeling. In her first days covering the post-apartheid landscape as a producer at Reuters Television in Johannesburg, Logan, then in her early 20s, had not exactly reminded anyone of a young Ted Koppel. “The word *bimbo* came up a lot,” one of Logan’s former Reuters colleagues told me. But opinions began to shift once fellow journalists saw her in the field. “It was a very, very intense time ... She’s a fucking hard worker, and she takes risks,” the former colleague said. “She had incredible guts.” (This person, like most of the nearly three dozen other onetime colleagues or friends of Logan’s I interviewed, requested anonymity in order to speak candidly.)

By 30, Logan was a correspondent for the British morning show *GMTV*. She was working out of London on 9/11, and within days she was pleading with

an embassy clerk for a fast-track visa to Afghanistan. At first, *GMTV* management seemed unsure what to make of it, this young woman apparently desperate to embed herself in al-Qaeda territory. Where would she sleep? What about a driver, security? She’d figure it out. She was en route to Kabul shortly after the first American air strikes that October.

It didn’t take long for Logan’s superiors to recognize the opportunity before them, the potential for their coverage of the biggest story on Earth to become an event unto itself. This was not just because Logan was a woman but because she was attractive. It is prudent to address this now, because the fact of Logan’s attractiveness would soon become unavoidable, the gathering resonance of her journalism inextricable from the public’s gathering interest in her appearance.

Logan had been in Kabul less than a month when her Independent Television News competitor Julian Manyon suggested in a *Spectator* essay that the “delectable” correspondent’s swift infiltration of Bagram Airfield and the upper ranks of the Northern Alliance was due to her “considerable physical charms.” Logan, he wrote, “exploits her God-given advantages with a skill that Mata Hari might envy.” Responding in a short dispatch for *The Guardian*, Logan parried adroitly. “If General Babajan smiles around me, perhaps it is because I offer him respect and attempt, at least, to talk to him in a non-demanding manner,” she wrote. “It’s not rocket science.”

The British tabloids, delighted to have located the sex in jihad so quickly, scrambled to build on the story. In the course of interviewing Logan’s mother at her home in Durban, a reporter got access to the swimsuit photos for which Logan had posed to earn extra cash while in high school and university. The photos soon appeared on the front pages of the *Daily Record* and *The Mirror*. At first Logan was furious, embarrassed. But then she decided to lean in, to fashion herself as the rare emblem of both harrowing journalism and unabashed femininity. The tip for the next *Mirror* splash (“Here’s a sight that would stop the Taliban in its tracks. War reporter Lara Logan relaxes on a deck

chair in a sizzling swimsuit”) reportedly came from Logan herself. “She was the first field correspondent I ever met who sort of understood her brand, which was a really new thing at the time,” a producer at a rival network told me.

As her profile grew, Logan charmed feature writers with her willingness to talk, to play ball when they asked her about things as personal as the last time she’d had a “good snog.” She argued that not using her looks would be malpractice. “There isn’t a journalist alive who won’t admit to you they use every advantage they have,” she told *The New York Times*.

More fundamental to Logan’s success in Afghanistan, however, was the simple fact that she showed up when others didn’t. In addition to her *GMTV* job, Logan worked as a stringer for CBS News Radio, and just a few weeks after arriving in Kabul, she found herself the only CBS-affiliated reporter on hand to cover the Taliban’s rapid unraveling. The network aired her prime-time debut from the capital.

This was when Dan Rather saw a young Ted Koppel. An article in *Vogue* described Rather as the first to urge CBS to hire Logan full-time. He marveled at her ability to “get through the glass,” as he told the magazine. “The good ones,” he said, “always want the worst assignments.” By spring 2002, Logan had a \$1 million contract with the network.

Her new colleagues understood the appeal. “She knows how to position herself, she knows how to relate to the camera—she’s incredibly good at that,” Philip Ittner, a former CBS producer who worked with Logan, told me. “She was also very good under fire. Even in a very bad firefight or something, after an IED exploded, she would get in front of the camera, and she’d be able to deliver.”

But then there was the tornado of it all. “She likes to stir stuff up, unconsciously,” the former Reuters colleague told me. “Wherever she goes, there’s a lot of kinetic energy that’s not necessarily net positive.”

LOGAN GREW UP one of three children in a well-off white family in apartheid South Africa. She enjoyed snacks prepared by housekeepers and a swimming pool in the backyard and the tacit belief that her

parents had only ever existed, and indeed would only ever exist, in relation to each other. And then one morning when she was 8, her father pulled into the driveway and Logan raced out to greet him and there in the car was a 5-year-old girl she had never seen before. Say hello to your sister, her father said. He was leaving to be with this other daughter and her mother.

“It was such a shock, such a traumatic experience,” Logan later recalled. After the divorce, she watched her mother struggle to reassemble the pieces of her life. Yolanda Logan moved her young children into a small apartment and found work as a sales representative at a glass company, never remarrying. “I learned about betrayal and dishonesty,” Logan told the *Sunday Mirror* soon after returning to London from Kabul. “When I looked at Mum, I saw a woman who thought she was secure and safe in her marriage suddenly alone.”

That was how Logan explained it when the *Mirror* reporter asked why she was so willing to pitch herself into danger as a journalist. “I’m afraid of being seen as vulnerable,” she said. “All my life, I’ve been fighting to prove that I’m not weak.”

She refused orders from CBS to keep out of Iraq during the American invasion in 2003, hiring local fixers to sneak her across the Jordanian border. On the drive into Baghdad, she played Van Morrison. With virtually every other American television broadcaster evacuated from the city, “shock and awe” was hers. One of Logan’s early segments for the relatively short-lived Wednesday edition of *60 Minutes* showed a Humvee she was in flip over when it hit a land mine; in a Sunday segment, viewers saw Logan defy a vehicle commander’s orders to stay put as he went to inspect an unexploded bomb. In 2005, the *Times* christened her the “War Zone ‘It Girl’”; in 2006, CBS elevated her to chief foreign correspondent.

Whether Logan was daring or heedless depended on whom you asked—and, as is typical in the environs of television news, a great many of her colleagues enjoyed being asked. Some felt that Logan showed undue deference to the military line; others grouched about what they saw

as stubbornness and self-absorption. Still others watched Logan peer down at an unexploded bomb and saw not bravery as much as recklessness. At a certain point, “a lot of people refused to produce her,” one of her former producers told me.

If, for Logan, this was not cause for introspection, it was perhaps because her approach was winning a lot of awards. (In her first six years at CBS, she picked up Gracie Awards and Murrow Awards and an Emmy.) And if, for Logan, the *New York Post* article headlined “Sixty Minutes” had not been cause for alarm, it was perhaps because Jeff Fager, then the executive producer of *60 Minutes*, had hung a framed copy of the article in his office. “It’s hard to judge what Lara Logan is going to be in 10 years,” Fager told *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine in the fall of 2008. “But boy, she’s made a mark in a short period of time.”

And yet, for as long as Logan had craved precisely this level of success, she also seemed uncomfortable with having actually attained it—as if to accept life as it presented itself to her, the way her mother once had, risked revealing it to be a trick of the light. She spoke sometimes of unspecified plans to derail her career. “I’m sure people are interested in seeing me fail,” she said shortly after joining CBS. She detected threats where no threats were intended. In 2006, when reviewing Katie Couric’s premiere as the first solo female anchor on a major-network evening news show, the *Times* pronounced that “the woman who stood out the most” was not Couric herself, but rather the “experienced and unusually pretty” CBS war correspondent. The unwanted comparison with her senior colleague seemed only to reinforce Logan’s inchoate sense of being conspired against. “I always think it is some kind of secret plot to destroy me,” she told *Vogue* in 2007. “I mean, to disparage the anchor at my expense?”

This dim, diffuse paranoia would sharpen, according to some colleagues, after the start of Logan’s relationship with the man who is now her husband, Joe Burkett.

Logan was married for the first time in 1998—to Jason Siemon, an American who played professional basketball in the United Kingdom. She met Joseph

Washington Burkett IV, a Texas native and an Army sergeant who was also married, a few years later, while reporting in Kabul. Early 2008 found them working again in the same city, this time Baghdad. Logan was now in the final stages of a divorce and Burkett was newly estranged from his wife. He quickly became a regular presence in the press compound outside the Green Zone.

It was not clear to Logan’s colleagues what Burkett did for a living, and Burkett seemed to prefer it that way. He cultivated an air of secrecy, dropping hints that he was involved in clandestine operations. Logan seemed drawn in by the mystery of Burkett and his “very secretive job,” as she once called it. It was a while before Logan’s colleagues learned that Burkett had been in Baghdad on behalf of the Lincoln Group, a now-defunct firm quietly contracted by the Pentagon to disseminate pro-America propaganda in Iraqi newspapers. But they needed only a few conversations to register his penchant for conspiracy theories.

As Logan’s relationship with Burkett progressed, some of her colleagues noticed slight shifts in her story ideas. “As much as she would occasionally come up with loony tunes stuff on her own, it would always be more of, like, ‘Hey, let’s go right into the most dangerous part of’ whatever environment they were currently covering,” Philip Ittner told me. “But when Burkett came on the scene, it was like—and this is a hypothetical—‘Clearly the CIA is bringing in hallucinogens to put into the water supply of Baghdad; we really need to dig into this.’” (Logan declined to answer questions about herself, her husband, or other topics related to this article. In response to a list of factual queries and requests for comment that *The Atlantic* sent her, Logan wrote, “You are a hundred percent wrong on everything.”)

Logan and Burkett were wed in November 2008; Logan was seven months pregnant with their first child. They began married life in a house they bought in the Cleveland Park neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

ON THE EVENING of February 11, 2011, at the height of the Arab Spring,



ALICIA TATONE. SOURCES: CHRIS HONDROS / GETTY; SAUL LOEB / GETTY.

Logan threaded through the congested streets of Cairo. She, her cameraman, her security guard, and her producer had come straight from the airport, as she later recounted on *60 Minutes*, having landed just moments after President Hosni Mubarak announced his resignation. “It was like unleashing a champagne cork on Egypt,” she recalled.

Logan’s agent, Carole Cooper, had advised against the trip; only a week

earlier, Logan and her crew had been detained overnight by Egyptian officials targeting journalists. But now, in Tahrir Square, thousands of people were singing, chanting, unfurling flags. For more than an hour she reported from the crowd, people smiling and waving at the camera. Then the camera’s battery went dead. The light illuminating Logan and the people around her was suddenly gone. A few moments later, Logan felt hands on

her body. She thought that if she screamed loud enough, the assault would stop, but it didn’t.

The mob tore off her clothes. For a few minutes she managed to hold on to her security guard’s arm, but then, like everyone else in her crew, he was beaten back. This was when Logan thought she was going to die. Later she would recall for *Newsweek* how the men raped her with their hands, with sticks, with flagpoles. Onlookers took photos with their cellphones. The assault lasted at least 25 minutes before a group of Egyptian women intervened. They were able to cover Logan until soldiers managed to reach her and get her to her hotel, where she was seen by a doctor.

The next morning, Logan was on a flight home to her husband and two young children in Washington. She would spend four days in the hospital. People from all over the world sent flowers and letters. President Barack Obama called her to share his support. Logan’s eventual decision to talk openly about what happened inspired other women in journalism to share their own stories of being sexually assaulted while on the job. After she spoke out, the Committee to Protect Journalists launched a

major effort to survey the problem and stigma of sexual violence in the field.

Over time, the most obvious reminders of Logan’s assault—the hand-shaped bruises all over her body—faded. For years afterward, however, as she told the *Toronto Star*, Logan would continue to cope with internal injuries—severe pelvic pain, a hysterectomy that failed to heal. And there was the emotional damage. Logan talked about problems

of intimacy with her husband, the dark memories that could sweep over her with a single touch.

A little over a year after the assault, Logan, at 41, was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer; she underwent a lumpectomy and six weeks of radiation, then went into remission. It was during this period of her life, Logan would say, that she “wanted to come apart.” She felt herself in a situation where “nobody could see it and nobody could see me and nobody understood.” She began suffering panic attacks. She tried therapy.

Through it all, Logan found refuge in her career. In April 2013, a little more than two years after the assault, *The Hollywood Reporter* published a glowing feature on executive producer Jeff Fager’s *60 Minutes*. The article depicted Logan as a confident correspondent striding into a screening for her next story, settling in beside Fager as he prepared to mark up the script. His verdict: “Terrific.” She could always make it back to terrific.

UNTIL, THAT IS, she couldn’t.

Not long after the *Hollywood Reporter* article, Simon & Schuster reached out to CBS with a pitch. A conservative imprint within the publishing company had a book coming out in the fall—*The Embassy House*—about Benghazi: the “real story,” as the prologue promised, of the deadly attack on the American compound and CIA annex in September 2012, as recounted by “the only man in a position to tell the full story.”

The man’s name was Dylan Davies, but he was writing under a pseudonym—for his safety, the book explained, and also because he had “no interest in seeking official recognition.”

Davies, a British-military veteran from Wales, was a security officer whose employer, Blue Mountain, had been hired by the State Department to help protect the Special Mission in Benghazi. In his book, he described how, on the night of the attack, he had scaled the compound’s 12-foot wall to try to save the Americans trapped inside, rifle-butting a terrorist in the process. He also said that he had seen Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens’s body at the hospital.

Logan and her producer, Max McClellan, agreed to consider *The Embassy House* for a feature on *60 Minutes*. The basics of Davies’s biography appeared to check out; email correspondence that Davies shared with Logan seemed to confirm, as he claimed, that he had been interviewed by officials from across the U.S. government, including the FBI, about everything he had seen and heard and done that night. Over the next few months, Logan and McClellan put together a Benghazi segment featuring Davies’s story as well as original reporting on the attack. After the screening of the finished product, CBS and *60 Minutes* leadership, including Fager, green-lit the broadcast for air.

Some of Logan’s reporting broke significant ground. No journalist had yet substantiated, for example, the role of Abu Sufian bin Qumu, an Ansar al-Sharia leader and former Guantánamo Bay detainee, in the Benghazi attack; the Obama administration did not publicly announce his involvement until the next year. But the segment’s revelations were framed almost as sideshows to the Ramboesque account of Davies, whose view of the attack comprised the majority of the report’s 15 and a half minutes.

Within days of the broadcast, his story began to unravel. *The Washington Post* reported that Davies had told his employer he wasn’t at the compound that night—something *60 Minutes* had known but did not mention, accepting Davies’s explanation that he had lied to his employer. A week later, *The New York Times* revealed that Davies had also told the FBI that he wasn’t at the compound. Logan and McClellan knew that Davies had been interviewed by the FBI; they had not checked what he actually said. And when, after the *Times* report, they tried to reach Davies to demand answers, they couldn’t find him—*The Daily Beast* later reported that he had emailed his publisher saying that because of a threat against his family, he was going dark.

I was recently able to reach Davies via email. He claimed without evidence that his son’s life had been threatened by “the US state department (Clinton)” after the *60 Minutes* report. (A spokesperson for Hillary Clinton denied the allegation and

In October, during an appearance on Newsmax, Logan declared that the global elite “want us eating insects” while they “dine on the blood of children.”

noted that Clinton had stepped down as secretary of state several months before the Benghazi report aired.) When I pressed him on whether he had told the FBI and *60 Minutes* different versions of his story, he replied that he didn’t “want anything to do with Benghazi” and asked what was wrong with me.

Media Matters, the liberal watchdog group founded by the Clinton ally David Brock, seized on the controversy immediately, publishing no fewer than 36 stories highlighting problems in Logan’s reporting. Other outlets would point to a speech Logan had given a year earlier, in which she accused the Obama administration of perpetuating a “major lie” about the ongoing threat of al-Qaeda, as evidence of political bias.

On November 8, 2013, for the first time in her career, Logan went on air to announce the retraction of a story. “We were wrong,” she said. Simon & Schuster withdrew *The Embassy House* from sale later that day. For CBS, and Fager in particular, it was a colossal embarrassment—the program’s “worst mistake on my

10-year watch,” he wrote in a 2017 book. Logan would later say that a nondisclosure agreement she and McClellan had signed with the publisher had prevented them from checking Davies’s story with the FBI. It was an odd line of defense—Logan arguing that she had given up the right to verify key points. An internal CBS review concluded that problems with Davies’s account were “knowable before the piece aired.” Logan and McClellan agreed to take indefinite leaves of absence. (CBS News declined to comment on the Benghazi report and its aftermath.)

SITTING IN HER home in Cleveland Park during the leave of absence, Logan took calls from colleagues and tried to make sense of things. For the first time in her career, she was losing control of the narrative.

Logan soon learned that Joe Hagan, a writer at *New York* magazine, was working on a profile of her. Hagan’s article, titled “Benghazi and the Bombshell,” was published in May 2014. Hagan attributed the Benghazi mistake to a “proverbial perfect storm” of factors, including Logan’s reputed personal sympathies with the Republican line on the attack, and the “outsize power” she enjoyed at *60 Minutes* thanks to Fager.

Logan would later file a lawsuit against Hagan and *New York*—a suit quickly dismissed by a federal judge. The complaint alleged that prior to publication of the “Hagan Hit Piece,” as Logan called it, Fager and CBS Chair Les Moonves had come up with a “specific and detailed plan” for her to return to *60 Minutes*. According to the lawsuit, after the article appeared Moonves felt that he and Fager had been painted as Logan’s “lapdogs” and decided to shift course; Fager then informed her that she would return to the program in a “drastically altered role.” When she went back to work in June, her relationship with him was, she claimed in the suit, “irreparably damaged.” “She really felt hung out to dry,” a person formerly close to Logan told me. (Neither Fager nor Moonves responded to requests for comment.)

For Logan, reckoning frankly with the circumstances in which she now

found herself would have meant accepting her own responsibility for creating them—accepting, in other words, the unextraordinary truth of the human capacity for poor judgment. But in the fall of 2014, a movie came out that helped Logan rewrite her narrative.

Based on a book by the journalist Nick Schou, *Kill the Messenger* tells the story of Gary Webb, a *San Jose Mercury News* journalist who, in 1996, published a blockbuster investigation that linked the CIA to America’s crack-cocaine epidemic by way of its relationship with the Nicaraguan contras. Although much of the reporting was solid, Webb’s “Dark Alliance” series also had serious flaws; the *Mercury News* eventually determined that the series “did not meet our standards” in several ways. Webb resigned from the paper not long afterward. He died by suicide in 2004. In the movie’s telling, the various news outlets that called Webb’s work into question were motivated less by a desire to correct the record than by petty jealousies and a longtime deference to the CIA.

It’s unclear whether Logan had ever heard of Webb before she saw the film. In many respects, their experiences were utterly unlike. Nevertheless, Logan seemed to cling to Webb as a kind of life raft, and would later invoke his name and story in interviews about her Benghazi report. (She also questioned whether Webb’s death had truly been a suicide.) Logan ultimately decided that Media Matters, in an effort to discredit the “substance” of the Benghazi report—about security flaws at the compound—had worked in concert with various media outlets to silence her. The problem, as she now saw it, was not that she had put an unverified account on air. It was that her report had dared to criticize the Obama administration. To use Webb’s own formulation—one that Logan repeats to this day—she had told a story “important enough to suppress.”

IN MID-2015, when Logan’s contract was coming up for renewal, CBS offered, and Logan accepted, a part-time correspondent role on *60 Minutes*. Shortly after the contract was signed, she, her husband, and their children packed up their house

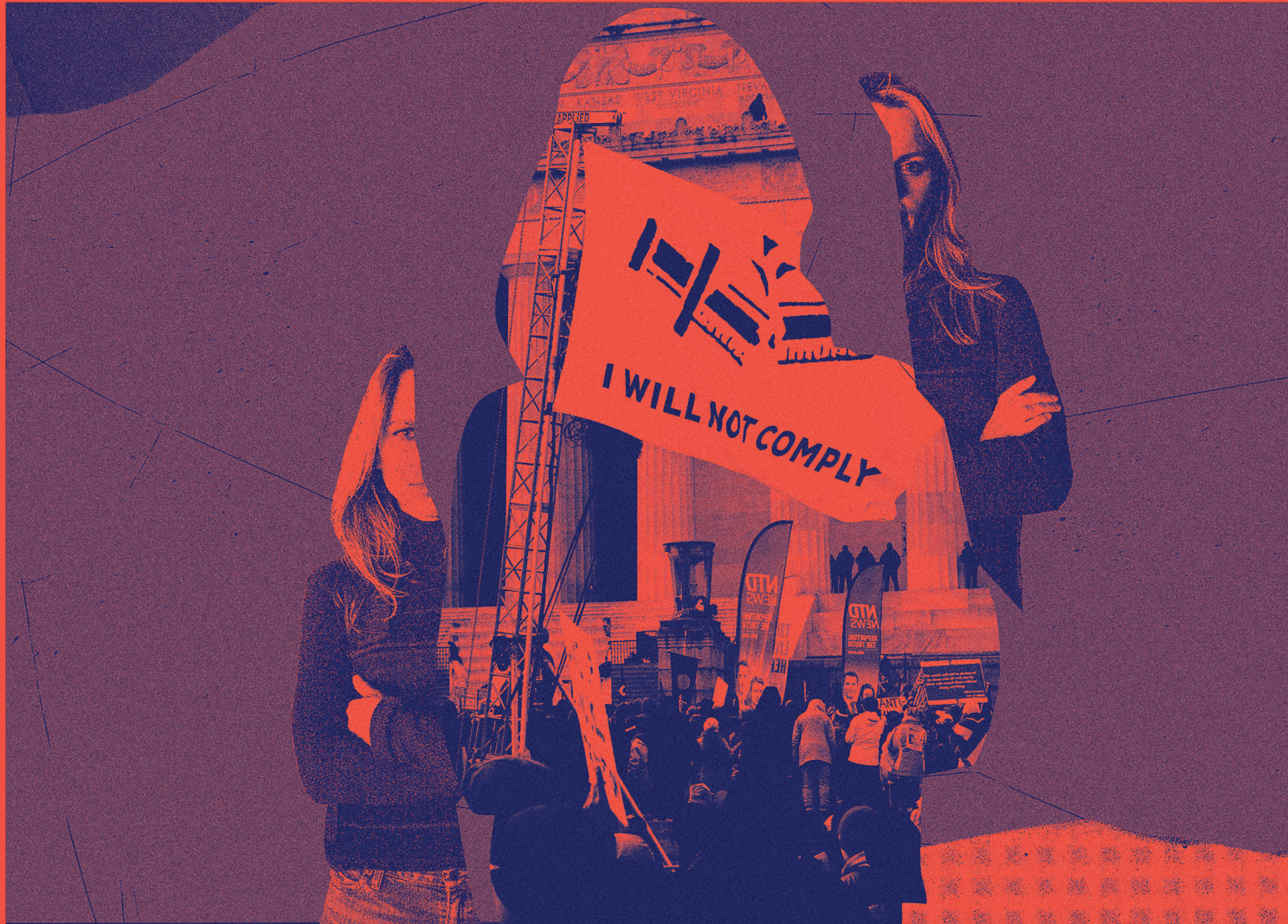
in Washington and moved to Burkett’s hometown of Fredericksburg, Texas.

For most of her professional life, Logan had not struck her peers as especially political—“very moderate,” one former colleague called her. She now began to shape a new worldview, one steeped in antagonism toward the media establishment she felt betrayed by, and toward the figures and institutions she believed it served. It was a worldview that offered both absolutism and purpose. And it was soon to find a partisan expression in Donald Trump.

On-screen, over the next two years, Logan seemed much the same journalist and person she’d always been. She continued to file stories from various countries for *60 Minutes*. Off-screen, however, she was becoming closer to people like Ed Butowsky, a Fox News regular and Texas-based financial adviser of whom Logan was now a client. Butowsky would play a central role in the story of Seth Rich.

In July 2016, the murder of the Democratic National Committee staffer—in a botched robbery, police said—produced a torrent of right-wing conspiracy theories. Butowsky helped instigate an investigation that resulted in a Fox News story suggesting that Rich had been killed by Hillary Clinton associates in retaliation for supposedly leaking emails from the DNC to WikiLeaks. (Fox soon retracted the story and later settled a lawsuit brought by the Rich family. Butowsky settled a separate lawsuit brought against him by Rich’s brother.)

According to Facebook messages shared with *The Atlantic*, Logan, too, had been suspicious of the botched-robbery line, and saw in the episode another instance of the elite media providing cover for the left. In an April 2017 exchange with Trevor FitzGibbon, a left-wing public-relations strategist whose firm had represented WikiLeaks, Logan wrote that she did not know “for a fact” that Clinton’s associates were responsible for Rich’s murder. “But I would be stunned if it were not true.” No journalist had reported this, because “they”—presumably the Democrats—“own the media,” she wrote, and pointed to the fallout from her Benghazi report. “They saw me as a threat and went after



me and the show.” A few months later, Joe Burkett attended a small gathering at Butowsky’s home at which, according to one attendee’s sworn deposition, the possibility of wiretapping Rich’s parents’ house was raised. (Butowsky has denied that this was ever discussed.)

Toward the end of 2018, CBS declined to renew Logan’s contract. She was likely not surprised. Logan later characterized her final four years at the network as isolating; executives who’d once supported her now treated her with “utter contempt.” (Fager and Moonves, as it happened, were both ousted at approximately the same time—Fager for sending a threatening text message to a CBS News reporter looking into #MeToo allegations against him and Moonves when a dozen women said he had sexually harassed or assaulted them. Both denied the sexual-misconduct allegations.)

In interviews, a number of Logan’s former colleagues expressed the belief

that, in time, she would have been picked up by another network. Her *60 Minutes* segment in 2015 on Christians in Iraq had won a Murrow Award; in 2017, she and her team won an Emmy for their report on the battle for Mosul. But what Logan’s messages with FitzGibbon seem to underscore is that, even if a continued career in mainstream media had been possible, she wasn’t necessarily interested in pursuing one.

LOGAN WAS CREATING, in effect, a new brand for herself. She unveiled it in early 2019, sitting down for a three-and-a-half-hour podcast interview with the former Navy SEAL Mike Ritland, whom she had once interviewed for *60 Minutes*. Logan related the story of her life and offered a blistering critique of the mainstream media she had chosen to leave behind. In speaking out against what she saw as the media’s liberal bias, Logan told Ritland, she was committing

“professional suicide.” She likened right-wing outlets such as *Breitbart News* and Fox to the “tiny little spot” where women are permitted to pray at Jerusalem’s Western Wall, while “CBS, ABC, NBC, *Huffington Post*, *Politico*, whatever”—the “liberal” media—took up the rest of the space, reserved for men. The interview went viral, and Sean Hannity invited her on his show for a follow-up. “I hope my bosses at Fox find a place for you,” the host told her.

By the start of 2020, Logan had a deal with Fox News’s streaming service Fox Nation, for a series called *Lara Logan Has No Agenda*. Along with reported segments on subjects including illegal immigration and the dangerous advance of socialism in America, Logan would use her new role to build on her criticism of the media. One of Logan’s former producers remembers calling her around this time. “I was like, ‘You know, you’re talking about me ... You’re talking about

all these people who've worked with you—we're part of some vast left-wing conspiracy? Like, seriously, you believe that?' And she was like, 'No, you don't understand ... You may not know you're complicit—but you're complicit.'"

As the months passed, Logan's comments became more extreme. Eventually some of her closest friends from her former life could no longer stomach a phone call with her, knowing it might turn into a stem-winder on the virtues of Michael Flynn, who had admitted to lying to the FBI about his contact with the Russian ambassador. When Trump supporters mobilized to deny the results of the 2020 election, Logan was right there with them; she would work on a movie (financed by MyPillow's Mike Lindell) about alleged voter fraud. After the January 6 insurrection, she rallied behind the people who were charged with taking part in it.

All of which seemed to culminate in an appearance on Fox News—in November 2021, as the country battled COVID—during which Logan compared Anthony Fauci, then the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, to the Nazi doctor Josef Mengele. Fox stayed silent about the remarks but ultimately did not pursue a new season of Logan's streaming show.

It was the sort of moment that those few friends left over from her old life thought might finally force a reckoning. Even her newer allies struggled to defend the remarks. ("Anytime you bring up a Nazi in anything, you're kind of going off the reservation," Ed Butowsky told me.) But by that point, Logan had come to seem firmly of the mind that setbacks, criticism, or a reproach of any sort were only evidence that she was doing something right. Carole Cooper, her agent—who, according to people familiar with their long relationship, had been like a second mother to Logan—dropped her. Less than a year later, Newsmax, where Logan often appeared on the commentator Eric Bolling's weeknight show, washed its hands of Logan, following her riff on the global blood-drinking elite.

Logan was undeterred. The stakes, as she had come to see them, were simply

too high. This is what she tries to communicate to people at the various local speaking gigs that now constitute much of her career, events such as the Park Cities Republican Women Christmas fundraising lunch in Texas, which she keynoted last year. "We had to cut her off because she was going too long," one member who helped arrange the lunch recalled. The message was: "The world is on fire" and "your kids are being exposed to cats being raped" and "elections are stolen" and "we've lost our country." The woman added, "It's a Christmas lunch, mind you."

THE TRUTH IS that I had been nervous about approaching Logan on that February evening in Texas. Two weeks earlier, she had suggested on Twitter that I was engaged in a broader "strategic hit job" involving an effort to frame her as a Mossad asset. I did not know how she would respond to my presence at the Moms for Liberty event, which I paid \$10 to attend. After my initial exchange with Logan, her manner softened, though she would not speak with me on the record.

In the past several years, I have written about a number of public figures on the right who believe very few of the things they profess to believe, who talk in public about stolen elections and wink at the specter of global cabals, and then privately crack jokes about the people who applaud.

I don't think Logan is one of these figures. People who know her say the private person is also the public one. It was with sincere urgency that she recommended Flynn's *The Citizen's Guide to Fifth Generation Warfare* to her audience that evening. I Googled Flynn's book as I waited to approach Logan. It is advertised almost as a self-help guide, the promotional copy encouraging Americans and "freedom loving people everywhere" to buy the volume to "understand the manipulation happening around you" and "why you feel the way you do." "When I just saw General Michael Flynn," Logan had told the audience, "he said to me—opening words—'We've got maybe 18 months before we lose this country.'" She had nodded as many in the crowd vocalized their dismay. "This is not something you can pick and choose about whether you want to

do." She declared, "I'm not going to surrender. Even if they throw me in a prison and execute me—'til my last breath, I'm going to be fighting."

In recent years, many Americans have embraced conspiracy theories as a way to give order and meaning to the world's chance cruelties. Lara Logan seems to have done the same, rewriting her story as a martyrdom epic in the war of narratives. Five years after Logan departed CBS, few tethers remain to the woman on the projector screen. Executives and journalists who were once her greatest advocates have long since stopped talking to her and would prefer not to talk about her, either. "Respectfully, I would like to pass speaking on this subject. Best wishes," Dan Rather wrote in a Twitter message when I reached out to him. Former friends who remember Logan as empathetic and generous now fear incurring the vitriol of a woman who frequently trashes critics and perceived enemies as "evil," "disgusting," "worthless." The only former colleague of hers who was willing to be quoted by name in this article agreed to do so out of a sense of duty. "She is spreading Kremlin propaganda," Philip Ittner told me. "And as somebody who is here in Ukraine, trying to fight back against the Russian information warfare, I can't in good conscience just sit idly by." It may be that saying nobody owns you, as Logan so often does, helps dull the reality that very few people claim you.

But the people at the event in Fredericksburg did claim her. After the speech was over, Logan talked one-on-one with dozens of audience members who seemed anxious to learn more about why they felt the way they did. She lingered until the very last person left the auditorium.

I think she stayed for as long as she did that night because she believes she has seen the light and wanted the people in the auditorium to see it too. I think she also stayed because the people there represent some of the only community she has left. *A*

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