

*CBS Mornings Plus*

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9:01:01 a.m. [TEASE]

9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Karine Jean-Pierre]

TONY DOKOUPIL: She was the face of the White House. Former Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre joins us in studio live to share why she says she left the party.

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9:17:42 a.m. [TEASE]

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Former Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre]

DOKOUPIL: Ahead, today's By the Way. Former White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre is here to tell us about her new book. It's called *Independent*. And her decision to leave the Democratic Party.

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9:21:26 a.m.

6 minutes and 45 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: By the Way; Karine Jean-Pierre on *CBS Mornings Plus*]

DOKOUPIL: Our next guest, Karine Jean-Pierre, was a registered Democrat for more than two decades, serving the Obama and Biden administrations. And in 2022, becoming the face of the Biden White House as press secretary. Now, Jean-Pierre says, after leaving the White House earlier this year, she also left the Democratic Party and is now a registered independent. By the way, a lot of other Americans are doing the very same thing registering as independents. She opens up about walking away in her new book, *Independent: A Look Inside a Broken White House Outside Party Lines*, and Jean-Pierre joins us once again. Thank you for coming back to the nine. We were chatting in the — in the eight.

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you.

DOKOUPIL: Kamala Harris called it reckless for Joe Biden to run for reelection. You don't use words like that in here. In fact, you think what was reckless was pushing him out. Can you explain?

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah. So, I think you have his decision to run. You have to go back to 2023 early that winter, spring moment coming out of the midterms, which was arguably, it's been

stated, one of the most successful midterm elections for a first-term President and there wasn't a red wave. There was supposed to be a red wave. And a lot of it was because of the successes that came from the Biden administration. And I would say from that time, arguably, you could say he was successful — right — and I just mentioned in his first couple of years he was the incumbent. He was the only person to have ever beaten Donald Trump in a presidential election. And so, all the things lined up and everyone was not was saying, you should run, he should run. And so, that's what — I want to take people back to that time and not be revisionist historians here and really focus on what made him make that decision. And I think for me, fast forwarding to June 2024, when so much was at stake for this country, for our democracy, it just seemed as if doing that to someone also who had more than 50 years of public servant work and had again, arguably a very successful, objectively, a very successful presidential run. I didn't understand it. I didn't understand why this is the way you would treat somebody when we are just weeks, months ahead of an election season in a — in a really unprecedented time.

KELLY O'GRADY: Well, to follow up on that, I mean, in your book, you talk a lot about how the Republicans were very in lockstep with President Trump. Do you think it's okay for people to be in lockstep, have unwavering support, even if there are concerns that a lot of people were having?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, I think there are two — I think there are two things here. I think that is important to have your moral compass just in general, as you think about what's going right now in this country, as you think about vulnerable communities who are under attack, there is — it is important to have your moral compass. Joe Biden was not under investigation. Again, he arguably — not arguably, objectively — had a successful period as President, and he was the only person to have beaten Donald Trump, has spent 50 years as public servant. It is not the same — right — in a sense of comparing those two people. What was different is how they reacted in a — in — in that period of time where I think so much was at stake. And it was — it was, I think, a cruel way to treat someone again, not under investigation had a pretty good presidency and had beaten Donald Trump, was the only person who had beaten Donald Trump.

DOKOUPIL: But he was clearly having problems, right? I mean, lots and lots and lots of people who just watching him on video, let alone meeting him, had reported on that. Have you reflected on why there's this big disconnect between the millions of Americans at home who are watching him and said, I don't know if he's all there, and you saying behind the scenes, wow, he was there?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, a couple of things. We were always honest. You couldn't hide the fact that he was aging, right? And we saw that there were moments where it showed that he was — no one is — no one is denying that. And he would poke fun at that. And he said it was a horrible debate, terrible debate. He had, like, spoken about it. I have spoken about it at the podium. I and I take and I think I said this to you at the 8:00 hour or — to you and the other anchors and this question, I take it very seriously when you talk about his mental acuity, when we talk about him being all there, he's someone that I saw almost every day, if not every day, and traveled with more than 95 percent of the time on Marine One, Air Force One. He was someone who would debate —

DOKOUPIL: So then —

JEAN-PIERRE: — with you, engage with you.

DOKOUPIL: — what's the disconnect here then? Like, is the country just ageist because millions of Americans didn't think he was up to it? But you're saying there was nothing there, there.

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, I'm — well, I'm simply —

DOKOUPIL: No problem.

JEAN-PIERRE: — I think the difference is I saw him every day.

DOKOUPIL: Okay?

JEAN-PIERRE: I did, I saw him every single day and had a first account of the President that I understood, and I knew to have cared about this country, understand policy, understand history, and be able to have, again —

DOKOUPIL: Yeah?

JEAN-PIERRE: — objectively, a very successful couple of years of his first term.

O'GRADY: Before we let you go — independent, you've left the party. I'll admit, as an independent myself, I did read a few, you know, of these passages and go, eh, it really feels like you're setting this up as Democrats versus Republicans. Would you ever vote Republican?

JEAN-PIERRE: No, I would not vote Republican.

O'GRADY: So, are you an independent?

JEAN-PIERRE: Well, no. Here's the thing. What I'm trying to highlight is the system is — is indeed broken. We need a two-party system that's functioning, that's actually functioning in order for our democracy to work. And what's happening right now is not working. You have millions of people like ourselves who are independent, who cannot participate in that two-party system. And so if that's happening, there's something broken. People are not seeing themselves in either of the party, so we have to lean in. I feel like I have to lean in and say, okay, let's highlight this and figure out how do we fix this? What do we do.

DOKOUPIL: If you're really an independent, though, how can you rule out a whole party? I mean, presumably, I don't know where you live. There might be a candidate who's a Republican who you happen to like in more than the Democrats, right?

JEAN-PIERRE: I mean, look, right now where the Republican Party is in this moment, me, I care

about the vulnerable communities out there. Project 2025 is something that they're touting, and they're actually ticking off. That's scary to me. That is really, really scary. I represent many of the communities that are under attack, and even if I didn't, there has to be humanity and care for people and I'm not seeing that now. If they were to change and — and we — there, you know, turn that around, maybe. But I think there is a — there is a fundamental problem. And I'm talking about —

DOKOUPIL: Yeah.

JEAN-PIERRE: — like, there's a problem on the Democratic side. There's no fight. I think they need to be an opposition party. And I see clearly some flaws in the Republican side that scare me, that scare me.

DOKOUPIL: Karine, Jean-Pierre, thank you for coming.

JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you so much, Tony.

DOKOUPIL: 8:00, 9:00. The book is *Independent*. It goes on sale tomorrow. Pick it up wherever you buy your books.