

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 433 TRANSCRIPT

**Tom Morello:** I'm Tom Morello and you're listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan. My co-host, David Feldman is on assignment at the January 6th hearings with Triumph the Insult Comic Dog. So we expect the full report from him there. In his place is our co-host, Hannah Feldman. Welcome, Hannah.

**Hannah Feldman:** Thank you, Steve.

**Steve Skrovan:** It's great to have your voice--a young voice--a spokesperson for a generation. I hope that's not too much pressure.

**Hannah Feldman:** No, not at all. (Steve chuckles)

**Steve Skrovan:** We also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello everybody; coming up is a challenge to your curiosity, listeners.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have a fascinating show for you today. We're going to cover a number of different topics. But first we're going to talk about corporate media. Corporate media feeds the American public a junk food news diet. Let's face it. Clickbaity headlines, breaking news, ticker tape, and corporate infotisements go down smooth and they taste pretty good, easy, digestible. Cable, and broadcast news, in particular, highlights essentially five types of stories in my opinion: war, racehorse elections, palace intrigue, natural disasters, and man-made disasters like mass shootings or airline crashes. And I suppose you could add a sixth, which I would call celebrities in crisis. These are inherently dramatic and spectacular and get bigger ratings that maintain advertising rates.

But without real information about real issues, the establishment press will leave us malnourished. How can we sustain democratic self-government and avoid civic anemia? Well on today's program, we'll welcome back Project Censored's Mickey Huff. Project Censored empowers students and the public to make informed decisions by teaching them media literacy and critical thinking skills, two essential ingredients in a balanced news diet. We'll speak to Mickey about this year's edition of Project Censored's annual volume, *State of the Free Press: The News That Didn't Make the News—And Why*. Ralph's going to take them through a number of those stories, and how Project Censored promotes a more robust free press and inspires grassroots engagement. After that, Ralph will pitch his idea for a new American tradition called Civic Legacy Gifts Birth Year Legacies.

And if we have time, Ralph will answer some of your listener questions, and as always somewhere in the middle, we'll check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, our first guest has been monitoring censorship long before he became a rallying cry for the right-wing. Hannah?

**Hannah Feldman:** Mickey Huff is the director of Project Censored and the founder and host of *The Project Censored Show*, a weekly syndicated public affairs program. He is professor of social science, history, and journalism at Diablo Valley College where he co-chairs the History Area and is chair of the Journalism Department. He has authored and edited several books including *United States of Distraction: Media Manipulation in Post-Truth America* (and what we can do about it), *Let's Agree to Disagree*, *Project Censored's State of the Free Press 2022*, and the forthcoming *The Media and Me: A Guide to Critical Media Literacy for Young People*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Mickey Huff.

**Mickey Huff:** It is an honor to be here. Thank you so much for that gracious introduction, Hannah, much appreciated.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, Mickey. Listeners who have heard Mickey before know that he's supercharged. I don't know when he ever sleeps and he's grinding out very important information for all of us. And I want to start, Mickey, with your censored stories of 2022, which you've been putting out year after year. The important thing about this, listeners, they're not just censored, and he'll discuss what he means by that, but they're interesting in and of themselves. That is, you go through the 25 censored stories in this book, and you say, I didn't know that. I'll give you an example.

“Prescription drug costs set to become a leading cause of death for elderly Americans. More than 1.1 million seniors in the federal government's Medicare program could die prematurely over the next decade because they'll be unable to afford the high prices of the prescription medications”, according to a November 2020 study issued by the West Health Policy Center, a nonprofit and nonpartisan policy research group, among other groups. That something should be a big issue in the campaign come November. Why was something like this censored? Well, because they named the names of drug companies?

**Mickey Huff:** Well, they're naming names, and they're naming dollar amounts, and they're naming numbers of people, particularly elderly Americans, that will be most negatively impacted and affected by this, Ralph. And you started out right off the bat, saying, well, this should be a campaign issue; this should be something that people are concerned about. We're still in the throes of a pandemic. I know, wishful thinking likes to rearview mirror that, but we're still dealing and grappling with the fallout of the pandemic, which was exacerbated extraordinarily by our class-based for-profit disease management system. Notice I didn't say healthcare system because it really isn't one.

A lot of these health management companies, these have really co-opted concepts like holistic health. And Kaiser Permanente likes to talk about how people should thrive. But the way in which they do that is largely through medication by staving off symptoms of illnesses and so many millions of Americans, particularly older Americans, are on a lot of medications and a lot of prescription drugs. And so Big Pharma stands not only to profit a great deal by this, but because of that profit scheme Big Pharma also is in a de facto way, according to these studies, really putting hundreds of thousands of people at great risk. If they can't get medications, they'll die. And so, Congress probably isn't going to move on a lot of this because of the Big Pharma lobby, something you know a lot about; you've talked about the problems of lobbying for decades.

So I'm afraid that you add that challenge to the challenge of this fact being in a very under-reported story that a lot of people are unaware of the cliff that they're heading toward or already going over, and that you don't have awareness to mobilize people to push candidates in a way that is strong enough to fight back against massive corporate lobbies.

**Ralph Nader:** Mickey, what do you mean by censored? When you say censored, these stories have been reported in some of the independent media or on some blogs. Is what you mean by censored that the mainstream press blocked it out?

**Mickey Huff:** Yeah, so censorship basically in our definition, it's obviously not that the story was never covered, or else we wouldn't know about it, right? And the more pernicious and insidious form of censorship that we talk about at the project is a censorship by proxy. It's not the traditional prior restraint government agency coming in to swoop down and suppress stories, but we know that's happened, right? And Julian Assange is living testament in WikiLeaks as he rots in the Belmarsh prison for trying to tell people the truth. What we mean by censorship is yes, the alternative independent media; they cover these stories and nonprofits dig deeply to cover these kinds of stories. But as you call it the mainstream or we call establishment, or legacy, or corporate media, they can't be bothered because of their own conflicts of interest offending advertisers. They've got to stick to the official news sources and official narratives.

So yeah, Ralph, it's really important to talk about censorship in a broader way, because if you're not critically media literate, and if you don't have a really extensive or broad media diet, you'll never find these stories. And that's the problem. People are accustomed to just pushing the button and turning on the TV and having the stories beamed into them. But these stories, Ralph, they don't see the light of day. They don't see the American airwaves.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's go through a number of these censored stories. I know our listeners are thirsting to get a sense of what you have written in this wonderful book. I read it every year that comes out, censored stories 2022; you're working on censored stories 2023. Why don't you give about a minute to each one of these that you have listed among the 25 censored stories of 2022? Here's one. "Pfizer Bullies South American Governments over COVID-19 Vaccine." How about a minute explaining that?

**Mickey Huff:** Well, Ralph, this is really a kind of medical or pharmacological apartheid. It's a class-based system where these companies claim that they have patent rights, and they don't want to share information. If you really want to talk about stemming the tide of the global pandemic, then the wealthier countries that are developing certain types of treatments or technologies to alleviate suffering and alleviate disease and illness, you'd think that they would be inclined to share that technology. And in this case, what we see is people reporting at the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Sarah Lazare, stellar reporter at *In These Times*. They're telling a different story. They're basically saying that these countries don't want — and as it says, literally here, I'll use this language because I think it's very strong, says that they report that Pfizer has essentially held Latin American governments to ransom for access to its life saving COVID-19 vaccine. So you have a company, a transnational company acting like a de facto country and deciding basically which countries and which people get access to its treatments.

**Ralph Nader:** And Pfizer is making a huge amount of money now because the government is overpaying.

**Mickey Huff:** Record numbers of profits on these vaccines. It's criminal, absolutely criminal.

**Ralph Nader:** Okay, next one. "Google's Union-Busting Methods Revealed."

**Mickey Huff:** Well, Ralph, this is a story that comes out of Motherboard, and this is leaked files. As you'll see, they are basically talking about how Google, and again, this is not a new story. What's new potentially about it is that these big tech companies, they have this persona, if you will, since we talk about corporate personhood. They kind of have this persona that they're hip and they're cool and they're not evil. And the reality is they're just as big and bad as the traditional Fortune 500s and so on. These companies are union-busting. They hire union-busting consultants, like IRI Consultants, to basically break up unions and they do not want workers to organize because they don't want to share profits. And they also don't want workers to unionize, Ralph, because they're scared to death of whistleblowers and whistleblower protection.

We're coming up here at the end of this month and the next month around the National Whistleblower Summit in Washington, D.C. And I think it's really important to notice how many people belong to working unions and laborers that are really keen sources on whistleblowing. So this is just another story in a line of hundreds about how these big tech companies really don't care about workers and really need to be reined in and regulated.

**Ralph Nader:** All right. The next one. "Grave Threats to Amazon Rainforest from Domestic Industries and Global Corporations."

**Mickey Huff:** Okay, that story, Ralph, actually comes through Amazon Watch, so that's another one of these examples. That's not a traditional independent media outlet, but it's an activist group. You have nonprofit groups that in many cases are filling the void of the news desert that are the ones that are really paying attention to these kinds of key issues. The *Independent* also wrote about this and this talks about how global corporations, this is, again, age old story, contribute to the human rights abuses of indigenous populations. We've seen this from big oil. We see this now here from other companies. We see it from banking and investment, and hedge companies, investment companies. These are major enablers of policies and practices that directly harm people living in what once upon a time we referred to as Third World or developing countries, but it's even more than that. It specifically often targets the most vulnerable of peoples, indigenous peoples in various regions of the Global South where these folks have very corrupt governments, and they have no real ability to defend themselves against transnational corporate power.

**Ralph Nader:** The big meat packing company that is in Brazil and now has come into the US, is very much connected to this. They cut down Amazon Forest their suppliers and they create pasture for cattle, and then the cattle are slaughtered, the meat is exported to the US without labeling that it was produced under a severe deforestation process in the Amazon. Almost 18% of the Amazon now has been cut down. And if they ever reach 35-40%, it's going to be replicating. It's going to be a disaster, not just for South America, but for the world. The one that stood out really interesting is called "Seed Sovereignty Movements Challenge Corporate Monopolies." These corporations want to own all our seeds for food. Tell us about that.

**Mickey Huff:** This has been going on for a long time. Of course, companies like Monsanto notorious for this, scholars and activists, like Vandana Shiva and others globally, have decried

this for a long, long time. And this is basically another iteration of major corporations trying to patent things that are required for people to live – food, literally food – trying to take control of the food supply. This story is, I think a really significant one that we had research on from San Francisco State University. And again, the corporate press has covered GMO seeds and these kind of things in the past, but what they're not really doing is they're not looking at how legally behind the scenes these companies are working to create more and more impediments for people in countries like we were just talking about a moment ago, Ralph, to have their own food sovereignty, to have their own ability to feed themselves, which means that they are then beholden to outside sources for survival.

Again, these should be seen as criminal practices. These are predatory practices by major banks and corporations. And again, this is a story that's old. The specific story here that's talking about the African Centre for Biodiversity in South Africa may be a specific iteration of it in this case, but this is a global battle that's been going on for decades. It also talks about the Open Source Seed Initiative, which was covered in the *New York Times*. But these kind of stories, Ralph, do not get nearly enough attention. And this is a pattern of the corporate press, by the way, with back to your question about censorship. When the *New York Times* covers something like this, it gets them off the hook. They get to say, oh, we covered that. But you know what? They cover it maybe once, or they cover it out of context, or they cover it from a business perspective, not a human rights perspective. And so that's the very, again, insidious — I'm going to use that word. That's the insidious nature of the kind of censorship that the corporate media, the establishment press practice on a regular basis. They don't follow up. They don't follow through. And they don't make this above-the-fold, frontpage news on a regular basis, so people can be empowered to do something about it.

**Ralph Nader:** Here's a story of censorship regarding state governments who are busy censoring people's free speech on the issue of Palestinian rights. You call it the Canary Mission, which is apparently anonymous on the web--Blacklisting Pro Palestinian Activists, Chilling Free Speech Rights. Explain.

**Mickey Huff:** Well, Canary Mission is one of those shadowy nebulous organizations that creates blacklists of activists, of professors. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, our own Peter Phillips may be listed, a former director of Project Censored and former co-host with me at *The Project Censored Show* program, for standing up in favor of Palestinian rights. You see how strong the Israeli lobby is, and this is like a de facto kind of organization that does a lot of dirty work in the bidding of the Israeli lobby. And really, in many ways, it's kind of like a foot soldier, if you will, like an online IDF (Israel Defense Force). Character assassination is what the Canary Mission specializes in, and they try to get professors fired. They try to get people unhired if you were not hired in the 1st place.

And again, you see the power that organizations like this wield using intimidation, threats to organizations. And this is also connected to people who support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, Ralph, which is becoming stronger. And Abby Martin won an important case in Georgia last year, a free speech case, in which she was uninvited from one of our own media literacy conferences because of her support for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions. And Canary Mission is one of those nebulous, I think, an organization that people should know a lot more about because there are many other organizations like them and they want to stifle and silence free speech, and they want to silence human rights activism for Palestinians.

**Ralph Nader:** We've raised this issue on other subjects on anonymity and how so much of the nasty stuff over the internet would go away if people had to put their name behind their nastiness. How does Facebook allow a group like this to be anonymous?

**Mickey Huff:** That's a fantastic question, Ralph. And although the dog and pony show that the bread and circus congressional hearings basically use the censorship by proxy to try to get these groups to censor or to deplatform, but it always backfires against the left. They are deplatforming and censoring and silencing many more groups on the left than they do on the right. This has been shown on multiple social media platforms. A lot of the times, Ralph, they just throw their hands in the air and then they pretend that, well, we're free speech organizations. This whole fiasco with the billionaires buying up big tech, like Elon Musk at Twitter, somehow people on the right thinking that he's some kind of warrior for free speech. He wants Twitter because he wants data harvesting. We're talking about a guy that has mega contracts with the Pentagon for technology and satellite technology, and surveillance. Jeff Bezos, Amazon, *Washington Post*, \$600 million cloud contract for the CIA. These companies are dangerous. They are not our friends. And in many cases, Ralph, they turn a blind eye to organizations like this that support establishment narratives. And we know in the United States you can have a country, like Saudi Arabia, chop up a journalist and carry him out of an embassy in a suitcase with total impunity. You can have IDF snipers shoot a Palestinian journalist in the face and get away with it. Murder her in cold blood, not even a month ago, and get away with it, Ralph. And these organizations, again, when the establishment narrative lines up with over a big tech, they turn a blind eye to these things. And by the way, Ralph, really quickly, Facebook even reversed one of its violence policies to allow pro-Ukrainian, anti-Russian posts to call for violence against Russians against Facebook's own policies against promoting violence. So that's yet another example of when the official narratives line up from government to big tech and big media, all the values and principles go out the window.

**Ralph Nader:** We've been talking with Mickey Huff, the annual co-author of the riveting book *Most Censored Stories of 2022* in this case, but it goes back how many years have you been doing this, Mickey?

**Mickey Huff:** Well, I've been doing it since 2007 and '08, but Carl Jensen founded the project in 1976 in the wake of the Watergate fiasco when the Nixon Administration actually had Walter Cronkite silenced for trying to produce things about it, and the alternative independent media were crowing about it. But it wasn't until the *Washington Post* finally picked the story up late that it broke. And that's what gave Karl the idea to wonder what else the legacy press was failing to cover in the interest of we the people.

**Ralph Nader:** And what's the website for Project Censored?

**Mickey Huff:** It is [projectcensored.org](http://projectcensored.org) and you can also check out our publishing imprint, [censoredpress.org](http://censoredpress.org). By the way, all of our radio programs and everything in top censored stories are archived at [projectcensored.org](http://projectcensored.org).

**Ralph Nader:** We'll repeat that, listeners, in a couple minutes, but I want to go back to one more censored story, which is really very little known. It's called "Coastal Darkening Threatens Ocean Food Chains". What's that about?

**Mickey Huff:** Well, this is a story, Ralph, that Doug Johnson covered. Researchers at the University of Oldenburg in Germany, concluded that pollution related darkening of coastal waters in the world's oceans poses a serious threat to food chains. So we've done several oceanographic stories about problems with environmental pollution and degradation of the world's oceans. This is, unfortunately, Ralph, yet another story where decaying plants and loose soil are because of heavy rains. Climate change, the climate crisis or fertilizer is washed into the oceans creating pollution that's creating layers that are blocking light from getting down lower into the ocean for sea and plant life under the ocean. And it is affecting the entire ecosystem of the ocean, upon which not only things living in the sea need for survival, but we too, Ralph, we too, people on land, we are also detrimentally impacted by the degradation of the health of our oceans.

And again, year after year, Ralph, we have stories on our list about ocean health, whether it's reefs or coastal darkening, pollution, nano plastics. You know, Ralph, I'm afraid to say I don't like to be cynical about this, but I think the window for us as human beings to really do something effective about this has been closing. And I think that if we don't really get serious and put aside our other petty differences, worrying about profits and so on, we're not going to have a planet for our offspring to really be able to live on very well. And we're also of course putting at risk many, many, many millions of other living things. And I'm going to use this word one last time, it's criminal that these things are happening and that we actually know that they're happening. This is why knowledge is power. This is why we do this research in critical media literacy education every year. This is why we post these most unreported stories. It is because we believe strongly that if people know and understand these things, we can mobilize. We at least have a chance to fight back. Without knowing, we ourselves, like the plants in the ocean, will live in darkness and we won't be able to do much about it, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** One group that is trying to do something about it that I help start is called Blue Frontier run by David Helvarg, who is the author of the bestselling book over 20 years ago, *Blue Frontier: Dispatches from America's Ocean*. They're celebrating their 20th anniversary this month in Washington, D.C. And I'm sure they're on to this problem of coastal darkening, threatening ocean food chains. But people who are interested in anything relating with the degradation of our ocean, two thirds of the surface of the planet, contact the Blue Frontier and be part of the restoration effort of our global oceans.

**Mickey Huff:** Ralph, we can't do this work on our own. That's why I'm so glad you have done so much activist work for over half a century, starting so many vital organizations that help organize people around these key issues. Project Censored is a very small part of this. We're kind of like the town crier, right? We crow from the rooftops about important stories that intrepid independent journalists do cover, but we can't hear them through the din of corporate distraction and junk food news and sensationalist garbage trying to take our attention away from these key and important issues, Ralph. And I just appreciate the opportunity to come on and I appreciate what you do with your show. And at Project Censored, we need all the help we can get to amplify the voices of the brave and courageous independent sources and reporters that really do want to tell the public what's going on, as George Seldes said, was the main goal for journalists.

**Ralph Nader:** And once again the website.

**Mickey Huff:** It is [projectcensored.org](http://projectcensored.org). You can get the archives of all of our stories going back to 1976 and much, much more, including you can get the book and tune into our weekly radio program, *The Project Censored Show* and check out our new publishing imprint, the Censored Press at [censoredpress.org](http://censoredpress.org).

**Steve Skrovan:** Mickey, if you have a few more minutes, I've got a question. I'm considering you a doctor of news (Mickey Huff chuckles) and I'm coming in as a patient, telling you that I'm so confused because there's all this fragmented news landscape out there. I don't know who to believe or where to go for my news. I know Ralph as a baseline, everyday reads the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, plus obviously many other things, but that's part of his job. It's not my job. It is part of your job. So as a civilian who is just trying to keep himself informed, doctor, tell me where do I go for, say, one-stop shopping or no more than two-stop shopping, because I have a very busy life, but I want to know how to be an informed citizen.

**Mickey Huff:** That's a very fair question, and if I am a doctor in this context that you put it, I certainly would not be working for the big medical cartels or the Big Pharma version that you rattled off. Of course, you're right, it is my job to read these establishment press sources like it is Ralph's, But I realize others don't have the time. We have a list. I wish there was a one-stop shop. What I'm afraid of is that it actually is all of our job, as citizens in a purportedly free society, to become as informed as we can, and to not outsource that to private, for-profit corporations. So I would urge people to try to find... it isn't that there's some objective source somewhere. That's one of the big ruses of the corporate media the "We report. You decide", or "All the News That's Fit to Print," and "Democracy Dies in Darkness." That's all part of the propaganda campaign to keep people thinking that they should trust these big media outlets. What people really need to do is look at independent outlets and they need to go across the spectrum and look at several different ones for different reasons.

You'll notice in the conversation that we just had some of the information that we were talking about actually comes out of colleges or universities or think tanks or nonprofits, not even technically news organizations, because that's where you have expertise from people who are really focusing with a laser focus on particular issues. I wish I could say go to *Democracy Now!* and Amy Goodman. Certainly you would get good information there, but there's also some things that you won't find there. So what we try to teach through the Project Censored curriculum that you can learn about in [projectcensored.org](http://projectcensored.org) is critical media literacy.

If you can teach people how to vet sources, how to ask the right questions (i.e.,) why does somebody want me to know this, who owns this media, what's behind it and how do the advertisers affect what's covered, you can become more of a critical consumer of news, not a passive consumer of news. And I hate to talk about news as consumption, but we live in a capitalist society where the news is part of a private for-profit system. If you go to [projectcensored.org](http://projectcensored.org) down at the bottom of the list, we have a long listing of independent news sources listed by category or theme. I would urge people to start doing that. I would urge people to be social about their newsgathering, not just independent, but share sources with your friends. Share sources with your enemies. Dare to look at sources that you disagree with or that you are unfamiliar with in the process of becoming more critically media literate.

So again, I guess as someone that would be functioning as a doctor of news and information, I don't have the simple one pill that's going to fix it. Unfortunately, our corporate media has the



red pill/blue pill, and we need a rainbow of a pill box here, Steve. So that's the best I can do for now.

**Steve Skrovan:** All right, thank you, doctor and hour is up, I guess.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you very much. We've been talking with the indefatigable Mickey Huff who is part and parcel of the group Project Censored that delivers so much unrevealed news to the American people. Thank you, Mickey.

**Mickey Huff:** Thank you, Ralph. Much appreciated.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Mickey Huff. We have a link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Up next, Ralph proposes a new American tradition. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, June 17, 2022. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Corporations increasingly are using the language of diversity and social justice to prevent unions from entering their workplaces. That's according to a report from the *Intercept*. Businesses facing worker uprisings are attempting to co-opt the language of social justice movements and embrace trends around self-growth and positive lifestyles to counter demands for unionization — a far cry from the old days of union prevention, a history that featured employers routinely threatening workers with private guards and violent clashes on picket lines, the *Intercept* reported.

So-called union avoidance consultants, also known as persuaders, work in a specialty profession that has been honed in recent decades. The persuader industry has evolved to match the cultural trends among many workers.

For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with Hannah Feldman and Ralph. Want to build a legacy? Instead of chipping in for a plaque thanking the class of 1994 on an uncomfortable stone bench under your alma mater's bell tower, why not help create civic institutions? Ralph has an idea about that, and it's called Birth Year Legacy, a birth year legacy gift. Ralph, explain a little bit about what you're talking about and what the background is about the Birth Year Legacy gift.

**Ralph Nader:** It's pretty simple. It's enriching our civic community from which most justice flows throughout our history. And all of us who've been to colleges and are now alumni, are always being asked to contribute to our alma mater. Well, some years ago I got together my classmates from Princeton of Class '55 and said let's do something different. Let's set up Princeton Project 55 and offer internships and full-time opportunities to new Princeton graduates to work in systemic social change groups around the country. And so, we did set it up and we are the most popular class in modern Princeton history because we have placed hundreds of internships for Princeton undergraduates and for Princeton graduates.

Two of them were so pleased with their experience that when they went to Silicon Valley and made some money, they bought us a mansion size headquarters right off the campus at Princeton University. Now, I'm proposing to take this to a next step, and that was paralleled by meeting

with some of my Harvard Law School classmates years ago. And most of them are corporate lawyers. How could we agree on anything? So, I put the principle on the table. I said we certainly can agree on this--there is not too much justice in America--and they all agreed. And so we started the Appleseed Foundation and this has established 18 centers for social justice in 18 states – 18 centers for social justice in 18 states, one class. Now, it's broadened out so the board of directors have other graduates from the law school and it's continuing its good work.

Now, I've proposed taking this gift to America to a new bigger stage. And that is I'm proposing a new American tradition. Just think of the impact that this could have for future generations. I'm calling them the Birth Year Gifts to America. Americans born in the same year, let's say 1940, 1936, 1945, 1930. Americans born in the same year will get together with one another and fund their own legacy gift to lift our country's future. Well, people say what in the world is all that about? Well, first of all, we know there's an awful lot of unused money piling up. Trillions of dollars. The wealthy, the near wealthy, the upper-middle-class are flossing around getting virtually no interest rates in money market accounts, or in bank savings accounts. It's been called dead money. That is, it just lies there. It doesn't help anybody, create anything in terms of improved justice, peace, what have you.

So here's how it would work. Let's say some really unstoppable individuals without great wealth think up of an idea. They'd like to have this idea implemented all over the country. Let's say they want to start arboretums in communities all over the country. Arboretums are a great way to teach people about the natural world and to connect youngsters who are now hooked into their iPhones into communion with the natural world. Well, let's say the class of 1940, we call it the Birth Year of 1940, gets hundreds of thousands of people on board. That's the hard way to do it. Remember Andrew Carnegie, after he made his huge money on the backs of steel workers, became a leading philanthropist in the late 19th and early 20th century.

And one of the things he did, in addition to establishing universities, was to offer communities all over the US and Canada this proposition: You provide the land, and I'll build the library. I'll pay for building the library. So, we have over 2,000 Carnegie libraries all over North America and that has opened the library's resources to millions of youngsters, not to mention adults, in the ensuing century and a quarter. So, the idea of the Arboretum is on a similar platform. But let's say we don't have to organize in any birth year hundreds of thousands of people. Let's say you have a few enlightened billionaires in the class of, say, 1950. They would be now about 72 years old, born in 1950, who really have no promotional aspirations. They've made their money, they've gone to the top of their profession or corporation, and now they're looking to, as one classmate of Princeton told me, “move from success to significance.”

So, let's say a few of these very wealthy people got together and said let's organize, or fund rather, school clubs to teach children civic skills and enable them to engage in civic experience in their communities. Or let's make it easier to create more self-reliant communities. Or let's create facilities in neighborhoods for participatory sports, not just spectator sports. And we'll talk about other examples. And they get together the money, because very rich people get their calls returned from very rich friends, relatives co-executives. And they do it. And they announce this is our legacy to America. This is our legacy gift.

I had a multibillionaire once, Steve and Hannah, tell me on the telephone. He said, “You know, Ralph, we all know how to make a hell of a lot of money,” he's referring to his fellow

billionaires, “but we don't have a clue as to what to do with it, including me,” he said. Those are his exact words. I saw that as a great opportunity to try to establish a new American tradition--birth year, permanent, nonprofit institutional gifts all over the country for the future.

**Steve Skrovan:** Did this billionaire respond to that and set something up?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's the interesting question. I have sent this description in the form of a full-page ad. It was a full-page ad in 2014 in the *Baltimore Sun*, right opposite the editorial page; it couldn't have had a better position. I got no response. So, I've just recently put this and this will be online, listeners, so you can explore it to your contentment. I put it as a full-page ad in a *Progressive Populist* about which we have talked; we've had the editor on a couple times, and this fortnightly newspaper full of progressive columns and editorials goes to five to 10,000 subscribers and almost by definition they're progressive. They want to find ways to advance justice. I got one response. The response said, “In the ad you invited us to contact you for more information.” Okay, we sent the caller more information or asked what information were wanted beyond this particular detailed ad. But that's all.

So this proposal, Birth Year Gifts to America, institutional growing of democracy and justice, and advocacy for peace and rebuilding communities has not tapped into the curiosity of the American people, at least not in these two instances. And I really can't figure it out. Any comments?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah, I can understand. Identifying with your college classmates, your graduate school classmates at a school, how do you get people together identifying with a birth year? I wonder what the emotional glue is for these people identifying with each other and teaming up.

**Ralph Nader:** That's what's called the social unity challenge. In other words, how do you create a community that jump starts all these institutions in one area or another? How do you get it motivated? Well, if you start with enlightened rich people, they know each other; they've socialized with each other, so they would have less difficulty bringing a critical mass of people and funding to get these institutions underway. The more difficult challenge is how do you start from scratch? How do you start from someone in Peoria, Illinois saying, I want arboretums in as many communities as possible; they have an incredibly powerful impact on youngsters as well.

And how does that one person reach other people? Well, you've heard the phrase more than I have, you go viral. You put out a challenge in such a way on the internet that it reaches people who have similar interests in people learning about trees and shrubbery, and land, and photosynthesis, and fruits. So that's the way they would create groups that didn't exist before. They would bond with each other. Now, hobbyists do this all the time. When they want to play bridge online, well, they put out the call. And people who want to play bridge online get in touch with them. So it's done in entertainment and hobby enjoyment areas all the time. It's also done for collectors, people who want to collect certain things and they want to trade. Let's say they want to collect old coins. Well, they put out the call. They don't know who is going to respond, but sure enough, people do respond because they have the exact same interest.

**Steve Skrovan:** I'm curious as to what's — because I know everybody wants to know how can I help? What can I do? But not everybody has the skills to run an organization or fundraise. I do fund raising for Public Citizen. I hate it (chuckle). Basically, it's asking people for money no

matter what the cost. It takes a very special skillset, so I guess my question is what are you asking our listeners to do to respond to this Birth Year Legacy idea?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, first of all, it's a little different than what you've described, because the fomenting organization, say for arboretums or after school civic school clubs for youngsters, etcetera, is a nonprofit institution. That would be the implementer, the administrator. So the funders, once they got themselves together, would be creating this nonprofit 501(c)(3) and getting the skilled people to run it. That's the sequence.

**Steve Skrovan:** So you're not talking about an existing institution, you're talking about now getting somebody to create a 501(c)(3) for this particular...

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, here's another example. There are great whistleblowers all over the country. They take their conscience to work, they see corruption, they see harmful products, they see cover ups, they blow the whistle, and then they often lose their jobs. And they are not well rewarded and recognized even though they're some of the finest, ethical people you can imagine. Look what risks they took to their career. So, one of the birth year gifts would be to establish a whistleblowing award in all 3,007 counties in America to encourage and support people who stand tall, who speak truth to power. And this would be given in an annual ceremony. There would be media; other people in the community would recognize this ethical whistleblower who might have saved some of their lives, or some of their tax dollars, or some of their freedoms. And the whistleblower would have the feeling that she or he are supported in the community, and not just out there on a plank and then they're left alone.

So, the institution to establish this would be a new one; it would be a whistleblowers' recognition commission and it would go to work. But it would be funded by some Americans born in the same year, 1935, 1940, 1950, whatever, who got enough people together, either small dollar contributions in hundreds of thousands of people making those donations, or a few major big donations by enlightened wealthy people. Now, there's a lot of personal reward to this for these donors. They really feel good about it, just like they feel good about helping their alma mater, or helping the Salvation Army, or helping their local library. So that's another incentive.

**Steve Skrovan:** Hannah, jump in here.

**Hannah Feldman:** Yeah, so what I'm hearing actually, this to me, as someone who used to work for nonprofits, I'm a recovering nonprofit employee, with all of their bloat and their top-heavy administration, and to me this actually sounds like a great program for existing nonprofits to do. It's like you have this universal branding of the Birth Year Legacy Gift, but it's within an existing organization that sets up a 1924 award or 1924 fund. And they appeal to their stakeholders who fall within that birth year and give them this branded fund within the work that they're already doing rather than creating more institutions.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's another variety to the organizational structure. For example, one of the birth year gifts that I've proposed is organizing veterans against war. The men and women who have experienced preventable war and violence are often the most credible people advocating for peace. Well, you may not have to start a new organization. You may go to Veterans for Peace situated in St. Louis, a nonprofit group with chapters all over the country and say, "Look veterans, we want to expand your reach and here's what we're willing to do within

your existing group.” So that's another variety of implementing this idea of a Birth Year Gifts to America.

**Hannah Feldman:** It also seems a lot less intimidating. The idea of going out and starting a new organization sounds, as someone who's never done that, sounds really intimidating and kind of overwhelming and it can seem like we're surrounded by appeals for donations all the time. And people who want to contribute in a meaningful way might go, “Well, why would I just add to the alphabet soup of nonprofits asking for donations?”

**Ralph Nader:** Well, as you know, there are a lot of generous people in this country and some of them are not satisfied with the existing charities. They want something new, vibrant, something they've been thinking about over the years. So, “Let a thousand flowers bloom,” as the saying goes. The other thing is that if we focus on the enlightened rich--now, I know a lot of people listening to this program very skeptical because they engage in what I call overgeneralization. That is, they may be right with 98% of rich people. But all you need is 2% of mega-millionaires and billionaires to fund a lot of things. And once they do that then they get more emulation from the ones that have been holding back or have been hesitant or skeptical. So if we do it in a way where it invites enlightened, very rich people, you don't go through all these things that you mentioned. They can get it done just the way Carnegie got it done.

Carnegie didn't put out a fundraiser. He was worth in today's dollars, probably \$30 billion. And he just said, “Look, you provide the land in your town, and I'll pay for the library.” He never ran the libraries. They are run by local people. That's the whole point. They can be centralized fundraising and contribution, but then the institutions that are formed are liberated and given decentralized control by the community. If people don't want to have arboretums in every community that's possible around the country that's too ambitious, they can just do it in their state. They can do it in California or Connecticut, or Massachusetts, or Illinois. So it's all scalable up, scalable sideways, but the key is the enthusiasm for doing it. There's tremendous enthusiasm in alumni classes. I know Steve, for example, in Yale goes back; the alumni show up for reunions and have a great time. I want to try to create a similar enthusiasm for your birth year. Let's say someone was born in 1945 with the victory over the Axis powers; they had a lot of relatives who fought in those wars, and there's a bonding along the events that occurred in 1945 in overcoming the Axis parties. There's all kinds of ways that you can get people to consider that they're part of some community in formation.

**Steve Skrovan:** Right. And I can see people identifying with each other who've gone to a college together or are in the same stage of life and have relationships with each other that they value whether...I was born in 1957, whether they were ...some of us were born in 1956, I wouldn't want to limit the “You just missed the cut. You were born in December 31st, 1956,” ... so I can see that as being just like it was for Princeton 55, the seedbed for bringing those people together.

**Ralph Nader:** The key is not to be too technical about this. Like you say, December 31st cut off. Once they have the inspiration that they want to get together and make a permanent legacy gift to America, whether it's national, regional, state, that's the most important thing--when you take some of these dead trillions and trillions of dollars and put it to exciting movements for a better livelihood and a better community.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, here's the website for the birth year ad that we're going to give out today where you can add your own ideas, [birthyearlegacy.org](http://birthyearlegacy.org). Go to [birthyearlegacy.org](http://birthyearlegacy.org) and you can add your ideas. For help getting started on your own birth year project, if you've got your own idea, please contact [info@nader.org](mailto:info@nader.org) or write to P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC, 20036 for preliminary advice. I'm going to go through that again. Go to [info@nader.org](mailto:info@nader.org) or write to P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC, 20036, and you'll get some advice on that there.

**Ralph Nader:** It unleashes the idealism, the practical idealism of people who often while away their days with nothing to do and they get discouraged as they grow older. And they're not in touch with the vibrant structure of modern life in their community.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well again, we encourage you to go to [birthyearlegacy.org](http://birthyearlegacy.org), check out that, and for help in getting started on your own birth year project, go to [info@nader.org](mailto:info@nader.org) or write to P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC. 20036 and you'll get some advice there on how to start your own project. Thank you for that, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** And once you do that, you may just want to get a reporter interested in reporting it so it reaches a wider audience, or a columnist to write a column about it, or a newspaper or a magazine to write an editorial about it. I think you'll experience at the beginning, unless you're lucky, we have a real dearth of curiosity in this country when it comes to building democratic institutions. We can be very curious about hobbies, about celebrities, about misbehaving politicians, and so forth. But when it comes to building the democratic society that we all profess to want to live in, from the community to the national level, you're going to have to work a little hard to ask people, well, aren't you for some of these things, wouldn't you like some of these things in your community? Well, if so, why don't you curiously take it to another level and talk it up? Talk it up at town meetings. Talk it up at school board meetings. It's all there. It's all for the asking, and it's all in our hands, people.

I want to recognize a listener. His name is Kevin O'Connor, and he was told right after our interview with Tom Morello, the musician activist and enthusiast for the International Workers of the World Organization, that I asked Tom whether they still existed. They started in the early 20th century. And their motto was one big union. They weren't interested in a Starbucks like store being unionized (chuckle). They wanted one big union for all workers facing what they call "the boss." And so in order to bring me up to date, Kevin O'Connor kindly sent me the 65-page red booklet called *Songs of the IWW: To Fan the Flames of Discontent*. And I must say, the lyrics of these songs, Steve, are quite amazing.

One of them was authored by An Unknown Proletarian, that was the author, and it was called "We Have Fed You All for a Thousand Years."

"We have fed you all for a thousand years  
And you hail us still unfed  
Though there's never a dollar of all your wealth  
But marks the workers' dead.  
We have yielded our best to give you rest  
And you lie on crimson wool;  
Then if blood be the price of all your wealth,  
Good God, we have paid in full! "

So thank you very much for that, Kevin.

**Steve Skrovan:** Okay, we're going to do a listener question here. This comes from Deetje Boler, and subject is Bill McKibben and Hazel Henderson. And Deetje says, "In your discussion with Bill McKibben of the need for a mass demonstration, no reference was made to the upcoming June 18th March on Washington long being planned. I was surprised that neither of you seemed to have heard of it. At least you didn't help get out the word. Long in the planning, notices have been coming for many months now. It has long been in the planning stages and is intended to mark Martin Luther King's legendary March on Washington and encampment there. Whether these marchers plan to stay there, as you discussed, I'm not clear.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you very much for bringing this to our attention. It's just very timely. June 18th is a Sunday and listeners will have heard your question just before that. So pay attention, listeners, to this March on Washington and find out what it's all about in detail.

**Steve Skrovan:** Deetje also goes on to say, "I listened all your programs, mostly as podcasts, greatly appreciate them. As I followed you through all the years, I'm an old Gray Panther à la Maggie Kuhn. By the way, I especially appreciated Hazel Henderson's recent contribution to your program and very sorry to hear of her passing. She was and is an inspiration. I like all she had to say. It is fortunate you had her on when you did before she passed out of reach. I shall listen again and again and treasure it even if we don't get to interact with their active presence anymore. So this is a nice tribute to Hazel.

**Ralph Nader:** And well said. Thank you. We're all mourning the loss of Hazel, but she has numerous writings, activities, accomplishments, and supporters all over the world that are carrying on.

**Steve Skrovan:** That's our show. I want to thank our guest again, Mickey Huff. For those listening on the radio, we're going to cut out now. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up." A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

**Hannah Feldman:** Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free. Go to [nader.org](http://nader.org). For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com).

**Steve Skrovan:** Do you have consumer complaint? Go to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* webpage. In the top right column, click on the button marked "Consumer Complaints" and that will take you to an e-mail address. Our friends Harvey Rosenfeld and Laura Antonini are standing by to answer your questions and complaints.

**Hannah Feldman:** To order your copy of the *Capitol Hill Citizen*, "Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight", the pilot issue is only \$5 to cover shipping. Go to [capitolhillcitizen.com](http://capitolhillcitizen.com). The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

**Steve Skrovan:** Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

**Hannah Feldman:** Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thanks everybody.