

DR. ANDREW WEIL, ROBERT TIGNOR

Male Speaker: From the KPFK Studios in Southern California, it is the Ralph Nader Radio.

[Music]

“Stand up, stand up
You’ve been sitting way too long”

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. Hello David.

David Feldman: Hello Sir.

Steve Skrovan: We have another doctor on the show today David. I know you love to have doctors on the show.

David Feldman: Yes, I do, yes I do.

Steve Skrovan: Anytime he can get free advice.

David Feldman: This isn’t the kind of doctor I need. I’m having an emotional crisis, but that’s a different show.

Steve Skrovan: Well, here’s a man who I’m sure is not having an emotional crisis, and that’s the man of the hour Ralph Nader, hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello everybody. We have very useful information coming straight to our listeners today. You’ll see what I mean listeners.

Steve Skrovan: That's right. Regular listeners know that Ralph frequently asks our guests if they've ever been on NPR or PBS. Well he won't need to ask that question today. Forget Terry Gross. Our next guest today has been on Oprah. Today we will be joined by the world renowned Dr. Andrew Weil, who many of you know is a leader in the field of integrative medicine. Integrative medicine, I know this, because I looked it up, is an approach to patient care that takes into account not just the physical, but also the emotional, mental, social, spiritual and environmental influences that affect a person's health, which means a person's health is not merely defined as the absence of disease. In particular, we're gonna be discussing Dr. Weil's book, *Mind Over Meds*, which addresses the problem of over medication. It is essentially a patient's guide to knowing when you need and when you don't need to take drugs. So please pay close attention to that. Also on the show today we will be talking to Robert Tignor, a professor of history at Princeton University who along with a couple of other colleagues, drafted a statement calling for the denuclearization of the Middle East. Now most of the talk about nuclear weapons in the Middle East in the past 15 years has involved the countries of Iraq and Iran, neither which has ever actually ever possessed nuclear weapons. The only country in the Middle East that does is Israel. Israel has estimated as many as a hundred and fifty nuclear warheads. In the statement drafted by Professor Tignor, that has been signed by many prominent intellectuals and activists including Noam Chomsky, Chris Hedges, and our very own Ralph Nader. We look forward to talking to Professor Tignor about that statement, which recommends that American political decision makers as well as Israeli political leaders need to rethink their political, military, economic and cultural policies in the region. Between these two heavy-weight interviews, we'll take a short break and see what kind of heavy lifting corporate crime reporter Russell Mohkiber is doing over at the National Press Building in Washington DC., and if we have time, we'll try to address some listener questions. But first, let's go to the doctor. Dr. Andrew Weil is the director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona and an internationally recognized expert for his views on leading a healthy lifestyle. Among his many publications is the book *Mind Over Meds: Know When Drugs Are Necessary, When Alternatives Are Better, and When to Let Your Body Heal on Its Own*. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour Dr. Andrew Weil.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed. Everybody knows that drugs in recent decades, especially, have saved a lot of lives. They have, for example, saved people with Type I diabetes, with the discovery of insulin. Chemotherapy agents have cured certain forms of leukemia and lymphoma that have been fatal. Antiviral drugs have turned HIV infection from a death sentence into a manageable chronic illness. We also should know that drugs kill a lot of people. They create a lot of injury. They create a lot of illness. And, this can come from a whole variety of ways. Excessive promotion by the drug companies, mindless prescriptions by doctors, demands by patients that lead to addictions like the opioid addiction. In your research Dr. Weil, you indicate that the use of prescription drugs has skyrocketed so much that people today take ten times as many prescription drugs as they did in the 1950s. The use of over-the-counter medications has exploded just as dramatically. Before we get into more detail, what if someone asked

you this provocative question, Overall, do pharmaceuticals prescribed and over-the-counter, kill, injure and sicken more people than they save and prevent injury and sickness in more people?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well, let me give you one statistic. There are between 200,000 and 400,000 deaths a year in the US hospitalized population alone, directly caused by medication. This is not mistakes. This is the right dose of the right drug for the right indication, the right patient. That many people die, making it something like the fourth leading cause of death in the hospitalized population. On top of that, there's a huge number of very serious adverse reactions from many of these medications. I also have to say that I think that a lot of the stuff that you see advertised on television is less beneficial than manufacturers claim, and much more dangerous. And, I think many people aren't aware of this. One of the assignments that I give to physicians who come to our Center for training is to think about a list of 12 drugs they would take with them if they had to go to a desert island and only take 12. Now my list would include things like morphine, aspirin, penicillin, prednisone and drugs that have proved their worth over a long period of time, and their efficacy and benefits are good relative to the dangers that they cause. Almost none of the stuff that you see advertised on television.

Ralph Nader: Well advertised on television, is a recently new phenomena. I don't think it is more than 20 years. Most countries in the world prevent pharmaceuticals from being advertised on television, because it is so prone to emotional content and seduction, and not very scientific. In our country now, the drug companies are spending between five and six billion dollars a year on television ads. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is doing a very poor job in policing these ads.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Only one other country allows that, New Zealand. I don't even remember how that got in. It sneaked in during the Clinton administration. There was no debate on it. All audiences I speak to, I ask people to contact their legislators, and ask to repeal that. Direct to consumer advertising has been a huge boon to the pharmaceutical companies, and a disaster for medical practice.

Ralph Nader: Because what happens is people watch and they go to their doctor and demand. It is on TV.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Exactly.

Ralph Nader: There was a report in the Washington Post just recently, which you may have not known about Dr. Weil. It just gives an illustration. The headline is a quarter of adults with sprained ankles were prescribed opioids in the emergency room around the country. The state by state review revealed wide variation from 40% in Arkansas to 2.8% in North Dakota. Now, is this medical malpractice?

Dr. Andrew Weil: I think frankly a lot of prescribing of medication, I would call medical malpractice. Because the, not only do the medications fail to work, but in many cases, they actually prolong or worsen the conditions for which they're prescribed. I discussed that in Mind Over Meds. This is true of a lot of the common medications. For example, the PPIs, these proton pump inhibitors, the purple pill, like Nexium that are now given out so widely for a heartburn and gastro-esophageal reflux. These were never intended for long-term use. If you shut off the production of stomach acid, you can't get off these drugs. Because if you try to reduce the dose or stop it, the body secretes much more acid than before, and symptoms return with a vengeance. Once you start this medication, you can't get off. There's a paper published in the New England Journal a few years ago in which they took a group of healthy, young adults who had no gastrointestinal problems, put them on one of these drugs for several weeks. And when they stopped them suddenly, all developed gastro-esophageal reflux. The drug caused the problem it is meant to solve.

Ralph Nader: You say better not to start on them at all. You almost have a no no on using them at all. Here, all over TV you see Nexium.

Dr. Andrew Weil: All over TV. Now when I grew up in the late 1940s, 1950s, there was no gastro-esophageal reflux. People got heartburn. They treated it by taking Tums, which is a very safe preparation of calcium carbonate and peppermint oil. Most people, I think, understood that heartburn was your stomach's way of telling you that you had mistreated it, that you ate the wrong stuff, you ate too much, and so forth. Now, people go to doctors and say they have upper GI distress. Typically, without even taking a dietary history or anything else, they're put on one of these prescription drugs that suppress stomach acids.

Ralph Nader: You also have some strong evidence on the use, or overuse of statins, like Lipitor, Zocor, and Crestor. Can you elaborate that?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Sure. These clearly have their place. They're very effective at doing one thing, which is lowering the bad form of cholesterol, LDL. But Coronary Artery Disease is very complex. There are many factors that lead into it. Elevated serum cholesterol is only one of those. I think it is a very sobering fact that most people don't know that half of people who have first heart attacks, have normal serum cholesterol. My worry is that when a doctor prescribes the statin, he or she thinks they've discharged their responsibility, that there's no need to talk to a patient about how they eat, how they exercise, how they handle stress and anger, and all the other factors that are responsible for Coronary Artery Disease. So, there are clear indications for the use of statins. People who have had a previous heart attack. But it is very questionable whether the number of the people now being put on them, how many of them actually needs them.

Ralph Nader: You say there are studies showing side effects like muscle pain, cognitive impairment, and an increased risk of diabetes from these statins.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Absolutely. Actually the side-effects profile of those drugs is not as bad as many of the other ones that we commonly use. But there are certainly adverse effects to them. They are not for everybody. They're being much too widely prescribed at the moment.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to some situation that's really in the news a lot today, anti-depressive medications.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well, I don't know, last I looked, something like one in ten Americans is on a prescription anti-depressant. Here's another case where the effectiveness of these drugs is not great. There have been many studies showing that you can't distinguish their effects from those of placebos in mild to moderate depression, and even in some cases a severe depression. This is another example where long-term use of a medication prolongs or worsens the conditions for which it is prescribed. These drugs work by increasing serotonin at neural junctions. If you do that, the body is going to respond by making less serotonin, and dropping serotonin receptors. If you try to stop the medication, after say, a year, depression often returns worse than before. This has a technical name now, it is called Tardive Dysphoria meaning lingering bad mood, which is the result of the medication. Many of these drugs that we use, I think they're okay for short-term management, say a very severe depression. But with depression as with Coronary Artery Disease and Gastro-esophageal Reflux, there are many other methods that can be used to manage these conditions. But those methods are not being taught at the moment in conventional medical schools. And this is why I started the Integrative Medicine program to train physicians in things like the influence of diet on health, mind-body interaction.

Ralph Nader: Exercise.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Exercise, stress management, and the use of natural products, which can include botanicals, other kinds of dietary supplements. So with depression, the best evidence we have for intervention from a physical level are exercise, regular aerobic activity, and also supplementing with fish oil, and increasing Omega 3 fatty acid.

Ralph Nader: Reducing caffeine.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Of course, and a host of other things that you'll never think of. The whole field of what I call mental nutrition. If you watch a lot of sad movies and hang around people who are

depressed, you are going to be depressed as well. There's a lot of things you can attend to that can improve your mood.

Ralph Nader: This cognitive therapy is coming up fast in the studies. Tell us what that's about.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Which therapy Ralph?

Ralph Nader: Cognitive therapy.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Yes, I think this is one of the great developments that's come out of the whole, positive psychology movement. Cognitive therapy helps you identify thought patterns that are responsible for moods, and then shows you methods of changing them. It is a very effective, both cost-effective and time-effective method. I refer many people to it. I think it is a great improvement over standard forms of psychotherapy. Really one of the best innovations we've seen.

Ralph Nader: You know psychologists all over the country reporting, more and more patients coming in saying that they're increasing their anxiety, dread and fear because of Trump and what he says and what he does. That's not a laughing matter. There are a lot of people who are sensitive to social justice issues. They see one area after another going downhill in our country. You know programs are being slashed that help defenceless people, environmental attacks, the coarseness of the rhetoric. I don't think we should shrug that off. Certainly the psychologists are taking it very seriously.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well, you know for years, I have recommended that people take news fasts and learn to reduce the amount of news that they let into their lives. That is, they not become uninformed. But there are many people, I'm sure you know them, who are addicted to listening to news on television or radio and as a result, becoming angry and anxious. I think exerting more control over the amount of that that you let in is a wise thing to do especially in these times.

Ralph Nader: Except for our audience, right?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Of course.

Ralph Nader: We believe readers think, thinkers read. You talk about something interesting here. Some of the people have criticized you for putting forth some conventional therapies that have no bad

side effects. But they say, well, there's no evidence, double-blind study, etc., that it works. Well, you know, acupuncture has worked on pain for 2,000 years in China. I don't think they had a double-blind study. But you say, in one of your interviews, that stinging nettle works just as fast as any antihistamine for Hay Fever. And stinging nettle doesn't have any of the downsides of the antihistamine.

Dr. Andrew Weil: This is one, if anyone has questions about the efficacy of natural products, of herbals, this is one to try. It is a freeze dried extract of nettle leaves in capsules. The dose is one to two capsules every two to four hours as needed. It is the best remedy for Hay Fever symptoms I have ever found, better than antihistamines with no downside. And if you rely on these, over time, the allergy seems to fade away whereas with antihistamines they persist. By the way, there is a placebo controlled double-blind study behind that. Many of the people that make these criticisms and say there's no evidence, are simply unaware of the evidence. It may be published in journals they don't read. It hasn't been brought to their attention. Furthermore, I teach that we should get in the habit of using a sliding scale of evidence that works this way. The greater the potential of a treatment to cause harm, the stricter the standards of evidence that should be held to for efficacy. If we adhere to that in conventional medicine, we would save ourselves a lot of trouble. I heard you talking about breathing before. I often recommend breathing techniques. I teach all patients breathing exercises. I found them to be incredibly effective for the management of anxiety, for a whole host of problems. I'm not bothered by the fact that there is not a body of controlled scientific evidence on breathing because I know from my clinical experience that this works, and the chance of it causing harm is vanishingly small.

Ralph Nader: What's interesting is the junk science label can be applied to hundreds of over-the-counter medicines and prescription medicines over the years. Because they didn't show any evidence. For example, there's been severe criticism of antihistamines, severe criticisms of laxatives that are on the market. Not only they don't work, but they actually have bad side effects on you. And Dr. Sid Wolfe and his people years ago put out books called "Pills that Don't Work", and "Over-the-Counter Pills that Don't Work". They were removed as a result of the publicity on the Phil Donahue Show and elsewhere. They removed hundreds of these ineffective medications for purposes, which are advertised from the market. So listeners, it can be done. Good knowledge can drive out bad medication. But what's interesting is, every one of those that were advertised for x purpose or y purpose, but were ineffective, every one of those was based on junk science. And yet, they were getting sold and sold and just like now, people go into drug stores, they buy antihistamines, they buy laxatives that don't work and harm them. How do you deal with that?

Dr. Andrew Weil: I think through education. This is why I wrote that book. I'm a great believer that if you present information to people in ways that they can understand and connect with their own experience, they will follow it. That's the only antidote that I see.

Ralph Nader: And it's very available now on the Internet. I mean you can go to worsepills.org. that's Dr. Sidney Wolfe's publications. Your book, "Mind Over Meds." Your website is what?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Drweil.com.

Ralph Nader: That's w-e-i-l, drweil.com. It is amazing how people so easily can reduce the pain, the anxiety, the dollars wasted just by paying a little attention, a few minutes, a few hours. It then can spread the word in their neighborhood. We're not dealing with shades of grey here. We're dealing with an industry that guiles a lot of doctors with their sales pitch that's selling you bad stuff.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Speaking of dollars Ralph, I think many Americans don't know that they pay much more for medications than people do for the exact same medications in other countries. Furthermore, the mark up on pharmaceuticals is greater than on any other product in the market. The companies justify this, saying they have to spend so much money on research. Very difficult to get out of them what they spend. But the amount they spend on research is insignificant to what they spend on advertising. A lot of that advertising and promotion are done with medical journals. One of the great untold stories is the collusion between medical journals and pharmaceutical companies in which research is published, and how that influences medical practice. You may, I'm sure you saw quite recently, collusion between insurers and pharmaceutical companies to make the prices of generic medications higher than they had been in the past.

Ralph Nader: That's right, they were the big hope for reducing drug prices. The drug companies in this country charge Americans higher for their drugs than any other country in the world. No other country subsidizes, and gives free research and development with clinical trials from The National Institutes for Health to the drug companies the way our country does. I mean what kind of gratitude is that? Do you see any danger in the following facts, that about 50% of all drugs in this country are imported from China or India? About 80% of the active ingredients in drugs are imported from China and India. There is no manufacturing facility, I'm told, in this country, for penicillin? You want to comment on that? In terms of national security, as well as safety?

Dr. Andrew Weil: There may be some of those products that are coming in from India that are fine. I must say I am, as a consumer, I'm concerned about all products coming in from China. I do not recommend that people use herbal medicines from China because of the possibility of toxic contaminants in them. I think that may apply to medications as well.

Ralph Nader: What's interesting is, drug companies that make enormous profits and get huge tax credits, huge government research subsidies, no reasonable price controls as there are in other countries, still want to make more money by outsourcing production to China and India. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't have a really big presence of inspectors in China. Let's go to something

that everybody relates to. The technical phrase is non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. But you know them as aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen. What's your comments?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Very effective drugs. Very useful. The best things we have that are for pain and inflammation that are not opioids, I think used appropriately, which is mostly for short-term management of condition, they are useful. The problem is that because these are so readily available, people think of them as being totally innocuous, and take them for casual reasons, or stay on them for long periods of time, and they are not without very serious downsides. The major ones being bleeding in the stomach or upper intestine. A lot of these bleeds are fatal. There's a very high number of deaths related to GI fatal bleeds from anti-inflammatories. Often, these occur in people who have no warning symptoms. It is not people who get stomach upsets or pain from taking them. It just happens out of the blue.

Ralph Nader: They can have cardiovascular and kidney problems, correct?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Absolutely. I think the point here is to remember these are strong medications. They work, they're ones that I would certainly keep around, but they should be reserved for the short-term management of painful and inflammatory conditions.

Ralph Nader: Now you're a graduate of Harvard Medical School in Cambridge. Give us your comment on medical education today when it comes to drugs, when it comes to health care, and when it comes to nutritional education. What's missing here?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well nutritional education is almost totally absent. The total that I got at Harvard Medical School was 30 minutes, which were grudgingly allowed through a dietician at one hospital I worked at in Boston, to tell us about special diets we could order for patients. When nutrition is taught it is taught as biochemistry, and it is forgotten as soon as the biochemistry exams are over. I think it is fair to say that most physicians are functionally illiterate in nutrition. It's not their fault. They weren't taught it but they're having in them in ways that they can remedy that deficit. Our fellowship, our two year fellowship for physicians at the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, nutrition is a major part of the curriculum. I would say when I write treatment plans for patients, the first steps are always about dietary change, things to avoid, things to eat more of, ways you can change. I would say that I have seen dietary change be an incredibly effective method before you even have to resort to medication. That's one area of deficiency. Another is the whole realm of mind-body interactions. Extremely important knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative medical systems, like traditional Chinese medicine, when to use that, how to find a good practitioner. The information about dietary supplements, and botanical medicines is almost completely absent. There's very little about spirituality, and medicine. There's very little about self-care. This is a huge problem because the nature

of, the way we train doctors, many people are unable to take care of themselves and so are not able to embody and model health and healthy living for their patients.

Ralph Nader: How can we increase the number of primary care doctors? Most of them are coming out with huge debts in medical school, in going into these lucrative specialties? But the interface with the patient is a primary care doctor.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well we pay them more, or we forgive some of that medical school debt, which is crippling for many people. There are some very good studies showing that states that have higher percentages of primary care physicians have better health outcomes. We know that this is a very useful thing, and we should be making that happen more.

Ralph Nader: Here's another one that raises an issue, what in the world are the doctors doing when people come in their office coughing and they have a cold, and you have some pretty severe criticisms of over-the-counter medication for common colds and flu.

Dr. Andrew Weil: I think most of them simply don't work, and you're better off leaving things alone, resting, staying out of circulation, drinking fluids, and just easing symptoms by things like breathing steam, and drinking tea and honey. But a worse problem is the number of people who have viral upper respiratory conditions who get antibiotics for them. This is a problem both of patients who demand antibiotics if a cold lasts longer than they think it should. It is a problem for doctors who write these prescriptions even though they know they shouldn't. This is one reason we lost the power of many antibiotics from simply overuse and thoughtless use.

Ralph Nader: One thing that really has troubled me over the years is increase of drugging of children. They go to the school, there's a nurse there, and they hand out the drugs. This is almost child molestation.

Dr. Andrew Weil: It should be very alarming to us. The numbers of kids on psychiatric medications, often multiple psychiatric medications is astounding. We have no idea what the long term effects of these drugs are on the developing brain. I would say we're doing a vast experiment with our children, and we have no idea what the outcome will be.

Ralph Nader: What are some of these drugs?

Dr. Andrew Weil: There are first of all are the antidepressants, the whole range of them. Then there are the stimulant drugs that are given for the treatment of ADHD, which I think is vastly over diagnosed. There are the anti-anxiety drugs, the benzodiazepines, which are highly addictive. But the one that really just bothers me terribly is the use of antipsychotic drugs. Now these are drugs that were developed to treat schizophrenia and major mental illness. They're now being handed out as first-line interventions along with SSRI antidepressants, to make the antidepressants work better. You've probably seen these ads on television. If you antidepressant isn't working, ask your doctor for whatever. To make up for the ineffectiveness of standard antidepressants, we are now giving antipsychotic drugs, and we're giving them to kids.

Ralph Nader: Not only that, but comment on this drug Orlistat.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well I think that is pretty much going out of fashion. This is one of these that's supposed to block fat absorption and promote weight loss. We have an epidemic of childhood obesity in this country, which should be another flashing red light, because it is being followed closely by an epidemic of Type-2 diabetes and will be followed by an epidemic of Coronary Artery Disease in young people. The answer is not to give a medication that supposedly blocks fat absorption and has a whole host of adverse effects. It is to think about what we're doing wrong. I would say one of the things that we should be really concentrating on is to get, not only kids, but all people, not to drink sweet liquids. It is not just soda, it is fruit juice. It's energy drinks. It's putting sugar in coffee and tea and other things. If we could just get people in this country to stop drinking sweet liquid, we would be one big step ahead.

Ralph Nader: I'm sure some listeners are saying, let's look at this systemically here. We have a fee-for-service, over-diagnosing incentive system where the more you prescribe, the more you operate, the more you diagnose, the more MRIs, the more money. Sectors of the whole medical, industrial complex make more money. Go for a single payer free choice of doctor and hospital, and get rid of fee for service. Canada for example, which looks a lot like us, spends half per capita. That is half, about \$4,400 dollars per capita. We're well over \$9,000 dollars per capita. They not only spend half, but they cover everybody. Where in this country, we have tens of millions of people not covered or grossly under covered, and they have free choice of doctor and hospital, and better outcomes. Let's look at it systemically now. What would you recommend?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Well to me the root problem is that as dysfunctional as our health care system is, it is generating rivers of money that are flowing into very few pockets. It's the pockets of the pharmaceutical companies, the manufacturers of medical devices, and the big insurers. And until we can break the hold of those vested interests on our legislators and our government, I don't think there's any hope of movement. The only way I see that happening is if a grassroots socio-political movement starts. Because at the moment, you cannot get elected to office in this country—it doesn't matter if you're a democrat, republican, liberal, or conservative—unless you have made deals with those vested interests.

Ralph Nader: That's why I keep saying to our listeners, it is Congress, it is Congress, which means it is you, it is you, your congressional district. Never takes more than one percent organized, your senators and representatives, representing public opinion. And, oh do you have public opinion on your side on this one. I mean, people are saying, for example, there is a disease in Louisiana. It has 85,000 patients. The drug company, Gilead Science is coming in and saying we have a new drug that's gonna cure. But it is only gonna cost \$80,000 a year per patient. We've heard some of these drugs are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is kind of corporate extortion, pay or die atrocity. Again, you think most people don't want regulation of drug prices in this country? A vast majority of conservatives and liberals. It is ripe for organizing back in your district. Otherwise, just getting worse and worse. I remember when a dollar a pill was considered uproarious

Dr. Andrew Weil: Yup. Well it is getting worse and worse, and it is going to get worse and worse. It is possible the whole thing will have to deconstruct in order for us to build something better. But more people have to get angry enough about the situation. We have to begin electing different kinds of representatives who are not beholden to those vested interests.

Ralph Nader: You got to make the connections. Like Dr. Himmelstein, and Dr. Woolhandler put out this report when they were at Harvard Medical School two years ago saying that 45,000 people in this country die every year because they can't afford health insurance to get diagnosed and treated in time. They think it is now about 35,000 because of Obama Care. I mean, how angry do you have to get when your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, your aunt, your uncle. There's plenty of anger out there. But it's not organized.

Dr. Andrew Weil: It is not organized, exactly.

Ralph Nader: By the way, when you came out with Mind Over Meds, there was no Oprah show to put you on, right?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Correct.

Ralph Nader: You're getting less than national media attention, because these shows are no longer on the air. Phil Donahue is not on the air. It is getting worse. I keep telling our listeners, with this massive expansion of communication and media, it is harder and harder compared to 60s, 70s, and 80s to reach a large audience for the kind of message that you have.

Dr. Andrew Weil: No question. It is harder and harder to break through all the noise out there. It is just harder.

Ralph Nader: You've graduated over 1500 physicians from your fellowship training program at University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine. That's in Tucson, right?

Dr. Andrew Weil: It is. If people go to the website of the program, it is integrativemedicine.arizona.edu, there is "find a practitioner" link there. You can locate our graduates near you. They're in all specialties, and they practice this new kind of medicine, which means using medication if it is necessary, but really knowing how to use all these other methods that are safer, more cost effective, and more effective.

Ralph Nader: These are all MDs, right?

Dr. Andrew Weil: They're all MDs, and DOs, doctors of osteopathy. We've graduated some nurse practitioners as well.

Ralph Nader: Tell us about your programs and the 12 volumes.

Dr. Andrew Weil: This is a series of books published by Oxford University Press. They came to me and asked me if I would be the general editor of a series of volumes for clinicians in different specialties. I think it is more than 12 now. But this is titles like integrative cardiology, integrative oncology, written by medical specialists, discussing the various kinds of treatments that can be used in addition to, or in place of conventional therapies for the management of conditions within those specialties. Many practitioners are finding this to be very useful, and we have more titles coming up all the time. We have one on environmental medicine coming, one on sexual health, sleep medicine.

Ralph Nader: How would people get these?

Dr. Andrew Weil: Just look up Oxford University Press website and it is the integrative medicine library series.

Ralph Nader: You said someday the integrative medicine becomes so mainstream in the US that the word "integrative" would be deleted. It will just be called good medicine.

Dr. Andrew Weil: I hope that's not far off.

Ralph Nader: Give that website again please?

Dr. Andrew Weil: It is integrativemedicine.arizona.edu

Ralph Nader: We're now gonna have some questions from Steve Skrovan and David Feldman. I'm sure you have more than a few on your mind. What's up?

David Feldman: Plant-based diet--if everybody converts to a plant-based diet, is that the healthiest step?

Dr. Andrew Weil: I think that's helpful, but I don't think it has to be exclusively plant based. We have a lot of scientific evidence for the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. That includes fish and high quality dairy products like yogurt and cheese, and occasional meat. So I don't tell people to become vegetarians or vegans. But I think it is very useful to reduce the amount of animal products in the diet, especially meat, and especially beef, and to really learn the basics of healthy nutrition.

David Feldman: What about removing sugar completely from your diet?

Dr. Andrew Weil: That's hard to do. We like sugar. I think we eat way too much of it. There's a lot of evidence that too much sugar deranges metabolism. It certainly promotes obesity. I think the trick is to find how to greatly reduce the amount that you take in. I would start with eliminating sweet liquids from your diet.

Steve Skrovan: There's a good movement around the country. It attacks soda.

Dr. Andrew Weil: That's fine.

Ralph Nader: The soda companies are trying to get minorities organized to say, this is a regressive tax. Soda is killing minority kids.

Dr. Andrew Weil: But you know people don't understand the difference between fruit and fruit juice. Fruit juice is really not very different from soda in its effect on the insulin system on metabolism. In California there was a grassroots movement that got soda machines out of public schools. They were replaced with fruit juice vending machines, not a big step forward.

Ralph Nader: I ask people, "Classic Coke, Coca Cola can, how much sugar do you want? Tell me when to stop, one tea spoon, two teaspoons, four teaspoons." By the time you get five, most people say "stop." Well the actual amount of teaspoons of sugar in a Classic Coke can is nine. Nine tea-spoons.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Wow...

Ralph Nader: Listen, we're unfortunately out of time. But the book is Mind Over Meds. It is a good factual read. You'll want to keep it on your shelf and refer to it. It can save you endless agony, help your neighbors be more informed, your friends, your relatives, save you a lot of money. This is where readers think and thinkers read. They operate in a very pragmatic, everyday household manner. Thank you very much Andrew.

Dr. Andrew Weil: Great to talk to you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking to Dr. Andrew Weil. We will link to drweil.com at ralphnaderradiohour.com. When we come back we're going to talk about denuclearizing the Middle East. But first let's head over to the National Press Building in DC and hear from our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber. You are listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Back after this.

Russell Mohkiber: From the National Press Building in Washington DC, this is your corporate crime reporting for Friday, August 3, 2018, I'm Russell Mohkiber. Peter C. Wright, the lawyer nominated to run the Super Fund toxic clean-up program spent more than a decade on one of the nation's most extensive clean ups, one involving chemicals sprawling headquarters in Midland, Michigan. While he led the legal strategy there, the chemical giant was accused by regulators, in one case a Dow engineer, of submitting disputed data misrepresenting scientific evidence in delaying clean up according to internal documents and court records as well as interviews with more than a dozen people involved in the project. That's according to a report in the New York Times. Wright spent 19 years at Dow, one of the world's largest chemical makers that once described himself in a court deposition as "the company dioxin lawyer." For the corporate crime reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. Our next guest has some very strong opinions about the consequences of countries having nuclear weapons in the Middle East and what needs to be done about it. David?

David Feldman: Robert Tignor is a professor of modern and contemporary history at Princeton University. Professor Tignor teaches courses in African history and world history and has done research on British Colonialism as well as its aftermath. Recently, Professor Tignor along with a number of colleagues, drafted a public statement calling for the complete denuclearization of the Middle East. The statement has been signed by Ralph Nader and many other concerned intellectuals and activists, including past guests on this show, including Noam Chomsky and Chris Hedges. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour Professor Robert Tignor.

Robert Tignor: Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be here.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed. This petition, which was signed by some pretty prominent people in this country and abroad, and some pretty prominent academics, who know what they're talking about in terms of the history of the Middle East came out. What kind of coverage did you get?

Robert Tignor: We got coverage in Europe from an outfit, a blog known as Orient XXI It was published in English and in French, in Common Dreams (non-profit independent media) and Anti-War. Hopefully in other places as well.

Ralph Nader: You didn't get as much coverage as one of Trump's secondary tweets at six a.m. in the morning, excoriating some person on CNN.

Robert Tignor: I'm very sorry about that.

Ralph Nader: Did you get anything on NPR, PBS?

Robert Tignor: No we did not.

Ralph Nader: This is just a point I make with a lot of our guests, Professor Tignor, namely the more important a subject is the less media it gets. Unless it is something that emanates from a powerful source like Trump, and whether it is an important subject or not, it gets media. You got coverage on the

Common Dreams and I'm sure some of the other blogs. Did you get interviewed on Real News Network?

Robert Tignor: I did not.

Ralph Nader: Okay.

Robert Tignor: I'm hoping that that will happen.

Ralph Nader: Yes, indeed. Let's get to the statement itself. What's the essence of the statement to denuclearize the Middle East?

Robert Tignor: Well you know, what got me started thinking about this were the agreement, the negotiations more than agreements taking place between the Americans, Trump, and the North Koreans and also the South Koreans in terms of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. I thought to myself, since there has been such concern about nuclear weapons in the Middle East, in particular in Iraq, and in Iran, and very little attention paid to the fact that Israel has nuclear weapons. That's generally well-known, but not very much noticed in the American press. I thought that since the Middle East is a region that has a lot of crises, and is a tinder box of political tensions, that making a statement about the denuclearization of the Middle East would be useful and helpful to call attention to the fact that Israel has got pretty much a pass, as far as its nuclear weapons are concerned.

Ralph Nader: Well, awhile back we had Thomas Graham on our show, and he was deeply involved for years as a negotiator with the Soviet Union on behalf of the US government and the disarmament agency and the various treaties that were signed with the Soviet Union. He made a big point of pointing out nuclear-free zones that already exist in the world. Most people are not aware of that. There's a formal nuclear-free zone in South America, which has worked. There's one in some countries in Central Asia. He thinks that there may be one emerging in Southeast Asia. He pointed out that that could apply to the Middle East.

Robert Tignor: That would be wonderful, wouldn't it?

Ralph Nader: Yes. Right now, Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons, and they got them with heavy help from the United States as Seymour Hersh has pointed out in his books and articles. Why does Israel have nuclear weapons and what's its policy in terms of their use?

Robert Tignor: Well, the Israelis have nuclear weapons because I mean that is the ultimate weapon, in case you know, a country has political difficulties and military difficulties. The Israelis have decided that they need... they have many enemies surrounding themselves, or at least they regard them as enemies, and certainly they are in some respects. And so they have felt a very strong desire to have nuclear weapons and to make it known to the other countries in the Middle East that they do have them, and that they would be willing to use them if necessary.

Ralph Nader: Why is it stated that they needed nuclear weapons? They have the most remarkable superiority in modern weapons against adversaries, probably in world history. They have the most modern US weapons. They get them sometimes before the air force gets them it seems. They're getting the F35, or about the same time. They have a navy, they have an air force. They have a mechanized army. It's surrounding countries, even before the turmoil in Iraq and Syria, disorganized, low equipment in terms of modern weaponry in all these countries. Israel can wipe out the Middle East countries with traditional weapons. Why do they need nuclear weapons, which doesn't put them very high in public opinion?

Robert Tignor: Exactly. That's a question that you have to ask the Israelis. But I think that they feel that this is the ultimate weapon and that they need to have it in order to be able to deal with their adversaries. Let me make a point. I think this is a correct point. I've done some studies of the 1973 war. And my understanding of the 1973 war...the early stages of the war, the Syrians and the Egyptians. The Egyptians crossed the Canal, and the Syrians occupied much of the Golan Heights. It is my understanding that the Israelis opened their nuclear weapon silos in anticipation of compelling the Egyptians and the Syrians to stop their military advances.

Ralph Nader: So it is primarily used as a deterrent.

Robert Tignor: Or course.

Ralph Nader: This is under Golda Meir.

Robert Tignor: Under Golda Meir.

Ralph Nader: Right. Of course officially Israel doesn't even admit to having nuclear weapons. The US goes along. They will never say yes, when it is the biggest open secret in the world, yes they do.

Robert Tignor: It is the biggest open secret, isn't it? I mean if you count all the countries that have nuclear weapons, Israel is always on that list.

Ralph Nader: Yes, and as a result, Israel has not joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It doesn't have to allow international inspectors into the country, as other members of the Nuclear Nonproliferation have to. That included France, England and the US. I think Pakistan is not a member. North Korea was a member and pulled out a few years ago. What would you advise the US government in terms of getting Israel to belong to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty?

Robert Tignor: I don't think that the US government is willing to do that. I would certainly advise them to do so. But it's advice that is unlikely to be heard by any one of the political leaders in our country.

Ralph Nader: In your statement, you say that the Israeli army has been in military occupation of the west bank in Gaza, in effect to constructively, It's a fiction that it is not occupying Gaza. It is seen by international law specialists as an occupation. Anyway, you said the Israeli army has been in military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza for five decades making it one of the longest military occupation of modern times. Now this is a pretty hard-fisted occupation. They can go in anytime, smash doors down. They have all kinds of check points, all kinds of surveillance. They have blockaded Gaza. Can Israel be called a democracy with its repression of five million people on its borders?

Robert Tignor: In a sense, I suppose it could be called a democracy. I think it is becoming very, very difficult to call Israel a democracy, especially with the passage of this nationality law, which says that Israel is a Jewish state. It basically disenfranchises the privileges of the non-Jews. There's a 20% of the population in Israel is Arab. The Jews in particular, there's an article in the New York Times today about the Jewish population, which has supported the state of Israel and had individuals that have served in the army of the state of Israel. Yet, they now feel as if they're second-class citizens.

Ralph Nader: You mentioned in the statement as well that American political decision makers as well as Israeli political leaders need to rethink their political military, economic and cultural policies in the region. For over 60 years, the peace movement in Israel, which has included retired generals, retired heads of the Israeli FBI and MASAD, and ministers of justice. They are very critical of Netanyahu at the present time. They have never been allowed to have a hearing in Congress. There's never been a congressional hearing in Congress on the peace movement. At various times, they represented over 50% of the Israeli population that wants a viable two-state solution. What do you think can be done to get some people in Congress to say AIPAC couldn't possibly oppose these former top-ranking Israeli officials in the military diplomatic national security and justice area from having a hearing in the House and Senate.

Robert Tignor: You think not? I don't think that they would be. They have advertised in the New York Times and various other journals. So many of these individuals who have served in the military, and in the intelligence establishments have, after retirement, they have said that a two- state solution is essential if Israel is to remain a viable state, and economy in that particular region of the world. But, I don't see that there's any hope whatsoever.

[Crosstalk]

Ralph Nader: But wouldn't that be a good program for the peace movement?

Robert Tignor: It would really be a very good program. I hadn't thought about that. That's an excellent idea.

Ralph Nader: Because the Jewish wish for peace in the US, and peace now, and the Quakers, and the Unitarians...and a lot of retired military officials, even retired members of Congress who are now free to speak out, could be brought to bear on this.

Robert Tignor: Let's do it.

Ralph Nader: So, maybe that's the next petition that you want to establish.

Robert Tignor: That's an excellent thought.

Ralph Nader: Tell me this, as you know from your historical knowledge, Professor Tignor, in 1967 the founder of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, came out of retirement and made it very clear that the Israelis should withdraw from the occupied West Bank in East Jerusalem and Gaza. Because if they didn't, and these were his words, "it would be the seeds of Israel's self-destruction" as a society and a nation.

[Crosstalk]

Ralph Nader: Now why did he say that? Why was he ignored?

Robert Tignor: He was ignored because the right wing is very powerful in Israel and the Likud Party has dominated politics ever since Menachem Begin was put into office. The most extreme of this group is Benjamin Netanyahu. And so that element in Israeli politics has come to the surface. And the the more moderate, more sensible Labor Party has its influence diminished.

Ralph Nader: Why did David Ben-Gurion, the most revered figure in Israeli history say what he said, do you agree with that?

Robert Tignor: I totally agree with it. Really, what is the future of the state of Israel? It can hang on for maybe another century. Whatever you say. It has the powerful military forces. But eventually, first off, it has very, very little international support. Only the Americans are really 100% behind Israel. But even in the United States, I think that the support for Israel is diminishing. This is also true among a number of Jewish individuals. Very important Jewish members who are not as sympathetic as they used to be. Incidentally I put petition a number of years ago calling upon Princeton University to divest from companies who contributed to the oppression of the Palestinians in the West Bank. It is interesting. This is a petition, which was considered by the divestment committee of Princeton. It was voted on by the undergraduates and by the graduate students. What is interesting about this is that the undergraduates voted against it. There was very, very strong support among the undergraduates. It was a strong minority position. But the graduate students voted very much in favor of it. I think being a pariah state internationally is not something that the state of Israel really enjoys.

Ralph Nader: Your co-originaors for this petition, distinguished professor of history Arnold Myer and Stanley Stein, along with you puts this out. And Arnold Myer as you know wrote this great history book called "From Plowshares to Swords", which is the history of Israel and modern Zionism and he didn't get much attention either. It got so bad that I bet you AIPAC hasn't even reacted to your petition.

Robert Tignor: That's probably true. I'll tell you something, there is something called Mission Canary. I don't know whether you know about it, but there must be a thousand American and European professors who appear on Mission Canary. It is a list of professors and individuals and organizations, and you must surely be on it, who have been critical of the state of Israel. Planted inside universities and organizations are individuals who are proud Israelis, proud Zionists, who collect all kinds of information about people who are critical.

Ralph Nader: I wasn't familiar with that Professor Tignor. We're running out of time. How can people get ahold of this petition and spread it out?

Robert Tignor: I'm going to send it to a gentleman. He runs a blog that deals with the Middle East. And hopefully it will gain a little more foothold.

Ralph Nader: Well thank you very much Professor Tignor. Thank Professors Myer and Stein for their good work here in trying to add another Nuclear-Free Zone to that and South America and other places in the world, in the extremely perilous area known as the Middle East or the Near East.

Robert Tignor: Thank you very much.

David Feldman: We have been speaking to Professor Robert Tignor. We will link to the letter. But Denuclearizing the Middle East at ralphnaderradiohour.com. I want to thank our guests this week, Dr. Andrew Weil, and Professor Robert Tignor. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners stay tuned for some bonus material, we call the wrapup.

Male Speaker: For Ralph Nader's weekly column, go to nader.org for more from Russell Mohkiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com. The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marron our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: And our theme music, Stand Up, Rise Up, was written and performed by Camp Harris. Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Thank you Ralph.

Ralph Nader: What you heard listeners from Dr. Andrew Weil should help you or your relative's friends and neighbours to be safer when you're confronted with pharmaceutical industries and its sales pitches.

[0:57:26]

[Audio Ends]