

Ralph Nader Radio Hour Ep 353 Transcript

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

David Feldman: Hello there, everybody. I think early voting starts next week in Georgia for the runoff.

Steve Skrovan: I believe you're correct. And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. All eyes on Georgia. The control of the U.S. Senate is at stake in the two runoff elections on January 5th, so stay tuned. Whether you're in Georgia or around the country, everyone has got a stake in this

Steve Skrovan: That's right. And that's what we're going to deal with on today's show. We'll be talking to Dr. Drew Westen, political psychologist and professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2008, Mr. Westen published the now classic [book], *The Political Brain*, which has since been read by President-elect Biden as well as President Bill Clinton—both of whom sang its praises. Dr. Westen's book argues that to win elections, liberal politicians should appeal to voters' emotions first [and] logic second. In other words, prioritizing the marketplace of emotions over the marketplace of ideas--feelings over issues. That's the psychologically sound game plan to achieve electoral success. We're going to be talking about effective political messaging, and in particular, what kind of messages will resonate with voters in this upcoming Senate runoff in Dr. Westen's home state of Georgia. Regular listeners know that one of Ralph's favorite phrases is “policy proceeds message.” Let's find out how that jives with the point of view of our first guest. David?

David Feldman: Dr. Drew Westen is a clinical personality and political psychologist and neuroscientist as well as professor in the Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry at Emory University. Dr. Westen is the author of *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, and is the founder of Westen Strategies, a strategic messaging consulting firm. He has advised a range of candidates and organizations from presidential and congressional campaigns to major progressive organizations to the House and Senate Democratic Caucuses. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*, Dr. Drew Westen.

Drew Westen: Thanks for having me on.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much, Drew. This is going to be a real treat for our listeners, but that depends on how good my questions are and how concise your answers are, because we have a lot of ground to cover to get people to realize what's at stake in Georgia on January 5th. It's very rare to have two U.S. Senate seats up for election in a runoff, because the candidates in the general election, no one got more than 50% of the vote. So if you get less than 50%, you've got to go into a runoff and that's what we're facing. So, let me start with the first question. You're identified with an evaluation of voters that are largely described this way: “In politics, when reason and emotion collide, emotion invariably wins. Elections are decided in the marketplace of

emotions, a marketplace filled with values, images, analogies, moral sentiments, and moving oratory, in which logic plays only a supporting role.” Now, someone listening to this, Drew, would think that inadvertently you are saying that the voters allow themselves to be debased with emotion and separation from their own interests in terms of actual policies that help them where they live, work and raise their families. But I don't think you're saying that. Am I right?

Drew Westen: You are correct.

Ralph Nader: Okay.

Drew Westen: And that's the shortest answer you'll get from me today.

Ralph Nader: So the key thing here is how do you divide emotion from reason or logic? For example, I think that in Georgia today, a good message on TV should be, “Georgia workers, you've been denied a fair wage for years. The federal minimum wage is \$7 and 25 cents. It's only a little over \$8 in Georgia. Go vote yourself a raise, because the House of Representatives under the Democrats has already passed a \$15 an hour bill, and it's being blocked by Senator Mitch McConnell, who is supported by Senator Loeffler and Senator Perdue who are up on the January 5th runoff.” What is the difference between emotion and reason and logic here?

Drew Westen: It's a great question. Emotion and reason evolve together. And they evolve together because that was adaptive; our emotions pull us in directions that typically lead us towards things that are good for us, away from things that are bad for us, our families, our communities. And we use our reason to create a roadmap for that. But you know, when one side is messaging well and the other side is messaging poorly, people's emotions would sort of summarize what their gut tells them is the direction to go. They don't summarize it well. And Democrats, for a long time, had a deficit in their messaging that has really, really put them behind. So, just to come back to the example you just gave, we'd be very close in the messaging on that. You know, the main attack that Kelly Loeffler, who is the Republican candidate running to replace Johnny Isakson, who is sick, who is running against Raphael Warnock, just had a debate together. And in that debate, she kept calling him “radical liberal” Raphael Warnock who intends to make this a socialist state or socialist country. Over and over, it was “radical liberal” Raphael Warnock. And you know, the first thing you have to do is you have to take that apart. You respond by saying something as simple as, “You know, Ms. Loeffler, I believe you've got my given name wrong. My name is actually not “radical liberal” Raphael Warnock. It's just Raphael Warnock. But you can call me reverend or doctor if you'd like.” You start out like cutting that crap out, and then you go straight to what you just described, which is the values. You know, to say, “You want to call me a radical; yeah, I represent the radical ordinary Georgian, the ordinary Georgian who believes that you shouldn't have to have two or three jobs just to put food on the table for your family or just to get by. And you know, if you want to have one job and come home at night, be able to be with your kids, be able to help them with their homework, if you've got a minimum wage of \$8 an hour, you're bringing home \$15,000 a year. Try raising your family on \$15,000 a year.” And that's the kind of values emotion-based messaging that I'm describing. It's not devoid of reason; it's using reason, but it's speaking to people's values and their interests.

Ralph Nader: How did the reverend respond?

Drew Westen: Well, the problem was, you know, I wasn't there to see how he was coached, but I have a feeling he got the generic Democratic coaching of “Don't look like an angry Black man” because he was just silent throughout much of the debate. He never answered the “radical liberal” thing. He never responded to it. Never answered—well, am I a socialist? And he happens *not* to be. He never really addressed what the defund the police stuff was about that she accused him of. She really took stuff straight out of her ads, which had been running over and over and over, and for which I know he was prepared and he's a really good candidate. But in the debate, he just let it all slide. And you know, that's not a good strategy because you let the other side fill people's minds with whatever they want.

Ralph Nader: Well, that happened in Florida and elsewhere. The Democrats didn't know how to answer the socialist accusation. I mean, there's so many ways to answer [laughter]. I'd say, you mean you don't like the post office; you don't like public schools; you don't like public drinking water; you don't like the Tennessee Valley Authority; you don't like Social Security or Medicare; you don't like workers' compensation; you don't like unemployment compensation? And by the way, if that's not enough. “You mean you want to turn down the \$600 a week relief package from Washington and a \$1,250 single grant to help people in this terrible COVID-19 survive and put food on the table. All of these are being blocked by Senator Mitch McConnell, which you, Senator Loeffler, support hands down.” I mean, why is that so hard to teach these Democratic candidates? They can't defend the country against the most vicious, ignorant, stupid corporate-indentured, warmongering, privileged Republican Party in history.

Drew Westen: Well, I'm voting for you for the Georgia Senate. [laughter] I'm going to write you in. Except that Ossof is going to need my vote. But no, you're absolutely right. This is easily put to bed in just the way you said. You know, Wes[ley] Clark, General Wes[ley] Clark, who was our Supreme Allied Commander to NATO, once said to me that the most socialist institution we have in the United States is our military. I mean, it's absolutely true. You know, people are told or given not only orders, but they're also given all the basic provisions of life. So, you know, for Warnock, it would kind of would have been an easy one to say exactly what you said or to say, “What do you have against our military? I mean, what is it about taking care of people and making sure that if they're hurt, they've got healthcare? What is it about that that you don't like? Especially [since] you know, you're sitting on a billion and a half dollars. I didn't know someone could own the stock market; I thought people could just own shares of stock, but you actually own the damn market!” This shouldn't be difficult.

Ralph Nader: Listeners should know that Senator Loeffler's husband is the CEO of the New York Stock Exchange; is that right?

Drew Westen: That is correct.

Ralph Nader: Let's ask a very basic question. How stupid can the Democrats be? Is it stupidity? Is it concentration of strategy in the minds of two or three people in Washington like speaker Nancy Pelosi who thinks you can win an election just on expanding Obamacare, protecting Obamacare and dealing with the bungling of Trump of the COVID-19 pandemic and never mind all the other bread and butter issues that the Republicans are against [that] the Democrats are for.

How do you explain how the Democrats have such a skill in blowing elections they should landslide, starting with Georgia?

Drew Westen: That's another really good question. And it's been, as you know, this has been a problem for decades. In the South, we've had a real problem of election campaigns being carpet bagged from Washington. They shouldn't be. You know, most people in Washington don't have a really good sense of what southerners think or feel or believe, and the strategies that they use to try to win aren't terribly helpful. I don't know how much of the campaign strategy is being run locally versus being run nationally. But I know in general, there's too much action by the DSCC, the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, in helping select primary candidates and in running campaigns that are tied to the money that they can offer. That isn't really good for the candidates to run the genuine campaigns, where they talk about, you know, what they believe that they ought to. I mean, Warnock, in his ads, is dynamite most of the time. You know, when he's speaking for himself, he's terrific. Ossoff has gotten much better. He started out as a pretty weak candidate and has gotten really much stronger, but the campaigns aren't appealing enough in the ways that you're describing. They're doing some of it. But a good example is the thing that they've said that has probably gotten through the best is their corruption argument. Both Perdue and Loeffler got private briefings on the coronavirus and they knew exactly what was going to happen. And both of them made massive sales of stocks that were going to plummet. And I think they've gotten a lot of leverage from that, but you know, there's a turn you need to make from that to people's everyday lives, which is, it's not just that they're profiting from this. It's that at the same time, they're voting down unemployment insurance for you; they're voting down healthcare for you. You know, Kelly Loeffler has got great healthcare. She's got it through, and so does David Perdue, being Senators. They've got great government healthcare through being senators. So, why should they have healthcare that you don't have? Let's give them six months to fix the healthcare system; otherwise, we give them what everybody else has.

Ralph Nader: The problem is that the Georgia Democratic Party has plenty of money. There's no excuse. They're on the pace of raising over \$200 million for these races. Number two, the strategy is still being imposed by Chuck Schumer and the Senate Democratic campaign outfit in Washington and Schumer is a loser. He lost a race against Mitch McConnell by Amy McGrath. She only had \$80 million in the relatively small state of Kentucky, and she lost big to one of the worst campaigners in the Senate, Mitch McConnell. And he lost the race against Lindsey Graham, South Carolina. Harrison had over \$80 million and lost handily. And nobody's asking why is Schumer still in charge. He's a loser. House Speaker Pelosi has lost four out of six of the last congressional House races against the worst party GOP in history. And she almost lost this one; [she] just barely squeaked through when everybody, including her, was expecting to increase the number of seats for the Democrats in the House.

So we have the situation in Georgia where you have a lot of good citizen groups--Stacy Abrams, and Black Votes Matter that are doing great work registering more and more voters, but the message is still coming from Washington. And partly it's because Schumer and Pelosi have said to people that they think the voters have a very short attention span and they can't handle more than a few issues. Well, of course that's nonsense because different issues provoke the affirmative response differently with different voters. So the minimum wage works in one way; the healthcare works in the other. Corporate crime rip offs of consumers work in a third;

unaffordable housing work in a fourth, public transit... You got to blend them in and they're not doing it. So is this correct that if the election was held today, the [US] Republican Senators would win. Do you agree with that?

Drew Westen: It's a tough call. I think at the moment, yes. I think the candidates own committees or the candidates themselves are running some good ads, but they're running good affirmative ads about themselves. They're not responding to attacks on them, which is a real problem. But there's another problem that's lurking here, which is, and again, I don't want to sound so critical of these campaigns, because they've done, you know, they've done a lot of really good stuff. You know, if they would just let Warnock be Warnock and just speak off the cuff the way he does--I mean, the guy has been the pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and he knows how to speak. And he is really, he comes across as warm and genuine and knowledgeable, and again, Ossoff has really improved. But I'll tell you something else in the background that's really hurting us, and it's both national and local. And that is I don't think Democrats learned the lesson of why Trump lost, and Biden won at the top of the ticket, and there were so many losses down-ballot. And you know, a big part of that reason, if we can take it back to Georgia, is that the story that's being told in Georgia is that this all comes down to Black women and how many Black voters we can get out to the polls. And on the one hand, obviously there's tremendous truth to that, and Stacy Abrams has done an amazing job registering people. But when you actually look at the data, particularly in light of all the purges that were done, those groups have had to do a lot of catching up just to get people back on the rolls. One of the, if not the biggest flip, and according to a *New York Times* analysis of it that certainly fits with what I've seen here, is that the suburbs around Atlanta and around the other larger cities in Georgia like Columbus and Athens and Gainesville, all of those suburbs are starting to vote Democratic. And those are primarily White. But they have lots of people of color who are middle class and upper-middle class; some are Asian; some are Latino; some are Black. And they are not responding as much to the message about oppression as they are to a message about the American Dream. And Democrats have a funny idea of what inclusion is. And that is when you're in the middle of a pandemic and you've got 20 million people who have lost their jobs, you don't want to say to a White/blue collar worker who has lost his/her job, "Hey, look, this pandemic is really rough. Look at what it's done to people of color." You want to start by saying, "Look, this pandemic has been really awful for all of us in so many different ways. You know, we've had parents and grandparents die in the hospital where we couldn't hold their hand; we couldn't even be in the room with them. So many of us have lost our jobs, White, Black, Brown; it's especially bad for people of color who started out in a worse spot, and as usual, they're the ones that it hit the worst." If you do it that way, if you first acknowledge the pain we're all experiencing, and then you say, it's especially bad for people of color, then what you do, is you get those White working-class voters and those White middle-class voters, to identify with a broader group of people than just themselves.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Professor Drew Westen of Emory University, who knows the politics of Georgia very well. It's well known the Democrats have lost the ability to connect with White/blue collar workers. These were the core base for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, President Kennedy, and the Democrats have lost the connection. And one reason they've lost the connection is they don't relate to them. They're in the upper 1%, these Democratic leaders in Washington, very comfortable life. And the second reason is that they fell

victim to an emphasis on identity politics, which means that they will highlight discriminatory injustice against Blacks, Hispanics, et cetera, but they won't highlight indiscriminate injustice against all workers--White, Black, Asian. For our listeners to get more of a grip on the data here, Georgia has 10 and a half million people, about 6 million are registered voters. And 32% of the population of Georgia is African-American; 62% is called Caucasian or White; Asian is 4% and Hispanic is 9%. So, what you said is so obvious, but what gives with these media consultants who seem to be tone deaf and are only interested in piling 15% commissions on television ads and are not that interested in the ground game, which would force a different kind of language, a different kind of communication as you have articulated. What's the blockage here? I've tried to get through to the Georgia Democratic Party for an answer, no response. I can't get a response from Stacy Abrams's groups or any others, but you're right in the mix there. Why isn't it so obvious that the Democrats pick it up and put it in their well-funded television ads and in their ground game?

Drew Westen: You are right on the mark, and, you know, that distinction of discriminatory and indiscriminate injustice is so important because we're only talking about the discriminatory. And to give just, you know, two examples that are right along the lines of what you're saying and about how this identity politics is killing us everywhere. It killed us down-ballot everywhere. It is not helping us at all in Georgia. And you know, so here's an example of something that was there was real progress made. And the Democrats messaged it ~~hat~~ in a way that was really, really problematic if you think about it for those White working-class voters. And that was recently President-elect Biden announced his communications team. It is all women. It's wonderful if you look at who those people are. They are real professionals. They know what they're doing. They've won elections. They speak really well. That is all great. But when you emphasize, "Hey, look, this is a story. We've got a whole communications team that's just women." What are you saying to those White working-class guys? You're saying we don't particularly have an interest in speaking to you. Frankly, it's also offensive to women because it's offensive to those women who got those jobs because they happen to be really competent at those jobs. But what's the metamessage that you're transmitting to those White guys in general, but especially that White working class that used to be, as you said, the backbone of the Democratic Party under the New Deal? And just to give one more example like that, Reverend Warnock, again who normally speaks...I can't say enough about how well he speaks when he's speaking off the cuff; his best ads are when it's just him looking directly into the camera and either responding to an attack or making an attack or describing who he is. He's just really, really good at that. But you know, in his most recent ad, he's describing who he is and his background. And there's this picture he's talking about, you know, about coming up from hard times and that's something everybody can understand. Most Georgians, like most Americans, are not college educated. They did not come from tremendous lives of privilege. They came from working-class homes or they came from rural homes where there wasn't a lot of money. But the image that the consultants put in the ad was an image of sort of a blighted area that when he's talking about coming up from the tough life, it was sort of a blighted area with a park that had nothing in it. You know, you can help people identify with you by showing images of working-class neighborhoods as well as poor neighborhoods, so you bring people along. But when you just do those poor neighborhoods, you lose the identification from the people who are middle class to say, well, that's great, but you know, I'm not really sure I like the projects. I'm afraid to walk in those neighborhoods, and so is Jesse Jackson.

Ralph Nader: And so it's not even necessary, Drew. It's not an either or minorities versus White workers. This is a major tragedy politically for democracy and justice in America. Because if the Democrats had any sense of history is that you cannot win elections if you leave White workers looking at the ads, and looking at the Democratic message and saying, what's for us; what do you got for us? That's the question that all these Trump voters ask, what do you have for us? And Trump, lying Trump, answered it, which is one reason he got 70 some million votes. Indiscriminate injustice should be the basis of the Democratic Party. It doesn't matter--in red state, blue state, conservative, liberal, White, African-American--they're all cheated and ripped off the same way by the insurance companies, by the banks, by corporate crime, by the credit-card gougers, by the big landlords; it doesn't matter. And I wrote a book on this called *Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State*. And I commented on how the Republicans, especially Trump, know how to divide in order to rule—the tactic used for over 2000 years. And the Democrats don't know how to unite in order to win. And I put in the book about 25 areas where there's left/right support, where there's cross racial/cross ethnic support, like for a living wage, like for universal healthcare, like for law enforcement against corporate crooks that are ripping off people right and left, like a different kind of tax system, like decent public transit, like putting money into public services and so on. And the Democrats just don't get it. Again and again and again, they're letting the country down and letting this Republican Party divide in order to rule. And now it's dividing, not just on abortion issues or pledging allegiance to the flag, they're dividing on more and more issues that should not be allowed to be divided. That's what Trump's political fever genius is. He adds to his incitement to violence; his incitement to... his dog whistles are increasing the kind of divisions, which should be replaced by a unitary compact that the Democrats should place before the American people. Now let's get back to Georgia. What are the ads saying in the light of what you've been describing? What are the Democratic ads saying?

Drew Westen: Let me just say one thing before that about what you just said because it was so important. First is I would say that, Ralph, it's fair to say that you wrote the book on that in general. You know, you sort of defined those issues and put them out there. I mean, you've been doing this for decades now, putting them out there. And I remember as a kid watching what you were doing, and the same practices are just, they just keep going on over and over and over again. Democrats need to reappropriate that, to come back to Georgia, they need to reappropriate that. What you're describing is not a socialist agenda; it is not a radical left agenda; it is a radical centrist agenda. The average ordinary American shouldn't have to deal with predatory practices. The average American shouldn't have to choose between food on the table and drugs for their kids, medications for their kids, if their kids are sick. The average American shouldn't have to make those choices, but they are all the time. And in Georgia, people forget that in Georgia, as there is throughout the South, a history of populism. And populism can be either populism of the left or of the right. You know, what populism of the left is, is what you're describing, which is really calling out the people who are screwing us, the people were screwing all of us. And in that sense, whoever controls the narrative on us and them controls the narrative. And for Trump, us and them is those Black people versus us White people. For Democrats, it ought to be the rich versus the rest of us. It ought to be those big corporations and their CEOs writing themselves huge bonus checks while they're cutting the wages and the jobs of people in their organizations. That's who it ought to be. Once you make it the rich versus the rest of us, it

doesn't matter what your color is because we're all in this thing together, which is what you described. So taking it back to...[interrupted]

Ralph Nader: Just let me add to that before you get into the ads. A lot of our issues were indiscriminate injustice—poisonous air, contaminated, water, unsafe pharmaceuticals—all these affect everybody. It doesn't matter what political label they put on them. It doesn't matter where they live. They're all affected that way. And I think that's one reason why we had so much public support years ago for the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act and the Product Safety Act, and of course, the Auto Safety Act. We *never* said, you know, we want to push auto safety, and by the way, you know, poor people are ripped off more. We said, poor people *are* ripped off more, but everybody's being ripped off by the auto companies and the finance shenanigans and the deceptive practices and the unsafe cars. It's just the Democrats lose because they don't know how to respond to the accusations against them. [In] the defund the police, there wasn't a single candidate that said that. It was some of the street protesters under tremendous pressure after the George Floyd homicide. And they didn't know how to say that. And they didn't say, well, what about Trump who is defunding the federal police on corporate crime. He's defunding the corporate crime police that's jeopardizing your health, your safety, your economic well-being. You know that. Why is he taking the federal cops off the corporate crime beat? They don't understand or they don't want to communicate in ways that defang the Republican Party. And you know, they make a point about Senator Loeffler and Senator Perdue and trading stocks, and that's not ethical. You gotta use the word corruption, as you pointed out. Every poll all over the world has corruption as one of the top things that people are against and they don't use the word corruption. In the debate between Biden and Trump, it was Trump, the inchoate, corrupt person like never before in the White House [who] was accusing Biden and Hunter Biden of corruption. And Biden wouldn't say, you're talking about corruption, Donald? So let's go to the ads.

Drew Westen: Yes. So in the ads in Georgia, we are seeing the strongest attack ads by the Democratic candidates have actually used the word corruption and they've been really, really strong ads. I mean, they're branding their opponents in a way where they're saying things like “Kelly is for Kelly; Warnock is for us.” That's a really strong message; it's a good way to put it. It's really straightforward. And again, a lot of their ads have been good. The problem is exactly what you're talking about, which is that you've got to have ads that are appealing widely, and you've got to have a ground game that's appealing widely, not just to people of color. But you've got to make sure that you bring back those voters from the suburbs who voted for Biden, but weren't sure about the Senate candidates. You got to bring them back and give them a good reason to vote for those Senate candidates. And that's what I have not seen. And that's where, you know, I think you're getting at something, you know, it's really interesting that when you talk about that kind of indiscriminate injustice, you're not supposed to say things like that anymore in polite company in the Democratic Party. It's not okay to talk about that. Just like, you know, it's a lot like what Reverend King experienced years ago when he switched from speaking primarily about the problems of Black people to speaking about the problems of poverty. He took a lot of hits for that, because he was speaking about how, look, yeah, this is much more concentrated among Black people, but poverty is poverty, and it doesn't matter who it hits. And Democrats should be saying things all the time, like “In the middle of a pandemic, if you're having your home foreclosed and you have to say to your child, sweetie, this isn't going to be your room anymore, it feels just as painful whether you're White, Black, or Brown. We all feel that same

pain and none of us should be feeling that. There is no excuse for it. There's a candidate here who will stop it. There's a candidate here who wants to see that keep s going and wants to accelerate it. That's really your choice here. Do you want to see people lose homes because of a pandemic? One candidate says, yes; one candidate says, no.”

Ralph Nader: They don't know how to relate to workers. Here in Georgia, for example, hundreds of thousands of workers work the night shift. They work from 12 to eight. They keep the state going while all the rest are sleeping, and nobody addresses them. They feel marginalized; no politician recognizes them. They don't put out press releases and say, they're going to campaign from 12 midnight to 3:00 AM before all-night stores and nursing homes and hospitals and police and fire and all-night factories--something as obvious as that. But you see, they've lost the Franklin Delano Roosevelt touch with the workers. And the same thing is they don't know how to aggregate semi-reluctant voters who've got a lot of other things on their mind and take them to the polls and then take them to potluck suppers, where they can relish their victory, relish their own self-awareness and plan for civic action in the future. The television is sucking huge money into virtual reality--the social media, virtual reality. They're not on the ground person-to-person. And it's impossible to communicate these messages to the respective parties in Georgia. Now, one doesn't want to be too harsh on the Georgia Democrats. They've come a long way without our advice. But when you have someone like Bill Hillsman who did the ads for Jesse Ventura and Paul Wellstone and got them to be elected Governor and U.S. Senator, respectively, starting against overwhelming odds, nobody is calling Bill Hillsman who specializes in radio and TV ads directed toward the White/blue collar worker. And of course, if you get those kinds of ads, then you can connect it with the ground game. It's like a double message.

Drew Westen: You know, Ralph, it's really funny because Bill and I, along with a colleague, have been trying to do ads together in Georgia aimed at exactly the population you're talking about, White working class, working class nonwhite as well. But [with] working class and middle-class voters, and we can't get any traction. It's just kind of remarkable because the story is that that's not where the action is. And if we lose this election in Georgia, it's because we're not going to pick back up the suburbs. It's not going to be because we're going to have low Black turnout, because I think with Raphael Warnock on the ballot, we're going to see—and with, you know, with all of the efforts made to bring Black voters out, I think we're going to see Black voters. But Black voters, as you said, are 30% of the population of voters in Georgia. And if you just do the math, you have to pick up 30% of White voters. And if you don't bring them out, you don't target them, you don't speak to them and to their concerns, their interests, their values, their feelings--if you don't do that, you're not going to win those elections.

Ralph Nader: Well, you know, Cornell West has written two volumes. One called *Race Matters*, and the other is called *Class Matters*. And Cornell understands that the two are not contrary to one another. And when it deals with the corporate supremacists, when the multinational corporate control over our country, over Washington D.C., creating the corporate state, which Franklin Delano Roosevelt called the “fascism American style” in the message in 1938 to Congress; when you're dealing with that, you have to have a unified message. Is it too late? You got about three weeks, three and a half weeks left. Is it too late to appeal to the White/blue collar worker who should be shown the way to go vote for a raise? You've been denied a living wage

for all your hard work by these corporate crooks. This is a very pointed message, Drew. This does not require further bibliographic research like if you have a complex tax reform bill, and you want people to support it. This is putting food on the table. You have 30 million people in this country who make less than \$15 an hour; 30 million people with dependents, and a lot of them are in Georgia. Is it too late?

Drew Westen: It's not too late, but someone has to do the math and say, you know what? We actually have to talk to these folks. We have to speak to them. Because if you don't talk to them, you're not going to get any messages through.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Professor Drew Westen of Emory University. He knows politics in Georgia, like few others. You know a lot about the Democrats and the Georgia Democratic Party. Why aren't you getting through to them? They're too busy counting millions of dollars coming into their coffers they don't know what to do with it?

Drew Westen: You know, I have no answer for that one, Ralph. Bill and I have been trying, but it's been thus far without success. And I think there is a, you know, there's a defensiveness about class right now as opposed to race that Cornell is exactly right, that speaking about race and speaking that class are not opposing propositions. But right now in the Democratic Party, it's just really difficult to get people to be willing to talk about class. Because, you know, ever since George Floyd's murder, which, you know, directed us exactly where it should have, that somehow led to people saying, well, all right, so we're going to focus on racial justice, but we're not really going to focus on economic justice. And it's just an enormous problem. And if you try to say what you just said about indiscriminate injustice as opposed to discriminatory injustice, that combination of phrases should be something that every Democrat knows and understands and embraces. Because if you want to be inclusive, you don't exclude the people who used to be your base. You include them and inclusion is supposed to be about addition, not subtraction. And Democrats have to be really careful with their identity politics around this, that every time you say, wow, isn't it amazing that all these women candidates are doing X, Y, and Z? You gotta be really careful that you're not saying to White working class men, hey, we don't need you anymore, because that's what they hear a lot of the time. It may not be what you intend, but what you intend is not what's important. What they hear is what's important.

Ralph Nader: And they hear the dog whistles and they hear very clever messages by Trump. In fact, the last message he put on TV in 2016, which should be studied by political scientists, and he beamed the message in the swing states. And he said, "This is our last chance." So the Democrats have really dropped the ball on this. And I don't think they should be excused in any matter whatsoever. And I think part of it is due to their indentured status to corporate contributors and the corporate patrons that have funded them over the years. That's why we hear a lot about police brutality against minorities, but we don't hear about the enormous death from medical malpractice and hospital negligence, which the Johns Hopkins University of Medicine doctors estimate at 5,000 preventable deaths a week, [that's] 5,000 in hospitals in the United States a week and we don't hear about it. If you try to raise it, when people are talking about preventable, impermissible violence, the political correct crowd says, "How dare you talk about these people who die in hospitals when people are being brutalized by police?" --as if it's one or the other.

Drew Westen: Couldn't agree with you more. And to go back to a theme, to something that you put on the table years ago, and pioneered--corporate violence through environmental violence. I'm not sure I'd use the word violence because I think people wouldn't get it, but certainly, the damage that's done to our lungs, to the water we drink and the air our children breathe, is a national security issue much, much stronger than virtually any geopolitical issue that we face, but we don't talk about it that way. And we should because it's a national security threat.

Ralph Nader: Well, we're running short of time, unfortunately. Two things before we conclude, Drew. We're talking with Professor Drew Westen, the author of a very provocative book called *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* that came out, I believe, in 2012. And he is a professor at Emory University. Any last practical advice or things that people in Georgia who might listen to this, should heed? Should they contact their Georgia Democratic Party and reallocate some of that money so that it beams toward the plight of all workers--go vote for a raise and all that?

Drew Westen: You know, I think that the strongest thing to say to whoever is handling the money now is your focus on bringing out Black voters is absolutely essential, but it is not a choice between doing that and bringing out those suburban voters and those White working-class voters, and also the Black and Latino working-class voters we lost in this last election—bringing them back on and letting them see what is it that we have to offer them. We don't need dog whistles to do it, because in fact, as you were saying, if you just start with something as simple as “You shouldn't have to work two or three jobs to put food on the table for your family; what is a \$15 an hour minimum wage? That's a \$30,000 a year salary. Do the math \$15 an hour at 40 hours times 48 weeks or 50 weeks. It's \$30,000. Try living on \$30,000 in Georgia. It's not okay to do that to people.” That's the message that would get through to everybody to be able to say, “Hey, this hits all of us.” Does it hit Black and Brown people especially? It sure does, which makes it even more unjust, but it is hitting so many Georgians and “We've got one party and two candidates who say ‘enough already’. We're not going to allow this to continue. We're going to have a minimum wage in Georgia that's \$15 an hour. That's just \$30,000 a year. If you think that's too much, then obviously we you're with Kelly Loeffler, and you're probably a billionaire as well.”

Ralph Nader: Well, some of the talk show hosts in Georgia ought to let the kind of voice that you represent on in the next few days before this runoff, Drew Westen. Steve and David, any last-minute inquiries?

David Feldman: Yes, anger and fear. Bernie ran a pretty good campaign tapping into anger, the same anger that Donald Trump was able to tap into. But Trump also used fear. He made people terrified. Is there any virtue in fear? Had Bernie run a campaign where he really terrified Wall Street and the banksters and made the rich terrified, came after them--would that have played out better? And would that not have gotten the votes of the terrified, because maybe the terrified, the richest 1%, would have woken up and said, you know, if we don't do something, the guillotines, they're going to, this is going to be like the French Revolution. How important is fear? And aren't the Democrats afraid of using fear? They can tap into anger, but not make the other side terrified.

Drew Westen: Really, really good question. So I'd answer it in two ways. And one is that what populism on the left does is it accurately identifies the problem as there are these people who are ripping all of us off, and then there's the rest of us and we need to make that stop. What populism on the right does is it adds, oh, and by the way, there's somebody who's darker skinned than you are, probably shorter than you are, who you can look down on and you can feel better about yourself while you've lost your job. And that's really the difference between populism on the left and the right. And you know, the conversations about populism that we hear all the time miss the fact that that populist impulse towards getting working people what they deserve, is exactly what we should be going for, and that is not a radical left; it is not a socialist agenda. It is an ordinary working person's agenda. It is an ordinary Georgian's agenda. That'd be my first answer to it. The second is, you know, it would be great if we had an Andrew Yang who did fear and trembling as well as offering the thousand dollars a month. Because, you know, what's going to have to happen over time with automation taking over so many jobs that we're going to see with the pandemic is this is going to be an opportunity for big corporations to automate more and more jobs and just not to hire people back. And with automation taking over so much, with outsourcing taking over so much, we are going to have to do things in this country, like expand the number of vacation weeks to something that's actually humane like they do in Europe. The first thing we could do for our workers is to give them a minimum of six paid vacation weeks instead of a one-week paid vacation, or at most two weeks of paid vacation. Give tax cuts to corporations that are good corporate citizens that do things like give the same number of vacation weeks to their average employees that they give to their executives. If you do that, we'll knock 5% off your taxes. If you put daycare facilities in your plants, we'll give you a percent off your taxes. If you put gyms in your plants and you give people two hours a week or three hours a week to actually go to the gym in the plant, you're not only going to cut the costs of your insurance premiums that you have to pay, but we're going to give you a tax cut for that. And most importantly, we're going to give companies tax cuts for the extent to which they decrease the differential pay between their executives and the rest of their workers. And if they do that, we're going to cut their taxes really low. And that would incentivize their shareholders to say, you know what, I don't think we're going to pay you people with a C at the beginning of your title and an O at the end of your title 400 times what your ordinary workers make, because it's costing us too much in taxes. It'll cut our taxes if you bring that back down to say a differential of 10, the way it is in Japan.

Ralph Nader: Why do tens of millions of people keep voting for candidates who get elected because of them and turn against the voters' own interests? Why do they keep doing that? I can see them making a mistake the first time. I can see them being susceptible to sweet talk by political liars. But again and again, they keep supporting candidates for election and get them elected who turn the corporate power against their own everyday interests as working folk.

Drew Westen: Well, that would be worthy of an answer of a few books [chuckle]. Certainly, the right has been more adept at using dog whistle politics to make that happen. And it's been more adept to things like, you know, Donald Trump's enormous tax giveaway to the rich three years ago. What it did was, yeah, it gave away most of our children's and our grandchildren's money to the rich, but it gave just enough to the average person in their paycheck that they saw it. And the Democrats didn't have a good answer to that, and they really needed a good answer to it. It's not enough to say, Yeah, but the richer getting more. I mean, you've got to really do it in a way

that makes people feel angry about what's just happened. And you've got to give them an alternative like, “No, actually we're going to raise the taxes on the rich, and we're going to use that money to cut your taxes, and you're going to see it in your next paycheck.” I mean, that's a pretty simple message. People would have gotten that if they'd seen that from a Democratic tax cut, but you just don't hear about Democratic tax cuts that way. And you ought to hear about them.

Ralph Nader: We got to begin focusing on the lack of due diligence by the voters themselves. They spend far less time deciding how to vote and who to vote for than in any particular consumer purchase. And it's considered, oh, you know, you don't want to be too hard on these people, but we have to have a cooperative spirit in this country. The voters are sovereign. The Constitution starts with “we the people” not “we the corporations” or we the Congress.-And we've got to start talking with tough love to our fellow citizens instead of saying, “Oh, I'm not into political talk; I don't want to talk politics with my coworkers or friends; it's too touchy. Because it all comes down, doesn't it to how informed the sovereign people are?”

Drew Westen: I think it comes down as much as anything else to what you were just saying in a different way. And that is, we didn't see in this election candidates who made absolutely central to their campaigns, if not the central thing about their campaign, that the thing they were going to fight was money in politics, because that is the root of virtually all of our evils. And if we got money out of politics, we would have a completely different society. And you know, 85% of Americans believe—I tested this in some work myself—85% of Americans believe that “campaign donations” are nothing but legalized bribery. That's how they see it, and they see it accurately. And, you know, until we take that issue on and somebody takes that issue on, but does it in a way that says, “Look, if we do this, we can address climate change and clean energy. If we do this, we can address these predatory practices by the banks and by lenders, these ridiculous fees that you get on your credit cards or on your bank statements.” That, you know, if you make a lot of money, you look at them and you go, oh, that's an annoyance. If you're scratching by on the minimum wage in Georgia at \$8 an hour, 8.25 an hour, you know, you get that \$35 fee, and that really stings because that's eight hours of work for you. But the root of all of that is the fact that the people who are making the laws, influencing the laws, writing the tax laws, are the same people who are benefiting from them. And that has to stop first and foremost. And I know, Ralph, I'm preaching to the choir on that one because, again, this is one of the issues you've championed for so long. But, you know, there are solutions to this, that get around *Citizens United* without a constitutional amendment. And we need to implement those solutions now. Because that's the only way we're going to have a just society.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. We've talked about this movement that's already more than halfway there called National Popular Vote. They're already up to 196 Electoral College votes. They've got laws in New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Illinois, California, and other states saying that they will give the Electoral College vote to whoever wins the National Popular Vote in the presidential race. And the Democrats who have lost two presidential races in 2000 and 2016, when they won the popular vote, won't support this [National Popular Vote Interstate Compact] citizen movement.

Drew Westen: It's extraordinary. And you know, Florida wants its power. [chuckle] You know, various states want their power. The problem of course is if only the progressive states do this, then the progressive states will have proportional votes that water down their votes. I mean, this is one of these things where everyone has got to agree to do it. The only thing we have on our side, frankly, is demographic change; places like Texas and Georgia are changing. But Democrats cannot continue to make the error in thinking that they're always going to have say, Latino voters with them. Because when Latino voters are poor, they vote like poor people. When Latino voters are middle class, I can tell you from having done a zillion focus groups, they sound just like White swing voters. They tend to be conservative socially because many of them are Catholic. They're much more moved by a narrative about the American Dream and not about being a hyphenated American, but just about being an American. And they are turned off by a lot of these messages that are about a narrative of oppression where they're defined by their victimhood because they don't feel like victims. So, Democrats need to be really careful and they really need to do some soul searching about why did we lose some young Black men against the most racist president, probably in our history, certainly in our modern history; why did we lose Latino voters? And you know, if you go back, even if you think about that word 'socialism', shouldn't Democrats be able to think further than, oh, this person is Latino, that makes them a person of color, therefore, we use this cookie cutter message for them. It comes back to class again. Once Latino voters become assimilated, once Latino voters become middle class, they are not likely to listen to primarily messages about these people of color coming from Democrats; they're likely to listen to issues around their interests and around their values like everybody else does. So, Democrats can't count on a reliable Black and Brown vote into the future if the Republicans ever get rid of Trumpism and the racism that's so ingrained in that party. That's a huge if; we've got a long way to go before that'll happen.

Ralph Nader: Well, a lot of Hispanics don't like themselves called people of color to begin with.

Drew Westen: That's exactly right. It's exactly right.

Ralph Nader: Well, unfortunately, we're out of time. We've been talking with Professor Drew Westen of Emory University, author of the controversial but incisive book, *Political Brain*. And thank you very much, Drew. To be continued.

Drew Westen: You bet. Hey, great to talk to you again, Ralph, and great to talk to you guys.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Dr. Drew Westen and we will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a short break. 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, December 11, 2020; I'm Russell Mokhiber. The captain of a scuba diving boat that caught fire and sank off the coast of California last year, killing 34 people who were trapped below deck, was indicted last week on federal manslaughter charges for one of the deadliest maritime disasters in recent U.S. history. That's according to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*. Jerry Boylan, 67 years old, was charged with 34 counts of seaman's manslaughter for "misconduct, negligence and inattention" by failing to train

his crew, conduct fire drills and have a roving night watchman on the Conception when fire broke out September 2, 2019. “As a result of the alleged failures of Captain Boylan to follow well-established safety rules, a pleasant holiday dive trip turned into a hellish nightmare as passengers and one crew member found themselves trapped in a fiery bunkroom with no means of escape,” the Justice Department said. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you, podcasts listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call “The Wrap Up”. Also want to give a shout out and a thank you to Sam Skrovan for helping us out with today's program, filling in for Michaela Squier. A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's free weekly column, go to nader.org.

Steve Skrovan: And also check out *The Ralph Nader and Family Cookbook: Classic Recipes from Lebanon and Beyond*. We will link to both of those. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

David Feldman: Our theme music “Stand Up, Rise Up” was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. I might add, this Boeing 737 Max situation is out of control now with the ungrounding order by the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. So those of you who want to participate in a consumer boycott, you can get these buttons designed by the artist, Mr. Fish, out of Philadelphia called “Ax the Max”. Put them on your lapel, take a picture, and send it up into the internet, your Facebook account, whatever, and get people to say that they're not flying this plane. That's the only response by consumers that the Boeing/Government complex can't control. So just go to nader.org and you'll see how you can obtain it.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah. I heard just today that [a] Brazilian airline [Gol Airlines] is the first one putting these in the air.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, but see what the press isn't telling you is that the sudden orders for the Boeing 737 Max by the Ryanair in Europe and the Brazilian airline were very heavily discounted. So Boeing is desperate to get that kind of publicity, but they're not telling the public that they're giving discounts up to 50% and sometimes no down payment until revenues come in. And that should be part of the story. Thanks for raising that, Steve.

[57:54]

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