

Ralph Nader Radio Hour Episode 110 Transcript

Guests: Winona LaDuke/Kai Newkirk

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, Steve.

Steve Skrovan: Very exciting show today. But before I put those topics on the table, we have a couple of announcements. First, Ralph, you have an event coming up in May you want to talk about. It's called Breaking Through Power. Tell us what that's all about.

Ralph Nader: It's 4 full days at historic Constitution Hall in Washington, DC, and I must say, it's the greatest aggregation of accomplished citizen advocacy groups on more major reforms and redirections in our society ever brought together in American history.

Steve Skrovan: Wow. So we'll do more of a build-up to that on the show as the dates approach.

Ralph Nader: Yes, and the website to get more details on all the groups, some of them you belong to, all of the wonderful people who are going to be there in those 4 days, covering so many areas, and no single issue gathering here... we're calling it a Civic Marathon for Serious People. We want people in that audience who do not have justice fatigue and who do not suffer from short attention spans. Who are serious about change in the country, and the website to go to is breakingthroughpower.org. That's breakingthroughpower.org, and next week, we're going to spend the whole show going through the exciting events. These are not just talkfests; they're action-fests as well.

Steve Skrovan: Well, very good. We'll look forward to that. And I have some very good affiliate news. Pacifica station, KPFA out of the Bay Area, has just picked up the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. If this were a morning zoo show, I'd hit a cymbal and we'd have air horns going off, because KPFA was America's original listener supported radio station. So we're very excited about that. And I want to give a little shout out to the program director, Laura Prives, for finding a slot for us there in the schedule. We will be on KPFA 94.1 FM every Monday now, at 11 a.m. Welcome aboard, northern California! And I know that you have a lot of friends and family in that area, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: I do. And now I don't have to answer the question: When can I hear your program on KPFA? Well, you can hear it every Monday at 11 a.m.

Steve Skrovan: Very good. Well, we do have another provocative and interesting show for you today. We're going to talk to a man who actually heckled Donald Trump at his debate a few months back. He heckled him and lived, I might add, and now I believe he's gotten himself arrested with a host of others at the Democracy Spring Rally in Washington, D.C., that took place this last week. His name is Kai Newkirk, who founded a group known as 99 Rise. But that will be in the second half of the show. We will also check in today with our tireless true crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber, the - wait for it - Joe Mannix of the corporate crime world. As always, if we have time, we will try to get to a listener question or two at the end of the show. But first, we're going to talk to an old compatriot of Ralph's about her effort to stop yet another dangerous pipeline carrying more tar sands oil from Canada down to the United States.

Winona LaDuke is an internationally renowned activist, working on issues of sustainable development, renewable energy and food systems. Ms. LaDuke lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, and in 1996 and 2000, she ran for vice president as the nominee of the Green Party with our very own Ralph Nader. As program director of the organization Honor the Earth, she works on issues of climate change, renewable energy, and environmental justice with indigenous communities. The group's latest campaign is to stop an oil pipeline from being built through native lands in Northern, Minnesota. So, welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Winona LaDuke.

Winona LaDuke: Well hi there. Good morning, guys!

Ralph Nader: Yeah, tell us where you're at in Northern Minnesota.

Winona LaDuke: Ralph, I'm on the White Earth Reservation here in Northwestern Minnesota, kind of between Bemidji and Fargo. Right now, I'm in the Honor the Earth offices in downtown Callaway. About 2 weeks ago, we actually had a train (that) had a propane tanker, and our town was abandoned. We were all forced to leave - evacuated - while they waited for the big boom, which did occur. And so I'm kind of on the western of my corridor, which has some infrastructure. But the beginning of kind of the infrastructure issues that we're all facing. I got bomb trains driving by and pipelines they're trying to shove through. So that's where I'm at. And the beautiful Anishinaabekwe, the beautiful land of wild rice and deer and fish and all good things.

Ralph Nader: There's another America out there, Winona, that's for sure. Winona is a many-splendored human being. She is an active farmer. She is a leader nationally of causes related to the first Native Americans. She has been in great rallies and marches on world peace. She's been all over the world speaking. She is a beautiful writer, an accomplished author of several books. And before we get into the subject, how would people reach you to find out about your books and your writings and your activities, Winona?

Winona LaDuke: Well, they can go to Honor the Earth, it'd be one thing, or Winonaladuke.com, I believe. Spotted Horse Press and Winonaladuke.com. I'll just do a little checking on that. But

our websites, I'll pull them up here... but Honor the Earth, you can find us through there, and my books are available. My latest book just out is called LaDuke Chronicles, which is about the past 5 years of wandering around, kind of the front lines of energy issues, environmental issues in Indian country, from northern Cheyenne, Crow, Lamee (sp?) Territory, Ojibwa Territory, Navajo Dine'e Territory, Lakota Territory. Sacred sites. Cultural protections. Stories about heroes. And the book is called Chronicles, and it is just out, Spotted Horse Press, here on the White Earth Reservation in Ponsford, Minnesota. So, that's just out. And I'll be bringing it out there to DC. I believe I'm going to come see you all here in a few weeks.

Ralph Nader: Yes, you're going to be part of the great gathering, Breaking Through Power. Citizens' revolutionary week. We call it a civic marathon. It's going to be a great gathering to show that the civil community is the fundamental basis of democracy. Whatever policy we get comes out of the vigor, or the lack of, the civil community, right down to the local communities and neighborhoods.

You have been known to write about restoring the prairies. And not just the Indian reservations, but the overall prairies, which are being beaten up by a lot of industrial agriculture and other forces. But you also are trying to bring it to the attention of the American people, the importance of observing the treaties between the first native American tribes and the U.S. government, and the relation of the state governments to these treaties. And so you're on a defense slot against these pipelines. And particularly, you are challenging, on all fronts, in a very sophisticated way, demonstrations, writing, legally, direct communication with Al Monaco, the CEO of Enbridge Corporation, a Canadian pipeline corporation, that has demonstrably shown that it is a serial spiller of fuel - a serial leaker of fuel, some of them quite disastrous, one being in Michigan, which you're going to talk about. But you put out an annual report on Enbridge Corporation in the form of a letter to Al Monaco, a "Dear Mr. Monaco" letter. And you title it "Enbridge 2015 Year in Review." And in all my experience, I've never seen a citizen advocate develop that kind of approach. I've seen letters to CEO's denouncing them, or proposing things they should do, or recalling cars. But I've never seen a citizen group actually issue an annual report on Enbridge, ending with its disastrous collapse in its stock price, its profits, its laying off workers. But it's still is determined with its lawyers and what you call their "Indian whisperers" to push through, one state after another - close to you - North Dakota, Minnesota, jeopardizing the wild rice fields and other aspects of your area - and they seem to be relentless. However, they have confronted a relentless opponent with relentless allies and demonstrators called Winona LaDuke. So you want to tell our listeners your campaign, representing Honor the Earth and your reservation against Enbridge.

Winona LaDuke: Yeah, sure. Thank you. So Al Monaco is the CEO of Enbridge. Enbridge is a Canadian pipeline company, which is the largest pipeline company in the world. They are up there, and basically, they are trying to move some land-locked oil. So you've got two basic sources of this, quote, American oil. One is the Canadian tar sands, right? And that's super land-locked up there in the Athabasca River Basin, and then the other one is North Dakota, which is also super land-locked. There's some trains coming out of N. Dakota. There's some

trains coming out of Alberta, but they need some big pipelines to actualize their dreams here, and Enbridge is their way. So I wrote Al a letter in January, because I feel like he's super remote. And I was a little inspired by you and your recent book - I mean Letters to the President. And I wrote Al because I'm like, "Hey Al, I'm down here on White Earth, and I was just watching your company. And you guys came to visit us. And you're trying to do something to us. And you don't even know who we are. So, I thought I'd write you a little letter of my observations." And so, basically, this is the lay of the land. There's 7 Ojibwe reservations in Northern Minnesota and a lot of wild rice. We have some pipelines that went in in the '60's - 50 year-old pipelines - not unlike the one underneath the Straits of Mackinaw before any major environmental laws were passed. Of course, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act passed after the pipelines were in. The pipelines were put in largely in tribes that were under duress - tribal communities under duress - the relocation, the termination era. The federal government signed some agreements. Everyone's thinking pipelines are cool. Well, that was 50 years ago. Those lines are leaking. And now they have more lines they want to put in. So there's 6 pipelines across northern Minnesota that are basically from the '60's. Those pipelines are all corroding at some level or another. One of them has 900 structural anomalies. Structural anomalies. That's what they call the Kalamazoo spill, the largest oil spill, inland oil spill in history. Structural anomaly; a horizontal break in it, add some more oil in it, some more pressure... it's got a lot of pressure going through here. And 400,000 barrels a day - that's a lot of pressure going through a 50 year-old pipeline. So now, they announce new ones. Alberta Clipper, 2010 - they gotta get that one through. That's a Canadian tar sands pipeline. They announced that they want to do this new one called the Sandpiper out of North Dakota because that's some land-locked oil. And then, they announce that, oh! That's right. Nobody wants the old route because that's those 3 tribes; Red Lake, Leach Lake, and Fond du Lac, that already have the 50 year old lines, said, "We ain't doin' that again." But they said it in more proper English. They said "No, that would not be permissible." They would not sign an agreement. So they try to bust a new route through the North, which now impacts the rest of the tribes. Going through the proposals, basically going through the watershed of the single largest wild rice producing lake in the United States, Big Rice Lake on our reservation with first, one pipeline of 640,00 barrels per day of fracked oil from North Dakota. And then, a second one announced, one of the old lines they want to start putting through, which then would be 750,000 barrels per day. You're talking 1.4 million barrels per day going through the most pristine lakes in Northern Minnesota, and brand new territory. And we said, "No, that's not going to work for us, Enbridge."

Ralph Nader: Let me interrupt here for just a minute to give some background. I was involved in getting the gas pipeline bill through Congress in the late '60's. And what the industry did was that they turned it into a "no law" law. That is, they wrote the standards for the safety of these pipelines, which, as you indicated, are under tremendous pressure. That is, when they break, there's a huge explosion. It's like a thunderbolt. And the pictures show - we'll get to Enbridge's spills in a minute. And then, they were exposed in a lot of other ways. There are people fighting pipelines all over the country, as you know, Winona, going through New York State, going through New England. People are marching, are litigating. Before you get into the unbelievably bad safety record of Enbridge - the Kalamazoo Spill and others - what if someone

in our listening audience is saying, "OK Winona, you want to stop these pipelines. How are they going to get the fuel to the consumers, into the businesses in the Midwest and the East?"

Winona LaDuke: Well, first of all, these pipelines don't serve us. They're headed to Superior and headed further east to refineries. Or one of the new intentions, I believe, is to just get them to Superior, because that's the largest inland port in the United States. This oil is not serving us - that we're talking about in these Enbridge lines. We have, in Minnesota, a drop in oil consumption in the State itself. But more than that, let's just look at the big picture. We have a couple of things. We are retooling the infrastructure of the United States, because we don't want to buy oil from Venezuela anymore. So we are basically taking oil from places that doesn't want to give up oil, like fracking it. When you crack the bedrock of Mother Earth, and put 600 chemicals down there, you've got extreme extraction. Tar sands is extreme extraction. And so, you're trying to create a whole new system, when the fact is that it's time to move past the fossil fuel era. And we all know that. And so what I want is what everybody else basically wants. One: I want infrastructure that works in this country, infrastructure that is not for oil companies, but is for people. Because we're putting in new pipeline proposals that'll serve oil companies and leave the liability, just as you said, with individual landowners, with tribal people, with counties and states, because the pipeline regulations are no good in this country. There's no clear liability in the transportation of oil. Second thing is that what we want is a transition away from these fossil fuels. And people say, "You still drive a car." Yeah, I still drive a car, but what I'd really like to do is be moving to an electric car. And I'd also like to be moving toward a transition away from moving everything around so much, re-localizing our economy far more than it is localized so that we aren't using so much gas. The energy in this country - we're wasting 57% of the energy between point of origin and point of consumption. And that fact means is that: why would you want to keep boosting up that system when it's so inefficient? Let's get efficient. Let's get local.

Ralph Nader: This is like, you're in your kitchen, let's say, listeners, and you've got the water faucet on. And it's leaking through the sink continually. So instead of blocking the leak, which is what energy efficiency is, you go out in the back yard and try to dig more water wells for the water. And so, energy efficiency can replace tons of these pipelines and other assorted fossil fuel productions and conveyances. The other answer, I think, to my question, is Detroit, right? It's the auto industry. If the auto industry had 50, 60, 70 miles per gallon, you wouldn't need these pipelines. And that's what it is. But just describe, Winona, the spilling history of Enbridge Corporation and what it's going to do to your area in Minnesota.

Winona LaDuke: Okay, just one more point on the efficiency. So Mara Prentiss, physics professor at Harvard, excellent Harvard Magazine article last year. Article says why we're going to move from a fossil fuel economy is pretty simple. We're moving from a fossil fuel economy because a combustion engine is 16% efficient, and a(n) electric engine for a vehicle is 65% efficient. So why would you put 6 gallons of gas in your vehicle and only 1 gallon moves your car, when you could, in fact, be driving an electric vehicle, which you could power off of solar? So the whole point is, plan to move on. No new energy infrastructure for these guys. These

guys are just gonna make just a big mess. Let's talk about that mess. I said I sent Al Monaco a letter. Were you going to ask me something about that?

Ralph Nader: Yeah, I was going to say, we're going to move, we hope, beyond even mentioning miles per gallon, because there won't be any gallon. It will be electric power...

Winona LaDuke: No, that's exactly right -

Ralph Nader: ...powered by solar energy, and you've been one of the nation's foremost proponents of wind power as a way to invigorate the economies of the first Native American reservations. So from your area of the United States, North Dakota, Northern Minnesota, you've got enough wind power if you can get it to the East to power most of the electricity needs east of the Mississippi, right?

Winona LaDuke: Right. I mean, there's a tremendous wind power in the northern plains. The NAWAPA infrastructure, which is clogged with coal and aging hydro-dams could be the tool to have wind affirmed with hydro. But we should change some of that hydro. Then we would be in a place to have either that, combined with solar, get rid of... you'd have a base. Then you'd have firm power, and you'd have the intermittent of solar and wind. You could power a lot. But you also need a lot more local. Not everything should be centralized. So that's part of the problem. That whole economy of scale argument really does not apply in the energy efficiency because you lose so much power between point of origin and point of consumption. The laws of physics and the laws of economics just don't really match up as they roll out. I'm interested in what the solution is. And what I'm looking at right now is that I've got this large oil company, this pipeline company, Enbridge. Enbridge came in, was planning to start construction in 2016. Citizen activism and tribal activism and tribal governments shoved them back. We forced an EIS process in this state. We've told the federal government that they need to intervene because you have federal trust responsibility to protect the treaty rights of the Anishinaabekwe of Northern Minnesota under our 1855 and our 1867 and our 1837 treaty, all of which would be impacted by these pipeline proposals that would have a huge impact on our wild rice. So first, the pipeline itself causes a compaction. Pipeline itself, the present pipelines we're seeing, disturbs the whole movement of water in the surficial aquifer system and in the surface water. Pipelines cause different plants to come in and disrupt wild rice beds. That's just the pipeline itself. It's like a giant bunch of things down that you put down - huge amount of weight and compaction destroys what is a naturally occurring system, aquatic system. Wild rice is a plant that grows in these aquatic systems as do a lot of our medicinal plants. And the second thing is the threat itself. The fact is that Enbridge has a really bad record. They have 800 spills over the past decade. Some of those spills are small. But a lot of those spills are kind of big. And in fact, the single largest oil spill in US history inland was an Enbridge spill. That was the Kalamazoo Spill. And the Kalamazoo Spill was caused by the same line that they are now presently looking to abandon up here in Northern Minnesota. They have these pipelines that they put in here in the '60's, and rather than clean them up, what they want to do is they want to abandon them in place, and leave American citizens, tribal people, counties, and states and the

state of Minnesota, and the federal government, to take care of a 50 year old pipeline that they want to just abandon. They don't want to clean up their old mess. They want to make a new mess and leave us with their old mess. And that regulation is totally not apparent. There is no clear regulation for pipeline abandonment in the United States, let alone in the state of Minnesota. So (overlap) they want to put in a whole bunch of new pipelines, plus abandonment. It's a giant mess, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, excuse me, Winona, also listeners should know this is a Canadian company that, along with US pipeline companies, has the power of eminent domain to go right through your land, assuming they compensate you for it, just as if a government could. And the question is, are there hearings? Are there public hearings? Is the Public Utility Commission of Minnesota listening? Is it a political ramrod through the state? Are they offering the landowners a decent amount of money to begin with? Are they ramming, wanting to ram the pipeline through the land on the cheap? Can you describe what the emissaries of Enbridge -

Winona LaDuke: The process?

Ralph Nader: ...yeah, and what do you mean by "Indian whisperer?"

Winona LaDuke: OK, so Enbridge came down. And in Canada, what they did is that... these pipelines started up in Canada, or some of them start up in Canada. In Canada, you have tribal communities, bands - they're called First Nations - that live in these remote areas that may have 300 people in a village. And they have - a lot of them are diesel powered - and they have no infrastructure. And they are asking... the pipelines went through there, or they tried to put in a new line, and a lot of times they're adding... they're trying to put in more pipe in the same right-of-way or expand it. So Enbridge went into these communities and said, "You're going to get 15 million this week, and next week, it's going to be 10." And this community is sitting there with no electricity, intermittent electricity that is provided by diesel engines, and no infrastructure. And so it's pretty much that "starve or sell" option that was forced down the throat of a lot of those tribes in Canada. Enbridge came down here, and I told them point blank, I said, "That's not going to work here. We're not small villages powered by diesel in the northern bush that you fly into. We're big tribes. We've got 50,000 tribal members in Minnesota, and we have big reservations. 837,000 acres is my reservation. We're not small. You're not going to get that." So they hire these guys - and we have a little video called Enbridge's Indian Whisperer. They had to hire these guys - they call them Tribal Relations Specialists. They hire one, then they hire another - they both had their contracts terminated. They got nowhere with the tribes. Enbridge came in and said, "We're gonna do this." And we said, "No, you can't do that. We don't like it." So the State of Minnesota kind of blind-sided - we could say they weren't prepared for Enbridge. We could say that. But we could also say that there's a lot of political interest, and they're trying to take some money from Enbridge. They started a process at the Public Utilities Commission that was pretty much a "shove it through," holding hearings - you have to quickly look it up in the notice, not really in the paper, or maybe in the paper, small print - a set of hearings January 3rd through 15th. Icy roads, middle of winter, you're allowed to come say

your piece, but you've got to get in line... that's not really a public process. That's what they did. But they were forced in court to do a full EIS. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission last year, over the regulatory interventions of tribal governments and the interventions of citizens, approved a Certificate of Need for these pipelines. A local citizens group called Friends of the Headwaters sued the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in court, and the court upheld that they had to do a full EIS - Environmental Impact Statement - before they could start issuing permits to the Canadian corporation and giving them the right to eminent domain. They had to do a full Environmental Impact Statement. The Public Utilities Commission appeals the court decision on doing an Environmental Impact Statement, and the court, up to the Minnesota State Supreme Court said, "No, indeed, you do have to do that." And so now, forced by court order, the state of Minnesota is doing an Environmental Impact Statement. The State of Minnesota Public Utilities Commission said it did not actually have to talk to the tribes and that they weren't subject to state authority which directed tribal - all state agencies to talk to tribes directly - they said they didn't have to do that. Now, they're saying that they have to do that, but they're basically very limited, sending us a notice of when they intend to hold a hearing. Still nowhere near the process that is needed. So we expect that this will take another 3 to 4 years. In the meantime, we are expecting a full Environmental Impact Statement, which includes things like, one: the climate damages. If you put in 55 million metric tons of carbon, annually, into the environment with 1 pipeline, the second pipeline, a 125 million tons of carbon annually into the environment, someone's got to pay for that. We believe that Enbridge should be responsible for the carbon impact of their pipeline. We believe that they should be responsible for the human impact of shoving a mega-project down the throat of tribal people, because the fact is that studies and practice indicate that you shove a project, whether it is a big dam project, a military project, a mine or a pipeline into a tribal community and violate their rights, violate their dignity and negate their ability to support themselves, because of the fear of the pollution or the pollution itself, it causes a high rate of suicide. It causes a high rate of social trauma. It causes a high rate of substance abuse. And we already have that. So we don't need Enbridge's help to kill our people. We need Enbridge to back out. And what we need is justice and not pollution. So that's why I'm in this.

Ralph Nader: Winona, you have allies outside the Reservation, don't you?

Winona LaDuke: Oh we do. There's all kinds of non-Indians. They're very upset about this. Local citizen's groups are upset about this. Unfortunately, I have to say that state representatives and county commissioners do not yet see the light, except for those who are being sued by Enbridge already. Some of them are still believing in the state legislature that they're going to get, we're going to get some sweet deal out of this. But Enbridge is not the kind of... you don't get a good date with Enbridge. They are not looking at the bigger picture of the long-term liability or the health effects of it. So we need to do a lot more push on Minnesota legislature. But community people, if you want to know about us, look at the Honor the Earth website, Honor the Earth on Facebook, because it's all about Enbridge.

Ralph Nader: Well, Steve, you now know why I wanted Winona LaDuke to be my vice president running mate. What a champion you are, Winona. In the remaining moments, I want you to give an overview. What's the state of tribal nations and their reservations around the country? How would you characterize their economy, their cultural problems that they've been having over the years? Unemployment, gambling. Could you give a brief overview? Because I know you've been to a lot of these areas over the years, and no one knows more about the big picture of first Native Americans in this country.

Winona LaDuke: Frankly, that's kind of a big request. In my state of native America, what I would say is that we're pretty tough, you know. We're still in here. But at the same time, we should not be facing things in 2016. This is not 1889 or 1863. So when you have sacred places that you pray, like in Apache territory, Oak Flats, Sen. McCain should not give away your sacred sites to mining companies for copper mines that are so inefficient. Our sacred places should be protected. Our territories should be protected from dams rising like in northern California, all across... a lot of our most sacred effigy mounds in Wisconsin, similarly challenged. So sacred sites should be protected. They are in unrelenting pursuit for remaining resources. That which we hold most sacred still remains under assault. Our tribal people, a lot of the statistics that were historic have changed because casinos have brought wealth to some of our communities. And I'm not a big fan of a casino economy, but the federal government has basically said to tribes, "We're not going to support your right to restore your land base. We're not going to support your water rights. We're going to give you a casino, and you can have that." And some tribes have done quite well with that. And it has stabilized some tribal economies. I am not someone who was interested in of full time employment for my tribal members. I'm interested in quality of life and our right to be Anishinaabekwe. It does not involve a 9 to 5 job. That involves earning income from whether it is our wild rice, our maple syrup, or our labor as we choose at a fair trade exchange as opposed to some price set at minimum wage, far below the living wage, that many of our people are subjected to. Language restoration efforts are across Indian country underway. At the same time, we have epidemics that we face at a higher rate than any other, for instance, meth and heroine and opiates. So my own reservation, we had five overdoses about two weeks ago. Everybody lived, but the week before, not everybody lived. Heroine overdoses. So I'm in a community that things have not trickled down to, that things are still stolen from. That people are trying to continue their way of life - our rice, our wild rice that is an essential part of that. A Canadian corporation is trying to destroy our rice as a part of their profit motive. I'm also in a community that tends to be here long after Enbridge. My state of the nations, I don't know how to give that. Given a little bit more thought, I have seen some pretty amazing victories in the past few years in the fighting after the bad guys. Great work in language restoration, food system restoration. The heroine epidemic is not helping us, and the extreme extraction. But I've seen - a lot of these companies go bankrupt. Peabody-Cole just went bankrupt.

Ralph Nader: The biggest coal company in the United States just went bankrupt.

Winona LaDuke: Right, these companies go bankrupt that we are facing. Companies that were are facing go bankrupt.

Ralph Nader: Winona, we're running out of time, unfortunately. But before I ask Steve to ask his question - I know he's been wanting to ask a question of you - can you tell our listeners how exactly how they can reach you?

Winona LaDuke: honorearth.org.

Ralph Nader: OK, and then your personal web that you gave? You want to give that again to our listeners?

Winona LaDuke: winonaladuke.com, www.winonaladuke.com.

Ralph Nader: And Winona is spelled...??

Winona LaDuke: W-I-N-O-N-A L-A-D-U-K-E.

Ralph Nader: And Honor the Earth is your organizational website. Have you ever been on, for your causes, on NPR? PBS? Any of the shows? Public radio? Public broadcasting?

Winona LaDuke: You know, with allies like you, and Minnesota public radio has taken a lot of interest in the issues that we are working on, here. But nowhere near the media we need, because we are working hard. And we have our own radio station here up on the reservation too.

Ralph Nader: Good heavens, you can carry the program! The Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

Winona LaDuke: I think we will have to carry the program. Let's figure out how to do that. We should have a little bit of communication on that.

Ralph Nader: Winona, would you debate Al Monaco, the CEO of Enbridge at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis? Would you be willing to do that?

Winona LaDuke: You know, I actually called for a debate in Duluth. The University of Minnesota at Duluth called for a debate between me and whoever Enbridge wanted to put up, and Enbridge would not do it.

Ralph Nader: Well, they're smarter than I thought! Steve, you want to ask Winona a question?

Steve Skrovan: Well, I actually don't have a question as much as a comment. That refers to something you just referred to, Ralph. I do understand why you were running mates back in the

day because the energy levels that each of you have - not too many people can match Ralph's energy level, and Winona, you certainly do that. And I applaud you for that.

Winona LaDuke: I'm working on it. I'm working on it, man. You know, he is the icon of all times, and we - when I was a little girl, I wanted to grow up and be just like Ralph Nader, so I'm still working on it. I'm still working on it for my reservation here in my own territory. But you know, I have to be a bit different, because I'm not Lebanese. I'm Ojibwe, so it's going to be a little different switch up there.

Ralph Nader: And a graduate of Harvard University, among other things.

Winona LaDuke: As opposed to Princeton!

Ralph Nader: That's right. And by the way, my interest in what we used to call American Indians started in 1956, when I wrote a huge article called, "American Indians: People Without A Future" for the Harvard Law Record at Harvard Law School, after going through a number of reservations in the prior summer. So I have a long history of knowing about the history that has befallen them, the imperialism, the colonialism, the military destruction, the broken treaties. And so it's so heartening, Winona, to see your leadership and others, beginning to turn this around in a very fundamental way right on the reservations. Thank you very much.

Winona LaDuke: Thanks for calling, and really, thank you so much for your hard work, inspirations, and your radio show.

Ralph Nader: We'll see you next month at Breaking Through Power, four days at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. Go to the website, breakingthroughpower.org. We'd like some of our podcast listeners and radio listeners to fill those seats down there. We can make it happen. But only you can make it historic. Thanks once again, Winona. To be continued...

Winona LaDuke: Miigwech (Ojibwe for "thank you") Thank you so much. Have a good day, you all.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with activist/environmentalist/economist and writer, Winona LaDuke, who is the program director for Honor the Earth, an organization engaged in a battle with the company Enbridge, to stop them from running a dangerous oil pipeline through tribal lands in Northern Minnesota. We will post all of the relevant links on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. When we come back, we're going to talk about a huge rally that was held in Washington this week to protest money in politics. But right now, I, for one, want to know what's going on at the National Press Building.

Russell Mohkiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, DC, this is your corporate crime reporter money minute for Thursday, March 24, 2016. I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Every year, thousands of workers across the United States are killed on the job, 4,679 in 2014 alone. Thousands more are seriously injured. Many of these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable when employers put in place basic safety measures. Some even result from company policies and practices that encourage and reward behavior that creates unacceptably risky conditions. Ignoring workplace safety requirements is against the law. A new manual from the Center for Progressive Reform urges action at the state and local level to prosecute worker death and injury cases under a state's general criminal laws, such as for manslaughter, assault and battery, and reckless endangerment. For the corporate crime reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Last weekend, Democratic candidate for president, Hillary Clinton, attended a fundraiser in Los Angeles at the home of George and Amal Clooney. The going rate to be a co-chair at the event was, get this - \$350,000 a couple. At least, it was broken up between two people, I guess. Even Clooney admitted, on Meet the Press the next day that the amounts were, as he said, "obscene." But according to Clooney, the money was being raised, not for the Clinton campaign, but for all of the down-ticket candidates, so that the Democrats could regain the Senate, confirm a liberal Supreme Court justice and eventually overturn the infamous Citizens United decision that created this orgy of corporate campaign spending. I guess that's one way to do it. Our next guest has another way. Kai Newkirk is the founder of 99 Rise, an organization that stands against corporate political spending. Mr. Newark is known for attacking the power of big money through creative and, some would say, controversial methods. He is one of the many organizers of coalition of public interest groups who arrived on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington, DC this past weekend after a 10 day march. About 600 of the protesters were arrested, including our friend Robert Weissman, the president of Public Citizen. The event was called Democracy Spring. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Kai Newkirk.

Kai Newkirk: So great to be with you. Thanks for having me on.

Ralph Nader: Thanks for your organizing work, Kai. I know you worked for months and months to establish the basis. It's not easy to get a lot of people to come to Washington and to go up to Congress, outside of Congress and engage in non-violent civil disobedience and get arrested. It's a very, very hard thing to do, and you pulled it off. Can you describe A) how you got interested in this? You're a young man. How'd you get interested in this? And what finally got you to a level of such intensity in terms of organizing? And then, describe last week what happened outside of Congress.

Kai Newkirk: Sure. Well, I'm not too young anymore. I'm 35. But, you know, I've been a community organizer in different movements for the better part of 16 years, from the Global Justice Movement after the Seattle WTO protest, the anti-war and the labor movement, and the immigrant rights movement, and other fights. And one of the things, the lesson at that time for me has been that we are profoundly blocked from making progress on so many of the urgent struggles that we face as a people, as a nation, by the effect of corporate and billionaire control,

or dominating influence within our government, because of the way that our elections are funded, and because of their ability to keep people from voting, who are going to challenge their interests. And so, for me, there's a recognition of the profound urgency that we have to win on this side if we are going to be able to deal with the serious crises that we face as a country, whether it's catastrophic climate change, mass incarceration, historic economic inequality. And we need mass, non-violent movements to do so. So I left my job with a city councilman in LA a few years ago, went on unemployment, and helped to form organization 99 Rise to carry forward the vision of doing the escalating non-violent action to address this political inequality and open up the space to win real reforms through a democracy that works for all. And the Democracy Spring campaign is the fulfillment of that vision on a whole new scale. It was actually much more than 600 people that were arrested - over 1,300 actually, at the Capitol over 8 days, from Monday, April 11 through this past Monday the 18th: the largest civil disobedience demonstration in or country of this century. And think that sends a tremendous statement of the growth of this movement and that the American people are not going to accept the status quo any longer. You're right, we started with a march. And not just any march - from Philadelphia at the Liberty Bell, symbolic of our aspirations for democracy as a country. And we started there on April 2. Over 120 people, Ralph, from at least 33 different States began and walked the entire distance. Many more joined us over that time. The weather was surprisingly difficult... cold, wind, rain, even hail on one day. A lot of blisters. Some folks said it was the most difficult things they've done in their lives to walk the entire distance. But so many people feel so committed to this fight. It was incredible this community that came together. And when we arrived at the Capitol a thousand strong, over four hundred sat in on that first day. There was an incredible rainbow, the energy was incredible, claiming the people's house, holding the space at the steps, saying, "We're not leaving until Congress takes action to end the corruption of big money in politics, and ensure free and fair elections for all." And then, day after day, we came back, and I think have drawn a line in the sand, saying that candidates for office have to choose the side of the people and democracy over that of big money and corruption. And those who defend the status quo, the corrupt status quo, will face a growing political price at every turn. We're going to take this moment across the country.

Ralph Nader: Kai, how many of you actually went inside the Senate and House office buildings to meet with Senate and House staff or members of Congress?

Kai Newark: I don't know how many. There were people who did that every day. We didn't have a special focus on it. There was a group that went in and sat in on the rotunda and used zip ties to secure themselves to the scaffolding. And so, it took longer for them to be arrested. Most of the action was outside. Most of it was focused on reaching the public, mobilizing the public through the media, which is how we're ultimately going to shift and move Congress - to elect a new Congress - and to force those who currently sit in it and will after this next election to respond to the will of the people. Because we represent the vast majority of it. But there were people who went in and talked to them everyday.

Ralph Nader: And how would you characterize the media coverage, first: the radio and TV, second: the Washington Post, the New York Times, AP? What kind of media coverage did you get? This has never happened before. There's never been that many - even in the civil rights in the days of protest against the Vietnam War - there never were that many people up at Congress, in non-violent disobedience and getting arrested. What kind of coverage did you get? On a very important issue - money in politics - corruption of money, the control of our 535 members of Congress, or at least, a majority of them, by big money. What kind of coverage?

Kai Newkirk: Well, I would say that it was, overall, a tremendous success. I think we focused national attention on this crisis, on big money in politics, and attacks on the right to vote, and the growing movement that's going to overcome that. We focused national attention on that, and I think, more than ever before, reached millions of people, not just through social media but through the traditional media. So I think we see that as a huge success that we made it impossible for them to ignore. But there's no doubt also, that much of the corporate and mainstream media that's complicit in the corrupt status quo, because the money that gets spent in politics gets spent on ads on those stations and those outlets - they did not pay nearly as much attention as they should have. The big networks - CNN, Fox, MSNBC - did not give us nearly as much coverage on TV as something this unprecedented warranted. We did break through. We did get coverage on them. I mean, overall, it was tremendous I think. But there's no doubt about that. The Washington Post and New York Times, especially the Washington Post - here we were, in DC, was pathetic. It was outrageous. And I think we need to call them out on that, that they're not doing their jobs when they give so little attention to something this significant. The coverage on NPR was great. I think they really captured it right and paid proper attention. AP, Reuters, I think were on it. And we broke through, across entertainment, journalism, from Entertainment Tonight, TMZ, Rolling Stone covered what we were doing. And a lot of progressive media.

Ralph Nader: How about CSPAN?

Kai Newark: Yes, I think there was significant coverage on CSPAN. So I think - a lot of people have been saying that it was a media blackout and stuff like that. But I think it's an important message for our people, the people that participated, to know that we did break through. We did focus national media attention on it. It's true that a lot of the corporate mainstream media that's complicit in the status quo was reluctant and resistant, and they should've done more. And we should push them and hold them accountable and continue to build. But we have to remember that all these institutions have to be moved like any other. When you use the power of social media, when you use public media, when you use progressive media and you build a story of a certain significance, it becomes impossible for them, eventually, to ignore it. They ignored Occupy Wall Street for two weeks. Or didn't give it much coverage at all. And then, ultimately, it was on the cover of Time magazine. So it can be done. We have to continue to build. We have to continue to escalate. This was a huge victory, a huge step, and we're going to build on it.

Ralph Nader: Tell me the kind of people who came up to Congress with you. Were they all ages, all backgrounds, a lot of diversity? What kind of people came to the forefront here?

Kai Newark: It was beautiful, Ralph. I mean, on the march and in the sit-in, it was completely inter-generational. I think there was someone who did the march that was 79 years old. There was a fifteen or sixteen year old woman, Tessa, who sat in and risked arrest with her mom at the Capitol. So you know, all ages were represented, people of all walks of life. Veterans, faith leaders, teachers, students, nurses, doctors, artists... it represented the gamut. And I think significant racial and ethnic diversity, which I think was a big step forward, especially the movement around money and politics has tended to be very white, very middle class, and very old. And I think this was a real break from that, in part, because we committed from the start that it was a fight around voting rights, challenging voter suppression as part of the political equality fight. Not just money in politics. And also, because of intentional organizing efforts. And still, we need to do better in that. But it was a huge step forward. I think a lot of the people that stepped up as volunteers, as leaders, as participants represented the rainbow of American society.

Ralph Nader: You know, Kai, before I ask you how you're going to roll out from here, and your plans in the next few weeks and months, I think liberals, Steve, got a little challenged in the New York primary. Here they are, these liberal pundits, beating up on Republican governors in Southern States for voter suppression, and suddenly, they discover, right in their backyard, the blue State of New York, there is incredible restrictions on voting! 27% of the people, independent voters in New York couldn't vote in the Democratic/Republican primary. 140,000 voters were de-registered in Brooklyn alone because they hadn't voted in recent elections. And so they went to the precinct, and they couldn't vote. And there were all kinds of restrictions, pointed out by Ari Berman, of The Nation magazine. So that's who you're talking about, Kai. This is not just a Southern phenomena. This is not just a racial discrimination or low income. These are two-party imposed restrictions that benefit the party establishments, because if it was otherwise, if independent voters could've voted yesterday in New York, Bernie Sanders might well have won.

Kai Newark: I think that very well could be the case. And there's no doubt, voter suppression hits black people, poor people and people of color hardest, but it's not only. We saw it in Arizona. We saw it in New York yesterday. It's outrageous. Can you imagine going - you're here to exercise your sacred and fundamental right - and someone says, because you didn't vote in the last election or whatever that you can't? It's ridiculous. It's an affront to our values, and it needs to be redressed. And it's so painful for people, because you feel like they're going to count the result as legitimate, regardless of what we protest, what we change, or what we try to change. And I've been left out of that process, so many people were. So I think you have to realize that this is a systemic problem, it's a problem within both parties. And even outside of that, that in general, from the start of our country, there's been a contradiction between the founding dream and aspiration toward democracy, and the founding reality, which was brutal. It was genocidal. It was slavery and exclusionary. And we've been fighting for generations to

open that up, and to break it open so that everyone can participate. We can realize that dream. And we still have a lot of work to do. We've come a long way. But we've got to restore the Voting Rights Act, pass the Voting Right Advancement Act and take additional measures to make sure - it should be as easy to vote as it is to "like" something on Facebook, y'know?

Ralph Nader: Yeah, well it should be... voting should be a duty, as it is in Australia. And they come in at 97%. And it could solve the civil liberty problem by giving people the right to write-in their own candidate, to have "none of the above" on the ballot, plus the candidates who qualified for the ballot. So it gives people the right to say "no." And then, with those kinds of rights, you can say, "Okay, voting's going to be a duty. Everyone's going to have to vote. And if you want to vote 'no,' fine. If you want to write-in someone, fine. If you want to vote for a candidate on the ballot, fine. But you can't not vote." That's Australia and several other countries around the world. And it saves a lot of money, begging people and advertising trying to get them out to vote. What are the next few weeks and months in terms of rolling out this energy you built up around Congress, Kai Newkirk?

Kai Newark: Well, this was a tremendous moment, and we've got to build on it to grow the movement around the country. Again, it was a(n) historic demonstration, a popular demand for change. We focused national attention on it, developed tons of new leaders and recruited allies to our side in Congress, and exposed the defenders of the status quo, this corrupt status quo. So we've got to take that around the country, build this moment. We're going to roll out an Equal Voice for All declaration that candidates can either sign or not to be with the movement: On the side of the people and democracy or against it: on the side of big money and corruption. We want to empower those who stand with us and expose and disrupt and shut down those who don't at the fundraisers, press conferences, campaign events, in their offices, in the streets, in the minds and hearts of voters, and ultimately, at the polling place, and make this election a referendum on whether we're going to have democracy for all or plutocracy for the 1%. We're going to continue to escalate here in DC at Congress. We're figuring out next steps. I'm not going to telegraph anything. But potentially, at the Conventions and around the country, we're going to look at what are the most effective ways that we can build on this moment with a movement, and enable thousands of people around the country who've been inspired to come together to organize and take this to the next level. This was just the beginning. And we're going to build on it. And we're going to shape this election in a way that we believe can create the mandate that we need for fundamental reform.

Ralph Nader: Rumble from the People! Putting the muscle in the sovereignty of the people.

Kai Newkirk: That's right.

Ralph Nader: Yes, Steve Skrovan.

Steve Skrovan: Well, first of all, I have a comment. The fact that you said you're old at 35, that puts Ralph and I in some sort of afterlife.

Ralph Nader: (Chuckling) It's all relative, huh?!

Kai Newark: Well, I'm just saying I'm not a spring chicken anymore, that's all.

Steve Skrovan: Oh, boy! Nevertheless, one of the things that did get a lot of coverage, I mentioned at the beginning, was this Clooney event. And he claims - and he said, "Bernie Sanders is right. This is obscene." And he claims that this was in order to change Citizens United, to get a liberal Supreme Court justice. Do you think that's a valid argument for that kind of a fundraiser?

Kai Newkirk: Well, I don't know the specifics of that in terms of exactly what was going on there. I haven't looked into it. I do give him credit for at least being honest about it. And I think that the standard we have to hold - at least for candidates for office - in my view, is not that they have to unilaterally disarm from raising any money outside of small donors in order to warrant support from those in the movement and those who are fighting for reform. At minimum, they have to commit to fight for that reform. They have to invest political capital in their campaign, calling out the current - the status quo - and committing to fight and to try to change it when they're in office. I think that's the minimum that we have to expect. And they should do the best that they can to run their campaign and raise money in a way that's consistent with that. I think that the Bernie Sanders campaign is a defiant exception to the rule in the way that he's been able to raise the vast majority of his money from small donors. But you can count on one or two hands the members of Congress who've been able to do so. So it's the exception to the entrenched rule. And I think that what we have to expect is that anyone who wants our support is committing to the support and fight for reform, even if they do raise money from bigger donors. I don't think that that should be the litmus test. But I think something like that is obviously, when the numbers are that high - you're talking about hundred of thousand of dollars - it's just kind of a grotesque poster child for this corruption that is impossible not to see that and say, "This is wrong." But if somebody wanted to give a million dollars to help us build the movement around the country to overcome this and didn't want to put any strings attached, then I think we should consider accepting that. I think it depends on the integrity, it depends on the relationships, it depends on what you're fighting for.

Ralph Nader: Well said.

Kai Newark: And I give them credit for saying that.

Ralph Nader: Well said. If the money comes no strings attached, you've got to use it to organize the people. We've been talking with Kai Newkirk. Kai, we've got to conclude. We've run out of time unfortunately. Can you tell our listeners exactly how they can contact you and the movement?

Kai Newark: Absolutely. Democracyspring.org. Go there. Sign up. This was just the beginning. We're going to build across the country all fifty states. Also, on Facebook and Twitter, go there. You can get very plugged in and be in touch with what we're doing. If you agree with us that we need a one person, one vote democracy, political equality, that you want an equal voice in government, it's not gonna happen without a movement. It's not gonna happen without your participation. It's exciting. It's much more fun to get off of the sidelines of history and get into the game. We just made history. We're going to do it again. Join the movement. Take an example from the years of service from Mr. Ralph Nader and be part of this.

Ralph Nader: Go to democracyspring.org. We've been talking with Kai Newkirk, who was one of the lead organizers of a spectacular, historic demonstration in Congress, outside of Congress. Non-violent disobedience. Many were arrested. And that's the hard-core that's going to spread throughout the whole country. Watch out, oligarchy! Plutocracy! The People are coming, and they're fortified by the Preamble of the Constitution, which is "We, the People," not "We, the Corporations." Thank you very much, Kai Newkirk.

Kai Newark: Thank you so much, Ralph.

Steve Skrovan: Well, for more about Democracy Spring and other events like that, go to 99rise.org. We will also link to it on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website.

Ralph, we have time for one listener question here. And this comes to us from a listener named John - doesn't give his last name. And... very short question. He says, Hi, Ralph. What is your opinion of Jill Stein?

Ralph Nader: Well, Jill Stein is a medical doctor graduate from Harvard medical school, who was the Green Party candidate in 2012. And she's the odds-on-favorite to become the Green Party presidential candidate in 2016. She has an excellent agenda in terms of foreign/military policy, peace advocacy. And domestically, she's about as progressive as any candidate has been for many years on all the aspects of quality of the economy, jobs, minimum wage, Wall Street subordinating to Main Street, protecting the public lands, climate change, full Medicare for all; she speaks very eloquently on that as a medical doctor. Everybody in. Nobody out. Free choice of doctor and hospital. She'll be on the ballot in over forty states. The Green Party will qualify to be on all the ballots in over forty states. So if you want a choice, given who may get the nominations for the Democratic/Republican party, you'll have the Green Party. By the way, my seven minute video, responding and rejecting Hillary Clinton's excuses for not releasing her secret transcripts - which she has a stenographer make a copy of before these closed-door business organizations, including Wall Street bankers - you can go the Ralph Nader Radio Hour page and you'll see that seven minute video. It's important that she be required to tell the American people what she told these business conventions behind closed doors in secret, to see whether she is saying one thing to the business lobbyists and another thing, sweet talking the people on the campaign trail.

Steve Skrovan: Well, thank you for that question, John. Keep all these questions coming on Ralph's Facebook page or on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. Thanks again to our guests for joining us today. Winona LaDuke of Honor the Earth, and Kai Newkirk of 99 Rise. I also want to, once again, welcome our new listeners in the Bay Area on KPFA 94.1 FM. Welcome to our growing family of affiliates. David Feldman will be back with us next week as we continue to fight the good fight on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Talk to you then, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much, Steve and Jimmy. We'll look forward to David coming back. And go to breakingthroughpower.org for the biggest aggregation of advocacy groups in American history in Constitution Hall, May 23, 24, 25 and 26.