

RALPH NADER RADIO EP 313 TRANSCRIPT

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

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello. Well, the hour is about suppressing democracy, and the suppressors getting away with it. We're too lackadaisical on this, and we're going to try to wake you all up so you can roll up your sleeves and let people have the full opportunity to vote.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, and it's kind of appropriate we're doing this the week of Super Tuesday, where we know that there were long lines in both California and Texas. But on the show today we're going to take a bit of an historical look about voter suppression during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Georgia. Robert Greenwald directed and produced the film *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*, which shows that during the 2018 midterm elections in the state of Georgia, an election decided by 54,000 votes, over 800,000 votes were not counted. The voters suppressed tended to be African American, poor and Democrats. Voter suppression is not new, but as Republicans employ more tactics and increased bureaucracy, they're systematically making it more difficult for people of color to vote. We look forward to talking to Robert Greenwald about his new documentary and how we should be fighting voter suppression.

In the second half of the show we'll change topics and talk to Shelli Stockton about a program she is running at the University of Redlands where every elementary school student at Redlands Unified School District is going to be given a tree to plant this Earth Day. And as always, after that we'll take a short break to check in with our corporate crime reporter Russel Mohkiber, and if we have some time left over, we'll try to answer some listener questions. But first, on this week after Super Tuesday, let's talk voter suppression. David?

David Feldman: Robert Greenwald is the founder of Brave New Films, a non-profit film studio, whose work is distributed for free to educate and mobilize for progressive causes. The studio is currently working with a coalition in California to end the unjust money bail system, with films like *Debunking Bail Myths*. His work has won him 25 Emmy Award nominations, two Golden Globe nominations, the Peabody Award and the Robert Wood Johnson Award. Mr. Greenwald directed and produced the film, *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. To get a taste of this, let's listen to a short clip.

[film clip]

Georgia's tight race for governor is getting national attention.

Brian Kemp is not only the Republican gubernatorial nominee, he's Georgia's Secretary of State.

Stacey Abrams is looking to make history by becoming the nation's first female African American governor.

Volunteers are picking up phones and knocking on doors across the state.

Come in and register to vote.

We are very excited to register as many people as we possibly can.

What do we want? Register to vote! When do we want it? Today!

I come as one but I stand as ten thousand. [cheers]

Pull back that veneer and you see something really rotten happening. It's almost like termites coming in. They're in the wood, they're eating the wood away, and you don't even realize your house is getting ready to collapse until it's almost too late.

We have a historic decision today, striking down a key part of the Voting Rights Act, the civil rights law passed back in 1965.

The Supreme Court essentially said racism is over and these communities don't need to pre-clear these changes anymore.

This decision leaves virtually unprotected minority voters in communities all over this country.

We are witnessing a tidal wave of voter suppression around the country.

If you look at Alabama, Arkansas, North Carolina, Ohio, Kansas, North Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin and Georgia, which is becoming ground zero.

We've got to understand, this isn't a Klan cross burning. This stuff is very bureaucratic; it's very mundane. It's very routine, but it is lethal.

David Feldman: That was from the film *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Robert Greenwald.

Robert Greenwald: Thank you. It's nice to be with you.

Ralph Nader: Yes, thank you very much, Robert. I want to have you run by the different kinds of voter suppression. It's reached a point now where former President Jimmy Carter, who has monitored elections all over the world, said a few years ago that the United States is no longer a democracy. And this has nothing to do with the issue of whether it's a republic or not; it is a republic. But the democratic processes have to characterize voting rights. And so, why don't you just go through these sectors. One of them on purges is absolutely stunning, listeners. And then answer the question, why are these not prosecutable crimes? Why are they not crimes, instead of politics as usual?

Robert Greenwald: Well, all good and challenging questions. So just to back it up just slightly, when we began this, what turned out to be this *Suppressed*, the film, I thought it would be maybe we'd do a five-minute piece pulling together a few clips about what had happened in Georgia. But as we dug into it and as the researchers dug into it, what we found was a systematic, multi-purpose effort to suppress the vote in a variety of ways. And then we found countless people, who are featured in the film, telling us about how their vote was suppressed.

When we do films, you know, we can't do certain things you do better in people's books or in white papers or in study groups. What film can do is, when I say this, is it puts a face on policy. So, our job was to find, but sadly it was very--we had an abundance of choices of people whose vote had been suppressed. And the way the vote had been suppressed was in a variety of, as you said, Ralph, legal ways. So, one way was closing voting booths. When you close voting booths,

you make voting literally unavailable to many people who don't have the money or resources. And the argument was well, we're closing polling booths to save money. Well, it turns out that one of these counties, and it was just one example, was spending more on Christmas decorations than on polling booths.

Another was to make sure machines were not available so that what it resulted in was long lines. We have people in the film talking about waiting an hour, two, three and up to four hours, which then becomes a poll tax, because now they have to lose work because they're gone so long, and they're paying for the right to vote.

We have the purges, which you mentioned, Ralph, which are extraordinary and going on all across the country. And those had a devastating effect on people's right to vote.

Ralph Nader: Explain that, and tell us what the number was.

Robert Greenwald: Well, the number sadly keeps changing. The number we were using was 17 million people across the country were purged. Now you asked the question, how is it legal? The legal basis for that is a practice that, on the face of it, makes a little bit of sense, which is well, you "clean up" the voting rolls because people move, people die, things happen. But the right wing has been using this as an attack mechanism so that lower income folks move more often and they would literally, and you saw this in the film, maybe get a little postcard about these people who had no idea they were being purged. They got a postcard which they ignored. They went to the voting booth and they were told no, you can't vote. So, it's being used, given the research efforts to identify not individuals, because nobody's able to do that yet, but identify communities and counties, which tend to vote Democratic, and in those areas, those counties, those cities, those communities, there is a disproportionate amount of purging directed at African American voters in the greatest percentage.

Ralph Nader: Well just to be clear here, we're talking about purges, not just people who move away, etc. We're talking about purges of voters who haven't voted in prior elections. So, the way it's administered, well, all these voters, which just happen to be more in minority areas, by the Republican repressors, oh, these people, if they haven't voted in the two prior elections, we're going to knock them off the rolls. So, they go to the polls and they can't vote. Isn't that true?

Robert Greenwald: That's exactly true, and keep this in mind. You've registered to vote, so you assume you're going to be able to vote. You get to the polling place, they tell you no, and you have very little recourse as to what can be done. We have in the film a gentleman who was in the military, and he wasn't purged, but he said it was easier to vote absentee ballot, where there were all kinds of efforts they used to suppress the absentee ballot; it was easier to vote absentee ballot from Iraq than it was to vote a few miles away from the state of Georgia.

Ralph Nader: It may be easier to vote in Iraq, as well.

Robert Greenwald: Yes.

Ralph Nader: Now you mentioned voting booths. What you're really talking about is voting stations. So, when they close down the station, Robert, some people have to travel ten, twenty miles just to get to another voting station, and they're knocking off these voting stations. So what other ways are they destroying democracy in America?

Robert Greenwald: Well, the voting stations is one of the most destructive possible ways, and

this happened in Texas where they closed, I think it was 700 voting stations I believe, maybe more. So, in the film we have an 89-year-old gentleman. He used to walk two blocks to vote. They closed his voting station. He did not have the financial resources and he did not have a car; there was not easily available public transportation. So, it was depriving him of his right to vote. It was sadly in the letter of the law, but there is some really good work being done by the ACLU and by Stacey Abrams' groups to fight this in court, pointing out that this effort to suppress is targeted and it is designed to achieve specific goals, which is knocking out certain voters.

I'm sure you've read about the gentleman who was a Republican operative who died, I think it was six months, maybe a year ago, and his daughter has released a lot of his research and a lot of his memos, which are bold and right out there saying, "Our effort is to make sure we have less people voting."

Ralph Nader: Talk about the registration abuse.

Robert Greenwald: So, each one of these tactics is very similar in that it falls within the letter of the law and it particularly falls within the letter of the law after the Supreme Court tragically got rid of the Voting Rights Act--the significant protections of the Voting Rights Act. So, [for] states it was a field day. They just raced in to take as many steps as possible, including making the registration very, very difficult. So, for example, one gentleman in the film, and he was one of many, you have to have two pieces of identification that were exactly identical. So, his Social Security number, he has a hyphenated name, had a dash. His driving registration did not have a dash. So, he literally was denied the right to vote until he raised hell and protested because a dash was missing. Who has a majority of hyphenated names? Well, you can guess that, and that's why they chose that tactic.

Ralph Nader: Why should we have to guess? Why don't you say it?

Robert Greenwald: Yes. It's people, minority folks, Latino folks and African Americans.

Ralph Nader: Let's talk about absentee ballots.

Robert Greenwald: Yeah. So with the absentee ballots, they literally, in Georgia, and I'm not sure how many states this was part of, they were able to hold the absentee ballots, some of the absentee ballots, not all of them, for such a long period of time that they were not counted when the election was in doubt. And by the way, we focus on Georgia, but Georgia is a case study. And what we're seeing and what we say in the film over and over again is, it was a tragic election. Stacey Abrams, to her credit, has started groups and organizing and fighting voter suppression. But Georgia is just one state and there are efforts in states all across the country to suppress the vote.

Ralph Nader: Well, 17 million people have been purged in 2016, a lot of them because they didn't vote in a couple prior elections. You see, there's a real problem with your film. It has great documentation and human interest, Robert, but we have to get people more angry. And one way to get them more angry is to say, well, why don't we just have universal voting as a duty? In Australia, you couldn't pull off these shenanigans because if you're 18 or higher, you have a right to vote period. There's no registration; there's no purges. There's nothing; you have a right to vote. So, 96% of the people end up voting in national elections, and we're lucky if we can break 60%.

Then in Canada, how do they deal with how long people have to walk or ride to get to the polling place? Well, no polling place has more than 500 voters. So, when you have it down to that level,

you don't have lines; you have a lot of polling places in neighborhoods in the cities and in the towns in Canada. How does Canada deal with the nightmare of registration shenanigans in this country? You simply are registered in the census. When you're counted, you're registered to vote.

So, we have to show this is not just deliberate in this country, but it shows how advanced fascism is in this country, autocracy is in this country. You know, you violated a parking ordinance and you can get fined. And you take away millions of people's right to vote by all kinds of obstructions, nobody gets fined; nobody gets prosecuted. The secretary of state in Georgia, as you know so well, stole a lot of votes from his opponent for the run for the governorship in 2018, from Stacey Abrams, and he became governor! There was no fine, no prosecution, nothing. And going to the courts with these right-wing judges, forget it. It goes all the way up to the Supreme Court. You got five autocrats, Republicans who are going to vote to extend this Shelby case, [Shelby County v Holder] which started the problem by getting rid of the civil rights law protections against what you're documenting in your film.

So, I think we got to go much bigger here. And the other thing I'd like to suggest is some of these obstructions that you're talking about can be overcome if we start the get-out-the-vote movement in July, not in October, not in November because there are all kinds of deadlines--students are discriminated against in terms of where they can vote when they're in college. You have to start much, much earlier. And some enlightened billionaires better put a lot of money into getting out the vote, starting in August, September, October [for] people [to] have meetings in neighborhoods, [helping people think about things like] what would you get if you voted? What do you want in terms of your family and what do you want the government to do [about] all the things like living wage and universal health insurance and prosecuting people who obstruct the right to vote?

And there are other countries besides Australia that have universal voting as a legal duty. When you have universal voting as a legal duty, Robert, and someone like Kemp, [former Georgia] Secretary of State, obstructs you from obeying the law and voting, that's a much more serious criminal offense. Your take on all this?

Robert Greenwald: Well, I think that's absolutely true. And what it goes to, Ralph, what it goes to basically is it's fundamentally, and this is where I hope the film can be a piece of helping, it's fundamentally arousing the electorate to correct this, because there are numerous, numerous policy ways, and they're not all that difficult. As you said, there's many possibilities and ways we can learn from other countries. There's lots of things that can be done in our country. But the political will from the Democratic and the progressive and the liberal side has not been there. Look, the conservatives and the right wing and Republicans have spent millions and millions of dollars and years and years designing smart and legally defensible, but morally and totally indefensible, ways to suppress the vote. We know what they're doing. We show the tactics; we show it. Now it's on us to come up with, and there are lots of grassroots groups. And as I've said, Stacey Abrams with Fair Fight and Fair Count, is connecting both to the census and to voter suppression today. So, there's lots, but it requires people being angry, being upset, and that's why we make the film available for free. That's why we provide study guides with it for schools. That's why we provide reflection guides with it for communities of faith. And our goal is to have 2,020 free screenings before the 2020 election. And every screening has a discussion afterwards, and the focus of the discussion is, what can be done?

Ralph Nader: And you're offering this free, of course. People, whether they're neighborhood clubs or whether they're schools or whether they're service clubs like Kiwanis and Lions Club and

women's clubs, they can all get this free, right?

Robert Greenwald: Absolutely. It's also available in libraries for free; it's available in bookstores for free, people's homes. We're working on making it more widely available for online classes. If any of your listeners have access to making it available online, please send me an email, robert@bravenewfilms.org. We're working hard to get it into the community colleges, so we're looking for more opportunities there because thanks to some of our 18,000 small funders, as well as some of the larger ones, it's all available and its simple guides as to how to run a screening, what questions to ask. And then most importantly, again, encouraging people to take action. Now we don't decide what action they should take, but on the website and on the study materials, there's a variety of different organizations, different people leading activity. And you know that great line, democracy is not a spectator sport, right? So, if people watch the film and don't do anything, we fail. But if they watch the film and take some action, then we're taking a step in the right direction.

Ralph Nader: And the earlier they do this before election day, the more likely they'll be able to surmount some of these obstacles. Is there any action legislatively in these states or by initiative, like in California, where you have a proposed referendum to reform these laws and put some teeth in them--criminal penalties, budgets to prosecute politicians or anyone else who is blocking people's right to vote... and the facility of voting? They may still have the right to vote, but they're blocked in all kinds of other ways.

Robert Greenwald: Well, as you say, I mean the fundamental thing about voting suppression is it challenges the notion of democracy, right? If you suppress the vote, then all this incredible effort is going to be very limited. And what you said is of course exactly right. Getting involved earlier around voting, registering, turnout; all of those things are critical. A few horrible, stupid, million-dollar TV ads at the last minute is like burning your money. But there are fundamental important ways, and it comes down to organizing and working within your community and getting people together. Now whether that's working for lawsuits or legislation or electing people who will take this issue on, again, there are multiple ways to do something. And the reason I stress that is because everybody can do something. There is no reason that anybody could say, I can't do anything. It can be a phone call. It can be an email. It can be a financial contribution. It can be going to a meeting. It can be joining a group. It can be using the film; it's easier to get people together with a movie than it is to get them together with a lecture.

Ralph Nader: Let's help our listeners understand this, in all states, the secretaries of state are in charge of these voting laws. And in most cases, they're elected. Some of them have been incredibly abusive of their power and have never been prosecuted. Georgia is one case in Robert Greenwald's documentary. But before we get to the nub of this, Robert, just describe one more type of obstruction. It's called photo ID.

Robert Greenwald: Yeah. Again, photo ID sounded, and this is where it's been so evil and clever. Photo ID, just like some of the other things, on the face of it, sounds like a reasonable thing to do, right? But then you get into the nitty gritty and you see over and over again abuse of photo ID because of the way that they define photo ID, the requirements they make, the financial part of photo ID. And when you challenge it then you have to come back yet another day to another location at another time. And again, these are people who are working for a living, who can't just take time off to do this. So many of these, and Dr. Carol Anderson says it in the film, are the equivalent of poll taxes, which we thought had been outlawed. And as we're seeing in Florida, they're just blatantly imposing them on people.

Ralph Nader: It escalates into something really grave, because what you're describing has cost the Democrats presidential elections. I mean, there were a lot of shenanigans in 2004 in Ohio, and Bush allegedly won Ohio by about 60, 70,000 votes out of millions cast. So, if Ohio went Kerry, Kerry would have been president. That was a swing vote. In 2000, the swing state was Florida. A lot of shenanigans there; I mean beyond belief. And they got away with it and the Republicans elected George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. What's wrong with the Democratic Party here? I've watched some of these debates and voter suppression hardly ever comes up. They don't go after the Republicans for it. They're not making it a cardinal issue, just like they're not making repealing or neutralizing the Electoral College a cardinal issue. They've lost two presidential elections since 2000 when they won the popular vote and lost the Electoral College vote. What are you doing to jazz up this decrepit, rancid Democratic Party that can't landslide the worst Republican Party in history over the last 20, 25 years?

Robert Greenwald: Well, that's a fundamental question as you say, and my observation, or one of the observations, and I try to look at where there's active work going on that's meaningful and impactful, is the thrill with what Stacey Abrams is doing. You know, starting Fair Count, which will focus on the census and tying it to all of this, right? Because if we're screwed on the census then that's going to make things even harder longer term. And she has models about organizing and on the sort of activist front. And I'm hopeful because she's an important voice, that that will begin to affect candidates talking about it. I don't understand, I've been shocked, as we've been monitoring it closely, I think there've been with all the hours and hours of debate, maybe two or three comments about voter suppression. There was a forum in Atlanta where several of the candidates were there discussing it. But on the larger nationally televised ones, it has never come up. Now you can blame it on the media, but you can also say why are the candidates and why are their advisors not using this, and pounding it as an issue of democracy.

Ralph Nader: It goes all the way up to Donald Trump. Dictatorial Donald approves of all this voter suppression, encourages it. The Republican National Committee in Washington, DC, right next to Congress, is involved in it. And the Democrats are not making this an impeachable offense. I mean, this is very serious constitutionally, as you know, Robert. And books are coming out all the time. One is coming out called *One Person, No Vote*. I think a professor from Emory University is putting it out. The Democrats are sitting on their hands. How many more elections do they want to lose because they don't hold Trump and the Republicans accountable? They run the House. They could have really tough investigatory hearings. Take your documentary and go nationwide with nationally televised hearings. And you can testify and other people that you've documented can testify who've had their vote destroyed. I don't like [the term] voter suppression. It's not tough enough of a phrase, like climate change instead of climate disruption or climate catastrophe.

Are you doing anything to go up on Capitol Hill, in Congress, and actually show the film to staff and members of Congress? And then put the question to them, why aren't you doing anything about this in the House of Representatives? What's your House Judiciary Committee doing? What's Nancy Pelosi doing?

Robert Greenwald: Yes, we are making that effort. And to do exactly that, to have a screening on Capitol Hill, which would be hopefully a joint Senate and House screening. And I believe it will happen. Things don't always move at the pace that we would like them to. I'm not a patient person to begin with. On top of that I'm a New Yorker, so I'm an impatient New Yorker. But I've tried to have some patience here and I'm hopeful that there will be a screening that we'll be able to

announce in the next couple of weeks. But if anybody listening, anybody who has contacts with their elected officials, please feel free. Call, email, send them the film, send them a clip from the film. We have two-minute clips, we have five-minute versions, we have every conceivable kind of way of reaching people from Facebook to Instagram to Twitter to YouTube, etc., etc.

Ralph Nader: Contact Congressman John Larson from Connecticut, Senator Richard Blumenthal from Connecticut, especially; tell them I suggested that they ought to take the lead here in the House and the Senate. We're talking about stealing elections really, aren't we, Robert?

Robert Greenwald: Well, legal, as you said before, the question is why is some of this legal? I'm not a lawyer, but that's where they've been clever. In 2000 they did it illegally, many of us believe. They have gotten smarter about it. So now they have seemingly legal ways to do this. Yes, it's legal to close a polling place and make an 89-year-old man not have access to the ballot box. Now, will a lawsuit turn that around when they've shown that some of these laws have been clearly designed to penalize a specific population? Yes, there've been some victories in the courts. I believe there will be more. But it's a combination; again, as you all know, it's a combination of political will as well as legal, particularly with so many of these judges in place that Trump has put in. [This] may be the worst legacy of all; we're also working on a short film about the judges. [Yet this may be the worst legacy of all because that's with us for the next thirty years no matter where Trump is.

Ralph Nader: That's why resort to the courts right now is too slow and too futile. And then when they get their wrist slapped, if we get a good court decision, they just figure out another way to obstruct voters. I mean, the League of Women Voters keeps expanding the list of outrages that they are trying to put the public focus on. They ought to be a good distribution for your film. They have League of Women Voters chapters all over the country. I'm sure you're in touch with them. But no, we have to make this a political crime of great proportion. We got to get rid of all this stuff by having universal voting as a duty. And people say oh, there's a civil liberties issue here. No, there's not, because you can go and vote for people on the ballot; you can write your own name in or anyone else by write-in vote, and you can vote for none of the above. So that takes care of the civil liberties issue. And then all this stuff you're talking about is swept away with a universal reform, just the way it is in Australia, all of it. And if we don't talk about it at that level, we're getting down into the weeds, into the weeds, into the weeds, and we're discouraging people. Sometimes documentaries and muckrakers in the other media, they're so good about documenting crimes, outrages, abuses, vicious practices against innocent people, that they can't rise to the level of saying how can we sweep this away? We need a billion dollars, and Blumberg can provide it, in the eight major states which can get out the vote and start overcoming these obstacles for the November vote in August, September, October. And then provide transportation, encourage absentee voting, you know, voting by mail like in Oregon that has it. That's what we have to do. There's such a thing as too much documentation without a larger frame of reference of what has to be done about it, and people get discouraged. They may believe everything you say, but they get overwhelmed and discouraged. I've seen this again and again around the country. We have to go for universal voting. Even Barack Obama spoke approvingly of it when he was asked about it once in a trip to Ohio as president. What do you say about all that?

Robert Greenwald: I say yes, yes and yes. That is absolutely what the film is wanting to do and trying to do, is arouse that emotion. You know, what I think and talk about a lot is with the film we reach the heart that then leads to the mind. Often on our side, and I think this is what you're

addressing, Ralph, you know, there are studies and position papers and 27-point documents. All of that can and is useful, but I believe to reach a large number of people and have them aroused, you get the heart and then the mind follows. That's what our job is with the film -- arouse people's emotion. People who don't know about this issue, who don't care about this issue, who don't realize how it fundamentally is a violation of democracy and it affects their lives--whether it's the minimum wage or it's healthcare or it's college for their kids-- it affects their lives when you take away the right to vote. And that's what we're trying to do with the film. That's why we're making it available for free, and that's why we're encouraging people to use it to spread the word, to get people engaged, and to take action.

Ralph Nader: Also, you know, people say, "Well, my vote isn't obstructed; I can go down to the local school and vote where the precinct is." Yeah, but if you're voting for a certain candidate and a lot of your neighbors are obstructed from voting, you're going to lose that vote. That candidate is not going to be elected. So, Robert is right. You shouldn't just say well, if it doesn't affect me why should I worry?

Before we get Steve and David in on it, I want you to tell our listeners how they can get this film, and then I'm going to repeat it, and then I'm going to ask Steve and David to repeat it so people have no problem with getting this film. Let's say it slowly.

Robert Greenwald: Okay. BraveNewFilms.org. That's our website, BraveNewFilms.org. You can go to our Facebook page, to YouTube, to Twitter, my personal Twitter, and Instagram. But the easiest is go to the website, BraveNewFilms.org and you will be able to get the film. You will be able to get a study guide if you want it, free.

Ralph Nader: All free.

Robert Greenwald: Yep. You will be able to get a reflection guide for communities of faith, free. You will be able to get short clips. So, if you're not ready to do a screening or if you have friends who maybe don't really care about the issue, as I was saying before, we literally have a two-minute trailer; we have short versions with some of the individual people in the film. Those are available on Facebook, on Twitter, on YouTube. And you can send them to your friends or colleagues. There is a simple idea that the advertising community has come up with, but it's very valid called the Trusted Messenger. And we've seen it. We've seen somebody spend \$500 million and he didn't have any connection toward people because it was not Trusted Messenger. What does it mean? Very simply, when you get anything, an email or a Facebook post or a YouTube thing and it's from a friend or relative, even a relative you don't like or someone you work with, it's more impactful than if it comes from some neutral advertising agency that you don't know about. So, you can do something just by taking clips and passing them around and saying to people, are you aware of this? Something needs to be done.

Ralph Nader: Okay. So, it's BraveNewFilms.org, and it's all free, listeners. We're very grateful for your work, Robert, and I hope that 50,000 forums all over the country in the next few months start using this film and all the things it has to offer. Thank you very much, Robert Greenwald.

Robert Greenwald: Well, thank you all. I really appreciate the time and the effort and the discussion, which will allow us to reach more people. Ironically, it takes time and effort to reach people even when the film is available for free. So, I'm sure with your engaged listeners and audience and followers we'll be able to further spread the word and get more people doing more

to fight for democracy.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Robert Greenwald, founder of Brave New Films and director of *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. We will link to that at RalphNaderRadioHour.com. We're going to take a short break. When we come back, we'll hear from Shelli Stockton about the tree plant-a-thon she is running this coming Earth Day, which aims to teach elementary students about mitigating climate change through planting trees. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, DC, this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, March 6, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. Ohio-based pharmaceutical company Cardinal Health will pay more than \$8 million to resolve charges that it violated the books and records and internal accounting controls provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. The Securities and Exchange Commission alleged that Cardinal's internal accounting controls were not sufficient to detect improper payments made by employees of its former Chinese subsidiary. The SEC alleged that Cardinal Health retained thousands of employees and managed two large marketing accounts for the benefit of a European dermo-cosmetic company whose products Cardinal China distributed. Employees directed payments to government-employed healthcare professionals and to employees of state-owned retail companies who had influence over purchasing decisions. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. A couple of years back we spoke to young German Felix Finkbeiner, who set a goal to plant a trillion trees around the world to help in the climate crisis fight. Doing her part here in America is our next guest. David?

David Feldman: Shelli Stockton is the Director of Alumni and Community Relations at University of Redlands in Redlands, California. University of Redlands, ESRI and the Redlands Unified School District are all teaming up to give every elementary school student in the district a tree for Earth Day 2020. That'll be part of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. During this tree plant-a-thon, through planting their own trees, the goal is to teach students the benefits of planting trees and about how trees help mitigate climate change and reduce air pollution. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Shelli Stockton.

Shelli Stockton: Thank you very much. I'm glad to be here.

Ralph Nader: Yes, welcome Shelli. When I was active in the first Earth Day in April, 1970, we talked about actually planting trees but nobody did a program like we're going to discuss in Redlands, California. And ESRI [Environmental Systems Research Institute], it's a pioneering GIS firm [geographic information system], in Redlands run by Jack Dangermond [billionaire businessman and environmental scientist] and his wife, Laura Dangermond. It's privately owned, very, very environmentally oriented. They are supporting providing a tree to every elementary school student in Redlands. Before we talk about the importance of tree cover in terms of global warming, what kind of tree and how big is it?

Shelli Stockton: Yes. We're going to give the students a choice of four different types of tree, so they can make a decision based on what kind of space they might have in their own yard or neighbor or family member's yard. So, they'll be able to choose from an oak tree, California Live Oak, a Stone Pine, Eucalyptus or a Chitapla, which is a smaller tree that would be, really work

well in smaller yards or places where there's not a lot of space.

Ralph Nader: And how large are these little trees when you give it to them?

Shelli Stockton: They're definitely going to be little, so they're going to be probably eight to ten inches tall in a little plastic sleeve. So, the good news about that is that they're easily transported by the kids as they take them home, but the definitely will need a protected area to grow and thrive.

Ralph Nader: And how are you going to assure that they're going to actually plant them? Are you going to try to do it in a citywide jamboree like on April 22? Is that when Earth Day is?

Shelli Stockton: Earth Day is on April 22. We're going to give them out actually a couple of weeks before that. So, it's going to take us about three days to get the trees. There'll be about 15,000 in total that we're planning to hand out. So, our main hand-out day will be the third of April, and we're hoping that the students will go home and plant their tree over that weekend or over the next week. And one way that we'll be able to monitor how many trees we've gotten in the ground is that we have worked with ESRI and some folks at the University of Redlands and developed an app that people will be able to go in and record the location that they planted the tree. So, we'll be able to see the sum total of all of our work.

Ralph Nader: And you give the students advice on how to plant and how to take care of it and how often to water it, things like that?

Shelli Stockton: Yep. There'll be some basic advice on the actual sleeve that the tree comes in, and then it will refer them to a website where there will be a video about how to plant a tree and how to take care of a tree and additional resources that parents and families and teachers, as well, can use to expand the lesson of how trees benefit the environment and how best to care for them.

Ralph Nader: Are you including high school students?

Shelli Stockton: We have included some environmental clubs in the high schools, so yeah, they're actually getting involved in helping the younger students to understand the value of the trees. We're also doing some tree planting at the schools themselves, some larger trees, as a way to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day.

Ralph Nader: Anyone doing this around the country, same way?

Shelli Stockton: Not that I know of. But we're documenting everything and we're really hoping that people will take this idea and run with it, because we found it to be a really beneficial partnership, the organization ESRI funding the trees and then our local university and the school district working together to provide resources and to hand them out. And I should also mention that the City of Redlands is a partner as well, because they have agreed to take any trees that a student doesn't have a place to plant or if we have extras, and they're going to grow them in their nursery so that they can plant them when they're larger in city parks or parkways, so that we make sure that all the trees get utilized.

Ralph Nader: By the way, ESRI is the best company in America to spread it through their geographic information systems. They have a GIS day every November for high schools and community colleges all around the country. Why don't you try to go to go to some progressive companies like Patagonia in Ventura, California and see if they'll do it for the schools there?

Shelli Stockton: Yeah, that's a good idea. Yeah. So, look for some other like-minded companies.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to the global level. Now tree cover absorbs a lot of carbon dioxide. You want to give some figures on what surface the trees, from the Amazon to everywhere else, serve to reduce greenhouse gases, and how much more can they absorb if we have a global tree-planting campaign already starting big in Ethiopia and other countries around the world? Can you give us some figures on that?

Shelli Stockton: Well, I mean there's all kinds of studies out there about the varying benefits of trees. Certainly, the absorption of carbon dioxide is one of the major ones that help in the climate crisis. But they also reduce rainwater runoff and improve the quality of runoff water. They provide cooling, which is especially important in dry, hot areas, which is where Redlands is. They reduce noise pollution. But the figure that we have really honed in on is that one acre of forest absorbs about six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out about four tons of oxygen, and that's a U.S. Department of Agriculture figure. But there certainly are climate scientists out there that feel like this is something that really could make, on a grand scale, anyway, a big difference. We're trying to just do our part locally. I think it's really important, especially for kids to understand that there's something that they can do, and just the idea of having a tree to care for and making that contribution to their community I think is really important.

Ralph Nader: And if they start understanding that nature around them is just begging human beings to use the great resources to save the planet. I mean, just imagine how much space there is for trees and bushes that are not used at all. And by the way, it does tend to curb the deadly expansion of soil erosion. I mean, trees have just enormous consequences beyond just the global warming situation. Have you thought of taking advantage of Arbor Day to go more national on this? Because I'm sure that all of you are not just doing this for Redlands. You want to have an example that can be spread around, emulated around the country. Is Arbor Day on your screen?

Shelli Stockton: Well, it's on our screen, definitely. It's interesting that it happens right in the same calendar cycle as Earth Day. So, we have not yet been in touch with the Arbor Day Foundation, although both the University of Redlands and the City of Redlands are tree-city and tree-campus designated organizations. So, I'll definitely be reaching out to them to let them know what we're doing. We've also been in touch with the Chief Service Officer of the state of California, and he will be attending our kick-off event on April 3rd. So, we're hoping that he can help us spread the word within the state of California to other cities and organizations that might want to get involved.

Ralph Nader: There is an endowed, fairly sizeable foundation in Washington, DC whose only purpose is to protect trees and grow trees and expand the tree cover in Washington, DC. They would probably be very responsive to what you're doing. I take it you didn't get any resistance in the Redlands school system to this, bureaucratic type?

Shelli Stockton: No, not at all. No, they've been really excited and they're helping us with the distribution and getting the trees out to the individual schools.

Ralph Nader: And what is your website? I'm sure listeners are saying we got to get more information about this for our community.

Shelli Stockton: Yep. It's Redlands.edu/trees, plural. So red like the color.

Ralph Nader: That's Redlands.edu/trees. And what do people get from that website?

Shelli Stockton: Well, there's all the resources for teachers and parents. There's access to the app

where we can show how students and others can put in the address of their tree and understand the benefits. And then tree planting and care instructions, as well as kind of a how-to for other organizations that might want to do the same kind of program.

Ralph Nader: I love your choice of trees, by the way. They're very, very reflective of the planet, not just of California, like Eucalyptus trees.

Shelli Stockton: Right.

Ralph Nader: Well, thank you very, very much. It's been very illuminating and it's something that can really be diffused very quickly. It doesn't require much investment and there's soil and tree opportunities everywhere, all over the country.

Shelli Stockton: Right, exactly. And I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to you this morning and tell people about this great project that we hope they will replicate in their own community.

Ralph Nader: Well, thank you and thank ESRI and thank the city of Redlands, and we'll try to spread the word ourselves. Shelli Stockton, thank you very much.

Shelli Stockton: That's terrific. Thanks.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Shelli Stockton, who is running the University of Redlands tree plant-a-thon, where every elementary student in the Redlands School District is being given a tree to plant for Earth Day this year. Alright. Let's do some listener questions. David, why don't you do the honors?

David Feldman: This one comes to us from Joe Cavara. He says, "Hey Ralph, I've been voting for you since 1996 and spreading your truth for decades. I even got a caricature tattoo of you on my forearm. I always get people asking about it and teaching them your history and fight. It's sad that you've been pushed to the margins by the corporate media, but you keep up the good work nonetheless. When Bernie wins, would you be interested in joining his cabinet? It's early, but has he even been in touch with you? We need you back in front, Ralph. You're their man for the job. Amen."

Ralph Nader: Well, Joe, thanks, but you didn't need to go to such extremes by imprinting a caricature on your forearm. You could have used a large button and spared your epidermal health. But I must say, not many people started voting for me in 1996. You should be a member of the 1996 and future club. As far as Bernie's concerned, I consider Bernie a progressive moderate. He's being painted by NPR, MSNBC, CNN as an extremist. Go through the list of what he proposes, listeners, and they either occurred prior to the present day in American history or they're already part of life in Western Europe, often Canada, Japan and other countries that we're way behind of. So, I think that they're now going to gang up on him inside the Democratic Party. That's what they did for Super Tuesday. They all got together with the Democratic Party machines in the various states and supported Joe Biden, Big Business Biden. How about that for a button? The triple B. You want more Hilary Clinton? Vote for Big Business Biden. And so, I think that Bernie, who has gone a long way without our advice, is now being ganged up on again, as he was in 2016. But I think the more he broadens out, the more he gets left-right support for these great, appealing agendas, I mean a lot of conservative workers in Walmart want a living wage; a lot of conservative workers everywhere don't want to be denied healthcare that they've already paid for by a tricky insurance company. A lot of conservative voters are tired of being ripped off by corporate crooks

and shenanigans that eat their disposable income constantly—fine-print contracts, overcharges, penalties, shoddy merchandise. So, thanks for bringing that up. I wouldn't want to go into the cabinet. Bernie has not returned my call for 22 years. I did meet him in October and we had a short chat. But I think he needs all the help he can get, don't you think, Joe?

David Feldman: You saw the corporatization of the Democratic Party before anybody else did, and that's why you ran in '96. The circling of the wagons right now to fight off Bernie, are you surprised by how quickly it happened and how craven it appears?

Ralph Nader: A little bit, because why did Senator Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg, why did they suddenly drop out? They were all on the ballot on Super Tuesday; they suddenly dropped out. Well, they were contacted by the Democratic National Committee, by various people like Terry McAuliffe, like the Clintons, and all of them basically saying do it in order to save the party from Bernie Sanders. Do it for Joe Biden, our boy, you know? I mean, these are a bunch of losers. They've lost so many elections, state and federal, over the years against the worst Republican Party in history. And the losers don't want to give up their sinecures, they don't want to give up the entrenched role that they play inside this decrepit Democratic Party that Bernie is trying to clean up and reform. And so, there's a lot of emails, a lot of calls going on after the South Carolina primary in the three days to line up all kinds of party apparatchiks [who obey orders from the DNC] to get out the vote, to bad mouth Bernie, and it worked for them for the time being.

But let's see Bernie and Joe Biden on the debate stage and watch how Joe Biden fares against Bernie Sanders. Joe Biden was for all these job-destroying trade agreements, corporate-managed trade agreements that emptied his beloved native Pennsylvania of jobs. He supported all the wars that Clinton and Obama supported. He is the toady of the big banks in Delaware. He supported the Wall Street bailout in the crash in 2009. He was the water boy for the credit card industry and their rapacious interest rates and penalties, and he comes from Delaware, which is the hospitality center for giant corporations to be chartered in, so they can have permissive corporate laws and strip their own shareholders and mutual funds and pension funds of the rights of ownership--entrench power at the top among the corporate executive class. That's all, just for starters. He's responsible for Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court. He took Thurgood Marshall's seat and he's been voting against black and Latino interests ever since, making a difference in 5-4 decisions. And as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Joe Biden mistreated Anita Hill, who was a star witness, and he didn't urge the Democrats not to vote and eleven of them bolted and supported Clarence Thomas, who won 52-48 in a Democratically controlled Senate. So, he's responsible for a lot of those 5-4 votes where Clarence Thomas makes the difference. It's about time that the press focus some attention on Delaware Joe.

Steve Skrovan: This isn't going to be muddied by identity politics. This is two septuagenarians, two old white men fighting it out over policy. It's a stark ideological contrast. How bloody can this get? Because it's going to be purely on the history of the Democratic Party and policy. Biden can't hide behind identity.

Ralph Nader: That's right. This is about power, corporate power over government. It's about wars that are aggressive and illegal overseas. It's about whether people are going to receive what they've earned, pensions, whether they're going to receive living wage, whether they're going to receive healthcare coverage, whether they're going to have a voice in politics, whether they're going to be able to vote and have the votes adequately counted without voting machine penetrations here and there. It's the epic struggle in America today. And if they take it away from Bernie, and they're

using bad ways to do it, a lot of Bernie voters are going to stay home, which is just what Trump wants. I think Trump would want to run against Biden, and I don't think he knows how to take on Bernie.

David Feldman: This last one comes from listener Ryan Elphicke, who is obviously a regular listener because he wrote, and he said, "Each week without fail Steve Skrovan begins the show by introducing Ralph as the man of the hour. It's such a cliché that I cringe." So, I wrote back and said "Sorry you feel that way, Ryan. Any suggestions?" And this is how Ryan responded. He says, "Now I feel like I'm picking on you, which I am." And he suggested, how about "One of America's secular saints; Professor Laura Nader's younger brother; the referee with 360-degree vision; the man ranked 17th on Trump's enemies list; a man who is safe at every speed because he doesn't drive; Harry Shearer's understudy at the Simpsons; the man who is about 830,000,000th in the British monarchy's line of succession; or the man of the moment." Ralph, do any of those appeal to you, if I'm going to change Man of the Hour?

Ralph Nader: The Man of the Moment.

David Feldman: The Man of the Moment. Okay. Do we have leave; do we have your permission now to change that up?

Ralph Nader: You sure do.

David Feldman: Alright, Professor Laura Nader's younger brother.

Steve Skrovan: Don't mess with the formula. Coca-Cola has a formula; we have a winning formula.

David Feldman: Alright, Ryan. Well, tune in next week, see if we do anything about that. I want to thank you for your questions. Keep them coming on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website, and I want to thank our guests again, Robert Greenwald and Shelli Stockton. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material that we call the Wrap Up. A transcript of this show will appear on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website soon after the episode is posted.

Steve Skrovan: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel, and for Ralph's weekly column. It's free. Go to Nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to CorporateCrimeReporter.com. And Ralph has got three new books out, 1) the fable *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*. To acquire a copy of that, go to RatsReformedCongress.org., 2) *To the Ramparts: How Bush and Obama Paved the Way for the Trump Presidency and Why It Isn't Too Late to Reverse Course*, and 3) *Fake President: Decoding Trump's Gaslighting, Corruption and General Bullsh*t*, cowritten with Mark Green. We'll link to that also.

The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky. Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our intern is Michaela Squier.

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

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. If you get the free copy of Robert Greenwald's documentary, *Voter Suppression*, and play it in your community, let us know about it. We need encouragement too.