

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 104 TRANSCRIPT

Bill Curry, Russell Mohkiber, Laura Flanders

David Feldman: From the KPFK studios in Southern California.

Steve Skrovan: It's the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan and coming to you from Los Angeles, along with my co-host David Feldman, who is stationed in New York City. Hello David.

David Feldman: Hello Steve, we've got a lot of show, let's get to it.

Steve Skrovan: Okay, excuse me, am I not going fast enough for you already?

David Feldman: Somebody has to be officious on the show.

Steve Skrovan: And from our nation's capitol the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello Steve, Hello David.

Steve Skrovan: We have a very exciting show today as David mentioned, we're going to be joined by a progressive radio host Laura Flanders, who is going to tell us about her adventure trying to register an offshore company in the Grand Cayman Islands. We're also going to talk some presidential campaign politics with author and columnist for Salon, Bill Curry, who has some pretty strong opinions about the whole thing, but especially about the battle that is going on between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders for the soul of the Democratic party. We will also, as always, hear from Russell Mohkiber, the Miss Marple, of the Corporate Crime Beat. And this week Ralph will be asking David an obvious question in our new segment about obvious unanswered questions. That's a pretty full show, but if we have time left we'll try to tackle more of your listener questions, its jam packed so let's get right to it. Introduce our first guest David.

David Feldman: Bill Curry is a political columnist for Salon. In a previous lifetime, he was White House counselor to President Bill Clinton and a two time Democratic nominee for Governor of Connecticut. He is at work on a new book on President Obama and the politics of populism, his latest provocative column in Salon is entitled “Hillary’s Inevitability Lie: Why the Media and Party Elites are Rushing to Nominate the Weakest Candidate.” Welcome back to the program Bill Curry.

Bill Curry: Great to be with you guys. Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much Bill, for coming on the show, in the year or so that Bill Curry has published a weekly political column on Sunday, you can get it by visiting salon.com. I think he’s established himself as the foremost political analyst in our country. And if you don’t believe it, just go and see his columns and see the educational value of it, the insight, the historical allusions, and I think you may agree. To give you an idea of the way Bill writes, I just want to read for about a minute from his recent column, “Hillary’s Inevitability Lie: Why the Media and Party Elites are Rushing to Nominate the Weakest Candidate.” And I’m going to quote him. “For two years the media has swallowed and pedaled the Clinton inevitability lie. For two weeks it has said Trump’s nomination is inevitable. This, after eight months of saying it was impossible. It’s so clueless on both counts, because it’s so much a part of the system that is under attack and because it relies so heavily on its useless tools and discredited methods. It’s hard to predict the future it being chock full of stuff that hasn’t happened yet. Even if they get it right, they don’t add nothing of value. To see the race as it really is, one might see the Democratic or Republican parties, as they really are. The story going around is that they’re far apart. It’s true of cultural issues, guns, same sex marriage, abortion immigration, but on matters of the distribution of political and economic power in opportunity. They are as close as can be. By this I mean, global trade, fiscal austerity, deregulation, information technology, use of military force, and most of all what they fight hardest to defend, pay-to-play politics, it’s against this bipartisan consensus of pay-to-play politics in neoliberal economics that the country, including large chunks of each party’s base, now rises up. And this is nearly as true of Trump’s fascist putsch as it is of Bernie’s progressive revolution.” Bill, do you really think that the parties are that close together on the issues you mentioned?

Bill Curry: They don’t always mean to be. On some of them, they absolutely are and it’s fully intentional. On global trade, there is a consensus. And again to think for a moment as I run through this, about all the propaganda over the last 20 years about how important it is to this to get bipartisan consensus. And then think for a moment about what happens when we do. What do you get? The Iraq War, No Child Left Behind, NAFTA. And you wonder why people are still chasing after it. That’s because the elites do really well by it. And so again, as I said in the

piece you quoted, we think about the parties, we think about this cultural issues that they used to divert their bases and to secure what coalitions they have, then we don't think about what they have in common. In some of those things, as I say, pay-to-play politics is number one, they both love it. Global trade is number two, they both love it. Economic deregulation has come to us almost equally from the Democratic and Republican parties, and not only in the financial sector but in trucking and other areas of commerce, the airlines et cetera. This major mantras of deregulating the economy, deregulating global trade, allowing the soft corruption of pay-to-play politics to operate like a cancer on the Democracy, this is a complete bipartisan consensus. On other issues they are much closer to consensus than their own base would ever understand. On the minimum wage, Democrats and Republicans are very different. But it was President Obama who decided not to raise it in 2009, because he didn't want to ruffle the feathers of the business community. Both parties are opposed to Universal Healthcare. And again you can argue the policies back and forth, although I wish we did that more often. We haven't in this campaign. But just to give an example, you know you can really take the phrase, Universal Healthcare and get it down to the two things that you need to do to get there which is to take first the insurance companies and then the drug companies out of the elicited bargain they struck with: Guess who? The Democrats. And so when you look at this, you begin to see what's the base of each party and the American people have been slowly learning and that is, it is this bipartisan consensus, the connection between pay-to-play politics in a rigged system for global corporations that is keeping the Middle Class down and destroying the Democracy. And as I said in that piece, whether it's Donald Trump's Fascist Putsch or Bernie's Democratic Socialist Revolution, they're both aimed at the same target. It's what the public means to change.

Ralph Nader: Bill let me interject here. You were for a few years, special assistant in the White House to President Bill Clinton and ...

Bill Curry: And as counselor to the President, yes.

Ralph Nader: The word *triangulation* emerged where, basically it's Clinton with the advice of Dick Morris, blurring the difference between the Democrats and the Republicans on Capitol Hill and it works for him. In other words, by becoming more like the Republicans he won big time re-election in 1996. Tell us, is that the incentive why both parties sort of overlap each other because they think they get an advantage against one another? And is Hillary an inheritor of Bill's triangulation?

Bill Curry: First of all, I would say that it *was* the way to get elected. And remember that in the 1990s - I would say both Bill Clinton and Obama and they're so much alike - each is a steward not a reformer. Each is - I would argue - a very competent steward. Bill Clinton had extraordinarily astute political judgment. And he was good at managing the economy and the

budget and America's place in the world. What he wasn't: was a reformer. He was a steward of how things are to keep them in the best shape you can without actually changing them. And when it came to systemic reform which was a phrase he used all the time, it wasn't really his strong suit. He didn't, for instance, understand the nature of the healthcare reform that we needed and might have passed. And after that, he stopped pretty much doing reform. And in those days in the 90s, in the very beginning of the great information technology bubble, you could get by as a steward. And America hadn't quite figured out how long it had been since the Middle Class got a raise. And the politics were different. Twenty years later, all those things are just not true. There is no substitute for reform now. And so those same kinds of things that worked then won't work now. And you can see that when you look at Hillary's campaign. It's not just that she isn't as charismatic as Barack and Bill. She has their verbal skills. She doesn't have their charm. And when she's found trying to run the same hustle by taking people's minds off their real differences by using language to make people think that they actually have come together when really they haven't, when there's still hard work to be done. When she does it, she gets caught. And it's also true that the audience she's aiming at - the working Middle Class of the United States - has seen through the hustle in both parties. And so there's an appetite now for what Bernie Sanders calls a revolution, such as I have not seen in my adult life and I don't think we have seen in this country, probably since the Great Depression.

Ralph Nader: Bill, let's step back on one convergence between the Democrats and Republicans that is almost never mentioned. In your earlier years, you came to Washington and you were one of the leaders for stopping the expansion of nuclear weapons in the world and reversing them and having a moratorium on testing nuclear weapons. I learned a few weeks ago to my chagrin that Barack Obama has given the go ahead - in his last year in office with no worries about having to be re-elected - for a 1.3 trillion upgrade of nuclear weapons, including a new - can you believe this in an age of missiles - a new nuclear equipped bombers. Of course, the Republicans are delighted with this. They want to even do more. But in the context of the Non Proliferation Act, which in effect says to the countries that already have the nuclear bomb that they can't expand the number of nuclear warheads and they have to move toward scaling them down to zero. And to the non-nuclear weapon countries - they signed the Non Proliferation Agreement - they signed on to never having a nuclear weapons. Now, why would Obama do something like that in his last year in office? \$1.3 trillion can repair most of the elementary schools in the entire United States and create very good local jobs.

Bill Curry: Okay first of all, there are a couple of answers that seem clear to me. But to go back to what I said, there's a bipartisan elite consensus. And I listed some of the things but even in that long windy answer I gave you, not all of them. You've just mentioned one of them now. And the other is, it's a consensus that supports the use of military intervention to advance the interests and in the minds of some of its practitioners, the values of the United States. I would recommend to the people a speech, the last speech that Ronald Reagan gave before slipping into senile dementia, he gave at Oxford. On this topic. And it was, believe it or not, one of the most

enlightened speeches on foreign policy that I've read in... ever. And Reagan, who apologized for the remarks of the evil empire to Gorbachev and publicly at the time - though everyone forgets - and who went to Reykjavik seeking the end of nuclear weapons, the absolute cashing in of the whole system by both sides - went to Oxford and said to the students there, "You must know that even if my generation won the Cold War, your generation, you have a new mission which is to establish a multilateral - not unilateral or bilateral or American and European - but a true multilateral conflict resolution mechanism and know that you cannot keep your weapons and ask everyone else to give up theirs." That was *Reagan*. And I've often said, if Ronald Reagan could have given that speech, couldn't just one Democrat? And so, it goes to what I said again before about all those issues, and whether you're a steward or a reformer - and Obama is for all of his other fine traits, very much simply a steward of the old order. There is only one answer here: I think it's the strength that he give the United Nations, but certainly it is that we ultimately finally do what Gandhi urge us to do, which is to renounce violence in the resolution of human conflict. And we have to be able to defend ourselves in the end. This isn't about unilateral disarmament but it is about understanding that our safety lies, not in the force of arms but in the rule of law. And Obama can't give that speech or make that decision now, because he doesn't understand it. He's gotten a little better in his last year than he was in his first six. He shies away from the Syria No Fly Zone. He shied away from the Libya interventions somewhat but not enough. He then did shy away from the Syrian intervention. He is perplexed by these things, but he has no reform in his head. And so in his last year, just as you rightly said, he is going the old way.

Ralph Nader: But why would he do this? This \$1.3 trillion upgrade of nuclear missiles?

Bill Curry: Because he believes it.

Ralph Nader: I know, but it's not going to go through the Congress under his watch, so to speak. He just proposed it. And most people don't understand that one Trident Submarine with multiple warheads, if it fired its entire volley at the same time would destroy 200 cities in the world in one hour. That's just one Trident Submarine. We have many of them. And the Soviets have many of them - the Russians. But why would he propose a \$1.3 trillion nuclear arms upgrade if he didn't want to help Hillary, the hawk, win the election?

Bill Curry: Well, let me just say I'm sure that enters into his thinking. But to get the real answer - to be certain, to be a little more certain of the answer than you are now - you probably have to get him on the show. But I would add: I don't just see it as a cynical ploy to help her get elected. I see it in a way as something worse. I think he does it, because I think he believes it. I don't think he understands any of the things that I just said. If he could just give the kind of speech Reagan gave at Oxford here in America before he leaves the presidency, he'd be doing a lot

more good than he's doing by putting this budget on the table and taking us down the road. And again, you think, you know - Hillary often says that she admits she made the mistake in Iraq. And Obama says that he opposed Iraq, although his opposition to it was actually very sketchy. People didn't look into it enough. But the fact is that they apparently haven't learned the lesson. Among the many lessons we've learned in the Middle East over the last 15 years is that the kind of military force we have is of so little value against the threats we face. And it's spending this kind of money against the threat that we're not really facing to the same degree - until we've already vastly outmatched - is it not just a waste of time but it weakens us by showing our enemies that our ideology has made us stupid.

Ralph Nader: Also you open a real door here, because if we're going to spend a lot of money to protect the health and safety of the American people, we can start with expanding the research, the application, the assistance all over the world to thwart epidemics, pandemics, viruses that are virulent, bacteria that are deadly that are spreading because of environmental changes and international travel. That's why I had to write President Obama a letter by an E.coli about to expire in a petri dish in Austria saying, the only way the E.coli could redeem its miserable life was to try to get Obama to redirect the war against the real terrorist: the bacteria and the virus. It's always important, Bill - I think- to do intermodal budget thinking. It's very important. When they talk about Flint and lead in the water, and it's spreading around the country - the discoveries - and the huge public works repair, they cannot avoid talking about scaling down this bloated, corrupt, \$7-800 billion a year military budget, 57% of what the Federal Government spends in its discretionary budget. Would you agree?

Bill Curry: I do. And I also did think about - I mean one of the many things that I believe make you invaluable is that you spend your life having the debate we're supposed to be having. And here, we have nearly 20 states in drought and you can go through now - you know a dozen debates and more than that town halls in both political parties - and nobody says the word "water." You can have the worlds threatened by pandemics and nobody says the word "germ." You could go down the list, both oceans, Pacific and Atlantic will engulf the east and west coast of the United States within our own or our children's lives, and you don't get climate change questions in the Democratic debates, let alone on the Republican side. And so it is difficult - and I agree with the point you make that part of when you begin to have these conversations, you begin to make connections. Children's lives have been ruined in Flint because these lousy politicians for decades can't even get an infrastructure bill together to fix the decaying water systems in urban areas all across this country. And where did the money go? It's going first and foremost to pay for trillions of dollars in military - in war cost that we never should have undertaken to begin with and an ongoing military budget cost for programs that don't make us stronger but only weaker.

Ralph Nader: That's the kind of intermodal thinking we really got to get going. In Flint, General Motors plant discovered the water was corroding its engine parts from something - not lead, some other chemical. It changed the source of the water back to a safer source and didn't blow the whistle on the Flint drinking water system. It didn't perform as a corporate citizen. It's not just the politicians as you know, it's the corporation ...

Bill Curry: You're saying you have some questions about General Motors' corporate citizenship?

Ralph Nader: (Laughs) Let me read another excerpt from your fine column for Salon. You can look at this column every Sunday, salon.com. "Voters want political reform and economic justice. They know that without reform they'll never get justice. Bernie Sanders is the only candidate who shares that opinion. The election is part of a broader revolt against a failed status quo. Clinton is an architect of that status quo, Trump a big beneficiary. So she hides her transcripts, and he hides his tax returns. Bernie is an open book. That's why he has the highest favorability rating of any candidate in the race. And Clinton has the lowest favorability rating of any presidential candidate in the history of polling, except for Trump." So what happens if Clinton wins? Are you going to vote for Clinton? Or are you going to stay home? Are you going to vote for Trump? Or you're not going to tell us who you're going to vote for.

Bill Curry: First of all let's take it a step at a time. But you and I have had this disagreement. I believe in the end that the answer here is not a naïve faith that the Democratic Party will prevail but a revolution against the hierarchy of that party. I wish that progressives were engaged in an assault on the Democratic hierarchy in the same way that the Tea Party engaged in an assault on the Republican Party. And I believe that ours could be even more successful. And it would change the world. It would change the world. As far as the Hillary stuff is concerned at the end one - unlike Tad Devine talking about whether Bernie would take it's spot of the ticket yesterday at MSNBC, I think it's MSNBC or CNN, I would not, I don't think -- Bernie just won the most historic upset in the history of presidential primaries in either party. If he wins the nomination let alone the election, it will certainly be remembered that way. And this race has just changed in a fundamental way. And people - voters just aren't buying the same old swill. Whatever - the most important thing - if I could just say that any voters who are listening - you know Hillary and the media that shares her neoliberal ideology - even the younger ones, even the vox.com and the MSNBC people - they all basically share her outlook. And they're all preaching this - they've been preaching this inevitability lie. And they've been preaching tactical thinking, where you're supposed to walk into a voting booth and ask, not which candidate represents your interest and values, but which candidate do you think somebody else is going to vote for, as if we could tell.

Ralph Nader: Let me interrupt you on this. The last words of your column and that leads to my question: “Clinton helped build the system voters want to tear down. Her candidacy rests on a rickety edifice of a dying political establishment that like Trump could blow at any time. This is Bernie’s revolution, not Clinton’s or Trump’s. If it’s anyone’s moment it’s his not theirs, it ain’t over until it’s over.” At the same time Bill, the overwhelming number of African-American voters are voting for Hillary Clinton. The overwhelming number of labor unions have endorsed Clinton without any conditions, by the way. How can any Democrat in a presidential primary, win the primary and get the nomination without the big minority vote and the big labor?

Bill Curry: Let me just say two things. First of all it just cracked in Michigan. A third of all blacks voted for Bernie. And secondly, Bernie is an unknown commodity. I said very emphatically in a recent comment, I don’t believe those voters were choosing Hillary’s neoliberal economic world over Bernie’s socialist revolution, Democratic Socialist revolution. All the polls say they agree with Bernie on opposing invasions. They agree with Bernie on the living wage. They agree with Bernie on universal healthcare, not Hillary. But there was familiarity, and ties, and Obama. And all those organizations you just mentioned - those organizations are dying. They did all these top/down endorsements and broke the hearts of their own members. They did what progressive organizations didn’t use to do. They didn’t used to get into primaries to help someone against a friend, let alone someone who wasn’t as good as their friend. At the very least they stayed out. And I also would believe that I look at the network you built. I look at all the PIRGS and Citizen Action, the new organizations like Working Families and Democracy for America and Move On and 350.org. There is a new grassroots movement that’s bubbling up in this country. Michigan was the strongest labor state in America. And 70% of labor backed Hillary and they lost yesterday. Because the members of the movement - just like the grassroots of the Democratic Party - they’re not listening anymore. They want something better. They understand that there are too many of their leaders and I don’t mean just labor - I mean they’ve been friend to me all my life. I understand how hard these choices are. But I also know that there are people in Washington now who are just careerists and technicians, who made deals for themselves. Or they make deals because they think that access to the establishment will help them. And it’s time to look back on a whole generation of data and say, “How much did this access really help? What are we doing here?”

Ralph Nader: You’ve been critical to the press and the horserace questions, the tactical questions. Before I ask you to tell our listeners what questions you would ask Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump - given your critique of the media - exactly what is the formula that the media seems to be mired in -no matter where they come from - when they’re questioning these presidential primary candidates? What are the formulaic questions?

Bill Curry: First of all they ask questions - they follow the debate that has been shaped by the pollsters in both parties, all of whom in both parties make most of their income from corporate

clients, all of whom rely on marketing. If there's one thing that these people need to learn, progressive, the journalists, the young journalist coming along are such a disappointment - to me certainly - and as well as the older ones. Policy proceeds message. First you figure out what you believe and then how to tell people about it. You have all these discussions about whether Hillary's bill or Bernie's bill can pass Congress - neither one can pass the Republican Congress - whether Hillary can get elected more than Bernie: all the actual empirical evidence says the answer is "no." And no evidence put on the table in the major cable networks and the New York Times and the Washington Post, which shows that real difference between their positions. Hillary keeps running around saying, "Bernie and I are allies, we really agree." They don't. Not on any of the issues we've talked about today. Their differences are sharp and deep. And so I would say to Bernie the one thing I would say to Bernie about issues is, "You have to turn around, you have to look her in the eye and you have to tell her that pay-to-play politics is wrong and that the reason she ought not to be the nominee of the Democratic Party is simply that she doesn't know it." And you have to be willing, when there are moments like the e-mail, you just don't say I don't care about your embed e-mails. I agree, the investigations by Republicans are odious and creepy. At the same time, all of the worst foreign policy in American history was concocted in secret. And that kind of secrecy, that that personal server reflected, that desire never to be found out is the very kind of thing that led us into Libya and Iraq and Vietnam and Honduras and Guatemala and a hundred other places we didn't belong. And so he's got to turn to her and on each one of this, he has to draw the distinction. I would pose questions to him that required him to do that.

Ralph Nader: Let's try your questions to Hillary, and then quickly to Trump that would provide a contrast with what I think is a pretty vacuous, redundant pattern of tactical questions by the reporters.

Bill Curry: Let me say, they are so simple. First of all, you know she got away until January by saying that she, "I agree with President Obama about invasions." But she didn't. She kept leaving herself all the room in the world to say she'd be for a ground invasion. She finally come out against it. She does this all the time. She moves too little and too late and in a way that makes you know that she's not really taking - she hasn't really learned something. She's just moving a piece on a chessboard. I would go to the TPP and explore. What is it that you finally figured out? What is it that you really know about this?

Ralph Nader: Pacific Trade Agreement...

Bill Curry: That's right.

Ralph Nader: That's the pending Pacific Trade Agreement.

Bill Curry: I'm sorry. That's right, that's right, and, you know, I don't think she gets any of it, but I don't think, as with Bill Clinton in NAFTA in 1992 who said he backed off of real labor pressure that and said that he wouldn't before without environmental, social, and labor standards being set and then just forgot about those as soon as the election was over. I think if you look at this stuff, there's a real question here - actually in both parties - which is: what's the front-runner really believe? What does she really believe about trade? She spent her whole Secretary of State time promoting fracking around the world. In a bizarre debate, she actually - this past week - she said that she would basically leave fracking as if it were a "state's rights" issue to all these Republican governors to decide. In these moments, when she says that she too wants a universal healthcare plan - she has never introduced a proposal in her life for universal healthcare. There is none on her website. There was none when she was first lady. And you cannot leave the insurers and the drug companies skimming the hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars off the top and get universal healthcare. That's the simple math of it. They have to press these people on the details. They can't just let them throw off a phrase here and there and co-op a theme. They have to go to the policy.

Ralph Nader: Bill, talk about a phrase. Is this accurate? If Hillary Clinton becomes President of the United States, is it fair to say, to summarize what we're going to expect: more war, more Wall Street?

Bill Curry: Let me just say that she's - her closeness to Wall Street and her fondness for military intervention are the reasons that I'm writing positively about Bernie and not her. I mean more than anything, it really comes down to pay-to-play politics, global capitalism, and the US tragic addiction to military intervention. I will say it again - we don't agree in the end I think - and that is, do I know in my heart that the election of a Republican would destroy any chance of dealing with global warming, would create a Supreme Court that would be fascistic for the rest of my life and perhaps the lives of people after me? Those are big stakes in my mind. I hate being blackmailed. It's why I'm fighting so hard now. But, I also understand that it happens.

Ralph Nader: You got a point on the Supreme Court, because the Democrats could have stopped Alito and Roberts with a filibuster but didn't. So you can't even rely on the Democrats to use a filibuster.

Bill Curry: Yeah that's right, but also as a very wise man once said, "Only God can change the past - not even God" - the actual quote is: "Not even God can change the past." It's done. They should have. It's who they are. Go back to Joe Biden not running all the witnesses against

Clarence Thomas. We might have a different court if he'd just done that. The Democrats don't have the courage of their convictions. It's a flat out fact. The problem is the Republicans do.

Ralph Nader: Yes. One last question, you're on the stage, a 100 million people are watching the program. Donald Trump is sitting in front of you and you have one question to ask him.

Bill Curry: I'm not sure what it would be. If I had 20, they would all go to the lies he tells about his personal life, about his business. He inherited all the money he has left. His business career - the only part of his business career that ever succeeded has been licensing his name in just the same way Kim Kardashian does. And he's no more fit to be President than she is. And the reason I say this - I know it's different from everything else I've said - is that I truly believe this guy is - I've never said this about anyone in public life - in addition to all of his fascistic tendencies - a word I've never used about any other public figure - I do believe that he is emotionally crippled. And I watch him, and he's so often seems about to blow. What he's most preservative of is his false image as a successful businessman. I would go after that until I think he would do what I thought he would do, which is really break down for all to see what was inside there and to know they couldn't possibly elect him. And by the way - everything else - he's a sublime, supreme, effortless, casual and reflexive liar. It'll take a very good interrogator, if you should just go after the issues to get out anything remotely resembling the truth.

Ralph Nader: We're out of time Bill, unfortunately. We could go on and on. I'm sure our listeners would agree with that. You want to get more Bill Curry every week, go to salon.com and you'll see what I mean when I describe him as America's foremost political analyst writing today. Thank you very much Bill Curry.

Bill Curry: Thanks, Ralph.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking to Bill Curry, political columnist at Salon. To read his weekly column, simply go to salon.com. We will also link to his page on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website at ralphnaderradiohour.com. When we come back, Ralph is going to cross-examine David on a secret topic. And we will be talking to Laura Flanders. But first, let's see what our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber, has been digging into. Russell?

Russell Mohkiber: From the National Press Building in Washington D.C. this is your corporate crime reporter morning minute for Thursday March 10, 2016, I'm Russell Mohkiber. The head of Volkswagen in the United States resigned effective immediately as the company struggles to agree on a settlement with the US Government over its emissions cheating scandal. VW said

Michael Horn's resignation was by mutual agreement, and he would be leaving to pursue other opportunities effective immediately. The company did not explain why Horn was leaving the company now, six months after VW was caught using default device software to systematically cheat on US regulator's tests. Martin Winterkorn, the global CEO of VW resigned in September 2015 in the near immediate aftermath of the scandal, which left the company facing fines of as much as \$20 billion and a criminal investigation by the US Department of Justice. For the corporate crime reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Ralph Nader: Thank you Russell. We now go to our obvious but rarely asked unanswered question. And I'm going to direct this to David, who is ready for it, but he doesn't know what it is. David Feldman?

David Feldman: Yes sir.

Ralph Nader: Do you like poetry?

David Feldman: Not really.

Ralph Nader: Have you ever read poetry?

David Feldman: Yes.

Ralph Nader: Is there any poem that you liked starting in elementary school when we all are asked to read poetry?

David Feldman: I wish I could say, "yes." I'm embarrassed to say that I don't. I never felt I had the time to read it. I like music. I like lyrics more than poetry. I'm not proud of this.

Ralph Nader: Why do you think so many people like poetry when it's obviously, in most cases, a little more difficult to understand than regular prose on the same subject? Why do you think so many people like poetry, even though you don't particularly cater to it?

David Feldman: I think something snaps in your head. There's a burst. You've solved something, and it produces some kind of chemical reaction in your head like a crossword puzzle.

Ralph Nader: You mean the word play? You're talking about the rhymes? You're talking about the conciseness of the lines? What are you talking about that affects people's neurons favorably?

David Feldman: I think when they crack the code of the poem, they find there's some kind of joy in it.

Ralph Nader: Have you read Homer's "Iliad?"

David Feldman: Yes I did.

Ralph Nader: Now that's poetry. Did you like it?

David Feldman: No. I like "The Odyssey." That to me was more lyrical.

Ralph Nader: All right, let me suggest that one argument for poetry is, it can say things in a way that has a much greater emotional impact and memory retention than say a similar excerpt of prose. And I just want to give you an example. It's a section from a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay and the poem was called, "A Meteoric Shower of Facts." This is only probably half a minute or so. And I want your comment on it. I want to try to see whether you're consistent in saying, you really never much liked poetry. Here we go. Especially how relevant this excerpt is today, and I believe it was written by Edna St. Vincent Millay in the 1930s during the Depression. And I quote her:

"Upon this age, that never speaks its mind,
This furtive age, this age endowed with power
To wake the moon with footsteps, fit an oar
Into the rowlocks of the wind, and find
What swims before his prow, what swirls behind —
Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Rains from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts . . . they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill

Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric.”

David Feldman: It’s great.

Ralph Nader: Why?

David Feldman: Well, it’s saying that, everything is apparent to us but there’s nobody in the press or a politician who is presenting the problems to the people. Was that pretty much what she say?

Ralph Nader: Okay, connecting the facts. I mean now the Internet is full of bits of information, and you have to weave it into knowledge, judgment, wisdom. And most users never get to that level. They’re overwhelmed by bits of information - especially the young generation that thinks that because it can get any bit of information on the Internet, it doesn’t have to know anything, in terms of memory like, can you name the members of the Supreme Court or something like that? Now that I’ve got you on a positive attitude toward at least one poem, is it fair to say that there are other poems around, “The Man with the Hoe” for example, other poetry around that you might really like.

David Feldman: Honestly?

Ralph Nader: Yeah.

David Feldman: No.

Ralph Nader: But you do like this poem correct?

David Feldman: No.

Ralph Nader: Steve you’re going to have to help me out, otherwise I’m going to have to ask you the unanswered question, Steve do you like ...

Steve Skrovan: I'm still working on Rolex of the Wind.

Ralph Nader: Steve, do you like poetry?

David Feldman: I'm sorry I'm sort of ...

Ralph Nader: That just shows how unrehearsed this question is. You never saw it coming and you answered it honestly. But of course, you aborted its continuing elaboration that ends with the obvious but rarely asked question. Let me quickly shift to Steve.

David Feldman: Ralph I know we're pressed for time but let me give you some legal advice. Never ask a question that you don't know the answer to. I've told you this a hundred times and you don't listen.

Ralph Nader: Only if you're in deposition or in a court of law, which we are not. Steve do you like poetry?

Steve Skrovan: Yes sir.

Ralph Nader: Okay give me something ...

Steve Skrovan: I probably like it a little better than David but when you were asking him if he had a favorite poem, I think the one that sticks with me the most is John Donne's "No Man is An Island" poem.

Ralph Nader: Oh yes. Yes. Let me ask you the rarely asked question. After you ask people, do you like poetry, what kind of poetry, what are your favorite poems, what is it about poetry that reaches you, that touches you? The question I'm going to put to you is obvious, why did you like that poem?

Steve Skrovan: Well, because it's said in a very concise way that we are all interconnected, and it's said in a very original way. And the metaphor of an island is a very sharp and clear image that is - at least it was very accessible to me.

Ralph Nader: Could he have gotten you as far along with prose, if he did the prose?

Steve Skrovan: No.

Ralph Nader: No, why not.

Steve Skrovan: No, because it makes you think about it in a different way and it conjures a metaphor - an image - that is very powerful.

Ralph Nader: Okay, well I think we're going to wrap this one up. We don't have poets on this show. We don't have poet lovers. But I'll try to think of an even more obvious one next week as we continue our series: Obvious But Rarely Asked Questions."

Steve Skrovan: Thank you very much. All right so we'll be back next week. I guess I'll be back on the way to stand for that cross examination by Ralph, but now we're going to go to our next guest which I'm very excited about, David introduce our next guest.

David Feldman: In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

Ralph please welcome the host of the Laura Flanders Show, Laura Flanders.

Ralph Nader: You're a poet and you didn't know it. Welcome Laura to the show.

Laura Flanders: (Laughing) Oh, I love it. I feel like a lark but speaking above the bullets flying.

Ralph Nader: We were on a *Nation* cruise together for the *Nation Magazine*. And we made presentations with other lecturers and one of the stops of the ship was at the Grand Cayman Islands, which is known as one of the most notorious - or famous, depending on your point of view - tax havens for corporations in the world. So we walked over to this nondescript several story building, gray, called Ugland House. And Ugland House has registered inside that building over 25,000 corporations, many subsidiaries of Bank of America, Citi Group, AIG, others from other continents. And there are lawyers scurrying around, in and out, working a system where they can transfer their profits to Grand Cayman Islands - which has virtually no corporate income tax. And by registering one of their subsidiaries there, they can escape US Government or United Kingdom or German or Japanese taxation. Here we are with your camera in front of Ugland House, and you decide you want to go and ask the guard, "How do you go about registering a corporation that you have?"

Laura Flanders: Yeah it seemed only fair, Ralph, I mean for heaven's sake, there we were. I've been hearing about Grand Cayman all these years. All these other people have their companies registered there. I haven't paid my taxes yet this year. I was hoping I could quickly register my company in Grand Cayman while we were there for the day and do what people like Bank of America does. It turns out, not so easy. But I think you need to set the scene of yourself and your sister walking in your beautiful suit - full with tie, the whole shebang - through Grand Cayman. Everyone seemed to know where Ugland House was, which I thought was interesting to me. We arrived on this big cruise ship - less said about that the better. We start asking people, "Where is this place?" They can all point to it. And then to get there you're walking along a sort of sun blazed dust road with roosters walking around. I mean, you see what happens to a place where there are no taxes to speak of. People are not living high on the hog, but the corporations are getting away with murder. Anyway, I go in, the guy is helpful enough. He says "Well, there's maybe a lawyer you can talk to." But then I think they got wind of the whole thing. What do you think? They sat us down, they sat you down underneath there, a Christmas tree - and why they have Christmas trees of the pine variety in the Cayman Islands I'm not so sure. But they sat you down and maybe they began to get wind, you know began to get suspicious because sooner or later he was saying, I had to have an appointment, he didn't seemed sympathetic to the fact that my cruise ship was going to leave. And in the end of the day, we didn't get to talk to anyone, but we saw plenty of people going in and out, looked very busy.

Ralph Nader: Yeah definitely, and you did interview me on one of the main points of our going there which is to show the privileges and immunities that corporations have compared to real human beings. I mean there are no human beings that can put themselves in a situation where they create hundreds of children called subsidiaries; and they reduce their taxes on the parents by putting their subsidiaries in the Cayman Island and downloading data in a way where they can escape US taxation.

Laura Flanders: The other point that you made that was so powerful I think Ralph and will be so important that people can watch it on our show this week, the Laura Flanders Show, just go to our website is, we're in the middle of an election campaign where we're constantly, we in the US are constantly being told, there's not enough money for this for that, for anything that matters, for human well being and the future of the planet. There's not enough money. And the point that you made is there's plenty of money. It's sitting offshore in places like the Caymans. It's not doing people in the Caribbean any good, let's be clear. But it's sitting there and taken out of the coffers of our shared resource - mainly our tax revenue - and that's where the great sinkhole is. And these stories proliferate. Since you and I were on that cruise Ralph, there's been story after story. Apple recently borrowed money, this is a company with billions of dollars in its bank account all paid for, that's been the story. What did they do with all that cash and they have so much cash, why aren't they spending it? Billions of dollars of cash on hand in their accounts, they can't actually spend it because that would mean bringing it back into the United States. So what do they do? They borrow money in the States to reward their shareholders. This is what is the madness of leaving decisions about priorities and taxation and how we're going to share our resources to the market. The market will deliver? It can't.

Ralph Nader: Not only that, the questions are never asked in Presidential primaries or Senate primaries or House of Representative primary selections. They never ask on the major debates of the nominees. You would think that trillions of dollars, parked overseas - where do those trillions come from? They're your consumer dollars, your consumer dollars to Apple your consumer dollars to Bank of America. They're parking them overseas. They are not being put in any kind of productive activity. They're being put in tax savings, park them in Luxembourg, Ireland, Grand Cayman Islands, Barbados, Bermuda. Just dead money and when they ever are used they're used for stock buybacks in order to increase the stock option values of the top executives. They are not even sent - as they should be more - to the shareholders, people who have mutual funds or pension funds or individual shareholders and we're going to see all these visually on the Laura Flanders Show. Tell us how people can watch the Laura Flanders Show and why it's important, why it's important to watch it.

Laura Flanders: The show is dedicated to a very Ralphian Principle, which is the need to raise radical spirits. On our show, you will not find so much time spent talking about all the things that are impossible and can't be done. We really focus every week on people who are doing the impossible, right here right now. The show coming up you'll see Ralph walking with the roosters through Grand Cayman - did turn out to be impossible for me to register my company - but what the heck. But you'll also see with this week's show has people from Buffalo who are figuring out how to take control over their city back, for low income people who are living in gentrification vulnerable areas. You're going to see people talking about how they can make change in their communities and that's really what we do every week. You go to lauraflanders.com, there's a podcast if you like to listen rather than watch. And I urge you to check it out. Ralph we're really happy to have you and you responded beautifully when I called

early in the morning on this nice cruisy morning and said, “Hey how about going to Grand Cayman?”

Ralph Nader: We literally had to dodge the roosters everywhere.

Laura Flanders: It’s crazy, it’s a crazy thing.

Ralph Nader: You didn’t get any impression other than the tourist that people were very well off in the Grand Cayman Islands where over 25,000 corporations are registered. But just as a suggestion for your future show. I just read in Washington Post an amazing story about how a couple of teachers in the District of Columbia are teaching three and four year olds how to prepare food, cook food, and bake food, and its increasing their motivation to learn, and they feel proud of what they produce in the kitchen. Can you imagine that - three and four year olds? It just shows you the potential in this country.

Laura Flanders: Absolutely. The potential is there, you know it, we cover it every week on the Laura Flanders show. There’s nothing more frustrating than watching the campaign season play out in the usual way that it does, where people are told for a minute that they matter and then they’re told to go home and cede all their power to politicians. You don’t believe it. We don’t believe it. We cover it every week. And it’s just a reminder of how things get set up the way that they are to watch this election campaign play out. As you say, this critical issues not even discussed if you listen to the debates you would think that everything having to do with trade policy and jobs going overseas was all ancient history, happened in the 90s. It’s still happening every week, everyday and we can do something about it. But it’s hard to get that message from the mainstream media and the TV.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much Laura Flanders. We’re out of time, but Laura Flanders is an example of what immigrants bring to America, (chuckling) even though they’re from the United Kingdom. Laura Flanders, the Laura Flanders Show, watch it, benefit from it, emulate it and move through the country as if we the people are the sovereigns. Thank you, Laura.

Laura Flanders: We are. Lauraflanders.com. Thanks so much Ralph.

Ralph Nader: You’re welcome.

Steve Skrovan: All right, that was the delightful Laura Flanders and we have a jam packed show. We actually have time for a listener question, at least one listener question maybe two, let's get to it. David?

David Feldman: Steve Demuth writes, Ralph your guest last week claiming that elections are being stolen with manipulated electronic voting machines has little credibility. I'm an Ohio voter and know for a fact that most if not all voting machines in Ohio generate internal paper receipts when electronic ballots are cast. The voter can even easily inspect the receipt to make sure that the vote was correctly recorded. It's been that way for years. Conspiracy minded guest on to the program hurt the credibility of your message, I'm a Green Party member and it's embarrassing that your guest made the party look so bad, keep up the great work, Steve Demuth.

Ralph Nader: My comment is, most is not good enough. It's got to be all voting machines generate internal paper receipts. There's a little window here of doubt in what Steve was communicating by way of assuring voters that what Harvey Wasserman said was all false. And throughout the country there have been - whether they are premeditated or not - there have been real trouble with voting machines. Glitches, voter's votes lost, voter's votes changed to the opposite candidate on the ballot. So, you may not believe that its extensive as Harvey Wasserman claims it to be and remember he's willing to be cross-examined, so you send him your question directly and see how he answers. There's a real problem and there's a history of stolen elections for over 200 years in this country - as you know - throwing away paper ballots, having people vote who are in cemeteries and so forth. So, it's good to be very skeptical, especially since the corporations who own the software are invariably pro Republican, and they control the software of these publicly purchased voting machines. The one flaw that I didn't raise with Harvey was he said that these kinds of manipulations occur when the final tally is close, like 1% or less. And when you say "Why didn't they have these shenanigans with the Obama election in 2008," he said, "Because Obama was winning by much more than 1% and they couldn't pull it off." Well he claims that Kerry was winning by 4% and it was switched at midnight or sometime after the precincts closed to 2% in favor of George W. Bush, well that's not a close election, so there's a sort of prima facie contradiction there. You might want to ask Harvey Wasserman about that. At least he gets the discussion going. We do know there are a lot of shenanigans. They may not turn the election one way or the other in various states, Arizona, elsewhere, but they can turn a close election. So, we have to be eternally vigilant.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Steve Demuth for that question, let's take another question, this one is from Chris Brozyna who is from St. Louis and heard our show a few weeks back with Lois Gibbs who was talking about the dangerous landfill fire that was heading toward a nuclear waste dump, not funny at all. But he asked, what can a well-endowed former major city do to regain its forward momentum instead of spiraling into crime, declining population size, political fragmentation, other crisis? There's been a push to raise the minimum wage but with the

physical shape the city is in, and no coordination with neighboring counties that is just causing the businesses to move over to the extremely close county border.

Ralph Nader: Let's look at cities that were very corrupt in the early 20th Century, before a wave of urban reform swept the country from San Francisco to the East Coast. How did that happen? It happened for two reasons. One is: there were some new leaders of some wealth and some status who said, "We cannot continue living in a corrupt political machine city anymore." And so - whether it was noblesse oblige - these leaders then began to document the fraud, the corruption, the denial of proper municipal services, the hazards, the calamities to the people. And gradually, the people began marshaling their level of concern. And gradually sensing this, better candidates threw their hat and their ring to run for office, including mayor, town city council and the reform was accomplished. There are books written on this. It happened around 1920s about then; and it's good to learn from history. The second reply I would make is: if people start organizing in their neighborhood, where they know the neighbors, there's a mutual trust often, the neighborhoods will link up with other neighborhoods. The linked up neighborhoods will begin reshaping the political dynamics in whole sections of the city. They will begin pointing out problems like lead in drinking water, because it's very easy to get a kit now from Virginia Tech Professor Mark Edwards, who is sending kits that make it easy for you to test the drinking water from your faucets. Or, they may have problems with inadequate public transit -not frequent enough - you name it, potholes, all kinds of things. And it bubbles up from the bottom. When it bubbles up from the bottom, you get some people who are almost never in political activity to lead the way. And that connection changes the whole city. You got to look at history where people were very despairing and very discouraged, but they did make significant turn around. And then of course the cycle of neglect by the citizenry and the corrupt politicians and their crony capitalists and their wheeler dealers and their stadiums and ballparks funded by taxpayer money for these sports billionaires, while there aren't enough recreational facilities in local neighborhoods for the young and middle aged and older alike to enjoy participatory sports at their own pace. All these things began coming together. And so, it all starts with a conversation, two people, four, eight, 16 living rooms and then it becomes a high school auditorium, elementary school auditorium meeting, and you're on your way. It just takes 1% of a given neighborhood stepping forward actively, representing the concerns of the neighborhood and the support of the neighbors to start things heading toward corrections.

Steve Skrovan: Well thank you for the question Chris and thank you all for your questions. Keep them coming either on Ralph's Facebook page or on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour websites. That's our show. We got through it. A lot of stuff. I want to thank our guests today Bill Curry, political columnist at Salon. For more of Bill's insights, go to salon.com and thank you to Laura Flanders from the Laura Flanders Show, which can be downloaded from iTunes and Stitcher. Just like us. Go to lauraflanders.com.

David Feldman: A transcript of this episode will be posted on ralphnaderradiohour.com.

Steve Skrovan: For Ralph's weekly blog, go to nader.org. For more for Russell Mohkiber go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

David Feldman: Remember to visit the country's only law museum, the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut go to tortmuseum.org.

Steve Skrovan: The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran.

David Feldman: Our executive producers Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, talk to you later Mr. Ralph Nader.

Ralph Nader: Well, thank you very much Steve and David and thank you listeners. Some of the listeners may want to send David Feldman a poem of their choice to become literate in poetry. How about that David?

David Feldman: That sounds great.

[Audio Ends]