

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 346 TRANSCRIPT

Steve Skrovan: It's the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Rader 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, everybody.

Steve Skrovan: Martin Luther King Jr.'s elderly cousin was recently denied her right to vote. She was falsely accused of moving from the county she was registered to vote in, and this wasn't a mistake. She was just one over 198,000 voters purged from the voter rolls in Georgia by Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. Our first guest is going to try to right these wrongs. Journalist Greg Palast's Investigative Fund wrote a letter to the Secretary of State demanding he return these voters to the registration rolls before the election. What Georgia is doing is just one of the many examples of voter suppression happening this election season. Greg Palast is back to talk to us about voting rights and fill us in on what's happening right now.

And we are less than two weeks away from the election, if you haven't heard. And there's been a lot of money spent on TV ads, \$100 million of it on the Democratic Party side alone, trying to convince John Q. Public not to vote for the reality star who spouts QAnon conspiracy theories. Will it work? Is that money well spent? To help us answer those questions, we welcome back founder of North Woods Advertising, Bill Hillsman. He's going to break down the late-stage advertising strategies of both the Biden and Trump campaigns. In between, we will as always take some time to check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russel Mokhiber. But first, let's talk about what the Republican Party is doing to suppress the vote. David?

David Feldman: Greg Palast is an economist and financial investigator turned journalist. He is known for his investigative reports for BBC [British Broadcasting Corp], *the Guardian* and *Rolling Stone* [magazine]. Mr. Palast was instrumental in exposing historic controversies such as the Shoreham Nuclear Power Station Project, Exxon Valdez, the 2000 U.S. presidential election

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and Deepwater Horizon. He is the author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. And his latest book [also a film] is *How Trump Stole 2020: The Hunt for America's Vanished Voters*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*, Greg Palast.

Greg Palast: It's always great to be with you again.

Ralph Nader: Greg, let's try something different this time because our steady listeners heard you on prior occasions outline all the various horrors of blocking people from voting, blocking the accurate counting from voting and so forth. What I want you to do is I'm going to give you the different categories of obstruction of voters and then you tell me what's being done about it after you have a very brief definition of the obstruction. So let's start with purging voters. What is it quickly and what is being done on the ground to give people a sense of optimism?

Greg Palast: Well, as you know, there's a TV show called *The Purge* where once a year you can kill anyone you want. We have a version of it in the U.S. in reality called the purge, which is done by these partisan political officials called secretaries of state. Once a year, they can literally wipe off the voter rolls those voters they think shouldn't vote. And not surprisingly, these hacks tend to remove people of color where they can, where Republicans control the state. So for example, in Georgia, as you just heard, the Secretary of State [Raffensperger] removed 198,000 voters illegally on false information. Almost all of them [were] black voters, young voters, including Martin Luther King's 92-year-old cousin. That report, which I did, [with] my investigators, [that] was put out by the ACLU. The one optimistic thing is that the word is getting out in Georgia, which is a swing state with two [US] Senate seats on the line, which could flip the Senate. The Secretary of State, a Republican hack, is not putting those 198,000 people back. We've threatened them legally, but it is motivating people to check their registrations and get out to the polls. But in other states, there's some good news. In Wisconsin, I did a report showing that nearly 100,000 people were facing a wrongful purge. There is an African-American Lieutenant Governor activist [Mandela Barnes] who brought me into the state and the board of elections is refusing to remove these voters--the bipartisan board of election. So, you know, there is integrity.

Ralph Nader: Okay. Let's go a little deeper here. People are purged if they've pass away; people are purged if they haven't voted in the last two elections; people are purged if they move their address. Now, how are people unpurging themselves with the help of citizen reform groups on the ground?

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Greg Palast: Okay. So we've had a lot of groups from the ACLU; mainly Black Voters Matter has been out there, and we've been pushing. And in fact, you know, actually probably the most effective thing we've had is that Leonardo DiCaprio hosted my PSA [Public Service Announcement] on "Lookout if you're purged and check-in" and 5 million people have seen that one-minute film go to Leonardo DiCaprio's Instagram.

Ralph Nader: Well, go ahead. Tell us how you can un purge yourself.

Greg Palast: Yes. So wait, so you un purge yourself, first of all, in those states where you can still check your registration, and that includes, for example, Michigan, California; [in], many, many states, the registration is still open, or you can even register on election day including Wisconsin. So you can un purge yourself simply by checking your registration [and], re-registering online if you can. Yesterday was the last day in Michigan for online, but you can register [there] in person. So people, if you know that you are purged, this is the hardest thing to do; check your registration at vote.org, or go to gregpalast.com [where] we have links, and re-register, or in those states where you can, in swing states like Michigan and Wisconsin, go in and bring your ID and proof of address; not easy. And by the way, Ralph, yes, most people don't understand if ~~it~~ you miss a couple of federal elections, like a midterm and a general, you could lose your vote, not because... you're allowed not to vote in America. You can vote and not vote; that's your choice as a citizen. What they're saying is if you didn't show up, it means you've moved. And that's one of the things we've been investigating and challenging. Not voting doesn't mean you've moved.

Ralph Nader: Setting aside why there aren't criminal prosecutions of the secretary of states and other officials who are engaging really in the ultimate constitutional crime, and putting that aside, that we don't have a national discussion on the Australian system where it becomes a universal legal duty to vote, and you can vote for none of the above or write-in and take care of the civil liberties problems, but we'd have to go into the weeds here. One of the most malicious ways of removing somebody's vote is to say that their signature on an absentee ballot doesn't match the signature that was on something years ago. And I lost 5,000 petition signatures that was assembled by a woman in Toledo, Ohio [expending] tremendous energy. And [when] she went to file them they said your signature, which you have to have on every sheet, at age 52 doesn't match the signature you had when you registered first at age 21. Now people have different signatures all the time. It isn't like a fingerprint. They just have different signatures, or their hand moves in one way or another. And this is so malicious. How do you correct that? Who's going to correct that one?

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Greg Palast: Okay, so let's get some numbers in here. In 2016, 141,000 mail-in ballots were thrown out because someone challenged a signature. Now, by the way, Ralph, we don't have 141,000 expert forgers in America. Not one single voter was arrested for this crime. Remember the idea is to prevent someone from stealing your ballot, voting and signing your name.

Ralph Nader: Good point.

Greg Palast: There's no proof that anyone has done this, but yet all some schmuck in a Boogaloo Hawaiian shirt has to do is say, "I don't like that signature" and you've just lost your vote. And in states like Texas, you're not even allowed to correct it. So how do you correct it? Number one, if you haven't asked for a mail-in ballot yet, don't. It's too easy to get challenged. Like I say, 141,000 just on signature. I know it's not easy. Go in early with your mask and your gloves and your sanitizer, and maybe a couple of lawyers with you. But try to avoid mailing in your ballot. And I'll tell you why. 100,000 people lost their vote for postage due. In New York, the Democratic Party—sorry guys, to tell you this—they challenged 24,000 ballots because there was no postmark on those ballots because the post office does not automatically postmark a pre-stamped ballot.

Ralph Nader: Okay. What about change of residence? That's the way they block people. They go down the corridor and change their apartment number and they say, "Oh, you changed your residence. You can't vote."

Greg Palast: Yes. That's what they were trying to do in, for example, in Wisconsin, if you moved at all. But federal law is are pretty damn clear, Ralph. If you moved within your "jurisdiction" that that means in places like Georgia, they say it's the county, or the city in Wisconsin. If you move within your building, and we literally spoke to people who moved within their building; one guy moved two doors down, and they lost their vote, which is illegal. And you know why they do this, Ralph? Because who moves? Students move, dorm room to dorm room, couch to couch. Low-income people [move]; renters move quite a bit often within their building or down the street. So they know who they're removing. They're removing low-income voters, young voters.

Ralph Nader: So let's talk about students. There's a big article recently in *the New York Times* that the student vote is going to be diminished because of COVID-19, students studying by

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remote, not being in a locale. Can you give us a quick description of how serious that is and who is going to disadvantage and what states?

Greg Palast: Well, I just spoke to student PeoQuo of the University of Madison. For example, he moved two doors down, lost his vote. There are students who are sent away because of COVID. For example, 182,000 University of Wisconsin students, many of them out of state, have gone home, but their registration address, their voting addresses are in Madison, Wisconsin, or in Milwaukee, and they need a witness signature. They also need to mail in a copy of their ID, a photo state ID, and guess what? Scott Walker and the Republican legislature in Wisconsin said, “If you use a student ID from the University of Wisconsin, it has to be a special one.” Hardly anyone has it, so [if] you send them the wrong ID photo, you can lose your vote there too. And it's really killed students, because then they have to go in and get a special ID in an office that isn't even open. So they're playing these games. Texas, the same thing; you can't use a University of Texas ID, but you can, you know, use your concealed carry gun permit ID to vote.

Ralph Nader: Let's continue with this description of the slow motion coup d'état. It always amazes me how people don't get really indignant on this. I mean, you know, throw them an ethnic slur or gender slur or a racial slur, and they'll really climb up the wall and denounce it. But they don't really get angry [about this]; it's just beyond belief. In American history, at this point, with the civil rights laws being enacted, all kinds of efforts against Jim Crow, women having the right to vote being part of the Constitution now, and these corporate lawyers for these Republican politicians—it's almost always Republican politicians—are just carving out the heart of our democracy, which is the sovereign right to vote. So tell us what do you think the worst three states are in the country in terms of obstructing the right to vote, and how much of it is tilted definitely against people who would vote Democrat?

Greg Palast: I would say without question: Georgia, Ohio, and Michigan at this moment. Now what's unusual about Michigan, you know, you expect it in Georgia [because] you've got these right-wing Republican conservatives. And they know in a state which the census should show... of course a census had been fixed too, by the way, Ralph; that's another discussion. But if the census is honest, Georgia is now a white minority state. It should be a solid blue state. The polls are showing the Democrats sweeping the presidential line and Senate, but yet they are massively removing voters. They are also, you know, they have what's called an exact-match rule. So if you are voting, you have to have [an] ID which matches exactly. So for example, if your name is Gabriel García Márquez, you better have the registered—remember that your ID, if it has accent marks or misses the hyphen or has the hyphen, you can lose your vote because it's not an “exact match” on your ID.

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And you're right. There's not enough indignation here. And who doesn't have IDs? And we have, by the way, a similar ID law, for example, in Wisconsin, that was left over from the Republican administration where again, you have to have a state photo ID. Well, who doesn't have a driver's license? People who don't drive, Ralph, people [who] don't have a car because they live in urban areas and apartment buildings. University of Wisconsin said, "the ID law knocked out over 50,000 voters who really wanted to vote, who are African-American, who were blocked from voting in '16. That swung the state to Donald Trump. That's why Agent Orange is in the White House because of these games.

Ralph Nader: Or another hurdle is ex-felons. People [who] paid their debt to society. They come out, and in some states, they're still blocked from voting. Tell us the situation in Florida and in what other states are they blocked from voting?

Greg Palast: Well, here's the crazy thing. There's no state left in America which has that old Ku Klux Klan law, and it was written by the Ku Klux Klan, that ex-felons can never vote that they lose their citizenship. We're not Saudi Arabia or Red China. You don't lose your citizenship for crime anymore. However, they use all kinds of tricks. You can't be serving time or be literally incarcerated and vote if it's a felony crime in almost every state. The problem is, for example, in lots of states like Georgia and places like Colorado, they've been removing so-called ex-cons who aren't ex-cons. That's how George Bush became president. This is not something that Donald Trump invented.

Ralph Nader: You mean ex-cons who are not ex-cons?

Greg Palast: That's right. One thing that we haven't been talking about in the fight over whether ex-con should vote is that most of these lists are dead wrong. And so, for example, in Florida, in 2000, when I was with *The Guardian* and BBC, I got the list of these so-called ex-cons, 58,000 of them. Almost all of them black, not guessing, because it says BLA next to their names on those voter registration forms for black. And I went through the list and not one—not a single one, Ralph, was an illegal voter--not one!

Ralph Nader: Yeah, they just had similar names, that's all.

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Greg Palast: That's right. So like for example, Willy Steam, a Gulf war veteran, African-American takes his five-year-old son with him to vote, to show him how, you know, here's what Martin Luther King did for us; we won the vote and they said, "You can't vote; you're a felon." And his five-year-old son is saying, "Daddy, what's a felon?" And he has never gotten a parking ticket. His only crime was voting while black. Now I looked him up. Willy Steam, the African-American in Florida, was removed because a guy named Willie O. Steam, a white guy, was convicted in Ohio. But this happens all over the country. In fact, I caught the Republican secretary of state of Colorado years ago when they... and now it's a Democrat. But when they had a Republican, she removed 50,000 so-called ex-con voters, and there is no law in Colorado to block ex-cons from voting.

Ralph Nader: What you're saying, Greg, you want to sum it up, is we've got a situation now where in Republican-dominated states, politically [with] governor, secretary of state, et cetera, the Democrats have to win by either 51%, 52%.

Greg Palast: Yeah. Forget 51%; you've got to win by 56%, 55%. But the good news is that you can win if you get the 55. And they can't steal all the votes all the time. So that should motivate people. I have to say that I had a disagreement; we spoke with Barack Obama when I was at the *Rolling Stone*, and he said, he knew all about it. He had down to the details of the vote suppression; he didn't say much about it. He said the way to deal with it is they steal--we said, you know, they stole 5.8 million votes from you. He said, "Well, that's why I brought in 9 million more voters." So, you could overwhelm the steal. Now that's not comforting; that's not democracy.

Ralph Nader: You point to Barack Obama and the Democrats. You think the Democrats are doing enough about this? They've been on notice for years. You've written about it for years. They've lost elections for years because of vote stealing and vote suppression. So here we are, let's say it's two years before now. Have they done what you think they should do? And if not, why not? Apart from going after the Electoral College, which makes all this vote stealing so decisive, you think they've done what they should be doing? If not, what should they have been doing?

Greg Palast: Okay. Two things let's be straight about it. There's two Democratic Parties. There's white Democrats and nonwhite Democrats. As I said, in Wisconsin, we had an African-American lieutenant governor, a new Democrat, who pushed. The state brought me in and they stopped the purge. What about in swing state Michigan? You have the three white women who took over, Democrats who took over the government in Michigan. You'd say, well, that's going to reverse

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all the trickery that gave Trump the surprise Michigan win in '16. The GOP removed 313,000 voters on the most bogus basis. My experts have gone through the list and they said, "You've got 152,000 people illegally removed. And we posted the names of people and said, please re-register. Do you know that I got a threat from the Democratic Attorney General [Dana Nessel] saying, "Don't tell people about these purges. You're discouraging them from voting". And my response was, you know, "If they're purged from the voter rolls, Madame Attorney General, they can't vote." No, the Democrats' position is that don't tell people that there's any problem with voting. Tell people like Joe Biden did during the debate, "Oh, all your mail-in votes will be counted. Don't worry." Well, you know, this don't-worry-be-happy position of the Democratic Party, [i.e.,] don't mention vote suppression; don't mention the difficulty voting; don't mention problems with mail-in ballots; don't mention the purge. Well, ask President Hillary Clinton how this has worked out. It hasn't. Ask President Al Gore how this has worked out. And unfortunately, they're throwing black voters, Asian-American voters, young voters under the bus.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. I mean, I can understand their concern because it takes very little to discourage a lot of voters from voting. You know, because "It's not going to count anyway; I got to go meet my friend down the street and talk about the Board of Education problem" or something, you know.

Greg Palast: You know what? I got to tell you that, Ralph, I was in Georgia, as you said, when Martin Luther... I was with Martin Luther King's 92-year-old cousin when she was, to my surprise, and every ...well, it wasn't to my surprise, because I had her name on the list. She was thrown out of the polling station on her 50th year of voting at the same place. Now I got to tell you something. When I was in Georgia in '18, the fact that they were trying to steal the vote and Stacey Abrams, who is of course African-American, became the first Democratic candidate for governor that I've ever heard, made the vote s² theft her number one issue--they're stealing our votes; they're stealing our votes. Rather than discourage people, they had a massive record turnout. I saw signs that said "This precinct 100% voted" in African-American areas. Instead of discouraging people, it got people whipped up, riled up. And by the way, I saw this in Mexico too, with AMLO [Andrés Manuel López Obrador] who crushed the opposition in '18 by making "count every ballot" his number one campaign point.

Ralph Nader: Okay. This is very encouraging if it's widespread. You think a lot of people are taking this 'they're going to try to stop me from voting' personally and redoubling their determination to go vote either in person or by ballot? You think that's a widespread situation in Wisconsin and Michigan and the so-called swing states?

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Greg Palast: Yes. Because I see, for example, Black Voters Matter especially has been probably the group at the forefront and Reverend Jackson with Rainbow PUSH. We've had some people right out on the front line saying, "They're stealing your vote that we bled for."

Ralph Nader: Why aren't the Democrats headlining Jesse Jackson more? He's the greatest vote getter-out in modern American history. I don't read much about their effort to support him or enlist him.

Greg Palast: No, there isn't. Unfortunately, he's being, you know, look, I'm going to be very blunt. The Democratic Party really has a split with African-American activists who are saying, "We've got to make a point; number one, start reversing these purges. You know, I've asked the Republican attorney general, not only asked, we made a legal demand on the Republican attorney general, to return 198,000 votes identified by me and the ACLU as wrongly purged, mostly African-Americans--put them back on the rolls. Well, okay. I didn't expect a lot of joy from that guy, because he'll lose his seat and the Republicans will get wiped off the map in Georgia. But what is shocking and frightening and unfortunate to me is that in Michigan, the Democratic attorney general is refusing to return to the voter rolls the people removed illegally, wrongly by her GOP predecessor. They don't want to deal with the issue of the purge. And maybe, you know, now I'm speculating, I admit, maybe there's just a fear of a black party. Remember that if every African-American is allowed to vote in Michigan, the black vote in Detroit will take over the Democratic Party and you will have a very different party.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. People said that to me. You're right. Let's ask another question. A ballpark estimate, Greg Palast. Assume X number of votes are being obstructed or have been obstructed, all the pushback by Black Votes Matter and all the citizen groups all over. How much are they going to recover of that? 20%, 30, 40, 50?

Greg Palast: I don't know. I'm a good investigative reporter, but I'm a bad speculator, but I am a statistician as well. And I can tell you that in 2016, 5.8 million ballots were cast and never counted. By the way, that's an official number from the EAC [Election Assistance Commission], from our federal agency; 5.8 million votes cast not counted. Like for example, 925,000 provisional ballots thrown in the garbage. Now how many can be recovered? I think a tremendous amount. I mean, I saw the operations of both the Abrams's campaign and Black Votes Matter; I have seen some activist groups out there. This time, I don't know what the percentage of recovery is, but it's going to be literally millions of votes have been saved. But I'm just very worried with this election, because I've never seen the purge machine in such high gear. Plus I'm extremely concerned about this massive mail-in vote, and the ease with which in

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America, we allow people to challenge and disqualify mail-in ballots. According to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], 22%, [i.e.,] one in 5 million mail-in ballots, is never counted.

Ralph Nader: Well, listen to this--two things: One is what likelihood will there be of recounts, because if the elections that close, state law often says, if it's within, you know, half of 1%, you've got to have a recount after the election. So give us your idea on that. And the second is, will the kind of pushback that's going on result in any criminal prosecutions in any state after the election? Two points: one/two.

Greg Palast: Okay. I'm going to go in reverse. Busting the bad guys, busting the ballot bandits, not a chance; almost never happens. Because if you succeed, remember the wonderful thing about stealing an election, it's the perfect crime, because you've stolen the police department--the voting police, right? The Justice Department, if it's national, and your attorneys general. So you take over basically the vote thieves.

Ralph Nader: What if the election puts a good secretary of state in charge, a new one, going after the crook who preceded him/her?

Greg Palast: I don't want to sound like a racist, but if it's a white secretary of state, don't expect much, as we saw in Michigan.

Ralph Nader: Well, is there a criminal penalty in any of these election laws to begin with?

Greg Palast: Yeah, there really are. I mean, you read the National Voter Registration Act, the Voting Rights Act, which is still there and still has its criminal positions. And by the way, the Part B, part two of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution says, if you take away black people's votes, or if you illegally remove voters, you're supposed to lose electoral votes and congressional seats. You know, it's never been enforced. Martin Luther King demanded the enforcement of that provision, and you know, even Lyndon Johnson wouldn't budge on that.

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Ralph Nader: Well, you know, without the Electoral College, we wouldn't have been having this conversation. So why don't the Democrats constantly talk about getting rid of it or blocking it with the National Popular Vote, vote.org movement at the state level, which is already over half of the Electoral College votes; it's on his way to succeeding. Why don't they talk about it? I mean, it's like they're fighting all these lethal skirmishes that could decide whether they're going to win or lose in one swing state after another. And they don't keep this Electoral College monster, this iron collar around their throat before the public [to] build public opinion against it.

Greg Palast: Well, a couple of decades ago, believe it or not, we came very close to eliminating the Electoral College, but now with the states so split red-blue, it's murder. And of course, the Democrats are afraid of bringing up an issue that they are afraid will "scare off" white voters. You know, again, we're dealing with... you keep mentioning the Democrats. Look, don't expect the Democrats to save your vote, to fight for your vote. That's not what they do; okay? Martin Luther King was not part of the Democratic Party; neither were you. You brought up these issues.

Ralph Nader: Well, if you were a Democrat Party now, what would you do in the next 10 days to get more votes? Either by issues or strategy, or on-the-ground, transportation to the polls. What would you do? Quickly.

Greg Palast: Number one, I would notify everyone who has been purged from the voter rolls. You have 16, according to Brennan Center and the federal government, 16.7 million people have been yanked off the voter rolls and very few of them know it. [So] they're going to show up and be unable to vote. They should warn people where they can re-register to do so. And in states where you can re-register on the day, they should be preparing people, because if you're going to wait five hours in line and told "you have the wrong ID to vote; you're not registered, but you can't now re-register" that's going to be a big problem. We're talking hundreds of thousands of people that could be restored to the voter rolls if they're given the information and they are warned. And I tell everyone vote early because if you have a problem, you learn about it. So they should promote not mail-in voting, but voting early. And during the weekday, those places are empty.

Ralph Nader: Well, one way to get people to vote is millions of people are underpaid in this country [with] frozen minimum wage. You just say, "Go vote for a raise, because we're going to give you 15 bucks an hour. The House has already passed it in Congress. Just go vote for a raise." Do you think the huge early turnout, which is now over 33 million votes, the huge early turnout augurs well for who? The Democrats or Republicans?

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Greg Palast: Well, there's no question, an early, early voting, massive early voting always helps the Democrats. The more people vote, the better it is for Democrats. But the thing is, is that people can vote or submit ballots--remember, they're talking about the ballots submitted; they use the term "counted". That just means that they got it and they marked it that as being received. Then there's tallied, meaning that they actually count the vote and add it to the Biden pile or the Trump pile. And we're going to lose 22% of those votes. Hell, the Democratic Party challenged every vote with scotch tape on it that was mailed in; that was hundreds of ballots.

Ralph Nader: Democrat or Republican?

Greg Palast: No, that was the Democrats in New York. They flipped in fact a congressional seat by challenging 24,000 mail-in ballots; that's the Democrats. So you can imagine what the "boogaloo bois" are going to do. Forget the Republican Party.

Ralph Nader: Greg, you're going to spend years in the weeds here, winning a little, losing a little, going crazy, being irritated, and upset. Take the lead from the Australian system, universal voting as a duty, period--one, just like jury duty. And if people don't like the candidates, they can vote, write-in whoever they want, or they can vote binding none of the above. You gotta get into that; otherwise, you're just going to be hitting windmills here.

Greg Palast: Absolutely.

Ralph Nader: You're going to be with right-wing judges. We're out of time, Greg. Thank you very much. Give us your website again and the book that should be a best seller but isn't.

Greg Palast: Well, it's a best seller; it's just not on the list. It's called *How Trump Stole 2020*. Don't worry. It's a warning, not a prediction. *How Trump Stole 2020*. And by the way, if you go to gregpalast.com, it is, as of today, available as a [free audio book download](#) at gregpalast.com. G-R-E-G-P-A-L-A-S-T.com, and stay tuned for the next two weeks where we give you reports on how to save your vote and who is stealing it.

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Ralph Nader: Well, let's hope history doesn't write that the COVID-19, Trump's virus and his bungling and spreading of it, because he didn't act soon enough, and he has never acted scientifically enough, doesn't come back to help him and the Republicans by keeping hundreds of thousands of students from voting and many others because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Greg Palast: Absolutely. This is a big problem because, for example, that's one of the reasons we have long lines because we don't have the poll workers. By the way, if you're young enough and healthy enough, please sign up to be a poll worker.

Ralph Nader: That's very important, young people. Sign up to be a poll worker, because a lot of the elderly volunteers are too frightened to go to the polls because they're excessively vulnerable to the COVID-19. Stand up for the elderly people who volunteered for decades and take their place. Thank you very much, Greg.

Greg Palast: You're the best. Let's stay in touch on this.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with journalist Greg Palast, author of *How Trump Stole 2020: The Hunt for America's Vanished Voters*. We will link to his book at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Now let's take a short break. When we return, Bill Hillsman of North Woods Advertising is going to help us analyze the strategies behind the ad buys of both the Biden and Trump campaigns. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter, Morning Minute for Thursday, October 15, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger isn't satisfied that the fixes for Boeing's 737 MAX, proposed by the Federal Aviation Administration are enough. In an interview with *the Seattle Times*, the pilot said that even if the FAA ungrounds the jet next month as expected, additional modifications are needed as soon as possible to improve the plane's crew-alerting system and add a third check on the jet's angle of attack data. "I'm not going to say, 'We're done, good enough, move on,'" Sullenberger said. "People are going to fly on it, and I will probably be one of them," he said. "The updated MAX will probably be as safe as the (previous

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model) 737 NG when they are done with it. But it's not as good as it should be." For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Joe Biden's campaign is advertising heavily on shows like *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy*. These shows are popular among older people and Biden's campaign is trying to appeal to older voters. Sure enough, it seems to be working in red-leaning states, where there has been movement from white people over fifty-five. Our next guest will tell us more about the political advertising strategies of both campaigns. David?

David Feldman: Bill Hillsman is a writer and an expert on independent voters. He's the founder and CEO of North Woods Advertising in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He ran award-winning political advertising campaigns for Senator Paul Wellstone, Governor Jesse Ventura, and our very own, Ralph Nader's presidential campaign. North Woods Advertising has won numerous awards for creativity in advertising, including an Emmy and multiple Pollie Awards. Mr. Hillsman authored the book *Run The Other Way: Fixing the Two-Party System, One Campaign at a Time*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*, Bill Hillsman.

Bill Hillsman: Hey, everybody.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. Welcome, Bill. You know, the Democrats are pouring in record amounts of money in national and local- and state-targeted television ads. I often wonder if some of that money was used to transport voters who have trouble getting to the polls, or other get-out-the-vote in neighborhoods would register more results for them. But anyway, I have questions like a lot of other people about how effective these ads are, not only technically, but whether they're headlining raising the minimum wage to a livable wage, or dealing with the sexual- predation record of Trump against women, or just addressing, in specific ways, people's widespread anxiety, dread and fear, which transcends red and blue states. So, we've collected some of these ads and Steve Skrovan is going to be sort of the MC and describe them and have you comment on them, and make any proposals you might make as to what would be new, very effective radio and TV ads.

Steve Skrovan: All right, very good. The first one we're going to play for you. And I understand, you know, we're on radio here, so you're not going to see the images. So this first one, we're going to play is titled "Flex Your Power", and the speaker you're going to hear is Ryan Shazier

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who is a former linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers. And it seems to echo what we were just speaking [about] with Greg Palast. It's all about voting. So here you go.

Ryan Shazier: I'm Ryan Shazier. In 2016, I didn't vote. I didn't think it mattered. I won't make that mistake again. One thing I learned in life; you have to make the most of every opportunity you get. Right now, you have the opportunity to make positive change in your community by voting. When you vote, you use your voice and you flex your power to make a change. You want change? Go vote. Use your power.

Joe Biden: I'm Joe Biden. And I approve this message.

Steve Skrovan: All right, Bill, what do you think of that?

Bill Hillsman: I think it's a pretty good ad. I mean, in a macro sense, the Biden campaign has so much money right now [that] they can afford to do a really good job in all of the swing states, which is where presidential campaigns normally concentrate all their dollars, and they can start advertising on a national basis. National TV ads, especially on sports programming and event programming, are really cost-efficient buys for presidential campaigns, because everybody in the nation has a vote. But mostly in recent years, presidential campaigns have been limited to a small number of swing states because of the Electoral College vote. And Biden is in a very unique position where he can now afford to compete very well in swing states; he can compete very well on a national basis, and he can expand the map to go into some traditionally Republican states and make Trump spend resources there.

Steve Skrovan: And in all of these ads, they are surrogates speaking for him, which [in] the three that we're going to show you, it's never Joe Biden speaking for himself except at the end where he approves the message.

Bill Hillsman: Also, in this particular ad, it's very much pointed at Pennsylvania. It's a former linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers. He got a bad break in his career. He had a horrendous injury on the field, and he's sending the message to sports fans, to young people, that you have to take advantage of the moment, that you have to do things in the moment, because you don't know what the future is going to hold. So that's an extremely effective ad for Pennsylvania, and I

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think it's also an extremely effective ad for traditional groups that you would think would be more in Trump's camp—white males, sports fans, et cetera, et cetera.

Steve Skrovan: But that's a good segue into this next ad, which is from a U.S. Army veteran. And this one is called “Worth Fighting For”.

U.S. Army Veteran: I served five years. When I first got back, I'm looking for snipers; I'm looking for IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. That PTSD was compounded by the fact that I was sick. Essentially, the muscles are evaporating off my body. My friends, they are not “suckers.” I didn't join the United States Army for me. I joined because I love this nation. I believe Joe Biden knows what makes this country worth fighting for. He would do everything he possibly can do for our country and for their families.

Joe Biden: I'm Joe Biden. And I approve this message.

Steve Skrovan: So how about that one, Bill?

Bill Hillsman: That soldier is also from Pennsylvania. So again, it's a very effective ad in Pennsylvania. But once more, Biden's campaign has started to adopt the tactics that Republicans have used for so long. Republicans realized a long time ago that you don't necessarily attack your opponent on their weaknesses; you attack them on their strengths. And what we're starting to see with Biden's campaign is he's doing that to Trump. So what he's now doing is he's competing for voters that the Trump campaign were basically taken for granted. Trump was making the very patriotic pitch--he's the commander in chief; he figures the military families and people that are interested in the military are automatically going to vote for him. But this is a very patriotic commercial and it's aimed at those particular voters. And it really takes Trump to task for calling people who have fought and died for our country “suckers”.

Ralph Nader: But it doesn't say so.

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Bill Hillsman: It doesn't say so directly; you're correct. But he does reference it in what the soldier says. He says that he and his friends are not suckers. And so, you're right. It's not as direct as it probably should be. But for the people who understand this and who understand what Trump has said about enlisted military, the message comes across.

Steve Skrovan: And in this next one, another surrogate, and obviously none of these are issue-oriented; it's all kind of character-oriented, and people being from these different walks of life endorsing Joe Biden. This next one is actually a college student and a football player. His name is Tristen Vance.

Tristen Vance: My name is Tristen Vance. I'm a college student as well as a football player here in Arizona. I've been working my whole life towards the dream to play professionally. Missing this season puts those dreams in jeopardy. Trump's failure of leadership is why we can't play right now. I don't blame President Trump for the virus, but I 100% blame him for the response to the virus. We need a leader who is going to look out for all of us to be constructed and build. I trust Joe Biden to do that.

Joe Biden: I'm Joe Biden. And I approve this message.

Steve Skrovan: So that was from Arizona,

Bill Hillsman: Right. That's a college student from Arizona who is basically saying to sports fans across the country, particularly college football fans that, you know, we are having trouble being able to play, being able to make a living after college because of the way Trump has handled the coronavirus. I think it was a relief pitcher for one of the major league baseball teams that said, "Sports is actually like the dessert that we get. It's the reward that we get for having a functional society." And there's a lot of truth to that. You know, if we had responded to this coronavirus pandemic differently, who's to say how much easier it would have been for players to get back on the field, for this to be under control, et cetera, et cetera. So I think that's an effective ad. It's an effective ad in Arizona. It's an effective ad in the groups that it's trying to talk to and take Trump to task on his handling of the coronavirus.

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Ralph Nader: Aren't you bothered that so far, this doesn't seem to be any specific issues like living wage or the various economic-security things that are on people's minds?

Bill Hillsman: No, you're right about that, Ralph. But these are very, very surgical types of ads that they're running right now. They're really going into certain areas of the country and they're going after certain voter groups that should be strengths for Trump. So the ads themselves, you know, they're not tremendous. They're not going to make everybody talk about it to all their friends and family.

Ralph Nader: Bill, It's the same approach that they lost on in prior elections. They're trying to spin off a few right-of-center voters, and they're not trying to get out the huge number of non-voters that are left of center.

Bill Hillsman: If you're saying they're taking for granted the voters that they believe they already have in their camp; I think that's true. They are taking those voters for granted. They've decided to expand the field. They've decided to attack Trump on some of his strengths. Whether that's going to work or not, I don't know. From an advertiser's perspective though, it seems to make some sense, based primarily on just how much money he has. He's in a really unique position.

Steve Skrovan: All right, well, this next ad, we're going to now turn to the Trump approach. And I have to explain a little bit of the visual on this one. This one is just a visual of a big pink piggy bank. And the sound you're going to hear is that piggy bank cracking open from an anvil with a picture of Joe Biden's face on it. So, with that in mind, we're going to play this ad, which is entitled "Joe Biden Wants Your Money".

Male Voiceover 1: [music plays] "President Trump's tax cuts helped families save \$2,000 a year, but in comes, Joe Biden's tax plan; four out of five Americans will have their taxes raised. Not cool. Don't vote for Biden. Your taxes will go up."

Bill Hillsman: Well, I don't quite know what to say. It's one of the worst presidential campaign ads I've seen in 20 years; it's so amateurish and poorly done. There are high-school students, and there are middle-school students that could do a better commercial than this one.

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Ralph Nader: Why?

Bill Hillsman: There's no energy to the ad, whatsoever. The voiceover is maybe the worst voiceover I've ever heard in a political ad. And I really, when it was sent to me to preview, I really thought this can't be a real ad from the Trump campaign. It doesn't have the disclaimer on it. I don't know how it ever got on the air; it is just that bad. But apparently, it's a real ad because didn't you guys say it was on his website?

Ralph Nader: Why do you think specifically it's a bad ad? Other than the voiceover.

Bill Hillsman: Well, but that's a big part of it. I mean, there's no energy to the ad. There's nothing in that ad that would get anybody to pay attention to it visually or from an audio standpoint.

Ralph Nader: How about the \$2,000 estimate, which is not accurate for millions of people, but how about that?

Bill Hillsman: Well, again, I think if \$2,000 is a lot of money to you and it is a lot of money to most Americans, maybe that gets your attention. I don't think so. I mean, there are local TV ads that are way better, that are made by the studios [and] by the TV stations that are way better than this particular ad. I mean, it's just embarrassing how much it fails on the very basic duties of an ad.

Steve Skrovan: But even that basic message of he's going to cost you money; that simple message, you don't think that's effective?

Bill Hillsman: It's not going to come through. It's just such a poorly done ad that that message is not going to come through. People who watch TV, Americans who have been watching TV since

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the 1950s, are all experts on commercial production values, and an ad like this just has no place in a presidential campaign. It is that poor; it's that poor.

Steve Skrovan: Wow. All right, well, so this next one is kind of interesting. The title of this one is called "Biden Lied". This argument would be very familiar to anybody who has listened to Trump in the last four years,

Male Voiceover 2: "The Ukrainian company hands Hunter Biden a lucrative deal."

Amy Robach: "If your last name wasn't Biden, do you think you would've been asked to be on the board of Burisma?" [Ukrainian natural gas producer]

Hunter Biden: "Probably not."

Male Voiceover 2: "Joe Biden said he knew nothing. Turns out, he lied. Biden met personally with a Ukrainian executive after they'd hired his son Joe Biden lied to the American people about his family, making themselves rich off of the vice presidency. What else is he lying about?"

Donald Trump: "I'm Donald J. Trump and I approve this message."

Steve Skrovan: Well, he approved that one. What do you think, Bill, do you approve?

Bill Hillsman: You know, it's an ad that's got a lot of things taken out of context. It's produced a lot better than the last ad, but as we said, almost anybody could produce a better ad than the last ad. The problem with it is strategic. I mean, I understand this notion of taking a vulnerability of your own and then trying to pin that on your opponent. But if strategically, for Trump to try to make... and I understand what he's doing. He's trying to come up with an 11th-hour scandal that somehow tars the opponent in the same way emails tarred Hillary Clinton down the stretch in 2016. I understand what he's *trying* to do, but it makes no sense for you to be criticizing the son

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of your opponent for trying to make money when your family is notorious for profiting off your own presidency. I mean, I just don't understand who he's really trying to convince of this, because if it's the voters who are already in his camp, he's already got those voters. So I don't really see how this commercial gets him any new voters. And that's the position that he's in right now. If he continues to talk to his base, well, that's not enough to get him re-elected.

Steve Skrovan: Well, but if Greg Palast is right and all that voter suppression comes out, I think that's what they're probably gambling on, is just fire up the base, get as many of the base out there, and hope that they can purge enough Democratic voters to find a path to the Electoral College.

Bill Hillsman: Yeah, there's a couple of things the Trump campaign has maintained that if they're true, Biden is in danger of losing this election. And one of the things they keep saying is that they've got a better ground game than the Democrats. Well, that should be head spinning because that's traditionally been a Democratic strength. In all the time that I've been doing politics, Democrats have had a far better ground game than Republicans do. So, if for whatever reason, the Biden campaign and the Democrats don't have as robust a ground game as the Republicans do this time, that's a real danger, especially when you work in considerations about voter suppression.

Ralph Nader: That's what they did in Hillary Clinton 2016. She didn't have a ground game. She had plenty of money, but she didn't have a ground game. [She] spent it on national television telling people how unfit Donald Trump would be as president.

Bill Hillsman: Well, that should be a real concern for Democrats then, because that is a way that you can lose the election, especially in Upper-Midwest swing states and Rust-Belt swing states. The other thing that Republicans maintain, and I think this is true, is that they're basically kicking the Democrats' ass in digital communications, and digital communications is important, especially in an age of coronavirus; it's the way that people interact with each other socially these days. There's no better communication-persuasion method than word-of-mouth from a friend or somebody you trust.

Ralph Nader: How could that be, Bill? The Democrats had an early start. They really dominated social media. How could—what happened?

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Bill Hillsman: I really don't know. I think some of it was the expertise that Facebook brought to the Trump campaign in 2016. But the Republicans claim, and I think it's true, that they really are in much better shape in social media and digitally in those types of communications than the Democrats are. And you're right, it's something that the Democrats should dominate in the same way they should dominate the ground game. We know there's more of us than there are of them. We know that from the popular vote. But to be failing on social media and in digital when there's more of you than there are of them, that's a real problem.

Steve Skrovan: All right, let's do one last one here. This is also from the Trump campaign and it is entitled "Insult".

Donald Trump: "I'm Donald J. Trump. And I approve this message."

African-American Male Voiceover: "Joe Biden insulted millions of black Americans."

Joe Biden: "If you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't black."

African-American Male Voiceover: "Worse, Biden wrote the mass incarceration laws that destroyed a generation of black families."

Joe Biden: "We have no choice, but to take them out of society. Away from my mother, your husband, our families. Lock the SOBs up."

African-American Male Voiceover: "He insulted us, jailed us. We must not elect him president."

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Steve Skrovan: So that was obviously targeted at a certain audience.

Bill Hillsman: Yeah, again, I think if Trump is going to win, it's going to be a very, very close election. I think we all understand that. So what they're doing here, again, is trying to win on the margins. Again, I think this commercial has a lot of factual inaccuracies in it. It's a lot of out of context statements, and it's a naked play to black voters to say, "Well, Joe Biden is not on your side." But the problem is, it's a choice. It's between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. And I don't know how Trump convinces—well, I actually don't know how Trump convinces himself, how he thinks he's better for black voters than Biden is. But convincing black voters of that is an even tougher job. So strategically, I don't really understand this either. He needs... every incumbent president who stands for re-election, it's an evaluation of your job performance. And he should be talking about whatever accomplishments he can piece together from his four years in office. And he should be telling Americans about a vision for the future as opposed to running these types of commercials, I think, if he's going to ever expand his base. But they seem to be running a campaign that they intend to win as a war of attrition, that they're going to knock down the number of people that can vote, the number of black citizens that can vote, the number of particular types of groups. They're going to cut into the margins there and somehow become victorious on Election Day. I don't know if it's going to work. If they've got a strong enough ground game and digital program, maybe it is.

Steve Skrovan: So, Bill, let's sum this up. What do you see happening in terms of these late-stage strategies, less than two weeks before the election?

Bill Hillsman: I think we're in a very similar position to 2016, and that should worry a lot of people. But the good news is that I do think Biden is ahead. I think he's ahead in most of the key swing states. I think they're doing a passable-to-good job in terms of mass communications like advertising. They ran an extremely good ad; Biden ran an extremely good ad on the first game of the World Series last night. They were somehow able to get Sam Elliott to be the voiceover on that. And it's gotten a remarkable response. The nature of the ad was a call to bring us together. And there is no more American, especially Western American voice, than Sam Elliott. I mean, that ad alone is going to get—the fact that Sam Elliott was the voiceover in that ad is going to get them tens of thousands of votes just on that basis.

Steve Skrovan: You know what? I have that ad. Let's play that ad for our audience:

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Sam Elliott: [Star Spangled Banner instrumental playing in background] “There is only one America--no Democratic rivers, no Republican mountains--just this great land, and all that’s possible on it with a fresh start. Cures we can find, futures we can shape, work to reward, dignity to protect. There is so much we can do, if we choose to take on problems and not each other, and choose a president who brings out our best. Joe Biden doesn’t need everyone in this country to always agree--just to agree we all love this country and go from there.”

Joe Biden: “I’m Joe Biden. And I approve this message.”

Bill Hillsman: Of course, what you miss with that are the visuals. And I will be the first person to say that the music was a little cheesy, and they could have done a much, much, much better job in terms of the soundtrack. But Sam Elliott’s voice and the language of that ad copy, along with the stirring visuals that were a big part of the commercial, makes a pretty good summation of Biden’s argument that he can bring us together. And I think that’s an effective appeal, especially coming down to the end of the election for most American voters.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much. We’ve been talking with Bill Hillsman from Minnesota. He is known how to win for underdogs, such as Jesse Ventura and Paul Wellstone, but he’s not seen his phones ringing by the Democrats for ideas, which has really bothered me, Bill, because it seems like there’s only one or two or three heads that are making the decisions here instead of a wide array of input. Nobody is smarter than everybody.

Bill Hillsman: Well, thank you for that compliment, Ralph. I mean, we’re rested and we’re ready.

Ralph Nader: Very good. Thank you, Bill Hillsman.

Bill Hillsman: You’re welcome, Ralph, anytime. Stay healthy.

Ralph Nader: You too.

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Steve Skrovan: Well, that's our show. I want to thank our guests again, Greg Palast and Bill Hillsman. For those of you listening on the radio, we're gonna wrap this up. For you, podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we do call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: For a copy of *The Day the Rats Vetoed Congress*, go to ratsreformcongress.org. And also, check out *Wrecking America: How Trump's Lawbreaking and Lies Betray All*, co-written with Mark Green. We will link to both of those. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

David Feldman: Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our intern is Michaela Squier. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* when we welcome Morris Pearl of Patriotic Millionaires. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: And this is a great program coming up, a bunch of millionaires being very progressive in terms of military, foreign, and domestic policy and having an effect. Thank you, everybody.

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