

Ralph Nader Radio Hour Episode 142 Transcript

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, David Feldman. How are you doing today, David?

David Feldman: Excellent. Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: Good morning. And also good morning to the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello. Why are you fantastic, David? I mean look what's coming out of Trump Land.

David Feldman: I'm fantastic, because I'm not aware of how bad it's going to get.

Ralph Nader: Well, it's going to get worse than the worst performance of Triumph the Dog.

Steve Skrovan: Ouch, that hurts both the Trump administration and David's career ... well on today's show ...

David Feldman: I'm actually energized. I am. I'm energized, and I am excited, and I think we can do great things in the next four years to fight Trump every step of the way. This is when people step up.

Ralph Nader: Well, that's why we have Kevin Zeese on.

Steve Skrovan: That's right. That's what I was about to say. Today's show will feature two - not one - two of the most dedicated and prolific political activists around whose pursuits actually overlap in a number of areas which will also be an important factor. In this second half of the show, we will be talking about US militarism with Joel Andreas, author of the graphic novel style exposé Addicted to War which is a scathing critique of the American military industrial complex. In the middle, we're going to find out about these latest shenanigans going on in the suites of corporate America with Russell Mohkiber, the Vincent Bugliosi of the corporate crime

B. At the end, we'll try to get to some listener questions but first on last week's show, frequent guest Bill Curry spoke about how important it is for citizens to organize behind ideas that can grow into popular movements that eventually set the stage for political action and electoral success. And we're going to a man who either spearheads or contributes to a number of different groups that push for a progressive populist agenda. David, tell us who that is?

David Feldman: Kevin Zeese is an attorney and political activist. He advocates for democratizing our economy as co-director of, "It's Our Economy" and he works to oppose war and shrink the military budget through his website, "Come Home America." That sounds like George McGovern in 1972. In addition Mr. Zeese co-hosts the public affairs radio program "Clearing the Fog." He was one of the organizers that the Washington DC iteration of Occupy Wall Street. And he's also been active in independent and third party political campaigns including serving as press secretary and spokesperson for our very own Ralph Nader in 2004. He's also a contributor to a movement called "Popular Resistance," which seeks to keep a bi-partisan people's agenda on the table in the face of corporatism. Regular listeners know that's one of Ralph's favorite topics. Please welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Kevin Zeese.

Kevin Zeese: Great, thank you for having me on.

Ralph Nader: Kevin, the people's agenda that you have written - it sounds very much like what we ran on in 2004, which you were part of that campaign. And it's very detailed. But to summarize some of it before we get a further dimension of this - in other words how do we really organize, how do we shift power, what are the tools to get it done? It's obviously a full Medicare for all with free choice of doctor and hospital, controls on drug company gouging. It's \$15 an hour minimum wage, long overdue. Thirty million people are making less today than they made in 1968, adjusted for inflation. You also have electoral reforms. You have pullback on empire and militarism. You have a very good demonstration of the agenda on human rights, worker, laborer rights, right to collective bargaining. You have a section on holding governments accountable and following the rule of law, which is being flouted so often. You have a good section on education and civic education improvement of the public schools. Improvement of housing, affordable and safe housing guarantees, climate change, energy efficiency, solar energy, break up the "Too Big To Fail" banks and the media and concentration and use of public airways for more public purposes. Each one of these you elaborate, and you get into food and water and transportation. Let me ask the first question, which is how do you actually develop the popular tools and popular power to get it done?

Kevin Zeese: Great question. And if you had to ask me where it came from I was going to give credit to the 2004 Nader campaign as a starting point. You stole my thunder on that, but it also came from people working on Occupy, people in the black civil rights struggle that's on going, the Black Lives Matter struggle, the "Fight for 15." We took a lot of existing material and

brought it together, because after we won the recent battle to stop the Transpacific Partnership, which is a tremendous people power victory over international or transnational corporate power, we wanted to build on that. We saw that in this last election - where we had the two oligarch parties, putting forth agendas that don't serve the people - that *we* hadn't served the people. We had to put out the agenda and then stand for it. One of the key ways that we're going to win is by keeping this agenda not compromising and pushing for it. Now, it takes organizing to do that. And during the five-year plus struggle on TPP, we held weekly conference calls. And I think you were on one of the first ones, Ralph...

Ralph Nader: Yes.

Kevin Zeese: ...when we talked about how we're going to defeat the TPP. Everyone early on thought, "Impossible. Transnational power, corporate power is too strong. Obama has sold out. The bi-partisans in Congress have sold out. You'll never stop it." And in the end, we did. I think that has a lot to do with people power. And some people might give Trump credit, but we were going to win if Hillary had been elected as well. We had the votes to stop it from being ratified. The delay that would've come with Hillary, when she tried bringing it up again, I think we would've been able to get organized to stop it again. So, we're going to be doing those kinds of conference calls again. You'd be welcome, Ralph, of course, as a guest on one of those to endorse the agenda and give us advice on how to proceed. It's going to be that collective thinking of people, who care about it, that's going to create the strategy.

Ralph Nader: Let's get to a deep definition of organizing. We know that if there were a thousand organizers in four hundred and thirty-five Congressional districts working full time, this agenda would have much higher visibility in Washington. A thousand organizers requires a lot of money. So, let's have your take here. One of the real problems of the progressive movement is they're always short of money. They have far better programs. They have a lot of potential talented workers; but they're always short of money. Where is the money going to come from? Here's one possibility: the super rich who are enlightened. Second: some enlightened foundations. Third: a more rigorous social media fundraising like Bernie Sanders produced. But this agenda really needs tens of millions of dollars, and it needs it fast. Let's talk about what are your ideas about getting more money to get more field organizers, because throughout history, every major movement had field organizers, the labor movement, civil rights movement, the farmer's populist movement, women's right to vote movement. And we've lost sight of asking the question, "What does it take?" So, where is it going to come from?

Kevin Zeese: That's a tough question and one that we're actually just starting to work on. Margaret Flowers, my partner in Popular Resistance, and I are working on it together to figure that out. We've already started to reach out to some potential big donors, but we have to really over the next week or two, we're going to develop a kind of plan to present to them.

Ralph Nader: Kevin, let me interrupt you. Since November 8th, have you seen a shift in the level of urgency by some of the enlightened affluent donors to progressive causes, where they basically say, "Look, we really have to step it up. This is a national emergency of immense dimensions?"

Kevin Zeese: I see more aggressive behavior by people than donors. I think that people have stepped up right away to Trump. And you're seeing a whole range of kinds of protests against him and his agenda. So, I see that. I don't see there's much from donors. So we hope that will develop once they start to see there's actually a way to combat him. The key to getting support financially is showing you have a plan to achieve it, that you can actually achieve it. That people see you can achieve it. And the second key: developing relations so people trust you. So it's a combination of that personal trust, people who are organizing this on the macro level as well as 3/4 of plan that they can see you can win. That's the two things we have to do.

Ralph Nader: Are you thinking of convening some of these wealthy people who have supported good causes like *Real News Networks* and very progressive causes around the country on climate change et cetera?

Kevin Zeese: I think the first step is actually more one-on-one. And once you start to see one-on-one support, then you can with those people helping to reach out to their colleagues and friends, who are also in the philanthropy field, they can then help to build that kind of a meeting. I think a meeting like that would be fantastic, but I think we have to first develop personal relationships and get them committed individually, a handful of them. And then we can go for a larger group.

Ralph Nader: All right. Let's go to the next structure of enhanced power by the people. What's your view of left/right coalitions on a lot of your issues - and we're talking not inside Washington Beltway left/right. We're talking the public opinion of conservative/liberal families, who are raising their families under dire circumstances. And conservatives and liberals bleed by corporate rapacity. They are exposed to the same toxics in the air, water, soil, food. They're ripped off by insurance companies and banks. So, we're talking regular people back home, where they live, work, and raise their kids. What do you think of the potential of that? I wrote a book, Unstoppable on that theme. And I'd like see what your take is on that.

Kevin Zeese: I've done some of that kind of work or tried to, to bring right/left together when -- my first area of work when I got into political advocacy was the drug war and that was a very natural right/left alliance.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. Describe that a bit. Describe that. You're a national expert on the War on Drugs.

Kevin Zeese: Yeah. This was obviously an issue libertarians agreed with. I worked with Garry Johnson when he was Governor of New Mexico. And libertarian activists don't want intrusions into people's lives. When you get talking to the people, who are struggling financially, they know that spending money, tax dollars, on enforcing marijuana laws for example, is not where their highest priority is. Of course, on the progressive side, you have many people who just see this as a human rights/social justice issue. It's not all for the same reason, but it reaches the same conclusions. And you know when I ran for office I was nominated by both the Libertarian and the Green Party as well as the Populist Party, which was a Nader Party in Maryland that existed for a while. I was the first person that was nominated by Libertarians and Greens. And the reason they did so was two reasons: one was the War on Drugs and the other opposition to the Iraq War. I think those are two areas where you can really see that combination of right/left action. The other area that I think has become obvious is under the economy. So many Americans now - the economic statistics show - are just struggling. They cannot handle a \$500 emergency. Like two thirds of the American public would have a hard time handling a \$500 emergency, a dental problem or a car problem. It puts them over the edge. And that insecurity, economic insecurity is what really led to Trump winning the Rust Belt. And the Democrats were so tone deaf to it. For Obama to be out there campaigning for the TPP, when people feel... struggle, economic struggle from NAFTA and other trade agreements, which was maybe what lost Clinton the election, along with the whole lot of all reasons that are history. But that could have been what put it over top was his push from more corporate trade. I think there is also - it's really interesting to see how people on the right, or the working class, who are not that political, react to various issues. And there's more then we realized. But there also has to be some care. There will be - it will be hard to do that in the electoral arena - actually running for office, because there are differences. And we can't ignore those differences. They're reality. One thing I loved about being a right/left political candidate was I got to hear from people on the right good ideas and share them with people on left. Hear good ideas on left and share them with people on the right. And it's a real opportunity to expand people's thinking.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. They're against crony capitalism, which we call corporate welfare. That's a big ticket item to have a left/right. Very skeptical of corporate managed trade agreements to put that mildly. The left/right support to amend the Patriot Act and get rid of the serious violations of civil liberties, like going into your home, have officials going to your home to search your home they have to tell you for 72 hours, or getting into your medical, financial records. There's a huge area of consumer protection, as I said earlier. Consumer protection protects everybody. And when it isn't there, people are marginalized and hurt and their income, health and safety regardless of what their ideological beliefs are. Let's combine the discussion we just had how to raise enough money with an emerging left/right alliance. Does that mean that you can start thinking of raising big money for field organizers and reform movements through social media? Is there chance to start to approximate what Bernie Sanders did on the campaign trail?

Kevin Zeese: Well, I think that's one of the great things that Sanders did was to show people that's possible. Others have tried it and presented an image of running fundraising on the Internet. Howard Dean did it. Obama even did it. But that was more image than reality. I think the first it's been real has been Sanders. And so that presents a new idea. Now, it hasn't been used as well yet in the non-electoral arena. And we have to figure out how to crack that nut, but there's no question. Social media is evolving so quickly that I don't think we even have any idea of its potential, not just for a fundraising but for undermining or maybe overwriting the corporate media. That may be our biggest power that's developing most quickly, and not as obvious to everybody. But corporate media is struggling. It's losing readership. It's losing profits. It's losing credibility. And I think this attack on fake news comes at such an interesting time, because what's really happening is people are seeing that the propagandized corporate media, the mass media, is where the fake news is coming from. Now, there are fighting back by saying, "No, the fake news is coming from the social media." I think the social media is going to be a tool on a whole variety of fronts in the coming years and a growing and more successful one. I know more people are working on that very aggressively.

Ralph Nader: Wait, Bernie Sanders raised about \$235 million for his candidacy.

Kevin Zeese: Amazing.

Ralph Nader: If the People's Agenda can raise that kind of money and concentrate on key Congressional districts - laser beam focus on Senators and Representatives, both for Republican and Democrats, two things happen. People start turning their attention away from these elections to changing the votes in Congress between elections, the way we did so often in the 60's and early 70's to the most unlikely Senators and Representatives lined up to support environmental and consumer and job safety legislation. The second thing that that kind of money can produce is a much more "in-personum" lobbying, Kevin. So, it isn't just rallies and weekend marches where the energy goes into the ether, but where it is cycled back with laser beam focus. I've often said that the most successful lobbyists in our country don't do marches. They don't do rallies. You don't see the NRA with huge marches or AIPAC with huge marches. They focus on 435 members of the House and the 100 members of the Senate. And they know everything they can about 'em: who their contacts are back home, who's their doctor, who's their lawyer, who's their accountant, who they socialize with, who they play golf with, what the staff is like, what they do on Capitol Hill in terms of committee work. And that's what a left/right coalition and money can do. And it ends up with a real great instrument, which is the formal summons to town meetings that the citizens organized in this way around an agenda like your People's Agenda, where they summon with plenty of preparation time for the Senators and Representatives to go to the people's town meeting and get instructed as to how they should go back and behave and vote in Congress. That's where it takes it into a new level, but for that new level to really be institutionalized, we need to talk right now about shift of power. And this is something, which you might want to add very explicitly to your People's Agenda. Here are

some examples of shift of power. You tend to shift power when you get rid of gerrymandering. You tend to shift more power to voters instead of having the politicians pick the voters. You tend to shift more power when you elaborate and strengthen tort law, class action law, access to the courts for wrongfully injured people. You tend to shift the power when you have requirements that utility companies and banks and insurance companies have to put inserts in their billing envelopes - paper or electronic - inviting people to join of their own non-profit groups with their own investigators and public interest lawyers and accountants. You shift power when you give people - you'll appreciate this particularly - the right to sue the government for violating the Constitution, violating budgetary standards, corruption. And right now "no standing to sue" is the mantra of our judicial system where they say to the citizens, "Well, you can't sue, because you don't have a personal economic interest in this that's strong enough to sustain your suit." What do you think of these? And, of course, when you strengthen labor laws, you strengthen the ability of workers to form unions and provide greater challenges to global corporations and more influence on lawmakers. So you have more money in these causes, you have left/right coalitions, you have the summons for the town meetings, and then you start developing these tools of power by shifting power from the few to the many - and by the way - that doesn't cost any money. What do you think all of that?

Kevin Zeese: Well of course, all that makes sense. And it's amazing how "standing" has shrunk so rapidly since about 1980 when it was at its peak as far expansion goes. And that's really limited our access to the third branch of government. I want to add something else to that, though that I think you underestimate - which is our job also to shift the political culture. To make room for all those kind of shifts you're describing, we need to have a different viewpoint in the political culture. And I think the right-wing has been very good at that by working through their power structures, impacting university professors and what they can talk about, creating think tanks and putting out all sorts of reports about various issues and building up this concept of "individual versus community." We have a job also to change the political culture. And one thing we noticed during the Occupy, which was, as you know, really a tiny movement. It was probably .01%, probably three hundred to four hundred thousand people participated. Look at the reaction we got from the power structure. They were having meetings between Homeland Security, FBI and police forces and mayors around the country.

Ralph Nader: They were busy trying to define it as domestic terrorism. That's how terrified they were.

Kevin Zeese: Exactly. They were afraid from a tiny percentage of the public. Now, there is research on resistance movements over the last one hundred years. And what they show is if you get a tiny minority, 3.5% of the public mobilized on issues where there already is mass support - and everything we advocate as you know Ralph, has 2/3rds or above support. So, if we get people mobilized, we win. 3.5% is the magic number. You can do it with less. And if you saw .01% create a wobbling power structure, imagine what one percent would do. 3.5% - every time a movement has reached that point, they've won, whether it's a dictatorship or a democracy. That's what actually changes the political culture.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. In this country, that's ten million people.

Kevin Zeese: I know.

Ralph Nader: That's more than enough.

Kevin Zeese: I know.

Ralph Nader: If they were represent majority opinion.

Kevin Zeese: Exactly.

Ralph Nader: Let's talk about another shift of power that's close to your experience. And that is: giving more opportunity to third party and independent candidates to compete in the electoral process. Now, you know we went through a terrible situation, where we were harassed with frivolous lawsuits in 2004, you remember...

Kevin Zeese: Amazing.

Ralph Nader: ... like twenty-four lawsuits and twelve briefs filed by Democratic Party, functionaries to get us off one state ballot after another. Our petitioners in the streets were harassed, were threatened with lawsuits. The petitions were filled with phony names, so they could accuse us of fraudulent petition gathering. And, of course, all the state barriers to getting on the ballot. Being kept out of the debates. Now, Margaret Flowers ran for the Senate in Maryland, which is a blue Democratic state, against Chris Van Hollen, who won. Give us some experience of what kind of obstacles she faced, whether she got on the debates. And what happened there? Because she was proposing an agenda like we are talking about that would have majority support in Maryland.

Kevin Zeese: Yeah. Yeah. Now - your 2004 campaign - I don't think people understand yet how significant that was in showing the Democrats for what they are: really are anti-democrats. They pulled every dirty trick they could they could to keep you off the ballot. They allied with Republican law firms and gave time - for no charge - and then of course demanded fees from you later. But it showed the bipartisan nature of opposition to anyone who stands up against

corporate power. It's amazing this year two of the worst candidates in history and how well they controlled the debate. Kept everyone out of debate, even though three quarters of the people wanted four-way debates with Johnson and Stein. That didn't happen. In Margaret's case, she is going up against Van Hollen, who was the corporate, corporate Democrat, who pretended to be this liberal. But he was the head of the D triple C (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee). He's now the head of the DSCC (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee). As a first-time Senator, he got that position. So, he was like a bagman for Wall Street and K Street. You could see that in his campaign donations. So, he refused to do any debates. He had to be pushed to do one televised debate. And Margaret was initially meeting all the standards to get in. But then they delayed and delayed making that decision, until they could find a poll that had Margaret below 5%. And that was their excuse to keep her out. We had to decide then what to do. Are we going to let them do that, or are going to do something to push back? We decided to show up and challenge and expose the nature -- because all third-party work now is breaking through barriers. And the first part of breaking through barriers is show there *is* a barrier. And so we showed up to debate. We we're surprised we got in. We came in separately, Margaret and I. I went to one side of room. She went to the center where there was a wide aisle to the stage. And I started by interrupting at the beginning and saying, "We have to decide something here. Are these going to be open debates? Kathy Szeliga, the Republican, do you support Margaret being in?" "Yes, I've always supported her." Kathy Szeliga did support Margaret being in. And then Van Hollen: "Would you debate Margaret?" "Oh, yes, I'd be here. I said that more than once." And so I said, "Well then if you both support it, Margaret should be on the stage." And the police we're all rushing over to harass me while I was saying that. And they were busy, and Margaret had a free shot to the stage. She got up on the stage. She shook Van Hollen's hand, shook Kathy Szeliga's hand, and she stood in the middle of them and started to talk. And then the idiot commentator from the sponsor, WJZ said, "Can you now leave the stage, please, so we can have our debate?" he basically said - which is so embarrassing. And she said, "No, I'm not going to leave. This is a debate. I'm a legitimate candidate. I should be here. You shouldn't be keeping people out." And then, of course, the police came and pulled her off the stage. And her first comment was, "Is this how you treat a US Senate candidate in the United States?" And that got such a reaction. Her social media exploded. She got some fundraising out of it. She definitely got some votes out of it and got massive exposure. Some of the videos on that reached multiple millions of people, multiple millions of people ...

[Crosstalk]

Ralph Nader: People who don't know much detail about these debates, it's often the only way to reach hundreds of thousands of voters. It's not just an additional perk here. And the second thing is: look who's creating these debates. It's commercial media. It's CNN at the national presidential level. It's Fox News. They're making huge money off the ratings. In fact, Trump taunted Fox, once saying, "If I boycott the next debate, you're going to lose profit." That's how sick the whole system has gotten. Corporations are setting the debates, how many there are, who can get on. It isn't even a public institution that's doing it.

Kevin Zeese: Let me just add one point to that, Ralph...

Ralph Nader: And these are debates from --

Kevin Zeese: Let me just add one point to that, and I know you know this. But just to really emphasize it for your listeners. The presidential debates, this phony Debate Commission, which was created by the Republicans and Democrats is just a corporation funded secretly - they no longer list who their donors are - funded secretly by huge corporations. And the Democrats, Republicans get to decide who's to debate. And they decide: Democrats and Republicans. They take or create artificial standards to keep anyone else out. And the corporate media - as you say - goes along with it. Why? Because they get hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising. So this scam is perpetrated on the public. It's a fraud for the public when especially three quarters of the people want open debates with all the candidates - this year there was four of them - who are qualified on enough ballots to achieve 270 Electoral College votes. Now, if they're in the debate, they reach sixty million - this year, they said a hundred million - people. Without that, they disappear. And the only time you've seen a third party candidate expand in September and October was when Ross Perot was in the debates. Every other time when you have those debates like that, it becomes evident to tens and millions of people - this year, hundreds of millions of people - that there's only two candidates. And the other candidates shrink and disappear.

Ralph Nader: Then for our listeners saying, "What can be done about that?" Let me tell you, the Debate Commission has been sued unsuccessfully, because they're a private entity, and you can't invoke the Constitution. But here's my proposal for 2020. And I think it's a very, very effective one. You have twenty cities and areas in this country. You organize them. Who doesn't want a presidential debate? Okay, they all do, because it brings media attention. It brings money to the metropolis. And so what you do is you go to these cities and you line up the Chamber of Commerce, the labor unions, the neighborhood groups, the professional groups, the schools and the local media, and you say, "We want the presidential candidates, when they go around the country, to come to Phoenix or to come to Seattle or to come to Boston or come to Pittsburg or Baltimore, because we have the biggest coalition ever in our area, demanding that the candidates come to our region, not just talk about world issues and national issues but to pay attention to regional and local issues." When you get that kind of demand, you break the back of the Debate Commission. And that needs like someone who antes up a couple of million bucks and hires some roving organizers to get this done, because you won't get any resistance. Everybody wants a presidential debate in their city or their region.

Kevin Zeese: Right.

Ralph Nader: What do you think of that?

Kevin Zeese: I love it. And I think as you target in on swing states that even puts more pressure on the candidates, because they say “no” to a massive coalition in Ohio or a massive coalition in Pennsylvania, which now becomes a swing state, it gets very hard to say “no.”

Ralph Nader: That’s right. And it makes them bone up on local and regional issues, so they have to talk about these things. Anyway, think about that.

Kevin Zeese: When I was working with you, I remember doing a briefing every time you were on the road on the issues of that area where you are going. And so when you got to an area, you had read that information. You knew most of it anyway, but you were updated on all that information, were able to talk about local issues. And that’s an essential thing. And I think that’s a great concept. I’ll share that idea with others.

Ralph Nader: You know, Kevin, you pointed out another unique feature to our 2004, 2008 campaign, where I did talk about local issues and regional issues. And most of the two party presidential candidates like to avoid it. They have their own five-minute repertoire, their mantras, their slogans. The last thing they want to do is talk about the Standing Rock pipeline issue or the inner city issues in Los Angeles, or what have you. That’s why I’ve kept my website for the 2008 campaign open, so people can look at how a presidential campaign that respects people in every state - we went to fifty states for every presidential campaign - how to run an honest, open campaign with issues supported by a majority of the people. And you can still go to votenader.org. That’s the 2008 campaign just to take a look at it. And take a look at over dozen and half redirections in our country that the Republican, Democratic Party took off the table. They wouldn’t even discuss it, like full Medicare for all, like higher minimum wage. They wouldn’t even discuss it. But we discussed it. And we represented majority opinion. How can people get in touch with you and connect with your movement, Kevin, before we close?

Kevin Zeese: The site that brings us all together is popularresistance.org, and you can write to us at info@popularresistance.org. You’ll see on that site connections to a whole range of campaigns. We’re about to start a single-payer healthcare campaign. We see an opportunity there with Obamacare being repealed, and the Republicans having no solution and not planning on putting a solution in for three years. So big opportunities. And I just want to say, Ralph, while you’re remembered for so much good work, I think the thing you’ll be most remembered for in our history is breaking the reality out to people of the two-party duopoly. And that’s what you’ve been attacked for most at this stage in your career. But I think that may be the most important thing you’ve done. And I think that will be told in the future, when people look back on your career that you broke that duopoly. Because in the end, this duopoly is going to fall. And it started with your 2000 campaign. So, I hope you recognize that’s great work.

Ralph Nader: Well, thank you, Kevin. I think it's going to break in 2020. It'd be nice to break with a mass movement, but they're going to be now more enlightened billionaires saying, "Hey, if this guy, Trump - a failed gambling czar, who has cheated his consumers, his workers, his creditors, who went bankrupt and bragged about it, who was a misogynist and a racist - if he can be in the White House, what about Mark Cuban or what about Tom Steyer?"

Kevin Zeese: Yeah, exactly. No, that's a really good point. We'll see if that happens. But I do feel a break is coming. And it's going to be people getting organized, people recognize they have power and whether you are billionaire or a person on the street, you have power. And I think we are told we don't have power. The reality is we do. We just defeated the transnational corporate powerhouses with the Trans-Pacific Partnership. So, we do have power. We need to build on it.

Ralph Nader: If you need more provocation wait and see what Trump and his corporatist war hawks...

Kevin Zeese: Oh my gosh.

Ralph Nader: ... and Wall Streeters are preparing to roll back things that you are now relying on for a decent livelihood and for decent human and civil liberties and civil rights.

Kevin Zeese: Exactly.

Ralph Nader: In fact ...

Kevin Zeese: Look at that cabinet. It's terrible.

Ralph Nader: Yes, a total betrayal of the voters, who voted for Trump. I just put out a Tweet basically saying, "Attention workers, who voted for Trump. He's now putting into the government machinery that he vowed to change leading Wall Streeters, leading war hawks, and leading corporatists to strip the government of any service and protection of your health, safety and economic rights. Now, you'll have even more fertile ground for popularrsistance.org folks. Go to it: popularrsistance.org. Thank you very much, Kevin Zeese.

Kevin Zeese: Thanks a lot, Ralph.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Kevin Zeese, contributor to Popular Resistance as well as many other activist organizations. We will link to all of them on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. And we'll see if we can find that incident with Margaret Flowers crashing the Maryland Senate debate and post that on the website, if that's on YouTube. Now, let's take a short break and check in with corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber.

Russell Mohkiber: From the National Press Building in Washington DC, this is your corporate crime reporter morning minute for Friday December 2, 2016. I'm Russell Mohkiber. TransCanada, the company whose Keystone Pipeline was defeated by a coalition of farmers and ranchers in Nebraska is moving forward with plans to put a natural gas pipeline under the C&O canal and under the Potomac River about a mile west of Hancock, Maryland. The company has applied to the National Park Service for a permit to survey the area. If approved by State and Federal authorities, the pipeline would carry fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania to a pipeline proposed by Mountaineer Gas in West Virginia. A coalition of area farmers, landowners, and activists have organized to oppose both the Mountaineer Gas and TransCanada pipeline proposals. Potomac River Keeper, Brent Walls, says that, "Area geologists are shocked at the proposal because of the Karst geology in the area. The problem with drilling in Karst geology is that pipelines leak," Wall said. For the corporate crime reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. My son discovered his love of reading through graphic novels. That's all he read when he was a kid. And he eventually graduated to more traditional fare. Now, he reads Dostoevsky for pleasure. I have some personal experience with the effectiveness of that particular art form. And our next guest has been using the graphic novel format to try to get through to people about a very complex political topic. David?

David Feldman: Joel Andreas is a political activist, who works for racial equality and workers rights inside the United States and to stop US military intervention abroad. After working as an automobile assembler, a printer and a civil engineering drafter, he completed his doctoral degree in Sociology at UCLA and now teaches at Johns Hopkins University. His illustrated expose Addicted to War: Why The US Can't Kick Militarism is being used in hundreds of high schools and colleges as an anti-war history book and has just been updated since it's last printing in 2004 to include drone wars, President Obama, Chelsea Manning, Tomas Young, ISIS and Syria. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Joel Andreas.

Joel Andreas: Well, thanks for inviting me.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. Welcome indeed, Joel Andreas. I wrote a column on your graphic novel titled Addicted to War: Why The US Can't Kick Militarism in September. And in that column I noted that you have over 450,000 copies in multiple foreign languages, including English of course that are in print worldwide. And its seventy-four pages with a 164 footnotes at the back. What struck me was how remarkably accurate and comprehensive a narrative it was on a rather complex and often remote subject to so many people. It's heavily endorsed with comments from veterans, scholars, clergy - among other notables - and was described by David Swanson, author of War Is A Lie, as a graphic novel written with "Humor, erudition and wisdom." I think you've taken the graphic novel to a far more sophisticated level, creating the genre of readability with a real intellectual challenge. I want to ask you to elaborate on that. Why aren't there more graphic novels at that level? I mean there are good graphic novels, but they tend to be more simplistic. They don't tend to be as detailed. They certainly are not as footnoted. But yours, I think, is a state of the art. And so two questions: One is what do you think is the future for graphic novels? Do you use it, for example, in college courses? Or is that considered stupefying the student and you need five hundred page textbooks? And what is the likelihood that there'll be more such graphic novels on many other issues like taxation, corporate welfare, healthcare, etc.

Joel Andreas: Well, first thank you for having me on your show. And thank for writing a very kind column that you wrote a couple months ago. I really appreciate it. And I appreciate the chance to get meet you over the phone.

Ralph Nader: You're welcome. Thank you.

Joel Andreas: What's the future of graphic novels? I hope that more people do more novels like this. I've done several now over the course of forty years - I've done three - and it's just, I guess, a side thing that I do. It's never been the main thing that I do. And it would be great if other people did similar novels. People have done - there was a whole series about war - I forget - specifically about war. They were more common actually in the 60's and 70's. That's where I got inspired to do the first one, The Incredible Rocky, which is about the about the Rockefeller family. I was inspired by Rius, who is a Mexican. He did a weekly little pamphlet, a weekly little pamphlet, weekly little insert for newspapers and then compiled them into a book. And they were a wonderful series about a whole range of issues, which some of them were translated in English; and that I got to know those. One was a history of Cuba. But there was Cuba for Beginners. There was a whole series of other ones. And then people were publishing other ones as well at that time. And I got inspired to do that. I wish that it *had* taken off more. And I guess it was maintained since then, expanded, but I think it's a great form and ...

Ralph Nader: Do you use it in your classes, or is it sort of a taboo genre?

Joel Andreas: People do use my book in classes, in college classes. It's used in quite a few college classes. In fact, it's been reprinted - chapters of it - reprinted in readers specifically designed for college classes about foreign wars. I am specialist in China now in terms of what I actually teach at the university. And so I teach two types of classes really: social theory classes, which are very much theory and then classes about China and recent Chinese history.

Ralph Nader: Are there graphic novels in China?

Joel Andreas: Are there? Not many in China. Of course the headquarters of the entire world for graphic novels, cartoons of all kinds is Japan with the Manga. They should be a model for the rest of the world in terms of doing this popular education. There have been very, very good educational, political graphic novels.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. We're talking with professor Joel Andreas, who teaches sociology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and the author of the graphic novel Addicted to War: Why The US Can't Kick Militarism. It's broken down in seven chapters: "Manifest Destiny" is one, "The Cold War," "The New World Order," "The War on Terrorism," "The War Profiteers," "Resisting Militarism" and then the final chapter "Do Something About It," which lists active groups, who would welcome you contributing your civic energy. Before we let - I'm sure David and Steve would like to ask some questions - but I want to ask you this question. What exactly is lost when you move from a five hundred page textbook, say on militarism, to a graphic novel? What exactly is lost? Because you give footnotes that refer to all kinds of academic studies to congressional investigations, to government reports, to citizen group exposes? What exactly is lost? I mean, some people would say, "Well, we're pandering to short attention spans. We're pandering to the video culture. It isn't as deep in terms of introspection." For - let's say, for college and high school students, what is lost by providing graphic novels, instead of five, six hundred page academic treatises?

Joel Andreas: Well, I think there's a purpose for both. Five or six hundred page academic treatises - you do need that kind of in-depth research to really get into the nitty-gritty and the details of what happened and really look into it in a more sophisticated way that's going to look at all the aspects. But most people aren't going to read that. Those are written for specialists. And you need those for specialists. But I write those kinds of books about China today. But, for popular education, nobody is going to read those books. And there's a whole different purpose for putting out books that many people are going to read. And you have to hit the highlights of what's really the most important. And you have to put it together in a coherent narrative, which then - I mean, you could write a very detailed book about the Vietnam War, for instance, but that

doesn't tell the whole history of US militarism. And you can't do that in a book about the Vietnam War and ...

Ralph Nader: There's one advantage of a graphic novel is it covers a lot of ground. But isn't it also an entry point people for people who want to follow up in more detail, then they go to the more academic works?

Joel Andreas: Right, and that's why I put the footnotes in there as well. It's not only to show people this is based on more detailed documentation, but it's also to encourage people to read those books and read the original sources ...

Ralph Nader: Why do they call it the graphic novel, if it's non-fiction?

Joel Andreas: That's not a term that I was even comfortable with at first. I just called it a comic book. But that's the term that's generally used. And it has certainly been the phrase that's used today. I don't think it even was used as much in the 60's and 70's, when I first started doing this but that's what's used today, and so I have adopted that term too, just so people know what I'm talking about. It's not exactly like a comic book like Superman or the Marvel Comics. It is good to distinguish it, but yes, you're right. Why is it called a graphic novel? I suppose most of them are stories, but certainly there's this educational variety that is more like a documentary. It's more like a serious book that's about facts.

Ralph Nader: How would our listeners get your book without having to resort to Amazon, the community buster of America?

Joel Andreas: They should order it directly. And in fact if they order it directly, often times they'll get - especially if they ordered more than one copy - they can get a steep discount on it.

Ralph Nader: And the website?

Joel Andreas: F-dorrel. F-D-O-R-R-E-L@addictedtowar.com. Addicted to war is one word.

Ralph Nader: You order this book, listeners, you can create a whole neighborhood center of activity around the militarism and the empire that's devouring our country - as all empires do - to their home country, eventually.

Joel Andreas: Yep, that is what half the book is about actually is the impact of these foreign wars on Americans here at home. As well as on the soldiers that are called upon to go and fight them.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, I've got a question. The subtitle of your book is "Why the US can't kick militarism." Why can't the US kick militarism?

Joel Andreas: I think there's two big reasons, and they're completely complementary and work together at this point. The US is an imperial power, so it has interests around the world. And especially the large American corporations that do business around the world, they depend on having particular kinds of regimes in power around the world that will cooperate with them and do their bidding when necessary. And the US military enforces that. So regimes that they don't like, they overthrow, or they attempt to. And they tend to put in place regimes that will be more cooperative with US economic interests, which are largely the interests of these corporations, multi-national corporations, that do business around the world. That's one aspect. The other aspect is now, ever since the Second World War - before the Second World War the US didn't really maintain a standing army or navy. It didn't have bases around the world. Starting with the Second World War - and this is really the time that the US started being this kind of an imperial power to dominate the rest of the world - they built up this standing army with bases around the world. And then with huge numbers, of course, the army with huge numbers of armaments that has built up this armaments industry, this military industrial complex, which is... These are huge corporations as well and very influential and very, very close to the whole Washington political establishment. And they have tremendous influence there and will not allow the government to stop spending tremendous amounts of money on buying armaments and supplying the military.

Steve Skrovan: So, what is the twelve-step program to kick this addiction?

Joel Andreas: You know, I don't think the US needs to be this kind of imperial power. I think for most of us it would be better off if it was not. I think though we should get out of the business of imperialism. And, I don't know if there's a twelve steps to that, but somebody needs to take the government out of the hands of all these corporations, ones that are demanding that the US do their... basically enforce their bidding around the world. And the military - especially the armaments corporations - their lobbies need to be shut out. The state needs to come back - I don't know "come back" - it needs to be taken out of hands of these huge corporations.

David Feldman: Could you paint a picture for me what 2020 would look like if Donald Trump kind of kept his promise - this is never going to happen - but if he was in the Situation Room for four years saying “No, we’re not going anywhere. America first. No interventionism. No war. Let Putin do what he wants to do. Let China do what he wants to do. We’re just staying home.” That’s never going to happen, but what would happen if we had a President, who just said “America first, no intervention, bring the troops home?”

Joel Andreas: Well, I think you're absolutely right. Not enough people appreciate this. That part of Trump's popularity was promoting this kind of isolationism, which was “America First” isolationism, but isolationism: “We shouldn't be... the Iraq War, the Iraq War was a mistake. We don't want to be spending so much money on overseas bases. We want to pull back from NATO and our involvement in East Asia.” He was putting forward this platform that was very popular among huge - a large part of the... I think even a majority of the American population would support that orientation. It made him unpopular among the real... the foreign policy establishment, the National Security establishment in Washington. But now it's very clear, since he's been elected, that he is not going to go that direction. It seems likely he's not going to go that direction at all. It's hard to tell what he's going to do.

David Feldman: Could you please paint a picture for me what would happen if a president just said “no” to all the voices telling him to go to war? What would happen if we didn't stay on top of Putin and China and protect the Philippines' fishing rights? What would happen, if we're not the police officer?

Joel Andreas: You know, that's a good question. I just think for my purposes, for moral purposes, that I'm not going to get involved in imperialist wars, and I don't think our country should. What exactly happens if the US pulls back? I'm not sure. There won't be any one power that's going to be dictating anymore, but the US is hardly capable of that anyway. The US has tried to do that and was capable of doing that to a certain extent after the Second World War, but it really hasn't been capable of doing that. It's lost most of the foreign wars that it has been involved in. So, it hasn't been able to impose this kind of global American peace that it promised, as wars are going on around the world. I think if the US pulled back, the wars would continue going on around the world. The US is not the cause of all the wars around the world, but I think it's actually exacerbates them.

David Feldman: I just have one final question, is it sacrilege, Ralph, to say that the America hasn't won a war since WW2?

Ralph Nader: I wouldn't use those words. It doesn't matter how many wars we lose, because the military industrial complex and their political representatives are very good at scapegoating. They ask questions like, "Who lost China to the Communists? Who lost Afghanistan?" But unfortunately, we're out of time. We've been talking with professor Joel Andreas, the author of the little graphic novel called Addicted to War: Why the US Can't Kick Militarism. It's a huge educational effort, only seventy-four pages with a one hundred eighty-four footnotes at the back. And if you want to get this book - how can they get this book once more, Professor Andreas?

Joel Andreas: Actually, the website is www.addictedtowar.com, one word, dot com. Very simple, you can also write directly to Frank at fedorrel@addictedtowar.com

Steve Skrovan: And for our listeners, we will link to it at the Ralph Nader radio hour website.

Ralph Nader: I can assure you, listeners, this is one experience you will not forget. When you get this book you'll say, "Wow, finally something I can talk to my neighbors and friends and co-workers about that's accurate, graphic and absolutely important to the lives they want to lead with their families and the future of our country and peace in the world." Thank you very much, Professor Andreas.

Joel Andreas: Well, thank you again for having me on your show, for all the work that you do as well.

Ralph Nader: Yes, thank you. Again, you're welcome.

Steve Skrovan: Once again, we've been speaking to Professor Joel Andreas, author of the newly updated graphic novel-style exposé called Addicted to War, Why the US Can't Kick Militarism. As always, we will link to that at the ralphnaderradiohour.com website.

And we've got some time now for some listener questions. And we'll do the first one here is from a listener named Sean, and he says "Mr. Nader, I've voted for you every time you ran for president. I agree with you on 99.9 percent of the issues. You say that the detractors of your presidential campaigns are 'political bigots' quote unquote, for asking you not to run, but are they?" Why are they bigots? He wants to know. "Isn't this issue analogous to free speech? There's a difference between saying someone shouldn't say racist things and saying someone should legally be disallowed to say racist things. This argument is a matter of strategy not bigotry. Would you acknowledge this fact?"

Ralph Nader: That's true if all they did was try to oppose me with other arguments and challenge me with other arguments. But what I was referring to is they wanted to force me not to run by having all kinds of state ballot access barriers, filing frivolous suits, wearing us down, diverting our resources, harassing our petitioners, keeping us off the debates. In other words, they don't want to debate. They don't want to contend. So when I was running for office, I was using my First Amendment rights of free speech to petition our government and freedom of assembly. And for anybody to say, "Don't do that," is basically say "Shut up. Do not speak. Do not use your First Amendment rights." So I can look at a candidate that I think is abysmally bad. I would never say to that candidate "Do not run." I would try to oppose the candidate or defeat the candidate. So, it's not just they're trying to shut up third party candidates, it's they increase it with enforcement power to keep them off the ballot, to harass them, to file frivolous suits. I think that's the distinction.

Steve Skrovan: I'm sorry Ralph, he's trying to say - he's probably someone who thought well, strategically maybe you shouldn't run, or Jill Stein shouldn't run, while acknowledging your right to run. And he's not doing anything to block that actively, other than say that.

Ralph Nader: See, there's no such thing as strategically telling people that they should "shut up." That's not an absolute version of the First Amendment, but it comes close to being a very strong defense of the First Amendment toward people whose views you may find abhorrent. But you should never say, "don't express these views." You contend them in a market place of ideas. I think that is what is missed. Simply to say, "Well you should run as a Green during the Gore/Bush campaign. But it's not smart to." Really? Well then, argue it yourself. I think it was very important to provide an alternative voice to the American people on issues of change and redirection that a majority of people support and were taken off the table by both Gore and Bush. What happens when you start using the "strategic" argument, Steve, is you start getting close to scapegoating. Because if the candidate doesn't agree with your strategic argument to withdraw or not to run, that means that the candidate gets blamed for the Electoral College. Gore won the popular vote. The Electoral College took it away from him. Blame the Greens. Or any kind of criminal shenanigans in Florida, violating all kinds of laws and Constitutional rights of people. Oh, blame the Greens. So, the strategic argument is basically an anti-First Amendment position that leads to scapegoating and worse. It discourages people from participating in the electoral process, because they don't have adequate choice of candidates.

Steve Skrovan: All right, very good. David...

David Feldsman: This question comes from Jon Anderson. Ralph, while talking about how the Canadian healthcare system could be implemented in the United States, you've pointed out that quote 'They look like us.' That is: Canadians look like people from the United States. In what context do you mean that?" And you just got back from Canada, right?

Ralph Nader: Yes, where there were large audiences and national TV coverage for the views reflected in my new book, Breaking Through Power: It's Easier Than We Think. Unfortunately, we don't have that kind of media freedom in the United States, especially with the commercial media. My point, "they look like us" - what I meant was - whenever we say to interest groups in the US, "Well, you know, Scandinavia, Japan, people elsewhere, they do it differently." Often the answer is, "Well, they're different cultures. They have different traditions. They're not like us." Well, Canada and the US were settled by Europeans. And then waves of immigrants from other parts of the world came to both countries. We're both melting pots. And that's what I meant when I said, "They look like us." In other words, the lack of a full Medicare system in the US cannot be sloughed off, when you use Canada as an example in comparison with using Japan as an example, which has full Medicare for all.

Steve Skrovan: Well, that's our show, thank you for the question, Jon. Thank you all for your questions. Keep them coming either on Ralph's Facebook page or on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website.

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 from Russell Mohkiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. We'll talk to you then, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you. It's holiday gift time. If you go to tortmuseum.org, you'll go to the Tort Store where there's some wonderful books and t-shirts and other reflections of our civil justice system, which is so central to our democracy and access to justice. Tortmuseum.org.