

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 151 TRANSCRIPT

David Feldman: From the KPFK Studios in Southern California.

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

[Music]

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman who has just been nominated for the Supreme Court. Congratulations, David.

David Feldman: Yes. It was an honor to be up against Meat Loaf and Gary Busey. They are formidable competitors.

Steve Skrovan: There is no show without the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello both of you. We have a very provocative show today and can't wait to get underway.

Steve Skrovan: You know what? I'm always excited about doing this show every week. But, every once and awhile I get even more excited. And when I told my colleagues at the TV show I write for who we were having on this week, they all got excited, too. And that's not an excitable bunch. This week, our first guest is former Secretary of Labor now Berkeley professor Robert

Reich. And we're going to very simply ask him, "What do we do now?" Also, on today's show we're going to talk about violence in the media, specifically Pixar Films and how that affects our children. We're going to do that with mom and child researcher Heidi Tilney Kramer. But first, let's get to the big question, "What do we do now?" To help us answer that is our first guest. David?

David Feldman: Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Bloom Center for Developing Economies. He served as Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration, during which *Time Magazine* named him one of the ten most effective cabinet secretaries of the 20th century. He's written fourteen books, including the best sellers Aftershock, The Work of Nations and Beyond Outrage. And his most recent: Saving Capitalism. He's also a founding editor of the *American Prospect Magazine*, chairman of Common Cause, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and co-creator of the award-winning documentary *Inequality for All*. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Professor Robert Reich.

Robert Reich: Well, thank you David and Steve. I am just so pleased, tickled, and honored to be on with my old friend, Ralph Nader.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, Robert. You dedicate one of your recent books, Saving Capitalism For The Many Not The Few - the subtitle is very important - to John Kenneth Galbraith, the famous progressive economist at Harvard, Ambassador of India under the Kennedy Administration and the author of many books that took apart many of the myths of corporate capitalism. In 1970 he wrote an article in *Harpers Magazine* entitled, "Who Needs Democrats And What It Takes To Be Needed." This is coming from a loyal Democrat. But he was not a panderer. He knew how important the Party was to stand up straight. He said in the article in that *Harpers* - this is 1970 now - "The function of the Democratic party in this century at least has in fact been to embrace its solutions, even when as in the case of Roosevelt's New Deal or the Kennedy-Johnson civil rights legislation. It outrages not only Republicans but the Democratic establishment as well. And if the

Democratic Party doesn't render this function at whatever cost and reputable outrage and respectable heart disease, it has no purpose at all. The play will pass to those who do espouse solutions. The system is not working. The only answer lies in political action to get a system that does work." I'm going to read some familiar words back to you. In 2001, you wrote an article in the *Washington Post* that was amazingly prescient. And you said, "The Democratic Party, it's dead. I know a dead party when I see one, and I'm looking at a dead party right now. Just consider the past eight years: lost the presidency, both houses of Congress, almost all its majorities in state legislatures, most governorships, will lose additional House seats in the next redistricting, most of the current justices of the Supreme Court appointed by Republicans, also most current federal judges and the interminable Bill Clinton scandals. The Democratic Party is stone dead, dead as a doornail." That was in 2001 in the *Washington Post*. It's almost exactly what you could write today. Answer to the question that we all want to hear from you, Robert Reich, "What do we do now?" We have to pay attention to the major tool in our two-party duopoly, the Democratic Party, that seems to be at the same low ebb as you described it in 2001. Hasn't learned from its lessons of defeat. Keeps reappointing its leadership - losers and losers - and leaves the American people with a great quandary. Could you comment on that? Your comments on the party in 2001 almost verbatim could be applied today, loss of state legislatures, governors, Congress, Supreme Court et cetera.

Robert Reich: If I haven't forgotten that 2001 article I wrote, it's pretty depressing hearing it coming back, because right now. It's almost as you say it's exactly the same thing. I mean Democrats have sixteen governorships out of fifty and I think it's thirty-two state legislatures that are fully under Republican control. And the future looks very bleak, unless the Party very radically reforms itself. I mean, I think one thing that we know now and I know now that I didn't know fully in 2001 is that we are in a populist era. The biggest and strongest and most powerful force in American politics is rejection of the status quo and a repudiation of politics as usual, and a deep and profound distrust of elites, including the current power structure of America. Now that has resulted in two kinds of populism coming to the fore in 2016. One was Bernie Sanders' progressive populism and the other was Donald Trump's authoritarian populism. I think the question hovering over America's future is which form of populism is going to ultimately prevail. At some point I

assume, hopefully, some voters are going to discover that they have been completely hoodwinked. It's bait and switch. I mean even in its purist form, authoritarian populism just simply doesn't work. We know that. Half of the 20th century, we saw that, because it destroys democracy. And I think Democrats really do have got to get behind the alternative of progressive populism, because the economy is not working for most Americans. I wish Democrats would stop saying it is. Although the economic data shows lower unemployment and higher wages than eight years ago, the fact is the typical family is still much poorer today than it was even in the year 2000, the year before I wrote the article in *The Washington Post* that you're quoting from, if you adjust for inflation. And also median weekly earnings are no higher than they were in 2000. You've got a large number of working age people - mostly men - who have dropped out of the labor force altogether. And another new problem is that is job insecurity. Many large numbers 20, 30, 40% of Americans are working in either more than one job, or they're working as contractors or freelancers. They have no idea what they're going to earn next week or next month, certainly not next year. And inequality is wider and its consequences are more savage in the United States than any other advanced nations. You've got to have a part a Democratic Party that is really capable of becoming a movement instead of just a big fundraising machine, which is what the Democratic Party now is.

Ralph Nader: Here is the problem. Whenever it's challenged from the outside it becomes very aggressive against people espousing policies that the Democratic should establish should we believe in it, like raising the minimum wage, changing the corporate tax system, cracking down on corporate abuses against consumers and labor, stronger labor organizing laws. I've of course been exposed to that. But what we're seeing here is almost a force field, professor Reich, where the demographic shift is in favor of the Democrats clearly. But they've lost two presidential elections 2000 and 2016 having won the majority vote and lost the Electoral College vote. Now, here's what I mean. They're standing in the way. They won't get out of the way. They won't internally reform. And they become very aggressive in crushing - often with unsavory tactics - challenges from the progressive wing, mostly recently Bernie Sanders and the dirty tricks they played on him. Here's the question: how do you deal with a Democratic party that defines itself primarily with this statement, "Do you know how bad the Republicans are?" instead of "Do you

know how good we can become?” How do you deal with it when it’s outsmarted all over the country in redistricting by clever and agile Republican strategists, and when it won’t join an interstate compact movement led by Steve Silberstein, who’s a wealthy philanthropist in San Francisco, who’s already gotten with about half a dozen staff, California, Illinois, Maryland, New York and others to pass laws that say that they will throw the Electoral College votes to any presidential candidate that wins the national popular vote, resulting in neutralizing the Electoral College. They’ve lost two presidential races after winning the majority vote. How do you deal with a party that has such suicidal tendencies?

Robert Reich: Well, I think two ways. One way is you threaten them. You say, “If you are not going to change your ways, you’re going to become even more comatose than you are now. You’re already on life support, but if you don’t change your ways, the future is really bleak, and there’s going to be a big void. And that void is going to be taken up by a new party, a third party.” The other is to remind them what happened in the Democratic primary in terms of not so much the negatives - although certainly those happen - but the life of the party. I mean the actual enthusiasm, passion, youth, principles and ideals in that Party was elicited. That life of the party was elicited by Bernie Sanders’ campaign. And now I don’t want to denigrate what Hillary Clinton accomplished. I mean she did, after all, win the popular vote by almost three million people. But it’s only to recognize - and I think the Democratic Party has to recognize - what everybody witnessed, a huge outpouring of excitement that Bernie’s campaign inspired especially from the young people. This is the future of the Democratic Party. It is the only reasonable future of the Democratic Party based on empirical evidence. The party has got to change from being a giant fundraising machine to a movement that unites the poor working class, middle class, black and white, who haven’t had a raise in thirty years and who most of whom feel angry, powerless, disenfranchised. If the party doesn’t understand these basic realities and fails to do what’s needed, then a third party is going to emerge to fill the void. Now, having said all that I just want to give a shout out for those Democrats, standard Democrats who now are starting to show some backbone in the Senate, resisting some of the Trump nominees; and people like Jeff Merkley, who are saying we’re not going to even entertain a vote on Gorsuch because they stole, the Republicans basically stole the Supreme Court seat. And enough backbone, enough Senators, enough Democrats, who

show enough backbone I think is a very good sign. And they're doing in part - not just because their own conscience dictate it - but they're doing in part because so many Americans, Democrats and progressives have stood up over the last week and a half and said, "No!" and called their members of Congress and began to act like a movement, a resistance movement. And that's really what we need. The Democratic Party is not going to change, unless we have a resistance movement that forces that kind of change.

Ralph Nader: What is most encouraging in the last few days is this incredible outpouring into the streets. Everywhere. It's not just New York City or Washington. It's everywhere.

Robert Reich: It's everywhere.

Ralph Nader: And it seems to be spontaneous. And it seems to have legs, because Trump will continue to be the provocateur in charge or in-chief provocateur.

Robert Reich: I'm always the kind of person that looks for a silver lining no matter how bad it gets; and I have been looking in vain for a silver lining for this Trump tyrant, this man-child of a kind of xenophobic, weird megalomaniac we have as president. But the one silver lining, Ralph, you've just pointed to, and that is that there is this outpouring of anger and fear and defiance that I haven't seen since the Vietnam War quite frankly. And it *is* spontaneous. We saw it the other night at airports, people just pouring out to airports with regard to this Muslim ban, which is unprincipled. It's against all of our history. It arguably violates the Constitution. Even though many of these people are not American citizens, still we have a separation of church and state. We've never had a ban on a religion. And, of course, it's a *Muslim* ban. And I don't want to get us into the weeds of the Muslim ban right this moment, I'm just saying, yes, we have a huge resistance movement that is being born. And it is pushing Democrats in Congress, in the Senate to act in ways the Democrats have not acted in for years. And that is all to the good.

Ralph Nader: That's your optimistic reputation, Robert Reich. What I see is that a growing outcry - as you see it - a growing pouring out into the streets. But I don't see it transforming into votes, breaking through the force field that is now the Democratic Party. There is a real outcry for a higher minimum wage. There's a real vote poll showing left/right support among workers. Seventy-five percent or more want a minimum wage around \$12 or more an hour. There is an outcry in many directions against Wall Street's power over Main Street, against the unfairness overall in the system, the inequities, inequalities, all the things you've pointed out in your many books. But look at the scene in Congress. They just introduced full Medicare For All, John Conyers Bill 767. Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer have not thrown their support behind it. They have fifty-one House members, the lowest of any recent years, even though this is a great opportunity to bring to bear an insurance system that is much more efficient than the present system, covers everybody, gives free choice of doctor and hospital, and saves a lot of lives. Minimum wage, where are the Democrats in the Congress? They're not making it a big issue. It's like pulling teeth deep to even get an introduction of a bill on the minimum wage. Long overdue consumer protection that's draining consumers of tens of billions of dollars, forget about it. When the Democrats controlled the House and Senate in 2009 and 2010, we couldn't get to Senate Democratic committee chairs to hold long overdue hearings after a eight year George W. Bush drought on many issues that are critical to the livelihoods of people, who pay all the bills, the consumers, not to mention investigations into the inner city racketeering of corporate criminals, not just red-lining and payday loan rackets et cetera. Not to mention the plight of occupational disease and trauma, the jeopardy to pensions. You see, I'm not seeing it translated. And when you talk to people in the streets, they hardly ever mention Congress. And they say, "Wait a minute. What do you really want in this country to happen?" They say, "Well, we want this and we want that." I say, "Don't you know that it's got to go through Congress? And how are you not taking all that energy in the streets and keeping it from going into the ether and laser beam focusing on 535 men and women, Senators and Representatives, who have all that power?" And the same is true for people like Tom Steyer, Al Gore, George Soros on climate change, Professor Reich. You can't get them to focus on Congress. "Congress is hopeless." "Congress is gridlocked." "The Republicans control all." So, unless we breakthrough this force field, unless we see the Democrats leading the campaign finance for reform legislation, even if they're not going to win, they seem to

give up, unless they're in charge. And when they're in charge, it doesn't become a priority. I think I see it from Washington point of view. You're looking at it from a California point of view.

Robert Reich: (laughing) That's maybe I find silver linings in California. You don't see them in Washington.

Ralph Nader: It will soon be called The People's Republic of California at this rate, eh?

Robert Reich: There are moves afoot to become a Province of Canada, if this keeps up much longer. But I think that the real issue that you and I are tiptoeing around, and we should stop tiptoeing around it, is money. I mean the Democratic Party's money establishment, the big donors, the major lobbyists, the retired members of Congress, who become bundlers and lobbyists, they are big, big part of the problem, have been in the past. Even though many might officially consider themselves liberal, and they don't necessarily recoil from an active government. The fact is that their preferred remedies spare corporations and the wealthy from making any sacrifices. And the moneyed interests in the Democratic Party over the last twenty-five years - I saw it; I was there - they allowed the deregulation of Wall Street, and they encouraged the bail out of Wall Street. They barely were concerned about the growth - in fact they weren't at all concerned about the growth of tax havens or insider trading or the increasing market power of major industries that are driving up bills for food and telecom and airlines and health insurance and pharmaceuticals and high tech. They talk about widening inequality, but they are not willing to make any sacrifices with regard to widening inequality. Meanwhile, they've allowed labor unions to shrink to near irrelevance. One hope I have - and it's really based upon what we saw from the Bernie Sanders campaign - is that the Democratic Party realizes it doesn't have to basically prostitute itself to big money. In fact, not only does it not have to, but it must not. It has to break the umbilical cord. It has to sever its relationship from big money. It's got to do what Bernie did and rely on small donations. It's got to become a membership organization, maybe five dollars or three dollars a year from millions and millions and millions of people that would do just as well, but it would have a much bigger base. And meanwhile, individuals have got to form with their friends, with their families, with

their neighbors what people are now calling Indivisible. And that comes out of a group of former Congressional staffers, who put together a very important guide on how to put pressure on your members of Congress. Indivisible groups or Indivisible Resistance groups and just keep on being incredible activists, but not just demonstrate. As you are saying, Ralph Nader, what we need is to turn the demonstrations into political strategy. And that means through these local grassroots organizations that are springing up. And I know they're springing up, because many have been in touch with me. These resistance groups - these Indivisible Resistance groups all over the country - they are becoming grassroots political action, citizen action agents, change agents. They are putting pressure on their members of Congress. They are calling, writing, keeping the phone lines completely tied up. They are already looking at the midterm elections for 2018. They're working in their Congressional districts. They're working across districts. They are also becoming more and more active with regard to the national federal rights project and also Steve Silberstein's project to get rid of the Electoral College. This is where change happens. Change does not happen in Washington. Washington responds to the changes that are happening among voters who are becoming activated and activist. This is why we ultimately ended the Vietnam War - for those of us who are old enough to remember that. This is how we got Civil Rights legislation - for those of us who are old enough to remember that one. Many young people today don't remember how citizen's activism translates into political change. And this is why I think that the silver lining here, Trump's outrages actually are putting more people, getting more people activist, putting more people into the role of citizen activists that we've seen since Vietnam.

Ralph Nader: If they only realize it, it's a lot easier than they think. A few hundred organized people in every Congressional district as you allude, representing a broad public opinion, zeroing in on the two Senators and Representatives issuing summons inviting them to town meetings of the people with the agenda prepared by the people can be transformative. You got five hundred and thirty-five politicians, who are scared of the people. People've got to understand.

Robert Reich: Five hundred and thirty-five politicians, who's major goal - I mean I don't want to assume that they are all lacking principle - but their major goal is to be re-elected; and if hundreds of people in their district are organized, that is a huge, huge deal. Then they're going to listen. And

that's why that grassroots organization becomes the key to putting pressure on Congress and getting more backbone in the Democratic Party. And even, let's not forget the Republicans. I mean, we used to have principled liberal Republicans. And there are still, I'm told there are some, but we need more. And the kinds of unconstitutional steps, violation of our basic norms and values and Constitution that Trump is now embarking on. It's not a Democrat versus Republican issue. It is an American issue. And the people are rising. If you look at, for example, the Gorsuch nomination, I frankly think that there is a fundamental democratic - small "d" democratic - issue behind all of this, and that is that we have a President, who may not be in fact in many people's minds is illegitimate. I don't know if you remember that Diane Feinstein, when she was - two weeks ago or three weeks ago - she was asked on television, do you believe that Russian operatives affected the outcome of the election, not just affected the election, but the fact that the *outcome* of the election? Diane Feinstein, remember, is the ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Diane Feinstein said - and answered the question, "Did Russian operatives affect the *outcome* of the 2016 election?" She said, "Yes." Now, why should we go along with a Supreme Court nomination from a President, whose legitimacy is in such doubt, who won't provide his tax returns, won't even put his assets into a blind trust? Why shouldn't Democrats and even responsible Republicans say, "We are not going to even hold a vote on whoever you come up with? We're not going to get pulled in to the old fight over our head's credentials, are his ideology appropriate and what's he going to do on abortion rights? Let's not even get into that. We're not going to hold a vote on a president's nominees until the Senate Intelligence Committee and the FBI finish their investigation about the Putin connection, and whether in fact this is a legitimate President. And we're not going to do it until he releases his tax returns and puts his assets into a blind trust, because we don't trust that he is a responsible and legitimate President." That's what we ought to be talking about. And I think that Senator Jeff Merkley, Senator Jeff Merkley and other Senators - because the people are rising - are talking that way now. This is a big deal.

Ralph Nader: Professor Larry Tribe, a preeminent Constitutional law expert of Harvard has stated that Donald Trump is in daily violation of the Constitution, the Emoluments Clause. He has business interests all over the world. He still owns these interests. Management is by his children.

He won't dispose of them. And all kinds of interest around the world can enrich him. And that is a clear violation of the Emoluments rule and an impeachable offense right there.

Robert Reich: Absolutely. There you have it. The Emoluments Clause in Article One Section Nine says very clearly that no high official of the United States shall take money or any other gift from a foreign government. And yet he is doing that all the time. His ban on Muslims, which Rudy Giuliani said a couple of days ago, "Of course it's a ban on Muslims. That's what Trump has wanted to do. I just advised him on how to make it look like it's not a ban on Muslims." Now, arguably - and many lawyers and many Constitutional lawyers are now and many - seventeen Attorneys General of states are moving toward fighting that on the basis that that violates the First Amendment in terms of the breach of the clause that says that there shall be no establishment of religion. You've got - and of course as I've said, the likelihood that Russian operatives didn't just influence the election but affected the outcome of the election - you got the Constitution and the legitimacy of our government at stake here. And Trump is a genius at diverting attention. His tweets get a lot of attention everyday and his outrageous acts get a lot of attention. But we have got to keep - and Democrats have got to keep, and responsible Republicans have got to keep - the public's eye focused on the fundamental breaches of the Constitution that undermine the legitimacy, completely, of this President. I mean, this is not normal. And we can't normalize this by just having another debate about whether, for example, a Gorsuch, the new Supreme Court nominee's ideology or likely vote on Roe V. Wade or whatever it is. That just normalizes the Trump presidency.

Ralph Nader: Neil Gorsuch is a plutocrat's dream and a people's nightmare. He's more extreme than Antonin Scalia. If given the chance - and the 10th Circuit hasn't had those many cases - he's a predictable vote against labor, against consumers, against the public lands, he's a really terrible choice. And those will come out in the coming days. He's written articles. He's part of the Federalist Society. His ideology is fairly well declared by him. When it comes to Trump though, we're dealing with something even worse, I think. We're talking with Robert Reich, professor at University of California Berkeley, author of many books including Saving Capitalism: For the Many Not the Few. We're dealing here with a dangerously unstable, easily bruisable ego. And so

he has began a two part dangerous escalation. The first one is with this ban and refugee and hatred against the Muslims. And that plays into the hands of our adversaries overseas, who are already increasing their recruitment. And what are they learning? They're learning that if they generate an attack in this country, Trump becomes and uncontrollable monster, and everything we care about is crowded off the screen. And it's all about terror. It's all about more military. It's all about attacking anywhere in the world. The other escalation that's now in place, is the police state escalation. The more and more protests that are occurring now - there are bills and state legislatures like North Dakota and elsewhere that want to seriously increase the criminal scale of protest from misdemeanors to felonies, for example, for stopping traffic and non-violent civil disobedience. And he is perfectly capable of unleashing a police state in this country. The question is whether the people of this country have strong enough defenses and whether the Constitution could be utilized strongly enough to push back on this. I don't know any more perilous time in our history. What's your view?

Robert Reich: Well, I agree. I agree with it - you're two points. And I wanted to just to add a third, and that is that Trump's attack on the press and on the freedom of the press and his attempts to intimidate the press and set up his own alternative: he calls it his direct link to the people through Tweets and through rallies and through anything else that his, basically his most important assistant, Steve Bannon of Breitbart News, comes up with: this I think is also incredibly dangerous. This is what through history despots and fascists and totalitarians have done. They basically delegitimize the independent press; and they substitute their own channel for getting their facts - which are not facts - they're made up - to the public, so the public becomes confused about what is the truth, especially over a basic question like how big a mandate does Trump have. Well, the fact is he lost the popular vote by almost three million. We know that. And we also know that - as I've I said - there is a real reason to believe that Russian operatives stole the election for him. We also have a lot of reason to believe that even when it comes to the number of people who came to the Mall to hear his Inauguration that that was unusually small, relative to other Presidents. And yet on each of these he has told big lies and then condemned the press, when the press corrected him. And his surrogates, like Steven Bannon and Kellyanne Conway and his press secretary Sean Spicer, well, they've all gone out - and Sean Spicer and the rest of them - and they have made the

lies even bigger. The use of the Big Lie is to me as dangerous as anything else Trump is doing and the de-legitimization of the independent press. When you put that all together, you have not only a Constitutional crisis, you've got a crisis of democracy. And that's what is motivating people right now. That's why people who have never been involved in activist efforts, who have never actually demonstrated, who have never got on the phone and called their members of Congress and continued to call until they get through the switch boards, that's why they're doing it. People at the grassroots are saying, "Wait a minute. This is a takeover of our democracy. This man, not only does he have a personality disorder, a sociopath or a pathological narcissist, but he also - he and Steve Bannon and a few others around him - are intent and already doing it. They are taking away the pillars of our democracy.

Ralph Nader: We're running out of time, Professor Reich. Let me try to summarize it this way. Donald Trump and his cohorts are losing the public opinion battle. His polls are very low, for a new President, unprecedentedly low. It comes in around 40, 42%. And he's not getting any higher polls of what he's been doing in the last near couple weeks. The three institutions that can challenge and curb him are the media - and they're doing what they're going to do. Their livelihood is at stake too under the First Amendment. The other two are the Courts and the Congress. And the Courts, we'll see, depends on the judges. A lot will file suits, and some of them they'll win. He'll be challenged. But Congress is what you can do something about, people, back home. Listen to Robert Reich. Join these Congress watch the groups. Do more than just contact your member of Congress. Summon them to town meetings where you can eyeball them. That is worth an enormous amount of pressure in the right direction on your Senators and Representatives. Many of them want to do the right thing. They know how to do it, but they've got to get backbone from you. You give them the backbone. Others may not want to do the right thing, but they want to get re-elected. In the 1960s and early '70s we changed the minds of many members of Congress on worker, environmental, and consumer issue legislation, who never before voted for the people, because they felt the rumble from the people back home. They had their finger to the wind. You better give them some wind. It's good to write them, it's good to email them, it's good to telephone them, but it's far better to start scheduling for March, April and May town meetings back home. If you show 'em you can get two to three hundred people out, you'll get a Representative showing

up. If you can get five people out, you'll get any Senator showing up. That's how few people show up these days. It's very impressive. So, I think you got to take it into your hands. The longer we wait, the more perilous the situation. The other thing we can rely on I think, Robert Reich, is this administration is coming in drunk with its own power. It's going to get a lot of resistance from the Civil Service. Already, a thousand diplomats have signed an expression of dissent from all over the world to what Trump just did with his immigrant and refugee directive. There's going to be resistance, but what it all comes down to it is the courts, the legislature, the media, the civil service, when they see you the people out there mobilizing and setting up a massive rally encircling the entire Congress and then one encircling the entire White House sometime in May and June, you'll see that the rush to tyrannize, plutocrat, and oligarch our society will be rolled back. What do you think in closing remarks, Professor Reich?

Robert Reich: Well, I could not have said it better. And, Ralph Nader, you are my teacher with regard to all of this. You've been talking about democracy and writing and making a ruckus for as long as I can remember. And when the public has listened to you, we have made progress. And now the public has got to listen to you once again, because we are now in the biggest crisis of our democracy we have had - and I would say certainly in my lifetime -and I would include Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon, I thought it would never get worst of than Richard Nixon. And this is worse than Nixon. Thank you, Ralph, for everything you're doing and have done. And it's been a pleasure to talk.

Ralph Nader: Well, tell our listeners, who are active people, they don't go around saying we're just scared. They go around saying we don't know what to do. They connect. And we always try to get them to connect. Do you have any emails or any websites that they can connect to, either your own or these groups that you're talking about - or Bernie Sanders?

Robert Reich: Well, there are three things. One is this website called Indivisibleguide.com, Indivisibleguide.com. It's a good source of information about how you can put pressure on your members of Congress. A second very good source is called Sisterdistrict.com. And this is an

effort to link up blue state districts - where you may be very happy with your member of Congress, you still need to push or him or her, but you may be relatively happy - with purple state districts. That is districts that could go blue in the midterms coming up in 2018 but need the help and encouragement and resources and people on the ground from your district. And so that Sisterdistrict.com is very, very useful and important. I would also, modesty aside, suggest you might want to go to my Facebook page, which can be found, I suppose, at Facebook. Facebook.com, whatever my Facebook page is. I think it's /RBReich/. And then I do have a website at www.robertreich.org that might find useful. I work with a little nonprofit called Inequality Media, and we're trying to get the truth out on videos and in films and a variety of platforms, because a lot of people learn best through videos and films and other, other sorts of platforms. That's what I'm doing. And I certainly hope you join us. And I'll join you. And we're joining together.

Ralph Nader: It won't be long - well said - it won't be long before the workers, who voted for Trump will see a whole series of betrayals of their hopes and dreams and what they thought they were voting for.

Robert Reich: It's already happening. And I keep on coming across people, who say to me, "Why in the world did I ever even think about voting for Trump?" I don't know if you've come across it. It's a twitter group called "Trump regrets," Trump_Regrets and all these people who have voted for Trump are tweeting their regrets. And what they've learned even over the past couple of weeks and so, yes have the courage of your conviction and understand that this one of the biggest bait-and-switches in American history.

Ralph Nader: And just getting underway. Thank you very much, Professor Robert Reich. To be continued.

Robert Reich: Okay, Ralph. Thank you and Steve and Dave. I really appreciate it. Bye-bye.

Ralph Nader: Bye-bye now.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking to Robert Reich whose website and books and documentary we will link to at the Ralphnaderradiohour.com.

You know, it's pretty well known fact that Grimm's Fairy Tales - which a lot of children of earlier generations were raised on - if you examine them closely turned it out to be... well grim, full of death and children being threatened. Think "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Hansel and Gretel." My kids on the other hand grew up in the '90s with Disney animated movies like *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin* and Pixar movies like *Toy Story* and *The Incredibles*. Those stories seem more benign, but our next guest has a different take, David?

David Feldman: Heidi Tilney Kramer is a mom and independent scholar focusing on critical children studies in US media. One of her thesis is entitled "Monsters Under the Bed: An Analysis of Torture Scenes in Three Pixar Films, *Monster Incorporated*, *The Incredibles* and *Toy Story III*." She lectures and teaches about childhood, and her recently released book [Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture](#) explores the history of propaganda and exposes the powerful forces pouring billions into influencing children with militaristic, violent and cruel images at increasingly younger ages. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Heidi Tilney Kramer.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Thank you so much for having me.

Ralph Nader: Well, this is a subject very close to our concerns. Over twenty years ago, we had a writer write a book on the commercialization of childhood. And were on in Phil Donahue Show. I called these corporations "electronic child molesters" that they circumventing as we speak and have been for year's parental discipline, parent authority over their own children and direct

marketing the most odious violence, corrupt, sickening and harmful material to the health safety and minds of our children. And I really look forward to a wider circulation to your new book Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture. Can you give us a summary of what you've discovered here and what you think should be done?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Well, thanks for asking. What I'm concerned about is really is this nationalistic glorification of militarism that has gone from the adult world now into G and PG films, which coincided with 9/11. And really I think the answer to all of this is identifying it and then teaching our children to be media literate. We have a big problem right now with children being addicted to video games, for instance, and the content is absolutely disturbing. And that's how I got on it. I was sitting with my son in the theater watching *Monsters Incorporated* and saw little Boo, the toddler who speaks only two words in the film, gets strapped into essentially the torture chair, the scream extractor. And the look of horror on her face compelled me to really look at children's media. When we talk about fairy tales, those were terrible stories, but they were taught for a lesson. And they were spoken by family or community members to teach children things like "be careful out in the big world." And now these films are so realistic. These video games are so realistic. And the kids are just sitting in front of it, watching it over and over again. In twenty-six kids' films that are all G and PG that I analyzed, I found excessive gore and slasher film technique, animal abuse, child endangerment and abuse, sexism, racism and stereotyping, worker abuse, state and corporate control, torture and the visible results of torture, gender policing and bashing, death language and action injuries, suicide, murder, the "woman as demon" trope, disability and body type problems, ageism, classism, bullying, violence in a prison scenario, concentration camp and holding facility themes, surveillance and security, fear based rhetoric and images, intimate partner abuse, war language and action, militarism and nationalism and big business promotion. So, clearly the MPAA when they labeled these films...

Ralph Nader: What is the MPAA?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Motion Picture Association of America. And really, essentially I find them to be a censorship bureau and that they're not going to allow any depictions of alternate sexuality. They are also not going to allow cursing. But, the violence component is through the roof. They're not discriminating for violence at all.

Ralph Nader: All of this is to make a profit for a number of large corporations. Would you name some of these corporations that are molesting our children and undermining parental authority? I made that point to an evangelical right-wing audience a few years ago, and they're parents. They're feeling the same thing. This is a potential left/right challenge to this kind of mindless violence. Could you name of these companies that are doing all these?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Well, certainly in my mind Pixar is an expert. But the big five media conglomerates - that control over 90% of everything we see and hear now - the big five are Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, Bertelsmann, and Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp. It's a lot power in very few hands, and I think that it's really whether, intentionally or not, the effect is the same to promote militarism, basically.

Ralph Nader: Have you been interviewed on the mass media at all NBC ...

Heidi Tilney Kramer: No.

Ralph Nader: ... CBS, Cable?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: No.

Ralph Nader: Tell us the extent to which this very important book you wrote Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture, which translates into violent action, not just violent viewpoints at a very tender age. This is a cruel ...

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Yeah. It really does, isn't it?

Ralph Nader: This is a cruelty no culture in world history would ever allow other than a commercial corporate dominated culture. Tell us what kind of coverage NPR and PBS and get ...

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Nothing.

Ralph Nader: Nothing?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: No. And, in fact, I self-published my book, because I took three years off to write it, because I became so infuriated not only that this content was in stuff that's supposed to be for little kids, but also nobody was talking about it. And for about a month, I went, "Why isn't anybody talking about this?" And I went, "I guess I need to talk about this," because the effects are not just fear and hate. We know that shows that came up around 9/11, *Homeland* and *24* and so forth, to inculcate the American public for torture. And that they're doing the same thing in children's media was horrifying. But to me, the greater harm is that nobody is really looking at this. Nobody is really talking about it. From practically day one, I mean what, kids are two and three years old, it's all couched in this "culture of cool" now. "You gotta get out to see the latest Pixar film." And nobody even thinks about it. You're so distracted by cute fonts and the bright colors and so forth. "You'll notice it for a minute, but then everything works out by the end. So, it's all okay."

Ralph Nader: But a lot of this violence is transmitted over our property, the public airwaves. Doesn't the Federal Communications...

Heidi Tilney Kramer: That's absolutely right.

Ralph Nader: Does the Federal Communications Commission have any interest to this? Have you contacted them?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: I have not, but in the book I do speak about the many, many people over the years, who have tried. So many of the rules that were in place have been worn away over the years. And that media is concentrated in so few hands is a relatively new problem. But the thing that I find concerning as well: not only are we teaching children how to be militaristic through these video games and films and so forth, but a lot of the sales of these films are split 50-50 or near about. So, somebody in another land orders one our films for their children, of course they're going to think that we deserve return violence, if even our children's materials full of it. That's something that both Plato and Aristotle totally agreed on a couple of thousand years ago. And here we are just knee deep in it.

Ralph Nader: I'm sure you're familiar with this book West Point colonel, David Grossman, over twenty... he wrote a book - this is a West Point colonel - he wrote a book with the title, Teaching Our Kids To Kill.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Yeah. Stop Teaching Our Kids To Kill.

Ralph Nader: Yes. Stop Teaching Our Kids To Kill. Is he still active in this issue?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: He is. And he's written a number of books, I think. One is called On Killing, and it's the effects on the society that engages in it. And, of course, we need to be very careful in a country where so much of our income is made through these wars. Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman is a psychology professor at West Point, and he identifies how these video game companies are using B.F. Skinner techniques of reward and punishment. It's interesting how soldiers are trained is brutalization, classical conditioning and operant conditioning. And they're using similar techniques on the children. So many people I know don't understand how or why their children are addicted to video games. But you know your body has a difficult time differentiating between real war, watching a war, or playing a war.

Ralph Nader: Tell us, are the churches worried about this at all? That's another bastion of peace and sanity.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: One would think. We're all so caught up in it. And you can't even go to a sporting event now without seeing the jets overhead with the red, white and blue exhaust coming out, all paid for with our tax dollars. I've given talks at the Unitarian Universalist Church. I'm trying to get the word out, because as you said it is something that affects both sides. And, for me it's not just that innocent children in other lands are being injured. What's happening to our own children? I mean, there's so much bullying because of all this cruelty. And of course our veterans - my father was a career military person - every day twenty-two veterans take their own lives. And it's a problem now among active duty members as well. Glorifying militarism is very dangerous...

Ralph Nader: What would you have ...

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Particularly when you're three years old.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. We're talking with Heidi Tilney Kramer, who's written a book Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture. All for-profit, responsible corporations on the New York Stock Exchange like Time/Warner and the Murdoch chain and others are raking off huge money by pumping this violence into little kids heads. Very little countervailing force. They plead the First Amendment as a way of exonerating their vicious cruelty; but the First Amendment doesn't mean that we have to let them get away with it without responding and counterclaiming and demanding that our public airwaves allow for criticism like Heidi Tilney Kramer can provide as a matter of modest balance. Tell our listeners what they can do. Suppose they are as upset as we are - and some of them have experienced it - when they see what their kids are being exposed to. Are there any citizen groups or any contacts you want to let our listeners avail themselves of?

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Yes, there are. Actually, there are some good groups out there that will teach you how to become media literate and teach your children. Common Sense Media is one of them. Sut Jhally Media Education Foundation - they have a number of very, very good films really talking about all of this. And like I said, I think that that's the key now. Once we've identified the problem, then sit with your kids and really explain to them why what they're watching is wrong or why you do not want to be complicit in buying "x" video game. It's very difficult to find video games, by the way, that are child friendly, if you will. And there's a heavy link to militarism. And if you know about "America's Army" - this free online video game targeting male teens, largely because that's who's needed for recruitment - they re-enact actual military operations. The VA is actually starting to use these video games for PTSD. It's a little scary. And the weapons are actual weapons to the point where the video game companies have to pay the arms manufacturers to use those likenesses.

Ralph Nader: It's moving very, very quickly. I think we need to have a state legislative hearing, if Congress won't have a hearing to give this greater airing. I think Scott Simon of NPR should be interested in this. You might want to contact him. He's got a very widely heard show on NPR every Saturday. Just try to get into these various receptive media outlets that are left in this country.

And just in conclusion, you want to repeat very slowly those contact groups, so people could connect with them and get angry.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Yes, Common Sense Media and Media Education Foundation, MEF run by Sut Jhally. They have a number of films that really target what's happening in media, whether it's Disney or date rape culture, for instance, the lack of female leads in media generally, different things like that - it's a very, very good group. And they have in-classroom materials that you can use. They are always there to answer your questions or to teach. Like I said, they have packets, teaching people how to be media literate, which is the key. We need to get the kids on board. I think once they see what's happening and how they are being manipulated - this content is new, but certainly propaganda is not new, and billions and billions are being poured into this to affect our kids and to cause that rift between parent and child.

Ralph Nader: I would add we need stronger parents and their child at a young age is not capable of much media literacy.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: That's right.

Ralph Nader: We need stronger parents, who shield their children, protect their children and then lash back at these electronic corporate child molesters. We've been talking with Heidi Tilney Kramer, the author of a shocking but accurate book called Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture. I'll bring the attention to this book to a group I belong to called Veterans for Peace in St. Louis, Missouri. And thank you very much for the work you do; and I hope you get much more exposure in the future.

Heidi Tilney Kramer: Thank you so much for everything, Mr. Nader.

Ralph Nader: You're welcome.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Heidi Tilney Kramer, author of Media Monsters: Militarism, Violence and Cruelty in Children's Culture. We will link to that at the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. So go that for all of that information. And, of course, I want to thank our first guest, former Secretary of Labor, author of Saving Capitalism and co-creator of the documentary "Inequality For All," that was Robert Reich.

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

Ralph Nader: Thank you. And listeners, please resort to those wonderful contacts by our two guests to get involved here. Remember all mass movements, all mass rallies; they're all made up of people who have civic self-respect and lock arms with one another.