

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 236 TRANSCRIPT

David Feldman: From the KPFK Studios in Southern California...

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

"Stand up, stand up

You've been sitting way too long"

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan. My co-host David Feldman is observing Yom Kippur as we record this. He's atoning, which is ironic because I think one of the things I expect him to atone for is not being here today. So it's just kind of a vicious circle for him. But we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello everybody.

Steve Skrovan: We have another special program today. In a lot of ways, our guest today, Phil Donahue, is the father of us all here in broadcasting, not to mention podcasting. That's because the original Phil Donahue Show was born in Dayton, Ohio--not exactly a travel hub for the country's movers and shakers. His show was one of the first, if not the first, if I'm not mistaken, to use conference-call technology to engage with guests on the phone who couldn't make the trip to Dayton. On our show here, we do much the same thing, except we're all in remote locations. I'm in Los Angeles, David is generally in New York, Ralph is in D.C., and our guests have come to us from all over the country and the world. So Phil Donahue literally invented the modern daytime talk show. His most frequent guest was our very own Ralph Nader, who appeared on the show nearly 30 times over the years. This will be Mr. Donahue's second appearance on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, so we have some catching up to do on that score. Mr. Donahue's last visit, we talked about the award-winning documentary he produced entitled "Body of War" about the life of Iraq war veteran, the late Tomas Young. Today we will discuss his views and a broad range of issues involving the media and politics. It's a rare treat for all of us. I also pulled up a Youtube video of Phil interviewing a young Donald Trump in 1987. I believe it was around the time Trump's book, The Art of the Deal came out. Maybe we can get some recollections of the dealings he's had with our current president over those years in New York. In addition, we will, as always, take some time to check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber, to get the latest on what's happening in the shadows of the corporate state. And if we have time, we'll talk about some other things. But first, let's talk to the father of us all, The Phil Donahue Show at nearly a 30-year

run in American television that along the way garnered 20 Emmy Awards. The show touched on the serious social and political issues of the day and was the first to include audience participation. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Phil Donahue.

Phil Donahue: Well thank you, thank you. I want several copies of your introduction. Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Welcome back indeed, Phil. When Studs Terkel interviewed you, right after your book, Donahue: My Own Story, came out in 1979, published by Simon and Schuster, which I hope would actually reissue it. It's so engrossing, and relevant to today's times, if only by comparison, the media then and the media now. But Studs Terkel who's done a few interviews himself. He was out of Chicago and he interviewed all kinds of people and put them into books. He was interviewing you on February 1, 1980 and he said, "I think the two interviewers I most respect working today are Oriana Fallaci and Phil Donahue. That sounds like a strange combination. Oriana Fallaci had a remarkable way of drawing out people in power--in fact, revealing them as they are, and Phil Donahue has a way of drawing out people primarily powerless." Well, you've done over 6,000 one-hour television shows in your storied career and you have had your share of different entertainment models on the show. But you also broke ground, again and again, giving first voice to powerless people. As far as I can remember, whether it's the workers, the consumers, the environment, women's rights, gay/lesbian rights and many other people who are the dissenters and you taught us that the mother of ascent is dissent in American history, and has to be protected. You broke all this ground and in the process, you had imitators of course. But I don't think people today who are under 35 or 40, appreciate the groundbreaking nature. When someone who couldn't get an interview on a tiny radio station in Texarkana, got on your show, they reached over 10 million people. Today, a cable show with three million is considered pretty good. When you look back on this Phil, you must make some comparison with today's mass media, and when you were coming up the ranks in the 60's and 70's. Can you share some of your observations and also comment on what afternoon daytime television is about?

Phil Donahue: Well thank you Ralph, and thank you for all the times you were on my show. I recall working very hard to get you to be on my program. And of course I would call your office, and your secretary would say, "Phil who"? I was only a local show at the time.

Ralph Nader: In Dayton.

Phil Donahue: In Dayton, Ohio, which was not the crossroads of the world. But I'm lucky that my program was born in Dayton. It's a town built on brains. NCR gave the world the cash register; the bell heard around the world. Charles Kettering, the suburb of Kettering, Ohio was named after him. He invented the starter motor. Remember the crank? I'm not sure I do. I'm not old enough to remember that. Of course there were these guys who owned a bicycle shop, and I forget what they gave the world. I thought about them as I walked up the spiral staircase of a double-decker aircraft. When we began our

show in 1968, we really weren't sure that we would survive. And that's not mock humility; that was the fact. Everything we competed with was either a spinning wheel or Monty Hall thing saying "Come on down", giving a contestant \$5,000 who was dressed like a chicken salad sandwich. The daytime schedule was either soap operas, or game shows with spinning wheels. Much excitement, and neon signs would say, applause, applause, and the audience would dutifully applaud. So here I come with one guest for an hour. We were a visually dull show and I remember, I just thought Ralph was on a pedestal. I was so enamoured with Ralph. I thought he was right on all of the issues and I don't want to embarrass him with my praise. But I just couldn't get him. And I heard that he was coming to Dayton through Cincinnati--an airport in Kentucky, as you might know. So I actually went down unannounced, to meet his aircraft, because I just felt that if I said, "Hi Ralph, I'm Phil Donahue", I knew he would say, "You came all the way from Dayton to meet me up here? How can I turn you down?" So there he was, comes down the stairs in his skinny tie and his shoes, which he bought at an Army/Navy store on his junior year in high school. And I'm standing there as he came up, and I said, "Hi Ralph, I'm Phil Donahue." He said, "You came all the way from Dayton to meet me here? How can I turn you down?"

Ralph Nader: I wasn't the only one. You would go to the airport to meet a lot of your guests. It was unheard of at the time.

Phil Donahue: Well, yes, I did. I drove, now you're gonna get me yacking Ralph. It is gonna get boring. I drove John Rock to and from the airport. John Rock was the physician who invented the birth control pill. He invented the pill that arrested somehow, ovulation, so that if a woman took the pill every day, whatever it was, she avoided pregnancy. Well that was a bombshell of a liberation for women all over the world. And I was just awed by this man. I picked up Norman Rockwell and his wife at the airport.

Ralph Nader: The Norman Rockwell?

Phil Donahue: Yeah. I mean I was such a lucky duck. I mean I was meeting all these people. The older I get, the more impressed I am with the opportunities I had as the host of a show. But our show was special, in that you were on for an hour. You weren't rushed. We certainly had our share of commercials, but you had some time to make your point. And, we're still scared about competing with a woman dressed like a chicken salad sandwich. So I pick up Ralph in a 1957 Chevy--no seatbelts. This was prior to Ralph successfully getting Detroit to literally put seat...imagine this achievement. You can't sell a car today without seatbelts. You can't manufacture a car today without seatbelts. Ralph was, I mean, he looked thinner, just working to get the big three to install seatbelts in the car. So here we are on the air with Ralph and an audience of mostly housewives from Miami Valley area--southwestern Ohio. And Ralph starts, and he talks about the projections from the dashboard and that what happens is, you die in the second accident. You're an egg in a crate and when you have a collision, you rattle around the inside of the automobile and if you don't have a collapsing steering wheel, your sternum is punctured by the force that throws you forward. And if you don't have specially designed locks that stay closed, you are ejected from the car. And if you're ejected from the car, your chances of survival are

significantly reduced. If your head strikes your dashboard, you may not die, but you will drool for the rest of your life. Well the housewives in the audience were slack-jawed. They couldn't take their eyes off this guy from Washington, D.C. who they had read about. And the ratings went through the roof. And Ralph was not dressed like a chicken salad sandwich.

Ralph Nader: That's for sure.

Phil Donahue: He drew the crowd. So, you know, Ralph helped me prove that you didn't have to do a Philly dilly, laugh-a-minute show to survive, to attract sponsors.

Ralph Nader: Today, there's no program remotely like yours where people like us could even get on and reach millions of people. So you had a lot of freedom. You put on Jerry Rubin, the Yippie. You put on a lot of daring people--people who challenged power (anti-war, civil rights, civil liberties)--you put them all on. You didn't have trouble with the bosses upstairs because you were syndicated in 200 stations. So a station would not like one of your guests who would censor it. You still had 199 others. And you weren't controlled by some guy in a skyscraper in Manhattan, New York. But, you did have a problem with putting Nicholas Johnson on your show, and you almost quit if they tried to censor out Nicholas Johnson. So who is Nicholas Johnson?

Phil Donahue: Nicholas Johnson was a member of the FCC. He was an outspoken challenger of concentrated media. He was one of the early, early voices reminding the audience that a monopoly media squelches controversy, is cold to anti-establishment ideas such as war, and how he got on the FCC, I do not recall.

Ralph Nader: Lyndon Johnson nominated him. Nicholas Johnson was head of federal Maritime Administration. And then he moved over. He was in his early 30's. He wrote a book called How to Talk Back To Your TV Set. But why were the bosses and upstairs so upset--when they let you have me on, they let all kinds of dissenters; here's a government official, Federal Communications Commission.

Phil Donahue: Well, first of all they weren't thrilled about letting you on, as you say. But Johnson was attacking the very heart of their profits, of their businesses, not allowing them to have more—they wanted as many stations as they could get and Johnson was saying, don't allow this. This is not a good idea. You'll have a monopoly media and that's too much power. And they'll be making the decision about what gets on TV. And that still lives today. I mean, corporate ownership is, I think, the biggest challenge to a robust media featuring all kinds of voices. It lives and I ought to know. I lost my job because I opposed the invasion of Iraq.

Ralph Nader: This is on MSNBC.

Phil Donahue: Right, which is one of the biggest—owned by General Electric at the time—one of the biggest defense contractors in the world and here they got this ex-talk-show guy on their own station, criticizing the decision to go to war, and invade Iraq. And so I was gone like six...I don't know...a week or so before the invasion. It was definitely a corporate hit. I think that there's a lot of evidence out there that they feel a bit guilty about what they did to me because shortly after I was fired most of their employees, who had a show, opposed the invasion of Iraq. Bush was wrong for bombing crowded cities at night where old people and children were sleeping. And America – the majority of people came around to believe that this was a massive blunder by Bush.

Ralph Nader: And before they closed your show down in 2003, MSNBC—owned by General Electric and Microsoft at that time—they required you to have two supporters of the Iraq War boomlet for every critic, and still that wasn't enough for them; they were so terrified of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

Phil Donahue: Yes, they were. The anti-war voice at the time--remember this was not long after the towers were knocked down here in New York. I mean, America, everybody it seemed at that time, wanted to bomb something. We've got to...when Bush said, "And the people who knocked down these towers will hear from us soon"; yeah, and the lust for war was palpable. And you know, here comes Donahue saying, "Wait a minute, are you sure he has weapons of mass... do we know? And some brave members of Congress spoke up. But the debate in Congress about whether to give Bush the freedom to go to war, not only survived, but was overwhelmingly approved. Only 23 senators voted no.

Ralph Nader: I should say to our listeners that you did have Nicholas Johnson on, because you threatened to quit. But General Electric and Microsoft owning MSNBC, they didn't give you the chance. They just told you, I think on Monday, clear out your staff and your desks by Friday, it's over; just because you wanted to air the criticisms of Bush and Cheney's drumbeat to engage in their criminal war of aggression in Iraq, which was not declared. But you've always had that reputation of wanting to put on the air people who were not just controversial, but people who were considered against civil rights, against civil liberties, or religious right wingers. You had Rev. Jerry Falwell on for 30-some times. But you also had Donald Trump on in 1987 when he was a 41-year-old, brash businessman. And you were quoted last year in an interview that you would be, "first in line", to interview Trump today. So what would you ask Trump if you interviewed him today? What would you talk about?

Phil Donahue: Oh man, I've been asked that before. Well, I'd ask him, what is the difference between ISIS and now I can't figure the other.

Ralph Nader: Al Qaeda?

Phil Donahue: Well yeah, that would be one example. I'd like to get into his head. He's bragging about crotch grabbing. They let you do it if you're a star. That was recorded, as you know. I mean, I would throw right back at him, some of the more embarrassing things he has said. How do you explain this, Mr. President? Talk to him about his racist response to black people who wanted to rent units in one of his apartment buildings, his multi-serial philandering. Oh God, I mean where do you start with this guy?

Ralph Nader: You were critical of the way journalists were covering or handling Trump, after he became president. You said, journalists should quote, "get out of Washington" and spend more time talking with Trump's voters--the real people. What do you think motivated Trump's voters, other than the Democratic Party's anaemic history in recent years?

Phil Donahue: Well, there are a lot of broken dreams in America. And there are some things I think that, those who are almost gagging in their condemnation of Trump today. I mean they can't think of enough adjectives to describe the contempt they feel for this horrible man, who has taken our presidency. That's how the mainstream, elite media, as he would call them, feel about America. This is our country. This is our America. But I think that if they could just start breathing again, and consider that this problem lies not in the stars, but in ourselves. When Trump walks out, he gets in his big airplane; he flies to the nearest airport that will take his plane; gets off the plane, four limousines meet him on the tarmac, and drive him to the nearest, largest venue. And he walks out on the stage, applauding, and looks like he's applauding for himself. And his big, red tie, and his hair, not an empty seat. And what you see in the foreground, are arms raised with cell phones, taking his picture all across the vast width of the stage. Who are those people? Who are they? Now, these people haven't, you know, this is a hard point to make because a lot of journalists will say that, we'll cover that. Well they did, but not enough. These are people whose kids are addicted to opioids. Their children can't pay back their college loans. The wage earner of the family, if he has a job, he hears that the company he works for is about to be sold to either China or some eastern country, and their congressmen have fabulous health care that is affordable. Hillary just made a hundred thousand dollars for a speech to Goldman Sachs. Their CEO makes 600 times their salary. You can't do that to people. Sooner or later, they're gonna go "kaboom." And in this case, "kaboom" meant voting for a guy who walked out on the stage and said, "You're being screwed!" And every one of these people in the audience raise their cell phones and say, "Yeah, the first candidate to finally speak for us!" The result, a lot of nice people—we have to understand this—a lot of nice people voted for Donald Trump. And they feel totally abandoned. They feel that no one is paying attention to them. Everybody has a better deal than they do, especially the elite. There's certainly—media is not really paying attention to them—media is Trump, Trump, Trump all day long. What's not being covered? We bombed a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders. Bombed the hospital. What is not being covered? Imagine the news that we aren't hearing about. I mean, this is a, for an egomaniac, can you imagine to suddenly wake up with all these perks and he's sitting there fantasizing about having Trump...on his name, on high rises in Moscow and all kinds of other places around the world. I mean this is an orgy of self-indulgence and we have allowed this to happen. I'm reading a book by Chris Hedges who is very, very brave and totally outspoken. He thinks the American idea is over. We can never recover what the framers have set up for us. We can never get

back. I mean you read this book, you got to lay down. This is, you know, there's a piece of you that says, maybe he's right. Nobody can dissent. We brought jingoism to a new level. We are the strongest people. We are the last super power of the free world. No one can really survive without us. We are the strongest military. It goes on and on and nobody can dissent. Dissent is treasonous.

Ralph Nader: Well speaking of that, that's why we miss Phil Donahue, because all these dissenters, people who have the facts, people who want to turn the country around, basically have no opportunity to reach large audiences. Just to give you an example, you remember when you had Dr. Sidney Wolfe of Public Citizen Health Research Group on with his book, Worst Pills/Best Pills. And you would go through one brand-name pharmaceutical after another. They were all approved by the FDA. Some had bad side effects, and some had minimal side effects; that's why Worst Pills/Best Pills. And the audience would be fascinated and they'd stand up and say, you know, so and so has high blood pressure, and they're taking this drug and it is getting them groggy and maybe that's why the person fell and broke her hip. And the ratings went through the roof and half a million copies of this very low-priced book, lifesaving book, Worst Pills/Best Pills, were sold on the show. And then after your show was over, he put out a new edition and he couldn't even get on afternoon national TV, even though it would have generated high ratings. What's going on with afternoon talk shows, when even subject matter that grabs millions of people, like Worst Pills/Best Pills did, can't even get on any of these shows that focus on sadistic/masochistic, imploding stories, and ignore the big issues of our times? Do you ever watch afternoon TV?

Phil Donahue: Well I watch the cable shows. I watch MSNBC. It's like a guilty pleasure. It's like being able to look into the window of the office from which you've been fired.

Ralph Nader: Well, these are shows like Dr. Phil and Ellen DeGeneres, they're afternoon TV. Nobody has any authority to talk about working families, or consumers or health care, or corporate crime, or fairer tax system, or what global corporations are doing to the country. They can't get on it no matter whether they have a book or whether they have a documentary.

Phil Donahue: I think that about you why don't we see more of you? It is hard to make this point without sounding like kissing a baby, but you have to be popular. Amy Goodman, a fabulous voice whose motto is "go to where the silence is"--you don't see her. The word is out that you've got to make people happy; you've got to make them laugh; they have to like you. And the feeling is that me, and you, and Amy, for example, are scolds. Nobody likes a scold. And if you're out of work, and as I say, your kids have dropped out of school, because they can't pay their college loans, you don't want to be peached to. 'All right, all right; I understand your point, but I'm gonna turn to the channel where contestants are dressed like a chicken salad sandwich. I want to be entertained'.

Ralph Nader: It's sort of like A Brave New World and 1984 combined. But I've just come out with a book called To the Ramparts, how Clinton, Bush and Obama paved the way for Trump, and how it's not too late to turn it around. I think a lot of the listeners of this program like it, because we do have all kinds of bad things described on the show by authoritative people. But we always give them something to do. And I think the main way to start turning this country around is to take control of Congress; people have got to grab control of Congress from global corporations and all the swarming lobbyists every day. They can do it. There's only 535 people and as you once said on the show, Phil, they all put their shoes on every day like we do. And we've got over 300 million people back home and one percent of them can organize in congressional districts, and turn the situation around. Congress has enormous authority: spending, taxing, investigating; legislating on behalf of workers and patients and consumers. All these things that the polls show, 70, 80 percent of the American people want, like full Medicare for All, or living wage, or cracking down on corporate crime. That all starts with Congress and that's why when we put out the book, Who Runs Congress, we got on your show Phil. You turned it into the bestselling book on Congress in American history. A few months ago I was talking with some publishers on the phone in New York. They weren't interested in an update. They said, who would read it, who would buy it? That's where we're down to now, but that doesn't mean that we can't get one percent of the people organized to have a Congress watchdog hobby, so-to-speak, and put in a few hundred hours a year representing majority opinion in this country—a lot of conservatives/ liberals on the same side on many of these issues—to start this upward-bound process, because as you indicated, in fact you told me, in 1996, we live in a culture of decay. It's only gotten worse.

Phil Donahue: Now let's understand that less than half of us vote. The people who brag most about "I'm a proud American" and "This is the country I celebrate" and all of that, are often the people who can't identify their congressman or woman. The lowest percentage of turnout for voting, is the first group, the youngest. What is it, eighteen to 24? It is down around 18%, 20% of those eligible voters, don't vote. We have not inspired our young people to stand in line, think about who they want to represent them, and go into a booth and vote. As long as that is true, you have to wonder, what is our future here--beg people to go out and exercise the fundamental right of a democracy? It's shameful, and we're sending young people to war with Obama--on Obama's watch. We use drones to send hellfire missiles into crowded places where people were gathering, or sleeping--drones on Obama's watch. We were killing children. There is no recognition of this awfulness on the part of the American population. We don't know this has happened.

Ralph Nader: Listeners don't know, Phil grew up, he worked the hard jobs starting in his teenage years. He doesn't like much to talk about those hard times, but it is a fact in his biography. He grew up very Catholic. He went to Notre Dame. Then he began to learn about the discrimination that came out of a Catholic Church. Can you talk a little bit about that? Were you surprised, ten, 15 years ago when the paedophile stories came out, because you did put on critics of the Catholic Church, for being, as you called it, sexist and racist, and sometimes destructive. And I'll tell you, that made a lot of waves. That was very courageous in those times. Can you bring us up to date on this? Did you have any glimmer of what's going on now, Pennsylvania, Boston and elsewhere?

Phil Donahue: We did do the first show on a cleric, priest pedophilia. The guest was a reporter for the New Orleans Times Picayune.

Ralph Nader: About when was that?

Phil Donahue: That would be 43, somewhere in there. With my mother watching from her apartment in Cleveland, I'm on the air with this guy saying, this is the Church's Watergate. And I thought that's a little overstated. But he went on.

Ralph Nader: This is about 40 years ago?

Phil Donahue: Well, '83, yeah.

Ralph Nader: 1983, yeah, okay.

Phil Donahue: '83--30 years ago.

Ralph Nader: And what was the audience reaction, and what was the public's reaction after this?

Phil Donahue: Well, I had priests call me and say, "How am I supposed to be in the playground area?" screaming and slamming the phone down. It was painful. But now, what we see...I'm just fascinated, and by the way, how'd you like to be a priest, a worker priest who doesn't abuse children, or adults? People look at them with funny suspicion. It must be awful. And the manner in which the church has spoken of gayness/homosexuals is... I think that the church itself should go to confession for the way that it's really diminished and abused gay people. It is a sin, God does not look with favor on this, and on and on, and on. You're just a terrible, terrible person, if you're gay. It has to change. There is no other option.

Ralph Nader: Phil we talked about this in a prior program. I want to bring Steve Skrovan in on this. The suggestion was made that since you don't seem to have all these abuses pouring out of protestant clergy, or clergy in other religions, where they allow the member of the clergy to marry. The discussion centered around dropping the requirement for celibacy for Catholic priests. You want to comment on that Steve, and what the reaction was to that?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, you and I talked about that Ralph and then a listener wrote in and kind of warned us against equating pedophilia with the celibacy issue, that that's a different thing that is more about power. But then again Ralph, you made a point that, how come you don't see this in these other denominations? So I understood both points of that, because there is a danger to, first of all, equate pedophilia with homosexuality, which it has nothing really to do with it. But that it's more about power. I don't know how you come down on that Phil.

Phil Donahue: Well, I've obviously interviewed many behavioralists who made that point. It is true, gay people have had their own essential self besmirched by the feeling that gayness equals pedophilia. A child who is sexually abused is more likely to be abused by an uncle, or another member of the family, than by a stranger or a gay person. I've interviewed a number of gay organizations that have spoken out about this church scandal that has appeared to take gay people down with them. That's a tragedy for gay people. It is funny, the church is so homophobic, and yet has the largest institutional closet in the world. Somewhere there's a Pulitzer Prize waiting for somebody, to get into this and make it clear. The whole reality of child abuse among clergy and other powerful adults who use their power to abuse helpless, young people who have no idea what's happening, and cannot possibly generate the power to do something about it, having been taught all their lives to respect the holiness of this adult person. And the other thing that, I think is awaiting a Pulitzer Prize, is what did the nuns know and when did they know it? I wrote a piece for the Washington Post that was published. It was kind of a thank you to a nun who befriended me when I was in eighth grade, twelfth, whatever it was, and wrote a very nice note to me on the first page of a missal (a holy Catholic mass prayer book) that she gave to me on the occasion of graduating from high school. Dear Philip, congratulations. Through this missal, which is dedicated to Mary, may you come to know her, and love her son, something like that. I wrote a piece, Thank you Sister. The other day, I heard you died. I'm sorry, I never thanked you. I went on to say how the nuns were the backbone of the Catholic school system—one of the most successful, private school systems ever devised. I mean thousands of people were educated and it never could have happened without the nuns; asked for no pay, and about how nervous they were when father came to the our class, and on and on, and the Washington Post published it. Well, the roof fell in on me, and I'm still trying to figure out why. The complaint was registered by the nun who worked at the National Catholic Bishop's office in Washington. Sister Mary Ellen Walsh, I think was her name. She since died. I never met her, but the fact that she brought me down was part of her obituary, also in the Post. Well I did change names and I didn't notify the reader that the names were changed. Okay, you got me. I pled guilty to that. What else have I done? Well it went on and on. They called, did I give the money that I earned—I think it is seven hundred dollars for the piece from the Post, and I gave it to the sisters of St. Joseph in suburban Cleveland. They were calling. They called there, "Did he give you that?" The nun said, "Yes, he did." I don't know why there was such hostility to this. What did I do that would rouse this kind of, and provoke this kind of attack and feedback? So the legacy of anger is out there--anger that's not expressed. Imagine reading about your own organization in the paper, about what's happening in Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, and these other, terrible, terrible revelations about pedophilia from Holy Catholic Priests in all of these places and there's no way for you to fight back. Well Donahue comes along with a piece about a nun which, and I said, you never said the Jews killed Jesus. Thank you sister. I have been slapped by a religious brother, which is true, never a sister. I had a

Brother of Holy Cross, order me to come to the head of the class and he belted me. Bang, my head snapped in front of the whole class.

Ralph Nader: This is in high school?

Phil Donahue: Yeah, high school. I remember his name. I'll never forget it. I just had my hands in my pocket, and I didn't move and boy, my head went. I remember because I wanted to cry, not because of the pain, but because of the humiliation of getting belted in front of the whole class. And I really fought it. I never, ever had that kind of feeling before. It was painful to fight back the almost involuntary need to cry. So all of these things I remembered; I wish I had included them in the book that you referred to.

Ralph Nader: The book is Donahue: My Story, came out in 1979. Tell me Phil, is anybody in the media asking you to come on and be interviewed and talk about the media today, and politics...

Phil Donahue: No.

Ralph Nader: ...and to talk about what is being censored/what is being excluded from the public's attention--NPR, PBS networks, the cable shows?

Phil Donahue: No, I am not invited of any of these programs. You never see, for example, Amy Goodman on Meet the Press. I don't know when the last time you were on Meet the Press Ralph.

Ralph Nader: 2008 was the last time. You can't get on now. They have this ritual.

Phil Donahue: That's ten years ago.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, all these shows, they have the same people on--Kellyanne Conway and the political consultants, and --Lindsey Graham from South Carolina. Chuck Todd told me that he's not in control of the show. He can't decide who's gonna be on the round table, and unlike his predecessor, who had me on as a young lawyer/author on Unsafe at Any Speed, and put this issue before millions of people--that's Larry Spivak, the first moderator of Meet the Press back in 1966 or so. That wouldn't happen today. It's all political gossip, the frantic news of what Trump did, or what he Tweeted. And I just think we all have to speak out against this.

Phil Donahue: I don't want to be a hypocrite. We have to ask--if I had a show I'd have Trump on. I would. I don't think I'd go with the chorus that we see now, certainly not every day or every Sunday. But if you don't feature those people, you're gonna get beat. Certainly Trump--Trump is the star. Trump is Elvis. Trump--and we have to acknowledge this--"if it bleeds it leads". I used to call the Ohio State Patrol every morning when I'd get to work at WHYO radio. I'd say, the first thing I'd say--the guy would pick up the phone, "Officer Blank of the Ohio State Patrol, Columbus or whatever it was, and I would say, give me "fatals". I didn't want property damage accidents. I wanted PIs (personal injuries) or best of all, "fatals". "Fatals" are more important than property damage accidents. So, what are we gonna do? I mean, now what?

Ralph Nader: Well you had me on your show on that subject once and I proposed this audience network since the people own the public airways: we're the landlords, and the radio and TV stations are the tenants, and they decide who says what 24 hours-a-day, and who doesn't say what. And they pay nothing for their license--no rent. You were quite interested in that and that was the last time I could ever talk about it on national TV, like over 30 years ago. Before we get Steve Skrovan in, I know he wants to ask you something important, where do you stand on this anonymity? So much of the vicious commentary on the internet comes because it is anonymous. You write a letter to the editor that's printed in the newspaper; you got to put your name behind it. You go on The Donahue Show; you put your name behind it. Now this mass anonymity is unleashing horrendous vitriol against both people who are controversial, and people who are innocent. What do you think about that with the First Amendment?

Phil Donahue: Well, first of all, we have to ask ourselves, what kind of an audience are these people reaching? Some of it I think falls of its own weight. It is just so ridiculously angry and baseless that it has to be dismissed. If it isn't, then I think the people who are absorbing this are themselves corrupt in a major way and also, visibly so, and not worthy of my time to listen to. So let's not huff and puff, I would say, easy big fellow. It is either this, or a controlled overseer of government.

Ralph Nader: It is interesting Phil. I've talked to some newspaper editors. I say, you always require the name on a letter to the editor in your print edition. But on your website, you don't. They said, well, because we want a lot of participation. We want a lot of people to come in. After all, it was a business Ralph. Steve, do you have some observations or questions of Phil Donahue?

Steve Skrovan: Yes I do. This is actually something you can chime in on too Ralph, but I'll direct it to you Phil. What was it about the 60's and 70's that made it possible to talk about serious issues, especially for you in the daytime? Was it because it was a time of relative prosperity, and people had room in their brains, and they weren't exhausted? Why did you think that was such a heyday?

Phil Donahue: Well, I think, as I look back on what we did and accomplished, I think that the audience out there wanted a show like ours and nobody else gave it to them. Women for example were very, very patronized then. The women's movement had just gotten rolling. It wasn't really.. it might have just started to lift off, but there was, a belief, in the halls of the decision makers in my industry, that women cared only about covered dishes, needlepoint, diapers, children and nursing and we proved this axiom to be untrue. Women were reading more sections of the newspaper than their husbands. Women were longing for an opportunity to get out of the house, maybe work in a productive venue. Children were being influenced by a father who walked out of the house in a nice suit, and went off to some mysterious place while mom went to the basement to do the wash. That, by the way, that analogy or incident is a rather exaggerated thing you have to be wealthy to understand. What the hell many children didn't have a basement or a washing machine. But nevertheless, all the feminists were pointing out that children get too much mother and not enough father and when they said that, they made me feel guilty, because they were talking about me. I don't know, I think, remember that in the 1960's America was right in all things. We won all our wars. We were the most powerful in the world and that attitude of this jingoism inbred in the American psyche, people started to believe this. If you believe this, you're gonna go to war. Every American -- if you give a president a Cruise Missile, he will fire it, and they have. It is just amazing. Trump fired a missile. I forget which country, but he actually fired it. What happened then? That story is over. Was there any afterlife to that? Did anybody examine that? Why did he do it? How many did we kill?

Ralph Nader: They don't even examine the Pentagon budget, which is over half of the government's operating expenditures. It's unauditible and it's in violation of federal law since 1992. The Government Accountability Office of the Congress throws its hands up in the air every year and says, well, we don't have information to audit the Pentagon budget. It is one reason why the missiles keep building up, wars occur, and black budgets fund them. That's the problem. Unfortunately Phil, we are out of time. I cannot say, and we'll be back in a moment, but it's been delightful spending an hour with you and I think the media is missing a big beat by not having you on periodically to comment on the present times of our society and world. Do consider putting pen to paper.

Phil Donahue: Well, I have to say Ralph, I'm impressed with...your brain is still working as it did back in the 60's when I first became awed by Unsafe at Any Speed. So, you have wonderful DNA. You really do sound sharp as ever. Someday I'll find out if you're taking pills, or how you've done this. But it is a wonderful, wonderful thing to hear you so clear, precise, and articulate especially when I looked up at age 83, and find myself struggling to think of the first name of somebody.

Ralph Nader: You're always too modest, Phil. Thank you very much. Thank you for what you've done for our country, our culture, our First Amendment. There's nobody like you who have proved what defending and using the First Amendment can lead to--a more just and open society. Thank you Phil.

Phil Donahue: Yeah. Well, thank you, thank you. Let's take more advantage of this wonderful blessing of having been born into the freest nation on earth. Although I think it would be better if somebody from another country said that about us.

Ralph Nader: Well said anyway, coming from you Phil.

Phil Donahue: All right, thank you Ralph.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with legendary broadcaster Phil Donahue. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Now let's take a short break and check in with our Corporate Crime Reporter Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute, for Friday, September 21, 2018, I'm Russell Mokhiber. It is one thing to advertise to children. It is another thing to pay parents to turn their offspring into an advertisement. But that's what Kentucky Fried Chicken is doing. KFC last month launched a contest to lure parents into selling their newborn baby's identity to KFC for life. Parents who name their child Harlan, after KFC founder Harlan Colonel Sanders, and agree to the terms of the contest are eligible to receive 11,000 dollars toward their child's college education. Only one child will be selected, leaving many other children named Harlan by hopeful parents, stuck with the KFC branded names for life. The selected child's identity, including name, pictures, voice, likeness and biographical information will be owned by KFC for advertising purposes. The company won't provide any additional compensation or even notify the parents when the child's likeness is used. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. That's our show. I want to thank our guest today, Phil Donahue. For those of you listening on the radio, we're gonna check out now. For you podcast listeners, we've got some bonus material in the wrap-up. A transcript of this show will eventually appear on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. We're getting better at getting those up quicker. For Ralph's weekly column--it's free--go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com. Visit the American Museum of Tort Law, and go to tortmuseum.org and check out the Tort Museum bookstore for engrossing books and memorabilia. The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is, Alan Minsky. Our theme music "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Join us next week when we talk about rats. We're gonna leave that a little mysterious. Tune in to find out what that's all about on the next Ralph Nader Radio Hour. I'll talk to you then Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thanks very much Steve, Jimmy. Thank you everybody. The message to the audience is, tune in next week. It is gonna be a jolting show.

