

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman who, in spite of the fact that his credentials to host this show were revoked by the White House, he showed up anyway.

**David Feldman:** I didn't smack Ralph's arm when he tried to take the microphone away from me.

**Steve Skrovan:** And the man of the hour Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello, everybody. This is an unusual show today. It's going to have music listeners and music with a purpose.

**Steve Skrovan:** Exactly. That's the question we're going to ask. Can music change the world? And I'm pretty sure I know how our first guest today will answer that. His name is Jim Musselman, and he is here to tell us about his experience working at the intersection of politics and music. Jim is the founder of Appleseed Recordings, which is celebrating its 21st anniversary. But before that, as a young lawyer and activist, he worked with Ralph on various safety and environmental causes including the mandatory installation of airbags in motor vehicles. I remember he told that story very well in a little movie called An Unreasonable Man. I also happen to know that while working in Flint, Michigan, Jim brought another unknown activist into Ralph's orbit.

That activist's name was Michael Moore. So Jim has had a significant role in the progressive movement. Jim's latest album is Appleseed's 21st Anniversary: Roots & Branches, which is three disks of 57 folk- and roots-oriented songs, both classic and original, by the genres' greatest performers. Jim has given us permission to play some excerpts from that album and we'll hear some of the stories behind the music. In the second half of the show, we're going to welcome back General

Motors engineer and whistleblower Nicholas Kachman. Longtime listeners may remember that we spoke to Mr. Kachman a couple of years ago about his book *GM: Paint it Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure*.

And he's here to give us an update on whether that corporate culture has improved since then. As always, we will take a short break and find out what's happening in the wonderful world of white-collar crime with our Corporate Crime reporter Russell Mokhiber, and we'll also try to get some of your listener questions, but first let's get behind the music. David.

**David Feldman:** Jim Musselman is a longtime activist and attorney who, after working with Ralph Nader, went on to found Appleseed Recordings. Appleseed is an independent and internationally distributed record label devoted to releasing socially conscious, contemporary folk and roots music. The company has a catalogue of more than 100 well-respected CDs, two Grammy Awards, and 10 Grammy nominations. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Jim Musselman.

**Jim Musselman:** Thank you very much. It's an honor to be on here. Ralph has been a friend and a mentor, and one of the biggest influences on my life for over 40 years. So it's a true honor.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you were one of the best attorney organizers in the field, especially in Michigan, as Steve mentioned. And then suddenly, at least, it appeared that to us, you went into folk music. And what was the reason why? You now have 21 years behind your belt and you put out this wonderful three-disk set that features 57 tracks, including 10 recorded especially for the collections, it's called Appleseed's 21st Anniversary: Roots & Branches. And we're going to tell our listeners how they can get that later in the interview, but our listeners should know now that a lot of these songs are recordings by Bruce Springsteen, Tom Morello, Donovan, Anne Hill, Tim Robbins, including material from Jackson Browne, Ani DiFranco, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Billy Bragg, and others.

So our listeners, I'm sure, are familiar with a lot of these folk singers and all the rallies, and marches, and demonstrations they appeared at over the years. So tell us, why did you switch from being an attorney organizer - graduate: Syracuse Law School - into this line of work?

**Jim Musselman:** Well, I always felt the arts could reach people in ways that other mediums could not. And for me, I've always wanted to fight for social justice and I wanted to start a record label that was going to use hope, and healing, and social justice. And I was over in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and I saw kids growing up in a war zone there. And I was like, "Okay. Maybe we can use music as a bridge as opposed to a wall." And so I brought Protestant and Catholic children together using music as the bridge, and that's where I got started, because I wanted to use music as a tool of social change. And I just saw myself as a link in a chain going back to Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger who used music to create positive social change around the world.

**Ralph Nader:** And you had a great relationship with Pete Seeger who worked along the Hudson River and had a sloop or a boat, and basically fought for environment preservation of the river, peace in the world. And you're working out of Pennsylvania a suburb of Philadelphia. Tell us about your work with Pete Seeger.

**Jim Musselman:** Well, I always admired Pete because when I was in law school I read the case of Seeger versus the U.S. where Pete actually stood up against the McCarthy era and said we have a First Amendment right to speak out. And he actually went to jail for that right. And I was like, Oh, my gosh. This is a true American, somebody who fought for the right for the First Amendment and was willing to go to jail for that. But I studied Pete and he had been on the right side of history dealing with civil rights, dealing with the environment, dealing with the Vietnam War. And I just felt that he had changed the world through music but he also had inspired people to organize, and what he did in the Hudson River with his

sloop "The Clearwater" was just amazing, the way he cleaned up the environment and got the PCBs out of the Hudson River, and changed history in so many different positive ways.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, as you know Pete Seeger was a real historic figure in American history. He lived well into his 90s, and I don't know if there's any singer in our country's history that went to more rallies, marches, hearings. He was a real singer doer and he symbolized your hope for Appleseed because he bridged that gap. There are some of us who have skepticism about songs and music, getting people actually out of a good mood in terms of justice-seeking into the field and actually doing something--getting them out to march, to vote, to start citizen groups, to have civic action as part of their daily lives, going to town meetings, urging others to do so, building the roots of democracy.

And I've always had some doubt as to whether thousands of people swaying back and forth in front of a great singer on the stage ever moved them to action. But Pete Seeger moved himself to action. I mean, without action he wouldn't have thought his career was at all fulfilled. What about this skepticism? Does it just give people the right mood and not really get them to change their routine and apply some hours every week to their civic causes?

**Jim Musselman:** That's a great question, Ralph. Plato once said, "Watch music because it can change people's lives." And he said that rulers should watch music because it has the power to transcend lives. And I always believed musicians had a responsibility, meaning, they had the ability to respond quickly on stage on social issues. And I remember when I was out in Flint, Michigan working for you, trying to organize people, and in the town meetings that we would have we would start off with Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land". And if you used music as a unifier in the beginning, it was used as a common thread to make people work together. So I would always use music when I was organizing in Michigan or in other places because it would bring people together for that moment.

And it was a lot easier to have public meetings after opening up with a song or getting people to sing along to a song. So I believe in the power of music and I believe that it can change people's lives in a positive way by educating them or by getting issues out there that they may not see in the evening news.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's be more specific and support your point in specific ways. I think first of all it's clear that music gets people to show up. We all have had our problems in getting people to show up for various civic causes, whether it's tax reform, or clean energy, or improving the infrastructure in your community, or exposing political corruption and corporate crime; it is really hard to get them out. But when they know there's going to be music, they do get out. So I think we can all agree that it does get people out. The huge rallies and marches always are usually associated with music. The second thing it may do, it bridges people who never get together and who are on a number of issues opposed to each other, and that has occurred. Could you give some examples of that where people essentially are fighting each other, and then you take their children or you take people who are inclined to want to make peace between the conflicting parties, and music becomes that initial bridge where they begin to see themselves as human beings--each other human beings?

**Jim Musselman:** Yeah. I saw that firsthand in Northern Ireland. The Catholics and the Protestants hated each other, and they never did anything together. They never interacted. So when I brought schoolchildren together over in Northern Ireland it was the first time a lot of them had basically interacted with each other. And I started using music as the bridge there, but then they started having soccer leagues where they would bring kids together, and sports and everything. So it's just about ripping down the walls. And that can be done by showing people their commonalities and using music as a way to show what they have in common as opposed to showing what differences they may have.

**Steve Skrovan:** That's a good segue to our first excerpt, because one of the songs we're going to play is a song that we all recognize but it's sung by some Irish singers. Here we go.

**Male:** Where have all the flowers gone? Long time passing. Where have all the flowers gone? Long time ago. Where have all the flowers gone? The young girls have picked them, every one. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

**Female:** Where have all the young girls gone? Long time passing. Where have all the young girls gone? Long time ago. Where have all the young girls gone? Gone to husbands everyone. When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

**Ralph Nader:** Can you comment on that song, Jim Musselman?

**Jim Musselman:** Yes, Ralph. I had gotten the Catholic and Protestant children together with the musician over in Ireland named Tommy Sands, and we wanted to have that song sung and I had the adults sing, "When will they ever learn?" and the children singing, "When will they ever learn?" And the song actually became the anthem of peace in Northern Ireland. John Hume who won the Nobel Peace Prize said it was a really important song. And after the Omagh bombings it was the first song ever played by Catholic and Protestant radio stations at the exact same time. And when the peace negotiations were going on outside Stormont Castle we had the kids out there singing, so when they would take a break, when Gerry Adams, and John Hume, and everybody would take a break, the kids were out there singing. So it was really showing the power of bringing people together through music and a common bond.

**Ralph Nader:** Another function of singing these songs is education. I mean, you sing Arlo Guthrie songs, "This Land Is Your Land", it opens up new windows for

people who might not know about the public lands among our lands. And the United Auto Workers put out a whole album about 45 years ago full of the kind of songs that animated the emergence of the U.A.W. in 1930s and mobilized the workers, and were sung by the families and workers in the sit-down strikes in Flint, Michigan and Warren, Michigan that built the union. And they're not distributing it anymore. You just can't get it. Is there a golden age of all these movement songs, these social justice songs many years ago that we have lost in recent years?

**Jim Musselman:** Well, that was one of my purposes of starting Appleseed to keep the link in the chain alive, but to keep these songs alive, and keep people singing them and performing them. But I think the labor movement stopped singing and music has stopped being used in so many ways. And that's why the '60s were so powerful was because music was such a powerful message to bring together people during the Vietnam War and everything. And I've seen some of it, I mean like in the March for Our Lives rally in New York there were a lot of performers singing, and you're seeing a lot of people singing "This Land Is Your Land" with what Trump is doing dealing with the immigration and everything that he's doing with that. So I think you're going to see it come back in vogue again because it unifies people and the messages are positive messages that the songs deal with.

**Ralph Nader:** Before we get to our next song, Jim Musselman, tell people how they can get the Appleseed 21st Anniversary: Roots & Branches.

**Jim Musselman:** Well, it's all at [appleseedmusic.com](http://appleseedmusic.com). I always thought the concept of Johnny Appleseed was wonderful, planting seeds of social justice. I remember you had an organization called Appleseed, and Pete Seeger had a column called Appleseed. So I felt that the whole concept of planting seeds of social justice was a really effective way to reach people. So it's all at [www.appleseedmusic.com](http://www.appleseedmusic.com).

**Ralph Nader:** Steve, how about the next song?

**Steve Skrovan:** Sure. We were talking about Pete Seeger earlier.

**Pete Seeger:** If you love this land of the free.

**Ani DiFranco:** Bring 'em home. Bring 'em home.

**Billy Bragg:** Bring all troops back from overseas.

**Singers:** Bring 'em home. Bring 'em home.

**Billy Bragg:** It will make the generals sad, I know. Bring 'em home. Bring 'em home. They want to tangle with the foe.

**Singers:** Bring 'em home. Bring 'em home.

**Ani DiFranco:** They want to test their weaponry but bring them home. Bring them home. Peace is there, big fallacy.

**Singers:** Bring them home. Bring them home.

**Ani DiFranco:** A foe is hunger and ignorance, bring 'em home. Bring 'em home. You can't beat that with bombs and guns.

**Singers:** Bring 'em home. Bring 'em home.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's the great Pete Seeger, who actually sang all over the world, Jim, not just in United States. And he always insisted on getting the audience to sing with him, right?

**Jim Musselman:** Totally, no matter where he was, Japan or foreign countries, he would get people to sing along in unison, and he had that wonderful ability. But that song really meant a lot to me because the day the Iraq War broke out, Ralph, I wrote five songs that day. I sat on my computer with my young daughter and I just wrote five songs and I asked Pete to get in a recording studio in Woodstock, New York to do that song with Billy Bragg, and Ani DiFranco, and Steve Earle. And we were called un-American. It's the same thing with the Dixie Chicks; we were told to leave the country, Applesseed and everything else. And then Bruce Springsteen recorded the song and sang it on Conan O'Brien and took it all over the U.S. and Europe.

And it's just a shock to me last week George W. Bush got the Liberty Medal in Philadelphia, and it was like we forgot about the Iraq War and Katrina. And it's so important because Pete talks about the importance of a citizen and the democracy of speaking out. And I remember you wrote a great column with Mark Green on that years ago. "Patriotism is not flag white waving; it's standing up and speaking out in the democracy." And that's what I thought of when I wrote that song.

**Ralph Nader:** George W. Bush getting this Liberty prize, imagine the butcher of Iraq with Cheney; it just makes the point that in a culture of decay the worst is first and the best is last. And I think what you've tried to do, prior to the Iraq War, is what Patti Smith did. She did it after a year blowing apart Iraq. She was motivated to do this song "Radio Baghdad," which we played at a church in

Albany, New York and was recorded by Rensselaer engineers. And I remember her haunting phrase. She went back to Mesopotamia.

**Jim Musselman:** Yeah.

**Ralph Nader:** And her haunting phrase was, "We created the zero and we mean nothing to you."

**Jim Musselman:** Totally.

**Ralph Nader:** In mathematics.

**Jim Musselman:** Wow.

**Ralph Nader:** So let's try the next song.

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah. Well, speaking of Bruce Springsteen.

**Bruce Springsteen:** One, two, a one, two three... If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning, I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land. I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning, I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters, all over this land.

**Steve Skrovan:** So, Jim, tell us about your relationship with Springsteen and his relationship to movement politics.

**Jim Musselman:** Bruce has been an amazing human being. He's done seven songs exclusively for Appleseed, and we wrote a song together "Bring 'Em Home" that I was talking about before. But that song is "I'd sing out danger, I'd sing out warning, I'd sing out love between my brothers and my sisters all over this land," and it's sort of the mantra for Appleseed what we've used. And Pete wrote the song during the McCarthy era when he stood up for the First Amendment and went to jail for it. But Bruce has just been an amazing human being. He stood up to Bush with Katrina, with his songs down in New Orleans and he has educated so many people and taken the right stance on so many issues to help the working men in this country. And I'm just honored and humbled that he has been such a fan of the label and that he's been responsive to every single idea that I've ever had. I approached six musicians on this album to do new songs and all of them did it with an alacrity towards the project where they're just enthusiastic, and Bruce was the first one I asked and he just jumped right on board.

**Ralph Nader:** You may not know, Jim, I did share a stage at Rockefeller Center, at an event with Bruce Springsteen. And after he sang his songs I came up to him and he was dripping wet.

**Jim Musselman:** Yeah.

**Ralph Nader:** I mean he leaves everything on the stage.

**Jim Musselman:** Same with Patti Smith. Same with Patti. I remember we did a rally on Wall Street, Ralph, I remember Phil Donahue was there and Patti Smith was there, and she sang and then she was dripping and she literally was so intense after performing, and that's what some wonderful artists do like Bruce and Patti.

**Ralph Nader:** And you're right there. How about the next song, Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Okay. Here we go. No intro for this one.

**John Gorka:** The water is wide, I cannot cross over neither have I wings to fly, give me a boat that can carry two, and both shall row my love and I.

**Steve Skrovan:** So, who is that, Jim, and what is that about?

**Jim Musselman:** That's John Gorka, a wonderful singer and it's a beautiful song, called "Water Is Wide," which Bob Dylan was going to do for one of our CDs, but Bob got sick and couldn't do it. But one of the purposes of Appleseed was to keep folk songs alive and immigrants came to America with just the clothes on their back and the songs they brought as their entertainment, because they had no radio or TV. So so many of these songs have lived on for 300-400 years like "The Water Is Wide" that John is singing there, and I just wanted to keep those songs alive. And we've done like CDs—songs of the Underground Railroad, historical albums where it's having the songs from history to be kept alive because they've been living for three, four hundred years and you need to keep the songs alive.

**Ralph Nader:** Listeners might wonder how Jim Musselman ever got through to these prominent singers or their agents. It's almost impossible to get your call returned. So a few days ago I was talking with Jim Musselman and I said, "Jim, how did you get through to these people? How did you even get their phone numbers? They're so cloistered because so many people want things from them and so on. How did you manage so now you can get through to these great singers that are on this recording?" And his answer was persistence. "Persistence".

**Ralph Nader:** Persistence. Persistence. Persistence. Persistence. Persistence.

**Jim Musselman:** Yeah.

**Ralph Nader:** So he had no contacts when he started. He had no money when he started. And look at him now.

**Jim Musselman:** Well, you know what, Ralph, right, when I applied for a job with you I had to write 14 letters literally. I kept trying, and trying, and trying. And I was like, nothing ever comes easy and finally I came down for an interview with you and John and I was like, (if) I just get my foot in the door my passion will show, but it's all about the persistence and I always know that .

**Ralph Nader:** In listening to NPR and watching PBS, they often feature new recordings like these anniversaries of commercial artists. Did you get on NPR when this was released; you get on any PBS program?

**Jim Musselman:** No.

**Ralph Nader:** You get on any commercial radio or TV?

**Jim Musselman:** Nothing on PBS; nothing in the New York Times. Just like you, we've been shut out in the New York Times like we don't exist even though the songs have been used in so many different areas of social change, but no.

**Ralph Nader:** How, you think this is so?

**Jim Musselman:** I think NPR is trying to protect themselves so they lean on the sense of not covering a lot of things dealing with social justice in many ways.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, they're very averse to that. They're more likely to put on right-wingers than progressive people, because they're afraid some members of congress will get on their back and so forth.

**Jim Musselman:** Yeah. That's what you're saying about the New York Times giving more of the space to Ann Coulter than to Noam Chomsky or to you.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's do the fifth song.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, this next song, it might be my favorite of the selections we have today, because it kind of rocks out a bit, and it's very current.

**Young Female:** French Hill, Republican, Arizona, 1.09 million. Bill Cassidy, Republican, Louisiana, 2.8 million. Rob Portman, Republican, Ohio, three million. Joni Ernst, Republican, Iowa, 3.1 million. Marco Rubio, Republican, Florida, 3.3 million.

**John Wesley Harding:** Well, the second amendment is fascinating, it's constitutionally enshrined, so that's 50 times the shootings here of everybody else combined. Congress won't change the laws, they'll treat the symptoms not the cause. Dirty Harry Magnum Force. You know I'm scared of guns. You know I'm scared of guns. You know I'm scared of guns.

**Steve Skrovan:** "Scared of Guns:" tell us about that, Jim.

**Jim Musselman:** Well, it's a disgrace what has been happening in this country. Nothing ever changes. In Australia there's one mass shooting and everything

changed in Australia. So I got John Wesley Harding who's from England and a wonderful human being, a writer and a singer, to do the song "Scared of Guns". And I wanted his 12-year-old daughter to recite who is getting money from the NRA, so during the song she recites who's getting money from the NRA and she ends it with Donald Trump, presidential campaign 23 million dollars from the NRA. So for me, I wanted to name names in the song because to me the NRA is terrorism in this country and we're not doing anything to fight it.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Jim Musselman, let me, in conclusion, ask you about one of my favorite songs "Working Class Hero" by John Lennon.

**Jim Musselman:** Yes.

**Ralph Nader:** What do you think of that song? That is an educational song as well as a great talent.

**Jim Musselman:** Totally wonderful song and it spoke to so many people. I remember when you were on the show with John Lennon on (The) Mike Douglas (Show), I think, but that was on this CD; we touched on U.S. foreign policy, homelessness, gun control, heroin deaths caused by the drug companies, and everything. So to me, it's the power of music to influence people just like you've influenced so many people around the world, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Jim, I'm looking through some of the songs here. You've got Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt, "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine", you have Sweet Honey in the Rock, you have Tom Paxton "Looking For The Moon", you have Dave Bromberg and Levon Helm "Bring It With You When You Come", you have Ramblin' Jack Elliott "Roving Gambler", you have Steve Young "Little Birdie", you have Donovan singing "Wild Mountain Thyme", and you have John Stewart and Darwin's Army "Bay of Mexico". This is really a great compilation of music and I

hope that some of our stations around the country will give Jim Musselman time to elaborate more than we have had time--people in the Bay Area, people in LA, WPFW in Washington D.C., WPKN in Bridgeport, WBAI in New York.

And then maybe some of the larger media will pay attention to it. These are songs that are classics; they're going to last for decades. And we really thank you, Jim, for the kind of work that you've been doing in this area and how you always keep your eyes on the prize. There are a lot of ways you could have made more money than by starting Appleseed Recordings, but you're making a different kind of wealth.

**Jim Musselman:** Well, Ralph, I wanted to say thank you and you're such a major influence on my life, but when I was working in your office it was Bill Taylor who went on to write great books; Michael Moore who went on to do movies. I mean just the creative minds that were all together to going in different areas of life that you influenced and you planted the seed in so many of us and thank you.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, we need, as you know, another young generation to take up the cudgels, so we're all working in that direction. One last time, how can people get this recording and how much is it?

**Jim Musselman:** It's [www.appleseedmusi.com](http://www.appleseedmusi.com). It's a three-CD set and it's very reasonable. It's \$20 for three CDs and 57 songs. But we have over a hundred and sixty CDs we've released on our website and historical ones and political ones and everything.

**Ralph Nader:** It's a great gift for your children, for the library, and for people who maybe are under 40 and don't have a recollection of these great social justice songs and the great artistic skill that accompanies them. Thank you very much, Jim Musselman, founder of Appleseed Recordings.

**Jim Musselman:** Thank you, Ralph. It's an honor.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking to Jim Musselman, founder of Appleseed Recordings. We have a link to Appleseed at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Now we're going to take a short break and check in with Corporate Crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. When we come back, we're going to find out if General Motors has cleaned up its act with former GM engineer and whistleblower Nicholas Kachman. You are listening to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Back after this.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter "Morning Minute" for Friday, November 16, 2018. I'm Russell Mokhiber. A day before a deadly blaze destroyed a California town, the giant utility Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) got in touch with BetsyAnn Cowley saying the company needed to access her property "because its power lines were causing sparks." That's according to a report from the Associated Press. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. What is known is that the fire started last week near Cowley's property in the tiny town of Pulga, incinerated the neighboring town of Paradise, and killed, at least, 42 people.

Cowley said she was on vacation last Wednesday when she got a surprise email from PG&E. The email said that crews needed to come to her property to work on high power lines. Cowley said PG&E told her they were "having problems with sparks", she said. They visited her property but she said she wasn't there Wednesday and was not aware of their findings. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Now most economists will tell you that corporations have only a responsibility to their shareholders. But what responsibilities do they have to the surrounding communities from which

they benefit? Here to discuss that question and many other things is our next guest.

**David Feldman:** Nicholas Kachman was an executive at General Motors from 1957 to 1993, mainly working as a corporate environmental engineer. He blew the whistle on the real reason General Motors had to be bailed out after the financial collapse of 2008, which he chronicled in his book entitled GM: Paint it Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure. He is here today to give us an update on the state of General Motors. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Nicholas Kachman.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Thanks. Glad to be here.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you again, Nick. We had you on in February 2016. You're a very rare engineer. Many years with General Motors you were the liaison between General Motors and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on air pollution and controlling air pollution. So you know what you're talking about; you've lived it for many decades inside General Motors. And I've been trying to get Automotive News and other publications to cover your book and your views on the engineering profession--the lack of standup for the professions' ethics inside the corporate institution. And it's been very difficult, but now our listeners have the pleasure of hearing more of your commentary.

I just want to note that in the New York Times recently, in the November 14th edition, there's a full-page ad by a group called Consumer Action for a Strong Economy (CASE), and the website is [caseforconsumers.org](http://caseforconsumers.org)--to hold Volkswagen accountable. And the title of the ad is "VOLKSWAGEN.FRAUD.CORRUPTION.CONSPIRACY." And it quotes a lot of publications talking about the prosecution of Volkswagen. The claim in the ad is that Volkswagen is attempting to resell 300,000 recalled cars. And this, of course, highlights the Volkswagen crime, which was a premeditated crime of

manipulating the software of its motorist customers in order to escape the EPA's standards on emission controls. And, of course they dumped a lot of nitrogen oxides into people's breathing air. And then they've gotten in a lot of trouble; they've had to pay many billions of dollars. The criminal cases have still not been completed. They've been confronted by law enforcement in Germany and the U.S. Let's start with that rather remarkable letter that you wrote to a retired General Motors engineer by the name of Don Scheinman. Could you tell our listeners about that episode?

**Nicholas Kachman:** Yes. He's actually a lawyer, one of the few lawyers that I had very close relationship with, and one I thought was outstanding/different. He always had a sense of humor and was doing the right thing for the company, I thought. And he's the only one that stayed in touch with me for the last 20 years since I retired. We'd send Christmas cards together. He asked to come over to my house to see me and in fact take me out to lunch and I told him I couldn't do that, but he did drop by and I expected a very pleasant meeting. But instead he attacked me for being an environmentalist. He attacked me for writing the book and being associated with Ralph Nader. He thought the book was good and he thought Joan Claybrook was terrible. And he made some statements like, "70-80 baby heads were ripped off by airbags, and yet Joan Claybrook wanted airbags". It was such a stupid statement--that ridiculous statement. Instead of spending a half-hour talking to me, a fellow that's in his last months of life, about the good old times, he starts--easy for a half-hour--he raved at me saying that GM engineers had collapsible steering column way before NASA regulations came out for it.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you rebuked him in the letter when he was talking about those deficient airbags that were too powerful and they injured small children who, by the way, should never be put in the right front seat of a motor vehicle.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Front seat, yeah, that's right. That's right.

**Ralph Nader:** And then in your letter you say, "If that was true--namely that these airbags were defective--if that was true, why didn't, at least, one safety engineer go to the press and tell the world GM had a solution? All of them went along with management wanting to do nothing until all the companies were forced by the federal government to do the same, namely, to correct the problem." But imagine here he is, he's coming to your house to pay a visit; you're not in the best of health, and he starts ranting about your communication with me, with Joan Claybrook, former head of the safety... (National Highway Traffic Safety Division under President Carter).

**Nicholas Kachman:** And bragging about GM engineers. Bragging about GM engineers. Why didn't any of those engineers that were so great go to the newspaper and say, 'I have a solution'? Engineers go to school to solve problems--make things better to improve humanity. They should be taught that; that's why you go to school--learn all the disciplines.

**Ralph Nader:** And then in your letter you say, "I've been convinced corporate lawyers are taught to defend their company's behavior no matter what, like 55,000 deaths and millions of vehicle injuries each year. And they remain defending their company well into retirement. So many GM engineers and attorneys lost their professional obligations and feelings for humanity causing the company's bankruptcy." So a few years ago you put out this wonderful story called, GM: Paint it Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure, and the media ignored it. Now in the 1960s I put out this book Unsafe At Any Speed (The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile) and it was all over the media, and there were congressional hearings.

So, listeners, when you hear me talk about the decay of our democracy and our media here is a case in point. So tell them a little bit about the noxious paint shops in GM where they paint the new cars in different colors. Tell us about how bad the situation is over the years.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Volatile organics from paints were proven to be hazardous; there's about 14 solvents that go in to thin out the paint and it goes on a cars and it's evaporated--goes out into the environment. I remember a DuPont guy say that if they tested them in clean air, most of them passed the Ames test, not showing cancer. If you take any of those Ames dishes with any of those solvents and put it out in the air where there's a car exhaust or just normal traffic air, they all fail. They all were toxic then. And so the government wanted, because smog was so bad in LA; I was there in '57, I couldn't stay at my hotel room for more than 20 minutes; my eyes burned, I started coughing.

And yet GM ignored that. When the environmental laws came about, they wanted to control those paint systems. One paint system like in Lansing, the paint coming out of that plant was like a million cars uncontrolled driving around the plant. That's how much toxic pollutants they were putting out. And yet, they knew that fact. They had a research staff. They were doing chamber studies; knew that it was wrong and yet, they fought it. They fought the regulations right until 1990s. They did everything they possibly could to not control, not to reduce emissions.

**Ralph Nader:** And a lot of workers got sick.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Oh, sure. And these solvents affect the lung. And if they're concentrated, what about the painters? I remember going on a roof looking down at a spray booth and a truck came in that was green and there's a painter on either side of the car. When they each sprayed they covered each other with green. Next car came with the red; they were both covered with red. That's why they finally had to go to robots, but they were killing people in the plants and outside people were breathing this air causing ozone levels which were extremely high, but the engineers fought it. And yet the same engineers--engineers want to do good--I remember we were forced to do something about particulate controls on a boiler and they worked with a vendor; it was really the vendor's idea, and they improved the efficiency of a cyclone mechanical collector from 78% to 85%.

And those engineers bragged about it the rest of their life. But those same engineers went back and fought every water pollution law, every hydrocarbon law, every waste law for the rest of their careers. Yet when an engineer does something good they brag about it the rest of their life, and yet they forget about doing good for everything. And they fought it; they went along with management not to control. They wasted hundreds of billions of dollars on this paint system thing, because they were just fighting the regulation. 3M Company, when polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) regulations came out in '76, had 55 plants putting out these toxic hydrocarbons. They made a commitment to control all of them within a year or two. They decided, "Let's get out of the pollution business and concentrate on the product and try to make products that are no longer using solvents that are dangerous." 3M, Cummins Engineering and Lincoln Electric Companies are first-class. There are some companies that have the ethical standards, the moral standards, believe in helping the communities and the workers that are outstanding. But mostly big companies in Detroit here--I mentioned Dow--other ones, they fight everything.

**Ralph Nader:** Let's talk about how these corporations prevent their workers from taking their conscience to work. You've talked about this extensively in terms of your engineering profession. And the standards and codes of ethics for engineers basically say that if you see something in your workplace that's dangerous and you bring it to the attention of the superiors and they do nothing; you are obligated to take that information to the proper outside authorities for action. That's the code of ethics for the professional engineering profession--the PEEs (Professional Electrical Engineers). And so you looked over this book that's coming out soon called *An Engineering Reader* by my niece Rania Milleron who has advanced degrees in public health and pathology. And this book is full of information about where engineers did blow the whistle and what happened to them and how whistleblowers have to be protected. And how various groups, citizen groups in Washington, elsewhere are taking these companies to court when they fire these whistleblowers arbitrarily. You've been concerned about the lack of involvement here by churches and their necessity to exercise their moral authority on this kind of corporate behavior. Could you comment on that, Nick Kachman?

Nicholas Kachman: I was different, and I enjoyed correcting pollution, correcting problems. I wondered why the other engineers didn't. And so I went through my college professors thinking did they ever preach that you're here to do ethical things and do good things? And then I went to my engineering registration to become a professional engineer you took a test, a two-part test. The second part of the test is whatever you do, will it be to protect public health and not harm health, not cause environmental hazard? One percent of the engineers, professional engineers in GM are registered professional engineers. And the engineering society in Detroit is controlled by the big companies, they have the people--the spare people and the money to attend to these things. So I think they failed. You're supposed to take an oath when you're a lawyer or when you're a doctor. You should take an oath when you're an engineer that you will do good and improve things, make life better, but they don't do that. And so I looked at, well, what if you correct the schools, have management start to preach to their new employees that this is the ethical thing to do. And some companies are doing it now, but then I thought, my God, the ethical preacher of moral right and wrong is the religion. I was raised a Catholic, went to Catholic school for four to five years, transferred to public.

And then I kept going to church for about 12 years, left and then when I got married I joined the Lutheran Church. I tried to think of all the sermons I heard in both the Catholic and Lutheran Church. Was it ever about this is Christian values, this is the line; above the line that's our values; below this line, this is wrong. It's unethical. It doesn't meet the Christian values standard. And not one sermon that I hear. And yet, in these communities there's a company founded do something terrible or this executive, there's something terrible, and they don't preach it. They don't say, "Look, this wasn't to our values." And so I think religion has failed, and that's why I read in the New York Times where they're losing millions of parishioners every year because they're not giving lessons, teaching of things that are relevant today by actually saying this is to our standard, this is a Christian value, this is not; this is unethical. I think they completely failed. And if you can write the books, correct the schools, get some management, but if you don't get

the religious people start to preach, this is really what should make life better for everybody, and give sermons that are relative--related to actual situations in their community. I think it's really important.

**Ralph Nader:** Nick, when you wrote this book *Paint It Red*, and I think it came out when, 2015?

**Nicholas Kachman:** Yeah, right about then. Yeah, right.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Right about two . . .

**Ralph Nader:** Has the GM culture changed much since Mary Barra took over as your CEO?

**Nicholas Kachman:** In the environment it might be changing although it didn't with the first executive. Our vice president, the first two or three she had to fire because they were doing such terrible things. Anyway, she fired the first two or three vice presidents and got to this woman now that doesn't know much about it, but I'm sending her information to try to educate her. But when she came out, *Fortune Magazine* said she is going to meet with the executive every three months and tell them the three zeros--no collisions, no emissions, no congestion. And otherwise, that is a good track, but she didn't mention rapid transportation, which is critical to the thing. They're working on these self-driving cars, but never mention rapid transportation, which is key to this whole thing. But then I wrote GM and told them, you should have three zeros for in-plant: no employee deaths or injuries, no employees' health effects to chemicals there, and no digression of the environment. I'm sure they want to come out with that and brag about it, but since I wrote them they're probably not going to do anything until I'm gone. And

someday they'll come out and say they're . . . so I think this woman it's CEO, she did when she came in, fire 15 engineers, forced the head of the legal staff into retirement who I thought was really bad, and about five attorneys. That's never been done by the 14 or 15 male CEOs before her. So there is a change taking place there. I'm just hoping that it stays that way and they really do good.

**Ralph Nader:** Nick, I took note of a comment on your book by John Calcagni who was the director of the Air Quality Management for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency between 1987 and 1993. Here's what he says about your book. "The GM paint program is a gripping case study of how GM's corporate dysfunction affected people at all levels of the company and beyond. Nick Kachman always addressed GM's environmental problems in a forthright honest and informed manner. So it's no surprise that GM: Paint It Red, the title of your book, pulls no punches and tells the story the way it happened. After reading GM: Paint It Red, you do not wonder how GM went bankrupt, but why it took so long."

Mariner Publishing is the publisher of this book, GM: Paint It Red. And it wasn't reviewed very widely; it wasn't noticed--this great inside story. And just tell our listeners how much this whole paint boondoggle cost GM.

**Nicholas Kachman:** No, not one reporter—and I'm trying, I'll talk to another reporter another week from now—has gone down below these new plants to find out the half a billion dollars they spent to just to try to combine the clean air with the dirty air in these big caverns; tremendous fans to push it on a stack that the pollution would be so diluted that under the law the cost per ton would be low enough so they would never control it. They're useless. They never did work. I haven't gotten one reporter to go to one of these new plants to see that half the plant is down below the ground. And it's worthless; it's unusable. They didn't work. All in an effort to try to avoid pollution controls, which now the only two new plants are that they built Lansing and completely controlled and easily done. They could have done that years ago originally, but been fighting they didn't let the engineers free to come up with solutions. If they were free they would've

come up with a staging of pollution control, low-cost pollution control 20-30 years ago, and not have to fight this paint plant and just let the paint superintendent use whatever paint they want because the solvents are controlled. No, they didn't do that. By fighting they actually spent billions and caused part of the bankruptcy.

**Ralph Nader:** Free the engineers is one of the lessons. Nick, going over into the lead scandal in Flint, Michigan, the lead in water. Didn't GM know about it well before it was made public and didn't they change their source of drinking water after passing out water bottles to the workers who saw the murky water and refused to drink it? Why didn't the GM tell the officials and the people of Flint since it was a big GM town for decades?

**Nicholas Kachman:** GM had some of the best water pollution engineers. The powerhouse chief in Flint had laboratories in each plant especially in Flint, which had so many complexes. They tested the water all the time especially if they were mixing it with chemicals or something for the process, then they would test the drinking water once in a while. But when it came in tasting, smelling bad, they used excuses that they went back to Detroit water from Flint water because it was corroding parts.

**Ralph Nader:** That's the Detroit River from the Flint River?

**Nicholas Kachman:** From the Flint River. Yeah, it goes through a treatment plant but they closed it years ago to go to Detroit water because the treatment plant needed to be upgraded and they didn't have the money.

**Ralph Nader:** It was corroding the parts of the plant, right?

**Nicholas Kachman:** Yeah. They changed that Detroit water without telling the employees or their families that we're going to change the water back because it's

corroding the parts. What would it do to a human being? But it was discolored and smelled. And GM knew it was bad, but to think that they didn't tell the employees and their families to stop drinking it; we'll give you water would have been the biggest PR program they ever had that's saying, 'We're going to pay Flint to go back to Detroit water for a couple million dollars until we get this resolved.' They didn't do that. It's ridiculous that they're not being sued because when I left there, we had good water pollution engineers from the plants and we had good labs. They tested the water all the time; they knew about it. And to think that they're not responsible is ridiculous to me.

**Ralph Nader:** You know we're talking with Nick Kachman, longtime chemical engineer for GM, liaison with the EPA, Author of GM: Paint It Red. Nick, you're a hero and this country doesn't recognize the kind of heroism that you represent in terms of blowing the whistle kindly, insistently, professionally inside the company, possibly risking promotion or even your career to try to get workers to have safer workplaces and the people outside the plants to have cleaner air. And you have a wife and five grown kids and none of the press thinks this is human interest enough to interview you. Will, some of our listeners at least contact some of the newspapers to interview Nick Kachman. Contact Automotive News in Detroit, which is a great trade paper but somehow has not reviewed this book, even though some of its editorials have reflected the same kind of criticism of GM that Nick Kachman provides.

So please do that, listeners. And this is just another example of how the media is not doing its job. It's engaging in trivia, sensationalism, fake stuff, constantly obsessed with Trump and not paying attention on the ground, to the real heroes in our country. We're running out of time, Nicholas Kachman. What would be your advice to the thousands of engineering students in engineering schools all over the country at the present time?

**Nicholas Kachman:** I would tell them to take a professional engineer exam and really understand why you went to school, why you learned all these disciplines--

various sciences to make life better. And so I would ask them all become professional and talk about the profession with pride. I haven't had an engineer yet who hasn't done something to improve human life that doesn't brag about it the rest of their life. No matter what else they've done--held regulations back fought regulations--but the one thing they do they'll brag about it to relatives and friends and everybody else, and they don't need any rewards. What I did for pollution control--I never expected anything. I was just so proud that I could control something, improve something, and that was satisfying. And I think most human beings have that. And so I tell new engineers, "God, be proud of your profession and be professional and do something good for humanity, you'll never regret it."

**Ralph Nader:** And your words to the engineering societies that they're going to belong to and pay dues to like the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Society of Automotive Engineers, the American Chemical Society. What would be your advice to them?

**Nicholas Kachman:** They got to realize what's happening, that I started to tell you about Dow Chemical giving stuff that was proven to be causing immense harm unbanned just because it contributed to Trump; that's unethical. But the only societies have to step up to make life better--to realize that they're professionals, and that their job is to improve life not to just defend a company and try to save them money. It's a tough job but I think the engineering societies have failed today by not emphasizing what your goal in life is and how rewarding it is. It's a tough sell because in so many areas things have to be improved to promote ethical behavior.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Nicholas Kachman, you've stood tall for many decades inside GM and you refused to be silent in your retirement as so many GM engineers and lawyers have been. And we're very proud of you. Listeners, you should try to get this book, *GM: Paint it Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure* by Nicholas

Kachman, K-A-C-H-M-A-N, with Ethel Burwell Dowling and it's published by Mariner Publishers. Thank you very much, Nicholas Kachman.

**Nicholas Kachman:** Thank you for having me.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking to Nicholas Kachman, author of GM: Paint it Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure. We will link to that at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Well that's our show. I want to thank our guests once again, Jim Musselman, founder of Appleseed Recordings and General Motors engineer and whistleblower Nicholas Kachman. For those of you listening on the radio, we're going to check out now, but for you podcast listeners stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The wrap up." A transcript to this show will appear on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website soon after the episode is posted. For Ralph Nader's weekly column, it's free, go to [nader.org](http://nader.org).

I get it delivered each week to my inbox via email. For more from Russell Mokhiber go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com). And Ralph has got two new books out the "Fable", HOW THE RATS RE-FORMED THE CONGRESS. To acquire a copy of that go to the [ratsreformedcongress.org](http://ratsreformedcongress.org). And also TO THE RAMPARTS: how Bush and Obama paved the way for the Trump presidency and why it isn't too late to reverse course. We have a link to that also.

**David Feldman:** The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

**Steve Skrovan:** Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up", was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proof reader is Elisabeth Solomon. Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour when we talk international politics with the Princeton University scholar, Richard Falk. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody. And listeners, if you thought well of the interviews of Jim Musselman and Nicholas Kachman, do encourage the media in your area to interview these two great people. Thank you.