

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 260 TRANSCRIPT

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host David Feldman. Hello David.

**David Feldman:** Hello Sir.

**Steve Skrovan:** We also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Good day to all of you.

**Steve Skrovan:** And by the way, Happy Birthday, Ralph. Just want to throw that in.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you.

**Steve Skrovan:** Now, on the show today, we have a special show, Professor Noam Chomsky will be making his third visit to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. The first time he was on the show was actually the first time these two progressive leaders had ever had an on-the-record public conversation. So let's get right to it. David?

**David Feldman:** Our guest's theory of transformational grammar revolutionized the scientific study of language. He is also one of the most influential public intellectuals in the world, having written more than 100 books, many of which target the role of the mainstream corporate mass media, which he maintains, manufactures consent in favor of the capitalist system and the political powers that support it. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour Professor Noam Chomsky.

**Noam Chomsky:** Very glad to be with you.

**Ralph Nader:** Professor Chomsky, since David mentioned linguistics, the press has been full of denunciations of people who say things that some consider to be racist or unkind. We have the situation that has dominated news here in Washington. Governor Northam of Virginia who used blackface when he was a medical student, 1984 to play Michael Jackson in a play at the medical school. And an uproar occurred and people in the legislature were demanding his resignation. Members of Congress and presidential candidates, Democratic Party were demanding his resignation. On the other hand, these are the same people that supported the slaughter of civilians all over the world and U.S.'s imperial policies. They slaughtered the Gazans and Palestinians and didn't denounce these people. So there's a real split between words infuriating people and deeds that are far more consequential, escaping condemnation. I'm sure you've thought about this. It's the way the press crowds out very serious issues on the ground. And the battle is: "Will you apologize?" "Do you regret?" "How dare you said something

like this thirty years ago?" Can we have your views on this? Because I don't think it's a minor matter.

**Noam Chomsky:** Well, first of all I should say that linguistics has absolutely nothing to do with it. So, it's just...so we can drop that. But sure, and in fact is not only deeds, it's also words. Deeds of course are far worse. But take words, since we're talking about that. There happens to be something called the U.S. Constitution. Conservatives are supposed to honor that. It has an article, Article 6, saying that treaties entered into by the federal government are the supreme law of the land. The major, modern treaty having to do with international affairs is the United Nations Charter, which states explicitly that the threat of force is banned in international affairs. Every president violates that constantly. Every time anyone says "all options are open" in the case of Iran, or Venezuela, whatever, they are issuing a major threat of force in violation of the US Constitution. Anybody care about that? Of course, as you say, the deeds are far more extreme.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, as we speak, John Bolton, National Security Adviser to Trump and Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State, are going all over the world threatening military force, military intervention without ever mentioning international law or the Constitution. This is quite extraordinary. These are graduates of Yale and Harvard Law School by the way. There's no mention in the media coverage. They never say, well, Mr. Bolton, is this legal what you're threatening? Is this lawful, what you're going around threatening, Secretary Pompeo? How do you view all this?

**Noam Chomsky:** Well, let's take it a step further. The threat of force is banned, but also the use of force, which is a force far more extreme. Does the US use force in international affairs without the narrow exceptions granted by the charter? Of course, all the time. Take the invasion of Iraq. It's a textbook example of aggression without any credible pretext. It's what the Nuremberg tribunal called the supreme international crime, differing from other war crimes only in that it includes all the evil that follows--terror, Isis, everything else. Have you seen a word in the media since 2003, saying, we have committed the supreme international crime and it should be condemned? In fact, the harshest criticism you ever see is, say Obama; it was a strategic blunder. Kind of like what the Russian generals said when Russia invaded Afghanistan; they shouldn't have done it; it was a blunder. But do we say it's a gross violation, not just of international law, but of our own Constitution?

**Ralph Nader:** As a matter of fact, former Judge Napolitano, who is the commentator on Fox, in an interview I had with him, said, what are the prosecutors in Obama's justice department waiting for? They ought to indict George W. Bush and Dick Cheney for war crimes. Instead, these two men are going around, getting honorifics--that some Democratic leaders are embracing George W. Bush in contrast to Trump and there is no law enforcement.

Noam Chomsky: I agree with that, but I think it can go a step further. How about the people who refused--now we're talking about virtually a hundred percent of commentators--who refused

to describe it as a war crime; who say that the worst problem was it was a blunder. Like Nazi generals, after the failure of the two-front war, criticized Hitler for carrying out a strategic blunder by not knocking out England first. I mean, do we praise them for that?

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, Hillary Clinton said, while she regrets voting for the war in Iraq, which has destroyed over a million Iraqi lives. She called it “a mistake.”

**Noam Chomsky:** Let’s take Barack Obama, it was “a strategic blunder.” In fact, can you find anyone who’s called it a war crime?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, some of us have obviously, but we’re not in the government.

**Noam Chomsky:** Way out at the fringe. Any one comment in any editorial in a mainstream journal?

**Ralph Nader:** It is astonishing they don’t come to the conclusion even of their own editorials. The New York Times is famous for this. They lay the case for war crimes and for impeachment and they don’t draw the conclusion based on their prior paragraphs.

**Noam Chomsky:** I think Orwell had the right insight into this in his introduction to *Animal Farm*, which was not published. It was found years later in his unpublished archives. He did write an introduction, an interesting one in which he said - it’s addressed to the people of England - he says look, this book is obviously a satire on the totalitarian enemy. But the people of England shouldn’t be too self-righteous about it because in England - now I’m virtually quoting - ‘unpopular ideas can be suppressed without the use of force.’ And he doesn’t say much about the mechanisms; has about two sentences. One is that the press is owned by wealthy men, who have every interest in not having certain ideas expressed. Second, and I think more important, if you basically have a good education, you know you have internalized the understanding that there are certain things it wouldn’t do to say, and I think we can add it, wouldn’t even do to think. I think he’s pretty much on target there. There are certain things that the intellectual culture simply inculcates into you as an understanding that there are certain things it wouldn’t do to say, and that should never even come into your mind.

**Ralph Nader:** You see that all the time on NPR and PBS, all the time. Never mind the commercial networks. Why do you think the left has abandoned the public airwaves struggle and the struggle to retain some sanity to cable channels? There are 600 cable channels full of junk. There’s no cable channel devoted to foreign and military policy or to labor, or to consumer health issues, on and on. Then the networks, the over the air, is supposed to be modestly regulated in the public interest, convenience and necessity by the Federal Communications Commission, is beyond caricature. It just seems progressive groups have given up that fight. They gave up when the Fairness Doctrine was overturned; the right of reply was overturned. That helped to keep you off the public airwaves. Why do you think they’ve given up this fight

here? The public airwaves belong to the people. They're the landlords, and they're giving it away free without a resistance 24 hours a day to the broadcast radio and TV industry.

**Noam Chomsky:** Well there's some, as I'm sure you know, there's a long and interesting history about this. When radio came along in the 1920s, there was a struggle about whether that public domain, the public airwaves, should be used for the public interest, or should be handed over to private corporations for profit. And at that time the church groups, liberal groups, progressive activists and others, did struggle hard to try to have it, at least, partially, significantly, handed over to the public, who actually own the airwaves. Well they lost. Unlike almost every other major country, the U.S. turned the airwaves over almost entirely to private commercial interests. That repeated itself in the late 1940s when television was coming along. Again, the same struggle, the same defeat. It was handed over to private corporations as a kind of a fringe operation that's public. But nothing like public broadcast, nothing like the BBC in almost every other country. Furthermore as you say, then the Fairness Doctrine was overturned under Reagan. And we can, even though part of the establishment of the cable networks, of course a gift to private corporations, was a requirement that the cable companies install a fairly reasonable television installation in communities. They're there, like Cambridge, Mass, almost any community has a small, public cable broadcasting option, which reaches a large part of the community. Even those haven't been exploited by progressives. They should have been. That's at least something. It doesn't impinge on the overwhelming gift to private power that's been given in the transfer of commercial rights to the entire airwave spectrum, but it's at least something. These are opportunities that have not been properly exploited. And as you say, it should go way beyond that. There should be real effort to ensure that popular organizations, mass popular organisations and so on have a really unimpeded and large-scale access to the media, the airwaves that the public in fact owns.

**Ralph Nader:** In that context Professor Chomsky, we have a public hearing chaired by then representative Edward Markey, a Democrat of Massachusetts over 20 years ago about our proposal to create an audience network, which would program several hours a day, returned to the public by the radio and TV stations under directive of the Federal Communications Commission and that the commercial broadcasters would be charged rent. They pay nothing now for controlling the public spectrum. They would be charged rent and the money would go to support studios, reporters, producers, commentators all around the country on the two or three hours of the audience network. Well, you can't imagine how the broadcasters reared up on Congress. They got calls from television station owners back home. It never saw the light of day other than a printed transcript. I think people have got to start thinking about what they own, because the people own the greatest wealth in the country. They don't seem to know it. They own trillions of dollars of pension funds and mutual funds. They own the public airwaves. They own 1/3 of America, which is the public lands. They own the research and development that comes out of Washington; it's built most of these modern industries from Silicon Valley on. And they just don't have a sense of ownership. Do you see this upcoming presidential campaign, given there's so many different candidates throwing their hat in the ring, raising the issue of the commons, which is really an ultimate shift of power from the few to the many?

**Noam Chomsky:** I think you're absolutely right, and we can carry it considerably further. Take the modern high-tech economy--computers, internet, lasers, satellites, iPhones, the whole spectrum. Where does that come from? If you look back, a very substantial part of it, in fact, the core part, comes from public spending. Back in the 1950s and 60s, the risky, creative work on developing what became the high-tech economy, was mostly done by public funding--at universities, at research labs, funded through public funding and so on. Well, you know, suppose you had a functioning capitalist system. If somebody makes a risky, long-term investment and ultimately after several decades there's some profit, they're supposed to get something from it. Does that happen? No, the profit goes to the private corporations that were able to pick up on work that was done substantially under public funding and they make the profit from it. What's more, they make exorbitant profits. Take right now for example, there's a huge attack on China across the board, for not allegedly, not honouring the intellectual property rights. Well, these are established in the World Trade Organization rules, designed of course by the investor class. They give huge patent rights, way beyond anything in history, to pharmaceutical corporations, to Microsoft, and so on. So, why should anyone honor those rights? I mean, all of this goes back to major public contributions. Suppose for example that China or somebody doesn't accept Microsoft's patent on Windows? Okay, that means that Bill Gates gets a little less money and the public gets cheaper computers. Same with pharmaceuticals. I mean, this whole system is so fundamentally corrupt that it has to be investigated from bottom up. I should mention another aspect of the transfer of radio and television to private hands. It has a big impact on the political system. Quite a big impact. Take television, soon as television came along, it offered an opportunity for candidates to reach a large public through television. But you have to pay for that. So it's one of the factors that led to a situation in which our political system is based on essentially bought elections. It didn't begin then, but it took a quantum leap forward at that point. It meant that you needed enormous amounts of money to run a political campaign. Well, where do you get that enormous amount of money from--corporate wealth, private wealth? We end up with a situation in which you can predict the outcome of an election with Congress or a president, with remarkable precision simply by looking at campaign spending. There's excellent work on this primarily by political scientist Thomas Ferguson. And, although as his work shows it goes far back, it did take a major leap forward simply with the transfer of television rights into private hands, meaning that to run a campaign is very costly. Of course, this has been expedited by the decisions of the most reactionary Supreme Court in living memory. But simply this one element that you bring up of the transfer of the public airwaves to private hands, happens not only to have a range of malicious consequences, but one of them is a simple undermining of the political system. These things should be part of general discourse, understanding, activism, and significant change.

**Ralph Nader:** I'm still waiting for a mass rally around a two-story television station somewhere in America, just before evening news, making these kinds of demands. Because now, people like Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity can attack a political candidate and that candidate has no more right of reply, which they had before late 1980s before it was reversed. And the same

for the Fairness Doctrine. That's why someone like Rush can promote nuclear power and the other side has no right to go on the station and give the downside of nuclear power. One thing about your writings, Professor Chomsky is you don't just deal with discriminatory injustice. You deal with non-discriminatory injustice that affects everybody. So, let's turn to the climate disruption/climate catastrophe—I don't like the word climate change, it's too benign—and refer to a comment you made, which was, "In a couple of generations, organized human society may not survive." Of course, leading in a race toward omnicide are these giant corporations refusing to convert to renewable energy, energy efficiency, and they want to push more fossil fuels and more nuclear plants. Something very positive happened the other day down at the Senate office building. I don't know if you were aware, but there's a new group of youngsters that's called the Sunrise Movement.

**Noam Chomsky:** Sunrise Movement, yeah.

**Ralph Nader:** It's just nine, ten, eleven-year-olds. Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, told me on more than one occasion, she thought youngsters could really have an effect because of their moral authority, their innocence and the fact that they're gonna inherit the country and the world. Anyway, they confronted Senator Feinstein outside her office, and asked her a number of questions. It was a very patronizing put down by the Senator. She didn't really know how to handle nine-year-olds' questions, anymore than Ronald Reagan did. They tend to be direct. They tend to be uncensored, and politicians are not used to it. They're used to professional reporters with marbles in their mouth. I think that a mobilization of pre-teenage youngsters who really get it, and they know what the fundamental questions are, and they don't abide political rhetoric and evasive responses, could really begin to mobilize at the level that's necessary. Youngsters would tell their parents, why aren't you using your seatbelt? Youngsters would tell in the past their parents, why are you smoking? How long are you gonna be around if you don't stop? What do you think of that because we're all looking for ways to elevate the level of urgency, which is simply not coming close to the kind of description you're portraying around the globe.

**Noam Chomsky:** Well actually that session with the children and Senator Feinstein was quite revealing. They kept trying to point out to her, look, we're the ones who are going to be impacted by the disaster that you're helping to create. And the slow, reformist steps of the kind you're advocating, simply aren't commensurate at all with the scale of the problem. These kids were making that point very forcefully. She basically had no answer. Now the Sunrise Movement has done pretty remarkable things. This is mostly young kids. They are the ones who have a major responsibility for putting The Green New Deal on the public agenda. That's a pretty remarkable change. A couple of years ago this was unheard of. It was the Sunrise Movement who were joined with a few new woman progressive candidates, Ocasio-Cortez in particular, who were able to press to get The Green New Deal idea on the public agenda. Of course, it's mocked, it's ridiculed; even Nancy Pelosi dismissed it. But it's there and it's getting support, maybe not in the precise detailed form that was proposed, but something like it, which is a very significant first step towards trying to address this crisis. Now with regard to children,

in Europe particularly, there have been a series of large-scale children's strikes--the children are walking out on strike, leaving school, protesting against the failure to deal with a major crisis that is going to severely impact their lives in coming generations. It's important to recognize just how serious this is. We're coming pretty close on the, you know, the discussions are mostly about the storms and so on. Okay, that's bad enough. But we're coming pretty close to the level of warming of a 125,000 years ago, when the sea level was about 30 feet higher than it is today. Simply imagine that. Now, right now, the huge Antarctic ice sheets are melting more rapidly than had been expected. The huge amount of water there that could easily bring us to something like what the world was like a 125,000 years ago. What happens to organized life at that point? Can you even imagine the consequences of the sea-level rise of that time? Well it's kind of interesting to see the way, across the spectrum, how this is being dealt with. I mean at the right, say the Trump Administration, produced one of the most astonishing documents that has ever existed in human history. I'm not exaggerating. The bureaucracy, naturally, the transportation bureau came out with a long, detailed document, which was arguing, it was leading to the conclusion that we shouldn't have any constraints on emissions, in transportation, cars, trucks and so on--just let them emit everything--you know, no matter what. And it had a very interesting argument. The argument was, look at the rate of global warming now taking place, by the end of the century, it will be maybe, they estimated, you know, seven degrees or something like that, or higher, and by then, we're basically over the cliff anyway; there's no chance of survival after that. So what the hell, why not just enjoy it while we can? Of course, the tacit assumption is that everyone in the world is as criminally insane as we are - as they are - you know, and will not try to do anything about it. Can you find any document like that in human history? I mean, you know, Nero is supposed to have fiddled while Rome burned. These guys are saying, let's enjoy ourselves while the planet burns to make more profit for the next couple of years.

**Ralph Nader:** It invites the phrase institutional insanity. The evidence is all around us. It's no longer just models of climate scientists, it's devastating floods, it's devastating hurricanes, it's rising sea levels, it's spreading disease because of habitat changes, it's extinction of species. And these people, who are in power have got their heads in the sand, or their minds are so monetized by ExxonMobile and others, that they refuse to see what's coming up. I mean the water is gonna start lapping up in Mar-a-Lago, or whatever the place is called that Trump is in Florida, so we're led here in a moment of maximum urgency by the worst leaders, collaborating with the worst CEO's of global corporations, who have no allegiance to any community in the country, or any country, other than to exploit them. And our political system is simply not up to it. You've taken a dim view of third parties because we live in a winner-take-all, two-party duopoly that basically tells the American people it's either a Republican or a Democrat; get in line. But in the 19th- century, there was easier opportunity to get on the ballot--an anti-slavery Liberty Party in 1840, the Women's Suffrage Party, the labor/farmer parties. They never won an election, but they pushed one or two of the major parties in that direction. The same is true for progressive taxation, Medicare, Social Security--that was Norman Thomas, Socialist Party, Eugene Debs, the Labor Party. If the straight jacket is such that the Democrats and Republicans cannot put a halt to this omnicide, and we're gonna talk about the nuclear arms

race that's getting underway, and speeding up. How do you get out of this electoral straight jacket?

**Noam Chomsky:** Well, I think we have to think about the time scales involved. I mean we're facing urgent problems, too urgent to await a radical transformation of the political and economic system. So, let's take, for example, some concrete cases. Take the JP Morgan Chase biggest bank, the CEO Jamie Dimon, I'm sure knows about everything we're talking about concerning the devastating impact of global warming. So how does he react? By investing more funds in fossil fuels, including the most lethal of them--the Canadian tar sands. Now why is he doing that? Let's ask about the choices that he has. In the institutional structures that exist, he basically has two choices. One, to do exactly what he's doing, to try to maximize profit with the certain knowledge that this is going to have devastating effects in the short term. The other choice he has is to resign and be replaced by somebody who'll do exactly the same thing. Those are the choices. It's an, as you mentioned before, it's a deep, institutional problem. Now the way to confront that in the present situation is pretty much the way the Sunrise Movement is doing and other popular movements are doing, and Public Citizen is doing. Try to develop mass popular action, which will compel people within the existing institutions to act differently. And, of course at the same time, try to educate the public to understand that there are deep institutional problems that have to be changed. Now with regard to Mar-a-Lago and the sea-level rise, President Trump has already given the answer that. He's a firm believer in global warming. We know that he recently petitioned the government of Ireland, his business did, for permission to build a wall, you know he loves walls, to build a wall to protect his fancy golf course in Ireland from rising sea levels. Okay? So, they understand, they know.

**Ralph Nader:** When it comes to the bottom line, they become very pragmatic. This gets us into the nuclear arms race because years ago, what you just suggested, mass mobilization, occurred at a significant scale. There were mass rallies and marches in New York City, in Washington, San Francisco. And Ronald Reagan looked out the window of the White House; he said, you know, there's some well-dressed Republicans marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, or in New York City, demanding nuclear arms agreements and suspension of nuclear tests in the relationship with the Soviet Union. And while people can say it wasn't enough, these nuclear arms reduction accords did lead to the dismantling of over half of the nuclear weapons that the U.S. and Soviet Union has, and there are inspectors in the U.S. from Russia right now, and inspectors in Russia who are Americans right now, supervising this gradual dismantling. But at the same time, the Trumpsters, the Boltons and Pompeos are pushing to scrap these accords, not to renew the START Treaty, and to get out of the INF [Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty], which Trump has done. I don't know whether you're familiar with Professor Ted Postol, emeritus of MIT, but he's just come out with a major article in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists saying that both the U.S. and Russia have violated this Intermediate Nuclear [Forces] Treaty. It isn't true that Trump and others say that the U.S. has not violated it. And this and other things can unleash another massive nuclear arms race, which is another wing of the omnicidal trends on this tormented planet. What's your view of this?

**Noam Chomsky:** Well I think what you say is extremely important. The mass mobilizations in the early 80s did provide the background for a very important treaty, the INF Treaty, which was signed by Reagan and Gorbachev shortly after that in 1987. Now that was of critical importance because what was happening at that time was that the United States was installing Pershing II missiles in western Europe--nuclear tipped missiles--which have about a five- to ten-minute flight time to Moscow, meaning devastating first-strike can happen before anyone even notices it. Now this was in response to the Russians developing similar missiles, which could hit western Europe. Okay? Now, there were enormous protests in Europe; there were these massive protests here that you mentioned. And it did lead to the INF Treaty, which eliminated a major threat of nuclear war, total nuclear war. And we have to understand that nobody survives a nuclear war. It's been clear for decades, that a first strike, because of its consequences including nuclear winter, would probably destroy the attacker along with everyone else. These are just unthinkable prospects. The INF Treaty did sharply reduce the danger of war. There are three such treaties, major treaties. The first one is the ABM Treaty, Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which barred ABM systems. Now they sound defensive, but every strategic analyst knows they're basically first-strike weapons; no imaginable AMB system would ever stop a first strike. Conceivably, it might stop, weak retaliatory strike. Though people like Postol, deny even that. But that's at most what it could do, which means essentially, it's a threat of first strike. The ABM Treaty was, the U.S. withdrew from the ABM Treaty under W. Bush, 2002. Now, the U.S. is withdrawing from the INF Treaty. And as you mentioned, Trump and Bolton are indicating that they would probably withdraw from a third, the new START Treaty. That's the treaty that did lead to the sharp reduction of nuclear weapons on both sides. This is beyond words, I mean, anyone who's taken the trouble to look at the record of the nuclear age becomes quickly aware that it's almost a miracle that we've survived. There's case after case, literally hundreds of examples where we came pretty close to having a nuclear war, sometimes stopped within minutes by human intervention. Some of it is highly adventurous actions of political leaders. But most of it is just accident, of the systems; you know the detection systems just consistently fail. That's true of ours, and it's where we have a lot of records. It's surely true of the Russians whose systems are much more primitive than ours.

**Ralph Nader:** We need a new wave here that gets into the electoral process so the candidates, which have been uniquely ignoring much military and foreign policy, the progressive Democratic candidates. They don't like to talk about the military budget or nuclear arms race or the whole Middle East situation other than support the Israeli position, the Saudi position. But you're right, this mass rallies, it never was more than one tenth or one percent of the American people, but they represented the yearning desire for arms control by huge numbers of American People, in the 1980s.

**Noam Chomsky:** That's what these children are doing now.

**Ralph Nader:** That's right.

**Noam Chomsky:** The Sunrise Movement is a couple of dozen people, but they have managed to bring it to the public in a way which is placing the need for a Green New Deal right on the major legislative agenda. It can be achieved!

**Ralph Nader:** They had 250 of them in front of the office of Mitch McConnell, the Senate Majority Leader. He was not there of course to talk with them. But let's talk about, in the concluding time we have available, we're talking with Professor Noam Chomsky, which everybody listening to this program knows his many books, stand-up positions, that facts matter. You've written a lot about the Middle East. What's going on now is that descent both within the Democratic Party and what's left of the Republican Party on the US-Israeli position in the Middle East, and the role of the oil industry and so on. It's just being stifled. People on Capitol Hill now are scared to criticize the secular government of Israel because they'll be accused of anti-Semitism. Two new members Tlaib and Omar, were denounced by Pelosi and Steny Hoyer and other leaders of the Democratic Party in the House because one of them mentioned whose interests should be focused on in the Israeli-U.S. relationship. And the other said something about AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] money affecting decisions in the House--dozens of small AIPACs around the country who contribute to campaigns. And then they were denounced as anti-Semites by people like Pelosi and Hoyer, who again and again, by word, by deed, by supporting funding and military weapons--backed the slaughter of Palestinians especially in Gaza and hundreds of children. This is crazy what's going on. I want to tell our listeners that you wrote this book with the eminent Israeli historian Ilan Pappé. That's Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on the U.S.-Israeli War Against the Palestinians. About 15/20 years ago, the head of the Arab-American institute, Jim Zogby gave a speech at Israeli University at a symposium called "The Other Anti-Semitism" and the racist commentary over the years by Israeli political leaders against Palestinians is mind boggling. I mean, one would not even want to mention the vicious, racist comments by prime ministers and heads of Israeli political parties, except to say that years ago the founder of modern Israel, David Ben-Gurion told Nahum Goldmann in a widely quoted phrase, "it was their land and we took it". And then the racist comments; there's never talk about anti-Semitism against Arabs. This is a huge censorship now on Capitol Hill. The only person who seems to be breaking through on this is Bernie Sanders, who is Jewish and feels freer to talk. Just the other day, he decried the rise of authoritarianism by talking about Erdogan in Turkey, Orban in Hungary, Putin in Russia, and he included Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel. What is your forecast as [to] whether we can have a national debate on this, which you've led, but have been kept off the mass media?

**Noam Chomsky:** Well, I think it's very important that things have been changing. You don't see it in Congress yet except for tiny cases like those you mentioned, but it's happening among the population, very significantly--including the Jewish population. We saw one striking example, just a couple of days ago, the latest move of the Netanyahu government; Netanyahu himself is facing an election on serious corruption charges and he's reaching out to wherever he can. He just introduced into his coalition a group, which is the inheritor of the infamous Rabbi Kahane, kind of an openly racist virtual neo-Nazi who was banned from the Israeli political

system back in the 1980s because of his extremist, racist policies. The successor of his group, which has the same policies, was just admitted into the Netanyahu coalition. That led to protests even by many of the major strong Zionist groups like the American Jewish Committee and so on. The Israeli government is moving so far to the right, not only including their practices, with regard to the occupied territories, that it's come to be alienating much of the moderately liberal including Jewish population. Right now, among Democrats, people who identify as Democrats, actually indicate more sympathy for the Palestinians than for Israel. That's a massive change. The main support for Israeli policies now in the United States is Christian Evangelicals who are deeply anti-Semitic themselves in a profound way we could talk about, and the right wing, and some rich Jewish donors--Adelson. And this is happening all over the world. The Gaza situation has been instrumental. I've been giving talks on these issues for 50 years. Until fairly recently, at university campuses, including my own in fact, I literally had police protection. Police would even accompany me back to my car afterwards. Meetings were held under airport security, investigating people's handbags when they walked in. Meetings were disrupted and broken up right in Boston, the most liberal city in the country. That changed dramatically. One of the things that changed it, you can almost time it, was the Israeli operations in Gaza. Operation Cast Lead was so vicious and brutal that although kind of Obama glossed over it, a lot of the public didn't. That's continued. Now the situation in Gaza now is literally catastrophic. I mean, international monitors predict that within a couple of years, Gaza will literally be uninhabitable. About 95% of the water is polluted. People are living, essentially caged; I've been there, it's actually like being in a prison. The sewage plants, the power plants have been repeatedly bombed, often destroyed by Israeli bombing. People are not allowed to fish more than two or three/few kilometres off shore in polluted waters. The main lifeline for Gaza, which has sort of kept people alive barely is UNRRA, the UN Relief Works Agency. The Trump administration has just cut off funding for them. The situation is really desperate. While people here, you know, may not know all the details, there's enough that's seeping through to arouse considerable opposition. Meanwhile on the West Bank, almost daily some atrocity takes place by settlers, or by the Israeli Army. It doesn't get reported here most of the time, but the general picture you can see is the illegal settlements expand. Now, I think, although it has not as yet had an impact on Congress, sooner or later, it will. Sooner or later, there will be recognition that our arm sales to Israel are illegal under U.S. law. There is a U.S. law called the Leahy Law, Patrick Leahy, which bans arm sales to any military units that are involved in systematic human rights abuses. Well, you know, the record of human rights abuses by the Israeli army is just overwhelming, which means that the military aid is basically illegal. Sooner or later there will be recognition of that.

**Ralph Nader:** We'll see some changes when the peace groups can persuade a congressional committee to have the first hearing in over 60 years, represented by the Israeli Peace Movement, which includes former generals, former heads of national security and the Israeli FBI who have turned against Netanyahu and favor a viable two-state solution. There hasn't been in the Senate/ House foreign relations committees any movement on that direction. But that, as you suggest, that would be the next breakthrough. In the few minutes we have left Professor Chomsky, can we talk about Venezuela in a different kind of way? We know that Trump wants

to overthrow, the Maduro government. We know what Bolton and Pompeo are doing. We know what Pence is doing in the Columbian border. We know the history of intervention in South America by the U.S. We know the books by people like Smedley Butler War Is A Racket, how he was represented the bank of National Bank in New York and Cuba, and the oil companies elsewhere. But what is very troubling is that people who are really progressive, who spend a lot of time in Venezuela have basically said that the Chavez/Maduro regime has given the left a terrible reputation; that the cronyism, the corruption, the colossal mismanagement of Chavez and Maduro have been so deep that you can't simply write it off as a consequence of foreign intervention. Now, I'd just like to read very briefly a comment by someone who's been there for years. Then you'll see where he's coming from. He says, "Chavez nationalized companies and left them to ruin in looting. He destroyed thousands of small farmers in favor of Brazilian factory chicken and meat. He imported black beans from China, and consider for a moment all of his meddling and squandering of cash. Early in his presidency, his criminal negligence directly cost at least 10,000 lives of poor people and amply forewarned landslides on the coast, because he wanted the population to stay put and vote in an election. This is an eye-witness account. What he and Maduro have done is to serve the country up to the neoliberal elite that will once again rule when Trump, Bolton and Abrams are long gone. Venezuelans have endured so much pain for so long with ten times the murder rate, total stagnation, abrupt decline in hospital infrastructure before, and especially during 2000 to the present that they will be forced to accept as saviours, the foreign oil-mining and timber companies so long rubbing their hands over Venezuela's riches; not to mention IMF-style (International Monetary Fund) austerity measures that will seem like a picnic next to Maduro's madness. This is a diabolical result we can anticipate for one of the most beautiful and wealthy countries on earth." Also, he went to talk about the sweetheart deals that Chavez/Maduro have developed with Chevron and other U.S. and foreign oil companies in Venezuela. What do you think of this commentary?

**Noam Chomsky:** Well, you know, it would take a good bit of time to go through it sentence by sentence, and take it apart. But there's a few comments that we can begin with. For one thing, there were plenty of problems during the Chavez years. But on the other hand, poverty was very sharply reduced. Educational opportunities were greatly expanded. There are regular polls taken of Latin American countries by the major Latin American polling agency, Latinobarómetro; it's in Chile. Not at all sympathetic to Chavez. Take a look at their polls through the Chavez years. Venezuela ranked right at the top along with Uruguay in public popular support for democracy, and popular support for the government. There was a reason for that. There was election after election, referendum after referendum--carefully monitored [by] the Carter Monitoring Foundation among others, determined that the Venezuelan elections were among the most-free in the world. Okay, that's a record of how the population felt. And there were reasons for it. There were serious errors, actually I've been criticizing for years. One was failure to change the colonial economy. The U.S. has been running Venezuela's (economy) for a century since it kicked out the British under Woodrow Wilson. When oil was discovered, the U.S. expelled Britain unceremoniously and essentially took over the country. Since then, it's been pretty much dominating it. Lots of hideous atrocities, not to go through that, but one effect was that the economy was almost entirely based on oil. Now one of

Chavez's errors was not to change that. The economy is still overwhelmingly based on oil. It was not diversified. A second error here I'm quoting the chief opposition economist Francisco Rodriguez, that's the spokesman for the opposition, serious economist. He says "a serious error of the Chavez government was not to put aside reserves during the period of high oil prices, rather to expend the reserves. They were spent on social programs and others inside the country". They were spent on internationalist efforts to say, provide cheap oil to Haiti, which obviously could barely survive, and many others. Also, despite the crazy talk about socialism, he left the capitalist class untouched; allowed them to enrich themselves, in fact during this whole period. To that limited extent, the critique you mentioned is correct. What all that meant was that after his death, the oil, a couple of years after, the oil price declined, and the government did not have reserves on hand to try to deal with crisis. So, they had to go to the international credit markets. I don't have to tell you who runs them, so you can guess what the reaction is. Then came the sanctions which are harsh/brutal, devastating the population. I'll again quote Rodriguez, the chief opposition economist, and a serious economist. He points out that "The sanctions have turned the crisis into a humanitarian catastrophe." And by now, the latest sanctions literally bar the government from almost any resources. It's an effort to starve the population into submission. Now, Maduro's own policies have been awful in many respects-- economic, repression and others. But this is in the face of constant subversion. Talk about the media again. For, ever since the beginning of the Chavez years, the media have been virtually an open voice for the anti-Chavez opposition, in ways that are almost unimaginable. For example, in 2002, at the beginning of the Chavez years, there was a military coup. There was a coup which threw out the government, threw out the president, dismantled the parliament, threw out the supreme court. U.S. of course openly supported it. Take a look at the media, the New York Times, they applauded it. They thought, hey, this is wonderful. We're getting back to freedom and democracy. Well, the coup was pretty quickly overthrown by a popular uprising. Has anyone ever withdrawn their praise for the military coup? And, after that came years of subversion, sabotage, internal problems and errors--some of them very serious. I could say that I was personally one of the people who was actually very active in opposing human rights violations. But to disregard the achievements of those years and the popular support for them, not only in the polls but in election--fair election after election--that's ridiculous. And by now, the media barely even pretend to be covering the situation. Their opposition, the New York Times, the Washington Post, it's true of the European major media--they're simply journals for the opposition. That's what they describe. There's a lot to be said. There's not time here to go into the full details. But it's a really atrocious situation. What is happening, as you mentioned, is a soft coup, a stranglehold which will lead to somehow the overthrow of the government, and the return of Venezuela to the kinds of circumstances that you see in the other U.S.-run countries of the region. They won't look at atrocities, crimes, and so on. Simply look at the countries that the U.S. has maintained control. The central American countries, Columbia, which is the most dangerous country in the world for union activists and human rights activists, has been... again, there's just no time to go through the details.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, shades of double-winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, General Smedley Butler. The more things change, the more they remain the same. Thank you very

much for the discussion. You always say to be continued, but your voice of towering intellect and reason, and factual rendition, which is rare today in public discourse, and we hope to see you more in the mass media, to reach more people. Thanks very much Noam.

**Noam Chomsky:** Glad to be with you.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Noam Chomsky. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). I want to thank our guest again, Professor Noam Chomsky. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap Up where we pick up on the Sunrise Movement viral video and Ralph comments not only on that but on some of the adult reaction on the cable news shows. Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour when we speak to Dahr Jamail, author of End of Ice and Ray Metcalfe author of The Bribery Stops Here. Thank you very much Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you everybody and people are ordering the rat book--five at a time and I have a proposal. Anybody who orders ten for a discussion in their living room, I'll do a squat box discussion with them for 20 minutes.