

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 280 TRANSCRIPT

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

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello. We've the most brainy talk show host in America underway today, listeners, you wait and see.

David Feldman: And Thom Hartmann.

Steve Skrovan: And Thom Hartmann.

Thom Hartmann: Thank you, guys. It's an honor and a pleasure to be here with you all.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. Well, I'm going to set the topics on the table. We're going to talk to Thom Hartmann, fellow broadcaster who most of you know is the host the *Thom Hartmann Program*, which is heard in all sorts of radio, TV, and digital outlets. This man has a resume as long as my arm and I have a very long arm. We could spend a whole show just listing his credits as a broadcaster, author and entrepreneur. But buried in his biography, I also found that he has been rostered as a psychotherapist in Vermont for five years. And he also holds a trainer certification in NLP, which stands for Neuro-Linguistic Programming, which explores the connection between our brains, the language we use, and our behavior patterns. And as a country, we're all experiencing a bit of psychological trauma under the administration of Donald Trump. And today, we're going to talk to Thom about how to handle that. How do you handle the bully behind the bully pulpit? And we'll probably discuss how the Democratic presidential candidates should handle Trump on the debate stage--try to ignore, humiliate, punch him in the nose? We'll also update you on the latest machinations going on in the corporate underworld with our *Corporate Crime Reporter* Russell Mokhiber. It wouldn't be a show without Russell. But first, let's get right to it. Let's talk to Thom Hartmann about how to handle Donald Trump.

David Feldman: This is going to be great. Thom Hartmann is live daily from noon to 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on commercial radio stations all across America, on nonprofit stations via the Pacifica Network, and on Channel 127 of the SiriusXM Satellite radio network. Talkers Magazine ranks Mr. Hartmann as the number one progressive talk-show host in America. He's also a four-time Project Censored-award-winning, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of 24 books in print. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Thom Hartmann.

Thom Hartmann: It's great to be here. Thanks so much for inviting me.

Ralph Nader: Thom, in prior interviews, we've talked about your groundbreaking scholarship, where you documented that infamous Supreme Court decision, which actually wasn't a decision, declaring a railroad a person, for purposes of the Fourteenth Amendment. It was in dicta or it was the scribe that wrote up the opinion that stuck it in.

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, John Chandler Bancroft Davis.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. You pretty much revolutionized corporate history with that finding and certainly got people into well, how did these corporations get all the constitutional rights that we have; I mean, they're artificial entities, not human beings. And now you're starting a series, which we're going to talk about later in the show, on the secret history behind this and that, and I'll leave that as a blank just to entice our listeners. And right now, I do want to have your take, and I'm sure our listeners want to have your take, on Donald Trump--his reality show strategy daily, and how do you handle him?

Thom Hartmann: Well, to go back to what they taught me in psychotherapy school, Ralph, when confronted with a bully, kick him in the nuts. I really think that this is what the Democrats need to be doing. They need to be going at Donald Trump with everything they have and just calling him a racist is nowhere near enough. He's also a criminal, he's also a thief, and has been throughout his life; he's a rapist, and that's fairly well documented. I mean these are words that really need to be attached to him, particularly if he's going to do things like telling the four women "The Squad," the so-called squad, to go back to the countries they came from and it was clear he was talking to all four of them. And him and Lindsey Graham are going to call them communists and all this kind of crap. I mean, it's really time to bring the war into his face.

Ralph Nader: Well let's parse that for a moment. He gets away with giving terrible nicknames to his political opponents and the press including *New York Times* and *Washington Post* dutifully report the nicknames. They don't ask for rebuttal by the tarred person and pretty much it sticks in people's minds--millions of people's minds. You know, they think of "Crooked Hillary," "Lying' Ted" Cruz, "Little Marco" Rubio, and it just goes on and on. He's got one for Biden. He calls Bernie Sanders "Crazy Bernie." And I've provided a lot of nicknames; I think he should be called "Dangerous Donald" or "Decadent Donald" or "Corrupt Donald" or "Cheating Donald." And here's an example, I think, of what you mean. When he went after those four women in the House of Representatives saying you go back to the country where you came from, I tweeted something that went like this, "Trump wants these four women to go back to the country where they came from. On that logic, Trump, a corporate criminal and a government outlaw, should go back to his ancestral Germany. I hear that Chancellor Merkel is looking for a chauffeur. Is that what you mean?"

Thom Hartmann: (laughter) Yes, exactly and very well said, Ralph. And I don't think frankly he would qualify to be her chauffeur, tragically. (more laughter)

Ralph Nader: By the way, he also said, "I don't have a racist bone in my body." He said that many times, Donald Trump. So, I just tweeted, Donald Trump constantly says, "I don't have a racist bone in my body." He's right; It's all in his brain!

Thom Hartmann: Yeah. Or maybe his fat is racist. I don't know, but . . .

Ralph Nader: So, what happens is, and you made this point brilliantly the other day when I was talking to you; you said "He's the world's expert on reality shows and he gets up every morning or in the middle of the night and he says, "How am I going to dominate the news? "

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, and this is something that is so overlooked and ignored. NBC spent millions of dollars training Donald Trump to be a good reality show host. It's probably the only thing that he's actually good at. He's failed the vast majority of his businesses; even the businesses that he has made money on; the money that he's made is tiny compared to other people in these industries. He basically has one thing that he's good at and that's doing a reality show. In a reality show, they teach you a couple of things--and this is true of all reality shows and this is true of all fiction. Number 1) The hero of the show is not as important as the bad guy. *Superman* would be boring without Lex Luthor; *Batman* would be boring without the Riddler and all that kind of stuff. *Silence of the Lambs*, you know, Clarice, an FBI agent--it would've been a boring show without Hannibal Lecter. The bad guy is actually the most important character in fiction as well as in reality shows. They cast somebody to be the evil person in every show and sometimes it's even the host; There's this hierarchy of casting and he gets that. And he realizes that he's only as good as the people he's fighting against can be characterized as being bad. So, rule number one: create the bad guys, cast the bad guys, or name the people that you're going against as bad guys in a way that everybody agrees is bad. Now that doesn't necessarily mean evil. I mean in the case Jeb Bush, it was Low Energy Jeb. But that is death for a Republican or for somebody who wants to become president of the United States. So, he's been trained to do that, number one. Number two: always set up the next show; always he's the next show. And do it in a way that keeps people going "What? Really? Oh, I gotta see this." And so, everything he does always has a "and guess what's coming after that" attached to it. Number three: you want to do absolutely everything you can to be the center of attention essentially. Now this comes naturally to him, I think, in many ways. It's how he's lived his life long before NBC taught him how to fine-tune his skills. And he's bringing all of these reality show skills--and there's a few others that are more secondary/tertiary--he's bringing all these reality show skills that the consultants and coaches of NBC so well taught him--to the White House. And he's running a reality show out of the White House. And every single day it's like, okay, let's take a look at the landscape of the media narratives, the media landscape, and if there's something out there that has grabbed the media landscape, for example most recently, Jeffrey Epstein's story and then it came out that Bill Barr said, "Oh, I'm going to recuse myself from this because my law firm used to represent Epstein". And then it came out that Epstein's got pictures; Epstein's got security tapes. You could see who went into his house and who left his house and what they were doing. And Alan Dershowitz comes out and goes, "I kept my underwear on when I got the massage." And suddenly Bill Barr is like, "Oh, I'm going to un-recuse myself and I'm going to insert myself into this investigation." But Donald Trump is looking at that going, uh-oh. And what's it going to take--how high do I have to jump with this particular basketball to drop it into the hoop, to grab the news cycle from something as outrageous as Jeffrey Epstein? Well, let's tell the four women of color to go back to the country they came from and he succeeded! For two days now or three days, he's owned the news cycle and Jeffrey Epstein has been pushed off the front page. And that's just one small example, but he literally has been doing it every day, since well frankly, he's been doing it every day since he got the Republican nomination.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, you know the whole idea is to put everybody on the defensive so they can't affect the news cycle themselves with their issues and agenda.

Thom Hartmann: You do that by defining them as the bad guy.

Ralph Nader: And he mocks the mass media. He says, "You can't do anything, but replay what I'm saying because you get more ratings, you get bigger audiences, and you can sell more advertising and make more profit; you have no choice.

Thom Hartmann: Which, by the way, is true.

Ralph Nader: Now let's say you're advising the presidential candidates on the Democratic ticket; there's 24 of them. Most of them have decided to ignore Trump. Their focus is on healthcare, living wage, immigration issues and so on. Some people think that's a mistake, Thom Hartmann. And some people are advising people like Bernie Sanders to go head-on against Trump, if only to distinguish himself from others who are carrying his agenda, like Elizabeth Warren, but also to goad Trump into making mistakes--going over the cliff sometimes and getting into real trouble. What would you advise?

Thom Hartmann: I think if you go back and look at a number of successful campaigns, both on the Republican and Democratic side, particularly in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, I'm sure you could identify some . . . like Lyndon Johnson for Jack Kennedy, for example. What you're describing, Ralph, is the traditional role of the vice-presidential candidate. And this is why I hope that whoever the presidential candidate is on the Democratic side, picks as a vice-presidential candidate, somebody who really has an instinct for sticking the knife in--somebody who is willing to be outrageous, who is not afraid of controversy, who is willing to go on the attack constantly--because that's what we're going to have to have happen. And that allows the presidential candidate to essentially say, "Ah, yeah, Donald Trump is doing whatever he's doing--that's Donald Trump, but I really want to talk about how important it is that 30,000 Americans died last year for lack of healthcare, and we spent twice as much; we spent 18% of our GDP on healthcare when the rest of the countries of the world spent 9%. I've got more important things to do than Donald Trump." And then the vice-presidential candidate goes out and is just slashing and burning. That's the way that it has, at least in theory and actually in practice in many cases, been done in the past, and that would be my advice right now, but that's subject to change based on who the candidates are.

Ralph Nader: But in the meantime, before the primaries, you got all these candidates ignoring Trump and Trump's dominating the news cycle.

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, I don't think that they should be ignoring him, particularly when you've got a large field like this, and if you look at the Republican primary, I think 2016 is a perfect example. One of the advantages of a large field is that it provides you with an opportunity for every single person--whenever they speak, whatever they have to say--to attack Trump. Just like in the Republican primaries, every time anybody spoke, they attacked Hillary Clinton knowing that she was going to be, in all probability there by that point, yeah, in any case, assuming that she was going to be the nominee. So, I think that the Democrats, if they don't wrap a Trump attack into most of their answers, and frankly I would generalize this; I would take it beyond Trump to the entire Republican Party, because Trump is the logical outcome of Nixon's Southern Strategy. The Trumpification of the Republican Party--everybody is acting like it's something that just fell out of the sky; it didn't. This is an entirely logical progression. It needn't be Donald Trump himself, but somebody equally outrageous. So, they need to wrap these two

things together. They need to tie the entire Republican Party to Trump, particularly as they get more and more uncomfortable with him.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. You know I just wrote a column on where are the Republican challengers to Trump. Listeners, get it on Nader.org. And what I pointed out was, you have these people who think Trump is a danger to the Republic. They think Trump is going to sink the Republican Party for a long time. The chaos, the takeover, the imagery is all bad for the Republicans--the huge deficits that he's generating, very bad for the Republicans. So, you have people like recently retired Senator Corker, who was Head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Senator Flake from Arizona. You have people like Christine Todd Whitman who was Governor of New Jersey and the EPA administrator under George W. Bush who can't stand Trump and actually asked for his impeachment; she's a Republican. You have people like John Kasich, who was the Head of the House Budget Committee and then became Ohio Governor for eight years; he can't stand Donald Trump, and you have others as well. In fact, just recently, Mark Sanford, the former Governor of South Carolina and Member of the House until recently, is testing the waters, but he hasn't declared. Bill Weld, who is former Republican Governor of Massachusetts, has actually declared against Trump, but he hasn't got much news. What do you think is going to happen? I think they're intimidated by Trump. I think they are afraid of being verbally lashed and stigmatized with nicknames--going after their families the way Trump did against Cruz and Cruz's wife. I think the lack of challenge against a Republican incumbent Donald Trump, who cannot break 44% in the polls and has a low-poll rating and high disapproval rating, and he's not being challenged in the Republican primaries; what's your take on that?

Thom Hartmann: If you remember your days in elementary school, the bully did two things: Number one, was willing to be a bully. But number two, brought people to his side. There would be people who would align themselves with the bully for fear of the bully, generally speaking. But then they became bullies themselves, and there's some shared self-interest there. What has happened among the Republican billionaire and donor class is that, at first, they were all looking down their nose at Donald Trump. Now they are largely all firmly on his side because he has quite literally given them what they want. He has given them a couple trillion dollars in tax cuts and deregulation and all these things. And so now, I think it's not just that they are intimidated by Trump, they're afraid of being called names, afraid of the death threats that'll come from the ultra-right and stuff like that. I think it's also that they're afraid they'll lose their funding, which is political debt. I think that that's what took out, as much as a potential primary challenger, that's what took out Flake and Corker, as much as anything else, was that their funders were also intimidated or had aligned themselves with the bully. So, it's a more systemic problem than just Donald Trump. Number 1) I don't see anybody successfully challenging him. I don't think there's going to be any Republican primary debates. I think anything that happens--Bill Weld is a crackpot frankly, and so is Mark Sanford, formerly of the Appalachian Trail. Remember, this is the guy who had the mistress in Argentina and all that stuff. I mean these guys have no chance, none, zero.

Ralph Nader: Well that conventionally would be a liability, but when you're up against Trump, I mean, he's trumped them on all those things, so that wouldn't be...[laughter]

Thom Hartmann: He still has the support of the donor class, but the second point I want to make really quick, Ralph, because I'd love to get your take on it, is I'm beginning to think that he's going to refuse to debate the Democratic nominee.

Ralph Nader: He's going to what?

Thom Hartmann: Refuse to debate the Democratic nominee.

Ralph Nader: That's why I had to ask you twice. Are you kidding? That'll make him a coward. He can't bear that.

Thom Hartmann: No, I think he knows that his brain doesn't work as well as most of these guys. You know we'll have to see. I may be very wrong about this but the sense that I'm getting is that he's feeling more and more besieged, more and more insular, more and more living in the Fox-News bubble and therefore he doesn't need the rest of the media. He doesn't need the major networks. He doesn't need the publicity that would come from the debates. And he doesn't want to give any Democratic candidate...if he can successfully control the news cycle every single day, which he's done now for two and a half years. In some weeks, there has been one day where he hasn't been on the front page of the newspapers or the top story in the news. One day out of some weeks. If he can continue to do that, he doesn't need the debates. And in fact, the debates represent a liability, a potential threat to him because he could be wounded by the debates. So I'm thinking that he's just going to flip the entire thing. Keep in mind, from '64 until 1980, there were no presidential debates.

Ralph Nader: That's right. Well you know, you're right, just backing up a bit, he has given the wealthy classes exactly what they want. I mean, the huge tax escapes and breaks, the lack of enforcement of the Internal Revenue Code, huge corporate welfare, crony capitalism, huge military contracts, no enforcement against Wall Street crimes; I mean, what's there not to like, right? With Trump, the only thing is that they don't like his personal behavior and his foul-mouthed verbiage, so he's very clever. You know, in some ways, he's dumb as a rock--a phrase he used against his former Secretary of State, Tillerson--but in other ways, he's actually a street-smart genius, isn't he?

Thom Hartmann: Very much like Hitler and Mussolini were. And you recall, not the first things that both of them did, but the first things they did as they consolidated power...and my concern is that if Trump gets reelected, that's the end of the experiment of democracy in the United States, which is probably a whole 'nother conversation. But one of the first things they did is they essentially delegitimized the opposition parties. This was before they outlawed them. And the first step in delegitimizing the Democratic Party is to refuse to use its proper name as it was named by Thomas Jefferson. It was called the Democratic Republican Party until the 1820s and then they dropped the Republican Party. It's been called the Democratic Party forever. And Joe McCarthy used to say always call it the Democrat Party with an emphasis on "rat." And Trump is doing that literally every day to the point that guests on MSNBC are starting to refer to it as the Democrat Party. So, number 1 is to delegitimize the party; you don't even allow it to use its own name. And then number 2, you don't allow it to have a presence. You know [when] the Democrats come out with campaign policies; he doesn't respond to their policies. He pretends they don't exist. So, if he refuses to debate them, he has massively delegitimized them, and then if he gets reelected, he can begin the process of essentially outlawing them.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Thom Hartmann, daily syndicated radio talk-show host extraordinaire. Thom, I want to ask you a question maybe nobody's asked you on the show. Let's

face reality here. Donald Trump didn't win the popular vote. He came three million votes short of Hillary Clinton, so he was selected by the Electoral College. But he did win a lot of votes--tens of millions of votes. And so, let me ask you, what has Donald Trump taught us about ourselves as a people?

Thom Hartmann: It's a really good question, Ralph. I think that what has happened is that what was always implicit has become explicit. You know, Richard Nixon with his "Southern Strategy," was sort of explicitly racist but not so much. And then when Reagan came along, and as you know, the old Lee Atwater tape that David Corn found years ago where he said "We used to be able to use the N-word, and then we got a little more sophisticated when we started talking about busing. And then by the time Reagan came along, we didn't even need to talk about busing anymore; we could simply say 'tax cuts' and everybody understood that that benefited white people more than black people, or in some cases, it even hurt black people. And so people got what we were saying." I think the Willie Horton ad might have been the exception, but that's how desperate George Herbert Walker Bush was because he was such a weak candidate. But what was implicit, what was kind of quietly done; the whole reason for the phrase dog-whistle was only dogs can hear them, is that making racist statements that only racists can hear is that Donald Trump now is saying stuff out loud. And this is a really dangerous thing. Number one: it reflects the racism that is inherent in our society, in our culture, largely among white Americans, but it occurs in other places as well, but largely white racism. Number two: it also is breeding a new generation of racists. I mean, basically when Reagan gave his first speech after he was nominated the Republican nominee in 1980 in Philadelphia, Mississippi, just down the road from where Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney, the three civil rights workers were murdered - they made the movie *Mississippi Burning* out of - and the entire speech before 30,000 white people was about states' rights; it was a dog-whistle. The racists got it, the Southerners got it, but the media didn't even report that context. It was largely unreported and [remains] unknown to this day. So, the young people of America were not exposed to this racism in a way that could convert them--essentially that would evangelize them. Trump has now turned it; by making it explicit, [he] has begun this evangelical process, and now the whole alt-right has jumped into this and they're recruiting like there's no tomorrow. They're doing it on YouTube; they're doing it on Twitter; they're doing it on Facebook; they're doing it on 4chan; they're doing it on 8chan. And they're just doing it; they're doing it on the streets, putting billboards up and posters. White racism, white supremacy has gone mainstream now as consequence of this, and that concerns me tremendously. I am very, very worried that The Turner Diaries scenario, that Tim McVeigh thought he could bring into fruition/bring into reality, that Donald Trump is taking us closer to the possibility of something like that--an actual civil war in the United States.

Ralph Nader: Well, I think he's also taught us that we're doing a bad job as a people recruiting politicians. We don't do our homework. We don't know what their record is. There are too many millions of voters who are five-minute voters; is the person likeable; is he saying things you're saying that you don't want to say out loud; does he air your own prejudices? Yeah, he's my guy even though he is jeopardizing your jobs, freezing your minimum wage, jeopardizing your healthcare, exposing your kids to all kinds of toxic pollutants in the air and the water, and generally running your livelihood into the ground; it doesn't seem to matter as long as the dog whistles, as long as his general prescriptions--promising "a terrific healthcare system when we get rid of Obamacare; I'm going to give you clean air, pure water; I will give you all kinds of industrial jobs. I alone can fix it". I mean, why are people so much smarter when it comes to

their sports teams, but when it comes to their politicians, it's as if they're calling out, take me, I'm yours.

Thom Hartmann: I think there's a real simple answer to that question and it's one of the most important questions that nobody is discussing. If you watch sports television or listen to sports radio, you will hear a discussion, not just of which team is more likely to win and which team is more likely to lose, but also why. This particular player knows this particular strategy; he knows how to get around this kind of a block--you know, they go in-depth into the sport. Our political discussion, in our corporate media, is completely different from that. It's all about who's up, who's down--what's the horse race. Bernie's been complaining about this for five years very, very loudly and he's absolutely right that the media will not talk about the issues. They will only talk about the issues if they're forced to, in the context of how did these issues help or hurt these candidates. And even sports radio is more in-depth, massively more in-depth than the kind of political coverage that you're getting on MSNBC and CNN and the big three networks, and generally on radio. And until that changes, and I think it's going to take something like either a return to the Fairness Doctrine or breaking up big media to make that change; until that changes, we're going to continue to have your five-minute voters because they only have five minutes of information.

Ralph Nader: What's interesting is how much he's doing in his very base. I mean, will you really consider what he's taken away from them and what he's broken his promise and betrayed them all the way down their entire spectrum of livelihood; I mean, the crumbling public services, for example, he promised he was going to have all kinds infrastructure jobs. "I'm a builder," he said, "I know what that means." He hasn't done anything. Even his proposal came down to a measly \$20 billion a year and you know how many few bridges that'll pay for. And then he's denying climate disruption. So, you got all of these red states being flooded, like Louisiana. And here's a president who is basically saying, "it's a hoax"; the hurricane intensity resulting in tornado proliferation is a hoax; the rising sea levels are a hoax and we're not going to do anything about it, Americans". And a lot of these people who voted for him are living in red states. So, there's something deeply masochistic operating here. Don't you think?

Thom Hartmann: Perhaps. I'm inclined to think, you know going back to my last riff, is that, again, this is a symptom of the media. The media is not pointing these things out. They're not talking about these issues. And so therefore, Trump gets to dominate the discussion. And in the corporate media you have the interlocking boards of directors between the media. I mean, there's this amazing website, theyrule.net, T-H-E-Y-R-U-L-E.net, and you can plug in any of the big corporations, plug in corporation A and corporation B, and then push a button and it'll show you how many steps you have to go through to find the interlocking board of directors. And in fact, in my book *Unequal Protection*, I went through a hundred corporations and showed how all the top 100 corporations of America have interlocking boards of directors and you can literally say okay, this person is on the AT&T Board and also on the Wells Fargo Board, and this person is on the Wells Fargo Board and also on the NBC Board, and this person is on the NBC Board and also on the Montana [Monsanto?] Board--and literally go around in circles. So, the media is unwilling to point these things out because they're all making money on this stuff, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thom, what's that website again?

Thom Hartmann: It's called They Rule; T-H-E-Y-R-U-L-E.net.

Ralph Nader: Well, on your program, you know you have three hours every day, do you ever point out--I'm sure you do--that the people own the public airwaves? They're the landlords; the radio and TV stations are the tenants. They don't pay anything for their license. 24/7 they decide who gets on, who doesn't. They got the FCC in their pocket and they got the members of Congress intimidated. They're really afraid of the local television stations, for example. Do you ever get a discussion among people about why don't they want to control more of what they actually own? The people own the airwaves!

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, it's a good discussion and we do have that from time to time on my show. The biggest challenge that we have, frankly right now, is the 1996 Telecommunications Act that Bill Clinton signed that didn't entirely privatize the airwaves, but largely did. And now you've got the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] coming out and saying that the deal that the United States made with cable companies back in the '80s was--if you want to run your cable through our public rights of way, because cable is not over the air, you have to give back to the communities in the form of public access, television stations, and you have to fund C-Span. Well, the FCC last week, came out with a proposed rule ending that, and cable access and this nonprofit access is like the last bastion of any kind of liberal programming that's on television anywhere in the country. And so, they're getting ready to pull that; I mean, they're taking that away. There's an all-out assault on the media. And then, of course, the Fairness Doctrine, which Reagan ended in '87, said that if you want to maintain your license since you're using our public airwaves, and this is before cable was a big thing, if you want to maintain your license, you have to "program in the public interest" was the magic phrase. It didn't say that if you carry Limbaugh, you have to carry Hartmann; you know, far from it. It said basically you have to program in the public interest and that was interpreted to mean news at the top of the hour. When I was a teenager, one of my first jobs, when I was 16, was as a DJ and I did that for three years, and then I did news for seven years in Lansing, Michigan. And when I was doing news, if I got caught talking to the sales people, I'd be fired. There was this wall between talent and sales. You could not . . . it just was not aloud if you were in the news department. And that got done away with in '87. I mean this was back from '67 to '78, but that got done away with in '87 by Reagan. So, between the loss of the Fairness Doctrine in '87 and Telecommunications Act of '96, and now the corruption of the FCC by both Bush and Trump, I'm very, very concerned about the future of public media access that's in the public interest.

Ralph Nader: Oh, yeah. Well, I've written to the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission and asked how he appraises his commission enforcing a 1934 Communications Act, which required that the radio and TV stations, using our property, had to pay attention to the public interest, convenience and necessity, which means public news, programming, local and so on; never even responded. Sent it again; never responded. Talked about it on the radio; never responded. Sent it to members of Congress; they wouldn't respond. That's how bad it is, people, because the only people that are afraid of people are the people like you listening to this program. And you've just got to organize yourself in a very dynamic way and enjoy life being assertive citizens recovering the meaning of "We the People" in the preamble of the Constitution. Before we get to your new series, and this is going to really excite listeners, *The Hidden History of the Supreme Court of the United States*, the *Hidden History of Guns and the Second Amendment* and so on, do we have any comments from Steve and David? I'm sure you do.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, Thom, I've got a question. It goes back to Trump and the whole racism discussion. You know, what I hear coming from the right is how can you call Trump a racist? Black unemployment is at an all-time low. How do you answer that? I don't know if that's factually true about black unemployment, but that's the claim. How do you answer that?

Thom Hartmann: Well, you know, the recovery from the Republican Great Crash, the Republican Great Recession in 2007-2008, the damage that the Republican deregulation did to the economy, Obama did a pretty good job of putting us back on course, but that said, an awful lot of what's been going on is sugar-high stuff as I'm sure you know. If that has worked to the benefit of black people, that's great; it works to the benefit of everybody and that unemployment is relatively low, according to the official statistics. But black people, white people--everybody right across the board by and large--unless you're making over a couple hundred grand a year, you're not seeing much of the benefit of that. Labor-force participation rates--I think the last number I saw was 67%. If you are unable to find a job for more than a year, say you live in a part of the country where industry has just left, when after it happened they went to Mexico or they've gone to China or whatever--if you live in a part of the country like that where there just are no jobs, you can be unemployed, but if you're unemployed more than a year, you're not counted as unemployed. So, you only show up in the labor-force participation numbers. So, instead of having 70%, 80% of the people who are eligible and willing to work working, we have in the 60s right now because we're just not counting people anymore. There are these different measures of unemployment. So, number one: We have a false picture; it's a false narrative that black unemployment is lower than it's ever been or any unemployment is lower than it's ever been. And all you have to do is insert back in the labor-force participation numbers, which gets you to--I think it's called E6 as opposed to E1 or E2. Ralph probably knows these numbers better than I do.

Ralph Nader: Thom, even if they're employed, they can't live on what they're making, because they got a frozen minimum wage that is completely separate from the unemployment rate in all its deficiencies, as you pointed out. Black wealth is one tenth of white wealth--one tenth of white wealth in terms of their savings and the value of any housing they have. And so it's a very deceptive thing. He keeps saying it, "Hispanic unemployment is at a record low; black unemployment is at a record low". Yeah, wages are pretty low, too. You got millions of people making less than workers made in 1968, adjusted for inflation. Any comments, David? Steve?

David Feldman: I would like to ask you a question. I would assume I'm going to get crickets. But I've asked liberals and lefties, what do we do about white men? They have the highest rate of opiate addiction; they do feel disenfranchised, and they become tempted by the tiki torches. What we do about white men? They do feel alienated.

Ralph Nader: Fewer number of white males in colleges than females. It's true. You know that's one reason Tucker Carlson's book was so popular, Thom, because he had a section of all kinds of statistics about white-male debilitation. I mean, the amount of drug addiction; they can't get adequate jobs; the jobs in industry they once had are gone. The plight of the white male, I think David is saying, isn't paid enough attention to.

David Feldman: And at some point, it becomes an identity.

Thom Hartmann: I agree. There's maybe a couple of points that I'd make around this. A) I don't have an easy bumper sticker for you and that's unfortunate. We need to be thinking about how to message that in a straightforward way. But basically, the white male has been raised with the privilege of being kind of at the top of the economic heap and with the story, the narrative that he is responsible for being the breadwinner and that's how his identity is defined and that's how his social status is defined. When you talk to a man, typically the question is, "What do you do for a living?"--not "Who are you or what do you like" or "What are your hobbies? or whatever, and so white men define themselves this way. But Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson have done some absolutely brilliant research. They run a think tank out of the United Kingdom, and they published three books on this. So, the first is called *Why Inequality Matters*. The second was called *The Spirit Level*. And they just came out with the third one and I can't remember the title right off the top of my head but it has the word "level" on it also. And what they found is that as inequality grows - now this is not poverty, this is inequality, just inequality - as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, what happens in the middle is that levels of social dysfunction start to explode. And it's a linear relationship to a certain point then it almost goes log. I'm talking about things like teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, suicide, mental illness, racism and things like that. As a subset of that, homicide, suicide I think I mentioned, drug abuse and drug addiction are symptoms--not specifically of poverty. Although the white male has been relatively speaking impoverished over the last 40-some odd years as a result of Reaganomics, I mean wages have been absolutely flat after just exploding for the previous 60 years. So, white males have not been able to fulfill those roles that they thought in society, which is the most commonly pointed-to answer to your question. But I think that if you look at the research that Wilkinson and Pickett have done and they're really worth digging into, what you find is that sense of social alienation; there's another one--trust, literally interpersonal trust. All of these negative indicators go up, or in the case of trust, it goes down massively, purely is a function of inequality. And by the way, there's a good body in the anthropological literature of the same thing among animals, among particularly mammals and it gets very, very visible with primates, but even with dogs and cats. If they detect a fundamental unfairness in their environment, they react to it by becoming erratic essentially and angry, and in many cases, self-destructive. So, I think that the rise of the billionaire class in the United States, along with the rise of deep poverty, although deep poverty has been with us for a long time, but principally the rise of the billionaire class is probably the main thing that's driving this and it's the one thing that nobody ever talks about.

David Feldman: Great. Thank you.

Ralph Nader: Well, listen, let's get to the series that you're starting to put out--your first book, *The Hidden History of Guns and the Second Amendment* and let me quote something that I don't think most people know, but that's why you're such a great historian. And this is the quote "As recently as the 1970s, the NRA, that's the National Rifle Association, and both political parties, supported reasonable gun-control measures and were willing to entertain even more comprehensive measures." Do you want to elaborate that?

Thom Hartmann: Well, it's absolutely true. Ronald Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush were big advocates of gun control. And the NRA, when it was a sportsmen's association, was all in on gun control, in fact, helped write some of the legislation that had to do with what's called the duck load. If you're out duck hunting, you can't have more than three shells in your rifle

because it's unsportsmanlike to have more than three--to take more than three shots at a flock of geese or ducks, for example. I mean there's other examples, too, and the NRA helped write a lot of that legislation state to state about what kind of equipment you could use when you go hunting; when you could go hunting, and what were the rules for hunting to make it all sportsmanlike. All that went out the window in the mid-seventies when the NRA basically got taken over by the gun manufacturers and turned from being a sportsmen's organization devoted to its membership to being essentially a lobbying and front organization for the weapons industry. And then along with that, they acquired massive political power because they got enormous wealth. And, Ralph, you're the guy who taught us all this; back in the day in the '60s and '70s--that that wealth-driving political power then corrupts systems whether the systems would have to do with auto safety or whether it's systems that have to do with gun safety. And that then, in turn, corrupted the Republican Party and, frankly, the Democratic Party for quite a few years, so that's the bad news. The good news, I think, is that the most powerful lobby in Washington, D.C. in 1997 and 1998 was the tobacco lobby. Nobody crossed the tobacco lobby. Mike Pence was out there writing op-eds about how tobacco doesn't cause cancer. When the lawsuits started happening in '97 and '98, and we started as a nation, realizing that this industry had been not only lying to us for 60 years, but was aggressively killing us to the tune of half million Americans a year; the horror just shattered their power. And the tobacco lobby by 2001, 2002 had become just another lobby in Congress. I think the same process is happening right now with the NRA, which is one of the reasons why when I wrote *The Hidden History of Guns and the Second Amendment*, I was thinking this is . . . I mean we made that decision two and a half years ago when I started, but it seemed to me like this was the trend line; this is the direction. And now in the last year, we're seeing all this infighting and the collapse and everything, which is very much what we saw with the tobacco industry at the end of its heyday. So, I think that there's good stuff coming down the road here.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, the tobacco industry was considered totally invincible in Washington. We always point out it takes a lot fewer people than most people think, once they're organized and focused on their members of Congress, to turn these corporations around. Your next book coming out in October, *The Hidden History of the Supreme Court and the Betrayal of America*, what's that about?

Thom Hartmann: It's about how the Supreme Court, starting with the Marbury Decision in 1803, basically placed themselves above both Congress and the president, and Thomas Jefferson went nuts about this, absolutely nuts and said the Marbury Decision stands and the Constitution has become a thing of wax. The Marbury Decision said basically the Supreme Court said that we have the power to strike down legislation that's been passed by Congress and signed by the president. And then in the later part of the 19th century and the early 20th century, it went beyond that and said we have the power to literally write new laws. And the example that the right likes to use about that is *Roe v Wade* where in *Roe v Wade* and then later on *Planned Parenthood v Casey* actually was the one where it got really explicit. They came up with this three-trimester thing. That's the job of the legislature. And I'm just mentioning *Roe v Wade* because everybody is familiar with it. But there's dozens and dozens of examples of this. And interestingly, during the Reagan Administration, Reagan had a guy in his Justice Department whose job was to figure out how to basically undo *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Roe v Wade*--these two decisions that the Reaganites saw as terrible decisions. And this guy came up

with this extraordinary memo going back to the Marbury Decision in 1803 and carrying it forward case-by-case-by-case and proposed

what is sometimes referred to as court-stripping, which is that Congress, under Article III Section 2, the Constitution explicitly says that the Supreme Court shall operate under exceptions defined by Congress and under regulations defined by Congress. And so this guy came up with this whole memo and this whole political strategy that they would have Congress, when they seize control of Congress and the White House, that they would pass legislation saying essentially that we, Congress, are going to regulate you, the Supreme Court, under Article III Section 2, to say that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision we're striking that down, and the legislation that we're passing to strike it down, you may not review. We're going to negate judicial review with regard to this, and the same thing with regard to *Roe v. Wade*. They never did it because they never got that control. But the guy who wrote that memo--his name is John Roberts. And right now he's the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ralph Nader: That's why you call it the hidden history. You know, I came across years ago, Thom, the early Pennsylvania Constitution, before 1787, before the Constitutional Convention, and they refused to give their Supreme Court any authority to interpret their state constitution. They said it was none of the court's business. We, by referendum, are going to interpret our Constitution by popular referendum.

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, and this was a huge debate at the Constitutional Convention--Judicial Review--should the Supreme Court have the power of Judicial Review? And largely all agreed "no" was the answer. And in fact, in Federalist--it's been about a year now since I wrote that book, so I'd have to go back and look, but I think it's Federalist--well I don't even want to throw a number out, but Federalist Papers, I think in '71 or '72, Hamilton talks about how the court is the least harmful, the least likely to injure; they don't have the power of the purse like Congress; they don't have the power of the military like the executive; they are basically powerless. And he was trying to assuage the fears of people who thought that the Supreme Court might claim the power of Judiciary Review, which is what happened in the Marbury Decision. And Jefferson couldn't fight it because he won the Marbury Decision. He was stuck. But it's a whole fascinating thing and it sounds a little bit wonky, but I'm telling you, it's not.

Ralph Nader: It's not wonky at all because McConnell, the Majority Leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell from Kentucky, his mission in life is to install in the federal courts the most right-wing corporatist he can find. And it's already bearing fruit because look, . now the Supreme Court, which is I call the corporate Supreme Court, favors corporations against workers, against voters, against you name it; it's a pro-corporate court. It isn't invalidating anything that might be called corporate-excessive power. And look at the result; they ruled in Citizens United in 2010 that corporations could spend unlimited money for or against local, state and federal candidates--unlimited money, as long as they don't coordinate it with the candidates. I mean Justice Stevens--who we just lost, bless his soul, John Paul Stevens just passed away at age 99--called it about the most devastating anti-Democratic decision ever made by the Supreme Court.

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, his rebuttal in Citizens United, his dissent in Citizens United, is must-read stuff. It only runs about four pages and everybody in America should read it. I mean it's shocking. He talks about Tokyo Rose, how under this decision of the Citizens United, Tokyo

Rose would have been able to contribute to electoral campaigns and run campaigns for the United States. It's amazing.

Ralph Nader: Thom Hartmann, how many secret histories are you going to put out? And give us a sense of what the titles are.

Thom Hartmann: Sure. Well, the first one was *The Hidden History of Guns and the Second Amendment*. The second one, which will be out this fall, which is available now to pre-order from your local bookstores or online, is *The Hidden History of the Supreme Court and the Betrayal of America*. The third one, which will be out next spring, I finished writing about three months ago and is going through line-editing right now; we're still debating its title. I want the title to be *The Hidden History of the Republican War on Voting*. My publisher doesn't want the word Republican to be in the title, so we'll see how that ends up. The fourth one, which I'm writing right now, is *The Hidden History of the Rise of Monopoly and the Death of Free Enterprise in America*. And we haven't yet come up with the title for it, but that's my working title.

Ralph Nader: And these are very clearly written. They are 192 pages written to be read and understood. They're not huge volumes with esoteric social-science jargon.

Thom Hartmann: They're small books and my goal in this--I pitched this as a 10-book series to my publisher, and they've been buying them two books at a time. And so, we'll see; I've got contracts now for four of them; if they do well, then we'll go to six and so on.

Ralph Nader: I've written a short book that I could've called "The Hidden History of" *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*, Thom. [laughter] People are ordering it five at a time because it makes them laugh themselves seriously enough to organize Congress watchdog groups back home. And by the way, you can get that by going to Nader.org or just go to ratsreformcongress.org where you, by the way, get a free tutorial step-by-step on how you could collaborate with your fellow citizens and actually organize to summon your senators and representatives back home for these town meetings. Before we close, Steve, David, any last comments or questions?

David Feldman: Yes, I have a lightning-round, 30 seconds; both men have to answer these questions. Thom Hartmann, how many books have you written?

Thom Hartmann: I've probably written around 40. I think I have 26 or 27 in print right now.

David Feldman: Ralph Nader, how many books have you written?

Ralph Nader: I have never counted. But I think it's less than 20. What I'm amazed at, Thom, you have three hours a day, five days a week, and you got to do some preparation. Where do you get the time to write all these books?

David Feldman: That was my question. I wanted to ask how many hours each man spends each day writing? Thom Hartmann?

Thom Hartmann: Here's my schedule. Louise and I get up at 5 in the morning; we put together my radio show over the next three hours and have breakfast. I go on the air at 9 I get off the air at

noon. I come home from that and I write until 6. Then we watch *The Rachel Maddow Show*. It sounds like an ad, but it seems like she's the only person doing any kind of investigative reporting. And then we go to bed at 7 or spend other hour or so looking over the news and try to plan for the next day. And that's five days a week. And then on the weekends I write five hours a day Saturday

and Sunday when I can, which is most days. And I'll just be the first to say, I'm a hyperactive kid who grew up. I don't see this as a grueling schedule. I enjoy it. I love what I do and so . . .

Ralph Nader: You know, David, I think you exaggerate the burden here. Let me reduce it. If Thom Hartmann just wrote one page in his book for 192 days and took the rest of the time off and didn't write a word, he would write a book a year. It's just incrementalism, David, something that you cannot learn from Triumph, the Insult Dog, that you keep associating with.

David Feldman: I learned it from Vietnam. I learned incrementalism from Vietnam. How many hours a day? How many hours do you read each? I'd like to know each man how many hours do you read each day?

Thom Hartmann: Read?

David Feldman: Yeah.

Thom Hartmann: Oh, I read myself to sleep every night, so probably two hours a day. Well, and that's not for work. I mean, part of it is for work. And then in the morning, I spend at least an hour or two reading the news, so maybe three or four hours a day.

Ralph Nader: I spend about five hours a day reading.

Thom Hartmann: And at least an hour of what I'm reading is fiction, by the way, that's my relaxation.

David Feldman: By the way, I think I just asked some of the most important questions that people have to ask--how much time do you spend reading?

Thom Hartmann: Yeah, and I'm guessing the average American would answer less than an hour, less than 10 minutes. I mean . . .

Ralph Nader: You know we have in our bookstore at the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut--tortmuseum.org if you're interested. We have a big sign and the sign reads "Readers think and thinkers read." That tells a story; that tells a story. Anyway, we're out of time. We've been talking with Thom Hartmann, the syndicated brainy talk-show host, three hours a day on well over a hundred stations around the country, and the author of a whole series of books on the hidden history of this and that--showing that primary source research often comes up with the real truth, not the myths that we're taught about in school about our historical background. Thank you, Thom.

Thom Hartmann: Thank you, Ralph. Thank you all.

David Feldman: That was humbling.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah.

Ralph Nader: He's the real thing. He goes right back to the original documents. That's why he took apart, which no historian took apart, the *Santa Clara Case* that turned corporations into persons. They never read the scribe stuff. He read it. Imagine? Not a single major American historian came across that.

David Feldman: And he's not a lawyer.

Ralph Nader: No. He's just a smart guy.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with the legendary broadcaster Thom Hartmann. His latest book is *The Hidden History of Guns and the Second Amendment*. We will link to his extensive body of work at ralphnaderradiohour.com Now we're going to take a short break and check in with our *Corporate Crime Reporter*, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, July 19, 2019. I'm Russell Mokhiber. The Justice Department is pursuing a criminal investigation into whether Johnson & Johnson lied to the public about the possible cancer risks of its talcum powder. That's according to a report from Bloomberg [Business Week]. The criminal probe coincides with a regulatory investigation and civil claims by thousands of cancer patients that Johnson & Johnson's Baby Powder talc was responsible for their illness. Now, a grand jury in Washington is examining documents relating to what company officials knew about any carcinogens in their products. Questions about the product's safety have led to more than 14,000 lawsuits from consumers asserting that the company's talc products caused their ovarian cancer or mesothelioma. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. I want to thank our guest again, Thom Hartmann. 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. A transcript of the show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org and have it delivered straight to your inbox. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: And Ralph's new books out--the fable, *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*. To acquire a copy of that, go to ratsreformedcongress.org, and *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 will 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 proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, David, Steve, Jimmy, and to our listeners, spread the word about the program, the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* that is willing to be on more programs and more stations around the country.