

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 314 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, and just to be on the safe side until this blows over, I will be emotionally distancing.

**Steve Skrovan:** At least six feet, I hope. At least six feet. And we also have the man of the moment. We're going to try that one on today. Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello everybody

**Steve Skrovan:** On the show today, a very exciting show, we're going to welcome back tireless environmental activist, Winona LaDuke. She's the program director for Honor the Earth, which is a nonprofit that uses indigenous wisdom, music, art and the media to raise awareness and support for indigenous environmental issues. We'll probably talk about a lot of stuff with Ms. LaDuke. She recently wrote an op-ed about the fires in Australia and what we can learn from indigenous peoples about fire management and we'll probably also talk about the work her foundation is doing to fight oil pipelines and also the role of industrial hemp in a vision of a new economy.

In the second half the show, we will be joined by John Nichols, the national affairs correspondent for *The Nation* magazine. We always call John when we need a good dose of progressive midwestern political wisdom. John will be discussing the state of the Democratic Primary at the second Super Tuesday where the establishment candidate, Joe Biden won three big states that begin with M: Mississippi, Missouri, and Michigan. The Democrats want to beat Trump, but is Biden really the safe choice? We'll talk about that and we'll also talk about what do we win if he wins and as always in between, we will take a short break to check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. And if we have some time left over, we'll try to answer some listener questions. But first, let's talk with Winona LaDuke about what's happening on the front lines of the Native American community. David?

**David Feldman:** Winona LaDuke is an internationally renowned activist working on issues of sustainable development, renewable energy and food systems. Ms. LaDuke lives and works on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota and in 1996 and 2000, she ran for vice president as the nominee of the Green Party with our very own, Ralph Nader. As program director of the organization Honor the Earth, she works on issues related to the climate crisis. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Winona LaDuke.

**Winona LaDuke:** Hey there. Aaniin = greetings/hello (in Ojibwe language)

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome back indeed, Winona. I might add that she has written some sterling books and has a great artistic flair when she asked people in mailings to support Honor the Earth organization, which is a nonprofit. We're going to cover quite a few topics however quickly. Let's start with the Australia fires that burned an area twice the size of Massachusetts, I'm told, in the past summer in Australia destroying a billion animals and taking dozens of lives and making air almost unbreathable in cities like Sydney, Australia. You mentioned in the past that it would be wise for us today to study how indigenous groups controlled wildfires centuries ago. They

still have a lot to teach us. And that brought to mind a book that my sister, Laura Nader, who has taught for decades anthropology at University of California Berkeley; she put out a book once with the title, *Naked Science* [*Anthropological Inquiry Into Boundaries, Power, and Knowledge*] showing that indigenous peoples, centuries ago, followed the scientific methods--trial and error, predictability. And although they didn't have PhD degrees and didn't come from MIT, they were basically field scientists and we should recognize that. So I'm not asking you to read *Naked Science*, but Winona, tell us how indigenous peoples in North America and in Australia and other places dealt with out-of-control fires or how they actually used fires.

**Winona LaDuke:** Yeah, I mean I don't know all things about all indigenous peoples. Just kind of issue that disclaimer, Ralph. But what I do know is that fire is a force that you need to work with in a good way. And America is not about that, nor is Australia. And so, you know, what they did is that whole Smokey the Bear gig when in fact native peoples managed forests or worked with forests, burned for blueberries, burned for medicines. You know, even our word "mushkade" has to do with the burned medicines, you know, that comes from our territory. And so in Australia, I mean, it's pretty well noted that anyplace where Aboriginal people had in fact burned, it was like I think a 57% less damage caused or less hit rate, like entirely going around those areas because people had burned all the small burnables in small fires. You know, I saw some of the coverage of it and some of the reporters, you know, science managers were saying, well, it takes a lot of money and time to do that. And you know, I'm kinda like, money and time, let's just say that you want to live or you want to be; might want to take time, take a little break and take care of things the way they should be instead of putting a dollar value on everything. And you know, those fires certainly have taught us that. And we're in the era of pretty much, you know, catastrophes of biblical proportion. You know, I'm not a Christian, but from what I gather, things are kind of in the worldwide scope, going poorly. And you know, I'm like you, Ralph; I'm human. I'm trying to do the best I can with a species that has botched things up for most of the world. And you know, so I'm sitting there thinking, well, you know, let's try to do a few things that are right. And you know, in this moment, I mean, there's a lot of things shifting. The Coronavirus has slowed down the global trade. You know, I was like, why did you need those shrimp raised in Scotland and deveined in China and served in New Mexico? Why was that a good idea? You know, so we're looking at kind of the choices that have been made, not just about fires. You know native people have burned for many years to keep peace with mother earth, but also the catastrophic ecological and trade and financial crises that are now caused by a lot of those bad decisions of basically not listening to Indigenous peoples.

**Ralph Nader:** And you're a leader, Winona, of trying to get on Indian reservations, renewable energy and crops like industrial hemp on your White Earth Reservation. Why don't you tell us what you're doing in this respect-- you want to help restore the prairies in that area of the Upper Midwest and you're working with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, which involves elected tribal leaders of 11 Dakota and ethnic Shoshone Nations in Minnesota. Why don't you tell us what you're actually doing and how it could be scaled up much greater around the country.

**Winona LaDuke:** Right. So you know, first, the last strike at you know, the crisis that we are in, price of oil is tanking, which means that you have all these, like the infrastructure that they're looking to build right now is infrastructure for oil companies, which is all going to be a bunch of stranded liabilities within five years. You know, we're going to be holding the bag for this. And a couple of big projects just ended up getting canceled. Single largest tar sands project, s imagined, Teck Frontier Mine, canceled last week as you know. Constitution Pipeline also canceled in New

York State. You know, Jordan Cove [is] another one that is on the rocks in Oregon. And then in Minnesota, we are still facing Line 3. Canadian Motors...

**Ralph Nader:** These are all pipelines that you've been opposing.

**Winona LaDuke:** All oil pipelines, we're saying. And so, you know, basically what I'm saying is that at this moment when you have a huge crisis, it would be wise to invest in a future that is sane. And so that's what we're doing at White Earth. So through our king, our group, our organization Honor the Earth, we create a solar thermal panel manufacturing facility called 8th Fire Solar, solar thermal. So, like your self-basing wall, it can reduce your heating bill by 15 to 25%. Why wouldn't you want to just reduce heat instead of just have it go out the window or just be cold? So we're looking at low-cost heating answers for you know, rural housing, urban housing. You know, that's kind of core to our work—it's called megawatts. We're not trying to generate power; we're trying to save energy by doing efficiency and doing, you know, something that uses a natural mother earth. So that's what we've been working on. And then we got working with some other allies in Minnesota, 200 kilowatts of solar planned for the White Earth Reservation now. And that's going to go for our villages like little small solar farms, you know, in five of our villages. You know, this is going to be a really, really good project when it goes up, but other tribes are looking at the same thing. So like we're at this moment where one side is looking at how to get more fossil fuels infrastructure in and then the enlightened team, that'd be us; the Indigenous Just Transition movement is saying we're going to go for solar; we're going to go for efficiency; we're going to go for local foods because we think buying shrimp from China and Scotland is dumb and we're going to go for hemp!

**Ralph Nader:** And wind power.

**Winona LaDuke:** Wind power. And wind, we are windy; we're not the Midwest, Ralph. We're the Northern Plains and Great Lakes. And the Midwest, that's like a geographically confusing thing. You know what I'm saying? The Mid of what West? That's just makes no sense. Anyway, so just to say, but we are windy as could be. You know, something really ironic. I sit there in Duluth one day I was driving up the road and I was driving up this two-lane highway in Northern Minnesota and I crossed the pipelines, the Enbridge Mainline pipelines where 75% of the tar sands comes into the United States. I crossed those lines and I'm looking to make sure there's no spills this day when I pass it. As soon as I pass, I see this large load coming my way and I pull over to the side because I kind of knew what it was going to be. And it's wind turbines and they're going to like Nebraska or maybe Southern Minnesota. I was trying to figure out why they were on this small road, you know, in my neck of the woods and you know what it was, is that they're coming into the Port of Duluth and then they're getting shipped. That's the furthest inland port to these Great Plains states with all this wind and they're coming in from Spain and Denmark and Germany. And I thought to myself, let's be industrializing America in a way that makes sense. Let's make things we need here. Let's quit making stuff or buying stuff we don't need. You could rebuild this country in a good way, you know? And that's what I want to see. To me, that's what this messages of these times is; look at this crisis as the opportunity to quit being stupid.

**Ralph Nader:** We're talking with Winona LaDuke who is with the White Earth Reservation. You've been fighting these pipelines now for years in the US and Canada and most people don't know when they read about the arrests and the criminalization of protests by some state lawmakers in these states, people don't know you're winning. I mean it's amazing what you're

winning. The biggest win was just a few days ago from these monstrous tar sands, the dirtiest oil in the world in Alberta, Northern Alberta. They cover an area the size of Florida. Tell us about why that went belly up and what other pipelines are going belly up and why.

**Winona LaDuke:** They're going belly up because it's dumb ideas. So you know, to get oil out of a tar sands, you got to... it costs like \$83 a barrel because you're taking basically kind of like hot asphalt and it's not even, it's like sand asphalt and you're trying to turn it into something you can put in a pipe and you know, that's not a good idea. It's super expensive to get it out of the ground and then they're having trouble with pipes because it turns out Canada already has enough pipes to wrap the globe three times. They don't need any new pipes, particularly if they're just for export markets. So they're trying to throw pipe that, I call it Trudeau West; it used to be called the Trans Mountain pipeline. And then Trudeau bought it when Kinder Morgan, a Texas corporation, said we're walking away. So that was beseeched. The Coastal GasLink Pipeline, trying to go through Wet'suwet'en territory, is beseeched because those people, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that they had title to their land, which to the best of my knowledge, would mean that you couldn't throw pipeline across it. And so they have blockaded over the past month, the roads, but more important, the rails across Canada still in about a third of the rails for a couple of weeks. And then there's the tech mine. You know, looking at the economics, looking at the disaster of climate change and looking at the fact that people are blocking trains and pipelines are not going, they bailed. They bailed. That was like you said, the Frontier Mine was going to be the single largest industrial project in the history of the world in complete act of idiocy. You know, and what I was looking at [when] I was just up in Canada. The corporation we're facing is Canadian too. Canada has this huge crisis that their entire economy is predicated on extracting stuff out of the earth that you shouldn't take, whether it's the deep tar sands or whether it's diamonds from James Bay, "blood diamonds of the North", you should just leave those things there. And Canada doesn't have a plan B and so they've created this crisis. So they've been pushing this and now, you've got human rights violations. You've got Trudeau who could do the right thing and is doing the wrong thing. And so I'm looking at the fact that, look at this, they say 100,000 people are laid off in the tar sands in Alberta because it just don't make sense to get that oil out. It doesn't make sense.

**Ralph Nader:** It's not that they weren't warned that it's uneconomic. What the oil companies don't want to recognize and admit is that all over the world solar energy, wind power, energy efficiency is much lower price. It's beating the oil and gas and coal industry in the marketplace. They don't want to admit that, and they don't want to admit that they have to be completely replaced by solar in all its manifestations, including passive solar architecture and photovoltaic and solar thermal and all kinds of wind power and they've got to build the grid for it. They don't want to recognize that, and of course, Trump is right on with them and he's disinvesting in solar and wants to put more money into coal and open up more Arctic Refuge in offshore and the Pacific and Atlantic and gulf to oil and gas. It's all omnicide. He's aiding and abetting global warming and horrendous storms and wildfires and droughts and other rebukes by an abused nature. So tell us, Winona, how people can contact you, how they can help what you're doing.

**Winona LaDuke:** Ralph, thanks for the opportunity. So [www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org). You know, [honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org). You can see we have a film called "LN3" about our frontline battle on the pipeline. You can do home showings of that to see where we're at. We have tried everything in the regulatory process. We're in the legal appeals process now on this pipeline project, but the PUC (Public Utilities Commission) approved it again at the beginning of February as expected. They congratulated themselves for being dumbed twice. And you know, we're looking at

everything possible to stop these lines. And as we look out there, Ralph, you know, you and I look at the same place. We look at disasters everywhere and we also see a vision of solar, local food, efficiency, wind, people treating each other decently. You know, and I'm a hold for that one. I'm going to keep working on that one. And that's the leadership we need now. And certainly, it's not coming out of Washington, so it's got to come out of people in communities. So [www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org), you know, Winona LaDuke. Support us in our indigenous just transition work because we're doing it. You know, we're not waiting for someone because there's no point to wait.

**Ralph Nader:** Winona, before we conclude, tell us about the prospects for industrial hemp, which goes back to ancient China and has 5,000 uses all the way from material used in building automobiles to food, to fuel, to paper. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grew it. It was considered illegal on the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] list because it camouflaged marijuana, which until recently was illegal to grow in the US. But now it's legal to grow everywhere--industrial hemp in clothing; it could produce clothing. Patagonia has clothing. It's a very strong, long fiber. What are the prospects? I understand there are about tens of thousands of acres already being planted, but what are the prospects?

**Winona LaDuke:** You know, I call this the “New Green Revolution”, Ralph, and I do that because hemp has the ability to transform this country. You know, we had a choice, or this country had a choice 70, 80 years ago between a carbohydrate economy and a hydrocarbon economy. And we know the choice that was taken. And that's the one we're paying for now and future generations will pay for.

**Ralph Nader:** Oil and gas and coal, hydrocarbon.

**Winona LaDuke:** That's right.

**Ralph Nader:** Carbohydrate is what you grow on the farms. You know, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford got together in the late 1920s and said exactly what you said. We have a choice; we can go with the farm grown energy or we could go with the petrochemical industry. And we of course went with the latter because that industry was organized and was powerful.

**Winona LaDuke:** Right, exactly. And so, you know, now in this time, we need to undo that. And so you need to move to a cannabis-based economy as an antidote to a lot of this. So, you know, I've been growing; Winona's Hemp & Heritage Farm is my little project that we started and now it's growing out into a larger initiative. And so what we're looking at is fiber hemp. Most of the acreage that has been grown in the past year has been hemp for CBDs, which has medicinal value and that has been growing in great amounts and has crashed its market. You know, it's no longer a bubble in that. But my interest is in fiber hemp because fiber hemp is what you can rebuild a textile and material economy from. And basically, I want to replace plastic. I want to replace fossil fuels. I want them out of our economy and out of our lives. So, that's what we need to do. And so, you know, my primary interest is in textiles because now most people aren't wearing anything that is natural. They're wearing things that come from oil companies and now would be the time to quit doing that because it's damaging to the environment from the microplastics in the ocean to whatever is leaching into the skin of Delta Air Lines attendants who, you know, had to trade in their whole uniform line because of some toxics in their wear, right? So what we want to do is return to linen, which is flax and hemp, which is hemp or cannabis. You know, the word canvas comes from cannabis. The word canvas comes from cannabis, which

just shows how significant, whether it is the sails, the ropes, or you know, anything that you would cover a boat with in Minnesota used to be hemp canvas. And so I want to see that rebuilt. And so I've been working here with varieties, but in this country, you know, to grow these out, now we're working in building this cooperative between tribes in the Northern Plains and Western Great Lakes who have large land areas, who could in fact grow out this hemp economy. And our interest is really being at the table in this economy, not on the menu. We want to be the people that are making the decisions about how you build an organic cannabis economy and you replace things like textiles. And so you're not getting fabric that is from China that has a quarter of the world's pesticides on it. You're not getting, you know, fossil fuels. You're not getting things that are going to, you know, just [be] destructive. Instead, you're building, you know, doing something that has textiles in it. You're rebuilding a textile economy; you're rebuilding milling. This country used to actually make textiles, but we stilled those mills in the 1980s in globalization, 1990s and closed down so many good working class jobs in the Carolinas and then the Southeast, you know, up to new England,

**Ralph Nader:** And you know, Winona, it's really amazing what you and others are doing. You're recovering long-lost knowledge and turning it into the wave of the future to save the planet. That's what's going on here.

**Winona LaDuke:** But that's the future economy. We want to rebuild it. As we rebuild it, we're going to rebuild it with renewable energy, a lot of common sense and decent treatment of workers. We create this world. So in a way, what we're doing is we're weaving the next economy in my region. And that's what we want to do. So I've been chasing down equipment. Most of it seems to be in Belgium or overseas because we also, I think just like melted down all the hemp equipment in this country as a part of prohibition from what I can see and so we're tracking down some industrial equipment so that I'm not sitting there spinning on my hand loop.

**Ralph Nader:** On that note, we have to conclude Winona LaDuke. Give our listeners your contact numbers once more slowly.

**Winona LaDuke:** Okay. [www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org). [www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org)

**Ralph Nader:** Give her some good response, listeners. Thank you very much, Winona, and to be continued. Thank you for all your work and being an example around the country.

**Winona LaDuke:** Thank you for your leadership, Ralph. Migwechiwi

**Ralph Nader:** [chuckles] You're welcome.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Winona LaDuke, program director of Honor the Earth. We will link to their work and her work at [alphnaderradiohour.com](http://alphnaderradiohour.com). We're going to take a short break. When we come back, we will hear from John Nichols of *The Nation* for his take on what's happening in the Democratic Primary. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, DC, this is your Corporate Crime Reporter, Morning Minute for Friday, March 13, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. More than two dozen horse racing industry employees were charged with participating "in a widespread, corrupt doping scheme", the latest black eye for the troubled sport. That's according to a report in

*The Washington Post*. Federal prosecutors brought charges against 27 people in a far-reaching operation involving performance-enhancing drugs, alleging that racehorse trainers, veterinarians and others manufactured, distributed and received “adulterated and misbranded PEDs and ... secretly administered those PEDs to racehorses.” The investigation found that the trainers and vets were able to deceive horse racing regulators by administering PEDs that were “difficult or impossible to detect in anti-PED tests,” some of them unapproved and administered using methods “that can injure and, in extreme cases, kill the horse.” For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I’m Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I’m Steve Skrovan, along with David Feldman and Ralph. Joe Biden has seemingly come back from the dead in his race for the Democratic nomination for president. The establishment is rallied around him making for a tough uphill battle for the progressive Bernie Sanders. Let’s now go to the heartland of Wisconsin and find out what John Nichols of *The Nation* magazine thinks about all this. David?

**David Feldman:** John Nichols is the national affairs correspondent for *The Nation* magazine. Mr. Nichols is also contributing writer for *The Progressive* and *In These Times* and the associate editor of *The Capitol Times*, the daily newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin. With Robert McChesney, he has co-authored a number of books about the media and how to reform it. One way to reform it is by welcoming him back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Welcome back, John Nichols.

**John Nichols:** It is an honor to be with you.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes, welcome, John. Well, one issue is now off the table: it’s electability. Given the Coronavirus and how Trump is trying to sugarcoat it, lie about it, cover up, interfere with the scientists and bail out the country on the backs of small taxpayers and higher-deficit spending without restoring the corporate tax cut to pay for all this economic dislocation, the coronavirus will finish him off. So like a third party, we can take electability. Any of the Democrats could have beaten him in the November election. But the big puzzle is how can someone like Bernie Sanders, who has a record of standing up for people in all areas of American life going back to the 1960s, an incorruptible politician who says it like it is and does it like he says it, lose ground to “Delaware Joe,” who grew up in corporate-dominated Delaware and has represented big business ever since?

**John Nichols:** Well, you put a few things on the table there, all of them significant. Let me offer a couple notions upfront. First and foremost, while you say that electability has been taken off the table and while I happen to share a lot of your assessment there, that doesn’t mean that it has been taken off the table for the average American, for the voter, and certainly for the pundit class, which is so powerful in our media. And so, they continue to make electability this incredible reality, this thing that must be discussed and all decisions mostly subsumed to it. And the answer to your question, as regards Bernie Sanders, intersects with it. While you may well be right that it is off the table, it wasn’t for the voters in the primaries on Tuesday, and they’ll caucus in North Dakota -

**Ralph Nader:** And why is that? Why is that in the African-American community? I mean Bernie was on the civil rights barricades in the 60s and ever since, and nobody has fought more for civil rights in the US Congress than Bernie and John Lewis, Congressman John Lewis. And the

African Americans, in large numbers, are voting for Joe Biden who is responsible for Clarence Thomas. And Clarence Thomas [Justice on the US Supreme Court] has been the tipping point in five-four decisions against black interests for over three decades. How do you explain this phenomenon here?

**John Nichols:** Well, let me say two things. First off, I'm going to push back a little bit on, you know, who has carried the ball on civil rights over the years. I think, you know, you have to look at a lot of folks including Ted Kennedy and many others.

**Ralph Nader:** I mean, current. I mean, the current Congress.

**John Nichols:** Yeah. But even there, I don't think that it is necessarily suggested that Sanders has this, you know, over-the-top record, this, you know, perfect record. The reality is that Sanders does have a record. It's worthy of discussing and it certainly can be put in the mix. Biden also has something of record. He was the vice president in the administration of the first African-American president. This has meaning; it has resonance with people. But you go to a deeper thing here and I think this is one thing worthy of discussing. It is not merely as we've moved through this process, the African-American community. African American voters gave Biden a very, very strong vote in South Carolina and have in some of the very critical votes in some of the Southern primaries as well as even in some Northern States. [But] when you take a look at what happened in Michigan, in rural areas, in Missouri, in rural areas, which are overwhelmingly white, in suburban areas as well, you know, Biden has just gotten a lot of traction. And the reason for that I think, you know, goes beyond a lot of the calculations that media puts in play because media doesn't necessarily acknowledge its own impact on a race. And the fact of the matter is that ever since Sanders kinda got into a place of viability as a candidate, you know, where people actually talk about him potentially as the nominee, you've had just a cacophony of media, commentators, outlets, political strategists, other people stepping up and saying, "Oh, Bernie Sanders can't be elected; you know, he's unelectable, he's unelectable, he's unelectable." The volume on that was turned up so loud that it created an opening for almost anyone who wasn't Bernie Sanders.

**Ralph Nader:** And it was contrary to the polls wasn't it? Didn't the polls show from 2016 and now that Bernie was ahead of Trump in a head-on poll?

**John Nichols:** Yeah, yeah. In fact, in the battleground states, which I look at a lot. Like in my state of Wisconsin, there was a poll just week or so ago that showed only one of all the Democrats, this is a little over a week ago when you still had a number of them in, only one of all the Democrats they polled on beat Donald Trump--only one--and that was Bernie Sanders. So the reality is that the argument that Sanders is unelectable has always been, you know, kind of a bit of a fantasy. You know, it's not a real thing. But... but as we well know, and Ralph, you and I've talked about this over the years, Chomsky, McChesney, so many people have written on these issues – Susan Douglas. You know, the simple reality is that our media is very, very powerful at creating narratives. That narrative really got traction with all sorts of voting groups, all sorts of demographics. And we need to understand that. And so here's where it gets interesting. Bernie Sanders took a hard, hard hit on Tuesday. There's no way to analyze it anywhere else. He said he need to do well in Michigan. But frankly didn't do that well. He said, he would have other things come together; a lot of them didn't come together. And so those are the Tuesday night results. On Wednesday morning, Wednesday afternoon, he stepped up, has a press conference, which I think is one of the more interesting press conferences we've had in the

campaign. He essentially acknowledged that he's got an electability challenge, that people don't see him as being as electable as Biden, but he also pointed out something else, that in the exit polls, overwhelmingly, people support his position on the issues. I mean, in Michigan, 57% of the people supported a government-run healthcare plan that replaces private insurance. It was described in the exit poll as that, not as Medicare for All, not some gentle title, but a government-run healthcare plan that replaces private insurance. 57% of people in Michigan supported it. I believe it was 58% in Missouri. In Mississippi, it was 60%. Now here's the other thing, in Michigan and Missouri, the exit pollsters asked if people favored just tinkering with the economic system of the United States or favored "a complete overhaul" of the economic system of the United States. In Michigan it essentially tied--complete overhaul tied with just some tinkering and repairs. In Missouri, complete overhaul won, right? And so the fact of the matter is that what Sanders is talking about is winning big, but he is not. And so in his press conference, he acknowledged or at least discussed some of these realities and said he was going to go forward into Sunday's debate to try and wrestle with some of these issues and obviously, the intent to suggest that if we really talk about this seriously, if we talk about what people want and what they can get out of this election and can we talk about, you know, not just what they want and issues, but also what they want as regards beating Donald Trump. And where the intersection of those issues as well as the electability then come together, that, you know, basically Sanders said he thinks, in a debate, he might well come out ahead on that one, that people might actually take a serious look at that, and it might, at the end of the day, benefit him going forward.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah. Given those exit polls, John, Biden is quoted as saying if the Congress passed a full Medicare for All, single-payer [bill], he'd veto it if he was president. He also said to some fat cats at a fundraising enclave that nothing fundamentally will change if he becomes president. He is for the war machine. He pushed even harder than Hillary Clinton did in supporting the criminal war in Iraq, which is radiating all areas of chaos and violence in that region of the world. He supports all the military budgets instead of redirecting them to repairing our public works back home with good-paying jobs. He gives lip service to labor unions, but he didn't lead the fight for \$15 an hour. He's a toady historically of the credit card industry and its rapacious charges and penalties. And he supported the Clinton crime bill in the 1990s, which led to mass incarceration, largely of minorities, blacks and Hispanics, and supported the draconian penalties on crack cocaine compared to regular cocaine, which of course had an effect on minority classes. And you just go on and on and you say, what in the world are African Americans doing supporting this man? He didn't bolster Clarence Thomas, but as Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, mistreating Anita Hill, he made it easy for eleven Democrats to cross the aisle and win it for Thomas; fifty-two to forty-eight was the vote in a Democratically-controlled Senate. And Thomas has been torturing minorities ever since. So I don't understand what's going on here. Enlighten us.

**John Nichols:** Well, you put a lot on the table, and you don't make Joe Biden sound like a very good guy. And so here's where we get into this, again, go back to this core concept. When we look at the exit polls, they show what people want and what people want are: two things: a progressive agenda--a very progressive agenda, on economic and social and racial justice on protecting the planet, and on ending these forever wars. I mean, those things are really quite popular. And so where Sanders is coming from on a host of issues wins. And yet, in those same exit polls, depending on the state you look at, sometimes by as much as a two to one margin, you have people of all backgrounds and demographics saying that they would prefer somebody who

can beat Trump to somebody who agrees with them on the issues. And so we ended up in a situation where electability has become, you know, the Holy Grail, the golden ring, the essential reality of the thing. And people are clearly willing to sacrifice things that they want, Medicare for All, things that they aspire to, real changes in the economic system, to beat Trump. Now I don't necessarily suggest to you that that's a bad choice. I think Donald Trump has been a horrific president on a host of issues. And so I understand where people are coming from. Now this gets to a deeper twofold reality. Number one, our media, our media has definitely been rough on Sanders; I don't think we have to detail that. That's pretty clear. And it has definitely been, you know, very intense on this electability thing and all that, but also Sanders himself, I think missed an opportunity after he won the New Hampshire Primary and particularly after he won the Nevada Caucuses, he should have pivoted his argument overwhelmingly to an electability argument. He should have, you know, done basically what he's doing now weeks ago and said as he rose as a candidate, as he became, you know, somebody who people actually were talking about as a possible presidential nominee, perhaps even president, he should have gone right into the debate and said, "What I'm talking about is winning; I'm doing well and so are the ideas I'm running on." This is Sanders talking. "If Donald Trump tries to attack these things, he will actually strengthen this coalition; he will make things more possible." And he should have made those arguments; he should have brought them into his speeches and the debates. I think it would have benefited him a great deal.

**Ralph Nader:** Let me add another perspective, John. Let me add another perspective here. I think the Democratic Party machine, which has always been against Bernie, used the electability thing, and you could see it in some of the candidates. You could see it what was coming out of some people on Capitol Hill against Bernie to marginalize him as a socialist, and nobody will elect a socialist. They used it as a tactic, and then the press of course picked it up. Look, you got a president who is now polling in the low 40%, 41, 42, 43. And he's going to sink more with this Coronavirus disaster leaving America unprepared to have enough face masks, enough gloves, enough ventilators, enough medicines that are produced in China. All this is going to come out. He's not going to be able to fake the Coronavirus as he fakes so many other things and he's the most vulnerable, beatable president in our memory. And to build him up--a pathological liar, a racist, sexual bigot--he has harassed and sexually assaulted more women and boasted about it. And 61% of the women in a CNN poll in late November said they wanted him impeached and removed. That's a pretty good start with the electorate. But why are we building up this monster as if he's going to be a tough person to defeat? You know, you remember Kevin Phillips, he said "the Republicans go for the juggler and the Democrats go for the capillary." Let me give you my metaphor: The Democrats have ten arrows in their quiver against Trump and they use two. The Republicans have ten in their quiver and they use all ten to attack the Democrats. The Democrats, look at how they held back on the impeachment. There were a dozen devastating impeachment violations they could have leveled against Trump--a lot of them dealing with health, safety, labor, wages, environment, civil rights, civil liberties--and Nancy Pelosi sent the Ukraine thing over only. People don't have a stake in Ukraine, but they had a stake in all the others that she kept in the closet in the House of Representatives. So they're creating their own Trump problem. He's the most beatable president in modern history. Your take?

**John Nichols:** I think much of what you say, I understand, respect; however, people's experience is powerful, and we have to understand that. In 2016, a tremendous number of Democratic voters were shocked when Donald Trump was elected. And in fact, remember, of course, he wasn't, you know, he didn't win the popular vote;--he took office because of an Electoral College reality of

winning very narrowly in three Upper-Midwest States. And so that just shook a tremendous number of people as has his administration. Just the reality of Donald Trump has shaken a lot of people and frankly, for pretty legitimate reasons. This guy goes to extremes. He is dangerous in so many ways. And my sense is that the experience of 2016, in combination with the real legitimate concerns about the prospect of what might happen if he actually did somehow win another term, causes people to really want to make sure that he is beat in 2020. And whether he is imminently beatable or not, the fact of the matter is people are still going, you know, their politics is going to extend from their own experience and it's going to extend from what they'd been through and what they're thinking about, what they're worried about.

**Ralph Nader:** Fear. You're talking about fear.

**John Nichols:** Of course. And what a Franklin Roosevelt say, in the 1930s, right? "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." The reality is Roosevelt himself, the most popular president in history on so many levels, saying he had a challenge with fear, you know. And he had to get people to overcome that. And so what we have to acknowledge is it's always there; it's always a reality. And in politics, one of the things you cannot do is demand that people come to a place where they are not comfortable or where they don't, where they haven't gotten to. No, you have to figure out where people are at and then talk to them about that and take them through that journey. I think that at this point with a media system that overwhelmingly, you know, raises up this electability thing to an incredible level, and then again saying in a campaign where Sanders needs to talk about this much more, he didn't at critical points. He didn't talk about it enough; not that he didn't talk about it, just not enough. Now I think with his Wednesday afternoon press conference where he did talk about electability, he talked about this disconnect between the exit polls and his numbers; I think he may be actually there. And so the question is, is it too late? Is it too late to kind of put this on the table? Perhaps, we'll see. But it's the right thing to do. People worry about electability whether Ralph Nader says they should or not; that's just reality. They do. And so we're going to have a debate and Biden and Sanders are going to stand on the stage and maybe they're each going to say they're more electable and then they're going to back it up. It's almost like a court case where you bring your evidence and put your evidence on the table and that could be, look, this could yet be the next great twist in a 2020 campaign that if we remember has had many front runners along the way.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, listen, John, Bernie would be well advised to stop making people think that what he's proposing is revolutionary. As we all know, almost all his proposals are entrenched in Western Europe democracies for decades, some of them in Canada. Number two, a lot of his proposals hark back to American history. The stock transaction tax, which people think is revolutionary, [i.e.,] sales tax on stock transactions when we pay 6-7% sales tax when we go into a store, but someone buys a hundred million dollars' worth of Exxon stock and pays no sales tax. That was imposed in the Civil War to help pay for the Civil War. There was a law that expired in 1968 when the volume was trivial compared to today, a sales tax. Is tuition-free higher education CCNY, University California, right after World War II and a lot of public universities essentially free tuition, higher education? Higher minimum wage? I mean the workers are still not catching up with inflation-adjusted minimum wage from 1968 and on and on. Teddy Roosevelt, Republican, supported full health insurance for everybody. He's got to talk about restoration. He's got to talk about what other countries do. Are they smarter than we are? I think there's going to be a demand, you wait and see, for Bernie to drop out. And if Bernie drops out, he destroys the whole progressive movement. What do you think?

**John Nichols:** Well, there'll be a demand for him to drop out, guaranteed. That's already started; that's a given. Does he destroy the whole progressive movement? No, he does not if he drops out. The fact of the matter is that you have Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and a rising generation of progressives who are going to carry on no matter what. And Bernie Sanders, even if he quit, the race would carry on. But I think perhaps your point, that if he drops out at this point where you know, this movement really has asserted itself and gotten, you know, so deeply into the process and gotten as far as it has, does he do harm to its progress? Does he perhaps create a circumstance where it's very, very hard in the future to, you know, kind of overcome all the barriers? Well, yeah, that is a choice and a calculus that Sanders as a candidate has to weigh. And it's a complicated thing because of the deep concern about Donald Trump. I think [it's a] legitimate concern about Donald Trump because of the complicated moment that we are in. And here's where I think the real challenge is.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let me, let me challenge you on this, John, because I meant the Progressive political movement, you know, for this presidential campaign. Here's what happened.

**John Nichols:** Oh, for this campaign.

**Ralph Nader:** Here's why, here's why Bernie has to stay in. [If] he can stay in until the convention with his hundreds of delegates, he'll be able to go after Trump in ways Biden can't and won't. That's one. And these are very vulnerable areas in Trump that Bernie can go after. But Biden, because his record and his philosophy, will not. Number two, we're seeing Bernie vindication now. Trump's socialism is coming to the rescue. How come everybody is begging now for the government to do this and the government to do that and the government to help here and there? So he's being vindicated. Under democratic socialism, we would have been far more prepared for this Coronavirus. And we wouldn't let corporations with tax benefits export our critical drug industry to China leaving us without even a production capacity for antibiotics in the US. The third is if he drops out, he'll be expected to run around the country making speeches like a toady praising Joe Biden, which he doesn't want to do. If he drops out, his money dries up and so, the issue now is not about just numbers of votes in primaries; it's about policy, agenda, redirection. And if he drops out, he'll lose all this leverage at the convention. Your take?

**John Nichols:** Well, my take is that obviously, a lot of my experience and understanding goes back to the remarkable campaign that Jesse Jackson ran in 1988. And there came a point during that campaign where of course it was unlikely that Jackson was going to be the nominee. He had not won critical primaries that he needed to win. And yet he carried on and continued to appeal to voters with a message that this vision of a multiracial, multiethnic, visionary rainbow coalition, could actually transform our politics. And when he got to the Democratic National Convention in 1988, he did transform a lot of how the party does things as regards its rules, as regards how it addresses some issues. He didn't win on everything, but he clearly contributed to the party. Now in 1988, that party did not win, but at 1992, it did. And Democrats began to take in some of what Jackson had argued for, which was a politics that was much more about mobilizing voters and getting new voters. That's a real deep part of what Jackson was preaching in '88 and beyond that, also opening up the processes. And you can say that many of the processes that made it possible for this party to evolve, at least on some issues, route back to that campaign. So there is an argument and an important argument that you can go forward in a campaign and achieve tremendous things even if your chances of winning are slim and getting slimmer.

**Ralph Nader:** Your point is proven because when Ronald Reagan challenged President Ford, he took it all the way to the convention. He lost, but then look how he came back. I mean, look how his ideology came back later. But there's another reason why he should not drop out. He owes it to his voters in the remaining states to give them the opportunity to vote for him and he owes it to his millions of followers not to so demoralize them that they stay home in critical states in November and help damage the Democratic cause. So, if I was Joe Biden, I'd want Bernie Sanders to come all the way to the convention.

**John Nichols:** Well, there is an argument for that vision and especially if Sanders' approach is to raise up these issues, raise up these ideas and argue for this vision of a mobilization election. And here's a really important part of it. When you talked a moment ago about vindication, look, I have always argued that we were going to get to a single-payer, Medicare for All system in the United States, not necessarily because of a campaign or a candidate, but because of circumstances, right? Where it just becomes evident that this is what we need. Well, certainly, the moment we are in points to that as well as it points to the need for paid sick leave and a host of other things and that's not even the whole of it. We are 30 years into a globalization revolution. It's changing everything about how we relate to the world. We're 20 years into a digital revolution. We're 8 to 10 years into an automation revolution. Things are fundamentally changing and so many of those changes argue that we are going to need a social welfare state and that we are going to need models that treat everyone equally and fairly no matter what their background, no matter what their race or ethnicity or region. And so, you know, these arguments that Sanders is putting forward, these arguments are not merely the extension of a campaign. In many senses, they are the reflection of a moment. They are popular now, not merely because of Bernie Sanders. There are plenty of people who worked on these issues before, Ralph, including you, on many of these issues. But what's happened is that the moment has come, and it is very, very dangerous for the Democratic Party in such a moment, not to be up to speed on the proper responses to the moment.

**Ralph Nader:** That's a very insightful description because if the forces of history are now reaching to a point where regular people are being pushed up against the wall by automation, by corporate socialism, by globalization, bringing down the more developed countries to lower countries run by fascist and other regimes. So I mean, you're right, but it's terribly tragic to see the fickleness of so many voters in the last few weeks. It must have stunned Bernie. And what's your prediction, John Nichols, who writes great articles for *The Nation*? What is your prediction? Will Bernie go all the way to the convention?

**John Nichols:** I think that Joe Biden will answer that question better than I. The truth of the matter is that Bernie Sanders has essentially said to Biden, here's the concern; here's the reality. The ideas are winning, but maybe Bernie Sanders isn't winning. And so Joe Biden, will you adopt these issues? Will you speak about them in clear and effective ways? If that happens and if they come to some sort of common ground before the convention, maybe Bernie doesn't go all the way to the convention. I think that is a possibility. The pressures, the challenges, the moment itself with the Coronavirus outbreak and things of that nature might ultimately pressure to make a decision before the convention. But if Biden doesn't rise to this moment, I mean, one of the mistakes I think people make is that they keep talking about Bernie Sanders. This is a two-candidate race. Tulsi Gabbard is still in, but it's essentially a two-candidate race. And instead of talking so much about what Bernie Sanders will do or how he will, you know, adjust to the realities of Super Tuesday in its aftermath, we should also be talking about how will Joe Biden step up, because here's the bottom line. I've covered politics for a very, very long time.

Candidates don't get better after they win. Candidates get better when they're in the process and they feel pressured to get better. And so that's the moment that we are in. And I think that frankly, Bernie Sanders understands that really well.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, he can continue--

**John Nichols:** My sense is still keep the pressure on until there's a sense that Joe Biden has risen to the occasion or frankly, that something else has happened.

**Ralph Nader:** We haven't seen Joe Biden under pressure, under debate. The Democratic party doesn't want a head on-debate. They're going to have sort of questions from the audience, a round table, because Joe Biden can't debate; he can't talk more than seven minutes before he starts stumbling and he hasn't been really tested. He won these states; some of them he never even campaigned in. He hasn't been tested as to whether he can take it all the way. And so that's one reason why Bernie should stay in the race and keep leverage on the corporate Democratic party for the party platform and the kind of commitments, like you said, they will make before they get into power and after they're in power, they say get lost people. You know, we've seen that before. We've been talking to John Nichols who has written many good articles for *The Nation* magazine as well as for other newspapers in New Hampshire; and many of his books still ring true. Thank you very much, John Nichols.

**John Nichols:** Pleasure to be with all of you.

**Steve Skrovan:** All right, let's do some listener questions. This comes from Bob O'Brien who answered our call to be an activist and he says, I listened to your podcast this morning about voter suppression and tree planting. Great show. I took a step to try to do something and emailed the ombudsman for NPR and what he did was he basically asked the ombudsman for NPR to book some of the guests we've had on the show like Dr. David Michaels, Robert Greenwald, Alan Grayson, and then he sent us the response he got from the ombudsman and the response seemed to be a bit of a kiss-off. It went, "Thanks for reaching out to the NPR public editor's office, Bob. I have noted your feedback for the newsroom. Just to note, booking interviews also depends upon the person in question having the time and agreeing to come on the show. Thanks again for reaching out." What do you think of that response, Ralph?

**Ralph Nader:** It's a little bit laughable because there aren't many people who don't have the time to go on NPR, [laughter] especially if they're authors of books like David Michaels and others. The second thing is that he tried to contact the public editor for PBS and he got the name of the public editor who has been deceased for over a year, so it's not exactly an exciting area. They now have a public editor who is really good. He has a background of 40 years of investigative reporting, but it's not really a full-time job. And I think they're going to be better at it, but it's very important to complain, to suggest, to propose to NPR and PBS and tell us about it. That's how we can assemble information to admonish and provoke and praise, if that's necessary, the people at NPR and PBS. They are missing a lot of stories, excluding a lot of progressive people, excluding a lot of civic community. They spend too much time interviewing each other as reporters and just look at their presidential campaign coverage. It's massively focused on the horse race, on tactics and who is ahead, who isn't behind, who stumbled, and not on agendas and policies.

**Steve Skrovan:** Right, right. Well, thanks Bob for taking up the call and doing that; we really appreciate it.

**Ralph Nader:** That's what other listeners should do, right Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah, and if there's more and more of that, hopefully, that will have some effect.

**Ralph Nader:** We urge people to write to their members of Congress and get a response. We haven't had many responses from members of Congress sent to us, but that's true too. You just give us the feedback.

**Steve Skrovan:** Right. Yeah, so do that. Whether it's calling the ombudsman at PBS or NPR or your Congressperson. If you do that, let us know how it went. Thank you for your questions. Keep them coming on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website. I want to thank our guests again, Winona LaDuke and John Nichols. 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.

**David Feldman:** For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com).

**Steve Skrovan:** Ralph has got three books out: the fable, *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*, (To acquire a copy of that, go to [ratsreformcongress.org](http://ratsreformcongress.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* and *Fake President: Decoding Trump's Gaslighting, Corruption, and General Bullsh\*t* co-written with Mark Green. We have a link to that also.

**David Feldman:** Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we speak with Jim Zirin, author of *Plaintiff in Chief*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you everybody. In the era of Coronavirus, check in the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines. It'll be quite helpful for you.