

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 331 TRANSCRIPT

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

♪ Stand up, stand up. You've been sitting way too long ♪

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

David Feldman: Hello, everybody.

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

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. You'll remember this show, for sure.

Steve Skrovan: Oh yes, yes, and for a lot of reasons, and I'm going to start by telling you that, in Florida, coastal flooding is becoming more and more frequent. Severe floods that used to be referred to as 100-year floods are becoming every few year floods. Florida is already seeing the devastation of climate change and their Republican lawmakers are changing their tune on environmental policy in response. Republican Governor Ron DeSantis even appointed a chief science officer! This may seem like a small change, but in a party that has long shied away from fixing the climate crisis, this is a big step.

Our first and only guest today will be another Republican who has also changed his mind on the climate crisis. We will be joined by pollster and wordsmith, Frank Luntz. In 2001, Mr. Luntz helped President George W. Bush reframe global warming as the less scary-sounding climate change, which I never knew that's how that came about. He encouraged Republican leaders to emphasize a lack of scientific certainty around climate change. But, since then, Mr. Luntz has changed his mind. He's now working to reframe the climate crisis as a nonpartisan issue and something Republicans care about changing. We're going to find out whether that's all true or not.

As always, we'll take a short break and 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. First, let's hear about the importance of language in changing hearts and minds. David?

David Feldman: Frank Luntz has long been a loyal Republican insider. Mr. Luntz made his name by advising Republicans to repackage their policies with language designed to play more on constituents' emotions. For example, telling conservatives to say they oppose the "death tax" rather than the estate tax. Dr. Luntz helped the Republicans understand the importance of building messages around small business rather than big

corporations. He is well known as a pollster and a political commentator. He conducted focus groups for HBO and *Vice News* before the 2018 elections, and he appears regularly on HBO and Fox News. He served as a consultant to the NBC show, *The West Wing*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Frank Luntz.

Frank Luntz: It's an honor to be here, and Ralph, if you're doing something and you invite me, I'm going to show up every time. We don't agree, but I respect all that you have done; I respect all that you have accomplished; and I appreciate being here.

Ralph Nader: That's a nice beginning, Frank, and I want to tell our listeners that one thing that makes Frank a good interviewee is that he's very forthright. I'll give you an example. Very candid, even though he's a partisan linguistic supporter of the Republican Party's message, and he's given suggestions to the Koch brothers, he does not hesitate telling the Democrats what he thinks of their linguistic abilities. One day, somebody asked Frank, "You know, Frank, you created this phrase, the 'death tax', to replace the normal description of the estate tax, and the Republicans went with it, and even the press picked it up." What would you call it if you were advising the Democratic Party, and you said, without hesitation, "a billionaires tax." Unfortunately, the Democrats are too stupefied, linguistically, to pick up on the language. They're losing, and they have been losing, the language battle for years. This is another one, perhaps, the listeners don't know about. I think around 2002, when Frank was huddling with some business and political types on the Republican side, he said that the phrase "global warming" was too frightening and that they should use the word "climate change," you know like fall, winter, spring, summer, something that sounds benign. Well, look what happened. The Democrats lapped it up like a cat lapping up milk, and they started using "climate change," ignoring my advice and others to use a more descriptive phrase of the devastation that's come and is coming, like "climate chaos, climate catastrophe, climate disruption." They're still using your phrase, Frank. Let me ask you this question. Why are the Democrats so bad in using the language? And I want to get specific. Once I get your general response, I'll give you examples of what I mean.

Frank Luntz: Actually, this will surprise you. I was in the White House as recently as this past December, and I was very nervous, and I finally got the guts to walk up to the president and ask him, "What does the J in Donald J. Trump stand for?" Ralph, you know what he told me? "Genius." Pause for laughter. My job is to understand what the public thinks, and I will tell you that there are a lot of people who realize, and condemn me if you follow me on Twitter, for being not a loyal Republican and for questioning whether or not I'm even a Republican at all, or a conservative at all. Climate is a great example, and I'm going to give you specificity, and I'm going to launch something with you that I've not talked about, and I will not be talking about for about another 60 days until I complete the project. I am a climate-change embracer. I have, for the last 11 years,

and people don't realize it, been working to bring about legislation to promote, and end the policies that are contributing to climate change. My focus is going to be on the reuse, recycle, and reprocess of paper, plastics, metal, glass--of all the things that we use at home. And I'm working on the messaging of this right now [i.e.,] what do you call it; how do you get people to do it? So that we have a cleaner, safer, healthier world. And that is an example of where the Democrats get it wrong. They keep wanting to talk about sustainability. The problem with sustainability is that it communicates the status quo to a public that desperately wants cleaner lakes, cleaner rivers, cleaner air; that desperately wants to hold corporations accountable for the pollution that they bring to their communities. Having switched sides, if you would call it that, I'd like to argue that there aren't sides. But now embracing it, I am going to be sitting with Democrats across the country trying to get them to focus on messaging that is more effective, and frankly more efficient, than the climate messaging they've been using over the last 20 years. Ralph, I'm not optimistic about it, because I've been fighting this battle for the last 10 years, and I will tell you that there are a lot of Democrats that would rather be right than elected, that would rather be right than effective, that would just rather say what they want to say and feel good about it than actually move the ball forward, which is something you've done your whole career. But, to make you guys feel better, the Republicans are the same way.

Ralph Nader: You had an epiphany about 10 or 12 years ago. I guess you were woken up in the middle of the night. What happened that made you rethink your engagement in climate disruption?

Frank Luntz: I'm going to shock you because this is not somebody you would embrace. This is not someone that any of you in this interview appreciate, but it came from Rupert Murdoch. I had sat with the Environmental Defense Fund [EDF] twice. Two times, we tried to find a way to work together. Twice, for an hour at a time, we talked about our positions on the environment and what needed to be done at the time. It was split between climate change and global warming. And we could not make it happen, and Murdoch called me at home and said, "This matters to me. I think that we are doing serious harm to our surroundings, and we need to address it, and I want you to go back one more time and put your biases aside, and listen to them, and try to learn from them, and then try to help them." And the third time was the charm, and we went across the country. We did a number of the DAO sessions. That's where people hold a device about the size of a remote control. We did a number of these to try to figure out what the best language was, and it was they, the EDF, that came up with the idea, brilliant idea--don't argue over the science; argue over the policy and argue over the impact. Arguing over the science doesn't get you the legislation you need. Arguing over the science doesn't get corporations to follow suit. It doesn't do anything for corporate social responsibility. Instead, talk about if there's no climate change, we will still have

better technology. If there's no climate change, we will still have cleaner air and cleaner water. If there's no climate change, we will still have more jobs. If there's no climate change, we will still have a positive impact on the people we want to affect. If there is climate change, we just may save the planet.

Ralph Nader: Sounds like me 20 years ago. You also had an experience with these wildfires in 2017 in Southern California. Didn't that make you even more determined?

Frank Luntz: That made me more public. I'm in that house right now. I'm recovering from the stroke that I had five months ago. I was in the bedroom of my home, which is up high, and I could actually see the flames that were less than two miles away from my house. I could see the flames themselves and I could smell the charcoal. I could not figure out what that smell was because my fire alarm had not gone off, and I step outside, and you can see ash coming down. For about five, six hours I wondered whether my house would survive. The difference, what that did was, I was already working for the advocates of legislation on climate before that. I'd started to do that work in 2009, but what that did in 2017 and 2018, because we had it for two years in a row, is it made me go public. I sat down with a half a dozen Democratic senators in public; I testified before their committee on addressing this. And I'm trying to provide everybody: Democratic, Republican independent; it doesn't matter. Ralph, the way that you're going to win in 2020 and beyond is the way that I realized is so important, which is you have to break down partisan barriers. You actually have to get people to listen, learn, and then lead. They won't hear you if they think you're a partisan. I'm trying to figure out, because of those fires, because of the things I've experienced, how to make America less partisan, and I will tell you I am completely failing.

Ralph Nader: Listen, people aren't aware of this. This is a new Frank Luntz to a lot of people. What do you think of George Lakoff. The Democrats often say he's your counterpoint. He's a linguistic professor of the University of California, Berkeley who likes to give words and phrases that resonate with millions of people to the Democrats and doesn't have much luck. What's your view of this work?

Frank Luntz: I think this work is very good, but you said it correctly. He approaches this as a partisan issue, and I approach this as a national issue without partisanship. The best language is not language that only appeals to one side. The best language, people say, appeals to everyone, and I'll give you an example. I'm working on something right now for campaign finance reform, which I know that you believe in. I know that this is a time to actually get Republicans on board because Democrats are raising more money than Republicans. They raised more dark money; they raised more PAC money; they raised more independent expenditure money; and they're raising more campaign money. They've got more billionaires that are involved in this process. Republicans would never support campaign finance reform because they always felt that their hands

should be tied. Now, they have a chance to do it. I assume Democrats still support it because they have for the last 30 years. But, just because they're raising more money from rich people, people that you, Ralph, oppose, they're in the pockets of those people right now, and I've got to believe that the activists want campaign finance reform so we have a unique opportunity for Democrats and Republicans alike to support it. And I'm going to try to get it launched in this campaign cycle. One more thing--I don't care if people yell at me on the web [through] my Twitter account. Twitter is such a poisonous environment. I offer ideas; I offer polling data to contribute to the knowledge in the debate. And one of the things that the stroke did is that it just made me not follow the meanness, the partisanship, and the ugliness that we have on social media [as] I continue to engage, to put forward ideas, and to explain public opinion.

Ralph Nader: Let me run some of the words that the Democrats use before we get to you and Trump. They use words that are really almost contraindicated to normal, verbal discourse with regular people. "Magical thinking," they like that one; Krugman likes that one. That's just another word for lying. They use the term "magical thinking." They use the word "problematic" when they really mean, this is something really bad." They use the word "neo-liberal," which as you might not know, was concocted in the 1930s by Milton Friedman, who wanted to distinguish his hardline, pro free-market theories with the liberals in the 19th century, mainly trying to curb government abuse, like our Bill of Rights. And the Democrats adopt neo-liberal. I asked these well-known writers, "Why are you using the word 'neo-liberal'? Do you think anybody other than a fraction of 1% know what that means? That means globalization, corporate power, domination." Instead of using the word "sellers" to describe drug companies and health insurance companies, they use the word "providers." Instead of using "corporate crime," they use the word "white collar crime." Why do they do this? Can you explain?

Frank Luntz: I think the one I liked the best was under the Obama Administration [when] they tried to change the name "mustard gas" and call it a "spicy condiment" so that it would have a more genteel feel to it. I don't know. I don't understand why politicians say anything. I really do think that so many of them are so out of touch and they don't understand the voice of the people. But I'll say to everyone who is listening to this show, that if you want to be an effective communicator, you actually do have to put aside your own word choices and your own preferences and listen to the public itself. They have a lot to say about what's powerful. [When] you talk "magical thinking," I'm thinking what is this, a trip to Disney World?

Ralph Nader: [laughter] That's right. Let's talk about Trump. You've had your ups and downs with Trump. He said very bad things about you in the past, and now you have, through Mick Mulvaney, his chief of staff, some entry. I want to read a paragraph from the June 11th *Washington Post*. "Frank Luntz, a Republican pollster, who frequently

leads focus groups said "Trump's strident rhetoric about crime the past week is likely to hurt him with the voters he needs to expand his base of support." I'm quoting you, "He's isolated, linguistically," Luntz said, "He's talking about 'law and order'. The last time I heard that was the 1968 campaign. His rhetoric is 50 years old. The world has changed. He's got 40% of the country completely enthralled with him, but this is not a lexicon that gets you elected. This is a lexicon that gets you to 45%, and not more." What are you telling? Give us some insight here. You've actually met with Trump. He's sort of making up with you with Mick Mulvaney, putting you together. What do you want to have Trump say, in terms of language, since he thinks he's a linguistic genius himself?

Frank Luntz: Ralph, I don't want to tell him anything, and he doesn't want to hear anything from me either. The only reason why I wanted to meet with him is I really wanted his signature on a couple items that every president, since Franklin Roosevelt, has signed, going back to 1932, so it's almost 100 years. I know he doesn't like me; I know he doesn't like the words that I use, that he doesn't like the language that I research. I'll give you an example. He defines his supporters as warriors. Nobody wants to be called a warrior, other than people in the military, or maybe people in the police. His own supporters identify themselves as hardworking taxpayers, and yet he talks about them as warriors. Another example is that he was so effective when he talked about, "I will be your voice." It was the single best line of 2016 for voters who felt that they'd been ignored or forgotten, "I will be your voice." He said it at the convention. Now, he talks about the silent majority. The problem with Donald Trump's communication is that it's all about Donald Trump. And his people don't have the guts to tell him, Sir, you're doing yourself damage. And I've just lost interest in arguing with people, as part of the change over the last five or six months. If he doesn't want to hear it, if he wants to talk about his own accomplishments, fine let him do it. That is not what voters want to hear, and it's the reason why Biden is now up 10 or 11 points. By the way, one last point: hiring a pollster to discredit another pollster is pathetic. Trying to buy a pollster to undermine the fact that you are going further and further down in the polls just tells you that you're going to go even further down. And that's what Trump did, and that should say everything about what's going on his campaign. There is a "but". I know I talk too much. This is also an impact of the last five months.

Ralph Nader: Someone asked me, when I told them we were going to be interviewing you, Frank. We're talking with Frank Luntz, the wordsmith, the pollster, the advisor to politicians. They said, "Ask him about the nicknames." Now Trump has nicknamed hundreds of people. We've heard some of them: Crooked Hillary, 'Lyin' Ted' Cruz, but he has also nicknamed people most people never heard of--a person running for Congress in Western Pennsylvania. And the nicknames are very, very pejorative, which some people think demeans the office of the presidency. However, a high official in his campaign for re-election said recently that the nicknames work. And one of the reasons

they work is because the Democrats do not give him nicknames. One way to deal with a bully is to give him his own medicine, and they refuse to give him nicknames even though the press routinely reports all these nicknames against A, B, C, D per people and never gives these people a right of reply. It's one thing if you just gave a nickname and the press ignored it, but nicknames becomes mass media, even in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Give us your view on nicknames. Should the Democrats give him nicknames?

Frank Luntz: He calls me Fat Frank, and because of that, and because I was so hurt over the last 16 weeks, I've lost 60 pounds. I'm literally only half the man I used to be, so he's going to have to come up with a new nickname for me; maybe Loser Luntz or something like that. I don't ascribe to that. I don't engage in that. That's not my style of communication, and I think it's awful. I don't want the Democrats to do it back to him because what my mom taught me is, "If everybody else is jumping off a bridge, would you jump off a bridge?" and I said, "Well, if they're having fun and they want to get into the water, why not?" and my mom then would hit me. Ralph, can we chill out a little bit about our politics? Can we treat each other with just a little bit of respect and stop ripping the hell out of each other? I know that Mr. Feldman really wants the Democrats to be like the Republicans, that aggressive. I don't like it. It's not good for the country. And we can see the damage that he has done over the last three and a half years.

Ralph Nader: Ethically, you make a good point. The question is is it effective for him? He has now called Joe Biden Sleepy Joe, and that's been published in all the press dutifully. Biden, of course, is not responding. But, just apart from the ethics, it's one thing if the press didn't report all this; you could ignore it and not go down to his level. What about as a matter of electoral tactics?

Frank Luntz: As electoral tactics, I think the best example for this failing is the fact that, on average, Trump is now losing by 10 points, and that number is increasing by half a percentage point a week; that the less Biden speaks, the better he does. The more that Donald Trump speaks, the worse that he does. If I could wave a magic wand, and if you said to me, "Frank, you're now in charge of the Trump campaign," I'd send him to Mar-a-Lago for two weeks. I would just get him out and make him quiet.

If you want to get into the electoral part of this, there's only 6% of Americans that are truly undecided; that's it. They are undecided not because of what Trump has done, but because of what Trump says. They're undecided because they don't have an opinion on issues, or else they would have chosen between Biden and Trump. They're looking at the attributes of the candidates. They're nervous that Joe Biden is too old; they're concerned that Donald Trump is off the rails; and they don't like either of them. In the end, you win the election, if you're trying to actually win the election, you have to do it by saying what you mean, meaning what you say, which is the number one way to

communicate honesty of a strong leader in times of crisis. And Donald Trump is not doing well on that. And the third thing would be empathy, and Donald Trump, the feeling is that he has not handled COVID well, and he's not handled the protests well. But that he has handled the economy well. And they have more faith in him on China than they do with Biden.

Ralph Nader: Let me just interrupt you here just a minute because you mentioned the COVID. There are some Republicans in the Congress who agree with the growing coalition that's demanding that Trump and Pence step aside and let professional scientists and managers deal with the COVID-19, because every time Trump opens his mouth, they are sinking in the polls--the Republicans, not just Trump. If you were advising Trump, would you say, "Look, do what New Zealand, Taiwan, British Columbia [did], put professional managers and scientists who know about epidemics and pandemics in charge and step aside." What would you say to him?

Frank Luntz: I couldn't do that because he's not going to. He gave Mike Pence responsibility to handle this challenge and then took it back from him in a matter of days after Pence was actually getting reasonably good marks from the media.

Ralph Nader: Apart from your pre-judgment as to his response, what do you think he should do? Step aside in favor of the scientists? Because more and more people are dying because he is bungling. He's not coordinating the states; he's lying about the trends; he's recommending dangerous drugs. He's making a lot of things worse. He started late. Had he started two or three weeks earlier, according to a Columbia University study, because of the multiplier effect, it could have prevented over 80% of the deaths. What would you advise him to do, regardless of his obstinacy?

Frank Luntz: I do want, because I think we're all complicit in this, literally all of us. I believe that it was the Mayor of New York who told people to continue to go out, continue to go to the pubs, continue to go to the bars, celebrate St. Patrick's Day, and that precipitated a huge outbreak in the city. You would think that the Mayor of New York would know better than this. I have an issue. I gave Andrew Cuomo props because of his briefings, but the fact is New York, and Westchester County, and the other suburbs were devastated by COVID. Now, what he ended up doing turned out to have been smart and effective, but he didn't start early enough in New York. And that's why the death rate was so high in that state; and the same thing in New Jersey. I don't think anyone has done this well, but I agree with you, Ralph, that medical professionals/medical experts should be devising the plans, and then the elected officials have the responsibility for implementing them. I think it's a team approach, and you also need to get input from the business community. I think we're all in this together; we all suffer together; we all benefit together. And I don't like it as us versus them. There's way too much of that in society today. I think we all have a role to play.

Ralph Nader: No doubt. People have to have more discipline. Some governors and mayors have been better than others, smarter than others. But, he's the president. He's got the command of the federal response, the federal resources, the federal preemptions. Do you think the way he's behaving since February on this COVID-19, he's hurting his electoral prospects?

Frank Luntz: I think it is hurting his electoral prospects, and I think it's one of the reasons why he's pushing for everything to reopen. What I'd be saying to him, and what I say to everyone, because what I'm saying on your radio show is exactly the same that I'd be saying if I were sitting in the office of Chuck Schumer, or Nancy Pelosi, or Donald Trump. The public is not demanding things reopen. They want a safe, sensible, and responsible process. I use those three words deliberately because those are the three words that the public is looking for. They do want to resume their lives, and it's not about reopening the economy. It's about doing it on an individual basis. Ralph, you were most successful when you personalized the challenge in the automotive industry. When people realized that the cars were so-called unsafe at any speed; when people saw themselves and what corporations were doing, and they saw that they were getting hurt by it on an individual personal basis, they demanded change. But, if you just talk about the system, the economy; if you globalize it or nationalize it, it's too big.

Ralph Nader: Frank, you make an important point. Semanticists call this going down the abstraction ladder. If you go where people live, work, and raise their families, you get a lot of conservative/liberal support around all kinds of things, not just health insurance and living wage, but even criminal justice reform; that's getting down to where they live, work, and raise their families. That's the point you're making. So what would you advise the Democrats and the Republicans to push for before November, before the election? What would you advise them to do on voter suppression issues and economic issues. Because I'm not asking you to devise a Democrat partisan or Republican partisan. What five or six things do you think they should put before the American people?

Frank Luntz: I think that they need to talk about genuine reform. Reform may not be the word anymore, and in fact, I actually think that it isn't the word anymore. But they have to show the specific changes that they would make and the changes that they would make within the first 100 days. Second, there are some things that Trump has done that they specifically oppose. Give three examples to the public, "These are the three things that I would overturn if you give us the power to do it." Third, is our deteriorating relationship on a global scale? I'm not suggesting that Biden return to a Hillary Clinton foreign policy, because I think a lot of Democrats will oppose it. But, I do think that Trump has talked about American influence on the world stage, and Biden does know foreign policy. With the foreign relations community, he's got an

expertise, and I would suggest that he raise it. Fourth, I know that there are people like Tom Friedman who don't want Biden to debate. You cannot do that. What good is winning an election if you are handed a country that is destroyed? I do believe we're in the process of destroying ourselves right now, [and] that Biden can use those debates and say, these are the things I will do in the first 24 hours, in the first 100 days, and in the first year, and this is the impact that it will have. He has to be side by side with Trump and challenge him. If he does that, and he does it well, and he completes a sentence, he's going to win, based on the language that Trump is using! But at a certain point, you cannot just run away. You cannot just hide in a basement. You have to engage. This is America. This is the most important presidential election, arguably since 1968. He has to speak up, and speak out, and tell us what he's going to do. By the way, if he does, and if he wins, that gives him his moral push to make the changes he wants to make. Because then he can say, I was clear about it; this is my agenda; this is what I was going to do. And if he doesn't do it, and he simply depends on Trump imploding because of awful language that Trump is using, then there will be people who will rightfully say, I didn't vote for Joe Biden. I voted against Donald Trump, and I don't support what Biden is trying to do.

Ralph Nader: On your global issue, if you'd be a little more specific, what would you say about these wars of empire. You know, he's pursuing nine illegal wars inherited from Bush and Obama, many of them. What would you say? Let's say the Israeli-Palestinian issue, what would you say to Biden what he should do compared to, "Go for it--Trump's message to Netanyahu; take part in the West Bank; do whatever you want?"

Frank Luntz: I believe in normalization, not annexation. I believe in recognition, not annexation. I believe that you seek what now is offered, which is to engage with the Egyptians, and the Jordanians, and the Saudis, and the Emirates--that the Middle East is not the same country, not the same region today that it was even 20 years ago; you may not be able to achieve peace, but you do have the ability for people to recognize each other and at least live together side by side and not kill each other.

Ralph Nader: You're talking about two-state solution?

Frank Luntz: Absolutely. I think it can be done, and I think that the Palestinians can be under significant pressure, not the people. The people, frankly, have been screwed by their leaders. You've got a Palestinian authority that is weak and corrupt and you have a Hamas leadership that is dangerous and done real damage to the people that they claim to represent. And if they had elected a different government in Israel over the last three/four months, you would have had a different outcome. You can get a peace agreement, but you've got to move quickly, because times like this, Anwar Sadat came once, and fortunately, they were able to take advantage of it. King Hussein came once, and they were able to take advantage of it. I think the leaders you have in the Emirates

are incredible. And they can help everyone in the region if they are not just talking to each other, but have normalized relations with each other. And that can happen, but it's not going to happen under annexation.

Ralph Nader: It's not going to happen, I suppose you mean, under Netanyahu. I mean they occupied the West Bank; they take the water; they blockade Gaza. They don't seem to take advantage of their military superiority to take the lead, and that's when you want to take the lead.

Frank Luntz: I don't agree with your characterization. I've spent a lot of time in the region, and I see the violence that still goes on. I see the terrorism that still goes on, and there's a narrative on both sides of this, and this is part of what I'm trying to achieve.

Ralph Nader: This is taken from your own assumption, Frank, that the people are dominant.

Frank Luntz: Ralph, I don't want --

Ralph Nader: They're in great position to take the lead, the people who are dominant. By the way, the innocent casualties are 400 to 1; 400 Palestinians killed and injured for one innocent. You always want to go, who can really make it happen is who is dominant, right? Isn't that simple politics?

Frank Luntz: I believe that's simple human behavior. If you sell yourself as a victim, you'll never find the solution. If you sell yourself as a victim, you will always blame someone else rather than seeing, within yourself in your own capabilities, the chance to resolve and make a difference. I do believe that there are victims. I believe there are victims in this country. I believe there are victims. I believe the Palestinians are victims. I believe they're victims of their own leadership. They're victims of Hamas; they're victims of Fatah. They deserve a homeland of their own. If you want me to be explicit, I will do so on your show. Palestinian people deserve a homeland of their own. They don't deserve the crap that they've gotten from their own leaders. I teach at NYU Abu Dhabi, so I actually am in the Middle East every year. One of the things I want to do is I want to teach. I met with the King of Jordan, and we talked about this--that the young Palestinians have been radicalized and that they don't want to make peace with Israel. They don't believe Israel should exist. Israel is not going anywhere; the Palestinians aren't going anywhere. So let's figure out some formula that's good enough that everyone gives so they will get that much more, and don't play the victim card.

Ralph Nader: This collaboration, at the village level between Israeli pro-peace and Palestinian pro-peace is a good start, by the way. I'm sure you're familiar.

Frank Luntz: Yeah, but Ralph, you know what happened in Gaza? You had a Palestinian peace activist communicating with Israeli peace activists at the beginning of

COVID, and they were turned in by some left-wing so-called peace organization, and they put six of the Palestinians in jail for collaborating with Israel. Cut it out!

Ralph Nader: The Same thing happened when they tried to do nonviolent resistance with the Palestinians. The Israelis arrested people in that way and blocked them, wouldn't even let them in the country. Anyway, listen, this is covering a lot of ground. I want to get Steve and David in on this, because they're brimming with questions and comments, I'm sure.

David Feldman: I have a question, Frank, about morality, because getting advice from a Republican on how to frame the conversation, you're suggesting more obfuscation, more playing with language while the Republicans seize the moral high ground. That's what they're good at. Why don't the Democrats unite and seize the moral high ground on Medicare for All and climate change and make it a moral imperative, almost religion, almost seizing religion. Why don't we do that?

Frank Luntz: I don't know. The key in all of this --

David Feldman: Would you advise plain-spoken, black and white morality as opposed to manipulating language?

Frank Luntz: The more honest you are, the more likely you are to succeed. The more direct and clear you are, the more likely you are to succeed. And the more that you play with what I would call "weasel words", the worse that it gets. Now, there's an exception to that. Bernie Sanders does not represent a majority of America. I know you guys have a warm spot in your heart for him. That is too extreme for too many people, and that's why he didn't win the Democratic nomination. He wasn't even trying to get a majority of the country. He was just trying to get a majority of Democrats, and he failed because the public... [interrupted]

David Feldman: Let me ask the question again in terms of framing. Medicare for All is a moral issue; climate change is a moral issue. So when you suggest that the Democrats adopt your wordplay and say, "Hey, forget morality." This is how Republicans talk. "There's something in it for you, America: jobs, economic growth as opposed to something that's black and white morality." [This is] something that Ronald Reagan, a Republican, and George W. Bush, a Republican, would bottom-line and say this is a moral issue. Why do the Republicans seize the moral high ground and the Democrats don't? Medicare for All is a moral issue.

Frank Luntz: By the way, you can say it as often as you want. That doesn't make it true, and it doesn't make the public believe it.

David Feldman: The Republicans have convinced Americans that austerity is a moral issue.

Frank Luntz: No, they haven't.

David Feldman: [With] the puritanical work ethic [and] personal responsibility, you guys have seized the moral high ground by preaching personal responsibility. It's biblical. Why don't the Democrats seize the moral high ground? Instead of playing with words, why don't they work the moral?

Frank Luntz: David, you're going to ask the question eight times. You've phrased it five. You can do it three more, and it doesn't change. You have to understand what the public wants; you have to understand what the public needs; and what the public deserves. That's been a context that I've been exploring now for the last couple years, but it's based on public opinion. It's based on what they prioritize. You said "Medicare for All". The public does not want government control of healthcare.

David Feldman: Yes, they do.

Frank Luntz: No, they don't.

David Feldman: Yes, they do.

Frank Luntz: They don't.

David Feldman: I'm going to back off.

Frank Luntz: Yeah, you have to because you're not a pollster.

David Feldman: No, no, I'm being polite. I'm going to back off because I'm being polite.

Frank Luntz: You don't have to be polite, but you're not a pollster. And I just finished a study on it, and actually I was supposed to go back to Washington next week and sit down with a half-dozen Democratic senators to show them where the public stands.

David Feldman: Who cares about the public? It doesn't matter what the public wants. This is...leadership is...

Frank Luntz: You just said it all, David. It doesn't matter --

David Feldman: No, real leadership is telling the people what they want, and what they need, and what's good for them.

Frank Luntz: Thank you. That's what they do in Russia and China. That's really good. Real leadership in that sense -- that's great. I love this.

Steve Skrovan: I want to jump in here because you talked about what the public wants, and we've talked many times on this show. And you're a pollster, so you know the ins and outs of how to frame questions. When you speak about the issues, we're not as divided as we think we are. There are majorities who want Medicare for All, depending

on how it's phrased. There are majorities who want gun control; there are majorities who are against the surveillance state. And I'm sure Ralph could name a dozen other topics where there are right/left majorities.

Ralph Nader: Living wage, cracking down on corporate crime.

Steve Skrovan: Exactly, so the idea that America doesn't want something like Medicare for All, and Bernie Sanders doesn't represent all of America. What we saw on this show was plutocrats don't want that. And plutocrats want Joe Biden, and they were able to marshal their minority power to make that happen.

David Feldman: Within the Democratic Party.

Steve Skrovan: Within the Democratic Party, yeah. But, even without the Democratic Party, there are majority opinions on a lot of these issues. So, what I take issue with is that America is, first of all, so divided because they really aren't.

Frank Luntz: They are, and you can see it in the streets; you can see it in the protests; you can see it over the last four weeks how divided we are.

Steve Skrovan: It's divided by minorities. You said it yourself. Trump is supported by 40%. That means 60% don't. And you could probably project other issues from those numbers too. So, 60/40, that's a pretty big majority.

Ralph Nader: Let me change the subject. What do you think of all these voter obstacles [that] some would call voter suppression? What do you think?

Frank Luntz: Everyone has the right to vote, and I think that we should be ensuring that everyone participates.

Ralph Nader: What do you think should be done because the Republicans have other views on this?

Frank Luntz: Vote by mail. I think we've got to figure out a way that people can vote and protect the system, but vote via the internet, via technology. I think we maintain vote in person that we do. The more people who participate, the more they feel bought into the system; the less people who participate, the more they feel shunned by the system.

Ralph Nader: Frank, is it permissible to ask who you would like to see win in November?

Frank Luntz: It's permissible, but I want to go back to David Feldman, because I want him to talk about his moral case for Medicare for All. I want to see how many times he can say the same words again and again in one hour on your show.

Ralph Nader: That's what politicians do. They repeat, repeat, repeat.

Frank Luntz: Okay, then David is a great writer; then David is a great politician.

Steve Skrovan: Frank, when you frame healthcare as a government takeover, and I think that's a phrase that you've advised.

Frank Luntz: That's correct.

Steve Skrovan: That's just wrong. It's not a government takeover when you talk about what the actual thing is.

Frank Luntz: You know how I know it's a takeover? Because I lost my own healthcare. And the problem was I traveled so much, I didn't even know it. I was uninsured for six weeks when I was a USAA healthcare recipient. And I lost it under Obamacare. They could not continue to offer it.

Steve Skrovan: Frank, we're not talking about Obamacare. We're talking about Medicare for All, which is just government healthcare insurance like they have in Canada. It is not a government takeover. As Ralph has said thousands of times on this show, privately delivered, everybody in, nobody out, free choice of doctor and hospital. That's what that is. When you say what it actually is, there are majorities who support that. When you call it a "government takeover", then of course people are not going to like that because that sounds totalitarian.

Frank Luntz: And it denies me my choice. I was promised by Barack Obama three things ...

David Feldman: You had a choice and you didn't take personal responsibility. You lost your healthcare because you were personally irresponsible, Frank.

Frank Luntz: Guys, this is amazing.

David Feldman: You lost it.

Ralph Nader: We're all critical of Obamacare, Frank, but Obamacare is not single payer, full Medicare for All with everybody in, nobody out. Do you want to answer the question? Who would you like to see win in November?

Frank Luntz: There are aspects of Joe Biden, particularly who he is as a person. I taught his son, Beau, who was one of my best students ever. I have been to Joe's house probably more than all three of you combined.

Ralph Nader: Doubtful.

Frank Luntz: I like Joe very much as a person, but I don't agree with some of the things that he stands for. And I'm waiting to see who he chooses as vice president. I'm so close

to the politics of the Republican Party even if I don't agree with what the president says or how he says it. And so, I'm watching and I'll attend a few of the rallies. I'll listen to some of the speeches. I've actually attended both. I'm the only human being you've met who has attended both a Biden fundraiser and a Trump fundraiser in 2020.

Ralph Nader: Do you think Trump for a second term is going to be better for America than a Biden term, since you know both sides?

Frank Luntz: I want to see them debate. I want to see what happens.

Ralph Nader: Do you think Trump wants to debate?

Frank Luntz: I'm sure Trump wants to debate, and I'm sure that Biden does not want to debate. But I think that they have to do it. I don't think that Trump's idea of having four or five debates is necessary. I think we'll see it in the three that they're supposed to do, and there's no reason not to. They can even do it the way you and I are doing this radio program right now, which is I call in. They can do a Zoom call side by side so we get to see and hear what they both have to say. I think that the country is more important than any individual political campaign. I think that we have a right to hold this president accountable for what he has done. I think we have the right to hold the former vice president accountable for what he says. And I don't think we have determined, yet, who is going to be the next president. Although, I'll tell you right now, as we tape this on the 8th of July, 2020, right now, Joe Biden has the advantage.

Ralph Nader: I think all of us will agree that they should debate; not to debate draws very bad conclusions for the faith of the American people in open-point/counter-point type presentations by people who want the most powerful office in the country. Well we're out of time, Frank. Do you have a book that you've written that you'd like to bring to the attention of our listeners?

Frank Luntz: The best book I've written, and then I'm going to ask you a question that you're not going to answer now, but that will give me a reason for you guys to have me back if you're not really angry at me for challenging you all.

Steve Skrovan: (laughter) Nobody's angry, Frank.

Frank Luntz: I can imagine that I just irritated at least one of the three of you. I wrote a book called *Win*, and it's all about the language of business and the language of politics. It's the third book that I wrote, and it actually went the highest; it got to number 3 on the *New York Times* bestseller list. And it's the best thing that I've got in terms of language and messaging. Ralph, I do want to know. I remember --

Ralph Nader: Wait, say the title of the book clearly.

Frank Luntz: *Win*, W-I-N. And here's what's really bad; I don't even remember the subtitle!

Ralph Nader: Okay, the book is *Win*, by Frank Luntz. It's probably worth reading, regardless of your political predilections.

Frank Luntz: Ralph, before you dump me, can you say that again without using the word "probably"?

Ralph Nader: [laughter] Oh, you mean -- alright, the book is *Win*, by Frank Luntz. I'd read it; you should read it.

Frank Luntz: Oh, I liked the way you said it the first time.

David Feldman: I'd like to offer my services to the Democratic Party. I can do for the Democrats exactly what Frank Luntz does for the Republicans. I will teach you to advocate for the distinction between right and wrong and good and bad behavior. The Democrats can win on morality, because as much as Frank teaches --

Frank Luntz: There he goes again.

David Feldman: Hang on. You don't give it away for free. You preach the language, the manipulation of words. But when you get alone with the Republicans, you're teaching them to campaign on the distinction between right and wrong and good and bad behavior. The Republicans win by seizing the moral high ground. That's the stuff you charge for. The stuff you're saying right now is you're giving this away for free, manipulating language. The truth is, if the Democratic Party ran on morality, on the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad behavior...

Frank Luntz: Here we go again.

David Feldman: -- we would [unintelligible] with the Republicans.

Frank Luntz: Here we go again.

Ralph Nader: Well, I take that as praise for your approach, Frank.

Frank Luntz: No, it's just... I actually am going to make a pitch for Democrats to hire David as well.

Ralph Nader: Let me break in here. The news is full of this letter by *Harper's [Magazine]* with over 100 people who never sign letters together [like] David Brooks and Noam Chomsky, calling for more freedom of speech and less stifling of speech. You remember Anthony Lewis, who was a columnist for the *New York Times* for years. His last book was titled *Freedom for the Thought That We Hate: [A Biography of the First Amendment]*. Would you agree with that?

Frank Luntz: I love that, and I see it all the time at universities where you'll go to a political science department, and the students and the faculty will be trying to shut down the only right-of-center viewpoint among that faculty member. The people that I appreciate the most, and this is what I try to pattern myself after, are those who I disagree with, but they welcome my speech; they welcome my point of view. The fact that you gave me a chance to be heard tells me you're one of those people, Ralph; you're one of the people who has your clearly-defined point of view, but you're not trying to silence those who disagree with you. That's one of the reasons why I respect you.

Ralph Nader: The only real believers in the First Amendment have got to believe in giving people they disagree with an opportunity to speak, petition, and assemble--all three in the First Amendment. We're out of time, Frank. We've been talking with Frank Luntz, author of the book *Win*, and advisor to all kinds of people and groups. And those of you who want to comment, send us your questions so we can follow up the discussion, and maybe we could have you back before the election again, Frank.

Frank Luntz: Let's do it, but I want to do it in studio with you and me in the same room.

Ralph Nader: That means no COVID-19, right? [laughter]

Frank Luntz: And it also means six feet away. [laughter]

Ralph Nader: Okay, thanks very much, Frank.

Frank Luntz: Thank you, guys. I appreciate it.

Ralph Nader: Feel better; stay safe.

Frank Luntz: Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Republican wordsmith, Frank Luntz. We will link to his website at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a short break. When we come back, we're going to do some listener questions. First, let's 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 10, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. A new compilation of regulatory enforcement actions shows that states have collected more than \$17 billion in penalties from financial services companies over the past two decades. Most of that sum comes from cases brought by New York State against major U.S. and foreign banks. The data was collected as part of the latest expansion of Violation Tracker, a database produced by the corporate research project of Good Jobs First. "The role of state regulators has become more important than ever, given the weakening of enforcement at the federal level," said Good Jobs First research director Philip Mattera. Good Jobs First collected data on 15,000 successful cases

brought by state banking consumer finance securities and insurance regulatory agencies over the past two decades. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Alright, let's do some listener questions. I'll take the first one. This is from Martin Smith, and Martin says, "I was listening to your podcast this week and your take on voter complacency, and I think you've got it wrong. Americans aren't sitting at home because they don't want to participate. Most Americans are scared. Scared of what, you may ask? We're scared of each other. Why do you think gun sales are so prolific in this country? People aren't arming themselves against the government. They're arming themselves against each other. Other than the occasional hello, I barely speak to my Latino neighbors. We don't socialize, and though I support most immigration causes and have even gone as far as donating money, I would never think of socializing with them. I've even gone as far as timing when I mow my lawn to avoid running into them. This is what our country has become, a nation of locked doors and rifles on the other side. And you want me, a 300-pound Black man to go around knocking on the doors of my redneck neighbors, trying to convince them to vote for Bernie Sanders? Forget it. Until we overcome our fear and mistrust of one another, our country is in big, big trouble."

Ralph Nader: My response Martin, is that one way to overcome mistrust of one another is to collaborate with people, maybe, on less controversial issues, to begin with, in the neighborhood and community. You might want to collaborate on anything dealing with education, or food scarcity, or repair of public services--where it doesn't matter what your ethnic background is--you want the same thing. That's my first response. My second response is there are a lot of areas where people live where they're not so scared, and I've often said if you just have 1% of the people in congressional districts pressing Congress to behave on behalf of the people and they have a majority of public opinion behind them, you don't need much more than that. History is full of examples where a tiny number of people made all the difference, because they knew what they were talking and they had public opinion behind them. They overcame forces against them who were basically representing a very tiny slice of plutocratic opinion in the country.

Steve Skrovan: Alright, thanks for the question, Martin. David?

David Feldman: This next one is for Ralph, Steve, and David. "I live in Canada." This one is from Gerry Chidiac, and the subject is the Canadian healthcare system. He says, "Dear Ralph, Steve, and David, I live in Canada and would like to clarify something about our healthcare system. Some debate took place during "The Wrap Up" of your most recent show regarding those Americans who already have a good healthcare plan not being willing to move to a public healthcare system. The truth is, that in Canada, we still have privatized healthcare. In essence, we have a two-tiered system. I'm not saying it is a good thing. In fact, it's a frequent topic of political debate, but it exists. In essence,

everyone in Canada gets excellent healthcare, but it does not cover things like eyeglasses or prescription drugs. My employer, for example, has a contract with a private healthcare provider, which I pay into, that then covers a certain percentage of these additional expenses for me and my family. The point is those with "Cadillac plans" do not have to worry about losing what they have. We have Cadillacs in Canada too. Thank you for your amazing show."

Ralph Nader: Thank you for listening from Prince George, British Columbia, Gerry. One point I understand is the elderly in Canada do have coverage for prescription drugs, and so that's one exception. The other is, of course, that Canada has more control over drug prices. They're still high, but nowhere near as high as the uncontrolled, off-the-wall drug prices in the U.S. The third is the point you made. Everybody is in and can go to any doctor or hospital and get coverage just showing their Medicare card--from when they're born for the rest of their lives.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you for your questions. Keep them coming on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website. I want to thank our guest, Frank Luntz, again. 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 for this 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. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

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

David Feldman: Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris; our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon; our intern is Michaela Squier.

Steve Skrovan: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we welcome back Dr. Michael Carome to talk about whether or not Trump and Pence should allow public health experts to take over. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. Listeners, talk is cheap. Everybody on this show is a volunteer. It's time for you to start these Congress watchdog groups. Go to ratsreformcongress.org to see how it can be done and how much easier than you think can be your effort on your two senators and representatives.

♪ Don't let them fool you. You have the power in your hand ♪

♪ I'm only trying to school you. Listen to me, people. ♪

♪ Do you understand? We got to (stand up) ♪

♪ Oh, you've been sitting way too long (oh, stand up) ♪

♪ You know what's right and you know what's wrong (rise up) ♪