

Ralph Nader Radio Hour Ep 344 Transcript

Steve Skrovan: It's the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my trusty co-host, David Feldman. You feeling trusty today, David?

David Feldman: Yes, I trust.

Steve Skrovan: You trust. And the trust—

David Feldman: I trust that people will violate that trust. (laughter)

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

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody.

Steve Skrovan: We have great show as always. Every day 1500 people die unnecessarily due to COVID-19. In Bob Woodward's latest book, *Rage*, we learned that Donald Trump knew how dangerous and easily transmissible this virus was. Yet he lied to the American people and downplayed it. What is it in the psychology of Donald Trump that makes him incapable of dealing with this crisis? Our first guest, Dr. Bandy Lee, a psychiatrist from Yale School of Medicine has been on the show before to talk about President Trump's pathology. Today, she'll update us on that and tell us a little about her recent interview with Mary Trump, Donald Trump's niece. Mary Trump just released her own book, *Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man*, which eerily echoes the title of the book Dr. Lee edited two and a half years ago when we talked about it on this program, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*. Mary Trump is also a psychiatrist, and in her book, she shines a light on her uncle's toxic upbringing.

And that's just the first part of the show. In the second part, we're going to talk to Tarek Milleron, who is one of the many discerning consumers in the Nader family tree. In fact, he is Ralph's

nephew, and like Ralph, he's not fond of Amazon, a corporation many of us don't like, but sometimes feel at a loss to avoid. Well, today, he's going to give us some great tips on how not to give Jeff Bezos more of your hard-earned money. In between, we will as always take some time to check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's talk about Donald Trump's mental pathology. David?

David Feldman: Dr. Bandy Lee is a forensic psychiatrist at Yale School of Medicine and an internationally recognized expert on violence. Dr. Lee is the president of the World Mental Health Coalition and has worked with various governments to implement violence prevention programs in prisons and the community. She edited the book, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President*. Dr. Lee launched her own website, bandylee.com, which now features an interview with Dr. Mary Trump. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour*, Dr. Bandy Lee.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Thank you for having me back.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Bandy. You know, when you started issuing the warnings about Trump's instability and disfunction and ego obsession right after he was selected by the Electoral College, people thought, "Whoa, this is really something. This is way out. Are you sure?" Well, you've been proven right again and again, day after day after day. And no era of Trump's regime have you been proven more right than during the COVID-19 pandemic period, where you say, "Trump is directly responsible for the death of thousands of Americans, which could have been avoided if he had just taken responsibility", instead of denying it, lying about it, scoffing about it in those key days in January and February. But in March, your organization came out with what you called a "Prescription for Survival" in a Trumpian Age. Could you inform our listeners about how dramatically grounded that prescription is?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes. Yes. Thank you. Well, we felt that what has now become obvious of his calamitous mishandling of the pandemic, was essentially pretty much an inevitable outcome of his psychology. And so a couple weeks into his announcing the pandemic, and when he was doing daily briefings, we felt that the nation was in grave danger. And so we put out our "Prescription for Survival", my organization and I, as well as Allied health professionals. We ourselves are thousands of mental health professionals, but others have joined us to put out a "Prescription for Survival", where we outline that the president's mental disturbances are just too great for him to ever manage the pandemic properly. And therefore, for the sake of our survival, for the nation's ability to save many lives, and it turns out to be hundreds of thousands of lives so far, we put out a prescription and it was that from a medical perspective, it did not matter what means were used to remove the dangers—whether it be impeachment, the 25th Amendment, demand for resignation or removal from influence of the public from decision-making as well as the press conferences that he insisted on daily; that to us was imperative that the dangers be

removed. And so we listed the options for lawmakers and the public and that was our prescription, which was written on March 25th.

Ralph Nader: In the most current prescription, basically, you want Trump and Pence to step aside from mismanaging the federal government's response to the pandemic crisis and have professional pandemic scientists and managers shape the federal response [in] coordination with the state local and putting forth the soundest scientific approach and advice instead of telling people they can drink bleach or take drugs that aren't effective and have dangerous side effects that Trump has been engaging in. And he keeps doubling down. He never retracts, never admits mistakes as part of the profile that you've shaped. When someone never admits mistakes, never regrets any decision, never apologizes, says he's doing things perfect, gives himself a 10 rating in managing the pandemic when he was asked by a reporter. How do you analyze that in psychological terms?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes. And he does that to this day. It is quite severe. And thank you for reading out part of our "Prescription Refill". When our prescription was not heeded, we put out a Refill just a couple weeks ago. And that was basically to turn everything over to scientists, because the president's psychology and mental impairments will not allow him to change course and to correct it, even after hundreds of thousands of deaths being proven, and even after his lies and misrepresentation have been revealed. And that is exactly what you pointed out—his inability to take responsibility for his own actions and the inability to admit that he was wrong. So even recently, I believe last night at the town hall, he continued to insist that millions of lives were saved because of his actions and that he did not do anything wrong.

So these were the dangers that we had been warning against since the very beginning of the presidency. We did not know there would be a pandemic, but we knew that were there to be a crisis, this would be the result, that he simply would not be able to manage it. And we actually did a full evaluation of his mental capacity when the Mueller report came out. It was the perfect kind of information in abundance under sworn testimony by close associates and co-workers to be able to assess his decision-making capacity. And he failed every criterion. And so it's truly an incredibly dangerous and troubling situation that he remains in office.

Ralph Nader: Well, it's not too late to have a national movement demanding that Trump step aside and let professionals, pandemic scientists and managers, take the helm, because there are a lot of Republicans on Capitol Hill that want that, because they want him to concentrate on the campaign and not engage in daily bungling, which reduces their own polls and their re-election fight.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Absolutely. We should begin today, as you mentioned, with the upwards of 1500 deaths per day. Every day counts, especially with a pandemic, which spirals out of control.

In fact, the infections accelerate because that's just the nature of pandemics and it becomes harder and harder to contain. And so the sooner we do it, the more lives we can save.

Ralph Nader: Well, you know, there are a lot of people who would band together here. I think leading citizen groups can be persuaded [i.e.,] Public Citizen, Common Cause, People for the American Way, the American Public Health Association [and] a lot of medical associations. You're coming forward together with some of the top mental health professionals in the country, if not in the world, in your efforts over the last three years or so.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes. We have quite a few renowned mental health experts among us who have agreed with us since the start. And they continue to try to warn the public. I feel that with the efforts of many of the very noble efforts of health associations and so forth, we truly do need to address the source of all of this difficulty, which is the president's mental state. And that is the reason why we have such difficulty mobilizing lawmakers [and] mobilizing the public, because he continues to maneuver the public psychologically in a way where those who are intending well are exhausted and those who are vulnerable, actually sign on to his every new changing narrative whereby he disconnects them from reality.

Ralph Nader: Also, he politicizes and takes control of the Centers for Disease [Control] Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, forces them to suppress scientifically based advice and come up with political advice driven by his assistants in the White House.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Exactly.

Ralph Nader: Why do you think the citizen movement in this country has not coalesced behind you for a step aside demand? Because he's dangerously advising people every day. And, you know, there are people all over the country say, "Well, I don't need a mask; the president doesn't need a mask." And now he's starting in-person rallies, which are devastating. There's no social distance; quite apart from the people there who come to hear him. And someone asked him, "Do you think it's perilous, Mr. President?" And he said, "Well, I'm far from the crowd; I'm on the stage." He interpreted it as if the question was addressed to him and not to the several thousand people in the audience crammed together.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Well, that alone is very telling, isn't it? That he believes that if he is safe, that everyone else is safe or that everyone else doesn't really matter. And there are many complex psychological processes behind this.

Ralph Nader: Back to why the citizen movement, the citizen groups all over the country are not organizing together.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes. I think there was a time when we were able to get a lot of public attention and media attention--two and a half years ago when we raised this issue to the number one topic of national conversation. I believe the public actually responded in a very enlightened way. And then the American Psychiatric Association stepped in, essentially acting as an arm of the government, and shut us down. People have described this as a switch that they thought that this conversation was going to keep going, and then it suddenly shut down and they didn't hear from us again. And despite our efforts since then, we just haven't been able to gain the traction. And the media organizations somehow, whether they were convinced by the APA, even though their new guideline, I might add since the Trump administration, that we're not supposed to mention anything, any comment about any objective observation of the president, applies only to their members. And that's only 6% of mental health professionals. But the media somehow took that to mean that none of them were supposed to. And so that kind of misinformation and public campaigns have shut us down. But as you can see, the issue isn't going away; the issue is becoming to the point of being an utter disastrous emergency.

Ralph Nader: Well, what your group has is the courage to come to the conclusions from your analysis. And too many citizen groups, too many columnists, too many editorial writers, share your analysis of the disastrous response and non-response by the Trump administration to the pandemic, but they don't come to the conclusions of their own analysis the way you do. So you have to address them. It's not that they disagree with you at all; they even fulminate with even greater rigor. I mean, George Will's conservative column has called the Trump government a gangster regime.

Dr. Bandy Lee: They're coming around to our position, of course, you know, three years later, but it's the same in terms of not having experts. And that is a very dangerous situation for our country in terms of both the pandemic and the mental health issue—the exclusion of experts in any dialogue. And of course their assessments will be underestimating and normalizing the presidency no matter how hard they try, because they just—I mean, that's the benefit of expertise. And the benefit also of being an expert is that you can speak about the projected consequences as well interventions; interventions that we do on a daily basis of similar personalities, similar situations albeit on smaller scale. But this occurs all the time. I alone have seen about a thousand individuals with Mr. Trump's presentation. And so it is not new to me, whereas to the general public, it is very new and surprising for most.

Ralph Nader: Well, how can people you and your group?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Well, they can reach out to me through the website you mentioned, bandylee.com. They can look up our prescriptions through prescriptionforsurvival.org, and they will also get to our website where plenty of material is available. And they can contact us and we're always ready to consult. In fact, always have been overly eager and even desperately eager.

Ralph Nader: And your website again?

Dr. Bandy Lee: World Mental Health Coalition, which is worldmhc.org. Or they can go to dangerouscase.org. It'll redirect them directly to our website.

Ralph Nader: Any comments from Steve and David?

Steve Skrovan: Oh, yeah. I don't think we can leave you, Dr. Lee, without talking about your conversation with Mary Trump, who is the president's niece, is also a psychiatrist who came out with the book that we mentioned at the top of the show. Did Mary Trump tell you anything you didn't already know? What insight did you get from her, if any?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Well, just like any revelations that come from either the White House or the president's colleagues or his niece, there are details that simply confirm our analysis of his psychological makeup and structure, which we already had abundant information about—decades of high-quality data and sworn testimonies. It was very hard to beat that. But I truly appreciated her perspective from an intimate family member being part of the family and her ability to rise above her personal experiences to apply her professional training and objective observations as a clinical psychologist. And to do that from an intimate setting and come to the exact same conclusions as we did as a group of psychiatrists and other mental health experts who came at it from a public health perspective. So in a sense, she completed our loop. She confirmed many of our analyses, as well as brought from a different direction, the same consensus that we have all had. And so it was very valuable in that way, and I respect her greatly as an expert.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. She sort of gave a heritage aspect of the family dynamic that we wouldn't necessarily be privy to, correct?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes. Yes. So it's very valuable in-depth information. And we, as mental health professionals, often use ourselves as instruments of observation. So her own experiences, as she was able to detach herself with training and her adulthood, she said that becomes extremely valuable confirmation of the assessment that we had already made, but not with that type of information.

Ralph Nader: You can read the interview with Mary Trump by Dr. Bandy Lee on your website, no?

Dr. Bandy Lee: That's right. Yes. It's featured on my website, bandylee.com. It still remains the only interview of her by a fellow mental health professional. And many people have valued it for that because we were able to go further in depth about her observations and the soundness of her evaluation.

Ralph Nader: One comment stood out, Dr. Lee, by Mary Trump as she was talking about stresses on Donald J. Trump and here's her words. "The stresses are unimaginable. Imagine the energy it takes him when he is supposed to be the best in winning everything all the time. The danger inherent in being faced with his inadequacies is astronomical." That is a really key insight.

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes, it truly describes the urgency he would feel to salvage his own psychic survival, if you will. He would go to any length to do that. And that's why this season of elections and his power being at stake is such a dangerous time.

David Feldman: Dr. Bandy Lee, we're just getting word that Michael Caputo, the former Trump's spokesman for HHS, seems to have had a—what I saw on Facebook was a breakdown and he's taking a 60-day medical leave. He went on Facebook and said, "CDC officials are plotting against Trump and people should take arms against people who don't vote for Trump." Is the problem that anybody who works for Trump is either catching the mental illness or comes to him already mentally ill? Is mental illness contagious, and/or do people who are already mentally ill gravitate to this man?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes, it's all those things. I do emphasize the contagion part because we often don't think of it. We don't think of mental symptoms as being contagious, but in fact, they could be more contagious in certain instances than infectious diseases like the Coronavirus. It is because you don't require physical contact; you only need emotional bonds and continued

exposure. And we somewhat have made a setup of the president's symptoms to be spread in the population. When you have a severely, mentally impaired person who goes untreated and is an influential position with continual exposure to the public, then this is what you would get. I've seen it numerous times in prison settings or with the state hospital population where individuals go untreated. But we now have a situation where the president has not been treated by virtue of his position of power and influence. And that is a somewhat perfect storm for contagion of symptoms.

The good news about that is that when he's removed from influence, a lot of this will abate. I'm not talking about those with similar symptoms being gravitated toward him, although those get confirmed and exacerbated. But those who were previously healthy will be able to come back to their general reasoning. In fact, there was a dip in his polls since earlier on in the pandemic when he was not able to hold rallies, he wasn't holding press conferences and his approval rating went down. Many people thought it was finally people recognizing his mishandling of the pandemic that was causing that. But I had a different hypothesis that it was really the diminution of his exposure to the public. And we see again that even though more people have died since, that his poll numbers are going up again as he is doing his rallies even though he is bringing them into spaces that will cause greater deaths among them. In fact, when it's this huge crowd, he's killing a certain number with each rally, and yet it doesn't seem to influence his approval numbers or the crowds that are gathering.

Ralph Nader: By the way, Dr. Lee, I just want to ask you. China is where the pandemic virus emanated from, and they claim that they brought it under control with slightly less than 5,000 deaths. And the United States is now zooming toward 200,000 deaths and China has four times the population. Do you agree with that estimate? And how did China pull something like this off?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Well, there was a great deal of marvel and praise earlier on that the Chinese government was using very draconian measures to contain the virus, which turns out were necessary because of the contagiousness and lethality of the virus. But of course, the Chinese government initially tried to coverup and tried to stifle a whistleblower who ended up dying from the disease. But they turned it around and saw that their image, world image, and ability to continue their reign would depend on their controlling this virus. And so, whereas I believe that 5,000 deaths is probably not even close to reality, they have done much better than we have. And that just goes back to the severity of detachment from reality that Mr. Trump brings and just the level of danger that we're in. Because this could very well spiral out of control. And since February and March, I have been saying that the death toll will match his mental state, his mental incapacities. And this is exactly what is happening at the moment. And that is pretty bottomless because he's not going to fight the virus. He is going to fight reality instead.

Ralph Nader: You're at the Yale School of Medicine?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Yes.

Ralph Nader: You're at the Yale University School of Medicine. Do your colleagues in their various specialties share your concerns?

Dr. Bandy Lee: Many do. But you may note that since the publication of the book, it was more of my Harvard colleagues who came forth rather than my Yale colleagues. I've been rather disappointed with Yale at its inability to come forth with its own decisions rather than just towing the line of the APA, the American Psychiatric Association, which I think was very misguided, and unfortunately, split the psychiatric community, not along the lines of assessing Donald Trump. We've had a consensus there from the start, but along the lines of whether or not we should speak about it. It's very clear that speaking up would have saved lives. And we have a primary responsibility to society. We do not have a responsibility, primary responsibility, to a public figure, and yet the APA ended up protecting a public figure at the expense of public health in my view.

Ralph Nader: On that professional note, we're out of time. Thank you very much, Dr. Bandy Lee. And we look forward to future efforts by you and your profession to give real meaning to the term "professional courage".

Dr. Bandy Lee: Well, thank you. We won't stop until the dangers are removed. That's for sure.

Ralph Nader: Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Yale psychiatrist, Dr. Bandy Lee. We will link to her work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. We're gonna take a short break. When we return, we're gonna talk about alternatives to shopping at Amazon. But 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 Report, morning minute for Friday, October 2, 2020, I'm Russell Mokhiber. Ever since Volkswagen was caught five years ago using illegal software to conceal the fact that its "clean diesels" cars were polluting the air; the company has insisted that the wrongdoing was the work of lower-level employees. Managers at the top were clueless, Volkswagen claimed. This week, prosecutors in Munich will challenge that assertion in court for the first time. They will begin presenting evidence in the trial of Rupert Stadler, a former chief executive of Volkswagen's Audi luxury car division. That's according to a report in *the New York Times*. The trial is the first in Germany stemming from the scandal, but the case will also test whether prosecutors can overcome the difficulties inherent in trying to convict top managers protected by layers of bureaucracy. 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. We're giving Ralph the segment off. You'll find out why. But first, I want to tell you that Jeff Bezos is now the first person in the world to be worth 200 billion—with a B, billion dollars. And Oxfam estimates that he could give all 876,000 Amazon employees a one-time \$105,000 bonus and still have more money than he did before the pandemic. There are countless reasons why you may not want to support Amazon. Our next guest doesn't want to either. David?

David Feldman: \$200 billion? He's worth \$200 billion.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah.

David Feldman: You know what the saddest part about this is? Imagine how much more he would be worth if he could have kept his marriage together.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. It would have been \$400 billion, roughly estimating.

David Feldman: Wow. Tarek Milleron learned at the feet of the master how to be an intelligent consumer. And like his uncle, Ralph Nader, he has some very strong feelings about Amazon. He avoids using Amazon. We've invited him on to give all of us some tips on how to avoid Amazon. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Tarek Milleron.

Tarek Milleron: Thank you, David. Hi, Steve.

Steve Skrovan: Hi, Tarek. Nice to have you on. So first, tell us, I mean, I guess it shouldn't surprise us, you know, as part of the Nader family tree, that you would be a discerning consumer. But first, tell us how you kind of came to this. And I assumed you had used Amazon in the beginning, before. So what was the transition there? What's the reasoning behind this? Why do you want to avoid Amazon?

Tarek Milleron: Yeah, I still use Amazon, but less and less than less and I'll be canceling my Prime membership when it comes due. It's not a philosophical reason. I actually think that people are just bamboozled into using Amazon and also use it just out of laziness. They don't want to put their credit card information in many times on other websites. And I've just concluded they waste my time too often and money.

Steve Skrovan: How do they do that? How does Amazon waste your time?

Tarek Milleron: So, you know, basically, you get used to using it and of course you get used to using it for things you need at the very last minute. And several times, it just completely let me down and left me really fairly infuriated by leading me down the garden path and then failing to deliver. So I can give you an example. I needed some specialty photo paper made by Canon and the photographer I was working with sent me the link. And of course, the link took me straight to Amazon, and I needed the paper right away for a big project we were doing. And, you know, Amazon kind of leads me down this path of choosing this and choosing that, but then I'm trying to figure out, will it really arrive in time? And no, it won't really arrive in time and the window is too big. And then, you know, you just feel fooled. In this case, I just went to Cannon's website, bought the paper directly from them. Yeah, I paid a little bit more, but in the end they actually had a big discount on it. And I got the paper when I needed it, which is a couple of days later.

Steve Skrovan: Wow. And so now you've explored other ways to avoid Amazon. Give us more examples. What can people do if you were gonna give somebody some tips and coach them on how to avoid it?

Tarek Milleron: Well, this is such a bizarre year that, you know, in our household, we use Walmart online, and we feel like we're being progressive. [laughter]

Steve Skrovan: Yes.

Tarek Milleron: We're pushing back against the man; we're using Walmart.

David Feldman: Wow.

Steve Skrovan: You have to find the next biggest man to push against the big man, I guess.

Tarek Milleron: [laughter] Right, exactly. Yeah. So what I tend to do now is I just take the extra few minutes to put in my credit card information to use businesses online that never waste my time.

David Feldman: In your website...some websites will store your credit card information. So is that safe?

Tarek Milleron: Well, yeah, that's above my pay grade, but I don't save credit card information. I just tend to put it in. Because really, when I say people are being fooled, literally, it's just a few seconds. Like you're going to miss the next cat video someone sent you; it'd be a text or something. Just take the time and then do an honest accounting. Like how often does Amazon really work out for you the way you think it should or the way it's represented? And how often do you buy crap on Amazon that breaks, and you don't return? So just doing an honest accounting, I think, gets you a long way. But I have another example of a product where Amazon really blew my stack and that is in around 1980, this coach in Ohio named Dick Hartzell who invented these rubber bands that you use for exercise, and that was an innovation back then. I was going traveling and I needed some of these bands. And the coach started a company called Jump-Stretch, but his product, I believe, was called Flex Band. Well, if you search for Jump-Stretch, of course now it takes you straight to Amazon, where there are a bunch of knockoffs that have taken his company name and applied it to an exactly similar looking product. So about three years ago, I went searching around. I remembered the word Jump-Stretch; boom, I end up in Amazon. I buy the stuff. Now I have no idea where the original bands are made or anything, but I know the ones that I bought, one of them, the color came off and got all over my stuff and it was like a nightmare. Well, what am I going to do? I think I paid 20 bucks for that. So I ended up just tossing those and just never using them. But now you can just go straight to the source. You just go, you look up Dick Hartzell, Jump-Stretch, and you'll find the real product. If you really want it, buy it from the original source.

Steve Skrovan: What about prices though? Isn't that one of the, you know, isn't going through Amazon cheaper?

Tarek Milleron: Well, yeah. I mean, obviously, it's cheaper, but for me, factoring in the aggravation and just wanting to have a better experience makes the difference, for me. Saving a little bit of money doesn't really add up, but I use Abebooks, which is owned by Amazon. That has generally worked really, really well for me. Of course, they just picked up someone else's nice project, right, which is sort of their MO.

Steve Skrovan: Right. Well, and I think that's probably Ralph's big problem, is the monopoly issue because his issues, I mean, we all know that Ralph and I know who is listening to this is a bit of a Luddite. I've talked to him about that. He still types on a manual typewriter. And so he's not as... you know, the fact that you're putting in your credit card information to anybody would be anathema to him because he doesn't participate in the credit economy.

David Feldman: Excuse me, for one second. You kind of skated over the issue of money. Is Amazon in fact cheaper and isn't that what most consumers are looking for, a bargain?

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. I mean, that's what's dangled in front of you over and over. But you can beat them on price; you can definitely beat them on service. Another example, I needed to buy some refill for a pen that my wife had, and I went on Amazon and I went through all the steps and put it in my cart; so they're using your time there. And lo and behold, that didn't meet the limit for it actually to be delivered, but we'll wait until you add more items. Well, it just makes smoke come of my ears. I walked down to my local stationary store and bought the pen and felt great. So, I think it's sort of a myth that they beat mom-and-pop [stores]. Because if you think about it, organized mom-and-pop could beat Amazon on every common item. In other words, if there were a structure where they could show their inventory collectively, they would beat it.

David Feldman: Or provide services that Amazon can't provide, you know, in the case of a bookstore, you have guest speakers, you have other things going on that are part of the community, the local community that a behemoth like Amazon can't replicate. I guess there's gotta be some creative thinking along those lines.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. I mean, that's what I think, but I also tend to go to specialty stores online, like B&H Photo [Blimie & Herman] or McMaster-Carr. Those are two fabulous websites where you have people [who] really know their business very well and you don't need to rely on 4,800 reviews of the child seat you're going to buy or whatever; you're dealing with experts. And you're paying a bit more for it and it's worth it. I really think ultimately people are just fooling themselves.

Steve Skrovan: Well, there's also an issue. And I think the pandemic, at least in our household, has brought this forth, is the idea of packaging too. And we avoid Amazon as much as possible. And my wife does most. We're now buying air purifiers because of what's going on with the wildfires here and going straight to the sources. Most of that, we managed to get one under the wire because they're getting sold out, but we also get a lot of food delivered. We haven't been in a store for about six months and the packaging is starting to pile up and that's not just Amazon; I guess it's all delivery services, but we kind of get addicted to this. And there's this externality that happens where all of this cardboard is being used. And what do you do with it?

Tarek Milleron: Sure. Cardboard and plastic, bubbles and so forth. Packaging is better designed now than maybe 10 years ago. Yeah. It really adds up. But I think the thing with Amazon, as opposed to focusing on what you really need and going to the right place to buy it, is that you've got this steady stream of little packages that come to your house. It's almost like an addiction, or you think of the thing you need. It just basically softens your brain to have these. That's sort of my philosophy.

Steve Skrovan: Well, every day is Christmas.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. [chuckle] Right. Exactly. So you get a little reward and then you continue to reward yourself.

Steve Skrovan: It does make sense.

Tarek Milleron: It's a pastime. It is an American pastime. Shopping is an American pastime, but you know, it used to be in-person, and now it's kind of in the ether.

Steve Skrovan: David, do you avoid Amazon? Are you able to do that?

David Feldman: Yeah, I mean, I live a very ascetic lifestyle where, I mean, I don't want to get too personal, but I ask myself, do I want this? And then I wait a day or two. And then after a day or two, then I buy it if I really, really need it. And so I end up buying very few things and the older I get, knowing some people with hoarding problems, and I think that shopping on Amazon is tantamount to a gambling problem. I think, for a lot of people, it satisfies the same part of the brain. You're just... it's like a slot machine. So it lights up. They figured out how to light up your brain when you buy something on Amazon. I don't buy anything unless it's absolutely necessary. Because you don't need it. I mean, you live in Northern California and there's a tradition up there of learning not to buy anything; you don't need anything.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. Well, I would think of myself sort of not a materialist until I look at all the tools I own, for example, or for work that I use my nonprofit and ended up buying a lot of recording equipment and whatnot.

David Feldman: But that's stuff you need, but in terms of clothes or processed food, all that stuff is literally garbage. It becomes garbage; it starts off as garbage.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah, and I agree. It certainly is an addictive thing. And maybe more people should start pranking Amazon by filling their cart and then emptying it in a few days.

Steve Skrovan: I was gonna ask you about that.

David Feldman: Culture jamming.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. Yeah. Just hang it out there. Of course, they've probably figured out some way of tapping your card in the interim or some weird thing they've figured out. But yeah, I think it's a menace. I mean, it's just less of a motivator to me because the fact is when you—let's say you really do need something, just don't go to Amazon. Figure out truly the best source for it. Save money by not buying as much.

Steve Skrovan: But it's what makes that difficult is that you do put something in your search engine, and it funnels you right there. And it's the first three choices, you know, especially for books.

Tarek Milleron: Well, my favorite tip for searches is just minus Amazon. I just exclude Amazon for my searches.

Steve Skrovan: So, wait a minute. That sounds like a very practical tip. What do you? Do you write in minus Amazon?

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. Minus amazon.com, and you can get rid of Amazon except for the promoted sites. But yeah, when it dominates, it totally dominates like you get Amazon U.K. and stuff coming at you and you're in California. And they know where you are and all that. Yeah. It's really irritating; so I just get rid of it.

Steve Skrovan: And so you can literally write, you know, air purifier minus amazon.com.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah.

Steve Skrovan: There you go. There's a very practical tip. I had no idea you could actually do that and that would work. And David, I was going to say a lot of podcasts—I listen to a lot of podcasts. David has his own podcast in addition to this program called *The David Feldman Show*. We'll give you a plug there.

David Feldman: Now comes the hit.

Steve Skrovan: Well, I want to know a lot of podcasts, Amazon is, you know, if you buy, if you go through that, say *The David Feldman Show* website, Amazon gives you a little taste, right? Are you still doing that?

David Feldman: I am. Yes, I am.

Steve Skrovan: You realize you're under oath, sir.

David Feldman: Thanks for the plug. Thanks for plugging my podcast there, friend. Yes. Guilty as charged, I say—but here's the thing I do say that if you have to shop on Amazon, do it through what is called an affiliate link because they don't charge you more and you're making Amazon about five to 7% less evil. But I would like to stop using Amazon, but people do shop on Amazon.

Steve Skrovan: But that must be enough of a payoff to make it worth it for you, right?

David Feldman: Not a lot, but enough for me to say “this is a hard habit to shake”. So yeah. No, it's not good. I'm not happy about it.

Tarek Milleron: Well, then there's the con. Yeah, you guys, we use Amazon Prime and likewise, it just really irritates me [that] you end up having to pay for everything. And the content that's free is by and large terrible or, you know, you've watched it years ago or whatever. What do you do for the content side of things? Do you use Amazon?

Steve Skrovan: Have you heard of books? [chuckle] Well, I have to say I got a Kindle about five years ago and it's very addictive. Well, I wouldn't say addictive; it's actually very practical here, because I just press a thing and I get the book and it usually is cheaper. And I don't have a stack of books in my house that I got to find more shelving for. So there is something that is very attractive about that.

Tarek Milleron: And movies and stuff like that?

Steve Skrovan: Movies, it's... you know, now I guess, we subscribe to Netflix and Hulu, and I guess we do have Amazon Prime, but you're right. We're still paying money to rent some movies that aren't terrible or so outdated, I guess. And it's a hard thing; it's an octopus that's hard to kind of extricate yourself from.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah, you can't really easily cut it out of your life. It's a reality because of their cloud services and all that. And so I don't even look at it that way. Really, it's just buy where it's more efficient; buy from businesses that don't piss you off.

Steve Skrovan: Well, there you have it. That's Tarek Milleron's how to survive Amazon.

David Feldman: So I was raised by Ralph Nader. I mean, my mother would watch, I guess, your grandmother on Phil Donahue. You know, we voted, Ralph would send us a ballot on how to vote. And my mother took her cues from your grandmother, from the *Phil Donahue Show*. Sugar was banned and consumerism. I was raised in an era of consumerism where [you] don't buy things unless they're absolutely necessary. Without getting too personal, I'm kind of surprised to hear that you, I know that you don't use Amazon, but like asking questions about disposable junk, like movies, and I'm surprised you even bother with that garbage.

Tarek Milleron: Oh, what can I say? You know, I'm a Californian who watches movies and comedy shows.

David Feldman: Even though it's bad for your health. It's like sugar. I mean, it really is as bad for you as sugar.

Tarek Milleron: Ah, well, I don't know.

Steve Skrovan: That's a little extreme. I mean, you know, it's the way the world is set up and unless you want to cut yourself off from that... I know you and me as comedians, we have to sort of be a little cognizant of what's going on in pop culture.

David Feldman: I'm sorry. What are you trying to say? What is cognizant?

Steve Skrovan: Cognizant means knowing... [laughter] I've got the best words.

Tarek Milleron: Any time you can make yourself or your loved ones laugh by kind of whatever means necessary, it just has to happen. So sometimes it happens through mass produced entertainment.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, we were talking before we went on the air that some of us have kids in the house. Not me, not David, but Tarek, you've got kids in the house and you're all stuck inside and there's gotta be ways to entertain each other and entertain them and be able to get some space from each other.

David Feldman: I wasn't allowed. Growing up, I wasn't allowed to watch TV. It was very, it was very limited. Very limited.

Steve Skrovan: Really? I wouldn't say I was a TV addict, but there were no restrictions on our TV watching.

David Feldman: Oh my God. My mother would just walk in and turn the TV off.

Steve Skrovan: Wow.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. My mom kept a black and white TV in the trunk of her car. So she took care of it that way. But we don't have a TV in our house and the kids don't have access to watch

whatever they want to watch. [overlapping] On the content thing and going to Amazon and going to canned entertainment, there's so many great things that people just put up on their YouTube channel or whatever that are educational, that are entertaining that you could watch. You know, I'm not going to miss Amazon Prime at all.

David Feldman: Yeah. So you're endorsing Google, which owns YouTube. [laughter]

Steve Skrovan: You can't get away. You can't get away from it.

David Feldman: Well, they do make you complicit in practically everything evil about corporate America. I mean, you really do have to just to work, to buy. To be a vegan, you have to work at buying something that doesn't destroy the planet--even when you're being a vegan.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah. It takes work and it takes, I guess enough people eventually doing it until it gets to a tipping point where that then becomes the norm. And that's hard to do, especially when you think you're alone.

Tarek Milleron: It's hard to do when you're hogtied, but you can do little bits here and there. Look at all the people baking bread now. If I hear someone talking about their sourdough one more time, you know? [chuckles]

Steve Skrovan: Yeah. Well, I'm more of a banana bread guy. And so I've been doing that.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah. So I needed to buy some flour. And again, I found a small mill in Utah; that's just fantastic flour. I'd never heard of it. It came by mail to my house, but I bought a hundred pounds. So we can't really complain about the packaging. And it was all paper, packaged in paper, a fantastic product. Probably could have bought it on Amazon and stiffed the company for some money. Why would you want to do that?

David Feldman: What about getting a...?

Tarek Milleron: Because I'm still saving a lot of money compared to buying bread.

David Feldman: Do you have a coffee grinder?

Tarek Milleron: Yeah.

David Feldman: Buy a hundred pounds of wheatberry and make your own flour with a coffee grinder.

Tarek Milleron: Boy, we eat a lot of bread, David. That coffee grinder, I'm afraid, would burn out in short order.

David Feldman: Have you tried milling your own wheatberry?

Tarek Milleron: I have not, but I'm sure we could buy a machine to do that, which would kind of environmentally speaking, be against the point of pooling resources and efficiently running through a machine in Utah.

David Feldman: What about a hand cranked? What about a hand cranked mill? I'm being serious.

Tarek Milleron: Yeah, you could do it, but still, if you think about it, let's get 150 million households buy a hand cranked mill, I mean, yeah. That's how we built America, but it's not going to have a great footprint. I'd rather just use a mill where they know what they're doing and then they can buy organic wheatberries from a whole bunch of small farmers.

Steve Skrovan: Well, you have to understand David churns his own butter. [laughter]

David Feldman: Only on the dance floor. [laughter] I do the butter churn on the dance floor.

Tarek Milleron: Now, if you mill your own lumber, David, now there I'll be impressed.

Steve Skrovan: So Tarek, we've got to close now. Why don't you take just a minute here to kind of sum up your how to avoid Amazon tips or philosophy?

Tarek Milleron: Okay. So when you do searches, get rid of Amazon; do minus amazon.com and you're stuck with the ads, but you know it'll free up a little space. As David said, make sure you really need that thing you'd like to buy. And yeah, let's have a little fun; let's load up some Amazon carts and then get satisfaction by deleting all the items. Learn about businesses that specialize in what they do and give them your business. And don't forget mom-and-pop. They're still there. They often have things in stock. And the more you buy from them, the more they'll have in stock. So I think that sort of sums it up for me.

Steve Skrovan: Well, there you have it, people. You've got it right there. Thank you very much, Tarek, for joining us, and we hope maybe we'll have you back.

Tarek Milleron: Well, thanks, Steve. Thanks, David.

David Feldman: Thank you. It was a lot of fun.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Tarek Milleron. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. We're going to answer some of your listener questions. Listener John Nash says, and he's referring to the episode we did a couple of weeks ago with Barbara Freese when Barbara Freese and Ralph, you talked about auto safety and the history of corporate denial there. And he says, "How can you talk about the history of seatbelts in the U.S. without mentioning John Paul Stapp who did the rocket sled testing? He tried to convince the government and the car manufacturers to put seatbelts in cars without success."

Ralph Nader: Well, I think he did have success, because he put his own safety on the line with these speed sleds at Wright Air Force base, which stopped suddenly to show that seatbelts could restrain an occupant in a car without damaging internal organs, which the auto companies were talking about. It's going to rip out your kidney or your liver, et cetera. I can't count the number of times I paid tribute to John Paul Stapp and his conferences that I attended as a young lawyer and learned so much from. He is a real hero, a medical doctor and a colonel in the air force. But you can't mention all the people who were heroes in this movement in a very tiny reference to seatbelts when you're talking about face masks and the resistance to face masks.

Steve Skrovan: Right. And Ralph, who was the pilot who pioneered a lot of the safety technology? And as I recall in my research for *An Unreasonable Man* and in reading *Unsafe at Any Speed*, he was the one who had a plane crash or was in a plane crash. He survived and he spent the rest of his life trying to figure out why did he survive when nobody else did. And it was the idea of the second collision.

Ralph Nader: I think you're talking about Hugh DeHaven.

Steve Skrovan: Right.

Ralph Nader: Yes. And he then started wondering how people who fell four stories survived at the bottom of the ground. And so he began to see that different G-forces, if they're distributed, can allow people to live, but if they are concentrated the way you say a pen is, the human physiology has less of a chance to survive. And that's where the concept of padded dash panels and other safety devices came into recognition. So he was really one of the great pioneers as well. Hugh DeHaven.

Steve Skrovan: Hugh DeHaven. Yes. And just to clarify for people, the second collision, obviously the first collision is the car with another car or a barrier of some kind. And the second collision is the human being inside the car and that was really the insight.

Ralph Nader: That's right. The human beings smashing against the windshield or the metallic dash panel or the steering column. Yup, that's the second collision. If you can interfere between the first collision and the second by airbags, padded dash panels, seatbelts, you will save the occupants.

Steve Skrovan: Right. Well, thank you for that question, John. I want to thank our guests again, Dr. Bandy Lee and Jeff Bezos's worst nemesis, Tarek Milleron. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you, podcasts listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Rader 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: Ralph has got a couple of new books. The fable, *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*. To acquire a copy of that, go to ratsreformcongress.org and *Fake President: Decoding Trump's Gaslighting, Corruption and General BS*, co-written with Mark Green. We will link to that also. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Rader Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

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

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. Get active.