

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 479 TRANSCRIPT

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

**David Feldman:** Hello.

**Steve Skrovan:** And we have the man of the hour who, unlike David's voice, is probably not cracking at this point, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello. Welcome. This is a program about resistance toward victory.

**Steve Skrovan:** For the past week and a half, I've been walking a picket as a member of the Writers Guild of America (WGA). That's because we're on strike. Some of you might be surprised to know that not all Hollywood writers are rich. It has always been a precarious profession, but now changes in technology and how the major studios and streamers do business has made it hard for many of the writers who create and develop your favorite TV shows and movies to even make a living. This dilemma is emblematic of the issues facing so many other industries across the country, namely the gigification of the American workforce, where one man, the CEO of Time Warner, David Zaslav, makes an annual salary of \$250 million. His salary alone would be enough to pay 10,000 writers. So we've invited the former president of the WGA (West), David Goodman, on to the program.

David is not only a writer of many of your favorite TV shows, including *Family Guy*, *Star Trek: Enterprise* and *American Dad!*, but he's also co-chair of the committee representing the writers in their negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. We look forward to getting the inside scoop on everything that's going on with the current writer strike. After that, we'll welcome back UC (University of California) Berkeley anthropology PhD candidates and library champions, Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez. Our regular listeners will remember their campaign to save the UC Berkeley Anthropology Library from closure. UC Berkeley's reputation as a bastion for progressive ideals, but lies, decades of disinvestment, corporatization and regressive policies have cut the heart out of one of America's oldest public universities. Closing the anthropology library is just one way in which University of California leadership has abandoned their students, faculty and their other stakeholders. So we look forward to speaking about the ongoing struggle at Berkeley. As always, somewhere in the middle we'll check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, why am I marching around Disney for four hours a day? Feldo?

**David Feldman:** David Goodman has written for over 20 television series. His best known work is as head writer and executive producer on *Family Guy*. He was the president of the Writers Guild of America West from 2017 to 2021. In that capacity, Mr. Goodman led the Guild in a campaign to force the Hollywood talent agencies into adopting a new code of conduct to better serve the needs of their writers. And today, he serves as co-chair of the WGA Negotiating Committee in their strike against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, David Goodman.

**David Goodman:** It's a pleasure to be here.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed, Mr. Goodman. This is unabashedly an affirmative answer to the question that unions have asked for decades—whose side are you on? And we're on your side. I'm a member of the SAG-AFTRA union, have been for many years. I know what those unions have done for artists, people who get on TV and radio and produce a lot of profits for their TV and radio stations. So welcome again and I want to open this by providing a frame of reference. You're dealing with an industry that pays some of its executives a lot of money. One of them reportedly received last year a pay package worth \$250 million. That is two and a half times more than what Tim Cook, the CEO of the most profitable corporation in the world, Apple, received. So this is where it all starts out, the double standard, the inequity. I want to hand this part of the program over to Steve Skrovan because Steve is very much part of it. He's been involved in the picketing and the demonstrating and the public information, and let our listeners know that a lot of those programs that they watch on TV, or listen to on the radio all over the country, are written by the people who are on the picket lines and are pretty mercilessly exploited by the corporate titans that rake off the profits. Why don't you take it from here, Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah. Thanks, Ralph. David and I have known each other for a long time, probably 15 years since the previous strike from 2007-2008, which was really an important strike for the writers to get jurisdiction over what, at that time, was called new media—it was essentially the internet. And we knew that if you don't get your foot in there at the beginning, then you never get it back. Why are we striking today, David? Why am I walking for four hours around the Disney Studios on strike, carrying a sign?

**David Goodman:** First, let me just say it's a pleasure to be here and pleasure to be talking to you and to Ralph Nader, one of my heroes. But speaking to the specific situation, it's very similar in a broad sense to what happened in 2007. We saw a future back then of streaming television which didn't exist then. There was no streaming shows and movies back then. Netflix was a DVD library. But we knew that if we didn't fight for that coverage then, we were looking at a very bleak future for writers who would be, to use Mr. Nader's term, ruthlessly exploited. Now we're looking at a future in this new streaming model where writers aren't going to earn enough to stay writers; these companies that we work for are spending billions of dollars and making billions of dollars on the product that we create. Currently, many writers can't afford to pay their rent, can't afford to live in the cities where they're required to work, and need to take second jobs. That's a very familiar situation in labor across this country and we're saying, if these companies are profitable, if, as you stated, the CEOs are making these pay packages that frankly are more than what we're asking for every writer to be paid in our package, literally, over a three-year contract, we need to fight. And one of the unfortunate products of capitalism is that at some point a union has to exercise its power, not just what it wants, but what it needs for its members. And that's why we're on strike.

**Ralph Nader:** Before we get into the details with Steve, tell us the names of these companies. They're household names and they've got a trade association that camouflages their logo. What are some of the companies that are trying to squeeze more or not provide adequate livelihoods

for the writers, without whom they wouldn't be able to sell their entertainment documentaries, fiction, non-fiction?

**David Goodman:** Netflix, Apple, there's Universal, Comcast, Paramount, Sony, Amazon. And what we're also seeing is the new players in the business, which is - Disney obviously is a legacy company - the sort of companies that always produce product like Disney, Universal, Paramount, and now these tech companies—Netflix, Amazon, Apple, which were traditionally not in this entertainment business, but are now squeezing profits from labor. They're kowtowing to Wall Street; they have to show profit growth, not just profit, and that always seems to fall on the backs of the labor that produces the products they make.

**Steve Skrovan:** So David, the climate seems different from 15 years ago in that 15 years ago it seemed like the Writers Guild was alone, because we always sort of have to be the bad guys in the economic ecosystem of the entertainment world. Why don't you describe that ecosystem and the other entertainment unions and our relationship to them.

**David Goodman:** Historically, that's its history. There are difficulties between the labor unions that the companies helped engender. The companies saw it in their best interest to divide labor, to characterize the Writers Guild as crazy, unrealistic, and childish. Those were literally the terms used to describe a union that has always stood up and fought for its members. And it divided us from our other unions in this business. And that has changed, because now, across the board, the membership of those other unions are feeling squeezed. It's not just writers being squeezed, it's actors, directors, crew people and the craftspeople. And the Teamsters have stood up and are standing with us in an amazing way. That's a function of how life in America has changed. And so, now that the fact that the Guild is willing to stand up and to fight the other members of their unions, and the leaderships of those unions recognize that the Writers Guild is the tip of the spear, that our fight is their fight, and that whatever we get is going to help them improve their contracts and their lives. So that's how it's changed.

But historically, the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), the organization that represents the companies in their negotiations, did a really effective job of dividing labor. And in most other businesses, the unions would all be negotiating with one company, and in Hollywood they flipped the story. All the companies negotiate with each union separately, and that also further divided us. But that's changing this year. We have support from all those unions I named and it's because everybody is feeling the squeeze.

**Steve Skrovan:** And it seems emblematic, like you've mentioned, of what's going on across the country and other industries where you have the financialization of those industries and the gigification of the labor force. Gigification is the coined word I've been hearing. Talk a little bit about the gigification of the labor force, which is probably the thing that you mentioned has unified us with all these other unions.

**David Goodman:** Yes. Basically what has happened in this gig economy is now coming to writers. Writers used to be able to have a career, even though built into working as a writer is a lack of security and going from job to job, the fact is the union helped protect writers to allow them to ride out the periods where they weren't working. Now, because wages have been so

squeezed and because the companies are really looking to say to us, they don't care about writers having what we call "term employment"—employment over a period of time that allows for building a career and staying a writer. If we don't do something, we're looking at a future where writers will work a day here and a day there. They've proposed a day rate for writers who work in comedy variety like the late night shows. We've never had a day rate; there was always a minimum of at least a week's work. Now we're seeing that writers are working for limited amounts of time, not enough money to ride out their year, and they're always have to be looking for the next job just to make ends meet. There is a sort of a misunderstanding that somehow all writers are living a successful, comfortable life, and that used to be the truth of being a writer in Hollywood. If you had any kind of career, you did actually get to live a comfortable life. That's not true anymore, yet the companies we work for are making billions of profits.

**Ralph Nader:** David, I read in the *New York Times* that these companies are paying huge sums to produce these films—Apple, Sony, Netflix—they're all big companies and have a lot of money. Where's all this money going to?

**David Goodman:** Well, that's the thing. They're competing with each other and they're putting money in for big name actors, expensive locations, and for film promotion. In I think the last five years, show budgets have increased by 50%, yet the amount of money spent on the writers is the same or shrinking. They're putting it into the product and then into the promotion of that product but they're not willing to pay the people who write that product a living wage. They're absolutely willing to spend the money, they're just not going to do anything to increase the money for those writers.

**Steve Skrovan:** One of the things that I was brought up short with when I went to one of the first informational meetings a few months ago, it was pointed out that 20 years ago, the entertainment industry was a \$5 billion business and now it's a \$29 to \$30 billion business, and yet our share of it has been reduced. Talk about that.

**David Goodman:** As I mentioned, show budgets have increased, so the profits of these companies have just gotten wildly outsized from previous years, and yet writers are making 24% less if you take inflation into account than they did 10 years ago. And so the idea that writers are making... we have a contract that lays out minimums and the minimum was supposed to be a floor. Now it's a ceiling; half of our members work at the minimum. That was never the intention of our contract. The intention of the contract was to make sure that the companies couldn't fully exploit us. Now they're saying everybody's going to make this minimum and that section of the population is going to grow. A quarter of the writers who actually run television shows, in many cases, are our most experienced members who've worked in television for some length of time, are working for minimum. They're running these shows that really do lead to enormous profit for these companies. So you're seeing a labor oppression of writers. So if you want to be a writer, you're going to just barely make enough money, maybe not enough money to survive and you might actually have to get a second job. There used to be a path to success in Hollywood as a writer, but they are taking away that path to success.

**Ralph Nader:** David, before we get into what the union is demanding in their negotiations, who is this guy who's making 250 million? What's his name? What company does he run? And how does he get away with it? He's one of the highest paid executives in American history.

**David Goodman:** Well, I think you're talking about David Zaslav at Warner Brothers who is actually head of Discovery and they merged those companies. And I think that the way he gets away with it is by overseeing the merger of these two companies and then pleasing Wall Street. Wall Street now rates that stock as a very good stock. So the shareholders there reward this man, who has raised their stock price and shown profit growth, with an outsized reward that literally could pay every writer under our contract for three years. What that ignores—and this is where it's so strange and kind of through the looking glass—is that the purpose of these companies is to make product, is to make television shows and movies. Yet over at that company, and not to just single him out, because I think it's happening a lot of places, that isn't their goal in the short-term. It's actually making cuts in labor and taking write-offs of movies rather than releasing them. And it's antithetical to what the purpose of these companies is supposed to be, which is to make product that people watch. And the fact that he's using that company to just raise a stock price, well, for what, what's the future of that? That's a stock quarter to stock quarter mentality that loses sight of the point of the company. And it's very upsetting because I work in a community that is filled with enormously talented, hardworking, creative people who made a compact with these companies to reach an audience, to be storytellers and participate in that, and the companies used to see great profit in that, and they still do. There's a reason they're negotiating with us, or there's a reason they did negotiate with us, and the reason that our strike does have power is because America and the world rely on this product that we create, those stories that we create, our connection, our way for people to connect. And because of this corporatization, some people are losing sight of that. Hopefully, this strike will bring them back.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, Ralph, we see this; we've talked about this on this program when we've talked about Boeing, we've talked about General Electric, where these formerly great engineering companies whose first priority is no longer making stuff anymore. It's just bumping up their stock price any way they can. So that's why I think this strike and this whole labor issue is emblematic of what is going on across all industries in America.

**Ralph Nader:** David, what union demands have they brought to the negotiating table?

**David Goodman:** All of our demands are about compensation. They're all about making sure that if you're a television writer, you'll be employed for a certain amount of time; if you're a television writer who creates a television show, you won't have to do it by yourself, there will be other writers hired to help you do that; if you're a feature writer, a writer of movies; that if your movie is going to just be on the streaming service as opposed to being in a theater, you're going to be properly compensated for that, you're not going to have to take that on a discount; if you're a comedy variety writer and you're writing a show in the streaming world, you're going to have the protections of the minimums along with the pension and health contributions that all the other writers in the union have. But now writers don't have that protection. All of our demands really fall under this just broad category of "pay us enough so that we can live; don't exploit us;

properly pay us". It's all about compensation across the board and there are a lot of very specific demands about specific working conditions that we're trying to address.

**Ralph Nader:** And does this mean annual salaries and bonuses or you pay piece work?

**David Goodman:** This is just the piece work. This is just our weekly contracts so that there's a duration. Many writers are now getting a job for 10 weeks in a room working out, let's say, a story for episodes of a television show. We're saying it's got to be longer than that because we're also — historically in the Guild; there's been almost a training program of writers who learn the production of a show because they're working long enough on that show to gain experience. But now the writing of the show has been separated from production, so many writers aren't getting that experience, so we're going to be losing a talented workforce that the company has benefited from. That's the crazy thing about what we're fighting for; they benefited from a system that they're now destroying. We created hit movies and TV shows because writers were able to stay writers because they could learn from other writers, and in a weird way, we were trying to save them from themselves. The things we're asking for in this contract benefit them in the long term. And again, our asks are not in any way things they can't afford. It's literally our opening offer/our opening proposals were worth less than 2% of all of their profits. And obviously with an opening proposal, we understand that's just the beginning of a negotiation, but they didn't even want to agree to that.

**Ralph Nader:** This is pretty shocking. Did you say 2%?

**David Goodman:** Less than 2% of their profit.

**Ralph Nader:** It sounds like the tomato grower gets less than 5 cents out of the dollar tomato that consumers pay for in the supermarket. Now, have some major actors and actresses, like Tom Hanks, Meryl Streep come to your support?

**David Goodman:** We are getting a lot of support from actors in our union in SAG, the Screen Actors Guild, so we're getting a lot of support from those actors. They show up to the picket lines. I don't know if those specific ones that you named, but there have been others who've spoken out in support and we obviously very much appreciate that.

**Ralph Nader:** If a George Clooney speaks out, you're going to get more coverage. That's why I asked the question.

**David Goodman:** We're the Writers Guild, we reach out to everybody, but my concern is my members and making sure that my most high-profile members stand with us, and they do. We have plenty of well-known writers in our union and they have stood up and are standing with us. I just had a phone conversation with George R.R. Martin yesterday; he's been writing great blog posts as an example of a very well-known writer who is standing with his union.

**Steve Skrovan:** Ralph, 15 years ago, the actors were with us and when we were in the picket lines, when an actor showed up at a picket line, then the cameras would show up and it was a big

part of the lot of the positive PR we got because nobody was showing up with the camera at the house of Les Moonves house to talk to him.

**Ralph Nader:** Let's go a little deeper on this. Probably the highest paid screenwriter today is Sorkin. Is he supporting you?

**David Goodman:** Aaron is a great union member. Although I haven't talked to him directly, Aaron is a great member of this Writers Guild. And I would let him speak for himself but historically, Aaron has been a great, great union member and supporter of the Guild.

**Ralph Nader:** Where are people like Steve Spielberg in this kind of controversy?

**David Goodman:** Again, Spielberg, great Guild member. He supported us during the agency campaign that Steve mentioned at the top of the show. Again, most of my work in this moment over the last week is making sure that our picket lines are manned, making sure that people are getting out there and showing the town that we're serious about this fight. And as this fight goes on, we will be bringing whatever big name members we can to show support. Because in a fight like this, you need to make sure that people feel that energy. And right now, this energy is out on those picket lines and writers showing up to them.

**Ralph Nader:** Are you asking for improved grievance procedures?

**David Goodman:** I have to say that a part of our negotiation is always making sure that we do have access to resolve and engagement from the companies, but for us at this moment, the main focus of this negotiation is compensation and also the threat of artificial intelligence; we have to make sure that we carve out that the first writer on a project has to be a human being, which is kind of a crazy thing that we have to worry about. But it's there and it's in there and it's part, again, of that overall ask.

**Ralph Nader:** Fill that out for a minute. You're basically saying that the robots are coming. It's inconceivable to an outsider that they could come close to the kind of creativity of a human writer.

**David Goodman:** Well, the way they do it is by using the creativity of the human writer. The way I understand AI is that it does something where it'll scrape, the term is scraping products, screenplays and other writing and putting it into its central processing and able to imitate the writing craft. But you're right, it's never really fully capturing the creativity; the scary thing about it is it doesn't have to. If a company decides they want to use AI as a starting place to come up with a story or a screenplay, they can use that program to vomit out something that isn't very good, but they give it to a writer to rewrite and that writer is not getting paid what he, she or they would have gotten paid to create something original. And that's very scary because I could see that happening shortly. Companies really looking to save money by just using this AI to create something and then suddenly the writer isn't the first person hired. And if they're not the first person hired, they may not get credit, they may not see any of the residuals from that work, and they won't be as well-paid. So, that's something we've got to put guard rails now.

**Ralph Nader:** I see. I look forward to a movie where the AI robots automate the bosses. They should be much more easily automated than the creative scriptwriters, right, Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah, I think that especially all these mid-level executives have more to fear from AI than we do.

**Ralph Nader:** Can you give the Guild contact number before you leave for people who want to know more about it?

**David Goodman:** You can go to the website, [wga.org](http://wga.org), and there's a lot of information on there. That's the best way to contact and you can contact the Guild through that website.

**Ralph Nader:** We've been speaking with David Goodman, former president of the Writers Guild and co-chair of the Negotiating Committee at the present time. Thank you, David. Good luck to you.

**David Goodman:** Thank you.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with David Goodman, former president of the Writers Guild of America West and co-chair of the Negotiating Committee during the ongoing writers' strike. We will link to the WGA's work at [ralphnaderadiohour.com](http://ralphnaderadiohour.com). We're going to take a short break and when we come back we're going to get an update on the anthropology library and its occupation from guests we've had on before, Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez. 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 Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, May 12, 2023. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

More than 300 minors, including two 10-year-olds who were unpaid, were found to be working in violation of federal labor laws at McDonald's franchise restaurants across Kentucky and other states. That's according to a report from CNBC. The department's wage and hour division determined three separate franchises operating 62 McDonald's locations across Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland and Ohio, violated federal labor laws by employing 305 children to work more than the legally permitted hours, as well as perform tasks illegal for young workers. Of the 62 restaurants, 45 were in Kentucky. "These reports are unacceptable, deeply troubling and run afoul of the high expectations we have for the entire McDonald's brand," Tiffanie Boyd, senior vice president and chief people officer of McDonald's said.

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, Hannah Feldman and Ralph Nader. Hey, from the picket line to the occupation of the anthropology library at UC Berkeley, let's get an update on that situation. David?



**David Feldman:** Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez are graduate students in the Anthropology department at the University of California, Berkeley where stakeholders, including students and faculty, have organized to demand that the anthropology library be protected and fully supported by the university. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez.

**Sandra Oseguera:** Hi, David. Thank you so much for having us again here.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having us.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed. In fact, it's more than protection; they're trying to keep the library open, which the administration wants to close to save a few bucks while they pour hundreds of millions of dollars in a nearby giant building dedicated to artificial intelligence. Before we get underway, I just came across the article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by a former graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Berkeley, Caitlin Zaloom, May 4th. And here's what she says about what you're doing. Here's what she said. Quote, "This is no local fight. Two visions of the university are clashing. One wants technical mastery and promotes corporate will, the other supports voices from people and places regularly excluded from universities and often turns critical attention toward industry and academe itself. There is no question that the first vision, tied to both big business and donors, now dominates higher education. You can see it on every campus in the country. But at Berkeley, one of the nation's flagship public universities, is a particularly ugly site," end quote. And then she makes a personal comment. Quote, "The library is a place where students do this together. I know because I spend hours every week at the tables and among the stacks as a graduate student in Berkeley's Anthropology department. Over those tables, students gathered books and articles written by anthropologists and mastered the history of their field," end quote.

And since we spoke, Jesús and Sandra, the New York Times had a front page article with a photograph on the front page and four photographs on the jump page describing the resistance by the students to sit in the arguments they use and the stubbornness of the administration which is trying to overwhelm the unanimous opposition against closing this specialized library by the faculty and the students. So that's where we are. So tell us, Sandra or Jesús, where you are now and how many students you have occupying this wonderful library and what your plans are.

**Sandra Oseguera:** Yes. Well, thank you so much again for having us here. And as you read Caitlin Zaloom's article, I want to highlight that she touches on really what we're trying to do here. We truly disagree with the vision that the administration has for this university and we believe that it can be different, that this can truly be a public university for students, underrepresented minorities but also for the public where public can come here especially to our library and be curious, collect knowledge and have a refuge where they can find themselves in the shelves, in the stacks. So that for us has been really important and I'm very happy that Caitlin Zaloom could summarize that vision that we have for our university and for our department and especially for our library.

About the occupation, Jesús, do you want to tell us more about the occupation?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Sure thing. I think what's been really interesting to us is how we began this occupation with about a group of 25 to 30 people who were willing to risk trespassing charges, who were willing to put a lot of things on the line for the sake of a library. And I think that that was curious for a lot of media outlets. As you probably saw the New York Times story, the sort of framing and spin was around this question of AI and the digital age. What we expected that the sort of energy and the momentum and the passion that the New York Times article captured would sort of wane as the days went on, but now we are on night — what is it today, day 20?

**Sandra Oseguera:** Yeah, today's day 20.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Today's day 20 of our occupation, and last night we had about 20 people sleeping in that library. And the day before that was the first time that our numbers dipped to 15. So it's been really amazing like just seeing new supporters come in through those doors of the library every single day. I think people are realizing that they can take control over their education into their own hands at a time when the UC Berkeley administration, with its increasingly corporate posture, really refuses to do so, really refuses to have the right priorities. And I don't think that it's a coincidence that this occupation is happening at the same time as Oakland Unified School District teachers are on strike. The things that Oakland School District is telling their teachers who are on strike are more or less the same things that the UC Berkeley administration is telling us. There simply is no money for the things that matter.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, there's plenty of money for the football program. They pay the coach at Berkeley \$3 to \$4 million a year, which is enough to support the anthropology library for many years. And listeners should know that this is one of the great anthropology libraries in the world. We're talking about over 100-year history here and people come to use the library who are not students because it's a public university and the library is open to people in the San Francisco area or anybody who wants to come and use the facilities. I know you're getting reactions from all over the country, not just from Berkeley graduates, but you're getting reactions from people who might be reporting the same thing in Vermont; they're trying to do this to us in Florida. Well, Florida is getting headlines because the Governor DeSantis is engaged in a censorship of textbooks and book banning. But the ultimate book banning is closing a library, shipping all these books to a remote warehouse in Richmond, California. Listeners should know that we are supporting this wonderful effort, which I hope will continue to grow with faculty and students, not just in the Anthropology department but other departments where specialized libraries are being closed down. We're supporting it and just recently there was a demonstration in front of the building on Scott Circle that is owned by the University of California, Berkeley for students who spend a semester as interns in Washington, D.C. I've spoken numerous times to the students in their lecture hall on the first floor. And so now people in Washington are understanding what's going on. I understand you got a comment by a major donor who said, "They want to save this amount of money? Well, I think I'll cut my contribution annually by a couple hundred thousand dollars." So Chancellor Carol Christ and whoever is behind this are going to have to worry about declines in donations to the university. They're going to have to worry about student applications of students who will decide whether they really want to go to a corporatized university with destruction of the public traditions of the university.

So I want to ask you because this interview is being transmitted over KPFA in Berkeley so people in the Bay Area are listening to it, what kind of help would you like? You're sitting in, this is a 24-hour dedication, it's going to go on. What kind of help from the community would you like in terms of help in kind, help in public support, contributions to provide food? What would you like from the Bay Area?

**Sandra Oseguera:** From the Bay Area, we are always happy to encounter people that come into the library and just give us words of support. That is very encouraging. What we are requesting right now is that if someone wants to donate or lend us some air mattresses or sleeping bags, that would be really helpful because we have a lot of students that join us and sometimes they are not prepared to sleep on the floors. So that could be one way of helping us. We are right now trying to reach out to restaurants and other businesses that could sponsor us to serve meals. We usually have about 20 people that we have to supply dinner for and that is one of our main challenges and where our money is being spent, also on our breakfast. So help with dinner and breakfast meals could be of help. And we are also receiving monetary donations through our fundraising campaign in [givebutter.com/saveanthrolibrary](https://givebutter.com/saveanthrolibrary).

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that's very good. And there's always serendipity. There's always people who know how to get their calls returned from the regents who control the corporation. They know how to get their calls returned from the administration just because of their stature, their influence, who knows what other ways that they'll come up with that you all have not yet anticipated. Now, one aspect of this that has really troubled me is the law school. Imagine if the administration said, "The law school has a specialized library, we're going to shut it down." They wouldn't dare do that. Those graduates go into corporate law firms so there's a lot of money and power involved, but they can pick on the Anthropology department which attracts a good number of Hispanic Americans, Latinos, African-Americans, Asian Americans, people who are asking questions that start with "why", not "how". How can we get more advances in AI? Why? Why corporate power? Why so much poverty in the richest land? Why are cultural traditions being commercialized by a corporate culture? And the administration, which is basically a corporatist administration at Berkeley, doesn't like academic exercises asking the word "why".

Now, the law school rebuffed you, I understand, to the extent that you contacted some people, some students there and some faculty who they said they weren't interested in helping you. I think that this struggle is going to lead to some capricious activities by the administration. They're inebriated with their own power. I don't think they remember the Free Speech Movement back in the 1960s led by Mario Savio. They think they can get their way and they're digging in their heels. I think there should be a temporary restraining order filed in the court in Berkeley to open up the equitable arguments here. That's what a temporary restraining order can do. It can go into the law of equity and not be overly technical, and move to an arena that the administration is not in control of. So I'm going to keep trying to get someone at the law school or some people to help you, but you see, this is what happens when they corporatize a law school and they decide who gets in and who doesn't. And law schools are not known for letting in citizen advocates at a young age. You don't apply to law school on your vitae and say that you have organized X demonstrations and led Y marches and basically challenged the corporate order and the corporate power. So keep at it with the law schools. What else would you like to tell us about what you are

doing? The summer is coming, administrations often wait until students they leave and then they move in. But this is not going to happen, correct?

**Sandra Oseguera:** We are aiming for that not to happen to us. We are planning to stay into the summer until we get an answer and we get our library. Something that we are trying and we want to denounce in this space is that we've been outside trying to hold accountable the actors that are cutting the budgets for libraries. And this is Jeffrey MacKie-Mason, the head librarian of the University; Benjamin Hermalin, the vice provost of this university, Berkeley; and the chancellor, Carol Christ. We've been out there; we're looking for them as we try to get an answer. We found Jeffrey MacKie-Mason and have his response on tape that anthropology is not a priority of his. And that his priority has shifted to aiming to reduce the library system in this university. We also have him on tape saying that if we think that he cannot do his job that maybe he should resign. He said those words and the reality is that he's someone who should be fighting alongside us to get the funding we need to keep libraries open at UC Berkeley. So right now we are coming for them and trying to hold them accountable, but they keep running away from us.

**Ralph Nader:** That's why Caitlin Zaloom in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* titled her article, quote, "The Fight Over a Berkeley Library Is a Fight for the Future of Higher Education." Jesús, what would you like to say?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** I think that it has been really inspiring to see our occupation space make our anthropology library into the space of encounter and transformation that it is supposed to be. What I mean by that is that the administration, and the press to some degree, initially portrayed us as passively occupying—just sleeping and reading in the space. But the reality on the ground is that the library has become an organizing space. Those of us who are occupying also gather and from there we fan out and make plans to go talk to our fellow students, make plans to go confront these core decision makers and hold them accountable for what they are doing to our education, what they are doing to these essential public resources. I think that the way every day our movement grows stronger and students wake up to the fact that Carol Christ, Ben Hermalin and Jeff MacKie-Mason are enemies of public education.

**Ralph Nader:** These are the top administrators.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Yes. This is an inspiring site to see. It's inspiring to see studentstaking ownership over their education and really not being afraid to stand up for priorities in a public university that they feel are the right ones.

**Ralph Nader:** Former Governor Jerry Brown is supporting you. He taught a course at the Department of Anthropology once. How's the faculty doing on this?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** I think individual faculty members each have different attitudes and postures, not only about what they will hope to see from the space but also what they believe is achievable. I think though there is a general climate around faculty and anthropology graduate students that suggests that the occupation is really shifting what many people believe is possible. ~~And I think~~ Our coverage on the press, in addition to the growing numbers of students that are

showing up to our demonstrations and pickets, and I think all of these different things are symptoms of an underlying movement for the future of public education.

**Ralph Nader:** I understand that Chancellor Christ met with the faculty, tried to get them to agree to push you out and the faculty said, "We will not betray our students." I hope they hold to that standard.

**Sandra Oseguera:** Yes. That is exactly what I was going to bring up; the faculty has been offered the space to make it into a reading room and in exchange for asking us to leave. And when it was brought up to them was like, well, the occupation already won this for the department, because the space was never truly promised to us. We had to make a bid as a department. And that was too complicated. We weren't prioritized in that bid, so they wanted to frame it as a symbolic win of the occupation. However, we in the occupation, are not chasing symbolic wins. We want a fully functional library because that is what matters to us. And the overwhelming desire of the department, faculty and grad students is to keep the library open. What we know about what happened in that meeting is that the majority of the faculty there spoke up and clearly said that they would not betray, and are standing with our students. We are incredibly grateful for that because even though we are willing to continue on our own, having that support means a lot to us.

**Ralph Nader:** Imagine, the administration wants a reading room without the books and the materials and the documentary history of anthropology that would go to a warehouse in Richmond, California. Tell me this. Are graduates of the Department of Anthropology, Berkeley, who are now all over the country, contacting you? And are graduates of the University of California, generally, contacting you?

**Sandra Oseguera:** Yes.

**Ralph Nader:** I would urge them listening to this program to do so and if they do, what's the best way to contact you?

**Sandra Oseguera:** Well, they can always find us on Instagram. Our Instagram is @savetheucbanthrolibrary. And if not, they can reach us via email. My email is oss@berkeley.edu. And Jesús, do you want to share your email?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** My email is my first name dot last name, @berkeley.edu. J-E-S-U-S, first name. Last name, G-U-T-I-E-R-R-E-Z.

**Ralph Nader:** And what about the student newspaper, *The Daily Cal*, are they rising to the occasion?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** There was some coverage in the first week, but I haven't seen that many articles in recent days. Maybe that could just be me focusing on other things but...

**Ralph Nader:** Jesús and Sandra, give us the timeline here. When is the university graduation date? When are the students leaving campus? Is there a summer school where students take courses? What's the scene?

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Commencement is next week on Tuesday. And a lot of our undergraduates have already started leaving campus because this week is finals week. That said, even though people are starting to sort of dissipate for the summer, we've gotten a lot of expressions of interest from people who have told us, "Okay, now that I'm done with exams, I can come start sitting in with you guys." It's powerful stuff to see people just coming out and people who are just learning about this telling us like, "If I had known about this, I wouldn't have accepted this or that internship so I could stay here for the summer with you guys." So it's been really exciting to see how passionate students are even if the summer is obviously going to shake things up a bit. And yeah, all eyes right now are on Chancellor Carol Christ. In 1999, she sent in police to mistreat and choke protesters standing up in defense of the Ethnic Studies department here at UC Berkeley. Right now, what we are doing is not so different from what those students were doing 24, 25 years ago. So yeah, it's your move, Chancellor.

**Ralph Nader:** If there are any pro bono lawyers out there in the Bay Area willing to lend these valiant students a hand, they can benefit from legal advice. All I say is shame on the law school at University of California, Berkeley. The Lawyers Guild student chapter didn't even bother to respond to your request for help. I'll try to make some calls to some professors I know. But they've got their own arena their own protected legal library, their own corporate recruiters that come and interview so it's not surprising that they don't see the higher education dimension and what's at stake here, not just for the Department of Anthropology, but for public education at university level in general. Steve, David, Hannah?

**Steve Skrovan:** Let's just defer to Hannah here because she's a graduate of the Anthropology department at Berkeley. So go ahead, Hannah.

**Hannah Feldman:** Thank you. It's great to see you taking the university's advice and using the library as a reading room 24/7. It's great collaboration. I'm curious if you've seen a shift since the *New York Times* article came out in who's giving you attention. I think people who would have been sympathetic with the cause to begin with would be the people who care about the actual driving motivations that you have. But more mainstream normie people who don't really care as much about the core values of education, social sciences, and humanities. Are the people who responded because of the mainstream *New York Times* framing that is new?

**Sandra Oseguera:** Yes. So on one hand, we have received a lot of support in the form of donations and messages from researchers. Many researchers in STEM have reached out to us, also other scholars in other social sciences and humanities are being present. But it's very interesting because now we have people coming into the library and they are people that read the *New York Times* article three blocks away from here and while they were on their morning walk they came into the library. We also had a couple of tourists from Scotland, I think, and they entered the library, they read the article in the *New York Times* and they wanted to see what was happening. So we have had a lot of people just coming into the space after that article and

bringing cookies or brownies or coming with a lot of words of support. And that means a lot to us. It's been really meaningful.

**Hannah Feldman:** That's so great to hear. If the people in charge don't care about the students or the mission, maybe they'll care about their own reputation and the public shaming by fellow corporatists.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, we're out of time but I want to give you Sandra and Jesús a last opportunity to convey to the audience something that we may not have covered.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** I just think that one of the most important things that our listeners can and should take away of what is happening on the ground is that this is a broad coalition of people essentially fighting over the soul of the university, fighting over the priorities and the future of higher education. I think initially the news coverage really focused things on anthropology and the Anthropology department and the anthropology library and rightfully so. To us, this is an anthropological fight. But at the same time, a lot of the folks who are risking something, putting things on the line, staying the night with us night after night are people from the community, are graduate students and faculty from all kinds of other disciplines. We want to really convey to the world just how much bigger than just anthropology and social science this fight is. For many people, this is a continuation of the conversation started during the strike in the fall and it's a conversation that's fundamentally about whose university is this. I think time and history will tell but I think we occupiers have a very particular answer to that and the ball is at the administration's court.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, we've been talking with the Jesús Gutierrez and Sandra Oseguera, two of the leaders of the resistance to closing the great anthropological library at the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley. And once more, could either one of you give the contact number very slowly so people listening to this program can contribute their values, their ideas, their suggestions, their support. At stake here is whether a public university is going to become a trade school for corporations or it's going to provide ample space and support for the humanities and social sciences, without which, this country will turn into a corporate serfdom. It's on its way in that direction already. Please can you give the contact number once more? If you want to give any telephone numbers, too.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Listeners and supporters should feel free to call us at 510-561-4804 or text.

**Ralph Nader:** Say that once more.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** They may call or text to 510-561-4804.

**Ralph Nader:** And your email.

**Sandra Oseguera:** The email is [oss@berkeley.edu](mailto:oss@berkeley.edu).

**Ralph Nader:** Well, thank you both of you and thank your fellow students and your faculty and all the people in Berkeley who are supporting you. This is going to be a struggle backed by

stamina and broader support from all over the country. And it will be continued. We'll have you on again to report developments. Thank you again.

**Sandra Oseguera:** Thank you.

**Jesús Gutierrez:** Thank you.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez. We will link to Save UC Libraries at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Ralph, you wanted to address some feedback we got on some recent shows.

**Ralph Nader:** We get a lot of interesting feedback but this time we got two really wonderful letters, very thoughtful letters. The first one was by a lawyer, Erik Thueson, and in commenting on Shanin Specter's program, he made some very important points pointing out the nuances and what it takes to deal with medical malpractice cases that involve the elderly and not all that much financial damages because the elderly retired and they can't argue wage loss. And he made a lot of other statements. It's so valuable we're going to send it to Shanin Specter. But we want you to read it and it'll be up on our [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com).

The second one was quite remarkable. It was by a woman who had a career in sports. She started in Lebanon and she describes herself as a 67-year-old woman who was very active in sports and she was upset that we didn't talk about the role of female athletes in our program, which focused on baseball and all the hurdles that women and girls have had to overcome to get equal opportunity and equal treatment. Of course, we have been on top of Title IX for decades because one of our colleagues, Arthur Bryant, was one of the chief, if not the chief, litigators to enforce it on college and university campuses. She wrote a long letter full of so much information. I read it twice. A lot of it is her own experiences and she ends up by saying, quote, "I urge you to pay attention and not ignore 52% of the world's population." And we certainly will be paying attention to that in the future, but I want to thank you. Randa Baramki wrote that letter. And those of you who are interested in this subject can read it in its entirety on [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Thank you both for sending letters that I know took quite some time to compose.

**Steve Skrovan:** I want to thank our guests again, David Goodman, Sandra Oseguera and Jesús Gutierrez. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted.

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

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody. Tell your local radio and TV stations to report some victories once in a while, where the citizens rise up and drive back the forces of greed and exploitation.