

**NADER, from page 4**

the shelf, they don't get on the ground because the people are not shaping our political economy – the top 1 percent is.

That's why we call it "Breaking Through Power," because the shift of power from the few to many in all kinds of structured manners on all kinds of aspects of our society is what produces a functioning democracy.

If it isn't shifted, you have a deteriorating democracy that is largely dysfunctional, except for its ability to serve and subsidize the plutocracy and its allied oligarchy in Washington, otherwise known as the corporate state – the merger of Wall Street and Washington – with the government being turned against its own people.

**E.G.:** *Your book contains some examples of breaking through power, such as when activists took on Big Tobacco, and when they demanded a higher minimum wage and won. But at the end of the day, you can still buy cigarettes in every convenience store across America, and nowhere in the U.S. is a minimum wage equal to a living wage. If breaking through power is so easy, why have we failed to do so in a really meaningful way?*

**R.N.:** Because we've never reached the 1 percent threshold of people mobilizing in congressional and legislative districts to make those changes. Those changes were made by a fraction of 1 percent of the people.

A few thousand people challenged the tobacco industry, for example. What if a million people did that? A few thousand people picketed McDonalds and Wal-Mart. What if 200,000 people did that?

That's why I subtitled the book "It's Easier Than We Think," because what these few people have shown is that if they were joined by up to 1 percent of the people, say 2.5 million people who have Congress watch as their hobby, around an agenda that's supported by a majority of the people, it would prevail, no matter how powerful we think corporations are.

I wrote a book called "Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State," where I identified 24 major areas that are supported by left-right, but the ruling powers focus on what divides us, and divide-and-rule strategy has been working for over 2,000 years as a way of entrenching autocratic power.

When you get down to where people live, work and raise their families, the so-called polarization, ideological divide dissipates rapidly, because they're facing reality, and conservative families are defrauded just like liberal families. Their kids are exposed to bad water and air, just like liberal families.

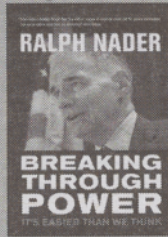
We regulated the auto companies with less than a couple thousand people working around the country on Congress. And as far as tobacco is concerned, you saw the part where the best estimate is just a few thousand people? But tobacco use now is down from 45 percent in 1964 to under 18 percent. So while you can still buy it, we don't want to drive it underground. Haven't we learned with marijuana and other drugs? You don't drive it underground. You create a criminal incarceration society. It's being treated as a health problem, which is what hardcore drugs should be treated as – a health problem.

**IF YOU GO****Ralph Nader at Powell's**

**What:** "Breaking Through Power" discussion and signing

**When:** Noon Saturday, Oct. 22

**Where:** Powell's City of Books, 1005 W Burnside St., Portland

**'BREAKING THROUGH POWER'**

In his new book, "Breaking Through Power," Ralph Nader lays out a blueprint for organizing citizens in each congressional district to engage with their U.S. representative and senator on a list of bipartisan-supported reforms.

But if you haven't read the book, there are other ways to get involved right away:

To get involved in lobbying Congress, Nader suggests visiting Citizen.org. It's the website for Public Citizen, a citizens interest group in Washington, D.C., that he founded in 1971.

**On campaign finance reform**

**What:** Honest Elections in Multnomah County Ballot Measure 26-184 benefit and information session

**When:** 7 p.m. Oct. 22; doors open at 6:30

**Where:** First Unitarian Church of Portland, main sanctuary, 1211 SW Main St.

**Cost:** Suggested donation of \$3 to \$20; no one will be turned away due to inability to pay

In the website's "Action Center," visitors can find an array of ways to get involved in current campaigns, such as Help Elizabeth Warren Change Wall Street and Tell Congress to End Forced Arbitration, by signing petitions, contacting their elected officials or sharing their stories.

Nader suggests people interested in advocating for full Medicare for all can start by visiting SinglePayerAction.org.

For periodic ways to get involved, visit Nader.org to sign up for his weekly column.



Ralph Nader testifies before Congress in 1966 about car safety. Nader's advocacy led to reforms of the automobile industry's safety practices.

**E.G.:** *"Breaking Through Power" lays out priorities that you say have left and right support, along with a blueprint and strategy for how to organize and break through this power. Are you attempting to start a movement, and if so, what role do you see independent media playing?*

**R.N.:** Well, the first role is showing up. Your media did not show up for "Breaking Through Power" (conference in Washington, D.C.). Eight days: four days in May, four days in September. They weren't there. Isn't that amazing?

Democracy Now! wasn't there, In These Times wasn't there, Mother Jones wasn't there, Nation magazine wasn't there. This is the major gathering of progressive civic leaders and doers on more issues and more reforms than has ever been brought together in American history – and they didn't show up.

So my first answer is: Why don't you show up?

You think the right-wing media wouldn't show up for a C-PAC convention every year? There's serious, serious deficiencies in liberal and progressive arenas in this country that prohibit even intimating an association with the word "movement." It's a farce. If you go and look at breakingthroughpower.org you'll see what I mean – 64 hours of videotaped presentations, people who actually change things, and none of the progressive media showed up. And of course the mass media didn't show up, the corporate media.

If you don't show up for the future of our country as you see it and agree with it, then there's not much more to discuss, and there's not many more recommendations that can be made in answer to your question.

**E.G.:** *Right now we're in an election cycle where both frontrunners have historically low approval ratings. Here in Oregon, it's expected 38 percent of voters won't vote for either of them. Where do we go from here?*

**R.N.:** It's not an election, it's a selection of two candidates in a two-party duopoly by the forces of plutocracy and oligarchy, so let's not call it an election.

An election implies choice, and when you have both parties – parties of war, parties of Wall Street, parties of police abuse, parties of the status quo – you don't have an election; you have a selection. Of course, it reached grotesque proportions in 2000 when Bush was selected by a 5-4 Scalia-led judicial coup d'état (he laughs).

There should be a binding "None of the Above" on the ballot so those 38 percent can vote "no confidence" in the whole sham, and if it wins, it requires new elections, for mayor or whatever, and new candidates, if a binding "None of the Above" wins. That has about 90 percent support when you explain it to people.

**E.G.:** *You also write about, in your book, and this is one of the priorities mentioned at the end: reclaiming the public airwaves. Why place so much emphasis on this when most people have subscription cable or get their news and entertainment from the internet? Why are public airwaves still important?*

**R.N.:** Because they draw community audiences. The internet draws individuated – Facebook, Instagram – cluttered audiences, No. 1.

No. 2: We own this property, the public airwaves, and the cable – we give the monopoly licenses. So why isn't there a cable channel for labor? Why isn't there a cable channel for students? Why isn't there a cable channel for consumers? For environmentalists? Why do they have 650 channels, and it's all junk, and it's so fractured, it's almost grotesque – you can't characterize it.

How come we don't have a cable channel on civic activity that's succeeding and improving one community, that other communities want to know about so we have best practices?

It's because our expectation level is at zero. We all grow up corporate unless we free ourselves, and so we have the low-expectation levels of corporatism. How many ads do kids see by the time they're 11? They're all ads by corporations. You don't see an ad for mass transit. You see ads for cars, horsepower, speed, glamour, style.

The progressive press is estranged from a critical, penetrating, realistic critique of our society. They don't show up locally. They don't show up nationally. They're in a rut of satisfying themselves with exposés and denunciation, and they never go to action.

If we propose ways that utility ratepayers could organize themselves, or insurance policy (holders) can organize themselves, etc., they would be bored. They're bored with electoral reforms.

Once in a while they'll mention instant-runoff voting and proportional representation – but they won't pursue it, and they won't publicize it where it exists, like in San Francisco, where they have instant-runoff voting.

They get high from exposing and denouncing – they love it. And they don't go