



Breaking Through Power: It's Easier Than We Think

Ralph Nader

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"Nader's assessment of how concentrated wealth and power undermine democracy is clear and compelling, but it's his substantive vision of how we ought to respond that makes *Breaking Through Power* essential reading. Written just before Donald Trump's Electoral College victory, Nader's latest book reads with even greater urgency now."--*Yes Magazine*

In *Breaking Through Power*, **Ralph Nader** draws from a lifetime waging--and often winning--David vs. Goliath battles against big corporations and the United States government. In this succinct, Tom Paine-style wake-up call, the iconic consumer advocate highlights the success stories of fellow Americans who organize change and work together to derail the many ways in which wealth manipulates politics, labor, media, the environment, and the quality of national life today. Nader makes an inspired case about how the nation can--and must--be democratically managed by communities guided by the United States Constitution, not by the dictates of big businesses and the wealthy few. This is classic Ralph Nader, a crystallization of the core political beliefs and commitments that have driven his lifetime of advocacy for greater democracy.

"Ralph Nader is the grand progressive of our time. We overlook his words at our own peril! This book is required reading."--**Cornel West**

"Ralph Nader's *Breaking Through Power* is a brilliant analysis of corporate power and the popular mechanisms that can be used to wrest back our democracy. No one has been fighting corporate domination longer, or understands it better, than Nader, who will go down in history not only as a prophet but an example of what it means to live the moral life. We disregard his wisdom and his courage at our peril."--**Chris Hedges**, Pulitzer-Prize winner and author of *Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt*

"Nader goes beyond delineating the problem and provides a critical prescription to battle the toxicity of unjust power--one that every individual can, and must, embrace."--**Nomi Prins**, author, *All the Presidents' Bankers*

"People are recognizing that our founding, fundamental values of fairness, justice, and opportunity for all--the very values that define our America--are being shoved aside to create an un-America of plutocracy and autocracy. Ralph Nader's new book *Breaking Through Power* provides progressive boat-rockers with inspiration and a plan for reclaiming America from the greedy Plutocrats and Fat Cats who think democracy is for sale to the highest bidder."--**Jim Hightower**

"I read Ralph Nader for the same reasons that I read Tom Paine. He knows what he thinks, says what he means, and his courage is a lesson for us all."--**Lewis Lapham**

"Nader insists on speaking up for the little people and backs his arguments and decent sentiments with hard facts."--*Publishers Weekly*

About **Ralph Nader**: Named by *The Atlantic* as one of the hundred most influential figures in American

history, and by *Time* and *Life* magazines as one of the most influential Americans of the twentieth century, Ralph Nader has helped us drive safer cars, eat healthier food, breathe better air, drink cleaner water, and work in safer environments for more than four decades. Nader's recent books include *Animal Envy*, *Unstoppable*, *The Good Fight*, and the bestseller, *Seventeen Traditions*. Nader writes a syndicated column, has his own radio show, and gives lectures and interviews year round.

Breaking Through Power: It's Easier Than We Think Details

Date : Published October 11th 2016 by City Lights Publishers (first published August 16th 2016)

ISBN : 9780872867055

Author : Ralph Nader

Format : Paperback 168 pages

Genre : Politics, Nonfiction, Social Movements, Social Justice

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Amanda says

Great concepts, but think these will be familiar to those interested in the subject. I thoroughly enjoyed the case studies / examples! Many of these were unfamiliar to me.

Patti says

If only many of the frustrated discouraged citizens would think about Nader's suggestions and take similar action, a difference could be made.

"No one needs to feel alone. An aura of anticipation, expectations, and overall excitement will arise if all these groups are connected with one another throughout the country. All can learn from one another's stories, ideas, proposals, and strategies. Moreover, in most congressional districts there are almost always some traditional, beleaguered organizations that could be convinced to join ranks and take up the local agenda. Even more, in some districts, there are civic associations, charities, unions, educators who would happily contribute their time, expertise and donations. These groups are likely to have affiliations with national groups headquartered in Washington D.C.. Remember: there are only 535 legislators in Congress and one person in the White House. We are in the millions."

Elbrozzie says

Based on the book's title, I thought I'd get some tips on how to break through power. I didn't.

Even though I have great admiration for Mr. Nader and the work he's done, Breaking Through Power was a boring and uninformative polemic.

Jennifer Abdo says

This is a really really short book for everyone fed up with the current two parties with concrete steps to take, some short term, some long term by a consummate activist for public safety and people power through the decades. Essential reading for an activist and informative for everyone else. He talks about the corporate takeover of Presidential Debates and the Republican and Democratic Parties, how corporations get away with paying no taxes and doing things average people get jailed for regularly. I didn't realize airline compensation for overbooking was won in a lawsuit, not given out of an understanding of good business practices or that safety regulations, lost baggage compensation, ban on post purchase price hikes were all a result of advocacy, not a sense of moral obligation by corporations either. Another surprise was the 30 year Peace Park Anti Nuclear vigil by Concepcion Picciotto- I had no idea that went on until recently.

Towards the end is really great- he lists several people, including our own Rev. Barber, who motivated

people to reclaim power. And then he moves to explaining a bunch of steps that people on both sides of the political divide have historically been widely in favor of- taking back the airwaves, giving the power to declare war back to Congress, reining in Wall Street, assist community business, jail corporate criminals.

The big finish is encouraging the binding none of the above option (NOTA) so that we can express our vote of no confidence. Then we'd get new candidates and more involved populace. In many elections, I think this would have sent an important message and empowered more people. So many people check out of politics because both choices are the same essentially or they dislike both options. We need a way to send that message to the top instead of being forced to say yes to something we can't necessarily get behind in order to have a voice. I don't know if this is definitively the way, but Nader's got a lot of interesting ideas to consider.

Paul says

Here is the latest from America's foremost consumer advocate. Nader has been fighting for the rights of ordinary Americans for 50 years.

Corporations have no problem sending armies of lobbyists to Washington to get tax and environmental laws written in their favor. The lobbyists are also there to get Congress to stop any bill which might even slow down the quest of the corporations for more profits. These same corporations also take advantage of the tax laws to, on paper, move profits to a foreign subsidiary in a country with more favorable tax rates. They can also, on paper, move their headquarters to a PO Box in some tax haven like Ireland, Bermuda or the Cayman Islands. That could reduce their federal tax bill to zero, or even make them eligible for a tax refund from Uncle Sam.

The revolving door between Wall Street and Washington is well known. A top executive at Goldman Sachs, for instance, might spend a couple of years in Washington supposedly to regulate the financial sector. When his "public service" is done, his old office at Goldman Sachs will be waiting for him, or he might stay in Washington, and become a lobbyist. According to the 1872 Mining Act, corporations can purchase mining rights to vacant land for a whole five dollars per acre. If they should happen to discover millions of dollars in gold, silver or other minerals on that land, they keep all the money.

What can be done? Nader says that less than one percent of the American people started the movement to abolish slavery, or started the civil rights or environmental movements. The issue does not have to be a "big" one, like immigration or nuclear weapons; it can be something in your state, or town. Get some people together, and have everyone to donating a certain amount of money, to hire full time staff, and volunteer a certain number of hours per year. Examples are included in the book.

This book is short, easy to read, and deserves more than five stars. Nader speaks for the average American, and backs up his arguments with facts. This is extremely highly recommended.

Cristian Strat says

I mistook the book for a general take on how to confront political power structures systematically. It's not; I

was wrong.

Half the book reads like a political speech to galvanize activists in the abstract ("It's easier than you think!"); the other half is Nader pitching his own particular initiatives.

Memorable quote: "I am not optimistic by nature. I am optimistic by effort".

Thomas Garcia says

Ralph Nader concisely and eloquently lambastes power corruption in the United States using numerous local, national, and international examples. Perhaps the most illuminating parts of the book arise from chapter 3, "How the System is Rigged," which abounds with historical and contemporary instances of power abuse. However, the book ends on an optimistic note, beginning with Nader's list of prominent activists and change agents in chapter 4, "Why Democracy Works." Arguing that even one person can enact meaningful change, he advocates the creation of "Citizens Summons" groups to wrestle power away from government and corporations and granting agency back to the people.

This book serves as a introductory survey into pressing issues facing the American people, ranging from rigged court systems to the two-party duopoly. Significantly, it also provides a call to action.

I encourage readers to also pick up Robert Reich's Saving Capitalism to obtain an even broader scope on 21st century US political issues.

Sharon says

The bulk of this book analyses how power has become concentrated in corporations and established politicians throughout US history, especially in the past few decades. Parts of the book claim to apply to people anywhere on political spectra, but the way Nader writes about profit motives and private industry will be alienating to conservatives. I'm also taken aback that he frames direct democracy as uncontroversial. Some of us in California think it can be pretty damaging. It's often ineffectual anyway because better-funded media campaigns make such a huge difference when voters are overloaded and can't / don't want to research every proposition.

I strongly disagree with the subtitle's claim that "it's easier than we think." I came away from this book thinking that everything in it sounds incredibly difficult and just about hopeless. 1% of the population putting in 300 hours of civic work per year is a high bar. Then again, the last portion of the book calls for a grassroots movement in every congressional district that meets with members of Congress in person to demand change. This was published in September 2016; by the end of January 2017, Indivisible and other groups have begun doing something similar.

Catie says

"The evidential truth is this: it is the initiatives of deeply caring regular people that provide the firmament for our democracy."

"My point is that expectation levels--what Abraham Lincoln called the all-important 'public sentiment'--need to change in order to win back control of society from the One Percenters and the corporations that will continue to contaminate the Earth until it is poisoned, let it warm until it is barren, and who will lie until they are caught and brought to justice. Expectation levels need to rise, and public sentiments need to be stoked to enact policy that moves us closer to the kind of society we deserve."

"a central goal of movement leadership is to create more leaders, not more followers."

Mark Patro says

Citizen lead democracy

This short book is another on the topic of "What a single citizen can do." There are many ideas and many reforms suggested in this book. Seemingly, because it was written two years before the election of Trump, it is out of date with regards to the number of people protesting and getting involved to "fix" our government. The seeds out Nader's ideas are still very relevant.

Jennifer Talarico says

Nader describes our corrupt government and then gives strategies to change it. I had a difficult time getting through the depressing realities before reaching the more positive tone in the last third of the book.

Hallie says

An excellent source for inspiration to participate in one's own democracy. I'm motivated!

Tawbicky says

Using his methods to make the changes I want to see on the local level

Randall Wallace says

Ralph sees a disengaged America where relaxation time now largely means time to be "spectators of celebrity lifestyles, scandals, crime and sports." We've traded democracy in to become a "society of spectators". Walter Cronkite said publically back in 1991 at Harvard that in political debates, "the candidates participate only with the guarantee of a format that defies meaningful discourse." How can the system be fair when "98% of sitting members of congress have accepted campaign money from the thirty most notorious tax avoiding companies." Now a single high schooler working at McDonalds contributes more to the "upkeep of the nation" than Boeing, Verizon, and General Electric combined. And the Democrats "Tough on Crime" stance has long since filled our prisons and created effectively one pro-corporate party with two

factions. “Timid supplications for justice will not solve the problem, we’ve got to massively confront the power structure” – Martin Luther King (1967)

Michael Kitchen says

This tiny book is more like a long, four-part essay, on how corporate power has taken over our government, and how we can take it back. The four sections - 'Plutocracy of Maximums, Democracy of Minimums,' 'To Organize Is to Initiate Resistance and Change,' 'How the System is Rigged,' and 'Why Democracy Works,' - provides clear and concise details and history, explains how our system of governance got to this point, and what we can do to take it back.
