

# An Outlaw in My Heart

## A Political Activist's User's Manual

Stephen Gaskin

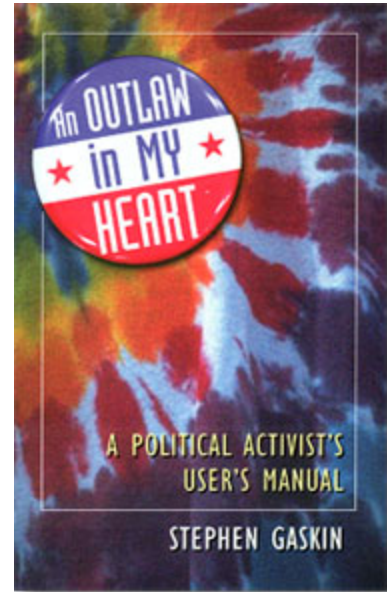
### From Chapter 1, "Why I Want to Be President"

I want to be President because the country that I've lived in for 65 years is not as free as it was when I was born, and it's gotten less free all my life. I still believe in the Constitution that I learned about in the third grade, and I would like to see that be what we live under, and not this patched-together thing that the corporations have bought.

The large corporations are in the business of buying the world. Once they've bought it, they will do what they please, and it's up to the American government to stop them because they are the only force that is big enough to do that. America is the only country that has a large enough and rich enough electorate to cause our government to listen to us at all.

The corporations have no business forming a world trade organization. The governments of the world need to get together and make trade agreements for the people, and regulate world trade for the benefit of all the people of the world. If I were President, I would make the corporations operate in the public interest, and would pass laws stopping the big mergers and forcing corporations to act in the best interest of the people and the planet. The thing is, the biosphere is one living organism and it is deathly sick. We are killing miles and miles of it by the day, and we have not caught on yet. We can pass high-sounding resolutions, but when it comes down to it, the corporations that own the forests get to cut them and burn them if they want to. This sort of thing has got to stop.

I want to run because I want to send a message to the Democrats and the Republicans that they are not the only parties out there and they do not represent a large part of the American people. With my campaign, I want to show



that somebody without any money and without being backed up by any corporations can go out and on the truth of ideas, try to give heart to the youth to let them understand that it is not totally lost; it's still up for grabs, and there's a lot they can do.

We have to get the politicians to start talking about the real issues that are tearing up people's lives, and be big enough and vocal enough to get some real commitments from them about cleaning up the environment, clearing out our prisons, and making it possible for people to have real freedom in this country, like we're supposed to be guaranteed under the Constitution.

The war on drugs as it's being played out in the U.S. these days is a concerted, organized attack on a minority of the population that would itself be a small country—maybe 25, 35, or 40 million people. The Constitution is being damaged severely by this; we're losing all the protections from government abuse and we're turning into a police state. The man we have made our drug czar can not only countermand U.S. Customs regulations about what can be imported, he can start wars with other countries and send troops into other countries. We have more troops in Colombia than we had in Vietnam in the mid-'60s.

The war on drugs is not the issue itself, but it's a symptom of the general unresponsiveness and "bought-outness" of our government. It shows this government is not of the people, by the people and for the people, which Proposition 215 proves. People in California have been arrested and given a hard time for abiding by Proposition 215, which was a medical marijuana use referendum passed by the electorate, and if there's anything holy in democracy it ought to be a referendum passed by the electorate.

There's hardly any Left in this country anymore, unless you count the marijuana legalization movement. This movement is one of the most authentic progressive campaigns that can now be found, a group of concerned people from all cultures bound together by their belief that the laws against marijuana are unreasonable to the point of insanity. These hundreds of thousands of people are affected by the drug war in the same way that the youth of the country were once affected by Vietnam. In those days, everybody knew somebody who'd been drafted, was going to Vietnam, or had been killed or injured. Now everybody knows somebody who's on trial, going to jail on mandatory minimums, or maybe even doing life.

That brings me to the young new voters out there. The only voting pool that I know of with enough people who are idealistic enough to make actual changes in the political landscape are the youth. And I want them to come out and make Richard Nixon sorry he gave them the vote. I want them to come out and turn the world around because they are the only force that can do it. I want them to say to America, "We're not consumers; we are the people for whom the world was made, and for whom it should be run."

I want the youth to come out massively, and I want them to vote for alternative candidates, like me, or alternative parties, like the Green Party. My platform is about as forward-thinking, as inclusive, as fair and as good a starting place as you'll find for turning this thing around. So my message to young people of voting age is register to vote, register Green, and educate yourself.

We, the inheritors of the country and the world, now have our turn to band together peacefully in public, register to vote, and make politicians pay attention to what we are saying. This is our right, and it is our obligation.

That's why it's so important to get alternative parties on the ballot in as many states as possible. We have to let the Democrats and the Republicans know that they are not the only game in town, and that there's a much better game being played over on the other side of the fence. I'm hoping that my presence in a presidential race can attract first-time voters, disillusioned political dropouts, and a bunch of other people who can help make a big noise in an election.