

For more than 27 years the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence. The Olympia FOR's program airs on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. Each program airs **every Monday at 1:30 p.m. and every Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. and every Thursday at 9:00 p.m. for a full month.** This creates **THREE OPPORTUNITIES EVERY WEEK** to watch each program.

You can also watch the program described below (and about 100 of our previous interview programs and special programs at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org, after they have debuted on TCTV. Simply click the **TV programs** link, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch. Many of our website's monthly TV program listings also include a .pdf document describing the program.

APRIL 2014

“Strengthen Democracy with a Community Rights Ordinance (CRO)”

by Glen Anderson, producer and host of this TV series

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's April 2014 TV program takes a fresh look at democracy – specifically, how to make democracy more real and more vibrant by practicing it at the local level. We'll examine the growing movement for vibrant grassroots democracy through local efforts called “**Community Rights Ordinances**” – **CROs**.

Our TV program's three guests help us understand Community Rights Ordinances – and how we might adopt one locally, perhaps focusing on a specific concern such as sustainable local food.

- Kai Huschke came from Spokane to be a guest on this program. Kai has been very active with a nationwide non-profit organization that has been promoting the CRO movement.
- John Pearce also has a background in the CRO movement. John is a writer, facilitator, instructional designer, and consultant to businesses across North America.
- TJ Johnson is a former member of the Olympia City Council who worked before, during and since then to improve our local community in many ways. For several years he has worked very hard on local food sustainability.

People know that democracy in the US has been weakened and corrupted over the years. The problems go far beyond rich people and corporations buying elections. Lobbyists pressure Congress and state legislatures to write laws that protect big business at the expense of consumers, workers and the environment. The perceptive author William Greider wrote on page 309 of *The Soul of Capitalism*, “[B]oth political parties are now adept at enacting hollow laws that appear to serve large public purposes but are actually wired with special-interest traps that guarantee continued evasion and meager results.”

Lobbyists also pressure presidents, governors, and Executive Branch agencies to do the same with the regulations they write. As a result, the system is stacked against the broad public

interest. When environmental groups or other public interest non-profit organizations challenge abuses, they are severely limited by the laws and regulations that only tinker around the edges but are designed to fail to protect the broad public interest.

Instead of playing a game that is stacked against us, the CRO movement begins with our **fundamental rights** and builds from there. Our nation's founders affirmed that people create governments to protect our rights, so our fundamental rights include real and profound self-government, protection of the public good, sustainable ecosystems, and other widely recognized human rights. The CRO movement depends on "We the People" to practice grassroots democracy.

The CRO movement urges voters in local communities – or local government bodies – to pass clear and enforceable Community Rights Ordinances that articulate and claim these fundamental rights, and to protect them from encroachment or violation by businesses, especially those based outside of the community.

A number of communities have passed CROs to protect themselves from fracking, from giant livestock holding areas, and other abuses. People in the greater Olympia area are considering pushing for a county-level or city-level CRO to protect our fundamental rights in some food-related areas, such as protecting rights for local people to grow healthy food or the rights of consumers to access to healthful and sustainably grown food from local producers. In 1999 the United Nations passed the "International Bill of Human Rights," which affirmed that every person in the world has the right to be free from hunger.

The best source of information nationwide is the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF), www.celdf.org, which is based in Pennsylvania.

Local organizers in Thurston County are working on a local CRO and might arrange with CELDF to conduct a weekend "Democracy School" in the Olympia area. You can visit the local website, www.communityrightssouthsound.org or send e-mail to info@communityrightssouthsound.org

Louis Brandeis, a very wise Supreme Court Justice from 1916 to 1939, said this: **"We can have a democratic society or we can have the concentration of great wealth in the hands of the few. We cannot have both."**

Now is the time to reclaim our rights and build a more real democracy.