

Every month since February 1987 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 several times every week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's **current schedule** at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and more than 160 of our previous monthly interview programs and also many special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the "TV programs" link, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch. Many of our website's TV program listings also include links to documents summarizing the program in Word and/or .pdf format.

MARCH 2017

"Protect America's Best Values from Attack"

→ Watch this interview and/or read this thorough summary and a resource list at the "TV Programs" part of www.olympiafor.org

by Glen Anderson, this TV series' producer and host

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's March 2017 TV program helps our viewers and our nation resist the attacks that are being inflicted upon our nation's people, environment, and democracy. We can withstand this storm if we **stay grounded in the best values that our nation has affirmed since the 1770s** – and if we **act upon** our best values to **protect all of our people, our environment, and our democracy**.

Furthermore, this kind of grounding can also help us avoid getting stuck in reactive, defensive mode. Grounding in good values can actually empower ourselves to make progress. Most Americans want to make progress for human rights, our environment and democracy. We can help Americans build upon our nation's best values, set bold goals such as getting big money out of politics and raising the minimum wage to \$15, and build grassroots movements to overcome the repression and accomplish our bold goals.

Three guests help us explore this topic. All three are local community members who have worked on a variety of issues and activities consistent with this theme:

- **Dr. Karen Johnson** has a Ph.D. in Urban Services. She is a founder and key contact person for the Black Alliance of Thurston County. She is an ordained minister, a workplace culture strategist, and a coach for executives. She is perhaps best known for her ability to inspire people and achieve results.

- **Mustafa Mohamedali** is a native of Kenya in East Africa with family roots in India. He has lived and worked in ten countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. He speaks four languages fluently and can get by in four more. He is a licensed professional engineer and certified project manager. He is a board member of the Islamic Center of Olympia and works actively in many interfaith activities, including Interfaith Works of Thurston County and the Jewish-Muslim Listening Group. For this interview, he is speaking as an **individual**, not on behalf of Olympia's Islamic community.

- **Tyra Lindquist** has worked for decades in our local community to work for human rights with special emphasis on helping women and others who have suffered from domestic violence. She and her humane values support a wide variety of other humane and progressive issues and activities. She is highly respected in our community and among people who work on various issues and activities.

Now is a good time to examine our best values and act upon them:

During the 2016 presidential election campaign, we heard a lot of ignorant and mean-spirited rhetoric. Since

Inauguration Day in January 2017, many people's worst fears have been confirmed:

- We are seeing blatant attacks on women, Muslims, scientists and journalists.
- The new administration is appointing people who are ignorant of – or hostile to – the governmental agencies they are being appointed to manage.
- The new administration is appointing billionaires and corporate executives to positions where they will profit through conflicts of interest at a level of corruption never before seen in U.S. history.

Many Americans are overwhelmed and don't know how to proceed. When Tyra and I were talking on the phone to prepare for this interview, Tyra appreciated the opportunity and said, "This is an opportunity for people to clarify our values." She pointed out, "Fear can inhibit good thinking," and she suggested that people use the crisis as an opportunity to calmly examine our values and proceed with critical thinking.

I was happy that she immediately grasped the concept and flavor of the TV interview we'd be conducting. During the interview she said that many people who had not been paying much attention to public policy issues have suddenly been shocked and awakened, so now – because so much is being thrown at us in so many ways – many people have started paying close attention to what's going on around us and what their own personal values really are.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness:

When Dr. Karen Johnson and I were on the phone to prepare for this interview, I asked her what she wanted to talk about, and she immediately replied, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." She said – with all the shootings and other violence – does our nation really value life? With so much oppression and repression, does our nation really value liberty? With so many people incarcerated, unemployed, and underemployed, what does "the pursuit of happiness" really mean nowadays? She affirmed that in order for humans to continue on this earth, we really must pursue "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for everyone.

Likewise, when Mustafa and I were on the phone to prepare for the interview, he also said he wanted to talk about "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." He explained that this is why he came as an immigrant to the

U.S. These values are important not only for immigrants, for Muslims, for African Americans, for Jews, for LGBTQ people, and so forth, but these values "really speak to the heart and soul of our nation." These values speak to our Constitutional values.

So, for example, when the U.S. put Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II, people are right to ask their grandparents, why did you allow that to happen? In the same way, our grandchildren will ask us what we did to stop the gross injustices of our current time. We must speak up.

Integrity, truth, honesty:

When preparing for the interview, Karen also affirmed protecting three other values: integrity, truth, and honesty. I asked her why we need to protect these now, and she took a deep breath before answering that when the administration asserts what it called "alternative facts" instead of the truth, it is hard to trust the administration. She called for "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." She asserted that honesty is a necessary foundation "for relationships, for community, and for society." Without honesty, there is "no standard for excellence." Now is a time for people to stand up "for integrity, honesty and truth."

I said that when I was a kid in the 5th or 6th grade I felt a strong sense of individual responsibility to act upon my beliefs. Karen's message of integrity, honesty and truth should call upon each of us to ask ourselves, "Am I willing to stand up for that?" Now is a time when forces that are the opposite of these values are beating down on us, so now is a time for each of us to take responsibility to act on our best values.

Karen agreed. Now is "the time to embrace our authentic self." "What do I really believe, and am I acting in accordance with my beliefs?"

Glen agreed that this is a matter of integrity. The root word behind *integrity* refers to wholeness, the number one.

Humane values in the Islamic faith:

The Islamic faith is grounded in humane values. Mustafa said that he does a lot of interfaith work, and that he is a professional engineer. He said if you're going to

build a bridge, you've got to have a really good foundation. When he builds bridges across cultures and across faith traditions, he urges people to know and understand each other's values. These values are the foundation across which bridges can be built.

Muslim Americans share the same values and aspirations as other Americans, because all of us appreciate our constitutional rights, and these are consistent with Muslim values and the values of other faiths.

His insight reminded me of a conversation I had many years ago with another member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. She is Jewish, had earned a Ph.D. in interfaith studies, who was working for the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Some of her relatives had been killed in the Holocaust, and she had profound faith-based values for social justice. She said that some very deep core values are common across all major religions, but sometimes they have different words for those values.

Instead of the widespread myths and fears about Islam, let's understand Islam honestly and truthfully:

The values that all three guests have been working with for many years are under attack now.

Also under attack is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects people's right to practice their religion without governmental interference. Unfortunately, many people are quite ignorant about religions that are different from their own, and many people turn their ignorance into fear and anger and even violence. Nowadays this translates into hurting Muslims.

Mustafa summarized some basic facts about Islam. He said that all faith traditions share basic concepts of goodness, charity, helping people in need, and peaceful coexistence with other religions. If a religion did not have those care values, they would not have been successful over this long period of time.

There are between 1.2 billion and 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and about 3 million Muslims in the U.S.

Muslims flow from the same tradition as Jews and Christians. They refer to all three faiths as "People of the Book," because they have drawn from the same prophets in Jewish scriptures and Christians' Bible. Muslims recognize all of these prophets and Jesus, and they especially appreciate Mohammed, who was the last prophet with God's latest and most refined revelation. All three faiths

draw from the same values and refined them as a natural progression over time. From Adam to Abraham and all the rest, more and more revelation was revealed until Mohammed received the rest of it.

I added that we all have the same God, but different languages used different words ("God" in English, "Dios" in Spanish, "Allah" in Arabic, and so forth. Mustafa agreed. He said that Arabic translations of the Christian Bible do indeed refer to God as "Allah," because that's the translation of "God" into the Arabic language.

Mustafa said that our local mosque has members whose first names are the same as many of the biblical prophets.

Tyra mentioned that – especially now that anti-Muslim emotions are being vented in our nation, a good number of local Olympia area people have reached out in friendship and support with our local Muslim neighbors. The Islamic Center of Olympia has invited people to visit and has been very welcoming and friendly. She said that when she visited, she experienced love, caring, community and connection – all positive values. Instead of feeling fear, reach out and things get better.

Mustafa invited people to get to know Muslim people as friends and visit the Islamic Center.

I said this is one of the friendliest congregations I've ever found. I also said that if you want to join a congregation that has the best potluck dinners, join the mosque because they have the best food – and the most diverse.

Don't be afraid of people who are different from yourself:

America's best values include appreciating diversity – appreciating our nation's rainbow of religious heritages, national origins, and other kinds of differences. Real Americans know and appreciate diversity. We're all in this together! All three of our guests have taken positive actions to help people overcome fears and support various kinds of diversity.

Race:

For centuries Americans have done many bad things about racial differences, but also some good things. Racial bias and injustice are deeply embedded in many aspects of our nation's functioning. Karen recalled our previous discussion about integrity and said this means living

consistently with our values. So if we believe in racial justice, we should look for ways to fix the racial biases that are built into our lives and our national cultural systems. She urged using love to displace hatred.

Karen said that her ancestors were brought to the U.S. against their own will. The U.S. is not a “post-racial society,” despite having elected Barack Hussein Obama. None of us had any say over what color our skin would be, so this is no basis for ranking people. We must combat institutional racism and also the unwitting racism in our thoughts, hearts, actions and beliefs. The first step is to be honest about that. She said “the black-white issue” is “really a false narrative.” Now is the time to get healed from that.

She said that many great empires were not conquered from the outside but rather collapsed because of internal problems. The Trump election and racism and sexism should make it clear that the U.S. is running that risk of internal collapse. She also said that some of those empires – immediately preceding their collapse – were pre-occupied with entertainment and fascinated by entertainment.

She organized the Black Alliance of Thurston County in response to the police shooting of two unarmed young African Americans in May 2015. The Olympia police chief recognized the need for the community to discuss institutional racism, so he asked her to bring together some African American leaders for that purpose. Her group of local black leaders recognized the need to promote self-love within the local Black community instead of negative perceptions and self-defeating mentalities. Black Americans are clearly resilient and capable to have survived this long under such extremely difficult conditions, so the BATC is building upon positive qualities within the Black community.

They also are pushing the Washington State Legislature to change the law that makes it extremely hard to hold police accountable for shooting people unnecessarily. They appreciate competent law enforcement and feel a need to fix this serious problem. (Washington State’s law is the worst in the nation for making it hard to hold police accountable for unnecessarily shooting people.)

We are a nation of immigrants:

I said that except for Karen’s ancestors, all of the rest of us in this conversation came from people who chose to come here. I mentioned that all four of my immigrant grandparents came to the U.S. after 1900, were poor, and

did not speak any English at all. But they were white with Christian backgrounds, and were able to look like they belonged, so they were able to blend in and thrive.

One of America’s favorite self-images reflects another aspect of diversity. We are proud to be a nation of immigrants. Inscribed on the Statue of Liberty is Emma Lazarus’s quotation:

“Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these, the homeless, tempest tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Mustafa said that the model whose face is the image for the Statue of Liberty was an Arab woman.

He also said that members of the Islamic Center of Olympia include 40 different ethnicities. All people from all ethnicities and economic classes pray side-by-side. This is probably the most diverse congregation in the Puget Sound area. Mecca during the Hajj is more diverse, of course.

Respect women’s dignity, autonomy, rights:

Tyra has worked since the 1970s for women’s rights, autonomy and dignity. The Women’s Movement was large then, and they were hoping for major progress very soon because the Women’s Movement was so large. Certainly she has drawn upon positive values – and a solid commitment to gender equality – to carry out and sustain that work now decades later. She was shocked that someone who disparaged women so horribly could get elected. She had expected more Americans to support gender equity more strongly.

But on the day after the Inauguration, many millions of women – and men – poured out into the streets to assert the value of gender equity. Many women who had never taken such a public action before joined this gigantic act of resistance to injustice.

I said this is “like a hinge point,” and if we are savvy and work strategically and boldly “we can turn a lot of things around.” (We discussed this later in the interview.)

LGBTQ equality and fairness:

America’s best values include fairness to all kinds of people. Increasingly in recent years, a growing majority

of Americans have recognized the need to be fair to people who are not simply men and women with straight sexual orientations. The reality is that people are much more diverse than the public had thought. Now a majority of Americans say we must be fair to all of these folks. This very recent breakthrough draws upon the American value that we must treat all kinds of people with fairness and equality.

Protect all people from oppression:

All four of us have worked to protect people from various kinds of oppression. Americans need to keep remembering that we're all in this together. I appreciate what Martin Luther King said in his 1963 Letter from a Birmingham Jail: **"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."** Likewise I also appreciate what Fannie Lou Hamer, a great African American civil rights leader from Mississippi said in a 1971 speech to the National Women's Political Caucus. She said that besides changes for black people, **"the changes we have to have in this country are going to be for liberation of all people – because nobody's free until everybody's free."**

Increasingly now, more people are recognizing that all of our struggles for social and economic justice are interconnected. Your struggle is my struggle, and my struggle is your struggle. Together we can generate enough "people-power" to turn things around.

Tyra affirmed Fannie Lou Hamer as an amazing role model. She was an ordinary person, but when she went to a microphone she expressed the most amazing truths and values from deep in her soul. Tyra said that ordinary people will increasingly find themselves at microphones and express their souls in articulate ways.

Democracy:

Karen emphasized democracy as a great American value that we must work to improve. I believe that democracy must be honest, fair, and accountable to voters. But that is being weakened now in several ways.

Karen recommended some ways to strengthen democracy. Especially we must reform the campaign finance system, so legislators can focus on issues. If they could focus on issues instead of on fundraising or pressure from donors to campaigns, they would pass better laws.

Karen said that when we fix problems we help more people than just the specific constituency. For example, when some public bathrooms were widened to accommodate wheelchairs, that also helps people who are big and need more space. Fixing problems – including systemic social, economic, educational and other problems – to serve one constituency, also helps other constituencies too. Just like we said a few minutes ago, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. So "if we fix it for the least of these, we fix it for all," she said.

Legislative reform must include electing more diverse people to the legislature.

The U.S. Constitution is based on the separation of powers between three distinct branches of government – Executive, Legislative, and Judicial – but now the same forces control all three and manipulate them to serve their narrow interests instead of the broad public interest. Most Americans do not want what the government is now imposing upon us. And genuine conservatives should oppose the dangerous concentration of power that Trump is grabbing and exercising through dictatorial executive orders.

Environment:

Most of our conversation thus far has been about various aspects of human rights. Many of our nation's best values affirm the importance of human rights. But also our nation's best values include caring for the natural world – the environment – God's Creation, so the environment is a faith-based value too.

Guns:

Karen is working for state legislation that would better regulate police use of deadly force. She identified some humane values that support legislation to reduce the likelihood that police would unjustifiably shoot people. The law we're promoting would make it possible to hold police officers accountable for unjustifiably shooting people. By providing accountability, it would also allow the public to better trust their police departments, and it would make our communities safer. It would also help good police officers who want to uphold their departments' best professional standards.

Tyra, Mustafa and Glen are active with a new local non-profit organization, Thurston Gun Sense, which is

working to reduce gun violence, including suicides and homicides.

Other issues:

Positive values could uphold better work for a variety of other issues, including education, health care, economic justice, reducing the gap between the rich and everyone else. We need to use our best values to work on many other issues.

Fear:

I noted that several times during this conversation we have mentioned fear. Fear was whipped up during the 2016 presidential campaign, and fear is being promoted now after the inauguration. Fear is trying to separate people from each other – and fear can push people toward taking away other people’s rights. If I’m afraid of you, I’ll find some way to push you down and keep you away. But if I’m not afraid of you, then we can be allies and work together on things that you and I both agree on.

Decent people can do several things to resist and overcome fear – at individual, community and national levels. Mustafa expressed sincere appreciation for the Olympia community’s graciousness and support for local Muslims. Local Jews and Christians have been especially supportive. People have created opportunities for Muslims to speak to the larger community.

He suggested that people get to know people of various minority groups, whether Muslims or other kinds of people who are in the minority in our society. This can dispel fear and create friendships. Enjoy conversations with diverse kinds of people. Also, then we can use our first-hand experiences and friendships to protect them from abuse by other people, abuse by media, abuse by governments, and so forth. If a neighbor or co-worker says something ignorant or cruel, speak up in that personal relationship too. Our own personal experiences of friendship empowers us to speak up and take positive actions.

He also suggested supporting organizations that protect people from abuse. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), and the Muslim Legal Fund for America are examples of good organizations to support.

Mustafa invited us to trust in God to help us through this. I added that we should not expect God to do all of the work, but that all of us need to take actions to help fix the problems, and the guests agreed.

The Trumpists are throwing a lot at us all at once. Naomi Klein’s book *The Shock Doctrine* is relevant:

We taped this March 2017 TV program on February 9, less than 3 weeks into the new administration. Many people have expressed alarm about the extreme appointments and extreme executive orders affecting us in many ways.

Tyra said that many things are being thrown at us every day. One day they threaten our health care, the next day they try to scare us about immigrants, and the next days are “fear of this and fear of that” and proposals to sell our public lands and weaken our national parks, and so forth. When we are threatened on so many fronts, it’s easy to freak ourselves out so we’d “lose our individual capacities for creative thinking” or for any kind of action, so we’d want to simply “crawl under the bed and hide.”

Tyra said that to resist the onslaught we need to calm ourselves, hang out with one another, enjoy our friendships, and take collective actions. When we join together with many others (*e.g.*, Olympia’s recent 10,000-member Women’s March), “our power comes back to us.”

Her experience from decades of work helping survivors of domestic violence has included learning about what brain science teaches us about people’s resilience for overcoming trauma.

Also, Tyra said we need to take good care of ourselves, as individuals, as neighborhoods, and at larger levels. She affirmed Angela Davis’s recent talking and writing in support of “radical self-care.” This can help us as individuals and communities to promote critical thinking and problem solving and love.

I mentioned that when they are throwing so many things at us day after day, this made me think of Naomi Klein’s brilliantly insightful and readable book, *The Shock Doctrine*. The author points out that dictators and other tyrants throw many things at the people and try to overwhelm people with “shock and awe” in order to immobilize the people’s will to resist and force them into submission. We need to recognize, “Oh, that’s the game they’re playing on us, and we’re not going to fall for that.” We must respond not only with overt organizing but also with the approaches that Tyra advocated just now.

Pay attention to the big issues, and work on these:

Instead of a president who carefully develops thoughtful policy discussions, we have one who “tweets” very short messages that seem designed to attack, inflame and provoke. This seriously undermines thoughtful media coverage, thoughtful discussion, and thoughtful public policy. Some folks have suggested that Americans should not let those “tweets” and other emotional outbursts distract us from the very big issues and decisions that are actually being worked on without adequate attention or scrutiny by the media or the public.

This sneaky tactic reminds me of a pickpocket who will brush against someone’s shoulder in order to distract attention while he steals the wallet from the opposite back pocket. I said, “We need to be onto those tricks and not let them get away with that.” We must work on the big, important issues and not get distracted by what our three guests called the “entertainment” and “noise” and “static” and “smoke-and-mirrors” that are put out for public consumption.

Start with our values. Then move to action:

The context and purpose for our guests’ conversation recognize and affirm that the humane and compassionate values that guide our work are actually widely held among the American people – and these have indeed been widely held as traditional American values.

A great “silent majority” of Americans do support the positive values we have been affirming during this conversation here, such as treating everyone fairly, taking care of each other, protecting our water supplies, and so forth. These widely held American values have been attacked by people in Washington DC, especially since mid-January. How could we encourage ordinary Americans to put their humane values into action?

Mustafa offered an example from his own faith community. On the first Sunday of each month the Islamic Center of Olympia provides food for people staying in a homeless shelter organized by Interfaith Works of Thurston County, because of Islamic values of compassion. (The homeless people know they can look forward to eating really good curry once a month!) He also said that Muslim Americans support U.S. national security, so more than 10,000 Muslims serve in the U.S. military to protect all Americans and to protect our religious liberty. About 50,000 doctors in the U.S. are Muslims, and they are saving Americans’ lives every day. Many of them

serve geographical areas without enough doctors, and – ironically – many of these are rural and politically conservative areas. Muslims practice their positive values every day, but the general public scarcely notices this.

I agreed and said that’s probably true for other social groups being attacked now. Who knows if somebody you’re working with is gay or part of some other vulnerable group?

Karen suggested this positive approach: “Don’t agonize. Strategize.” She said that over the decades Black people have done a huge amount of work for human rights, and they could simply tell the rest of Americans: We’ve been there, done that. Now you handle these problems. Or they could say: We’ve done difficult work, and we know how to make progress. We could “lead the charge in how to love your neighbor.” She added, “Fundamentally, that’s what we’re talking about here.”

She said this might be our nation’s greatest hour, because now our nation really must deal with racial justice. We must not destroy our planet from hatred before the climate crisis destroys it.

Thanks to our guests for sharing their wisdom and encouragement:

When the interview was ending I thanked **Dr. Karen Johnson, Mustafa Mohamedali, and Tyra Lindquist** for sharing their wisdom and encouragement.

A thorough list of non-profit organizations and other resources will be posted on the “TV Programs” part of www.olympiafor.org, so our viewers can follow up:

I urged people to use resources to help us with what we’ve been discussing. These include books, articles, and online resources. Many are listed on the “**Nonviolence**” part of the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s website, www.olympiafor.org. This web page includes several resources I wrote, including these three:

- **“We Can Overcome Cynicism and Despair with Empowerment and Hope”**
- **“Our Nation’s Political Crisis – How We Got into It – and How to Get out”**
- **“Organizing Nonviolent Remedies for Our Current Crisis”**

On the “TV Programs” part of www.olympiafor.org I highly recommend watching our January 2017 TV program about the power and effectiveness of organizing nonviolent grassroots movements. I also highly recommend reading the summary at the link next to it, and some previous TV programs about nonviolence and grassroots organizing.

Next to the website’s link for watching [this](#) March 2017 TV program we will post a resource that lists the names and websites of a great many non-profit organizations and other information sources related to a variety of issues. On the “TV Programs” part of www.olympiafor.org look for this March 2017 TV program and the document titled “2017.03 Sources of Information.”

We ended with this encouragement:

I thanked our guests **Dr. Karen Johnson, Mustafa Mohamedali, and Tyra Lindquist.**

I expressed deep concern that people and the environment are being assaulted by the new national administration’s bullying, mean-spirited attacks, and corruption. We are seeing blatant contempt for human dignity and human rights. Big business corporations are increasing their abuse of God’s Creation and contempt for a sustainable environment for the future.

Bullies always try to intimidate their victims. But if we understand what they are doing, and if we are grounded in humane values, we can resist effectively. Also, if we are savvy about using nonviolent grassroots organizing to turn our values into effective action, we can help more people resist, and we can turn things around.

Many resources do exist. See the ones listed in the Word document link next to the link for watching this TV program through the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s website, www.olympiafor.org. Click the “TV Programs” link and scroll down to March 2017.

We’re all one human family, and we all share one planet.
We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.
The world needs you! You can help!

INFORMATION:

www.olympiafor.org
Click “Nonviolence” link

www.olympiafor.org
Click “TV Programs” link
Click “January 2017” link – and also
Click “March 2017” link

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence by contacting the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation at (360) 491-9093 www.olympiafor.org