

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 for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and more than 90 of our previous interview programs and special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the TV programs link to reach www.olympiafor.org/tv_programs.htm, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch.

Many of our website's TV program listings also include a .pdf document describing the program.

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“CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING HARD REALITIES”

by Glen Anderson, producer and host of this TV series

Decades ago I was talking with a friend who had escaped from Germany during the late 1930s when the Nazis were reported to be doing horrible things. He told me that – before he left – his friends told him that they could not believe that Germany could do the horrible things that some people said the Nazi government was doing. His friends said Germany was a nation of musicians, scientists, artists, philosophers and theologians, so they could not believe what people were telling them the German government and people were doing.

Human beings have psychological defense mechanisms that make it hard for us to accept hard realities. In fact, Al Gore titled his movie about the climate crisis “An Inconvenient Truth.” The climate crisis is only one of the hard realities that many people deny rather than grapple with honestly.

Likewise, the pervasive danger of a nuclear war that could destroy life on earth is too unpleasant to think about, so most Americans try to ignore the danger that nuclear weapons threaten with every minute of the day.

Americans – especially politicians – like to say we have the world's best democracy, when actually we have one of the lowest rates of voter turnout and an election system that is horribly corrupted by multi-millionaires and giant corporations.

And the U.S. military actually has overthrown democracies and replaced them with brutal dictators in many parts of the world since the early 1950s. These are objective facts that very few American politicians or mainstream media will admit, and that most Americans do not want to know about.

So we – like the Germans of the 1930s – find it hard to accept hard realities that contradict the comfortable self-image we enjoy.

During this TV program we'll consider some practical, psychological, and spiritual consequences of denying these hard realities. We'll “connect the dots” between various issues and various parts of our lives. And we'll consider some remedies to help us accept reality and solve the problems. Our intention is not to blame, but to help us understand and move ahead toward solutions.

This program features three guests whom I respect deeply for their wisdom and insights. They will help us think meaningfully about the hard issues about which our nation is in denial, and about the psychological and spiritual consequences of that denial.

- **John Van Eenwyk** is an Episcopal priest, a Ph.D. clinical psychologist, and Clinical Director of the International Trauma Treatment Program. He has special insights and skills to help people deal with severe trauma, such as war and torture.
- **Debe Edden** has been a teacher and youth worker, and served 11 years as a trainer and volunteer coordinator for our local Hospice program. Since 1990 she has worked with Heartsparkle Players, a Play-back Theatre troupe based in Olympia.
- **Arthur Vaeni** has long served as pastor of the Olympia Unitarian-Universalist Congregation. He and the congregation engage the community in thinking and taking positive action in the world around us.

Thoughtful people look around and see many gigantic problems, including:

- The persistent danger that nuclear weapons could destroy the world at any minute;
- The rapidly worsening climate crisis;
- A U.S. empire that serves giant corporations and the military-industrial complex, but actually provokes enemies faster than we can kill them;
- A government that fails to provide real democracy, that serves powerful interests in defiance of public opinion, and that is horribly corrupted by big money in election campaigns, and that causes many people to stop voting.
- An economy that allows giant corporations to ship good jobs overseas and creates only a few low-

wage jobs, so a whole generation of young Americans see no future for themselves.

Many of the US's political, economic and social systems are broken. Some people speak out explicitly, and many more people suspect it subconsciously but don't dare admit it, even to themselves. Instead, we do weird things with our psychology, like living in fantasy worlds or projecting problems onto scapegoats.

A wise friend told me, "Either we deal with reality, or reality will deal with us."

Denial about hard realities separates us from the real world. This denial alienates us from reality. This hurts us both psychologically and spiritually. And it prevents us from solving the real problems.

Perhaps watching this TV program will help our viewers see things in fresh ways – connect the dots – lower the barriers to understanding things better – and helping our viewers solve the problems.

A Turkish proverb says, "No matter how far you've gone down on a wrong road, turn back." That's a good message for us now. Let's turn back from denial, and let's solve the real problems.