**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs offering fresh ways for people to see issues such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, governmental functioning, and so forth. We provide voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media.

Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. In order to solve problems, we need to see things differently. Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “Parallax Perspectives.” ***Parallax*** is the view you get by looking from different perspectives. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.

Each program airs three times a 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 cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. You can see TCTV’s current schedule at [**www.tctv.net**](http://www.tctv.net). This is part of Thurston County Media,[**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org).

**You can also watch the program described below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on this blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the computer screen. Also, see much information about a variety of issues grouped by topic at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video at the “TV Programs” part of [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) and/or read this thorough summary there.

🡪 The end of this document lists some sources of further information about this TV program’s topic.

**Here is this month’s program:**

**October 2018**

**“Let’s Understand the Islamic Faith”**

by Glen Anderson, producer and host of the TV series “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”

This month’s interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” helps us understand and appreciate Islam as a legitimate faith in the world, in the U.S., and in our local communities.

Islam is the world’s second most popular religious faith, but almost all Americans who are not Muslim do not understand the Islamic faith. Many of the things Americans think they know about Islam are not actually true.

Some people’s political agendas want us to be afraid of “the other.” Then they exploit our fear in order to control us so we will serve their political agendas. One powerful remedy for fear and exploitation is to really understand “the other.” When we really understand something, the fear goes away, and we can recognize our common humanity with the people whom we had previously been tricked into fearing.

This interview informs the public about Islam. This will make our nation more savvy and more civilized. We create an opportunity to meet new friends.

**Three guests help us explore this topic:**

* **Turan Kayaoglu** is a professor of international relations and the associate vice chancellor for research at the University of Washington’s Tacoma campus. He is a political scientist who teaches courses in religion, politics and human rights. His research explores issues related to Islam, international relations, human rights, and American Muslim experience. Kayaoglu is the editor-in-chief of *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* and the author of two books and over twenty articles in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He is on the Speakers Bureau of Humanities Washington, so is available to give talks anywhere in Washington State about Muslim history, culture and politics.
* **Aneelah Afzali** is an attorney who graduated from Harvard Law School and was made a partner in a law firm. She is the founder and Executive Director of the American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN) at the Muslim Association of Puget Sound (MAPS). She also serves as a Board Member of a statewide interfaith social justice non-profit organization that I have belonged to for many years, the Faith Action Network. Aneelah co-founded and led the Middle Eastern Legal Association of Washington. Five years ago, Aneelah left her legal career to pursue service and knowledge, two things her faith emphasizes. Since then, she has served as a community activist, interfaith leader, and justice advocate. *Seattle Magazine* recognized her as one of 2017’s most influential people.
* **Mustafa Mohamedali** is a licensed professional engineer and certified project manager. 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 the Social Secretary of the Islamic Center of Olympia (our local mosque) and works actively in many interfaith activities, including Interfaith Works of Thurston County and the Jewish-Muslim Listening Group. I also appreciate Mustafa’s friendship and his work on a number of other good issues supporting social justice.

So our guests are a professor, a lawyer, and an engineer. Even though all three guests are well educated experts in their respective professions, our interview will focus on **the Islamic faith itself** rather than just an abstract intellectual approach. Besides providing accurate information, we will also affirm the personal side – from our hearts as well as our heads. Each guest is a practicing Muslim who is also proud to be an American and a part of our community.

Although I am not a Muslim, I appreciate much about the Islamic faith, and I’m happy to help the general public understand Islam better. Our society will function better when people understand and appreciate the various kinds of people who live here – and when we deepen our own spirituality.

**Islam believes in the same one true God that Jews and Christians believe in.
Muslims also appreciate Muhammad as the last of God’s prophets.**

Aneelah started with some basic information about the same one true God shared by Judaism, Christianity and Islam – the three major faiths that are rooted in Abraham. The oldest scriptures were written in Hebrew, the Christian New Testament was written in Greek, and Muslims’ holy book, the Quran, was written in Arabic. The word for “God” is different in each language, so during our conversation we can use either the Arabic name “Allah” or the generic term, “God.”

Aneelah expressed appreciation for this opportunity to share what Islam **is** instead of constantly reacting to what it is **not**. She summarized Islam’s basic beliefs. It is part of the Abrahamic faith traditions with underlying monotheism sharing the same one true God.

Islam invites people to submit themselves to the will of God. Muslims affirm and honor all of the prophets, including Abraham and Noah and all of the others in the Jewish scriptures, and Jesus, who was the next to the last prophet before Muhammad completed the work of God’s revelations to humanity. Islam recognizes all of them as sharing God’s message with us, so all of them are “muslim” with a lower-case “M” because all were submitting their will to God.

Glen mentioned that this is the origin of the word *Islam*, which refers to submission to God. The faith is about paying attention to what God – Allah – wants and letting him guide us significantly so we will serve those purposes. Aneelah agreed. All of the successive revelations are cumulative. They urge us to worship the same Creator who created all of us (regardless of our respective faiths) and we serve Allah’s Creation. She said all of the prophets taught us to worship God and be good to each other. This is the core of Islamic faith.

Glen said this is also the core of what we need for a good society and a good environment. If God – Allah – created it, we need to take care of it and be good stewards of it.

Glen said that Allah is bigger and more supportive of humanity in more ways than people realize. A number of years ago a Muslim friend from Massachusetts recited – in both Arabic and English – a list of 99 attributes of Allah. It was a powerful spiritual experience to hear him describe God as “The Most Merciful” and “The Source of Peace” and “The Protector” and “The Creator” and “The Great Forgiver” and all of the 99 attributes. Glen said, “We have one Allah, but there is so much richness in who Allah is,” so Glen encouraged people to watch a 4-minute video in which a young woman sings in Arabic (with English subtitles) the 99 attributes of God, Allah. This 4-minute video is beautiful, informative and inspirational:

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2pK\_VGEchA&list=RDD2pK\_VGEchA&start\_radio=1**

Glen asked Turan – based on his great expertise in human rights as well as your expertise in Islam – what he might say about these 99 attributes of Allah in relation to global values of human rights. Turan affirmed that Islam’s values overlap with the values articulated in the International Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations General Assembly adopted it on December 10, 1948, and it remains in effect now. See the complete text at [**https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\_Translations/eng.pdf**](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

Turan said that Eleanor Roosevelt and the U.N. human rights commission she chaired pulled together the best values from many sources worldwide, including values from various faith communities. The U.N.’s Declaration of Human Rights includes the best values of the world’s faith traditions along with other profound values. The Declaration starts with a basic Islamic principle that everyone has a right to life. Islam believes that God creates life, so only God is authorized to decide when a person’s life ends.

Turan said the 99 attributes we mentioned a few minutes before include Allah as the Just Ruler. Islam affirms all people’s equality before the courts. The Declaration affirms the right to peace. Indeed, Islam affirms peace and affirms that Allah can help us achieve peace.

Glen affirmed the International Declaration of Human Rights as one of the best documents ever that affirms worldwide values. We hold those values deeply, and we wish our government and other governments would respect and practice those values supporting human rights.

Turan added the additional insight that besides referring to “human rights,” we should also respect “human dignity.” Faith traditions affirm “human dignity” as a value.

Glen agreed and said that late in the life of Mohandas (the “Mahatma”) Gandhi, someone asked him about “human rights” and he responded affirming also “human responsibilities.” We are accountable to each other, and this is another nuance that’s worth lifting up.

**Islam’s 5 Pillars and other basic beliefs and core values**

Mustafa summarized the “Five Pillars” of Islam. Part of being a good practicing Muslim is practicing these Five Pillars.

#1: Muslims declare that there is only one God, and that Muhammad is his last and final messenger. Muslims also accept that all of the prophets that came before Muhammad also were prophets carrying God’s revelations to us from their own times in history.

#2: Muslims pray five times every day. They are encouraged to pray them together in congregation, but it’s OK to pray them alone at home or on the job or wherever you are when the prayer times occur. Mustafa said, “God says he has made the whole world a place of worship for mankind.”

#3: Muslims give alms to the poor. Each Muslim is required to give 2½% of whatever he or she has saved. If you own a business you must give 2½% of your capital or inventory. These alms must be given every year. Islam believes that this wealth is not really ours. It belongs to people who are in need. This dollar amount is not based on income or things you are using (*e.g*., one house or one car), but if you have a second house or second car that you are renting out, those are subject to this requirement, along with any savings you own.

#4: Muslims fast from dawn to dusk every day during the month of Ramadan. The Islamic calendar is lunar and rotates throughout the year, so sometimes Ramadan occurs during the winter when daylight is shorter, but sometimes during the summer when daylight is much longer. Unlike most other people’s fasts, you abstain from drinking as well as food. He said, “The objective is to make yourself more insightful with Allah in your mind all the time.” Anything you do wrong, such as saying a bad word, would break your fast, so Muslims are careful to abstain from them especially during Ramadan. Doing this kind of a fast for 30 days can help these practices be ingrained in you (stop smoking, stop drinking, stop doing bad habits, etc.), so these better practices start to seem natural for us so we can continue with better lives after the month of Ramadan has ended.

#5: At least once during each Muslim’s lifetime, it’s necessary to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. This pilgrimage is called the Hajj. Somebody who is not physically healthy enough or can’t afford it financially is excused from this obligation. The pilgrimage around the big black cube in Mecca traces the footsteps of the prophet Abraham and his wife Hagar when Hagar and their son Ishmael were newly arrived in Mecca after being rejected by Abraham’s other wife, Sarah. The big black cube marks the site of the first house of worship for the one true God. Aneelah added that Muslims from around the world – including rich and powerful Muslims – follow in the footsteps of a woman and recognize Hagar’s important historical role in the faith.

**Islam’s heritage from other Abrahamic faiths – and Islam’s core values**

Judaism, Christianity and Islam share common roots in tracing their origin back to Abraham. Aneelah summarized some similarities and some differences among these three Abrahamic faiths. She said many of the same values are shared in common among these three faiths.

Justice is a very strong mandate in Islam. She said a verse from the Quran is posted at Harvard Law School. We are commanded to stand firmly for justice even if it would go against ourselves or our families. Regardless of wealth or poverty, every person deserves equal justice.

We are commanded to show mercy. She said the prophet Muhammad said that the amount of mercy we show to other people – and even to animals – will be reflected in the amount of mercy Allah will show to us.

Compassion and forgiveness are values that Islam emphasizes. Aneelah said forgiveness is emphasized so profoundly in Islam that some Muslims who have been victims of hate crimes – even when their family members have been assaulted or killed – have forgiven the persons who committed those hate crimes. The point is not that the person deserves forgiveness, but that “everything we do is for God’s sake.” Also, “God will forgive us if we forgive others who do us wrong.”

Glen agreed that “there is a modeling of the core values that we see in God – in Allah” so we need to practice these values.

Mustafa added the Islam’s 5 pillars are not what make you a Muslim. He said these are tools that help us be better Muslims and better persons. “If you do those 5 things but you’re not a better person, then you’re not a good Muslim. Period.” These tools guide us. He explained, “What makes you a Muslim is something inside you that serves humanity, speaks the truth, is compassionate, and is forgiving.”

Aneelah emphasized knowledge as a core value in Islam and in her own life. She said the prophet Muhammad taught men and women to seek knowledge. She said she left her legal career in order to pursue more knowledge and to serve people. Service is another key value in Islam.

Glen said knowledge and science and mathematics all have deep roots in Arabia.

**Islam and other Abrahamic faiths: similarities and differences**

Glen asked Aneelah to say more about the common roots of the three faiths that trace their origins back to Abraham – and to mention some similarities and differences among Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Aneelah said all three are monotheistic – believing in the one true God who created all of us. Muslims believe in all of the prophets in the Bible – the Hebrew ones in the Old Testament, and also Jesus as another great prophet from God. Muslims believed that all of these prophets conveyed revelations from God, so they believe in the Torah and Psalms and the Gospel. All three religions share many common values, as we have been discussing.

She said Muslims have more in common with their Christian sisters and brothers than with Jews, in that Jesus was the Messiah who will return and defeat the anti-Christ. She said Muslims revere the Virgin Mary, and there is a chapter in the Quran titled after Mary.

She also said Muslims have some things in common with their Jewish sisters and brothers in ways where both differ from Christians. Muslims believe in a pure monotheism and do not believe Jesus was God, because Muslims are monotheistic and do not believe in the Trinity either: just the one true God to whom each of us is accountable and responsible. They believe in an eventual judgment day when all of us will be held accountable for what we did here on earth.

She said Muslims do not believe in “original sin.”

Mustafa used a metaphor about computer software to help people understand the succession of revelations leading up to Muhammad and Islam as the culmination of the three Abrahamic faiths. Mustafa acknowledged that it is “a very loose analogy.” He said people might understand the evolution from old computers’ DOS operating systems to more sophisticated systems, “Graphical User Interface” with mouse. Microsoft stole Apple’s idea and created various successive versions of Windows. He said the evolution of religions shows this kind of progress. Muslims recognized Noah as a very early prophet before the Abrahamic faith developed and evolved through Moses and David and Jesus, and now we have Islam, based on Muhammad as the latest prophet. Each of these prophets was given revelations by God, and each built upon the predecessors. Muslims accept all of these prophets who came before and Judaism and Christianity, so Muslims are “downward-compatible” just like newer software can still work with previous versions.

He said people ask him why God gave these revelations bit by bit over a long period of time instead of all at once. He said that civilizations evolved over time, so from time to time different generations would be able to handle successive revelations based on their evolving level of civilization and culture. After earlier revelations focused more on law and “an eye for an eye,” later revelations focused more on grace, compassion and forgiveness. Finally, the Quran was revealed, and Muslims believe it is the ultimate testament for all of humanity and for all of time.

Mustafa said the Quran mentions approximately 25 or 28 of the prophets from the Old Testament and New Testament. He said many of those names are the names of Muslims nowadays. Our local mosque in Olympia has people named Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, and so forth.

Glen expressed appreciation for Islam’s affirmation of these other faiths, which is refreshingly different from the competitiveness that so many religious people feel. Some religious people want to elbow out of the way people who believe differently, because they think they have the one true answer and they don’t want anyone else to believe differently. Glen expressed the Muslims’ grace in affirming the “downward compatibility” with the other two Abrahamic faiths.

Aneelah added that Moses and Jesus are each mentioned more times in the Quran than Muhammad is. Moses is mentioned more than anyone else. Glen said he has read about one-third of the Quran and was struck by how many supportive references exist there for the prophets who preceded Muhammad.

**How the Quran came into being and what the Quran says**

Muslims believe that God revealed the Quran to Muhammad in the 23 years from 609 to 632. Mustafa explained how the Quran came to be written. He said that during that time in Arabia, there was much dissension among the people, gross injustices, murders of baby girls, and a very stratified society. Powerful people were the only ones who had rights.

At that time the angel Gabriel came to Muhammad with the core message supporting justice for the people, both for that time and forever. The revelations that became the Quran were given by Allah to Muhammad bit by bit during that 23-year period, as he and the local people were able to understand these revelations. The Quran is the Word of God revealed through Gabriel to Muhammad, and scribes wrote it down.

[We did not have time to say this during the interview, but Glen said that – after reading about one-third of the Quran and much additional information on top of other prior knowledge – someone wanting to learn about the faith would find it easier to start with other sources of information – including your local mosque – before reading much of the Quran. We also did not have time to say that the Quran (written in Arabic) has qualities of expressiveness and poetry and rhythm that are lost in translation because other languages cannot capture those qualities.]

**The Prophet Muhammad’s special role, and his personal qualities and skills**

Turan helped us understand the Prophet Muhammad as a unique person, his special role, and his personal qualities and skills. Turan said Muhammad was a great role model for him. He was very humble and down to earth. He served the community. He was an orphan who had lost both of his parents and some of his closest family members, so he identified with other people who were in need, who were marginalized. This was difficult in a society that was clan-based and hierarchical. Turan said many of Islam’s earliest members also came from those difficult backgrounds. They included widows and poor people who discovered that the Prophet Muhammad was articulating their concerns – and he was articulating their grievances against the rich powerholders.

Muhammad was a real family man. He was committed to his children and – after his first wife died – he raised his children well as a single father for a number of years before marrying again. Turan said that he too is a single father, and he finds inspiration in Muhammad as a role model.

The Prophet Muhammad kept seeking knowledge and said that in order to seek knowledge people might need to go as far away as China. Islam strongly affirms seeking knowledge. Turan said he came to the United States in order to seek knowledge, so this also is a good connection. Turan said Muhammad’s personal qualities serve as a role model for him and inspire him.

Glen added that he has been reading about Muhammad from other sources of information. Those sources explained that Muhammad was a very highly skilled organizer in reaching out and bringing people into the faith. Also, Muhammad was a very highly skilled administrator of the governmental functions and civil life in his community, and he vastly improved the people’s quality of life.

Turan said three things were coming together. Muhammad brought the faith to people as an inspirational spiritual teacher. He was a great community organizer who brought together the people who had been marginalized on society’s sidelines. Also he was creating a new state – a civilized society with law and order – a system for collecting resources and redistributing them to the poor people. Glen affirmed the value of good, efficient administration of the new society.

Glen also said that reaching out to the people who had been marginalized was something that Jesus did too. He connected well with people who were poor, people who had disabilities, and so forth. He was really on their side.

Turan added that the Prophet Muhammad was so effective in reaching the poor people that the oligarchs – the rich people on top of the society – tried several ways to bribe him to stop. But he just wanted to preach the message that God had revealed to him. Glen expressed appreciation for his great integrity.

**History, popularity, and diversity of Islam in the world – and in the U.S.**

Glen said he appreciates Islam’s appreciation for the oneness of all humanity, across all races and all nationalities. This was a radical concept when the Quran was written in the 600s. Long ago many local areas had their own different tribal-based gods instead of recognizing a universal God. Even nowadays, many people worldwide and in the United States still do not accept equality across races and nationalities. But Islam valued this 1,400 years ago.

Turan explained Allah’s appreciation of human diversity and human rights for all. He said the Quran says Allah created everybody to be equal. Nobody is superior to anyone else because of their race or other individual attributes. We all have the same rights and responsibilities. Some beautiful verses in the Quran say Allah created us in different nations not in order to fight with each other but rather in order that we might learn from each other. Another verse says we all have different paths (different faith traditions), and each of us should excel in whatever our own path is. Do not say that your religion is better than someone else’s religion. Just practice your own religion so that you will be a better person, and take responsibility to give back to the community.

Glen said this is another thing that Mohandas Gandhi had said. He was raised Hindu and always remained a Hindu, but he also appreciated other faiths. He did not try to convert other people to Hinduism, but he urged people to practice their own respective religions well. If you’re Jewish, be a better Jew. If you’re Muslim, be a better Muslim. If you’re Christian, be a better Christian. And so forth. Gandhi’s generosity of spirit and his even-handedness and deep integrity are also what Islam promotes.

Mustafa said that Gandhi sometimes quoted from the Prophet and from the Quran. Glen added that in the town where Gandhi grew up on India’s west coast, his Hindu congregation’s services also read from the Quran and the Bible, so interfaith respect and appreciation was a part of Gandhi’s childhood and development. He continued that practice all his life.

Glen said that Aneelah had recently told him about the diversity of the American Muslim population. She said in the U.S. about 25% of Muslims are white, about 25% are African American, and about 50% have other very diverse ethnic and national origins.

We showed on the TV screen a map that Mustafa provided. Heather Ahmed, a member of the Islamic Center of Olympia, created a display showing colored dots marking the nations throughout the world members of our local mosque have their roots. It’s hard to see the colored dots on the image we showed on the TV screen, but there are dozens distributed throughout the world. Mustafa said that – if he remembers correctly – there are 39 dots on the map showing the ethnic origins of members of the Islamic Center of Olympia. Mustafa said the local mosque is proud that it is the most diverse faith community in the southern part of Puget Sound. The next most diverse faith communities in Western Washington are other mosques in counties north of us.

Mustafa also said that yet another way in which Muslims practice equality is that when they gather at the mosque for prayers, they kneel next to each other on the floor, shoulder-to-shoulder, with all races and nationalities intermingled as equals, and rich and poor all intermingled. There are absolutely no distinctions between the people.

**Islam emphasizes equality across races, nationalities, and other differences.
Islam is committed to human rights for everyone.**

Glen followed up on our discussion of Islam’s appreciation for the oneness of all humanity, across all races and all nationalities. Just now we showed and discussed a world map showing origins of members of our local mosque. Glen mentioned that the Quran keeps addressing **all of humankind**, not just people in one tribe or one nation or one race – and also not only people in one faith. The Quran keeps emphasizing the equality of **all** people, regardless of demographic differences.

Glen asked Mustafa about the Quran’s chapter 49, verse 13, which addresses this. Mustafa translated the Arabic wording into English. He said this verse says Allah created all of mankind from a single pair – a male and a female – and made us into nations and tribes so that we may know and learn from each other, not so that you may despise and fight with each other. Allah says that the closest to him among you is the one who is best in conduct and most righteous.

Mustafa and Glen affirmed that this is a good model for all of humanity.

**Why do our guests find Islam so attractive, valid, meaningful and satisfying?**

Glen said that much of what we have been discussing has focused on factual information and ideas. But in addition to the “head” level, we have also been affirming the “heart” level and our feelings for Islam’s positive values. Glen asked why our guests find Islam so attractive, so valid, so meaningful, and so satisfying.

Turan said the Quran is an inspirational text, and – at a human level – the Prophet Muhammad is inspirational too. We already discussed the International Declaration of Human Rights. Islam’s scriptures likewise lift up perfect principles. Muhammad articulated and practiced these principles, and he connects Turan with the rest of humanity. Turan said that we wants to be a good father of his kids, as Muhammad was, and to model his behavior after Muhammad and Islam’s principles.

Aneelah said she had a spiritual transformation. She had been born into the faith and then came back to it and read the Quran cover to cover. What she found most attractive and inspirational in Islam – both while studying it in a comparative religion context and while she was experiencing her spiritual transformation – was twofold:

(1) She appreciates Islam’s emphasis on rationality, logic, and using our minds. She is a lawyer by training and is very logical. She appreciates Islam’s emphasis on rationality and using our minds to connect with God. She said that repeatedly throughout the Quran Allah is urging us to think about this, reflect about that, explore this, go and learn about that, and so forth.

(2) She appreciates Islam’s support for women’s rights. It strongly emphasizes women’s empowerment. She said this surprises some people, but the Quran and Muhammad kept supporting the empowering and uplifting of all human beings, including the most marginalized. Historically and even today women have been oppressed. Islam is a religion that acknowledges women’s equality and empowerment – and Islam celebrates women’s empowerment in very positive ways. She said Islam includes a number of influential women.

**Islam supports women’s rights and equality.**

Glen said that many Americans do not know that a number of Muslim women have been significant leaders in various ways, including serving as heads of state. In a few minutes we would show on the TV screen a display of Muslim women who have been strong leaders in various ways, including as elected leaders of a number of Muslim-majority nations.

Glen asked Aneelah about her experience as a practicing Muslim in America. She said islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric have been increasing nationwide, including at the highest levels of the U.S. administration. Also a whole industry of very well-funded anti-Islamic hate groups have grown up to spread a narrative of fear and divisiveness. Divisiveness is wrong. We have so much in common with Jewish and Christian sisters and brothers and other fellow Americans.

She said that as a practicing and very visible Muslim American woman today, she has experienced people driving by, rolling down their car windows and yelling obscenities to her. People have devalued what she has to say, or they’ve been surprised that she is intelligent and articulate. Instead of all that, she keeps focusing on the positive, and she keeps finding people of good will who understand the interconnectedness and the common values we share. They join her in understanding that the love we share is greater than the hatred that some other people are spreading. She said, “Our faith is far greater than the fear.”

Glen agreed and said that our current interview is taking the high road instead of bogging down in “the crap that’s really toxic for the whole society.” He also said that he is convinced that the hatred is also toxic for the people who hold on to the hatred and rots them from the inside. Aneelah agreed and said that negativity is based on fear, and “fear hurts the individual as much as the community.”

She said Islam has definitely empowered her in multiple ways. She works for the largest mosque in the State of Washington, the Muslim Association of Puget Sound. In many ways she is the organization’s visible face. She wears the hijab and refers to it as “her Super Woman cape.” She is able to do what Islam teaches her, even in the face of opposition, and even in the face of some people’s fear or hatred. She follows the path of Muhammad, which is to show forgiveness and kindness and love – even to enemies – just as Jesus also had taught.

Also, wearing the hijab is a way to visibly identify herself as Muslim. She is proud to be Muslim. Years ago during football season she used to wear Seahawks clothing because she identified with Seattle’s football team. She is proud to be an America, proud to be a Muslim, and proud to be a woman. Now is the time to bring those three identities together and be proud of all at once.

Glen said that our society extensively exploits women in entertainment and advertising and other ways. He expressed appreciation for the hijab’s modesty of saying, “I’m not buying into that.” Therefore, he sees the hijab is as empowering rather than oppressive. Aneelah agreed and said that women are free whether to wear it or not. She said her friends who choose to wear it find it empowering for modesty, for identity, for solidarity, and for other reasons. It really is a woman’s choice. She said no person – and certainly no man – should tell a woman to either wear it or not wear it.

At this time we showed on the TV screens an image of a display that Heather Ahmed, a member of Olympia’s mosque, created to show Muslim women who had made significant contributions in recent history, including those who were elected to be the leaders of their respective nations. Mustafa said some are intellectuals, some are in charge of various parts of the United Nations. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia have had Muslim women as heads of state. Indonesia has more Muslims than any other nation. He said that only about 15% to 20% of the world’s Muslims live in the Middle East.

**The Islamic Center of Olympia and other local mosques**

Glen said that in the various religions, their members in each local community gather in their respective local churches, temples, synagogues, or – for Muslims – in mosques. Regardless of religion, each local congregation serves as a hub of community connectedness for that faith’s local members. The greater Olympia area is blessed to have the Islamic Center of Olympia to serve the needs of local Muslims – and to interact positively with people of other religious faiths and the community as a whole.

Glen said he has visited a great many and variety of local congregations and is glad to have visited our local mosque, the Islamic Center of Olympia, on several occasions. He said it is one of the friendliest and most welcoming congregations he has ever visited. Also, if you enjoy good food and want to join a local congregation with the best “church potlucks,” join the mosque instead of a church. Their potlucks feature amazingly good food from all over the world. Mustafa said the menu is not planned because it’s a potluck, but Glen said that this spontaneous diversity of good food is an example of God’s grace.

Mustafa said that after 9-11-2001 the Islamic Center of Olympia has enjoyed an outpouring of support from the local community. Jews, Christians and other people have expressed support and have attended their Friday worship services and expressed their support in other ways. He said people are always welcome at the mosque, because it is a place where people can worship the one true God. Also, they decided to specifically invite people for an Open House especially on the first Friday of each month.

The Islamic Center of Olympia hosts an Open House on the first Friday of each month (from 1:00 to 3:00 pm during Daylight Savings Time, or from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm during Standard Time). It starts near the west parking lot with a welcome briefing. Then people enter the building for the call to prayer (participation optional), sermon, social time, light refreshments, and Q&A with the local mosque’s imam and a good number of local members, so people can ask questions and get reliable answers and experience a sense of community. For information visit the mosque’s website – [**www.islamiccenterofolympia.org**](http://www.islamiccenterofolympia.org) – or e-mail them at **info@islamiccenterofolympia.org**

**Additional interesting information and insights**

Glen mentioned that it’s natural for a religion’s scriptures to be written in the language of the area where that particular religion arose. Much of Islam’s work is done in the Arabic language because Islam arose in Arabia. The Jewish scriptures were written the Hebrew language, and the Christian scriptures were written in the Greek language. The Catholic Church kept operating in Latin for much more than a thousand years and Martin Luther translated the Bible into German in the 1500s. We should not let our unfamiliarity with the Arabic language put us off. That language’s richly expressive and poetic qualities are lost somewhat when translated into other languages that are not as inherently expressive and poetic as Arabic.

Glen also said the Islamic faith does not use physical symbols or statues or paintings of people or animals, like many other religions do, because they reject idolatry and do not want people distracted. Mustafa says they worship the Creator, not the creation. Islam does use beautiful geometric designs.

Islam does not have a concept of “original sin.” Muslims believe that children are born pure.

People who want to learn about Islam will learn many other interesting insights.

**Sources of more information**

* Glen said that this interview will appear on Thurston Community Television (TCTV cable channel 22 in Thurston County WA) three times a week throughout October 2018. It will air every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm.
* Also, he will post it to his blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), so people will be able to watch it from any location at any time for many years into the future. Visit [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), and click either the “TV Programs” category or the “Religion” category. Along with the link for watching this interview, people can click a link to read the thorough summary that you are reading now, reporting on what we said during this hour. The end of the blog’s thorough summary provides links to additional information that Glen and his guests have compiled for you to enjoy. See that information below. Also, the bog post might possibly include some photos of our local mosque, its people and activities.
* The website of the Islamic Center of Olympia [**www.islamiccenterofolympia.org**](http://www.islamiccenterofolympia.org) includes information about our local mosque and information about Islam. Also, the mosque’s Facebook page is always kept up-to-date.
* Early in this hour Glen said that Allah is bigger and more supportive of humanity in more ways than people realize. He urged people to watch a 4-minute video in which a young woman sings in Arabic (with English subtitles) 99 attributes of God, Allah. **Glen enthusiastically encourages people to watch and appreciate this beautiful, informative and inspirational 4-minute video:**
**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2pK\_VGEchA&list=RDD2pK\_VGEchA&start\_radio=1**
* An informative website answers many “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) about Muslims. See it at
[**FAQs About Muslims**](https://ing.org/top-100-frequently-asked-questions-about-muslims-and-their-faith/?gclid=CjwKCAjw2rjcBRBuEiwAheKeL-xvv97KfkH7CljH_ENSz5EUtUHxryW_eiY0bGQyAEt9UrCRzZx41BoC-RgQAvD_BwE) **= https://ing.org/top-100-frequently-asked-questions-about-muslims-and-their-faith/?gclid=CjwKCAjw2rjcBRBuEiwAheKeL-xvv97KfkH7CljH\_ENSz5EUtUHxryW\_eiY0bGQyAEt9UrCRzZx41BoC-RgQAvD\_BwE**
* Another very good source of information about Islam is the Islamic Networks Group, [**www.ing.org**](http://www.ing.org), an American non-profit organization that educates the public about Islam, clarifies misunderstandings, opposes bigotry, supports the First Amendment, and promotes peace.
* Another source of information about various aspects of Islam is at [**www.whyislam.org**](http://www.whyislam.org)
* The Muslim Peace Fellowship is grounded in Islam and the faith’s rich support for nonviolence, peace and social justice. It is one of many religious peace fellowships (Lutheran, Jewish, Presbyterian, Buddhist, etc.) affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation ([**www.forusa.org**](http://www.forusa.org)). For many years I have known and respected friends who have been active in the Muslim Peace Fellowship. See information about the MPF at [**https://mpf21.wordpress.com**](https://mpf21.wordpress.com)
* On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Declaration of Human Rights. See the complete text at[**https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\_Translations/eng.pdf**](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)
* Several reputable non-profit organizations work effectively to protect civil rights. Good examples include Donate to reliable, well-known institutions that fight for Muslim civil rights like the [**www.ACLU.org**](http://www.ACLU.org) and [**www.CAIR.com**](http://www.CAIR.com) and [**www.mlfa.org**](http://www.mlfa.org)
* Our guest Turan Kayaoglu invites people to get more information by contacting him by phone or e-mail: (253) 692-5856 **turan@uw.edu**
* One guest suggested these additional sources of information:
* State Department's publication on American Muslims:  [**https://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/American\_Muslims.pdf**](https://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/American_Muslims.pdf)
* American Muslims and Religious Freedom FAQ:  [**https://interfaithalliance.org/americanmuslimfaq/**](https://interfaithalliance.org/americanmuslimfaq/)
* Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Muslims by ING:  [**https://ing.org/top-100-frequently-asked-questions-about-muslims-and-their-faith/**](https://ing.org/top-100-frequently-asked-questions-about-muslims-and-their-faith/)
* The Pluralism Project at Harvard University page on Islam:  [**http://pluralism.org/religions/islam/**](http://pluralism.org/religions/islam/)
* Islam Explained (and MANY more topics/resources):  [**https://www.whyislam.org/brochures/islam-explained/**](https://www.whyislam.org/brochures/islam-explained/)
* American Muslims Video Playlist:  [**https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL75NGzbbbROO8\_dYaLIhqkJSmK0q-9IXN**](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL75NGzbbbROO8_dYaLIhqkJSmK0q-9IXN)
* UPF Film on Muhammad (peace be upon him):  [**https://www.upf.tv/films/muhammad-legacy-of-a-prophet/watch/**](https://www.upf.tv/films/muhammad-legacy-of-a-prophet/watch/)
* Muhammad - The Last Prophet (Animated Cartoon): [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGxVWDLO87I**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGxVWDLO87I)
* Inspiration Series Video Playlist: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-pLS81Hamw&list=PLa83T0LuOY9hd7CeMfnN\_0S41kOvnWKMl**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-pLS81Hamw&list=PLa83T0LuOY9hd7CeMfnN_0S41kOvnWKMl)
* Islam: Empire of Faith (documentary by PBS):  [**https://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/**](https://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/)
* Website for Largest Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Group in America:  [**https://www.cair.com/**](https://www.cair.com/)
* Website for Largest Islamic Center in Washington:  [**www.mapsredmond.org**](http://www.mapsredmond.org)

**Glen thanked our guests and our viewers – and offered closing encouragement.**

I thanked our three guests for sharing their expertise – and for sharing from their hearts as well as their heads:

* Turan Kayaoglu
* Aneelah Afzali
* Mustafa Mohamedali

And I thanked all of the people who have watched.

In our modern era, let’s not assume we are too modern – too sophisticated – too well educated – to appreciate religious faith. Our three guests – modern, well educated professionals – provide good evidence that smart, sophisticated people can indeed believe and practice a religious faith.

Furthermore, I believe that interest and curiosity about a variety of religious faiths are important for becoming well educated and spiritually cultivated.

I hope all of us will explore, learn about, and appreciate Islam and other faiths.

And I hope all of us will insist that our fellow human beings respect – and protect the rights of – people of all faiths, and people who choose to have no organized faith.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at **glenanderson@integra.net**

**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 whatever you can do to help!**