**“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, the environment, 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. Therefore, in order to solve problems, we need to see things in fresh ways.** 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***“ – the view you get by looking from a different perspective. 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. TCTV is part of Thurston County Media. You can see their schedule at [**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 at the issue category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

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

**Here is the July 2019 program:**

**“Houselessness, Human Dignity, and the Right to Survive”**

by Glen Anderson, the TV series’ producer and host
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**Introduction to this interview:**

The July 2019 interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” takes a fresh look at problems and solutions related to homelessness. We dispel some of the myths that interfere with realistic understanding and smart solutions.

Typically, people talk about the issue from afar, but this interview featured a guest who actually is homeless. The viewers can see that he is smart and has good insights about solving problems.

Our other guest co-founded a great local non-profit organization – “Just Housing” – in 2016 and has been working with our homeless guest and a variety of other people:

* to inform the public and local governments,
* to conduct effective advocacy for solving the problems, and
* to provide smart, effective direct services for houseless people.

Both guests understand that people’s first need is for a decent, stable place to live. Local governments need to recognize this basic human right – and to reform public policies instead of using heavy-handed policing to criminalize their poverty and disrupt their makeshift communities.

Glen welcomed these guests who offered smart insights and positive solutions throughout this interview:

* Jamie Joy
* Tye Gundel

**Different people respond in different ways to the issue of homelessness:**

Glen said:

* Some people seem to be annoyed by the mere presence of persons who seem different from them.
* Other people feel concern and support a charity-based approach toward helping them.
* Still other people see the larger context of a society and an economy whose systems fail to treat some folks fairly.
* And some of us either are homeless or have friends who are homeless, so our first-hand experiences affect how we understand the realities.

He said that wherever on this spectrum each person watching this interview is, every person will enjoy hearing from Jamie and Tye. Both guests share knowledge, insights, and recommendations that can improve the public’s understanding and help our local community act with wisdom, compassion, and fairness.

**“Homeless” 🡪 “Houseless”**

Both of our guests prefer replacing the term “homeless” with the term “houseless,” and Jamie sometimes refers to himself as “unhoused.” Jamie explained why “houseless” or “unhoused” are better terms than “homeless.” He said the term “homeless” seems to imply decades-old stereotypes of “dudes who didn’t care.” Decades ago – especially with the G.I. Bill – people had opportunities for houses, educations, and so forth, but he said now this is no longer the case. He said, “Now the unhoused people are no longer that homeless bum. They are a single mom with a couple of kids. They are some 19-year-old dude who was 18 ½ yesterday and got ‘graduated out’ of foster care. The new face of unhoused people is no longer the old face of ‘homeless’ people.”

Glen said people who live in small tents near other people who live in small tents are not “homeless,” because their tents are their homes, and their small community of tents is their “home” community of neighbors. They are not utterly rootless, but they just do not have conventional stable places to live.

Tye said some “houseless” or “unhoused” persons choose those terms because the term “homeless” causes many people to think those persons are rootless and no longer a part of the community where you might have lived all their lives. Rather, they might reply, “I might not have four walls around me or a typical house, but Olympia or Lacey or Tumwater is still my home. I still have a home; I just don’t still have the house that I used to have.”

**We summarized the current situation in Thurston County and elsewhere:**

Tye summarized what has happened in downtown Olympia over the past few years. She said that three years ago some people were sleeping in awning areas downtown, but there were no tents downtown. Local governments kept doing “sweeps” that simply moved people away from where they were. The “sweeps” also immediately removed any tents that appeared. Of course, this was not a real remedy because it did not reduce the numbers of people with no place to live. It tried to suppress their visibility, but that was not practical or sustainable. More people lacked places to live, but cities have tried to create the perception that this is not a crisis downtown.

Jamie said that the “Just Housing” organization started about three years ago. He said he has been continuously homeless in Olympia for more than six years. He said that he would sleep behind various places and ordered to move away from each one in sequence. Without the “Just Housing” organization or the Community Care Center [at State & Franklin, just south of the Intercity Transit station], people were desperate to find any place where they could brush their teeth or wash their hair. Now these two new resources have made people’s lives slightly better – “but only slightly, because it still sucks to be homeless.”

Glen said that even when we recognize our common humanity – which he said is part of what he wants this TV interview to accomplish – the gap still exists, because when we finish the interview he will be able to return to a house, while Jamie won’t.

**Why do so many people in the U.S. lack a reliable place to live?**

Tye said the homelessness crisis has resulted from many other crises. We don’t have enough jobs. Wages are not high enough for people to be able to afford housing. People have suffered childhood abuse or other intense traumas, but our society does not provide enough services to help people recover from those kinds of problems. Many of our society’s systems have not functioned as they should, so they end up causing many people to become homeless.

Glen said that the U.S. treats health care as a commodity to make a profit on instead of providing it as a human right. All of the other rich nations recognize health care as a basic human right, and they provide good quality health care for everyone without charging people a lot of money. But in the U.S., people can’t afford good health care, so they get sicker, or they spend themselves into bankruptcy and homelessness.

Jamie added that mental health care also is important. People who suffer serious losses (jobs, spouses, homes, etc.) might need someone to help them cope with those losses. In the U.S., mental health care is too expensive and not available enough. When a person suffers one serious loss occurs, that could cause problems throughout the rest of that person’s life, perhaps including homelessness.

Glen agreed that “the problems will cascade on from there.” He also said that some politicians are shredding the “safety net” in order to keep taxes down, but that actually costs us more in the long run.

**Houseless folks are real, individual persons – NOT an anonymous “Other.”
All people are one human family.**

Glen said he believes that all people are one human family. We are all in this together. Every person in our local community has a right to be here and deserves basic human dignity and rights. This includes people who do not have a regular place to live. He showed a poster that says:  **“Community is a weaving …. When people are missing, there are holes in the fabric.”** He said the poster came from Jefferson County WA’s social service agency. The caption at the bottom refers to people with developmental disabilities, but its humane message actually pertains also to houseless people and all other kinds of people who are hidden or excluded from mainstream society. Glen said he has displayed that poster on a wall at home for many years because its message is so important. We need to make our society include everyone with equal presence and equal human dignity.

Jamie added that we could also see the “weaving” metaphor as including mainstream people as threads going in one direction and the homeless people and weirdos as threads woven in with the mainstream threads. He said that having threads interwoven like that makes the whole society’s fabric stronger.

Glen added that the old saying, “It takes a village to raise a child” makes sense in this context. The community is stronger when everyone is included: all races, all religions, all abilities, all economic classes, and so forth.

He also said this poster’s message also calls upon everyone to recognize that all kinds of people – including houseless people – are part of our community. Society would be better if anyone and everyone could enjoy normal human interaction, but many mainstream folks tend to avoid recognizing the presence or making eye contact with people who are different from themselves.

Jamie said, “Unhoused people are now considered ‘The Other,’ so you can – with impunity – ignore us.”

Tye said fear is very common, and it is part of the problem. Fear of “The Other” gets worse when we avoid normal conversations with people different from ourselves. We should talk with people, learn their names, discover their stories, and reduce the barriers. We hear that some people are too afraid to go downtown, but she and other people do interact socially with the folks who spend time downtown and enjoy the variety of people who live here.

Glen said he spends a lot of time downtown, especially for meetings and peace vigils, and he has enjoyed talking with pedestrians who stop to visit. Some of the houseless people spend time at the library, and they are well-read. They are fun to talk with. We need to dispel the fears.

**We dispelled the myth that the real problem is drugs or alcohol:**

Glen said mainstream society, the media, and local governments could deal more realistically and effectively with houselessness if we were not held back by some myths and fears that interfere with solving problems. One obstacle is the myth that drugs or alcohol are the reasons why people don’t have better places to live.

Tye debunked that myth. She said that although some people say, “it’s a drug crisis, not a homeless crisis,” but – although drugs are a problem nationwide – they are not the same as the lack of places for people to live. She said that even if our nation were to remove all harmful drugs from the streets tomorrow, many people would still not have places to live. The homelessness crisis needs to be dealt with specifically. Confusing that with drugs or other problems oversimplifies the homelessness crisis and interferes with solving it. She said actually the homelessness crisis has resulted from many systemic failures.

**Instead of blaming people who are houseless or assuming that people are choose to be houseless, we dispelled those myths:**

Glen said another myth is that houselessness is a person’s own fault – that the person actually chose to be houseless.

Jamie said, “It’s my own failing that I was not born into a rich family. It’s my own failing that I worked for twenty years as a salesman and then my place went out of work. It’s my own failing? It’s an economic failing. There are not enough good-paying jobs to pay for even the smallest places to live. That’s the failing. It’s not me. It’s the greater economy.”

Glen said many people who are living in their cars actually are working, but their wages are too low so they can’t afford a decent place to live.

Tye said that if you engaged homeless people in conversation, some of them would say, “I choose this lifestyle.” But she said actually that glib statement is often covering a more complex story. Some people have been homeless since they were children. She said some people don’t even know anymore what it means to be part of mainstream society. Now the homeless community is the only community they know. She agreed with Jamie that many circumstances are beyond their control, so saying “I choose this lifestyle” is a way to regain some sense of agency over their lives. Claiming that choice is a way to empower themselves. Glen agreed that this could be a psychological self-defense mechanism.

Jamie said people living in a shelter have to be gone before 7:00 a.m. and can’t return before 7:00 p.m. They have to figure out what to do during that stretch of time.

We did not have time during this interview for Glen to say that during the two years he worked in public assistance (“welfare”) offices for Washington State’s Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), he quickly figured out that the “welfare” system was designed to humiliate and punish people for being poor rather than recognize systemic problems that cause poverty. Society and our political and economic systems would be embarrassed if too many people starved to death too visibly, so the “welfare” system keeps them alive, but only just barely. Poor people actually “earn” their meager benefits by submitting to the “welfare” system’s persistent humiliation.

**We also dispelled the myth that houseless people are dangerous:**

Glen asked Jamie about the myth that houseless people are dangerous. Glen said this might be one reason why ordinary people tend to avoid eye contact or conversations – and why ordinary people shy away from solving the problem of houselessness.

Jamie jokingly said, “Houseless people can be kind of spooky.” Glen added, “So can people who have a regular place to live. I’ve worked with some of them.”

Jamie said that statistically more unhoused people are attacked by housed people than housed people are attacked by unhoused people. “We are more vulnerable.” Many “hidden homeless” people do not look obviously homeless, but often people who do look dirty and obviously homeless are attacked by young people who think it’s fun to beat up homeless people.

Tye added that just a few days before we taped this interview a stabbing occurred in downtown Olympia. An attacker wearing a mask came up to a homeless person, said he did not like homeless people, and stabbed his victim in the leg.

Glen said that a member of the U.S. Congress is a Muslim woman, and the U.S.’s Executive Branch tries to make us afraid of Muslims, so that fear-mongering has provoked many death threats against her. Glen said the real terrorists are not her but rather the “nice, white non-Muslims” who are threatening to kill her. The recent huge increase in shootings, bombings and terrorist violence in the U.S. has come from white Americans who are not Muslim. These white Americans are attacking Muslims, Jews, gays, African-Americans, and other at-risk populations, but the FBI recently cut back on gathering data on right-wing terrorism because their political agenda is to blame only people who are not right-wingers.

Jamie remembered the fear-mongering during the 1960 election when some people wanted us to be afraid of JFK because he was Catholic – another example of “The Other” who would hurt our nation if he were elected.

**We discussed some realities of living and/or spending time downtown, in parks, and other public places:**

Glen said that an important obstacle to solving social problems is a lack of empathy and understanding. When nice people are judgmental against someone who is different, that polarizes society. Glen affirmed the inherent sense of our common humanity. He said he believes all people are one human family, so we need empathy in order to solve social problems.

For example, he said he lives in a house, so he can take for granted the routine resources that a houseless person lacks. Glen said:

* I have a house where I keep my personal belongings inside a building. If I didn’t have that, where would I keep my clothing and my other stuff? Drag it around in a shopping cart? Carry a big bag?
* I have a bedroom, so I can sleep inside. If I didn’t have that, where would I sleep?
* I have a bathroom inside my house. If I didn’t have a bathroom, where would I go?
* I can hang out in my living room at any time of the day or night – and nobody gets judgmental. But for some people without a house, Sylvester Park is their *de facto* living room. We need to recognize that a houseless person needs to improvise to achieve a living room, even if it is a public park.
* My garbage is picked up by a truck that visits my neighborhood. If I didn’t have that resource, how would I get rid of my garbage?

These are basic human realities. Both of our interview guests and other advocates for houseless people say that our system “criminalizes survival.” That’s an important insight.

Jamie added the additional difference that people who live in buildings not only have kitchens, bathrooms and closets, but they also have shelves where they can display knickknacks and mementos reflecting memories from good times past. Also, people who live in buildings have walls where they can hang up pictures of their mothers and grandmothers. He said people who live in tents don’t have shelves or walls, so even if they had pictures of their families, those would get destroyed by the city government the next time a police “sweep” destroys everybody’s tents and belongings. Glen added that these items in tents also would be damaged by the humidity and rain, and Tye added that flooding also sometimes destroys them.

Jamie said, “We do not have a past to look back upon. We do not have a future to look forward to. All we have is tonight. Will we live through tonight?”

Glen called upon the general public to better understand the different realities and to muster some empathy and understanding, so our society can actually solve the problems.

**We discussed a few more realities of encampments in the woods:**

Glen invited Jamie to share any further insights from his experience living in encampments in the woods.

Jamie said that he started living in the woods “years and years ago.” Back then, “Just Housing” did not exist, and the local community was very negative toward unhoused people, so he and others used to have to hide from public view. They’d camp behind this place, and a “sweep” would remove them, so they’d camp behind some other place and another “sweep” would remove them, and that pattern continued.

He said in the past few years the local community recognized that now there are “too many people to sweep,” so they were allowed to camp in certain areas. He quoted a city official who said, “We tried doing nothing, and that didn’t work.”

Tye said that she has talked with people who have never known anyone who lived in an encampment. Some people think that would be an easy life without bills to pay or jobs to go to (assuming that houseless people do not have jobs). She said living in a tent is not an easy life. Tenters need to worry about rats that can chew through the tent. They have no door to lock to protect their stuff or their privacy from other people. “There’s no security. There’s no permanence. There’s no safety. That’s the reality of living in the shadows – in the forest, under the bridges, along the tracks.”

Glen added the fact that this is constant stress. Jamie said, “It’s night after night. It’s day after day. Every time I leave my tent, I’m not sure it will be there when I come back.” He said he arranges with his neighbors to watch his tent, but this is not something that a person living in an apartment would need to do; an apartment resident would not need to find someone to watch his door.

**How could cities and the residents of encampments in the woods make the encampments work better?**

Glen invited Jamie and Tye to offer insights and suggestions for how the residents of encampments – and local governments – can make the encampments work better.

Tye agreed with Jamie’s previous statement criticizing local government policy of moving people from one place to another. She said they call that “the whack-a-mole approach.” Jamie said they also refer to that as “Camp Carousel.” He said the City of Olympia had coined the term “whack-a-mole” for this policy.

Tye said they keep telling the city that its “sweeps” do not solve any of the problems that occur at encampments. The problems at the encampments (garbage, human waste, etc.) could be solved directly by providing the necessary services at those locations. She said that garbage exists because there are no garbage services, and human waste exists because there are no bathrooms. She said they did convince the City of Olympia to start providing some of these necessary services at certain locations, and the conditions at those locations have improved significantly.

Glen said that every “sweep” on the “carousel” destroys not only people’s property but also the sense of community the residents have built there. People who have set up tents near each other have created a neighborhood community that they self-manage. Tye agreed that the “sweeps” cause chaos and force people to start from scratch all over again somewhere else.

Jamie added another problem that the “sweeps” cause. He said suppose a woman who lives in a tent needs insulin, and she is away when a “sweep” occurs. The city destroys her tent and the insulin that she needs for survival.

Tye said the “sweeps” also destroy the identification documents and other personal documents that people need, and their personal photographs – perhaps the last photos they have of their families – and other irreplaceable items.

She said “sweeps” do not solve the real, underlying problems. There are not enough places for people to live, so encampments are certain to occur. Jamie agreed that until we create thousands of new bedrooms, there will certainly be people living in the woods.

**We discussed the *Martin v. Boise* decision and the *Oakland* decision:**

Tye explained how the court decision *Martin v. Boise* changed local situations. She said the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of a group of houseless people in Boise, Idaho, for criminalizing sleeping outside. The court ruled that it is unconstitutional for a local government to outlaw performing basic life-sustaining activities like sleeping or releasing body wastes when they have no place else to go.

This forced local governments to stop merely “sweeping” people and to start offering alternatives that would obey the Constitution.

Jamie added that the alternatives would have to be indoor alternatives. He said this was a big deal – until last summer’s *Oakland* court decision changed things again.

Tye said that after the *Martin v. Boise* decision, the *Oakland* decision changed things again and removed the city’s need to identify enough beds for people. It was merely enough to provide a list of resources, whether or not enough beds existed at the places on the list.

Jamie and Tye added that the *Oakland* decision allows governments to evict people because of “public health and safety” concerns. Glen said that is a very broad and vague standard. Jamie said one place had radon that everybody knew about for many years, and another place had asbestos that everybody knew about for years. He said that places where people have been for many years now are suddenly no longer available because of “health and safety” reasons.

Glen said some of this is rooted in the attitudes that we had discussed earlier in this interview. He said, “if we can change people’s consciousness and attitudes, they will find solutions.”

Tye said after the *Martin v. Boise* decision, the City of Olympia paused their sweeps. She said that she and other advocates asked whether the pause was intended to create time for finding better alternatives and better policies, or were they looking for loopholes. What we discovered was loopholes.

After the *Oakland* decision, the City of Olympia started sweeps again.

**We discussed the City of Olympia’s concentrated tent city downtown:**

Glen asked about the very concentrated tent city existed for a while in downtown Olympia north of State Avenue, across Franklin Street from the Intercity Transit station. Tye said that in June 2018 there were three camps downtown on B Avenue, the Smart lot, and the Franklin Street lot. Each encampment had its own personality and vibes, so local houseless persons moved into the camp that best suited their own personalities and affinities.

She said the City of Olympia experimented with loopholes it found in *Martin v. Boise* and started closing down those three camps in stages. The Franklin Street site was swept in order to make room for the “mitigation site” that exists there now. Then the City started closing down the B Avenue camp and another camp elsewhere. The City proceeded to close down alternatives and cram people together into the Smart lot, and then the City started taking away pieces of that. She and Jamie said that about 300 tents were crammed into a tiny space of just 1/3 of an acre. She said that although the three camps might have looked chaotic to outsiders, the “health and safety” problems actually got worse when the City crammed so many people into one very small space.

Glen said, “The City should have known not to cram a whole lot of people into a tight space.” Jamie said finally the City brought a small dumpster and portable toilets to the site, but they were not adequate for the huge number of people camping there. He said that the City failed to clean them, so the residents themselves voluntarily cleaned them because the City had failed to do that. Glen said the City was negligent and stupid to cram so many people together and not provide the necessary services for health and safety. Tye said that many people felt that they were being “set up for failure” by the City. The City finally had an excuse to get rid of all of the camps.

**How could society, the media, and governments better understand the realities?**

Ordinary people need to better understand the other realities and problems beyond what we have discussed already. Glen said he heard Tye, Jamie, and other people speak at a public event in late March 2019 at the Lacey Library. They provided the kinds of information and insights that they are sharing during this interview.

At that event Jamie had said that houseless people are the “subject-matter experts” who should be shaping the decisions and plans. Glen said that so much public policy comes from the top down, but if we really want to solve problems governments should talk with the people who are directly affected because those people can figure out the solutions. Glen said the solutions that the “Just Housing” people presented at that March 2019 event in Lacey are the kinds of solutions our community needs. For example, houseless people know how to create and self-manage encampments, how to make them safe, how to keep troublemakers out, and so forth. Solutions are available, but governments need to listen to the houseless folks themselves and their allies and advocates.

Jamie said, “We’ve had to figure out our own solutions.” Glen said governments need to be open to hearing from houseless people, and need to welcome their participation, be responsive, and take smart actions to meet their needs. Jamie said that the governments don’t even need to invite their participation – just recognize that houseless people have been devising self-management solutions for years, so maybe the houseless people themselves have useful insights.

Tye added that local governments tend to see houseless people as the problem, when really they are part of the solutions to the actual problems. Until governments see the reality in this fresh way, we’ll continue to experience a lack of space at the table, so the people who are directly affected are denied a voice.

Glen said this sounds like the old metaphor of a canary in a mine. A mining company is extracting ore from underground, but their processes cause dangerous fumes, so they bring a caged canary underground, and if the canary dies they know that the fumes have become too dangerous. People who are hurt by public policy screw-ups are like those canaries in the mines. Governments should recognize that suffering people are symptoms of systemic problems. Jamie said that when multiple canaries become homeless, other people should become concerned.

**We dispelled the myth that compassion and services make us a “magnet”:**

Glen said that houselessness exists all throughout the United States. But in most local communities, some people oppose providing services for fear that their communities will become “magnets” that would attract people from other parts of the nation. Glen said the absence of compassionate services comes partly from ignorance – and partly as an excuse for refusing to practice compassion and refusing to help poor people.

Jamie said it is “Other-ing” other people. He said that despite the number of homeless people in Olympia, there are many also in every other community, including Seattle, Tacoma, Puyallup, Longview, and everywhere else. “We are not a “magnet.”

Glen said homeless people live in rural Thurston County, and “rural every place in the U.S. It’s cities. It’s rural. It’s every place.” He said, “Any community that wants an excuse to refuse to take responsible action will say, ‘we can’t be compassionate because then we’ll be a magnet.’”

Tye said research has shown that most of the houseless people in Thurston County actually are from our local community, not from elsewhere. But, she said, even if that were not true, she says her organization, “Just Housing,” asks, “would it be so wrong if people wanted to come to our community because they know that we are a kind and compassionate and welcoming community?” She said our local community keeps trying to attract more people to move here – but not poor folks.

Glen said local governments and businesses are always doing outreach to bring in new people.

Jamie said, “Those of us who are unhoused are not just unhoused. I used to be an office manager. I know so many people who know welding and plumbing and drywall and electricians.” Tye added that some houseless people are artists. Jamie said, “If you were hiring, and two persons came in – one housed and the other unhoused – who would you hire?”

Glen said people often move from one place to another because they have landed a job in a different community. They say, “I’m going to move to Bellingham because I got a job offer there.” He said that society thinks “it’s OK for people to move to someplace because they have a job offer, and the new city welcomes them.” Cities want to be “magnets” for people who are employable. But there is a double-standard when a city welcomes people to move there to take a job, but rebuffs people who move there without jobs.

Tye said she knows many people who are houseless in Olympia who had moved here to work at new jobs but when their jobs ended – or some other life situation fell through –they ended up stuck here without places to live.

Jamie said he also knows many houseless people in Olympia who used to work in Olympia. “The place I used to work is no longer in business. Now what?”

**Besides discussing Olympia, we also recommended solutions for Lacey and all of Thurston County. “Just Housing” works throughout our local county:**

The local organization “Just Housing” has been urging the City of Olympia to take positive actions, and they have been urging the City of Lacey too. Jamie said Olympia has been frustrating, but they still have hope for Lacey.

Tye said that all of our local cities should be doing many of the same things to relieve the problems. Solutions might look different in different communities, but the basic issues are to address the long-term systemic issues such as jobs, wages and housing costs.

She said “Just Housing” also works on meeting people’s short-term immediate needs. She said “Just Housing” gets criticized for applying band-aids (emergency shelters, encampments, etc.), but she said band-aids are important because they stop bleeding and protect from infections. Band-aids do not actually heal the wounds, but they protect the wounds from getting worse. She affirmed the need to work on short-term solutions even while they also work on long-term solutions and actually end the houselessness crisis.

Jamie added, “Olympia has been bleeding too long.”

Glen expressed appreciation for their work with the City of Lacey. In fact, the City Council was planning to make a relevant decision during the meeting that was occurring in the evening when we were conducting this interview on Thursday evening June 13.

Many local governments have imposed controversial bans on camping. Olympia still has theirs, despite the criticism the City has been receiving. Most cities have stopped imposing new camping bans because of the *Martin v. Boise* decision. Tye said it is disheartening to see the City of Lacey considering imposing a camping ban at tonight’s City Council meeting. “It seems like a step backward instead of a step forward.”

Glen reminded our viewers that it’s not just individual cities, but it’s also rural areas throughout this county and in cities and counties nationwide.

Jamie said, “Every time rent goes up by 1% or 2%, homelessness goes up by 1% or 2%, because people who were just barely getting along last year can’t afford the rent this year.” He said as long as rent keeps going up while wages stay stagnant, we are going to have more and more homeless people.

He said the situation now is very different from decades ago when a homeless person was considered “a bum who doesn’t want to work.” Now homeless people are folks who were housed last year but aren’t anymore. Glen agreed that these folks “got pushed out systemically.”

**“Shelter in place” is a practical policy that should be used more often:**

Glen said people might have heard advocates talk about “shelter in place.”

Tye explained the concept of “shelter in place” by starting with a local example. She said a year ago a camp existed on private property. It was referred to as the Nickerson encampment. “Just Housing” worked with the people who were camping there. The City of Olympia bought the property, so the camp suddenly became illegal because it violated the City’s ban of camping on public property. Within two weeks the City issued an eviction notice.

“Just Housing” worked with the residents to ask the City Council to stop the eviction and allow time for the campers to work with people in the larger community to solve the specific problems (garbage, human waste, etc.). This would solve problems instead of merely displace people.

An Olympia congregation, the United Churches, worked with “Just Housing” to meet the needs for garbage collection, laundry, access to showers, and safe heat. Instead of moving the people – and the inherent problems – to another location, they actually worked with the residents to solve the challenges. She said, “That’s ‘shelter in place.’”

**The best research supports providing stable housing first, before changing behavior, etc.**

Glen expressed support for another reform that came along a number of years ago and is slowly being adopted in a number of places. He said that typically, local governments have insisted that houseless people stop drinking or stop taking drugs or start reliable mental health treatment BEFORE they could qualify for stable housing. Jamie referred to this as a “high barrier” approach. Glen said solid research has reversed that typical sequence. Research was proving that housing people is the FIRST step toward solving problems. Only after a person’s housing has been stabilized will the person become better able to deal with other personal problems. This is the “Housing First” model. More than a decade ago, Washington State’s King County (where Seattle is) and other places started paying attention to this solid research and started changing their policies and practices to improve effectiveness.

Tye said she strongly supports this “Housing First” model. She said most of the relevant social service agencies in our local community have switched over to this “Housing First” strategy. They recognized that the traditional sequence put people more at risk of dying on the streets. People who relapsed got kicked out of their shelters and became more at risk on the streets. But when people are housed in a stable place for a longer period of time they are better able to get access to services so they can stay on their medications and get clean and sober and safe. This better strategy “meets people where they are.”

Jamie said, “Imagine you’ve been unhoused for six months or a year. You’ve got no guarantee that your place will be there if you go to Salvation Army to get dinner. Your ‘house’ might not be there when you get back. But maybe someone has a beer or some weed or whatever. But because we lack stability we look for some reason to look for some way to not think about that lack of stability. So once we are given some stability, this place will be there tonight when I get back.” He said this reduces the need for escapism.

Tye added that this positive change occurs even apart from mainstream housing, because even a safe place to keep one’s tent provides some security and stability. The mitigation site has made it more possible for people to find jobs and health care and permanent housing.

**The Community Care Center in downtown Olympia does good work:**

Another improvement locally is the Community Care Center opened, which opened in September 2017 at the corner of State & Franklin in downtown Olympia, across from the Intercity Transit station. They seem to be doing good work in providing a variety of services and helping provide stability for people.

We did not have time during this interview to mention something that Tye had told Glen in advance of our interview. She said that some people with health problems need better community services so they can stop being trapped in a revolving door of hospitalization and suffering on the outside. She said that our community also needs a “respite center” so people can actually recover.

**“Just Housing” does good work in the greater Olympia area!**

In 2016 Tye and Renata Rollins co-founded a local grassroots organization called “Just Housing.” Tye is currently the main organizer, and Jamie and many other people help the organization carry on its good work.

“Just Housing” emphasizes two main kinds of work:

1. Their **#1 focus** is political advocacy (*e.g*., to “legalize survival” and decriminalize houselessness.
2. Their **#2 focus** is direct services for houseless people.

Tye said they help people keep their encampments clean and safe by picking up the garbage that the campers have put into bags. They also support local bathrooms. She said the City of Olympia told them that the City did not know how to provide those services, so she said “Just Housing” offered to show them how. Glen added that the City of Olympia owns and operates a garbage collection utility. Tye said “Just Housing” works with the residents of encampments by helping to do massive cleanups and then organizing residents to collect their ongoing garbage in bags and bring them out for weekly pickups by volunteers who donate the use of their trucks at regular dates and times. Glen said this is exactly what happens routinely in his own middle-class residential neighborhood where people put their garbage out on certain dates for pickup.

She said they connect people with outreach services conducted by some faith communities and non-profit organizations that provide basic survival supplies, laundry services, and some other basic health and safety supports so houseless people’s lives will be somewhat easier.

Jamie added that some other organizations are doing things to make people’s lives easier. But he said some are corporations or governmental organizations that are part of “the system.” He said what’s different about “Just Housing” is that “Just Housing” actually talks directly with the people and – instead of telling them “here’s what we’re giving you” – asks the people open-mindedly “what do you need?” Tye said people told “Just Housing” that they needed garbage pickups and bathrooms, so that’s what her grassroots organization provided. Jamie added that the group also provides socks, which people always really need.

Glen affirmed that “Just Housing” is doing highly effective grassroots organizing from the bottom-up instead of the typical top-down way in which governments and many social service agencies deal with houseless people. A good example is that they collaborate with houseless people to collect and remove garbage. They create an opportunity for collaboration with, rather than “doing for.” Residents bag their garbage, just like other people do. Jamie said houseless people do like to take care of their own garbage collection. It gives “agency.”

Glen encouraged people to contact “Just Housing” and work with them. Phone them at (360) 562-0239 or e-mail them at **contact@justhousingolympia.org** Their website is [**www.justhousingolympia.org**](http://www.justhousingolympia.org) Connect with their Facebook page, which is [**www.facebook.com/justhousingoly**](http://www.facebook.com/justhousingoly)

The public is welcome to Just Housing’s weekly meetings every Tuesday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm at the POWER office, 309 5th Ave SE in downtown Olympia. The first hour (2-3 pm) is the organizing meeting focused on internal organization, funding, and strategy planning. The second two hours (3-5 pm) is the general meeting with updates and discussion on current projects and events.

**Watch this interview on TV and/or on your computer where you can also read what we said:**

Glen said this TV interview will air on Thurston Community Media, cable channel 22 in Thurston County WA three times a week throughout June 2019: every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm.

Also, he posted this TV interview to his blog. He invited people to visit [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) and click on the “TV Programs” link or the “Economics” link or the “Human Rights” link or the “Olympia Area” link. Click the program title, **“Houselessness, Human Dignity, and the Right to Survive.”**

On the blog people can watch this one-hour interview and also read Glen’s very thorough summary of what we said during the interview. ***(You are reading that thorough summary now.)***

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked our guests:

* Jamie Joy
* Tye Gundel

He also thanked the people who have been watching this interview.

This TV **series** deals with problems and proposes very workable solutions. Houselessness is a serious problem in the United States, but **very workable solutions really do exist**.

* We need to understand the problems accurately.
* We need to work for **long-term** solutions, which include changing our society’s values and attitudes – and our economy – so every person is valued.
* We need **short-term** solutions too. The immediate remedy is to see this as a social and economic issue rather than a law-enforcement issue. Also, we need to see the systemic causes rather than blame individuals who are poor. We must stop criminalizing poverty.
* The other **immediate** remedy is to make sure every person has a decent, reliable place to live. Research proves that stabilizing a person’s housing is the first step before dealing with personal or behavioral problems.
* **A crucial first step** toward solving the problems is to actually bring the affected people directly into the conversation. **Houseless people themselves** have first-hand knowledge and insights. This interview’s houseless guest has shown that they can help our society solve problems.

**We can solve the problems if we really want to!**

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**

I end each TV program with this encouragement:

**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!**