De-Polarizing – MORE RESOURCES

Glen Anderson compiled these resources to accompany this TV program and help us organize from the grassroots for a truly nonviolent society.

**The November 2020 TV program on “How to De-Polarize American Society”** provided good information. These additional resources go beyond what we said.

You can watch the TV interview itself and read the thorough summary of what we said during the interview (and ending with links to some information resources) at this link on Glen Anderson’s blog: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society)

Besides the “MORE RESOURCES” page you are reading now, also see an additional blog post with even MORE RESOURCES: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/de-polarizing-american-society-more-resources**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/de-polarizing-american-society-more-resources)

Also see some resources relevant to this topic (“How to De-Polarize American Society”) on my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), especially at categories **“Nonviolence”** and **“Conflict Resolution.”**

I have always valued this quotation by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, which I’d like to see practice at the interpersonal level and also at the society-wide level: “If we could read the secret history of our ‘enemies’ we should find in each person’s life, sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”

Since 2002 the Nonviolent Peaceforce ([**www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org**](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)) has done amazingly good work in some of the world’s most heavily conflicted areas to de-escalate conflicts, dispel rumors, build communication between various factions, train local people to do these kinds of peacemaking and reconciling work, etc. When the Nonviolent Peaceforce was being created, I produced a TV program about it and started donating generous financial support. I have been reading their publications for a good number of years. In October 2020 I received a mailing from them that made me think of the work of the three guests from other organizations whom I interviewed for my November 2020 TV program. You might want to read this: [**https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/blog/english-press-clips/892-nonpartisanship-in-an-age-of-division**](https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/blog/english-press-clips/892-nonpartisanship-in-an-age-of-division) In late 2020 they were offering video conversations promoting nonviolence worldwide and locally. Here is an example: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JeTierbhqY&feature=youtu.be&t=96**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JeTierbhqY&feature=youtu.be&t=96)

A guest for the November 2020 TV program recommended [**https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news**](https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news) and this example from their Red/Blue Dictionary: [**https://www.allsides.com/dictionary/compassion**](https://www.allsides.com/dictionary/compassion)

The short “TED” video at this link is grounded in a compassionate approach that seems highly relevant to our November 2020 TV program: [**https://www.ted.com/talks/dannagal\_g\_young\_how\_your\_personality\_shapes\_your\_politics**](https://www.ted.com/talks/dannagal_g_young_how_your_personality_shapes_your_politics)

Also, some of the items in the “Watch next” part on the screen’s right side look relevant to our TV topic, but I have not yet watched any of these.

A non-profit organization is exploring the potential of neutral mediation to resolve “seemingly intractable issues.” See this: [**https://thefulcrum.us/employing-mediation-skills-to-tackle-seemingly-intractable-issues**](https://thefulcrum.us/employing-mediation-skills-to-tackle-seemingly-intractable-issues)

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**Social media promote and reinforce polarization:**

A documentary film that exposes social media's problems – including its strong tendency to misinform and lie – is watchable online through Netflix ([**www.netflix.com**](http://www.netflix.com)). For almost an hour it explains the manipulative design in social media, and then – nearly an hour into it – it explains how it has spread horrible lies and conspiracy theories and has caused extreme political polarization. Businesses created social media (Facebook, Twitter, and so forth) in order to sell advertising and manipulate our behavior.  They monitor every click people make and gather extremely detailed information about every person who uses social media so they can sell ads – and convey political messages to them – and actually addict them to the social media, cell phones and so forth.

The documentary film titled, “The Social Dilemma” explains how social media has polarized people toward the extreme Right Wing and to other political positions.  The social media companies’ algorithms monitor what people click on and feed them more of the same.  Therefore, somebody who reads any conspiracy theory on the internet gets fed more conspiracy theories by their social media and search engines. Research has shown that the internet and social media spread false information 6 times faster than true information.

**In case you don’t want to watch all of it, you’ll see that the most relevant part of "The Social Dilemma" (about lies and polarization) starts at about 50 minutes and goes for about 15 minutes.**

**Martin Luther King, Jr., dealt boldly and constructively with profound divisiveness:**

Martin Luther King, Jr., was thoroughly grounded in profound nonviolence, and he maintained that throughout his career, even during extreme polarization during the Civil Rights Movement. In various speeches and writings, including his famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” he explained the need to break the silence and raise the issues of racial justice and freedom. Some white folks were accusing him of causing problems, but he kept explaining that he was only bringing to the surface problems that had long existed, so now they could be dealt with. He exposed latent problems and practiced compassion in helping various kinds of people deal with them. The underlying problems were actually a form of violence, and the Civil Rights Movement worked to resolve them nonviolently.

At one point King wrote: “The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. … Returning violence for violence multiples violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

This insight is fully consistent with the point that I make in the workshops I conduct to help people organize nonviolent grassroots movements for social and political change. I explain that conflict has always existed, and conflict always will exist. What nonviolence does is change the dynamics of the conflict – rewrite the script about how the conflict will play out. Nonviolence is courageous and proactive and powerful.

Don’t let anyone mislead you into thinking that Martin Luther King was a wimp, or that he was soft on racism. He was very boldly courageous in fighting racism with the only strategy that can succeed: strategic nonviolence.