**“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***,” which is 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 information about various issues at the category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

**This summary includes some information and insights that we did not have time to include during that hour. Many of these are ideas that a guest or Glen had said while preparing for the interview. These additional insights are added under the relevant topic headings below.**

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

**🡪 Also watch and read PART 1 of this two-part interview (November & December 2020) at** [**How to De-Polarize American Society – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society)

**December 2020
“Practical Ways to De-Polarize American Society”**

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

This month’s interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” can help us heal our sharply divided nation. We conducted this interview two weeks after the 2020 election, and this TV program will continue to be a useful resource long after the January 2021 Inauguration Day. That’s because our nation’s polarization has actually existed for a very long time – not just the past four years – and the polarization will continue until we accomplish profound healing.

While elections decide winners and losers for political office, election results do NOT change the minds of the people whose candidates lost, so the losing candidates’ supporters do not go away. They and their thoughts and feelings persist in our society, and they will re-surface in many ways. Therefore, our society needs to practice understanding and healing.

Regardless of where you are on the political spectrum, this TV interview will help you understand the problems and provide practical remedies, so our nation can heal and move ahead.

The remedies include listening deeply to people with whom we disagree – and practicing understanding and compassion, even while we disagree. This does NOT mean ignoring our own values or our own understanding of this issues. Instead, we do need to help our nation have open, honest conversations about things that matter.

We addressed this topic also in our November 2020 TV interview, “How to De-Polarize American Society.” You can watch that interview anytime through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).and/or read a thorough summary of what we said. See the blog’s sections for “TV Programs” or “Nonviolence.” The direct link is [**How to De-Polarize American Society – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society)

Now this December 2020 interview explores the subject in more ways and provides many practical solutions. **This month’s TV will make perfect sense to you, even if you did not watch last month’s program. And if you did watch November’s program, this December program will provide fresh insights and solutions instead of being redundant.**

As I do each month, I typed up a thorough summary of what we said during December’s interview. (You are reading it now.) This thorough summary includes links to many additional sources of information. This is posted to the “TV Programs” section and the “Nonviolence” section of my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)

Two guests helped us explore this subject. I happily welcomed back two of the guests from November’s interview. **Susan Partnow** and **Rachel Eryn Kalish** have long and deep experience helping people in many parts of the world resolve conflicts through the Compassionate Listening model. They work with the Compassionate Listening Project ([**www.compassionatelistening.org**](http://www.compassionatelistening.org)). Susan and Rachel Eryn shared their exceptional knowledge and skills and applied them to the serious polarization that people in the United States are experiencing nowadays.

**Glen briefly summarized what our guests said in November’s interview:**

Glen briefly summarized the November 2020 TV interview so people who missed it will better understand what we discussed for December.

In November we discussed the need to observe what’s going on and discuss it objectively with people whose ideas or beliefs are different from our own. We discussed the need to accurately recognize other people’s feelings and our own feelings – and other people’s needs and values as well as our own.

If we remain calm and show respect for people who differ from ourselves, we can create an atmosphere that allows honest conversation that allows better understanding – and perhaps even finding some points of agreement. But if we still disagree, that’s OK if we handle our differences well.

We need to start within ourselves with deep grounding and awareness so we will be able to manage our own “triggers” without getting into an argument with somebody who has different ideas. We need to respect the other person’s right to hold ideas and beliefs that are different from our own.

Then we will be able to listen deeply and seek to truly understand the other person. When the other person feels respected as a person, we are able to move closer to respect each other, truly hear and understand our differences, and perhaps move toward de-polarizing. It’s OK if neither person changes the other one’s mind, so long as we practice civility in our conversation.

We discussed the need to avoid labeling, name-calling, and so forth. We can disagree without being disagreeable. It’s somewhat like the old saying, “hate the sin but love the sinner.” Let’s respect the other person’s full humanity and experience being truly “with” the other person at a deep level, even if we disagree about facts and issues.

**More insights – and practical applications from PART 1’S insights:**

When we were preparing for this interview, Rachel Eryn said she wants to create an “opening” – an “opening of the mind” or a “softening of the heart.” She urges people to “lean back a little bit” and “soften a little bit” instead of being caught in the “fight-flight-or freeze” trap that are hard-wired into people’s amygdalas. This will help us be “a little more spacious, a little more curious, a little more open,” so we will be more open-hearted and open-minded.

***We did not have time during the interview to mention these additional relevant insights:***

Communicating in person is more likely to work well than communicating online, where rudeness is easy and occurs often.

This old saying is valid: “It’s possible to disagree without being disagreeable.”

Often it helps to defer substantive discussion of issues until after we have built a human connection with the other person and helped the other person to feel valued. After making that kind of connection we can have a better conversation about issues.

Resist the temptation to get swept away with righteousness or anger. It is possible to carry a small stone in our pocket and touch it to “ground” ourselves in case of turmoil.

**Echo chambers and confirmation bias:**

Glen said Americans have become much more polarized because we no longer hear or read the same information. Decades ago everybody watched the same three big TV networks and read the same newspapers. But now the political Left and the political Right have their own different sources of news, facts and information – and the Left and Right have their own different sources of opinion, propaganda, and bias.

He added that because of this, people no longer have the same understanding of what is real – what is true. Each end of the political spectrum is free to denounce as “fake news” anything the people on the other end of the political spectrum believe. Also, nowadays conspiracy theories are widely believed. Fewer people trust science, and a growing number of people even believe the earth is flat.

Rachel Eryn said she finds this media diversity to be a fascinating subject. She said that for a very long time most of the news media found and reported on the truth in the middle, and they omitted the partial truths and the distortions that the right wing and left wing were trying to raise. She said now people on the political left and right are taking information from their margins and asserting that their own information are the only truths. She said this makes it very hard for our society to understand or discuss the facts. She said she has tried to discuss facts with people – both in person and on Facebook – who absolutely do not agree on the facts because they rely on different sources.

She has found a good remedy is to ask people to set aside factual matters and start discussing what each of us values. This creates a starting point for more fruitful discussions.

Glen expressed appreciation for this approach. He said every person has values of some kind or another, even if we are not consciously aware of our values or can’t articulate our values. He thanked both guests for their skills in helping other people become aware of what their values really are. This process is both humanizing and healing.

**Social media are a big part of these echo chambers and confirmation bias:**

Both Rachel Eryn and Glen had watched the 2020 Netflix Documentary film titled, “The Social Dilemma” ([**www.thesocialdilemma.com**](http://www.thesocialdilemma.com)). The film expands upon some of the realities we have mentioned just now.

*To introduce you to what we said during the interview, Glen provides this summary (not in the interview itself) that summarizes the documentary’s message: Social media tend strongly to misinform and lie. For almost an hour the documentary explains the manipulative design in social media, and then – nearly an hour into it – it explains how social media have spread lies and conspiracy theories that have caused extreme political polarization. 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.*

Rachel Eryn said the problem is likely to get worse because many people who do not believe Biden won are using social media to strengthen the movement to deny the election results, based on sources that represent a very different sense of reality than what most people accept.

She summarized the message from “The Social Dilemma” that is relevant to our current topic. She said social media use computerized algorithms to select topics and messages that are designed to reinforce what we already believe. So, for example, somebody whose internet search history shows that the person believes the climate crisis is an existential crisis will find information popping up that reinforces their concern about this serious crisis, but somebody else whose internet search history shows that they think the climate crisis is a hoax will find information popping up that reinforces their notion that it is only a hoax.

As a result, she said, people are living in different realities, and the internet’s algorithms reinforce our different realities. This is even more true on social media. Rachel Eryn said this is a huge societal problem – far bigger than today’s topic of how to have a conversation with people who think differently.

Glen offered the example that if he thinks the earth is flat and searches the internet for information about the flat earth theory, the high-tech algorithms in his web searches will feed him more links and prompts providing more information that supports his obsession that the earth is flat and debunking the baloney that the earth is a sphere. This would lead him to disregard the people who think the earth is a sphere and would marginalize himself into the growing community of “flat-earth” believers. Rachel Eryn said this kind of reinforcement is highly validating and allows Glen to enjoy being with other people who believe exactly what he believes.

Susan said this is a good example of the “confirmation bias” that we had talked about before. Glen said “confirmation bias” is the term psychologists have been using for a long time for this kind of phenomenon. Rachel Eryn said this is part of being human. Glen said we need to understand how this kind of “tunnel vision” works and what it means for our current political era.

***We did not have time during the interview to mention these additional relevant insights:***

Our current era’s “climate denialism” and the repression of science and negativity toward actual truth are not new. Rather, they are escalations of long-term aspects of American society.

Decades ago historian Richard Hofstadter wrote an insightful book titled, ***Anti-Intellectualism in American Life***. He has defined anti-intellectualism as “resentment of the life of the mind, and those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition to constantly minimize the value of that life.”

The great scientist and writer Isaac Asimov wrote, “[There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there has always been. The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that ‘my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.’”](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/461118)

People would think more accurately if they were to question the media they watch or read – and to get out of the “echo chamber” and watch or listen to somebody different. Psychologists recognize that “confirmation bias” is what occurs when we seek out and take in only those kinds of information that reinforce what we already think or believe. See the article in a recent issue of ***Wired*** magazine: [**https://www.wired.com/story/facebook-twitter-echo-chamber-confirmation-bias/**](https://www.wired.com/story/facebook-twitter-echo-chamber-confirmation-bias/)

Even within the progressive movement, some of our own words and actions provoke more political polarization, so we need to practice Compassionate Listening within our own movement too.

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.

Research has shown that the internet and social media spread false information 6 times faster than true information.

**Convert a “no” into some way to move forward:**

Glen said it is easy for someone to say “YES” to what they believe and “NO” to something different that someone else believes. He invited our guests to discuss how to deal with reactions that are basically “NO.” For example, when some people hear a “NO” to what they have said, they simply stop and give up. But when we were preparing for this interview, both guests offered insights and encouragements for getting beyond an initial “NO.” We explored their remedies now.

Rachel Eryn said that in biology, “a cell has a permeable membrane,” and she suggested we explore permeability by saying things like, “That’s interesting. How did you develop that idea?” She said that she and Susan teach this kind of approach often. She said that a hard “NO” shuts the other person down, but if we are somewhat permeable we can connect with another person by asking how they developed their idea, saying we see it differently, and discussing it in an open-hearted way. She and Susan like to keep intact the bridges of connection with other people. Even if nobody changes the other person’s minds, we can discuss without fracturing the relationship or ripping the community apart. It helps to try to understand what’s going on with the other person and understand each other’s deep values so we can connect at the level of deep values.

Susan added that it helps a lot to be aware of our intention. If we really want to have a connection and build a bridge that each of us might be willing to cross, then we can keep seeing that person’s humanity with dignity and curiosity about understanding them. She said that from our end of the bridge things look different than from the other person’s end of the bridge. Let’s cross the bridge so we can see and understand each other’s reality.

She agreed with Rachel Eryn about digging to the deepest values of each person, so we will find points of connection, “because our values represent our yearning for wholeness – and rightness in the world.” She believes “all persons are interconnected, so ultimately we all need and want the same thing.” For example, we can discover that all of us want safety, and all of us want our families to feel secure. Even if we each have different strategies about how to achieve these, we can at least connect in sharing deep values “when we meet on that bridge.”

Glen thanked Susan for mentioning William Ury’s metaphor of the bridge. He said Ury and Roger Fisher co-authored the classic book ***Getting to Yes***, which explains how to negotiate win-win solutions to conflicts. Susan also recommended Ury’s book ***The Third Side***, which advances this kind of thinking and problem-solving.

Rachel Eryn added the helpful suggestion that other people in a group can help to soften the conflict that an actual facilitator is helping people resolve. She said unlike when some kids are starting to fight and other kids yell, “Fight! Fight! Fight!,” it is possible for other bystanders to say or do things than can help people de-escalate conflicts.

Next, Susan shared her experience from almost 20 years ago when she was speaking to a big audience in downtown Seattle’s Westlake area at a rally she had helped to organize just a day or two after the September 11, 2001, attacks. She recognized the need to pull diverse people together, so she spoke of reconciliation, but an audience member heckled her fiercely and yelled many nasty things at her. As soon as the event ended, she felt the need practice the reconciliation that she was preaching, so she sought out the heckler in the crowd and engaged him in a friendly conversation to understand what was going on with him. She approached their conversation with an open heart and with curiosity, so she asked him to help her understand why he felt so strongly opposed to what she was saying to the audience. She discovered that he had lost a very close friend in one of the Twin Towers, so he was feeling deep pain, grief, fear, etc. She expressed that she understood, and she affirmed each person’s need to feel safe. Both she and the man shared those deep feelings.

Glen thanked Susan for her courageous action.

He said too often we get stuck in a binary trap of “either-or,” when actually we could generate more creative and effective solutions. Sometimes we could create a “both-and” remedy.

For example, he said when he conducts workshops on nonviolence he includes a creative insight that the feminist pacifist Barbara Deming had devised decades ago. Here is how “the two hands of nonviolence” works:

Extend your left arm straight out in front of you with your left hand upright facing forward in a “no” or “stop gesture. One hand of nonviolence says firmly, “No, I will not allow that cruelty and injustice to continue.”

Then raise your right arm out in front of you and – with your right hand – make a welcoming, inclusive gesture that sweeps the other person toward you. It welcomes the other person while you say warmly, “Let’s join together and find a nonviolent solution to the problem.”

These are “the two hands of nonviolence.”

Glen said this concept can help us get past the binary thinking that traps us. Beyond protesting against bad things, we can also bring people together to generate creative nonviolent alternatives.

Susan expressed appreciation for this approach. She said it requires maturity. We need to center ourselves. We need to tolerate ambiguity. This can be frustrating and hard work. People want to see things simply, but reality is more complex.

Glen said that for half a century he has been opposing negative realities such as war, racism, and economic injustice. But at the same time he works for alternatives that will solve the problems. He said that for several decades he has spent a full hour every week at one location in downtown Olympia – and an hour and a half every week at a different location – holding signs in peace vigils so pedestrians and motorists can see them. He made signs that are worded to support the positive alternative instead of the problem. So, for example, instead of saying “stop the wars,” his sign says “Choose Peace.” And instead of saying, “stop racism,” he made signs saying, “All people are one human family” and “Human rights are for everyone.”

Glen said he enjoys holding the sign inviting the public to “Act on your best values.” Everybody who goes by in vehicles or on foot has some best values, regardless of where they are on the political spectrum. His sign invites everyone to act on their best values. This would help our society.

He said that wording the signs with commands to stop doing bad things might cause pedestrians and motorists to think he is blaming them. Instead, he designed and made these signs that lift up the positive solutions to the problems. Pedestrians and motorists do respond very positively to be invited into joining in affirming the positive solutions. Our nation does conduct wars, and our society does include racism, but Glen’s signs assume that the people going past have better values and do want to solve those problems with better alternatives. The tremendously positive responses from pedestrians and motorists keep proving that this approach really does work. Positive responses come from people in all demographic groups and all kinds of vehicles.

Rachel Eryn said this is a great example of what she and Susan had said earlier in our interview about how useful it is to be open-minded and open-hearted. She resonated with “Choose peace” and other positive messages because these are welcoming and calming instead of holding signs commanding people to stop doing certain things.

**Instead of trying to simply defeat an enemy, let’s heal the mean-spiritedness at the problem’s root. Let’s end “the era of grim demonization”:**

Glen said all three of us recognize that there are better solutions than merely defeating enemies. All three of us work to re-frame conflicts so that we can heal the divisions and welcome people into a better future. This will lay a foundation so – about twenty minutes from now – we can discuss what Rachel Eryn calls “polarity management.” Glen invited both guests to discuss some basic ways of re-framing conflicts so we can end what has been called “the era of grim demonization” and start to heal the divisions.

He asked Rachel Eryn to say how she would like people to see our nation’s current crisis – and the possibility of a better future. She said she would like people to hear the grievances underneath all of the anger. She wants people to hear the anguish and the fear underneath the expressions of anger and blame. Just starting there would be a tremendous step forward. We need to understand each other.

She said some of this actually has been happening, but she said there is still a lot of reflexive polarization with people thinking that other people are against them. It might be OK to scream – but not at each other. Expressing frustration is OK if we can do it without directing our hard feelings against other people or attacking them in any way. She said other people actually could hear us simply express what’s true for us, provided that we do not attack or blame them. Then people can recognize, “You are hurting. You are upset.” This could be a good starting point.

Susan agreed with starting with that and following up with an invitation to dream together. Many people are feeling so defeated, so afraid, and so negative right now. If we invite each other to express our respective deep-level dreams we can find some common points. Perhaps we can find ways to join together to build our best, deepest dreams.

Rachel Eryn agreed with Susan and invited people to seek the deep-level dreams rather than settle for what’s at the superficial level. She said it’s not enough for one person to say they dream of a society dominated by white Christian males and another person to say they dream of a multi-cultural society. We need to dig deeper than that. At deeper levels people might recognize that they want to be safe, healthy, and to feel validated and good about themselves and connected with the people around us. She said the kind of dreaming that she and Susan are asking for must come from a deep place – a deep need (as practitioners of Nonviolent Communication would say), not merely a “want.”

Susan and Rachel Eryn are conducting 4-part workshops for people who supported Biden and people who supported Trump. Glen asked how they designed those workshops and what they do in those workshops. Susan said they invited– and are warmly welcoming – people from both sides. Some Biden supporters and fewer Trump supporters are participating, but some of the Biden supporters have friends and family members who supported Trump.

Susan and Rachel Eryn designed a setting that would be safe for everybody, where everybody could discuss the pain they feel from the divisions and polarization, and where everybody can build skills and mutual support and opportunities to practice how to mend fences. Susan and Rachel Eryn help people with the skills, support, compassion and capacity needed now. They end the 4-part workshops with attention to social media, where communication functions differently from in face-to-face situations.

Rachel Eryn said two of their recent participants are women who participated by Zoom from different parts of the country, and they will be bringing together some Trump-supporting women so these two women can listen to them with open-hearted curiosity.

Glen expressed appreciation for the efforts of Susan and Rachel Eryn and said we need to get the dynamics of their approach out more widely into our society so more people can be helped to de-polarize our society.

**Examples of courageous work to connect across serious divisions:**

Recently Glen read a book with a powerful example about using compassion to reconcile somebody who was immersed in hatred and cruelty. The book’s title is ***Not by the Sword***. The author is Kathryn Watterson.

In Lincoln, Nebraska, the cantor at the local synagogue started receiving anti-Semitic phone calls that were extremely hateful and threatening. Also, some local African-Americans were receiving threatening phone calls and were being abused in other ways.

The cantor found out that the man who was doing these hateful things was the Grand Dragon of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan for the state of Nebraska. The FBI considered him armed and dangerous.

It turned out that this man had serious disabilities that confined him to a wheelchair. He was angry about having disabilities trapping him in a wheelchair, so he reacted by becoming a leader in the KKK and making hateful, threatening phone calls from his apartment.

The cantor and his wife recognized that this man was suffering, so his abuses were probably his way of venting his frustrations and anger. During one of these phone calls – knowing about his disabilities – the cantor and his wife asked him whether he needed help going to the store for groceries or some other kind of help. Their reply to him changed the entire context of their interactions and created an opening for the man to soften his attitude and create a positive change. He allowed them to come to his apartment for housecleaning. This turned into an actual friendship.

After a while he publicly resigned from the KKK, denounced the KKK, and went with the cantor and an African-American woman to do joint speaking engagements on behalf of human rights for all kinds of people.

Later he developed significant curiosity of the Jewish ethics that inspired the cantor and his wife to reach out to him with compassion. As his interest in Judaism deepened, he began to study it seriously for its spiritual value. He ended up actually converting to Judaism. By that time his disabilities had worsened so he could no longer live alone, so the Jewish family invited him to move into their home, where he lived until he died a few years later.

The book makes a truly compelling case that compassion can be powerful. Compassion can transform hatred into nonviolent alternatives, including reconciliation.

Rachel Eryn also expressed appreciation for this amazingly wonderful book. Susan said when we see each other in our full humanity and dignity – and practice love – amazing results can occur. Glen said the cantor and his wife did what Susan and Rachel Eryn are inviting us to do – get below the superficial level of polarization and recognize the human person underneath. They connected with great empathy and compassion and accomplished an amazing reconciliation.

Rachel Eryn said nearly all of the people who have left hate groups did so because of some compassionate outreach when some other person invested the time and compassion to reach out and connect effectively. Glen said we need to learn these lessons of what actually works instead of assuming that other people have doomed us to endless polarization and escalation of conflict. Let’s find out what actually has been working and replicate those success stories.

Rachel Eryn acknowledged that some people watching this interview probably are very skeptical about the potential of what we have been saying. She acknowledged that these kinds of efforts really are difficult. She said we are hard-wired for tribalism – hard-wired for fighting – hard-wired for polarization – but we also are hard-wired for God, goodness, connection and love. She invited all of us to live from those higher levels, even though it is work to do that. We need to overcome fears and other tendencies that can hold us back. We can develop a practice that helps us see through the things other people say and do that could trigger us and make us afraid and pull back. She said she thinks of this as spiritual practice.

Glen agreed and said this requires deliberate intention because our society has greased the skids toward the way things typically go.

Susan added the important point that we cannot do this alone. It is a spiritual practice and we also need community because we are social animals. We need a sense of community (a *sangha*, in Buddhist terms, or – Glen added – an *affinity group* in the progressive movement’s way of organizing mutual support for bold nonviolent actions) so we can reassure each other as we do this scary work even while mainstream society provides little support for this. Rachel Eryn added that the participants in their 4-part workshops connecting Trump people and Biden people have expressed appreciation for the support their group has provided in helping them do this communication across the divide.

***We did not have time during the interview to mention these additional relevant insights:***

Some people on each part of the spectrum can get triggered and react badly. Most expressions of American politics are adversarial. We could choose better ways to deal with political issues, but we rarely see better ways modeled in mainstream media, political candidates, or public conversations.

Politics in the U.S. have become so polarized that many people are saying a new Civil War might erupt soon. When people fight a war they are hell-bent to defeat the enemy. However, wars do NOT resolve issues. In every war, one side – and sometimes BOTH sides – lose. Then they gear up to fight again.

Here in the U.S. some people are still flying the Confederate battle flag, even though the Confederacy was decisively defeated in the Civil War more than a century and a half ago. The Civil War did not end racism, and many Americans still fly the Confederate battle flag. Our nation has been suffering from horrible racial injustices ever since. No war can solve that problem – not in the 1860s and not in the 2020s. We need to use better visions and better processes in order to end racism and solve other polarizing problems.

It is possible to speak your truth in a way that someone else can hear without becoming defensive – and vice versa. It is possible for people to find some common ground even with people with whom they disagree strongly.

President-Elect Joe Biden has called for ending the era of “grim demonization.” Our nation needs to deliberately starting to practice reconciling and healing, instead of continuing the angry polarization.

We don’t have to be perfect. Not everybody wants to engage in the way we are advocating, but if we practice even some of what we’ve been discussing in this TV interview, we can change the culture to de-polarize somewhat.

Sometimes in a hot argument with family members who disagree strongly about an issue, it’s necessary to step away from the hot argument in order to preserve the relationship within the family. This could happen about an issue or over an LGBTQ identity or dating outside of one’s race or religion or whatever. If a reconciling action is not possible at that moment, it’s better to simply step away than to escalate.

**Susan and Rachel Eryn conducted the role play they had devised to demonstrate their practical skills:**

Our guests developed a role play that demonstrates how practical their ideas are. Susan said it is not easy to practice their recommendations, so they developed a brief role play to demonstrate how to practice them. She said even if a person does get caught up in the conflict, it is possible to make a choice to shift to a better way to handle the conflict.

Susan and Rachel Eryn devised a simple scenario involving friends who share many ideas and progressive viewpoints, but where one friend thinks the other (Susan, in this role play) is not “woke” enough. Rachel Eryn added that the situation they would soon be role-playing includes one friend who wonders why her friend is reaching out to those kinds of people. Rachel Eryn said the scenario starts after Susan had recently posted something on Facebook. Rachel Eryn plays her friend who is haughty, arrogant and judgmental. Susan had previously invited Rachel Eryn to contact her if she ever disagrees with anything Susan posts there, so Rachel Eryn phones her and says, “I can’t believe what you just posted this morning. I really don’t think you get it. You don’t know how serious this stuff is. You keep trying to bridge to these idiot people.”

Susan replies, “Just slow down a little. I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Rachel Eryn says, “That post that you just did about ten minutes ago, and I decided to pick up the phone instead of just sit here and stew and steam and be mad at you. I think you’re acting like some New Age Baby Boomer who thinks everything is going to be OK. It’s clearly like … you don’t know those people. They’re not worth spending a minute on.”

Susan pauses and says they had agreed that telephoning would be OK – “and … I need to pause and take a breath. Is that OK?” She pauses again and says, “I’m really glad you called, because I value our relationship, and I want to stay in connection. But I realize I was really getting ramped up, so that’s why I’m glad we took a little pause. It sounds like you are really disturbed by what I posted.”

Rachel Eryn replies, “I was really disturbed by what you posted. I think it’s exactly what we’ve been talking about, where I just don’t think you get it.”

Susan replies, “So you’re afraid by my encouraging these bridge-building things that I am so drawn to, that it’s going to dilute what you feel is so essential right now. Is that it?

Rachel Eryn replies, “Yes, that’s exactly it. That’s it. That’s it.”

Susan continues, “I really hear you, because I want those essential things too. I really do. Deeply. I know how much we need that in our nation. … And when I look at it I wonder how we’re going to get there. So I feel some of the bridge-building work I’m doing is one of the ways to help us get there. And I’m so grateful that you are there pushing at that other edge.”

The role play ended, and Rachel Eryn asked the TV viewers whether they saw what had just happened. She said that said what Susan did “took all of the charge right out of me.” She thanked Susan for doing such a good job in understanding what Rachel Eryn’s character was feeling and needing. She said Susan did this in an honest way without manipulating her.

Susan acknowledged that knowing what needs to be done and knowing how to do it do not necessarily guarantee that during any particular occasion she will actually do this kind of compassionate connecting. She said that in this role play she knew she wanted to make a choice, and she wanted to stay connected with her friend. She could hear her friend’s understanding of the truth, and her friend’s assessment did not need to be either right or wrong.

Glen thanked both guests for conducting their role play. He expressed appreciation for their having worked together for so many years on these kinds of practices, and he said it’s harder for those of us who lack all of their experience and skills. But even so, he said, “I always believe that if people are grounded in the spirit of nonviolence and good intentions, we will say and do the right stuff.”

Susan said the martial art of Aikido uses nonviolence to physically help us move toward the other person and use the energy to help them on their way. She said we can learn this.

Rachel Eryn reinforced Susan’s point that none of us is perfect – and we don’t have to be. Somewhere between being absolutely perfect and absolutely abominable is a point that is “good enough.” She encouraged our TV listeners to try to be good enough. She said if you try, the other people around us will feel your good intention.

**Major themes, such as fear, anger, anguish, despair, cynicism – and truth:**

Glen said our nation’s polarization has unleashed a variety of strong emotions, such as anger, fear, despair, and cynicism. This interview has already touched on a few of these, and now we can further discuss these kinds of emotions.

Rachel Eryn said we need to listen – and we also need to give people permission to express their emotions, but without attacking other people. She said many people do not know how to do that. They think they either must suppress their emotions and stuff them down within themselves, or else they can “throw up all over people.” She said in between is a space that is alive and allowing where people can express their feelings without hurting people.

For example, it is OK to say, “I am angry and furious that Donald Trump lost the election.” But a person can say that without making up a story accusing somebody of stealing the election from Trump.

She said it is OK to recognize feeling angry. She said that for a very long time the culture was repressing people’s feelings, and then the lid was ripped off and people are expressing feelings now, but – unfortunately – also “flinging a lot of stuff.” She suggested a remedy is to own our emotions, manage them, and work on them honestly without having the emotions grab us and run us at the level that is happening now in our culture.

Glen agreed that Rachel Eryn’s insights about the previous repression have deep roots in our society. He said for a long time women were not allowed to speak up about what they were experiencing and what was going on within them. Historically and even now, when a black person objects to some injustice they are experiencing, they get shut down, because they are not allowed to assert their rights. He said a lot of this kind of stuff is deep in our society, so that makes it harder for people to deal with emotions.

Rachel Eryn said this might by why our society’s current stage is so important, even though it is very painful. Our society is in a stage where people are refusing to be shut down or shut up. The next stage can be where each person is able to speak their truth and also be able to hear and be with each other. She said this is not an “either-or.”

Glen said it is very healthy that nowadays young people and kids are speaking up about the climate and racial justice and other things that matter. We need that.

Susan said now is a time of great fear, and the media are stirring that up further. There are deep reasons for fear. For example, climate change is causing deep fear. Wildfires were blazing in Rachel Eryn’s part of California. Floods cause fear. These fears really do get at us.

Susan said that before the November 2020 election she was doing some “deep canvassing” and listening deeply to the strangers with whom she was interacting. She kept hearing people express various kinds of deep fears. These fears increased the intensity of the polarization that people were feeling. She acknowledged those fears and moved toward them rather than trying to get people to suppress their fears. She practiced compassion and caring.

At this point in our interview, Susan told us that we can live with fear. Human beings have the resilience that can deal with fear. Some people feel that they are not supposed to feel fear and that it cannot be acknowledged. Then fear becomes “a terrorist within us.” We need to be able to sit down and talk with the fear we’re feeling, and work with it and deal with it. Rachel Eryn added that if we deal with fear in this healthy way it will not back up within us and explode later into something destructive.

Glen said fears exist at all points along the political spectrum. It’s not just at one end or the other, but all along the entire range of political views. Instead of anyone blaming anyone else at a different point of the political spectrum, let’s recognize that fears are out and about, and all kinds of people can deal with them honestly and openly, so we can understand and deal constructively with them.

Susan said the fear base is shared, even while various people’s strategies may differ. She suggested that everyone could consider how to manage and cope.

Glen mentioned that something we had said during our November interview is relevant to this part of December’s conversation and deserves mentioning again. During the Vietnam War people in many nations disagreed with the U.S.’s war there. A young American woman visited France and sat in a public park and held a sign, “An American willing to listen.” People came up and spoke to hear, and she did good listening.

Rachel Eryn also did this in 2003 shortly before George W. Bush and Dick Cheney started their war to overthrow Iraq’s government.

Honest listening activities such as these create healing and fresh openings for people to express themselves in societies that are polarized. She said she and other people created a little group that went to various protests with small signs saying, “Willing to listen.” She said people also have created “listening tents” at public settings. She affirmed the usefulness of any kind of activity that helps people engage and defuse. She said these volunteers do not want to defuse the activist energy, which is needed, but want to create openings instead of closings, so people can de-polarize.

Susan said these activities could be located in various places where they are needed. She mentioned someone’s “empathy tent” and an activity on Seattle’s Capitol Hill when the community occupied a neighborhood there in the summer of 2020. People brought many couches onto the streets and sidewalks and created “conversation cafés” that were structured to facilitate good communications so people could listen to each other and come together to build a sense of community.

She suggested, for example, suppose you are arguing with your uncle about Trump. You could take out your watch and suggest that each of you could speak for three minutes while the other person really listens without interrupting. This could transform your conversation. Even this minimal structure could help a lot.

Glen said in some organizations’ meetings – and in some traditional villages – the participants agree to use a “talking stick” (or a tablespoon or some other small object) that is held by the person who is temporarily recognized as the speaker for a while. Then the “talking stick” is handed to the next person who is chosen to speak. With this method the group agrees that one person at a time can speak while everybody else listens. Glen said we can devise workable methods – and this method is not new. It is ancient and traditional in many small village-level cultures in various parts of the world. Rachel Eryn and Susan mentioned some examples of where this is used.

Susan also said that this is part of how “conversation cafés” typically work. Glen said it would be fun to get more of these kinds of things to happen – in the kind of spirit that Susan and Rachel Eryn have been discussing here.

***We did not have time during the interview to mention these additional relevant insights:***

Along with powerful emotions that Americans have been feeling, Glen senses a powerful worry that the very concept of TRUTH has been eroded. Many people accept lies and propaganda. When a society no longer values truth – or honest science – the society is eroded.

He said he appreciates what the highly respected historian Hannah Arendt wrote a warning in her classic 1967 essay “Truth and Politics.” She warned of “a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth” as a necessary prong of a totalitarian dictatorship. This was cited on page 7 of the Oct-Nov 2020 issue of ***The Progressive***. A relevant quotation Isaac Asimov was quoted in the first column of page 4 of the document you’re reading now.

Ever since the 1960s Glen has been volunteering a huge amount for issues he cares about. Decades ago, people seemed to have more hope that we could solve the problems, but now he keeps sensing that many people – including people with good political values – feel so much cynicism and despair that they are less effective than they could be in working for significant progress.

He has written resource materials and conducted workshops to help people move from cynicism and despair into empowerment and effective organizing. For example, see this -- [**We Can Replace Cynicism and Despair with Empowerment and Hope – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/we-can-replace-cynicism-and-despair-with-empowerment-and-hope) – and this – [**“Let’s Boldly Create the Future We Really Want” – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/lets-boldly-create-the-future-we-really-want-4)

**“Polarity management”:**

Glen said that when a society is polarized – as American society is now – people tend to choose sides (“us” vs. “them”) and limit our thinking into opposing boxes of “this” or “that.” Such binary thinking prevents us from thinking creatively and actually solving problems. We need to open things out, as both guests have been urging.

Rachel Eryn explained what she calls “polarity management” – what the concept is and how she helps people accomplish that. She said the model was created by Barry Johnson. [See a 17-page introductory summary here: [**https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/14-06-19.Barry\_Johnson.Polarity\_Management.pdf**](https://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/14-06-19.Barry_Johnson.Polarity_Management.pdf)]

She said some polarities are embedded in life itself never go away, such as in-breath and out-breath, or night and day. She said we can manage polarities well “by honoring the best of what each polarity is trying to say.”

Conservative ways of thinking have some positive aspects, such as conserving what’s best. Likewise, progressive ways of thinking also have some positive aspects, such as trying to move things forward. There are healthy aspects of both of these communities. If conservatives and progressives do not interact well with each other, each faction hardens into polarization and the situation become toxic.

However, it is possible to manage the polarities well and help each kind of people see the positive, healthy aspects of the other community and stay above the line below which toxicity occurs. If we manage the polarity well we can create a flow that allows good solutions to emerge. This is illustrated in diagrams in the “polarity management” document linked at the bottom of the previous page.

***We did not have time during the interview to mention these additional relevant insights:***

Our society is polarized in a number of ways besides political party and ideology. Instead of labeling and demonizing “the other,” we can go beyond the adversarial model.

While we were preparing for this interview, Rachel Eryn explained “polarity management” beyond what we had time to discuss during the TV interview. She said polarity management recognizes the need for connecting and the need for boundaries. It recognizes the need for power and for reconciling. Instead of feeling polarized in negative ways, we can get beyond the concept of polarities as merely opposing and see how we can balance by using the best of both. We can change hard “EITHER-OR” absolutes and pursue “BOTH-AND” solutions that serve the best values underlying each viewpoint.

Progressives talk about “Freedom,” while conservatives talk about “Liberty.” These are not exactly synonyms. Our concepts differ somewhat. It would be fun for progressives and conservatives to discuss what we mean by using these different words.

Rachel Eryn has practiced the kinds of things we discussed during this interview on occasions when she has taken spontaneous actions to intervene when people in public were in serious conflict.

This interview’s insights, approaches and skills are practical and helpful when we interact with neighbors, relatives at Thanksgiving dinner, and in other settings. These practical tools could help to change individuals’ hearts and could be used at the bigger nationwide scale to heal our social and political systems.

We all need to be seen, heard and loved. This is how we can move ahead. Our guests say the change must come from the inside out. One of our guests said she agrees with Gandhi that each of us must “Be the change you with to see in the world.”

Before we conducted the TV interview, one of the guests said, “We don’t have to agree about anything to be kind to each other.” At the core of nearly all conflicts is people who feel they are not respected. Glen has read that in 2016 when Hillary Clinton called Trump supporters “the deplorables,” she antagonized many people and caused them to vote for Trump.

While preparing for this interview, one of us said perhaps we need some kind of a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to heal our nation’s current polarization.

Emotional intelligence includes being self-aware, managing oneself and holding the difficulty without being able to solve ambiguities and conflicts. Recognize that we do not have simple solutions.

We need the Compassionate Listening model also within the progressive movement, because some of the progressive movement’s words and actions provoke more political polarization.

Our society has been hurt by too much sloppy thinking – too much oversimplification – too much distortion or reality. We simply cannot lump people together and make wholesale stereotypes. Reality is more complex than that. Let’s all avoid the seductive trap of binary thinking (“us” vs. “them,” etc.).

We will not save our nation by merely defeating the people we think are wrong. The people who were defeated simply go underground and come back again. Here are two examples: **Example #1:** After World War I’s Treaty of Versailles heaped abuse upon Germany, the German people came back with more extreme nationalism and World War II. **Example #2:** Even though the Union army decisively defeated the Confederate army in the Civil War, they did not defeat racism, so even now – a century and a half later – racism still poisons the U.S. and some people fly the Confederate battle flag.

Instead of merely defeating opponents, we need to understand them and their deep needs. Then we can move ahead to solve the underlying problems.

Even if people on the far edges might never be satisfied, the vast majority of us can do better than we have been.

True understanding can lead to compassion, and compassion can lead to healing. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.” How much progress could we make in our society if we were to truly understand the sorrow and suffering that many Trump voters have suffered? Start by understanding them. Then move forward.

**Again, the guests and I emphasize that we are NOT wanting progressive people to compromise our values or compromise what we believe or simply meeting our adversary half way on issues. We need to help people on all sides listen deeply, understand, and move ahead.**

**Sources of more information:**

Many sources of information exist about what we’ve been discussing. Information sources can help us at the head level, the heart level, and the practical level.

Right now you are reading the thorough summary I typed up and posted to my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), along with the link for watching this interview’s video. I posted these to my blog’s **“TV Programs”** category and “**Nonviolence”** category. I also posted the November 2020 interview video and that month’s thorough summary. **We designed the November and December interviews to make perfect sense whether or not you watch the other month’s interviews. They do fit together well, but each is a great stand-alone resource.** Please share these with your friends, non-profit organizations, and in other ways. The direct links are:

* November 2020: “How to De-Polarize American Society” [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society)
* December 2020: “Practical Ways to De-Polarize American Society” [**“Practical Ways to De-Polarize” American Society” – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/practical-ways-to-de-polarize-american-society)

Relevant portions of Glen’s blog – [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org) – (categories for **“Nonviolence”** and **“Our Current Political Crisis,”** and **“Organizing and Activism,”** and so forth) provide information and resources worth considering, also many bog posts go beyond the scope of this TV interview’s topic about de-polarizing.

Also, see these blog posts:

* **De-Polarizing – MORE RESOURCES:** [**De-Polarizing American Society – MORE RESOURCES – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/de-polarizing-american-society-more-resources)
* **De-Polarizing – QUOTATIONS from Many Persons Flesh out the Topic:** [**Many quotations about de-polarizing society and using nonviolence to solve problems – Glen's Parallax Perspectives**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/many-quotations-about-de-polarizing-society-and-using-nonviolence-to-solve-problems)

Both Susan Partnow and Rachel Eryn Kalish work extensively with The Compassionate Listening Project, whose website -- [**www.compassionatelistening.org**](http://www.compassionatelistening.org) – includes resources and opportunities for training and also recommends resources from a bibliography based on their course on Compassionate Listening as World Work. I hope people will connect with additional organizations that support nonviolent conflict resolutions.

**Here are more great resources:**

* **Northwest Compassionate Communication**: [**www.nwcompass.org**](http://www.nwcompass.org)
* Susan Partnow and Rachel Eryn Kalish are part of this non-profit organization:
**Compassionate Listening Project**: [**www.compassionatelistening.org**](http://www.compassionatelistening.org)
* Susan Partnow and Rachel Eryn Kalish are part of another non-profit organization:
The Network of Spiritual Progressives: [**www.spiritualprogressives.org**](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org)
* The diagram Susan shared with us came from Braver Angels: [**www.braverangels.org**](http://www.braverangels.org)
* Rabbi Michael Lerner’s non-profit org, the Network of Spiritual Progressives ([**www.spiritualprogressives.org**](http://www.spiritualprogressives.org)), connects deep values with public policy issues. One of our guests recommended Lerner’s new book, ***Revolutionary Love: A Political Manifesto to Heal and Transform the World***
* Some local communities benefit from having local non-profit organizations that help people resolve conflicts. The Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County (WA) is an excellent resource at [**www.mediatethurston.org**](http://www.mediatethurston.org) (360) 956-1155. Glen’s December 2013 TV program focused on the DRC’s work and methodology. Here is a short summary and a link to watching that TV interview: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-how-to-resolve-conflicts**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-how-to-resolve-conflicts)
* The **“Nonviolence”** and **“Conflict Resolution”** parts of Glen’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), include much information and many examples, insights and resources.
* Glen recommends Kathryn Watterson’s inspiring book ***Not by the Sword*** and summarized it on pages 6-7 above.

**One of our guests recommended watching these relevant videos:**

* The danger of a single story - Chimamanda Adichie:
[**https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\_adichie\_the\_danger\_of\_a\_single\_story**](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)
* How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them. - Verna Myers:
[**https://www.ted.com/talks/verna\_myers\_how\_to\_overcome\_our\_biases\_walk\_boldly\_toward\_them**](https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them)
* What we can do about a culture of hate – Sally Kohn:
[**https://www.ted.com/talks/sally\_kohn\_what\_we\_can\_do\_about\_the\_culture\_of\_hate**](https://www.ted.com/talks/sally_kohn_what_we_can_do_about_the_culture_of_hate)
* Why I have coffee with people who send me hate mail - Ozlem Cekic:
[**https://www.ted.com/talks/ozlem\_cekic\_why\_i\_have\_coffee\_with\_people\_who\_send\_me\_hate\_mail**](https://www.ted.com/talks/ozlem_cekic_why_i_have_coffee_with_people_who_send_me_hate_mail)

**One of our guests recommended reading these relevant books:**

* ***See No Stranger:  A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love***- Valarie Kaur
* ***Blindspot - Hidden Biases of Good People***. Banaji and Greenwald
* ***Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us Vs. Them***. Choudhury
* ***The Opposite of Hate*** - Sally Kohn
* ***Republican Like Me: How I left the liberal bubble and learned to love the right.*** Stern
* ***Strangers in Their Own Land***, Arlie Hochschild
* ***Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*** - J. D. Vance

**Here are 3 clusters of articles**

**about problems and solutions:**

**#1. Let’s understand the polarization**

**#2. Information, insights, and recommendations about de-polarizing**

**#3. Moving ahead from 2020**

**Cluster #1. Let’s understand the polarization that has been existing**

* Nearly four years ago – soon after the 2016 election – I wrote a thorough article and posted it to my blog, with only minor updates since then. My article says Trump did NOT cause the problems that our nation was experiencing. Trump was a symptom of what was happening, and he exploited it to serve his ego. You can read my article here: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-we-got-into-our-current-crisis**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-we-got-into-our-current-crisis)
* Both of our TV guests pointed out how fear is one of the sources of our polarization. I believe fear is at the root of many of our nation’s issues, including racism, anti-immigrant bias, materialism that hurts the environment, and many other issues. I believe we should devise a grassroots movement to oppose fear in all of its many manifestations. I believe many issue constituencies could join together to build a movement to excise fear from our society and build a better nation in which all people are valued and we practice true justice and we live in harmony with nature.
* Here are two very short excerpts from a long article at [**www.popularresistance.org**](http://www.popularresistance.org): “We live in an era of great polarization. This is expected because it goes hand in hand with great inequality and it often precedes moments of social transformation. Think of it as heightening the contradictions and forcing a choice. Who are we and how do we want our society to be?” See this article: [**https://popularresistance.org/left-democrats-abandon-struggle-for-the-working-class-to-the-right/**](https://popularresistance.org/left-democrats-abandon-struggle-for-the-working-class-to-the-right/) “George Lakey puts the polarization into historical context. Almost one hundred years ago, when extreme polarization existed in Europe, some countries moved to fascist dictatorships while others moved to socialized democracies. The difference was how the people organized and mobilized. Lakey suggests a road map.” See this article: [**https://popularresistance.org/how-to-build-a-progressive-movement-in-a-polarized-country/**](https://popularresistance.org/how-to-build-a-progressive-movement-in-a-polarized-country/)
* This article from Wed. Nov. 4, 2020 (just one day after the election) says we need to face the bitter truth that “We are two countries, and neither of them is going to be conquered or disappear anytime soon”: [**https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/theres-no-escaping-who-we-have-become/616992/**](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/theres-no-escaping-who-we-have-become/616992/)
* This article says, “The Election's Troubling Message: Even if Trump Loses, America's Political Civil War Isn't Over”: [**https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/11/the-elections-troubling-message-even-if-trump-loses-americas-political-civil-war-isnt-over/?utm\_source=mj-newsletters&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=daily-newsletter-11-04-2020**](https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/11/the-elections-troubling-message-even-if-trump-loses-americas-political-civil-war-isnt-over/?utm_source=mj-newsletters&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-newsletter-11-04-2020)
* This article from ***The Atlantic*** says there is a Cold War between “red” and “blue” America: [**https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/2020-election-results-biden-trump/616996/?utm\_source=newsletter&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm\_content=20201104&silverid=NjQ1NTk5ODM2NTQzS0**](https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/2020-election-results-biden-trump/616996/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20201104&silverid=NjQ1NTk5ODM2NTQzS0)
* Our nation must deal with the fact that “A Large Portion of the Electorate Chose the Sociopath,” as this article explains: [**https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/large-portion-electorate-chose-sociopath/616994/?utm\_source=newsletter&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm\_content=20201104&silverid=NjQ1NTk5ODM2NTQzS0**](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/11/large-portion-electorate-chose-sociopath/616994/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20201104&silverid=NjQ1NTk5ODM2NTQzS0)
* Can Biden heal America when Trump and his allies don’t want it healed? Now is the time for other Republican leaders to exercise true leadership and ask the nation to unify behind Biden. [**https://www.nationofchange.org/2020/11/10/can-biden-heal-america-when-trump-and-his-allies-dont-want-it-healed/**](https://www.nationofchange.org/2020/11/10/can-biden-heal-america-when-trump-and-his-allies-dont-want-it-healed/)
* A late November 2020 article titled, “We Must Understand Hate If We Are To Combat It” is posted here: [**https://theolympiatribune.com/we-must-understand-hate-if-we-are-to-combat-it/**](https://theolympiatribune.com/we-must-understand-hate-if-we-are-to-combat-it/)Many news reports stated that the U.S.’s 2016 US election was plagued by a huge amount of disinformation that foreign entities (not only Russia) spread across social media. This continued through the 2020 election, and it is widely understood that disinformation remains is a very serious threat to our democracy. Recent reports have stated that Facebook has been giving a free pass to extremist right-wing outlets such as Breitbart to also spread misinformation about the origin of Coronavirus. **Another report says such** misinformation has tripled from 2016 to 2020. The New York ***Times*** reported that misinformation on Facebook is more popular now than in 2016: [**https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/12/technology/on-facebook-misinformation-is-more-popular-now-than-in-2016.html?emci=173bc3c2-270e-eb11-96f5-00155d03affc&emdi=8a158374-150f-eb11-96f5-00155d03affc&ceid=32458**](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/12/technology/on-facebook-misinformation-is-more-popular-now-than-in-2016.html?emci=173bc3c2-270e-eb11-96f5-00155d03affc&emdi=8a158374-150f-eb11-96f5-00155d03affc&ceid=32458)
* We need strong progressive remedies to counter the economic decline of most Americans and the other long-standing problems that have made so many Americans feel insecure, afraid and angry. Actually, incomes peaked in about 1976 (adjusted for inflation), and people recognize they have declined. Republicans (especially Trump) blame racial and ethnic minorities and women for taking white men’s jobs. In order to solve the underlying problems, we need to reach out with decent, humane, wise values and build nonviolent grassroots movements to solve the underlying and systemic problems. I’ve written about that elsewhere on my blog. **More insights:**

Neither of the big political parties will save us from the underlying problems. While the Republican Party has been aggressively making the problems worse, the solutions we need are much more profound and much more progressive than what the institutional Democratic Party has promoted or even acknowledged. The Democratic Party (including Clinton, Obama, etc.) have supported big business and abandoned labor. (The biggest contributor to Obama’s 2008 campaign was Goldman Sachs. Obama stuffed his administration with people from Goldman Sachs, and he refused to prosecute any of the crooked bankers who had crashed our economy.) Democrats promoted the neoliberal economic policies that have made things worse. Hillary Clinton was so utterly subservient to big business that in 2016 Trump was able to run on Hillary’s LEFT and convince people that he was on the side of ordinary working people.

The 2020 primary featured two candidates – Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren – who strongly supported economic justice, but the institutional Democratic Party and mainstream news media crammed Joe Biden down our throats. Biden’s long career has been utter subservience to big business, and especially big banks. If either Sanders or Warren had been the nominee, they would have campaigned vigorously with a strong populist message that would have exposed Trump as a corrupt shill.

* Most Americans do agree on many important values – and also support smart changes in public policy – but the 1% wants to keep the 99% divided by political party. This is the key message that my old friend Paul Cienfuegos wrote for his non-profit organization, [**www.communityrights.us**](http://www.communityrights.us). He wrote that the 1% usually frames issues “in such a way as to keep environmentalists fighting with working people; to keep people of various skin colors fighting each other; to keep urban people distrusting rural people and vice versa, etc., etc. The political divide that matters most is the 1% vs the 99%, which is why radical candidates like Bernie Sanders and AOC are such a threat to the status quo.” He says, Democrat and Republican VOTERS are in general agreement about lower drug costs, adequate funding for childcare, ending cash bail, legal status for Dreamers, bold action on climate change, a livable minimum wage, marijuana legalization, paid family leave, a publicly run internet, universal affordable healthcare, an end to our military interventions, safe drinking water for everyone, and ending corporate-run prisons, but most ELECTED OFFICIALS in the two big political parties “favor none of these. Their priorities are mainly about serving their corporate donors.” He wrote that many parties do divide the “right” and the “left,” but we must pay attention to the important issues that divide the “top” from the “bottom.”
* Our TV interview about de-polarizing American society is a refreshing – and practical – change from the typical emphasis of one end of the political spectrum obsessed with defeating the people at the other end. Certainly liberals and progressives want to stop right-wing extremism (and vice-versa). **But some of the attempts to DEFEAT them simply continue the polarization and make it worse:**

Some “anti-fa” (anti-fascist) behaviors only reinforce right-wing extremists by causing them to feel defensive. How would YOU feel if the roles were reversed? If you support racial justice and a racist punched you in the face, would that persuade you to join that person in being racist? No, you would become even more entrenched in your position. The same thing happens when an “anti-fa” person physically attacks a fascist.

The Cold War and nuclear arms race persisted for decades because the USSR and the US each reacted to the other nation’s perceived threats by escalating the fears in their own populations and by building even more nuclear weapons. Such entrenched polarization with nuclear weapons could easily have destroyed Planet Earth and all of us who live there. (Actually, the danger still exists and has been escalating recently, so we must strengthen the movement to abolish all nuclear weapons.)

In order to reduce right-wing extremism in the U.S., we need to HEAL right-wing extremists of their fears and hatreds and other negative feelings. This needs the best insights from mental health professionals and from the first-hand experiences of persons who have left the right wing. Likewise, we must HEAL the left-wing extremists who also are trapped in the binary polarization and often unwittingly interfere with solving the real problems that hurt our society.

**Cluster #2. Information, insights, and recommendations about de-polarizing**

* John Lewis, the great nonviolent activist and leader within the Civil Rights Movement, said or wrote this: “Not one of us can rest, be happy, be at home, be at peace with ourselves, until we end hatred and division.”
* I posted to my blog four brief resources that can help us understand and practice de-polarization. See them at this link: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/these-four-resources-can-help-us-de-polarize**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/these-four-resources-can-help-us-de-polarize)
* One of our TV guests has conducted a lot of “deep canvassing,” which includes deep listening. See this: [**https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/2020-presidential-campaign-tactic-deep-canvassing-1059531/?link\_id=1&can\_id=1d662460c0abb8939c5044c82927552b&source=email-learning-how-to-listen&email\_referrer=email\_964186&email\_subject=learning-how-to-listen**](https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/2020-presidential-campaign-tactic-deep-canvassing-1059531/?link_id=1&can_id=1d662460c0abb8939c5044c82927552b&source=email-learning-how-to-listen&email_referrer=email_964186&email_subject=learning-how-to-listen)
* This interesting article is grounded in a basic truth about organizing:  We’ve got to reach out to people who do not already agree with us. Vincent Emanuele’s article, **“Yes, the Left Should Talk to Trump Supporters,”** was posted on November 26, 2020 here: [**https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/11/26/yes-the-left-should-talk-to-trump-supporters/**](https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/11/26/yes-the-left-should-talk-to-trump-supporters/)
* Do Biden and Trump voters even speak the same language? [**https://grist.org/politics/do-biden-and-trump-voters-even-speak-the-same-language/?utm\_medium=email&utm\_source=newsletter&utm\_campaign=daily**](https://grist.org/politics/do-biden-and-trump-voters-even-speak-the-same-language/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily)
* For many decades George Lakey has been one of the world’s best strategists, writers and organizers for nonviolent social and political change. Recently he wrote about the need to openly recognize and discuss points of disagreement rather than deny or repress them. He wrote, “Terror often happens when a population tries to suppress conflicts instead of supporting their expression. A technique for reducing terror, therefore, is to spread a pro-conflict attitude and the nonviolent skills that support people waging conflict to give full voice to their grievances.” This wisdom seems fully consistent with what our TV guests have been urging – and helping people to accomplish.
* People at opposite ends of the political spectrum actually have some values in common. Many libertarians agree with progressives in several ways, such as: (#1) We all value individuals’ inherent dignity and rights; (#2) We all oppose governmental intrusions into various aspects of our lives, such as suppressing free speech and interfering with personal drug use; (#3) We all oppose the U.S.’s aggressive, militaristic foreign policy and unnecessary wars; and (#4) We all share common HUMAN interests APART FROM POLITICS (enjoying kids, grandkids, gardening, etc.). Wouldn’t it be fun for progressives and libertarians to have conversations about what we share in common?
* Throughout our society we can improve our thinking and our recognition that all of us are in this together. Americans value “rugged individualism” more than cooperation or recognizing our common humanity. A traditional concept in some parts of Africa is ***Ubuntu***, which does not have a direct translation into Western languages. The sense of ***Ubuntu*** is this: “My humanity is caught up, it is inextricably bound up, in yours.” How much of the U.S.’s polarization could be overcome if we could shift our culture to understand and appreciate the truth of ***Ubuntu***?
* One of my guests recommended AllSides ([**www.allsides.com**](http://www.allsides.com)), which presents each news item from three perspectives. AllSides provided “The Red/Blue Dictionary” as an example to help politically polarized people understand each other’s language and concepts. See this example about how different kinds of people understand what “compassion” means: [**www.allsides.com/dictionary/compassion**](http://www.allsides.com/dictionary/compassion)
* Carl Sagan produced this “Baloney Detection Kit”: [**https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/03/baloney-detection-kit-carl-sagan/**](https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/03/baloney-detection-kit-carl-sagan/)
* Glen appreciates the warm welcome and radical inclusiveness that was expressed at the bottom of a flyer for a local event a good number of years ago. The flyer was reaching out to all kinds of people and inviting them to come and participate in a particular event at some date/time/place. The one-page flyer included this at the bottom:

You are especially asked to participate in this effort if you are: a tax payer  African-American  an older person  a student  White  a member of a peace group  a member of the military  homeless  gay  a member of a religious group  not a member of anything  Hispanic  a parent  unemployed  a teacher  a government official  a pet owner  an athlete  Middle Eastern straight  a citizen of the U.S.  a member of the human race

**Turn the page to see Cluster #3: Moving ahead from 2020 🡪**

**Cluster #3. Moving ahead from 2020**

* Fox News was created to be a propaganda arm for conservatives and the Republican Party. Fox News supported Trump, but now Trump and some of his supporters have turned against Fox News because Fox News finally admitted that Biden won the election. See this: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_-M2YaVokI0**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-M2YaVokI0)
* I have long appreciated George Lakey as one of the best strategists, organizers and writers about nonviolent social change. The link below offers his insights from November 11, 2020, about Trump's claim of a “stolen election” and what we should do now. Below the article’s headline was this one-sentence summary: “The point of claiming a stolen election is not to set the stage for a coup, but to add to the right's list of grievances for building political power in the future.” In his article, George Lakey says an actual coup is less likely now. Instead, he does say this: “I believe Trump’s ‘stolen election’ claim is a choice to continue a kind of politics that has served him well in the past – so well that he’s re-shaped the Republican Party in its image. Trump specializes in the politics of grievance.” Lakey’s article also says this: “Count on it: the juice will ferment in 2021 and be stronger in 2022. Everything that hurts Americans will be laid on the door of Biden, ‘who was fraudulently elected!’” The article proceeds to offer suggestions of what we should do now. I especially appreciate his insight that we should be promoting empathy instead of political correctness. Read the article at this link: [**https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/11/trump-stolen-election-claim-coup/**](https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/11/trump-stolen-election-claim-coup/)
* This article is about what groups that are focused on bridging can do now that the election's over: [**https://thefulcrum.us/big-picture/bridging-the-divide**](https://thefulcrum.us/big-picture/bridging-the-divide)
* Michael Nagler, a long-time expert thinker, writer and organizer about nonviolence discussed how we can get past our present calamities and become proactive about building a livable future: [**https://wagingnonviolence.org/metta/2020/10/beyond-the-storm-of-political-health-and-climate-disasters-a-conversation-with-michael-nagler/**](https://wagingnonviolence.org/metta/2020/10/beyond-the-storm-of-political-health-and-climate-disasters-a-conversation-with-michael-nagler/)
* Many people – across the political spectrum – feel beaten down and powerless, so our remedy must recognize that. When people are beaten down into powerless, they feel shame that disempowers them even further, so they can’t fight back. They might even look for an authoritarian figure who will do their thinking for them. Our remedy must focus on empowering people to recognize their deepest needs and values – and empowering them to organize smart nonviolent grassroots movements. An excerpt from this article -- [**https://www.alternet.org/are-americans-broken-people-heres-why-weve-stopped-fighting-back-against-forces-oppression?src=newsletter1092898**](https://www.alternet.org/are-americans-broken-people-heres-why-weve-stopped-fighting-back-against-forces-oppression?src=newsletter1092898) says this: “U.S. citizens do not actively protest obvious injustices for the same reasons that people cannot leave their abusive spouses: They feel helpless to effect change. The more we don't act, the weaker we get. And ultimately to deal with the painful humiliation over inaction in the face of an oppressor, we move to shut-down mode and use escape strategies such as depression, substance abuse, and other diversions, which further keep us from acting. This is the vicious cycle of all abuse syndromes.” Our remedy must help people improve their self-image, their morale, their individual dignity, and their autonomy. Nonviolent grassroots organizing for worthy causes provides these. We can start building a better future with big goals and incremental steps – small victories – that provide reinforcement and bring more people into our grassroots movements to solve our nation’s problems.
* This article said Joe Biden ran his campaign based on the approach that his character is better than Trump’s. The article says that’s not going to fix what’s broken in our nation, and he will not be able to heal the country by retreating from conflict. See this: [**https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joe-biden-character-election-2020\_n\_5fa2fb14c5b660630aedd074?ncid=newsltushpmgpolitics**](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joe-biden-character-election-2020_n_5fa2fb14c5b660630aedd074?ncid=newsltushpmgpolitics)
* The bold thinker and writer Chris Hedges wrote more than a year ago that in order to save the planet we must overthrow the ruling elites. I agree. On September 21, 2019, huge climate rallies occurred. In January 2017 the Women’s March protested Trump. These kinds of events can be necessary, but they are not sufficient to bring about the changes we need. In 1982 when more than a million people rallied and marched for peace in New York City, President Reagan’s Secretary of State, General Alexander Haig, said, “Let them march all they want, as long as they continue to pay their taxes.” Millions of people can rally and march, but the system continues. Chris Hedges, who has written strategically smart and bold essays, wrote another article along this line. He wrote that our protests are not enough because we do not live in a democracy. This is because “the ruling elites” and big businesses prevent the changes that are necessary for protecting the climate and making other necessary reforms. His article said Obama has been an obstacle, along with Republicans. He said that in order to save the planet we must nonviolently overthrow “the ruling elites.” He made a compelling case in his 2019 article: [**https://www.truthdig.com/articles/saving-the-planet-means-overthrowing-the-ruling-elites/**](https://www.truthdig.com/articles/saving-the-planet-means-overthrowing-the-ruling-elites/)
* Instead of bemoaning problems, let’s envision and create what we want instead! Political progressives spend a lot of time and energy bemoaning “ain’t-it-awful.” That tends to sap our energy and distract us from actually solving the problems and creating a better world. I urge us to devote much more time and effort in **proactive** efforts to: (#1) Envision what we really want for our world, our nation, and our local communities, and then (#2) Organize to actually build upon our positive visions and create what we really want. See this relevant post on my blog: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/lets-boldly-create-the-future-we-really-want-4**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/lets-boldly-create-the-future-we-really-want-4) I often conduct a series of 6 practical workshops that ground people in nonviolence and help people build strategically smart grassroots movements that will reach out effectively to the public and bring a strong majority onto our side to solve the problems. The flyer in this blog post has more information: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-6-free-online-workshops-to-empower-you-for-nonviolent-grassroots-organizing-on-any-issue**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-6-free-online-workshops-to-empower-you-for-nonviolent-grassroots-organizing-on-any-issue) Please contact me at (360) 491-9093 or **glenanderson@integra.net** if you want to be invited to the next opportunity.
* Joanna Macy has been writing for decades about the bold steps we need to take in order to honestly confront and realistically deal with the hard realities such as nuclear weapons and the climate crisis. In December 2017 she published an article (also at [**https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/climate-solutions/opinion/2008/02/02/the-greatest-danger/**](https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/climate-solutions/opinion/2008/02/02/the-greatest-danger/)) about how to “live with the fact that we are destroying our world.” She wrote that social taboos prevent the vast majority of people from recognizing our world’s serious crisis. She wrote that suppressing the unconscious despair “contributes to the numbing of the psyche” and diminishes us in many ways. [Psychic numbing impedes our capacity to process and respond to information. The energy expended in pushing down despair is diverted from more crucial uses, depleting the resilience and imagination needed for fresh visions and strategies.” She agreed with Zen poet Thich Nhat Hanh, who said that in order to save the world we need “to hear within us the sounds of the Earth crying.” She urged us to experience the trauma – and even shed our psychological armor and fall apart – so we can move ahead and solve the problems. Instead of fearing a loss of control and seeking easy answers, she encourages us to take bold steps, speak the truth, and experience what our hearts are yearning for. Acknowledging the outrage and sorrow we feel for the world “breaks us open to a larger sense of who we are. It is a doorway to the realization of our mutual belonging in the web of life.” This can open us up for greater solidarity with all people on earth. She has written and spoken boldly of “The Great Turning” – “a vast, global movement: the epochal transition from empire to Earth community.” See books and articles about “The Great Turning.” Imagine how we could use that to de-polarize our society and other people worldwide and build a better future for all of us and Planet Earth.
* A relatively new non-profit organization, the Pro-Truth Pledge ([**www.protruthpledge.org**](http://www.protruthpledge.org)) was created to promote science-based truth-seeking, rational thinking, and wise decision-making. The Pro-Truth Pledge is a project of Intentional Insights, a volunteer-run educational nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. They invite politicians, media persons, and the general public to take the Pro-Truth Pledge.
* A friend with good insights about politics and spirituality sent me this 3-minute, 35-second video of a song with a relevant positive message: [**https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=The+Change+by+JoJo#id=1&vid=ea750f506901e2286961d359c80791c6&action=click**](https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=The+Change+by+JoJo#id=1&vid=ea750f506901e2286961d359c80791c6&action=click)

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked **Susan Partnow** and **Rachel Eryn Kalish** for sharing their insights and practical remedies with us. He also thanked all of the people who have been watching this interview.

He reminded our viewers that practicing good listening and compassion for people who are different from ourselves does NOT mean ignoring our own values. We DO need to help our nation have open, honest, vibrant conversations about things that matter.

No individual politician or political party caused our nation’s long-standing problems. Defeating them in elections will not cause our nation’s problems to go away. We need to engage all kinds of people more effectively so we can understand more deeply, more compassionately, and more wisely, so we can manage the political diversity that exists.

Also, he believes we need to organize grassroots movements that will help ordinary people work together nonviolently and strategically to solve the problems.

He believes our nation can do much better than we have been doing – if enough people of good will do enough deep listening and practice compassion and try to heal our nation, not just defeat people on the other side.

Throughout the world’s history, many societies have included fractures and polarizations. These are **not sustainable**! Nor are the polarizations that the U.S. is experiencing now sustainable for our nation’s well-being. Our nation’s well-being requires that we actively seek healing, transcend the brokenness, and protect the U.S. from the serious crisis that is upon us.

All three of us here agree with what Van Jones said recently about the “REUNITED STATES”: “The election may be over, but there is work still ahead of us. The Reunited States shows us that, if we are going to heal this country’s divisions, we all need to summon the power to change how we see and hear each other.”

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!**