**QUOTATIONS from Many Persons So We Can**

**De-Polarize Our Society and Solve the Social and Political Problems**

The November and December 2020 TV programs about de-polarizing American society provided good information. Over the years many wise, compassionate persons have said or written smart insights about this subject. **I collected some of their quotations here.**

You can watch the videos of the TV interviews and/or read the thorough summaries of what we said during the interview at the **“TV Programs”** part of Glen Anderson’s blog: [**http://parallaxperspectives.org**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/how-to-de-polarize-american-society) Also, I posted even more resources about the topic at [**http://parallaxperspectives.org/de-polarizing-american-society-more-resources**](http://parallaxperspectives.org/de-polarizing-american-society-more-resources)

**What kinds of polarization are Americans experiencing nowadays?**

|  |
| --- |
| While the most obvious political polarization in the U.S. from 2016 through 2020 has been between people who support Trump and people who oppose him. But more kinds of polarization exist too: * Within the Democratic Party, there is conflict between the middle-of-the-road “centrists” and the progressive wing that opposes the abuses of big business, opposes the U.S.’s foreign policy, and wants many very profound changes in other aspects of American society.
* Within many families and networks of friends, there are conflicts between people who differ politically and also between people who raise political issues and other friends and family members who hate political squabbles and don’t want them to disrupt families and friendships.
 |
| Across the wide political spectrum, many people recognize that very serious problems exist. Even when we disagree about exactly what the problems are, many different kinds of people do recognize the problems’ seriousness. Some people seem to feel so overwhelmed by how big the problems are that they react by feeling powerless – and cynical – and might want to react in destructive ways.  |
| “Decades ago an elderly friend told me about living in Germany when Hitler was coming to power. My friend told other friends in Germany during that era what Hitler would actually do when he gained more power. Nobody would believe my friend’s recognition that Hitler would do bad things. They kept telling my friend that Germany was a highly civilized nation of music and science and philosophy, so the cruelties my friend was warning about could never occur there. Now most Americans believe the U.S. is the greatest nation on earth. Most Americans believe our nation is highly civilized and the world’s leader in freedom and democracy. Most Americans believe the U.S. would never sink into fascist cruelty.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Hitler promoted ‘*Deutschland über alles*.’ Trump promotes the English translation, which is ‘*America Firs*t’ and ‘*America #1*.’ Look at other similarities regarding racism, deliberate cruelty, suppression of dissent, dictatorial one-man rule, the perversion of honest democracy, political abuses of religion, the subservience of loyal followers to the great leader, etc. Yes, it really can happen here!” -- Glen Anderson |

**Americans also disagree about what is true – what is reality:**

|  |
| --- |
| “A populace deprived of the ability to separate lies from truth, that has become hostage to the fictional semblance of reality put forth by pseudo-events, is no longer capable of sustaining a free society.” -- Chris Hedges in his book ***Empire of Illusion***. |

|  |
| --- |
| “The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists.” -- Hannah Arendt, a great historian who valued human rights |
| “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.” -- Voltaire |
| Salvador Dali said this about reality and paranoia: “I believe that the moment is near when by a procedure of active paranoiac thought, it will be possible to systematize confusion and contribute to the total discrediting of the world of reality.” When I first saw that quotation, George W. Bush was President, so I immediately thought about his regime’s rigid dogmatism, its gross disregard for reality, its eagerness to substitute prejudice and ideology in place of science, and its use of fear-mongering as a way to bully people into submission. In 2016 the American voters elected Trump, who is extremely worse than George W. Bush. We need to read Salvador Dali’s quotation again and work hard to save our nation from terminal craziness. – Glen Anderson |
| “There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there always has been ... nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that ‘my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.’” -- Isaac Asimov |
| “We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.” -- John F. Kennedy |
| One of President Nixon’s top aides, John Ehrlichman, later reported this: “The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.” |
| “An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it. Truth stands, even if there be no public support. It is self sustained.” -- Mohandas K. (the “Mahatma”) Gandhi  |
| “Do not believe everything you see on the internet.” -- Abraham Lincoln. (Glen Anderson knows Lincoln actually said this, because Glen saw this on the internet. In fact, Glen is the person who posted this to the internet.) |
| “In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” -- George Orwell |
| “Expose the lies. Replace them with the truth. Act on the truth.” -- Glen Anderson |

**Insights into how to cope with polarization, enemies, and people different from ourselves:**

|  |
| --- |
| “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” -- Nelson Mandela |
| Marshall Rosenberg wrote this in ***The Surprising Purpose of Anger***: “Three factors in why some of us respond violently and some of us compassionately in similar situations:1. The language we have been educated to use.2. How we have been taught to think and communicate.3. Specific strategies we learned to influence ourselves and others.” |

|  |
| --- |
| Three wise persons’ quotations about fear:* “My belief is that when a country primarily instills fear in the minds and hearts of the people of the world, it is no longer useful in joining the dialogue we need for saving the planet.” -- Alice Walker
* “The more you can increase fear of drugs, crime, welfare mothers, immigrants and aliens, the more you control all of the people.” -- Noam Chomsky
* “I learned that courage was not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. It always seems impossible until it is done.” -- Nelson Mandela
 |
| “We ALL share ONE earth! The earth itself has no national boundaries. Those were contrived and drawn onto maps, not onto the earth itself. The people on earth must live with each other peacefully. War violates the spirit of Planet Earth. Likewise, the climate transcends national boundaries and affects the ENTIRE earth. Also, Coronavirus is a GLOBAL pandemic that transcends national boundaries. Furthermore, a nuclear war would spread radiation around the world – and it would kill people in the nation that started the nuclear war. We must change the culture of the various nations – and Planet Earth’s global culture – to help everyone transcend nationalism and cooperate globally.” -- Glen Anderson  |
| Nelson Mandela was asked, “Did you despise those jailers who kept you in prison on Robben Island for twenty seven years?” He replied, “Of course I did, for many years. They took the best years of my life. They abused me physically and mentally. Then one day when I was working the quarry, hammering the rocks, I realized that they had already taken everything from me except my mind and my heart. Those they could not take without my permission. I decided not to give them away.” This was cited in [***The 9 Disciplines of a Facilitator***](https://default.salsalabs.org/T874359a7-6629-4b88-a2b6-f0625b39cbfb/73f213d0-9291-4d36-89ed-21024f132530) by Jon C. Jenkins and Maureen R. Jenkins |
| Nelson Mandela said many wise things, including these:* “What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”
* “No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”
* “A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”
* “You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution.”
 |
| Our current political crisis was NOT caused by one person and NOT by one political party. They are SYMPTOMS of long-standing social and political problems that festered and now erupted, including:* Big-money corruption of political parties and election campaigns
* News media valuing entertainment and profits instead of truthfully informing the public
* Greedy business corporations that put profits ahead of human rights and environmental health
* Longstanding bias and discrimination on the basis of race, religion sex, sexual orientation, immigrant status, economic class, etc.

We can solve these problems if we:* Ground ourselves in humane, compassionate values
* Educate ourselves and other people about the real issues
* Nonviolently expose and resist the bad stuff
* Organize nonviolent grassroots movements for profound social, economic, environmental, and political changes
 |
| “Raising your voice is the next best thing to being right.” -- Demetri Martin |
| “[A] person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian. This is not in the gospel. … [T]his man is not Christian if he says things like that.” -- Pope Francis said this in early 2016. |
| “Not one of us can rest, be happy, be at home, be at peace with ourselves, until we end hatred and division.” -- John Lewis, the great nonviolent activist and leader within the Civil Rights Movement |

|  |
| --- |
| I don’t know which wise, compassionate person first wrote this widely quoted message: “When you’re used to privilege, equality feels like oppression.” |
| “Conventional war wisdom says that without war, Hitler wouldn't have been defeated. The more radical wisdom of nonviolence says that it was because of war itself and its necessary false obedience that Hitler even came to power at all. If nonviolence had been lived, Hitler would not have been obeyed in the first place” -- Leonard Desroches, ***Allow the Water*** |
| “True community is based upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the common human ties that bind us together.” -- Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray |
| “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.” -- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow |
| “If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” -- Nelson Mandela |
| “Nonviolence isn't sitting back with your arms folded. It is first recognizing that the very person who is your oppressor is also your brother or sister. One day he or she may stop being your oppressor, but they'll never stop being your brother or sister.” -- Jose Maria Pires, in Mev Puleo, ***The Struggle Is One: Voices and Visions of Liberation*** |
| “Be truthful, gentle, and fearless.” -- Mohandas K. ("Mahatma") Gandhi |
| “Friendliness trumps rudeness.” -- Glen Anderson |

**Yes, we can practice deeper listening, more compassion, nonviolence, etc.:**

|  |
| --- |
| “Let us reflect on what is truly of value in life, what gives meaning to our lives, and set our priorities on the basis of that.” -- 14th Dalai Lama |
| “Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence.” -- Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| Three powerful messages about compassion:* “Compassion is the radicalism of this age.” -- The Dalai Lama
* “To develop the drop of compassion in our own heart is the only effective spiritual response to hatred and violence.” -- Thich Nhat Hanh
* “Compassion and concern for others are the key to human survival.” -- The Dalai Lama
 |
| “Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him.” -- Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| I wish the politicians who claim to be Christians would respect these commands from the Bible:“Seek peace, and pursue it.” -- Psalm 34:14 and 1 Peter 3:11“Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers and sisters, be compassionate and humble.” -- 1 Peter 3:8 |
| “Just imagine if all the energy that goes into fighting other people and reinforcing the belief in separateness was instead directed at showing respect for people. What if the five R’s of restorative justice – respect, relationship, responsibility, repair, and reintegration – were guiding principles of our activism?” -- G. Scott Brown |
| “In the face of the winds of change, some people build walls. Others build windmills.” -- A modern Chinese proverb |
| “The longer we listen to one another – with real attention – the more commonality we will find in all our lives. That is, if we are careful to exchange with one another life stories and not simply opinions.” -- Barbara Deming, a committed pacifist and feminist |
| “Central to the advancement of human civilization is the spirit of open enquiry. We must learn not only to tolerate our differences. We must welcome them as the richness and diversity which can lead to true intelligence.” -- Albert Einstein |

**We can solve problems between individuals and also throughout society.**

**Let’s build a nonviolent society that respects every person’s human dignity and human rights:**

|  |
| --- |
| “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of oppressor.” -- Archbishop Desmond Tutu |
| The Dhammapada says: Conquer the angry man by love. Conquer the ill-natured man by goodness. Conquer the miser with generosity. Conquer the liar with truth. |
| Nuclear war would kill fetuses along with the rest of us. “Pro-life” people should work to abolish nuclear weapons, not only abortions. How could we help “pro-life” people understand this and join the anti-nuclear movement? This is just one example. How could we connect with other kinds of constituencies so they will see the need to abolish nuclear weapons as part of their work on the issues they mostly focus on? |
| “If there is going to be real change, it will have to work its way from the bottom up, from the people themselves.” -- Howard Zinn |
| “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” -- Buckminster Fuller |
| “Heretic, rebel, thing to flout.They drew a circle that shut me out.But Love and I had the wit to win.We drew a circle that took them in.” -- Edwin Markham |
| “Love is wise; hatred is foolish. In this world, which is getting more and more closely interconnected, we have to learn to tolerate each other, we have to learn to put up with the fact that some people say things that we don't like. We can only live together in that way. But if we are to live together, and not die together, we must learn a kind of charity and a kind of tolerance, which is absolutely vital to the continuation of human life on this planet.” -- Bertrand Russell |
| “Social movements must be based on widely held universal I. To place their social movement in the center of society... movement activists must consciously stand for and articulate the culture’s fundamental values, such as justice, democracy, civil and human rights, security, and freedom.” -- Bill Moyer in his book ***Doing Democracy*** |
| “The real struggle of the 21st century will not be between civilizations, nor between religions. It will be between violence and nonviolence. It will be between barbarity and civilization in the truest sense of the word.” -- Daisaku Ikeda |

|  |
| --- |
| “Violence is the method by which the ruthless few can subdue the passive many. Nonviolence is a means by which the active many can overcome the ruthless few.” -- Jonathan Schell in ***The Unconquerable World***, his 2003 book about the power and effectiveness of nonviolent action |
| “Our society is so inured to violence that it finds it hard to believe in anything else. And that phrase *believe in* provides the clue. People trust violence. Violence ‘saves.’ It is ‘redemptive.’ But when we make survival the highest goal and death the greatest evil, we hand ourselves over to the gods of the Domination System. We trust violence because we are afraid. And we will not relinquish our fears until we are able to imagine a better alternative.” -- Walter Wink, a biblical scholar who wrote extensively about these issues |
| “People turn to war and violence not because they are wicked or hateful. They resort to violence because they do not see any other option for resolving intractable conflicts. It is (therefore) fruitful to show how a strategy of nonviolent conflict can be an effective alternative to armed struggle.” -- Gene Sharp |
| “The real focus of American violence is in the very culture itself, its mass media, its extreme individualism and competitiveness, its inflated myths of virility and toughness, and its overwhelming preoccupation with the power of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological, and psychological overkill. If we live in what is essentially a culture of overkill, how can we be surprised at finding violence in it? Can we get to the root of the trouble? In my opinion, the best way to do it would have been the classic way of religious humanism and nonviolence exemplified by Gandhi.” -- Thomas Merton |
| “The Trump regime is throwing all sorts of horrible stuff at us in an abusive ‘shock & awe’ strategy to overwhelm us and cause us to feel powerless and despair so we will not be able to resist them. Let’s understand that that is their strategy and refuse to let their ‘shock & awe’ get us down. We can nonviolently fight back with savvy and strategic grassroots organizing that exposes their corruption and their violation of decent values. We can turn the public against their cruelty and corruption. To stand strong and nonviolently fight back, we must avoid mindless “escapism” and “self-medication” that reduce our determination and our energy. Let’s ground ourselves in the principles and practices of profound nonviolence – and share those with other people. Confronting Trumpism head-on can be empowering!” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Trump did NOT ‘make America great.’ Just the OPPOSITE! Trump made America corrupt, polluted, ignorant and cruel. The institutional Democratic Party pretends to disagree, but refuses to seriously resist Trumpism. The real resistance and positive alternatives must come from ordinary people, not from politicians. We must stand up for truth, honesty, real democracy, human rights, a healthy environment, nonviolence, and courageous, strategically smart grassroots organizing.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Democracy is not what governments do. It’s what people do.” -- Howard Zinn |
| “Immigrants make America great. Environmentalists, Water Protectors, and Climate Activists make America great. Organizers of grassroots movements for peace, social justice, and Left economics make America great.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win.” -- Mohandas K. Gandhi (“the Mahatma,” which means “great soul”). Gandhi’s insight expresses his confidence in the power of building strong grassroots movements of ordinary people to nonviolently challenge the powerful status quo. |
| “We have the power in this room, if we mobilize it, to change the future course of America.” -- Martin Luther King said this to about 35 people in a church basement. |
| “The old saying, ‘Power corrupts’ has more layers of truth in it. Certainly power corrupts the people who hold power. In addition, those people are corrupted further by their fear of losing power. And beyond that, the people who are victimized by those corrupt power-holders are corrupted if they use violence when reacting to their abusers. The only way for ordinary people to break the cycle of corruption is to break the cycle of violence. We can free ourselves only if we use principled nonviolence and smart strategies to fight back against corrupt power-holders.” -- Glen Anderson |
| For decades Gene Sharp was the world’s best researcher on the power of nonviolence and how to use nonviolence to remove dictators from power. He wrote:* “Dictators are never as strong as they tell you they are.”
* “People are never as weak as they think they are.”

See much information at his non-profit organization [**www.aeinstein.org**](http://www.aeinstein.org)  |
| “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well,” Czech dissident, writer and statesman Václav Havel said, “but the certainty that something is worth doing no matter how it turns out.” Havel was a great writer and playwright. The communist government repressed and imprisoned him, but he emerged and was elected to lead his nation. |
| “To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.” … “And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.” -- Howard Zinn |
| “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. ... We must move past indecision to action. … Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter – and beautiful – struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the children of God, and our brothers and sisters wait eagerly for our response. Shall we say the odds are too great? Shall we tell them the struggle is too hard? … Or will there be another message, of longing, of hope, of solidarity with their yearnings, of commitment to the cause, whatever the cost? The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment in human history.” -- Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| “In the U.S., liberals timidly ask what is ‘politically feasible’ and ask for small changes that the political parties and giant corporations could be persuaded to grant us. In Latin America, people demand bold reforms and agitate actively. In the U.S., our modest reforms are watered down and deferred. If we want real progress, we must be more like the Latin Americans.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” -- Martin Luther King, Jr. |
| “Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores, and thereby speed the day when “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.” - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Beyond Vietnam” Speech, April 4, 1967 |
| “Besides protesting against what we oppose, let’s also organize to achieve positive goals. We need to keep protesting against the cruelty, corruption, injustice and violence that continually assault us. But if we spend most of our time and efforts fighting the bad stuff, the oppressors will continue to have the upper hand because they can keep throwing bad stuff at us and we will always be on the defensive. We need to spend most of our time and efforts taking the initiative to organize for the positive goals that we want instead. We need to be proactive, envision the future we want instead of the current mess, and organize to achieve the positive goals. Thousands of years ago, it was written in Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” This is true today too. If we preoccupy ourselves fighting the bad stuff, we bog down and perish for lack of a positive vision – a positive agenda of goals we want instead.” – Glen Anderson |
| “If you fight with violence you are fighting with your enemy's best weapon ... “ -- Gene Sharp |
| Martin Luther King’s famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” deserves to be read and re-read every now and then. When some nice Christian ministers expressed concern that King did things that landed him in jail, he re-directed their attention to the underlying problems of severe racial injustice that he had confronted nonviolently. I urge you to read his entire letter. This short quotation provides the flavor: “You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative. In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action.”  |
| “To be psychologically healthy, a person needs to cultivate and maintain self-esteem. But when the surrounding society and culture de-value certain kinds of people, it is difficult for them to cultivate or maintain self-esteem. As a result, some of those de-valued individuals respond by alienating themselves from society. People who have been de-valued and alienated often internalize that negativity and respond by behaving in ways that are destructive to themselves and to society as a whole. ‘Nice’ society does not want to accept responsibility for what it has done, so it blames the people it has harmed. We need to help victims heal, and we need to help ‘nice’ society take responsibility instead of venting blame.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “During crazy political times, humor and creativity are revolutionary acts – and they can be effective in making end runs around politics as usual.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Whenever the government provides opportunities in privileges for white people and rich people they call it ‘subsidized’ when they do it for Negro and poor people they call it ‘welfare.’ The fact that is that everybody in this country lives on welfare. Suburbia was built with federally subsidized credit. And highways that take our white brothers out to the suburbs were built with federally subsidized money to the tune of 90 percent. Everybody is on welfare in this country. The problem is that we all too often have socialism for the rich and rugged free enterprise capitalism for the poor. That’s the problem.” -- Martin Luther King, Jr., said this in 1968. |
| “People (and our political, economic and other systems) created the problems that threaten humanity. Since people caused the problems, people can solve those problems. Many conservatives assume either (1) that the realities are not problems, or (2) that the problems are ‘human nature’ or ‘acts of God’ and therefore beyond our control. Many liberals also assume that the problems are too big and beyond our control, so we should settle for making tiny incremental changes. I believe that we can indeed solve the huge problems if we remove the obstacles (*e.g*., cynicism, big money’s domination of politics, mainstream political and media corruption and biases). Also, in order to remove those obstacles, we must organize nonviolent grassroots movements to solve the problems.” -- Glen Anderson |
| “Besides working to stop what we oppose, what if we also worked equally hard for what we want instead?” -- Glen Anderson |
| Many items relevant to these topics are posted to Glen Anderson’s blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), especially the categories for “Nonviolence” and “Organizing & Activism” and “Our Current Political Crisis.” |