

“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

You can also watch the program described below through your computer at 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.

The article below is what I said in the July 2021 TV program about “Empowering the Progressive Movement.” It is not quite a transcript, but paraphrases some parts of what I said on TV, and it includes some additional ideas and resources. The blog post (see below) includes the video of the TV program, the document you are reading now, and links to some additional documents related to this topic.

Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary at these parts of my blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org: “TV Programs” and “Organizing.”

“Empowering the Progressive Movement”

July 2021 Program in the “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” TV Series

by Glen Anderson, the TV series’ producer and host
(360) 491-9093 glenanderson@integra.net www.parallaxperspectives.org

Glen introduced the viewers to this month’s TV topic:

This month’s episode of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” helps you and other people make more progress when we work on the issues we care about.

- Perhaps you want to change U.S. foreign policy to support peace instead of militarism.
- Perhaps you want to protect the environment and the climate.
- Perhaps you want to eliminate racism from our society.
- Perhaps you want to significantly change our criminal justice system to become humane.
- Perhaps you want to eliminate poverty and create an economy that is fair for everyone.

All of these are huge issues. In each case, we are the underdogs. Powerful forces created the unjust status quo – and powerful forces sustain the injustices that we are trying to eliminate.

Because we are the underdogs in these big issues, we need to empower ourselves and bring many people together so we can organize large nonviolent grassroots movements to solve the problems and create peaceful and just societies at the local, national and global levels.

But often people feel powerless – as if we are too small and the oppressive powers are too big. We need to empower ourselves – and we **can** empower ourselves if we are grounded in profound nonviolence and if we have the skills and strategies to organize winning campaigns.

I conduct free workshops to help people strengthen their knowledge, strategies and skills for “Nonviolent Grassroots

Organizing.” One of my workshop sessions focuses on empowering ourselves. **The TV program you are watching now is based on the workshop session about HOW TO EMPOWER THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT. The insights and skills for doing this are the same for any issue you are working on.**

You can find out more about my Sept-Oct 2021 workshops – and how to sign up for them – at this link: <https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-online-workshops-so-you-can-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about-4>

I designed my workshop on empowering ourselves to start with me doing ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ... I would sit silently and just wait without doing anything at all.

The workshop participants would feel increasingly uneasy and anxious because nothing was happening. Eventually someone will ask why nothing was happening.

Then I will say, “This concludes today’s first group exercise.”

- “One of the basic principles of grassroots organizing is that **nothing** will happen by itself.
- “Our role as organizers is to **figure out** what should happen – and then to **make** it happen.
- “Our role as organizers is to **develop smart strategies** and **work with other people** to bring about positive political and social change.”

That was the first “teachable moment” in the workshop.

I want people to understand the need to take the initiative and start making good things happen.

Why we need this session about empowering ourselves:

We need this workshop – and we need this episode in my TV series – because **we recognize that we are the underdogs working to change big, unjust systems.**

We need to empower ourselves to use strategically smart nonviolence to organize grassroots movements that can achieve our goals.

Here is why we are focusing this episode of my TV series on empowering ourselves:

Many progressives recognize that big systems such as U.S. foreign policy, the economy, the criminal justice system, the electoral system, and so forth are horribly dysfunctional.

Because these systems are so big and so dysfunctional, it’s easy for us to feel powerless.

But this feeling of powerlessness inhibits us from acting boldly and effectively.

During this hour we will understand this “learned helplessness” and how to overcome it.

During this hour we will explore how political and social change occurs.

During this hour we will explore how to organize and strategize to create effective and powerful grassroots movements.

Questions about big issues and powerlessness:

When I start my workshop on empowering ourselves, I ask the participants some questions about feeling powerless when we work on the big issues we care about.

I ask four questions and invite people to raise their hands to answer each question.

I invite people to look around the room to see how many other participants have raised their hands for each question.

Here are the four questions I ask in the workshop:

1. How many **of you here today** are concerned about global problems such as nuclear weapons and the climate crisis? # of hands: _____
2. How many people think the **general public** wants to **avoid** thinking about how serious these problems are? # of hands: _____
3. How many people think the **general public** feels that **solving** these problems is **beyond their control**? # of hands: _____
4. How many of us here today **sometimes share those fears** that **solving** those problems is beyond our control? # of hands: _____

George W. Bush and Barack Obama:

Think back to late 2002 and early 2003 when George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were planning their war against Iraq. People who wanted peace were alarmed and started organizing. From the fall of 2002 to mid-March 2003, the peace movement was growing stronger and more vigorous – throughout the U.S. and also worldwide.

This is because we felt **empowered** with the possibility of preventing the war. We thought if enough of us protested enough, we could prevent Bush and Cheney from starting the war.

I developed this workshop way back when George W. Bush was president.

I continued to conduct this workshop – with only very minor tweaks ever since then, because the workshop’s lessons have stayed equally relevant since then. The biggest, most serious problems – and the smartest, most powerful solutions have remained – at their deepest levels – pretty consistent throughout the years when George W. Bush and Barack Obama and Donald Trump were in office. The big, serious problems that progressives are working on are still persisting now with Joe Biden as President.

The problems are profoundly deep.

Both of the big political parties have caused the problems, and both parties have failed to solve them.

But ORDINARY PEOPLE really can empower ourselves and organize bold solutions!

After the war started in March 2003, much of the peace movement collapsed. Many people felt they had failed, so they felt **dis**-empowered.

But people who were solidly grounded in the peace movement had deep and long-term commitment and strategy, so we persisted, despite this **short-term setback**.

One way to empower ourselves **now** is to cultivate deep and long-term commitment and strategy so we can empower ourselves and persist, even when setbacks occur.

We are much more likely to empower ourselves and persist if we deeply understand two things:

- (1) **The theory and practice of nonviolence – and why profoundly principled nonviolence is powerful; and**
- (2) **How to build powerful grassroots movements to accomplish our goals.**

During Barack Obama's 2008 campaign he promised to:

- Stop the Iraq war.
- Close Guantanamo.
- Protect our Constitutional rights.

Obama won the 2008 election, **but he did not keep those promises:**

- He kept waging war in Iraq until the Iraqi government forced the U.S. almost entirely out.
- He kept Guantanamo open.
- Instead of protecting our Constitutional rights, he prosecuted many journalists and whistleblowers for telling the truth. Obama prosecuted more people under the repressive 1917 Espionage Act than all previous presidents combined for nearly the entire century since 1917.

President Obama did NOT keep his campaign promises. But after he was elected in 2008, many progressive Americans felt that with a smart African American in the White House, we could sit back and let him solve the problems. Many people did not push him to keep his promises.

Instead – without strong enough pressure from the grassroots:

- Obama refused to prosecute any of the Wall Street bankers who committed crimes that crashed our economy.
- Obama continued the U.S.'s traditional militaristic foreign policy – including the Bush-Cheney wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Obama escalated the drone wars into many other countries, where he killed many people and angered more people into using terrorist violence.
- Obama deported many more immigrants than George W. Bush had.
- Obama told the world in 2009 that he wanted to abolish nuclear weapons, but one year after that public statement he supported a horribly expensive new generation of ALL nuclear weapons: warheads, bombers, missiles, submarines.

In many ways Obama **refused** to make the politically progressive changes that most Americans wanted.

Partly this was because people assumed he would do that **without** our strong organizing and pushing from the grassroots.

As a result of all this, many politically progressive people felt **dis**-empowered.

Next I shared a story about my friend's experience:

In the mid-1970s an old girlfriend told me what happened one night when she was working as a waitress in a very classy nightclub in a big city. The nightclub was very busy that night, and they were short one waitress, so my friend was having to work much faster and harder than usual.

A woman she had just served called her back to return to her table and complained, "I ordered my steak to be medium-rare, but this steak is medium!"

My friend looked at her and said, "Lady, nobody ever said life was going to be fair."

I thought this story was funny, but it has always grated on me. People who are politically progressive want the world to be fair, but the world often is not fair. We let this reality hurt our feelings. We sometimes feel wronged by the way the world turns out to be. As a result, we often feel powerless.

We need to devise ways to function effectively in a world that is often **not** fair.

Research about Powerlessness: Experiment #1:

Now I want to share with you the results of some experiments that two psychologists had conducted on animals. Psychologist Martin Seligman was experimenting with conditioning dogs and got unexpected results.

He placed a dog in a box with side-by-side compartments separated by a low divider. The box's floor was wire mesh. He ran a mild electric shock through the floor of the side where the dog was standing, and the dog jumped to other side to avoid the shock.

Then he placed a harness on the dog to restrain it. When he shocked the wire mesh floor, the dog was PREVENTED from jumping over the low divider onto the safe side of the box. Then when he removed the restraining harness – and shocked the floor again – the dog would NOT jump to other side. It just cowered in a corner because the dog HAD LEARNED TO FEEL HELPLESS.

This can happen to us. When we are repeatedly abused and feel there is no way for us to escape the abuse, we LEARN TO FEEL HELPLESS:

- This can happen at an individual level (as when someone is trapped in an abusive or violent marriage – or when someone is trapped in poverty or other serious misfortune).
- This can happen when a portion of the general public has been abused and made to feel helpless.
- **If the public feels powerless, people will cower in fear and fail to take the actions necessary to solve the problems that are hurting us.**
- Our job is to empower people so they will know they can take action to solve problems.

Research about Powerlessness: Experiment #2:

Now let me tell you about a second experiment. Robert Sapolsky wrote an excellent book – titled, *Behave* – that is interdisciplinary. He supports social justice and positive actions. He conducted an experiment that made rats feel helpless. When the rats felt helpless, they started biting their neighbors.

Who feels powerless in our society? Many different kinds of people feel powerless because the system is stacked against them:

- Some poor people, minorities and young people feel they have no future.
- Some people want peace, social and economic justice, etc., but feel powerless in corrupt, dysfunctional political and economic systems.

Many people who have a lot of power **WANT THE REST OF US TO FEEL POWERLESS**. Many people with huge political and economic power want ordinary people to feel afraid and powerless, so those powerful people can abuse us and do whatever they want.

For example, many big businesses and the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex want us to feel powerless so they can do whatever they want and we will feel too powerless to stop them.

Martin Seligman had to re-train the dog how to escape the shocks. **Likewise, we need re-train the public** – and our fellow **political activists** – that we DO have power to counteract the political repression. Let's help the public discover that we are not powerless. Let's help the public understand how to empower ourselves and how to devise smart, nonviolent strategies so we can turn things around.

Some people feel powerless because they are poor or old or young or have a disability, or

Don't let difficulties cause us to feel powerless. Let's build upon what we CAN do – the power we DO have. Decades ago the great peace activist Dave Dellinger wrote a book about the power of nonviolent organizing titled, *More Power than We Know*. This is the reality: we really do have more power than most of us think we have.

The TV program you are watching now can help us empower ourselves. Then:

- We will be mentally healthier
- We will be better able to organize for the social and political changes we want to accomplish for our society.

- Some white working-class people feel they had “played by the rules” but got left behind by economic changes and politicians who failed to protect them.

The 2016 election was about perceptions of who had power and who felt powerless.

- Hillary Clinton's entire political career was devoted to supporting big businesses, rich people, and the military-industrial complex. She had made a lot of money speaking to Wall Street audiences.

- Donald Trump ALSO was an elitist – a billionaire white racist landlord – but he PRETENDED to care about the working class and other people who had been left behind by people like Hillary Clinton and her Wall Street elitists.

Robert Sapolsky's rats who were made to feel helpless started biting their neighbors. In what ways have people who feel helpless done the same – and started biting their neighbors?

We should ask: Who benefits when ordinary people are made to feel helpless and bite our neighbors?

Military basic training is designed to **DISempower** the new recruits so they can be **trained** to hurt and kill people in other countries.

How can these insights help progressive movements understand why we often fall short of our potential?

These insights help us understand why progressive movements often falls short of our potential.

Every aspect of our society is in a severe crisis. This includes foreign policy, economics, environment, human rights, the climate crisis, news media coverage – and electoral processes and democracy itself. **All of our major systems are in severe crisis.**

Progressives know this!

Sometimes – because we know so deeply how broken and dysfunctional ALL systems are – **we make ourselves feel overwhelmed and powerless.** When we feel overwhelmed and powerless, these feelings **prevent** us from taking positive actions to solve problems.

Also, some parts of progressive movements exude cynicism, which leads to pessimism and negativity. Feeling cynical, pessimistic and negative actually **disempower** ourselves. Then our negativity repels the general public and interferes with organizing effectively.

Who would want to join a movement whose attitude is glum, pessimistic and negative?

We can do better! We need to empower ourselves so we can reach out effectively to the general public and welcome them to join us in building a strong grassroots movement that is enthusiastic about organizing to achieve our positive goals.

Even while we recognize how seriously broken ALL of the systems are, we need to **EMPOWER OURSELVES** with **positive insights** and **smart strategies** for **HOW TO ORGANIZE NONVIOLENT GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS to solve the problems.**

That's why I conduct my series of FREE workshops to help people strengthen their insights and skills. In these workshops, I share many savvy insights and practical resources. I offer them every few months. You can find out more about my Sept-Oct 2021 workshops – and how to sign up for them – at this link: <https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-online-workshops-so->

Many men feel powerless on the job. Bosses mistreat them. They were left behind when wages peaked in 1976. They can't get their wives or kids to obey them. I think men who feel powerless buy big trucks as a way to empower themselves by towering over other people on the road.

Likewise, many men who feel powerless are fanatically obsessed with owning guns, because the guns help the men feel powerful after feeling so badly powerless.

[you-can-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about-4](#)

During the historical era when so many parts of the world were colonized, European nations oppressed the colonized peoples and kept them powerless. Usually, the colonized people felt they were stuck being colonized, and they usually did not see the possibility of rising up and declaring their independence.

But starting in the 1950s and 1960s, people in many colonies did rise up and declare their independence. Once the people in other colonies saw that independence movements actually were possible, they started independence movements in their own respective colonies, and a massive world-wide consciousness and movement for independence arose and won many victories. **Historians started talking about “the revolution of rising expectations.”**

This is what we need to create now! We need to organize boldly and with a positive attitude that will inspire broad public support and create a “revolution of rising expectations,” so many ordinary people will join with us to achieve bold goals!

Throughout our nation's history, the best political and social changes have been organized through grassroots movements. People envisioned a positive future and organized from the grassroots up to accomplish smart goals. **This was possible because people felt they could actually win! They experienced a “revolution of rising expectations.”**

This happened historically in other countries AND in the U.S. Now – in order to make progress on the issues we care about – peace, social justice, a humane economy, environmental stewardship, and so forth – we must envision the possibility of winning – and we must learn how to strategize, organize and build effective nonviolent grassroots movements.

Most of what people think of as “activism” falls far short of what we really need.

I distinguish between mere “ACTIVISM” – which often is just a bunch of random or frenzied activities – and **actual “ORGANIZING,”** which includes working collaboratively with other people to set specific goals and devise smart strategies and conduct a sequence of well-planned campaigns and activities that will build upon each other to achieve our bold goals.

Frenzied “activism” can be chaotic and futile. It often leads to burnout or counter-productive behaviors.

In contrast, **strategically smart “organizing”** uses positive, goal-oriented methods to bring more and more people together into thoughtful efforts to achieve smart goals.

Here are eight practical insights that can help us EMPOWER OURSELVES to move forward:

#1. Many “activist” organizations merely protest against the bad things without ever devising a **bold and attractive alternative vision** for the future that they want to replace the status quo. It is not enough to be re-active. We must be pro-active. **We must create a bold and attractive vision for the future.** When I post this video on my blog, I will also post an article I wrote. I titled the article, **“Besides Protesting What We Oppose, Let’s Also Organize to Achieve Positive Goals.”**

This article’s first two paragraphs say:

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.

- #2. Most of us sign e-mail petitions through “mouse-click activism.” I click those action alerts too, but that is not enough! It is far less than what the world needs from us because “mouse-click activism” does not apply real pressure. **We need to actually build power.**
- #3. Political parties and many non-profit organizations are limited by what they think is “politically feasible” at the current time in the current political climate. Instead, we must propose a **bold vision** and **significantly change** our culture and the political climate, so that **our bold vision WILL BECOME** “politically feasible!”
- #4. As grassroots activists, **our job is to change public opinion** – to **move much farther toward the left of what most people assume is “politically feasible.”**
- #5. I strongly agree with whoever said, **“If you are not changing the terms of the debate, you will lose the debate.”** This point is crucial: – **If we are not changing what the debate MUST REALLY be about, we will lose the debate.**
- #6. Many activists simply repeat the same tactics over and over, without clear goals and overall strategies for reaching those goals. Instead of spinning our wheels repeating old tactics, we must build grassroots movements that **devise bold goals and smart strategies.** **We need to actually build power!**
- #7. During election years many progressives get distracted by the two big political parties that keep failing to address the real problems and keep failing to propose real solutions. Because the election campaign seems so urgent, many people let it distract their time and energy, so they REDUCE their work on the real issues. **We must NOT let politicians distract us from working on the REAL ISSUES!**
- #8. Only about 5% of democracy is about voting in elections. 95% of democracy is organizing at the grassroots to build strong grassroots movements to make the social and political changes we want!

Some assumptions about power:

Now I want to share some additional insights and strategies that will:

- (1) Help us **overcome** the feelings of powerlessness that interfere with our succeeding.
- (2) Actually **empower us** to become more effective in achieving our goals.

The conventional model of political power is a pyramid with a wide bottom and a pointed top: People assume that the people who hold the official political power are up in the top peak, and ordinary people are down at the bottom. Then (according to this conventional model), our role is to try to influence the people at the top. We ask them, “Please please please do the right thing.”

In contrast, a model based on a savvy sense of grassroots organizing for social change actually turns the pyramid upside down! We the people have the real power! This actually is what Thomas Jefferson and our nation’s founders understood. “We the People” created our nation and – tentatively – elect some people to perform official duties. But “We the People” still retain our power over the government and over our society. Likewise, businesses are incorporated and given corporate charters to conduct business, but we can revoke those corporate charters when businesses seriously misbehave.

With this alternative model – the upside-down pyramid – our role is not only to push the people who have official power, but – more importantly – to reach out to the general

public and educate them and change public opinion so a big majority of the public will support our bold goals. We mobilize the public to make the changes that we want.

The main issue in any social movement is the struggle between the movement and the people who hold the “official” power. We compete with them to win the general public’s hearts, minds, and support.

We need strategies and activities that will reach out to the general public in a friendly, open way with a spirit of non-violence. We welcome more and more new people into the movement, so our “people-power” will win our goals.

If we show anger or rudeness we’ll frighten the people away and hurt our movement.

But if we show the general public that we share important values – and we can develop human connections with each other – we’ll welcome more and more new people into the movement. With smart strategies and persistence we can win.

This bold, grassrootsy approach is profoundly democratic (democratic with a small “d”) and is smarter and bolder than any political party. This approach is laid out very thoroughly in a brilliantly insightful and practical model called the ***Movement Action Plan***. It was written in about 1990. I have used its insights in many practical ways since then.

You can see basic information at these links:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_Action_Plan

<https://andreasspeck.info/content/movement-action-plan>

The ***Movement Action Plan*** was written by a long-term activist, Bill Moyer, from Philadelphia and San Francisco. He summarized it in his book, ***Doing Democracy***. See this: <https://newsociety.ca/books/d/doing-democracy>

I share with interested persons some copies of the original document and his book – and many related resources. We brought him to Olympia several times, and I featured him twice on my TV programs. He authorized me to conduct workshops on the ***Movement Action Plan***.

Very briefly, the ***Movement Action Plan*** is based on the principles I’ve laid out in the past few minutes (about nonviolence and the upside-down pyramid). The model explains how social and political change movements move through eight stages, starting at the very beginning when almost nobody knows the problem even exists – all the way through until we win and hold on to our gains. We don’t win all at once – not even when huge numbers of people are protesting. We need to progress through the sequence of stages – and we need different kinds of people with different kinds of personalities and skills as we move from stage to stage.

We must devise strategies to win a majority of the public: Do these:

- **Neutralize** a growing percentage of the public away from accepting the position of the people who hold the official power.
- **Move a growing percentage of the general public over to our side.** This includes people who are undecided and not yet paying attention.
- **Activate our supporters continuously** for strategically smart organizing until we achieve our goal.

I showed the “Spectrum of Allies” model on the TV screen, and I explained it:

You can use this “Spectrum of Allies” model to help you strategize how to expand and strengthen the grassroots movement for whatever issue you are working on.

People’s positions on an issue are not merely “pro” or “con.” Actually, public opinion spreads all the way across a very wide spectrum from strongly “pro” to strongly “con,” as shown in this diagram:



Suppose you’re working on the climate issue. Too often we fret about how to convert a hard-core climate denier (shown by the asterisk at one extreme end of the horizontal line above) into an enthusiastic climate protector (shown by the asterisk at the extreme opposite end of the line). That is NOT realistic. And it is NOT necessary.

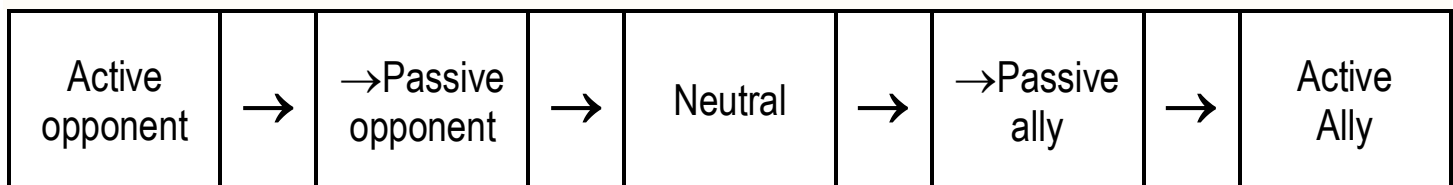
Think of a teeter-totter with a number of kids sitting next to each other along the full length of the teeter-totter. If each kid would move just six inches toward one end, their cumulative weight would tilt the teeter-totter toward that end.

Actually, this “Spectrum of Allies” model recognizes that different members of the public are at many different points along the entire spectrum. We can make significant progress by moving the people at **each point** on this spectrum **just a little bit** toward our direction.

We can do that for whatever issue you are working on. Identify various positions along the spectrum. For example, this diagram shows five positions, but you could break down the various positions more specifically than shown here in this simple diagram:

Strongly on the wrong side	Somewhat on the wrong side	Undecided with mixed feelings	Somewhat on the good side	Strongly on the good side
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

For each position on the spectrum, you could **devise some strategies to reach out to that specific niche and move them even slightly toward your direction.** See the arrows in this similar diagram.



Weaken their hostility. Help them see some validity in your points. Arouse doubts and disunity among opponents.

Devise different ways to reach various kinds of moderates so they will tilt toward your side.

Reinforce allies’ knowledge, commitment, cohesion, and support for the long term until you win.

Some people are NOT EVEN ON THE SPECTRUM because they are NOT EVEN PAYING ATTENTION to the issue. We need to devise strategies to induce them to start paying attention, so they will land somewhere on the spectrum, and then we can move them toward our direction as new allies. The arrow below illustrates this. How can you engage and recruit people who are not even paying attention? What strategies might work for different kinds of non-participants?



To summarize the information above, we can understand our task in winning public opinion is to do four things:

1. Our primary job is to develop strategies to move people from **each** box into **the next** box farther toward the good side. We need to develop different strategies to reach each of the different kinds of people in each box so we can move them to the next box over.
2. We need to devise strategies to activate the people in the two good boxes to help them work more actively to help us.
3. Let's devise ways to weaken the power and resolve of those who are in the two boxes on the "wrong side." Strategize how to help them start to doubt their current position – and start to understand and see the merits of our position.
4. Some people are not paying attention to the issue, so they are nowhere on this linear spectrum. The vertical arrow at the bottom of page 9 shows we need to engage them with the issue. Facts alone might be insufficient if they do not currently have the emotional space to consider the issue we are working on. Let's figure out ways to help them become emotionally open to considering the issue – and also ways to educate people about the issue, so we can move them to our side..

Nonviolence is important, practical, and powerful:

Research shows that nonviolence works better than violence in achieving freedom and democracy. → See the blog post about this July 2021 TV program for some resources to help you empower yourself and other people. I list a few at the end of the document you are reading now, and I list more on my blot. I especially urge people to see the one-page resource I typed up with links to sources of information about how nonviolence really works – and it is powerful. I titled it, "Resources for Organizing Nonviolent Grassroots Movements."

I especially personally recommend works by two great researchers:

- Gene Sharp was the brains behind the Albert Einstein Institute, www.aeinstein.org. Their website has many books and resources. You can download many of them for free.
- Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan wrote a compelling book, *Why Civil Resistance Works*. I also recommend Erica Chenoweth's TED Talks and YouTube videos.

Some people choose nonviolence merely because it is very practical, and it has proven to work. Other people embrace nonviolence as a bedrock principle – the ethically grounded goal for the society we want to create **as well as** the method for reaching the goal.

1. Why is nonviolence a crucial part of **building a grassroots movement** to work on the issue?
 - Nonviolence fosters democracy, egalitarianism, accountability – rather than machismo, elitism and anonymity.
 - Nonviolence sows the seeds of the democratic and egalitarian future we want to replace the status quo.
 - Let's frame our efforts in terms of widely held positive values that the public supports, such as democracy, fairness, and what's good for your children.
2. Why is nonviolence a **powerful antidote to feelings of powerlessness**?
 - Nonviolence has been proven to be powerful when used skillfully.
 - Nonviolence builds upon people's best values, so it affirms the oneness of all humanity – and it warmly invites people to join with us.

How can we empower ourselves?

We can affirm every person's human dignity. We can stand in solidarity with the smart movements that have affirmed the human dignity of oppressed people. Many kinds of oppressed people have conducted consciousness-raising activities. For example, this was an important part of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

For hundreds of years African Americans have been oppressed, but their movements for civil rights, liberation and racial justice included powerful affirmations of their full human dignity by reversing the oppressive stereotypes and put-downs. Notice the affirmative pride in "Black Pride," "Black is beautiful, and "Black Lives Matter."

The LGBTQ movement used similar approaches of affirming who they are. For thousands of years they were forced to stay “in the closet” because it was not safe to be “out.” A few decades ago a powerful and affirming insight empowered LGBTQ people to “come out of the closet” and affirm their full, equal human dignity by becoming visible and assertive. They affirmed “Gay Pride. They asserted LGBTQ dignity and equal rights without blaming or retaliating against straight people. This welcoming and inclusive strategy allowed straight allies to join with them for social justice.

We could apply the “coming out of the closet” strategy to other issues We could do that for other issues whose supporters have been trapped “in the closet.” Underdogs in those grassroots movements can empower themselves by “coming out” and building those grassroots movements. “Coming out of the closet” significantly strengthened the LGBTQ movement by increasing their visibility, so also many more people actually oppose the death penalty than have stated this publicly. Many people who wanted to abolish the death penalty were “in the closet” about that. Therefore, about two decades ago I created a half-page flyer urging all kinds of people to “come out” against the death penalty if they personally oppose it. I have offered my flyer in many public places, including some LGBTQ “Pride” events. **HERE IT IS:**

Do Your Friends Know You Oppose the Death Penalty? “Coming Out” Against It Can Help Turn the Tide!

Social science has tipped us off on some powerful possibilities. It turns out that a modest number of individuals can create powerful social movements by energetically spreading the word.

Epidemiologists know that epidemics of diseases can spread through a few virulent carriers, and sociologists know that the same is true of ambitious and well-connected activists.

For many years the death penalty has been the *status quo* – a given – the accepted norm. Most people assume that other people accept the death penalty. If more people who quietly oppose it would come out of the closet and tell their friends they oppose it, public perceptions will shift and the public will sense that public opinion is shifting against the death penalty. This will help move public opinion – and politicians and the media – toward abolition.

Coming out of the closet can be a powerful affirmation. Coming out against the death penalty will change history!

→ See the blog post about this July 2021 TV program. Besides links to the video and to the document you are reading now, the blog post will include some resources, including the one-page resource I mentioned on page 10 above and some additional documents:

- “Visualize – **and create** – a government that is **truly** “of the people, by the people, for the people.”
- “Six Rules for Organizing a Grassroots Regeneration Revolution”
- “Peace Movement Potentials and Strategies”

Now – while we are nearing the end of this TV program – ask these questions:

Now I will follow up on something I said near the beginning of this TV program. I said that when I have conducted this workshop in person with a group of people, I asked questions about global problems such as nuclear weapons and the climate crisis. When I have presented this workshop in a location with other people physically present, people had raised their hands to show we think these are serious problems. Also we raised our hands to show that we think the general public wants to avoid thinking about the serious problems. Usually at that early part of the workshop some

people admitted that they themselves felt powerless to deal with those serious problems.

Now – near the end of this TV program – **please ask yourself two more questions:**

- #1. Do you think the people who are watching this TV program can actually do something to help solve those problems?
- #2. Have you **already accomplished** something – **made some progress** in working for peace or human

rights or the environment of some kind of social or economic justice issue – **by working together with someone else?**

If your answer to question #2 is “YES,” then **you have already empowered yourself** – and you have **empowered other people** – to do good things.

Two strategically smart examples of organizing from the grassroots up:

Historically, most of the political and social progress in U.S. history was accomplished through nonviolent grassroots movements. **Only after** these **grassroots** and **local** movements became large and powerful did the people at the top of the political and economic hierarchies (and federal government) accommodate the new realities that local grassroots people had already put in place.

Women’s right to vote was an important struggle. But 72 years elapsed between the first major meeting in 1848 and the 1920 constitutional amendment that guaranteed their

I encourage you to build on that experience – and use the insights and empowerment strategies we have discussed during this hour – to empower yourself further – and to further empower other people too.

right. Many grassroots movements have accomplished significant progress in far fewer years. Examples include the movements for the climate, LGBTQ rights, disability rights, Black Lives Matter, organic food, challenging the status quo about police behavior, and growing public interest in socialism.

All of the big issues that we care about will require huge, long-term grassroots movements so we can accomplish our big, important goals. We must empower people to organize savvy, long-term strong grassroots movements so we can fight uphill and win.

Example #1:

The LGBTQ movement is an inspiring example of empowerment and strategically savvy grassroots organizing. On the previous page I mentioned that for many, many centuries, public attitudes were so hostile that LGBTQ people had to stay “in the closet.” It was not safe for them to admit to their employers or their friends or families that they were LGBTQ persons. Employers could refuse to hire them – or could fire them – and they faced all kinds of dangers. State and local governments considered – and passed – legislation that promoted discrimination and oppression. On the previous page I said that a strategically smart strategy was to “come out of the closet” and assert that they had equal rights. By affirming their dignity – and their pride – they changed the social and political climate. I remember seeing a bumper sticker on a car decades ago that said, “We’re queer. We’re here. Get used to it.”

The great number of persons who “came out of the closet” and affirmed who they were wiped away the stigma – and generated empathy, solidarity and support from their friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors, and the public overall. Now somebody who used to share the widespread default negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people started standing up for them, because the person actually knew – or was related to – an LGBTQ person. They did not want their LGBTQ friends and relatives to get picked on. Now LGBTQ folks had many allies in the straight society. This made it “politically feasible” for governments to start protecting their equal rights.

Since 1987 I have been producing and hosting TV interview programs. Some decades ago, one of my programs interviewed guests who helped their local religious congregations publicly affirm equal welcoming for LGBTQ persons. In a more recent program, I interviewed some savvy local grassroots organizers who had accomplished good things. One guest – a lesbian I had worked with on other issues since the 1980s – told about how they started locally to achieve relatively modest goals, and then built upon those successes to seek bigger goals and bigger geographical areas.

Many years before the State of Washington allowed gays and lesbians to marry, she said they got the City of Olympia to extend City employees’ health benefits to domestic partners on the same basis as married employees. Then they successfully organized for non-discrimination in City employment – and they accomplished other step-by-step goals. They did this at the county level too. When enough local governments throughout Washington State had made these advancements, they were able to win statewide legislation for various kinds of equal rights.

In February 2012 Washington State became the seventh state to pass a law allowing gays and lesbians to marry. The nationwide movement for this basic human right kept growing state by state until several years later the U.S. Supreme Court recognized that right.

When Barack Obama was elected President in 2008 he **OPPOSED** equal rights to marriage. But after smart grassroots organizing – and political victories – changed public

opinion and the political landscape, Obama was forced to change his mind, and he started supporting it.

Now even the Pentagon allows LGBTQ persons to serve in the military. The Pentagon even welcomes transgender persons.

The organizers accomplished these goals even though LGBTQ persons were a minority in the population. Their movement did NOT attack straight people for being straight. Instead, they grounded their organizing in widely held values of human rights and equality. They welcomed support

Example #2:

Next I summarized a different example of successful grassroots organizing that has been winning victories in a growing number of states and two big victories nationwide. The death penalty is sharply declining in the U.S.!

Since before 1990 I have been organizing strategically toward abolishing the death penalty. We have made progress here in Washington State and nationwide. Public support for the death penalty peaked in 1994, and it has been declining ever since. As a result, executions have been declining sharply since about two decades ago, and by mid-February 2021 the U.S. had gone the longest time in the past 40 years without a state-level execution. Far fewer death sentences are being imposed nowadays; death sentences peaked in 1996 at more than 300, and declined sharply to fewer than 50 in 2018. In 2007 or later, 11 states got rid of the death penalty. Now 23 states no longer have it, and in 3 other states governors have imposed moratoriums on executions.

The death penalty has existed in the United States for hundreds of years. While the federal government still has its own death penalty, the vast number of cases – and executions – occur at the state level. Local organizers have strategized ways to chip away at it within their states, even if they have not yet abolished it altogether.

One victory: Persons with IQ below 70 have much less culpability for their behavior, so a number of states passed laws to exclude them from eligibility for being sentenced to death. Washington State was one of the first states to pass such a law. Enough other states also passed laws so that when a case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, in 2002 the Court recognized what it called “**evolving standards of decency**” and prohibited executing those persons anywhere in the U.S.

Another victory: Likewise, children have much less culpability for their behavior, so Washington State was one

from straight allies who shared their values of human rights and equality. They organized locally, won modest local goals, and escalated the geographic scope and the range of goals. This was strategically smart grassroots organizing!

These were enormous – historic – seismic – shifts in public opinion, and then also in public laws. All of this enormous progress was accomplished in just a few decades. An oppressed minority can indeed empower itself and organize in strategically savvy ways from the grassroots up!

of the first states to pass laws excluding them from eligibility for being sentenced to death. More and more states were passing laws to protect them, so when a juvenile death penalty case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, in 2005 the Court again recognized “**evolving standards of decency**” and prohibited nationwide the execution of persons who had committed their crimes before the age of 18.

It is important to recognize that – in both of these cases – empowering some state governments to pass humane laws inspired and empowered other states to do likewise, until the flood of “evolving standards of decency” persuaded the U.S. Supreme Court.

These two examples – LGBTQ rights and restricting the death penalty – show the effectiveness of empowering local and state people to ground ourselves in humane values and work from the grassroots level step-by-step all the way to the national level.

We can do this on more issues! We need bold, smart local and state-level actions for human rights – and for workers’ rights – and for the climate – and for profoundly overhauling our dysfunctional criminal justice system – and for making our tax systems fair – and on and on and on!

Serious problems – and great opportunities – exist throughout the world, in our nation, and in our local communities. Grassroots movements have great potential to solve the problems and advance into the new opportunities. **Our efforts will be more successful if we envision the future we want, if we set bold goals, if we plan strategically, and if we use creative, nonviolent methods.**

It really is up to us!

Glen's closing encouragement:

I thanked Dennis Mills for his technical skills in converting this video into a format that can be aired on Thurston Community Media – and also for converting it into a different format that I can post to my blog.

I also thanked all of the people who have been watching this TV program. I said, “YOU are the people who will solve the big problems. YOU can strategize with other people to **empower all of you**. YOU can organize nonviolently at the grassroots level to **start solving problems from the grassroots up!**”

I affirmed that **ordinary people have much more power to do this** to do this than do the politicians who are trapped in systems that force them to think small and to obey the rich people and big businesses that funded their campaigns.

In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years because he wanted the white racist government to treat indigenous black Africans fairly. Soon after he was released from prison, he was elected president of the new non-racist government. Nelson Mandela famously said, “**They will say it is impossible until it happens.**”

I said I believe that people can indeed empower themselves to take bold nonviolent actions to solve big problems and make progress at local, national and global levels. We can set goals and bring people together to organize nonviolent grassroots movements and make the world a better place.

I conduct workshops on “Nonviolent Grassroots Organizing.” These workshops are free and use computer video so people anywhere can participate. My next series will run

from mid-September to late October of 2021. You can find out more – and find out how to sign up – by visiting my blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org, and clicking the “Organizing” category. Scroll down until you see the invitation to sign up for these free online workshops on “Nonviolent Grassroots Organizing” so YOU can make better progress on the issues YOU care about.” **You can find out more about my Sept-Oct 2021 workshops – and how to sign up for them – at this direct link:** <https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-online-workshops-so-you-can-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about-4>

The blog post where you are reading this document also includes links to the documents I mentioned during this hour – and links to some additional documents. These links can take you to a number of resources that will empower you to act upon the contents of this TV program. Visit www.parallaxperspectives.org, and click either the “TV Programs” category or the “Organizing” category. Look for the title of this TV episode, “Empowering the Progressive Movement.”

You can get information about a **wide variety of issues** related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through Glen's blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org or by phoning him at (360) 491-9093. Please share this information with your friends. You or your friends can watch this video and/or read relevant information through Glen's blog, www.parallaxperspectives.org.

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

Glen ends 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!**