**“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, the environment, governmental functioning, 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 summarized 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 blog home page. Also, see information about various issues at the category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

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**🡪 I saved this document in Word format with live links.** If this document does not load or print properly for you, please e-mail me at [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org) and I’ll promptly send you the links you request.

**🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary through these parts of my blog,** [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)**, including the categories for “TV Programs” and “Organizing” and “Framing.”**

How to Communicate Your Issues to the General Public

Glen’s Parallax Perspectives TV Series

October 2023

Glen Anderson (360) 491-9093 [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org)

**Glen welcomed viewers and introduced this month’s topic:**

This month’s episode of the “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” TV series provides a wealth of information, insights, and practical ways for you to strengthen your skills and strategies, so you will be more effective in reaching out to the public and decision-making bodies so you can achieve the goals you want for the issues you care about.

Besides airing this TV program on cable TV in Thurston County WA, I’ve posted the video to my blog, along with the images I showed on the TV screen and the transcript you are reading now. This document includes some additional information beyond what I said on TV.

I hope these resources will help you strengthen your insights and skills for communicating to the public your information and recommendations for public policy and improving our society.

My blog is [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). The word ***parallax*** has ONE “R” and TWO “L’s”: PA – RA – LL – AX – perspectives.org

Click the link for “TV Programs” or the link for “Organizing.” All of this information is at both locations on my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)

**Here is why this TV program will help you make much better progress on issues you care about:**

* It’s not enough for us to merely accumulate more information and talk among ourselves.
* In order to achieve our goals for the issues we care about, we need to change public opinion and build a strong, smart movement from the grassroots up to accomplish our goals.
* This means we need to communicate our messages effectively to the general public.
* To be effective, we must design our public outreach strategically and carry it out skillfully.
* We can become much more effective than we have been at moving public opinion!
* During this hour I provide a wealth of fresh insights and practical methods.
* I’m posting more information to my blog, along with this TV video.

**This is how this TV program’s topics will flow through the hour:**

* I’ll provide some basic insights about how to communicate effectively with the public, so the public will understand – and agree with – the solutions you are proposing for the issues you care about.
* I’ll provide insights about how to approach the public in friendly ways that will welcome them to connect with you and learn about the issues you care about.
* I’ll share insights from the “Nonviolent Communication” model developed by Marshall Rosenberg.
* I’ll help you understand and use the concepts of “framing” and “re-framing” issues so people will be able to hear and absorb your message at a deep level.
* I’ll provide a simple, straightforward 3-step process to move the public to the decisions you want the public to make.
* I’ll provide insights and strategies for how to convince the public – and different parts of the public – to agree with your proposals for dealing with the issues you care about.
* I’ll introduce a great many practical and creative suggestions for reaching the public and decision-makers.
* I’ll invite you to see more information on my blog and contact me for more information and resources.

**Basic insights about how to communicate effectively with the public:**

Suppose you are deeply concerned about an issue and are already well informed about it. If today you had one hour to work on your issue, would it make more sense to read even more about it OR to write a letter to the editor or use some other way to reach out to the public to urge people to take an action you want people to take? We need to reach out!

The world and our nation are facing many big, hard, scary problems. Because the problems are big, hard and scary, they can cause people to feel depressed and powerless. But the good news is that we can turn those feelings around – and we really can make progress toward solving those problems. The rest of this TV program explains how to make progress.

People spend a lot of time lamenting “ain’t it awful!” But bogging down with conversations and e-mails that are depressing wastes our time and sucks the energy out of us.

Instead of getting depressed and cynical in circular loops of “ain’t it awful,” let’s strategize how to actually solve the problem. Let’s share information with people who do not yet know about the problem – or who do not yet know about the solutions you are recommending. Let’s pivot from depression into strategies and actions for solutions!

Let’s do this in a positive way that welcomes people to join with us. Sometimes people with our politics convey negativism, cynicism and powerlessness that undermine our ability to solve problems. Don’t convey those negativities to people, because we need people to join with us with positive strategies to solve the problems. Do not antagonize the public or frighten them away from us.

Let’s be friendly and welcoming, so people will feel positive and empowered when they join with us to solve the problems.

When we work on issues, do not blame the general public. They are already oppressed by powerful political and economic pressures, so do not pile on to the public. They are suffering already. Let’s empower the public to join with us on our side in solving the problems.

Recognize that many people currently feel powerless. They do not see themselves as members of grassroots movements solving big problems. We can reach out to them – starting where they currently are – and inform them and empower them to feel good about joining into our organizations and our movements to solve the problems.

Some of our common activities – wearing buttons, putting bumper stickers on our cars, and so forth – are useful in giving some visibility to the issues we care about, but they are not sufficient to accomplish the bold, systemic changes we really need. Buttons and bumper stickers are tools – simply parts of larger strategies. We need to connect with real people through face-to-face interactions – not only through screens – to build nonviolent grassroots movements to solve the problems.

We really do have a lot of potential. Many years ago I wrote an article titled, “Peace Movement Potentials and Strategies.” It’s about using peace vigils – holding signs in public places – and using strategically smart messaging about peace – to reach people and help them want to organize for peace. I posted the article to my blog. Here is a link so you can read it: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/peace-movements-potentials-and-strategies**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/peace-movements-potentials-and-strategies)

**Use warm, friendly ways to communicate with people.**

**This includes Marshall Rosenberg’s “Nonviolent Communication”:**

When we reach out to anyone (members of the public, official decision-makers, and so forth), we want them to find us humane, credible and worth listening to. Let’s use warm, friendly ways to reach those people with our message, so we can persuade decision-makers to do what we want.

A very smart, savvy way is to use the principles from the “Nonviolent Communication” model developed by Marshall Rosenberg. (You can see more information by searching the internet for his name – Marshall Rosenberg – or for “Nonviolent Communication.”) He has written books and produced engaging videos using hand-puppets.

You can see how practical it is when I showed his 4-step process on the screen and said what each step means:

**4-step process:**   
1. Observe without judgment.  
2. Say how we feel about what we’ve observed.  
3. Express our needs (and values).  
4. Make a request (not a demand).

1. Observe without judgment: Simply say what we have seen going on around us (locally, globally, etc.). Say what we’ve seen happening, and invite the other person to say what they’ve seen happening. Say this objectively without adding any judgmental comments.

2. Say how we feel about what we’ve observed: Besides saying how we feel about what’s been happening, also invite the other person to say how they feel about it.

3. Express our needs (and values): Marshall Rosen berg invites us (and the other person) to identify our needs. I usually find that it helps to identify values too, because we are grounded in the values that are important to us (and to the other person). I can express my needs and my values about the issue before us – and invite the other person to express their needs and also their values.

4. Make a request (not a demand): In order to solve the problem or resolve our conflict, the fourth step is to request a particular action. Rosenberg wants this to be a request for something the other person can actually agree to do. It is a request, not a demand: “Would you please …?” Or, “How about if we …?”

Marshall Rosenberg’s method of “Nonviolent Communication” (NVC) is also known as “Compassionate Communication.” It offers ways for us to connect with other people in ways that meet each person’s needs and contribute to each person’s well-being. It allows each person to grow and improve – and voluntarily solve problems. When one person understands NVC, he or she can use it even when the other person does not.

NVC helps us hear other people’s feelings and needs. It helps each person express themself in ways that will more likely result in everybody understanding and cooperating. **It emphasizes recognizing and naming each person’s underlying feelings or needs**, even if someone had not been aware of them at the outset. This makes our conflict resolution real and meaningful. It makes a human connection and lays the foundation for meeting each person’s needs when we devise a solution to the conflict. Instead of making demands and dominating the other person, NVC helps each person make requests that are more likely to be fulfilled voluntarily. This preserves and improves our relationship. This is important at a person-to-person level, and also if we are going to some decision-making body such as communicating with business executives or elected officials in formal settings.

Part of the NVC technique involves interpreting the other person’s judgmental or abusive language as actually expressions of their feelings and their unmet needs – which they might not even be consciously aware of. Instead of letting that “push our buttons” and reacting judgmentally, NVC helps us translate the other person’s message (*e.g*., judgmentalism or abusive language) so we can respond from a place of understanding and compassion. Then we can respond in ways that explore how to satisfy each person’s feelings and meet each person’s needs. Instead of “taking their bait,” use NVC to reframe the interaction toward solving the conflict.

Also, Nonviolent Communication helps us get below the words in the questions that people are asking, so we can address the actual concerns that lurk below or behind the words in their questions. In most of our everyday interactions with other people, when someone asks for information, we give a factual answer. But when we are dealing with issues that are hard and scary (such as nuclear weapons), when someone asks a question about the issue, there is often more behind it than a request for factual, technical information.

So, for example, if you are discussing nuclear weapons, the other person’s question is not necessarily seeking a technical, factual answer. They are likely expressing fear about other nations and fear about our national security. Let’s listen for what the other person’s underlying feelings, values, and needs. Then we can shape our answer to address those. Indeed, unless we acknowledge and satisfy these underlying feelings and needs, the person won’t be able to hear our facts.

**Use positive approaches and methods to shape your message.**

**Skillfully “frame” and “re-frame” issues to connect with people at a deep level:**

Here is a smart way to hugely improve our effectiveness in communicating with people about the issues we care about, so people will be able to agree with us at a deep-down level.

**The concept of “framing” and “re-framing” is crucially important! We must use this concept when we develop our outreach strategies – and when we write or say anything for the public to read or hear or see!**

I showed this on the TV screen and explained it:

* “Frames” are clusters of consistent archetypes and   
  narratives that help people to process information.
* These “frames” strongly influence how the public   
  understands political and social issues.
* Because each “frame” is a deeply held preconception, it interferes with a person receiving anding accept new information that contradicts the exiting “frame.”

In the third bullet point, notice the word **pre**conception. This means “before thinking.”

The concept of “framing” was popularized a few years ago by George Lakoff, a linguist who says that the way we are wired affects how we perceive the messages we receive. He says political conservatives have successfully “framed” issues in ways that cause people to intuitively agree with them, but political liberals and progressives have failed to “frame” and “re-frame” issues so people will intuitively agree with us.

**If we would be more savvy about “framing” and “re-framing,” we would convince larger majorities of the public to agree with us and demand the public policies that we are urging.**

**“Framing” is altogether different from “spin.”** “Spin” is merely a short-term manipulation designed to deceive people about what has just now happened. But “framing” is deeper and longer-lasting. “Framing” taps into long-term ways of how we understand reality. “Framing” is about your worldview – how you perceive reality, including unconscious and deeply embedded perceptions of reality.

**I showed the image on the screen again. Please re-read the box in the column on the left side of this page and absorb the concept.** We need to “frame” the issues effectively so the public will understand them very deeply – intuitively – as we want them to do. If existing “frames” have already deceived people, we need to “re-frame” the issues so the public will see them in the ways we want them to see.

People connect with messages – or reject messages – based on how their brains function, and how they perceive reality. **People can receive and absorb messages that are consistent with how they perceive reality, but they AUTOMATICALLY REJECT messages that are NOT compatible with how they see reality.**

We need to communicate our messages in ways that will resonate with how people perceive reality, so they will be able to hear and absorb our messages. This will help them intuitively agree with what we are saying. Therefore, we need to carefully “frame” and “re-frame” the issues.

**Here are some examples of “framing” that have deceived the public:**

* Throughout most of U.S. history, we had a “War Department,” but we waged very few foreign wars during those centuries. In 1947 the U.S.’s “War Department” became the “Defense Department,” and – in an ironic Orwellian twist – we have waged many, many wars since then, but the government has always “framed” them as being for our “defense.” (So, for example, we had to kill Vietnamese peasants because they threatened our “defense.”)
* Likewise, the military budget is always called the “defense budget” for the same reason, to fool the public into thinking that spending hundreds of billions of dollars every year “defends” us, when really it causes massive military violence, killing and destruction – and it also hurts our own troops.
* Using illegal drugs is a public health problem, so we should “frame” it as a public health issue – so we could deal with it as a public health issue – like other civilized countries do. But instead, the U.S. created a “War on Drugs,” so by framing our national response as a “war” on drugs, the U.S. promotes violent, repressive, and often racist actions that violate human rights and traumatize communities.
* The U.S. has a powerful self-image that our nation is a “beacon of liberty” and “the light of the world,” the very model of freedom and democracy and enlightenment. This “frame” leads directly to the assumptions that the U.S. should impose its foreign policy upon other nations. When George W. Bush and Dick Cheney were urging the U.S. to overthrow Iraq’s government, Senator Joe Biden, Chair of the Senate’s Armed Services Committee, was a major cheerleader for war. Senator Biden said the U.S. should bomb Iraq into democracy. Now – as President – Joe Biden continues the nationalistic and militaristic frame that led to the Iraq war and other foreign policy blunders. He appointed as Secretary of State – the cabinet member who directs U.S. foreign policy – a man whose career had been urging other nations to buy military weapons made by U.S. weapons manufacturers. This has become the mission of the State Department – the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. This corruption flows from the “frame” that the U.S. is the world’s “good guy” and the mistaken “frame” that violence is the way to solve problems.

**We need to recognize the “frames” that have been imposed upon us – and we need to “re-frame” them to be more accurate and more humane.**

**“Re-framing” can help people understand and feel the realities in new ways**, so we can change to a humane foreign policy and create other good public policies.

“Re-framing” can bridge the gap between mainstream *status quo* portrayals of the issues and the new solutions we are promoting.

**Here are good examples of “framing” to affirm our best values:**

* People working for the climate want Congress to pass a strong “Green New Deal.” This is a good choice of words – smart “framing” – to summarize what we want for the climate, local communities, and labor. The “Green New Deal” wording taps into positive frames about FDR’s “New Deal” of the 1930s and lifts up the “Green” image of care for the environment, climate and sustainability. The “Green New Deal” is smart “framing.”
* A few years ago the Olympia City Council majority wanted to spend our tax dollars on a conference center, but they did not want to put it up to a public vote. Local progressives organized smartly to demand a vote. The progressives “framed” the controversy in terms of **democracy** and **our right to vote about how to spend our taxes**. The progressives created an organization called **“Public Funds for Public Purposes.”** We won overwhelmingly, stopped the project, and later the voters replaced those City Council members with better ones.
* Instead of letting conservatives denounce government “regulations” as if regulations were oppressive, let’s recognize them – and “re-frame” them – as actually “protections” against pollution, “protections” for public health, “protections” for workers’ safety, and so forth. Let’s “re-frame” these positive governmental actions as the protections they really are.
* At Standing Rock, the Native American organizers were smart to frame themselves as “Water Protectors” instead of merely “protesters.”
* Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement were very skillful at framing issues. They used a lot of Biblical metaphors and images – especially related to the Exodus, journeying from slavery into the Promised Land, and so forth. They inspired their natural constituency – the Black Church – and also helped White Christians and Jews to understand the Civil Rights Movement so they would support it too. Many Jews supported the Civil Rights Movement as an expression of their faith and their values. King also framed the Civil Rights Movement in very American ways – especially as helping Black people participate in the American Dream, in fulfilling America’s promise to all people, and in showing the rest of the world that America can actually live up to the best values that our nation claims to have. All of these are smart “frames.”
* The U.S.’s endless wars are waged in the name of “national security.” But instead of simply accepting the common militaristic “frame” that “national security” means a huge military and thousands of nuclear weapons, we must **redefine the concept of “security.**” My August 2023 TV program helped Americans replace the narrow, nationalistic, militaristic concept of “national security” with a wise, insightful global concept of “TRUE Security.” You can watch my August 2023 TV program and/or read what I said on TV through my blog. Here is the link: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/replace-simplistic-national-security-with-true-security**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/replace-simplistic-national-security-with-true-security) **Next I showed on the TV screen an image contrasting the current “frame” and my “re-framing” alternative and mentioned some of the strong differences.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Typical American Way to Achieve National Security** | **Better Way to Achieve**  **TRUE Security** |
|  |  |  |
| **Vision:** | U.S. dominates all other countries | U.S. cooperates fairly with all other countries |
| **Goals:** | National security against other nations | Global security and equitable relationships among all nations |
|  | Political, military, economic, cultural dominance | Self-determination  Economic well-being for all  Respect for other cultures and religions |
| **Methods:** | Military action, arms sales, covert operations, selective diplomacy | Nonviolent direct action at international level (e.g., the Nonviolent Peaceforce) |
|  | Unilateral action, coalitions that the US controls and others must endorse | Multilateral resolution of conflicts. Support the UN, international treaties, international law. |
|  | Economic and “development” policies that support US interests | Marshall Plan to eradicate global poverty  Unconditional commitment to the poor |
|  | Charity to help the poor without changing structural inequities | Generous actions with no selfish motives  Structural changes for justice and fairness |
|  | Minimum wage | Living wage. Guaranteed minimum income |
|  | Conflict management focused on violence as individual pathology | Nonviolent resistance to systemic violence. Interpersonal conflict resolution skills |
| **Motivation:** | Hatred | Compassion and love |
|  | Fear | Faith |
|  | Power | Justice and profound fairness |
|  | Self-centered, so people are objects | Other-centered for the other’s sake |
| **Result:** | Global chaos | Global community |

I mentioned the huge differences between the middle column (the typical way people understand “national security”) and the next column’s summary of “TRUE Security.” The table’s bottom row contrasted the results. The U.S.’s current way of seeking “national security” has resulted in global chaos, but my alternative proposal for “TRUE Security” would result in global community.

**I did not have time on TV to give these   
examples of “framing” and “re-framing”:**

* For many decades, the American people have been fooled by authority figures in governments and the media and popular culture into thinking that democracy means exactly TWO political parties (no more than two), and that democracy means voting for candidates in one of those parties. Other countries have many more political parties and more vibrant democracies than the U.S. does. Also, people in many places practice profound democracy by organizing grassroots movements to accomplish what they want to accomplish instead of simply electing people to make decisions for us. Framing the concept of “democracy” as limited to merely voting for a candidate in one of two big political parties traps us in the kinds of problems that hurt our nation. Let’s “re-frame” “democracy” to be more robust and creative!
* Since the 1940s, authority figures in governments and the media have convinced the American people that nuclear weapons protect us and keep us free. Actually, nuclear weapons threaten to kill billions of people, not protect us. This existential threat to Planet Earth and human survival causes horrible **in**security that lurks below the surface of everyone’s consciousness. We need to “re-frame” nuclear weapons in order to move public opinion to demand the government abolish them for world peace.
* When peace and justice activists reach out to the public, we have to “re-frame” the public’s existing “frames” and help them accept the new “frames” that will help people see reality our way. When we develop our campaign strategies and tactics, we must be very careful about how we “frame” and “re-frame” the issues.
* Trump – a billionaire who was against ordinary people –“framed” himself as being “populist.”
* During the George W. Bush era, war-hawks wanted people to support the U.S.’s wars, but Americans wanted peace, so the war-hawks “framed” their pitch to urge people instead to “support the troops.”
* American were whipped into fear about “Weapons of Mass Destruction” that Iraq did not have, but people ignore the U.S.’s use of artillery shells with uranium tips that do spread radioactivity in Iraq. Also, despite the term “depleted uranium,” these weapons are still highly radioactive.
* Conservatives kept lambasting “the liberal news media” and succeeded in causing people to be skeptical of news that puts conservatives in a bad light. Also, references to “the liberal news media” have caused the media to become defensive and move rightward on the political spectrum.
* Some murderers are “framed” as “monsters.” What must we do to monsters? Every horror movie shows the only solution is to kill them. Therefore, when murderers are framed as “monsters,” the media and politicians have already dictated the death penalty as the only solution.

**More insights and practical suggestions to improve our messaging:**

Next I showed on the TV screen two simple, straightforward ways to help us strategize for our outreach organizing efforts and help us shape our messages for whatever changes in public policy you want to accomplish. **Take these three steps in sequence:**

**1. Make this problem a hot public issue that must be dealt with.**

**2. Win a majority of the public to agree that  
current public policies are a serious problem.**

**3. Win a majority of the public to agree to support our solutions for changing public policies.**

For that first step, make this a hot issue that the PUBLIC must deal with, the MEDIA must deal with, and the POLITICIANS must deal with.

The second step is to make the PUBLIC, MEDIA and POLITICIANS recognize that the status quo is broken – and must be fixed.

These two steps flow smoothly into the third step: convince them to adopt the solution that we are proposing.

I have used this three-step process effectively in many kinds of settings (letters to newspaper editors, testifying to state legislative committees, etc.).

Then I showed this next image on the TV screen and asked people to **c****onsider these four strategic questions in order to plan a strategy and design our message so we will win:**

* **What will win over the majority of the general public?**
* **What do they value and want?**
* **What do they fear?**
* **What symbols and images can get them to   
  respond our way?**

I said these four strategic questions are practical and multi-dimensional instead of a simplistic one-track command to do what we want instead of the status quo.

Devise strategies that include these and build upon them. So, for example, in the first strategic question, ask: What will win over various sectors and constituencies within the public? Devise different strategies to reach out to each sector and constituency in light of each of these four questions.

**Here are more insights and suggestions to help us:**

Liberals tend to over-intellectualize issues – for example, by throwing a lot of facts and statistics at people. But facts that don’t fit the public’s current “frame” simply bounce off without making a lasting impression, while the “frame” remains intact! Let’s “frame” our issues without relying so much on intellectualism and statistics. Let’s “frame” them in ways that people will easily absorb and internalize. Let’s keep many of our facts and statistics in reserve for follow-up and other settings when appropriate.

When we strategize, let’s pay attention to how we frame the issues.

For example, suppose you are organizing a grassroots movement to cut military spending and use the savings to meet human needs, let’s frame current budget priorities as a **problem that hurts the American people**. Let’s frame unmet human needs as **victims of military spending**. Let’s frame our campaign as “we the people” vs. the military-industrial complex or “we the people” vs. “the elites.”

Issues are interconnected, so constituencies are interconnected. For example, for the example in the previous paragraph, ask ourselves what constituencies – what kinds of people and organizations – we should reach out to and bring into our movement, so we can build a bigger, more broad-based movement with a majority of the public joining us.

Some of these people and organizations are already on our side, even if they are not yet conscious of that. By working for immigrants’ rights or better public health services, for example, they are already indirectly helping our campaign as a by-product of their work, even if they don’t yet know about our specific campaign.

Likewise, we are getting indirect help from people who are working for the sectors we want to fund (*e.g*., social services, low-income housing, libraries, energy alternatives, etc.), even if they don’t mention the wars or militarism.

Also, people who are working against the U.S.’s wars or working for a nonviolent society are already on our side and helping us indirectly, even if they don’t even mention the federal budget.

These basic principles and strategies can help you regardless of whatever kinds of issues you are working on, such as protecting our climate or humanizing our criminal justice system or improving our electoral system.

Let’s help all kinds of people see how our movements are inter-connected and how we can help each other build our respective (but inter-connected) movements. I have conducted free workshops to help people do that. If you are interested in a free online workshop, contact me at (360) 491-9093 or [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org).

Likewise, let’s devise the most strategically useful strategies and frames for each different constituency we want to reach:

(1) Identify each constituency we want to reach.

(2) For each constituency, which strategies and frames will reach them and move them toward our direction?

In turn, we become allies of them, so we help them build bigger, stronger movements for their issues.

**Consider again the approaches I said a moment ago here and showed in the boxes on this page and the previous page.**

Sometimes people working for social change are misperceived as enemies of the public. Don’t let yourself be vulnerable to that! Instead, **design your campaign’s strategies and messaging to tap into our society’s best values – widely held values – and show that your campaign is rooted in those values.**  This will make it easy for ordinary people to join with us. Let’s show that the status quo violates those values, but your campaign will put our society’s best, widely shared values into practice.

Likewise, let’s use symbols and images that will present our Campaign favorably to each constituency.

I offered some general advice for outreach to the public and showed it on the TV screen:

General advice for outreach to the public:

* Be friendly and open.
* The public is NOT the enemy!
* The public is NOT idiots.
* How many times have activists approached the public with a smug superiority?
* How many times have activists insulted the public’s intelligence, attitude or values?
* The public will reject us if they think we are “talking down” to them or if they think we don’t respect them.
* You can’t convert people by insulting or antagonizing them.
* The general public does not want to join a grumpy, angry movement.
* **Again, I repeat the importance of this: Be friendly and open.**

Next – in order to build upon the points I had mentioned a few minutes before – I showed the on the TV screen the box I’ve put in the next column. This helps us find allies who could help us. I explain that box a few paragraphs below the box.

Reach out to identify and recruit more kinds of allies:

* Who are your **natural** allies? These are the kinds of people who are likely to already agree with you, even if they are not already working actively with you.
* Your **tactical** allies on **this particular** issue (even if not among “the usual suspects”)?
* Which allies can collaborate with you to **reach their particular portions** of the general public?
* Go beyond “the usual suspects” to reach different kinds of people.

We have several kinds of allies. Some are **natural** allies who already care about the issue we are working on, and they already resonate positively with the solutions we are proposing, even if they are not active in our organizations or our issue-specific movement.

Also, let’s reach out to **tactical** allies who might not be paying attention to this issue, but who have something in common with us, so when we mention the issue we are working on, they will recognize it is connected with the common values we share or connected with the issue they are working on. We can reach out to them, bring them in to help us, and – in turn – we can become tactical allies for them and support their issue. All of this builds a big, strong, broad-based multi-issue movement.

Each ally that we reach out to could reach out to their own respective memberships and constituencies to build our movement even further. This is how you involve labor unions, religious communities, women’s groups, organizations of other racial and ethnic groups, young people, and other constituencies.

**Here are some practical and creative examples of effective outreach:**

**Next I shared a number of examples that are very practical and creative.**

Most people hate political squabbles – especially partisan squabbles, but really any kind of political conflict that gets polarized or negative. To avoid squabbles, people tend to settle for the *status quo* and to reject anyone challenging it in a confrontational way.

We **do** want to challenge the *status quo*. So a strategically important question for us is: **How can we challenge the *status quo* without turning off the public by being perceived as negatively argumentative?** How can we invite people to discuss controversial issues and learn about them and start to agree with us about changing the *status quo*?

**Many smart strategies are possible – and effective! I shared some examples next.**

For many years I organized outreach to inform the public about the death penalty and move public opinion toward abolishing it. Here are **three** of the practical and creative ways we devised in order to welcome and engage people:

(1) When we set up our information booth at public events, our banner in front did NOT command people to “abolish the death penalty,” because that was not user-friendly. Instead, we made an attractive banner that asked a question that invited people to come to our booth and discuss the issue. Our banner’s question asked, “Are you troubled by the death penalty?” This invited people – regardless of where they stood on the issue – to come to us for a discussion. We enjoyed some good discussions.

(2) We trained our booth’s volunteers to discuss rather than argue. We listened to where people were starting from and helped them see the issue differently. We successfully moved a number of people toward wanting to abolish the death penalty. We invited interested persons to join our committee and work with us.

(3) At public events, organizations typically have tables in front with stacks of printed materials for people to pick up. But that is boring! It is not welcoming or engaging. Instead, we invented clever and welcoming alternatives. In order to attract people and invite them to learn, we created actual games related to the death penalty. The games were fun for people to play, and – by reducing people’s defenses through playing the enjoyable games – our booth’s visitors were able to learn about the issue in these teachable moments. We successfully engaged people to think and feel. Then we followed up by offering paper handouts about the points people were interested in. Offering paper handouts was NOT the first step. First we engaged people through games about the issue.

In the year 2000, Malcolm Gladstone published his book ***The Tipping Poin****t*. It analyzes the dynamics of major social shifts, such as shifting public opinion, clothing fashions, and disease epidemics. We can engineer big changes to improve our society by using some of the lessons he identified in his book:

(1) Small, strategic starting points

(2) People who are good at starting new ideas

(3) People who know a lot of people to spread the new ideas

(4) Methods, frames, images and slogans that have “stickiness”

Face-to-face gatherings are warmer, friendlier and more engaging than anything on computer screens or phones.

Many important movements have started with just a few persons around someone’s kitchen table. People actually have stopped nuclear power plants by starting with a few persons at somebody’s kitchen table, and they organized to grow from there.

Consider holding house meetings in your living room. Invite people to gather face-to-face for “Discussion Nights” and “Reading Nights.”

If you want to reach people through public leafletting and conversations, figure out the kinds of locations and times where the most suitable kinds of people would be present. Choose the kinds of locations and times when people could easily pause to talk and take your handouts.

Communicate in ways people can easily understand. Speak the people’s language. The Biblical story of Pentecost gives us a model for starting a mass movement. When the Early Church was just beginning 2,000 years ago, the apostles were meeting together with a wide variety of people from other nationalities and other cultures. The Bible says the Holy Spirit enabled the Early Church members to speak in other languages. The foreigners present were amazed to hear the apostles were speaking *their languages,* and as a result, many of them found the apostles credible and engaging, so they believed the message of the new religion.

Likewise for us, an important part of doing outreach and building a movement is speaking in ways that the people we want to reach will easily understand. Again, this points out the importance of reaching effectively each different kind of constituency. So you would speak differently to an audience of middle school students than to college students.

Engage people by asking questions and starting conversations rather than telling people what you want them to think.

**Here is a powerful strategy:**

For many centuries, gays and lesbians were oppressed and forced to stay “in the closet.” A few decades ago they started making huge progress by publicly “coming out of the closet.” They publicly expressed PRIDE in who they were, and held PRIDE events. This outreach strategy made them visible and proactive. They “came out” to their families, friends, co-workers, and so they reached many people and created an exponential growth of visibility for LGBTQ persons as real human beings, not an abstract “other.”

This positive approach helped other LGBTQ persons come out of the closet too. Suddenly, EVERYBODY throughout our society knew LGBTQ persons, so a MAJORITY of the public started wanting to protect the rights and safety of their friends and relatives. Majority public opinion supported rights and sharply reduced discrimination and oppression.

**Let’s use this strategy this for other movements too:**

* What if MANY people who are troubled by the **death penalty** “came out of the closet” and publicly opposed the death penalty?
* What if MANY people who oppose **nuclear weapons** “came out of the closet” and publicly opposed nuclear weapons?
* What if MANY people who want **socialism to replace capitalism** “came out of the closet” and publicly started calling for a serious public conversation about what’s wrong with our cruel, broken economic system – and suggesting that we might replace capitalism with socialism?

The public would notice that public opinion was significantly shifting – and many people who are troubled by the death penalty or nuclear weapons or capitalism would break their silence and “come out of the closet” on these issues.

All of a sudden, conversations about these issues would “go viral” and millions of people would start learning about them and discussing them. Millions of people would feel encouraged to know that they are not alone, so they would join these growing movements for significant changes!

Politicians would notice too (although they would likely be the last to figure things out). Massive changes in public opinion would eventually force politicians to change public policies!

When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008, he opposed equal rights for marriage, but public opinion changed massively and forced him to change, so he actually started to support equal rights by the time his second term ended. Public opinion even forced the U.S. Supreme Court to rule that gays and lesbians have a right to marry anywhere in the U.S. We actually did change the Supreme Court!

**Here are two main points for reaching the public on issues you care about:**

1. Never insult or blame the people you’re trying to reach. Find ways to identify with them and reduce the threshold so it will be easier for them to step across and join with you. Seek points of agreement and build relationships.

2. Focus clearly on what the real issue is – what the real goal is – and don’t let extraneous issues interfere with –or distract you from – your clear focus. Do not expand the specific goal into something too broad for the people – or the decision-maker – to handle. (So, for example, if you want a business to stop doing one bad thing, don’t denounce the entire corporation or capitalism overall; simply focus on the one thing you want them to stop doing now.) (Likewise, if you want Congress to stop funding a particular military weapon, focus on that without also demanding that they stop all wars too.) If you are trying to get a person in power to make a decision to agree with you, make it easy for them to do that – without blaming them for not having achieved your goal yet – and without expanding the issue into something beyond what they can decide. Figure out what strategies and “talking points” will be most effective in reaching each decision-maker. For example, some people with the same religious faith as a decision-maker could lift up their common values.

**We will be more effective speaking to audiences if we address the general public’s underlying concerns and values.**

**Here are TWO EXAMPLES:**

* If we are urging peace, and we know the public is concerned about national security, let’s explain how war actually threatens and endangers our own security and how a peaceful foreign policy will make us – and everyone else – more secure. Explain how we will be more secure with peace than with war.
* If we are urging care for the environment and we know people will worry that this might cost them their jobs, let’s explain how protecting the environment would create new and better jobs.

**More ways to be effective when speaking:**

When speaking to an audience, it is good to anticipate the objections that are likely to arise – and prepare in advance our strategies, rebuttals, and talking points to counter them.

Whenever we speak about our issue to an audience, we know that the people who disagree with us will raise certain arguments against us. We can neutralize those opposing arguments if we address those arguments up front in our own main presentation before waiting for the Q+A session. We might say, “Some people will argue that ... But actually, ...” This shows that we do understand arguments on the other side, and we do have smart answers to those. Being proactive in this way can increase our own credibility.

Many years ago I drove to Seattle for an all-day workshop conducted by the ACLU about how to answer the “hard questions” about the death penalty. Learning how to do that is strategically useful when we’ll be discussing a big, controversial issue such as death penalty or nuclear weapons.

It is especially important for us to emphasize what we WANT more than what we oppose. We usually spend a lot of time and effort protesting against what we OPPOSE. We need to spend more time and effort advocating for the SOLUTIONS that we want instead.

In this light, several times each week I hold signs at peace vigils in downtown Olympia. My signs have positive messages, so they cause people to respond very positively. Here are three examples:

* “All people are one human family.”
* “We declare peace.”
* “Choose a bold, humane future.”

The first example – “All people are one human family” – affirms every person who walks or drives past our peace vigil. Someone might be part of a demographic group that suffers discrimination, but they know that we affirm and include them.

The second example – “We declare peace” – is positive and uses an active verb to create a proactive message.

The third example – “Choose a bold, humane future” – invites people to do something positive and creative. It too is warm and friendly.

People resonate positively to our warm, friendly signs. Let’s design our outreach to elicit this kind of public interaction. It is more effective than the hackneyed stereotype of merely “protesting” against bad stuff.

In our outreach messaging, let’s avoid any jargon that might confuse people and any rhetoric or behaviors that could peg us into stereotypes that we don’t want.

Even when we critique the *status quo*, let’s do that in a positive way – and offer positive alternatives grounded in positive values. Instead of letting ourselves be perceived as negative, let’s promote positive alternatives, vision and hope. This also helps to build and strengthen our grassroots movements so people will be attracted to us because we are actually solving problems instead of being negative.

Twenty years ago when the peace/progressive movement had suffered very serious defeats, I helped some college students organize an all-day workshop we called “Cultivating Sustainable Movements.” We designed the workshop to empower people with visions, strategies and skills to strengthen the movements for peace and progressive issues.

**A smart case study from 1982:**

In the early 1980s President Reagan was aggressively promoting more nuclear weapons and a possible nuclear war. The nation was terrified that Reagan would start a nuclear war. Public discussions about nuclear weapons bogged down in arguing about numbers: How many weapons did each side have? How many megatons of destructive power were in each side’s weapons? How much “throw-weight” did each side’s weapons have? All of those numbers bogged things down with boring abstractions.

In late 1981 the “Nuclear Weapons Freeze” campaign came along and cut through all of that and simply said: JUST STOP EVERYTHING NOW. Just FREEZE all of the development, manufacture, testing, deployment. Just FREEZE everything! The public easily understood that, and the public agreed with the Freeze Movement. The Freeze Movement grew rapidly nationwide.

I was active in the Thurston County Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign starting in December 1981. Instead of saying, “Holy crap! Reagan’s going to blow up the world,” we chose a positive slogan: **“Ain’t it great to be alive!”** This positive message cut through the crap and allowed our smart organizing to win a county-wide ballot issue in November 1982 with a landslide 62 ½% “YES” vote!

Another smart strategy is to state the bold new reality we want to accomplish by using a present tense verb, such as “Olympia Promotes Freedom” or “Olympia Declares Peace.”

**Learn from other sectors and adapt their lessons to our efforts. EXAMPLES:**

* Read articles, books, and other publications written to help businesses and other sectors. Consider how you could adapt their ideas for improving *your* effectiveness. What business call “marketing,” we call “outreach.” Learn from principles and methods that are ethical and effective. Let’s adapt ethical ideas about *advertising* to strengthen our *outreach and movement-building*. Ideas for improving *quality* and *customer service* should pertain to our organizations as well as to businesses and governmental agencies.
* Businesses want high quality “customer service” that will “satisfy and delight” their customers. Let’s find ways to “satisfy and delight” our members and our volunteers. Let’s provide high quality and reliable service for our members and volunteers. Let’s provide information in ways that people will actually be able to learn from and act upon. Let’s return phone calls and e-mails quickly. Let’s always follow through on commitments.
* Let’s be “user-friendly” and make it easy for people to hear and understand our message – and easy to take action based on our message. Our publicity should include phone numbers and e-mail addresses and websites. Instead of merely saying the location (*e.g*., “the Methodist Church” or the name of a restaurant), provide the addresses and perhaps provide driving directions and even bus route numbers, depending on where you live.
* Produce high quality work in everything we do. Errors undermine credibility and good feelings. Spell everything correctly – especially people’s names.
* Be relentlessly proactive instead of merely reactive.
* Use creativity, humor, satire, and witty defiance. I know many examples that we don’t have time to say now during this hour.
* Refuse to be intimidated.
* I like a smart feature at the bottom of a flyer that invited people to come to a particular event. Instead of merely saying, “Everyone is welcome,” the full width of the bottom one inch of the flyer included the radically inclusive and welcoming box I show in the right column here:

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

**Sources of more information:**

I am posting to my blog this TV program – and the transcript and some additional information that you are reading now. My blog is [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). *Paralla*x has ONE “R” and TWO “L’s”: PA – RA – LL – AX – perspectives.org

Click the blog’s link for “TV Programs” or the link for “Organizing.” All of this information is at both locations on my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)

The blog’s category for “Organizing” includes many additional resources to help you strengthen your insights, strategies and skills.

A great many organizations provide information, resources, training, and so forth. Ask me for referrals to the best ones.

Several times each year I conduct FREE online workshops about nonviolent grassroots organizing to help individuals and organizations increase their skills and effectiveness. Contact me for information. I’m at (360) 491-9093 and [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org)

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked the people who have been watching this TV program.

We care about a wide range of important issues related to peace, human rights, social justice, a fair economy, the environment and climate, eliminating cruelty from our criminal justice system, improving governmental functioning, and so forth.

For EACH issue we care about, we need to ORGANIZE GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS with smart strategies so we can convince the general public. Strong, strategically savvy grassroots movements can also convince governments, businesses, and other entities to make the changes we want.

Therefore, WE NEED SMART STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATING OUR VALUES AND OUR MESSAGES to the general public – and also communicating them to the powerful political and economic decisionmakers so they will make the changes that we seek. We can become much more effective at this!

Over the decades, we have accomplished some of the bold goals we wanted. Now we must strengthen our strategies to accomplish even more!

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 [**glen@parallaxperspectives.org**](mailto:glen@parallaxperspectives.org)

I end each TV program with this invitation to help make progress:

**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!**