

Every month since February 1987 the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence.

The Olympia FOR's program airs several times every week for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and more than 90 of our previous interview programs and special programs at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the TV programs link to reach www.olympiafor.org/tv_programs.htm, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch.

Many of our website's TV program listings also include a .pdf document describing the program.

DECEMBER 2009

“THE ‘3 STRIKES’ LAWS ARE UNJUST”

by GLEN ANDERSON, PRODUCER AND HOST OF THIS TV SERIES

During the past few decades the public and politicians were adopting one “tough on crime” proposal after another. In 1993 Washington voters passed an initiative that made Washington the first state to enact a “three strikes and you’re out” law. Three qualifying felony convictions would result a sentence of life in prison without any possibility of parole. More than 20 other states copied Washington.

The foolishness of this law is now becoming apparent. Many people have outgrown their criminal pasts, turned their lives around, and yet linger in prison – costing the taxpayers money when these people could be free and contributing to society. The “three strikes” law actually sentences taxpayers to a lifetime of wasting money imprisoning people who are no longer dangerous. As these prisoners become elderly and develop more health problems, their medical care costs will impose an additional burden on taxpayers.

“Three Strikes” laws feed people’s sense of revenge. But instead of providing justice, it reeks of racism and economic class bias, and it destroys families.

Although the initiative’s supporters claimed it would protect us from “the worst of the worst,” actually the “three strikes” law is too broad and sweeps up many people whose crimes were not so dangerous to society.

In 2001 Washington's Sentencing Guidelines Commission recommended removing Second Degree Robbery from the “Three Strikes” list and evaluating whether any form of Second Degree Assault should remain. For eight years the Legislature has shied away from reforming the law for fear of being labeled “soft on crime.”

Now a variety of people and organizations want to reform or abolish the “Three Strikes” law. Also, the state government is starting to distinguish between what actually works and what does not. The simplistic “Three Strikes” law does **NOT** work.

The Olympia FOR's December 2009 TV program features three guests with first-hand knowledge and fresh perspectives about the "Three Strikes" law:

- **Moira Hennings'** husband is in prison serving a "three-strikes" life sentence. She also volunteers for the Department of Corrections' Family Advisory Council.
- **Vance Bartley** was sentenced to life in prison for "three-strike" offenses, but in prison he studied law and discovered a serious defect in his case and – after 12 years in prison – got his sentence overturned. Vance's knowledge of the law earned him a job as a paralegal in a Seattle law firm.
- **Noemie Maxwell** is an exceptionally well-informed and hardworking volunteer on "three-strikes" and other criminal justice issues.

All three guests volunteer with Justice Works!, a Seattle-based organization that works to end racism in the criminal justice system. Justice Works! is affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Justice Works! is a statewide organization that works specifically to reduce racism in the criminal justice system. Research shows that racial minorities are especially harmed by this law. Justice Works! is seeking volunteers. For information – and to help – please contact them at www.justiceworks.info or (206) 725-9189. Two other good sources of information and action are www.fix3strikes.org and www.justiceisnogame.org