

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.

MARCH 2012

“STRATEGY AND CREATIVITY FOR GRASSROOTS POWER”

by GLEN ANDERSON, PRODUCER AND HOST OF THIS TV SERIES

Throughout our nation's history, the best political and social changes have been organized through grassroots movements. In the modern era too, if we are to make progress on the issues we care about – peace, social justice, a humane economy, environmental stewardship, and so forth – we must learn how to strategize, organize and build effective grassroots movements.

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's March 2012 TV program focuses on this.

Our guest is Bill Moyer from the Backbone Campaign, based on Vashon Island, Washington. (NOTE: This is a different person from the late grassroots organizer of the same name who was based in Philadelphia and San Francisco, although they share many insights and strategies in common. This is also different from the prominent Bill Moyers [with an S at the end of his last name], who presents thoughtful TV programs and printed articles.)

Bill was one of our guests on our January 2012 TV program about the Occupy Movement. Bill participated directly during the first week of Freedom Plaza in Washington DC. He was in charge of messaging there. He has helped other Occupy movements in several ways.

Our March 2012 TV program goes far beyond the Occupy Movement to address broader insights

and strategies for making positive changes in our political and social systems.

In September-October 2008 when Henry Paulson in the Bush Administration proposed a \$700 billion bailout for Wall Street banks, many millions of people across the political spectrum were outraged. Some people wanted an alternative to that. Congress voted down the Paulson Plan. Democratic Party elites and some “liberal” entities tweaked it, ran it through the Senate, and tried to get “liberals” to support it. We should have applied real grassroots pressure, not just “mouse-click activism.”

The Democratic Party and the DC-based non-profit groups have failed to recognize the populist moment and failed to build a grassroots movement. A lot of so-called “mouse-click activism” comes from non-profit organizations based in New York and Washington DC.

The “beltway non-profit industrial complex” is completely incapable of functioning as a movement. They call themselves a progressive movement, but they do **not** take leadership from grassroots. Worse yet, they confuse people around the country, so people lose the sense of what a grassroots movement is, and what action is, and we lose tactical vocabulary. It is **not** about e-mail petitions.

That is not sufficient to really apply pressure. **We need to build power.** Grassroots organizing is more powerful than “mouse-click activism” from Back East organizations.

After Bush, we had a tremendous opportunity for real change, and Obama campaigned in that way. The pivotal moment was at hand, but Democrats and “liberal” organizations failed to grasp the pivotal moment. They left a vacuum when a genuinely populist movement could have arisen, but rich elites funded the Tea Party to exploit that vacuum. The Tea Party offered no real solution. We still needed a true populist uprising. The Occupy Movement served the need for an emerging movement with a clear populist voice.

He encourages people to read Lawrence Goodwyn’s book, *The Populist Moment*, which explains the century-old movement that farmers created and used to improve their economics. These farmers analyzed the economic realities and used their new insights to create cooperatives that actually helped many people’s lives.

Here in Puget Sound, when a company tried to establish a full-fledged gravel mine on Maury Island – and mainstream environmental groups using mainstream methods seemed unable to stop this – Bill organized a grassroots movement with strategic and bold actions involving hundreds of people. This effective “people-power” pressure forced the Governor to meet with them, and this strong base of grassroots activists changed the political realities and forced the established powers to listen to them and the mainstream environmental groups. Bill’s efforts had changed the political debate and public opinion, so now there was a new context for decision-making. Finally the land was bought and is now a park.

On Vashon Island progressive people set up a local branch of an existing credit union. They moved \$15 million of Vashon residents’ money from big banks into the credit union. More than 1,000 persons from the 10,000 member population have joined the credit union. Other communities could replicate this.

Don’t just tap into the cynical “political calculus” that limits ourselves to what seems possible. In order to really change things, we must be bold, and we must be proactive. The public will join with us. Moyer paraphrases someone else who said, “The job of politicians and lawyers is to do political calculus. It is the job of activists to build power.”

Our greatest leverage to change things is at local communities by real people. Grassroots movements need to develop “capacity” and skills and strategies. We need to expand alliances and build a national network of community-based movements. Autonomous actions should be informed by the framework of goals and strategies and principles.

The U.S. Air Force’s air-to-air combat methodology includes a decision-making process called OODA, which stands for “Observe – Orient – Decide – Act.” OODA becomes a loop. Develop skill in cycling through this OODA cycle quickly and in a variety of settings. Progressive organizers and activists need to observe the realities and act with agility, the ability to surprise. This will force our opponent to make mistakes. Employ tactics faster than they can observe, plan and respond.

The Olympia FOR’s March 2012 TV program will be provide fresh insights and stimulate creative strategies for grassroots action.

You can contact the Backbone Campaign at (206) 408-8058 www.backbonecampaign.org