

Sharon Gaskell – What are we owed?

Social Justice – Something to Think About.

If you subscribe to the classical definition of justice – i.e. the act of delivering what is owed to another – you must decide what each person is owed.

Are we owed a daily meal?

There is enough food (3,500 calories/4.3 pounds) for each person each day. Yet more than half of us go hungry, while many of the rest buy diet books.

Are we owed safe drinking water?

Some 12 percent of the planet uses 86 percent of the natural resources. While we wash our cars, fill our swimming pools and water our lawns, more than 3/4 of the planet is thirsty. Dehydration kills as painfully and as surely as malnutrition.

If we stop at food and water without supporting the tools needed for permanent change – education, medical, dental, housing – we are in a ‘charity’ mindset. Justice demands that you don’t just teach a man to fish, you test the water he uses for sustainability.

To stand in solidarity with, and to create a preferential option for the poor, we need clarity of intent and vision. For the poor to want a job and an apron to protect their clothes when working, is part of doing justice. For the poor to be able to keep cats to kill the rats, mice and cockroaches, is doing justice. For the poor to have cat food to sustain the cats so that the cats are able to do their job, while feeding the people so that they do not have to eat the cats, is part of doing justice in all its many aspects: distributive, redistributive, retributive, social etc.

Starthrower Foundation exists apart from the charity status quo mindset and is constantly discerning and striving to stay true to our mission. Justice is more difficult than charity, but infinitely more necessary to the planet.

Martin Luther King’s vision that every person have 3 meals a day for their body, and education and culture for their minds and dignity, and equality and freedom for their spirit is a vision of a just world. This Starthrower Foundation’s vision. Is it yours?

Dom Helder Camera wrote, “When I give bread to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why people are poor, they call me a communist.”

There are no saints in Starthrower Foundation. Justice is not easy and it’s certainly uncomfortable.

I challenge each of you to push your personal comfort level in relation to those who live in absolute poverty. Everyone can do something. You can change the world.

Wishing you SHALOM, the fullness of peace that comes when there is justice for all.