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CREA is a faith-based, independent 501(c)3 organization.



*“Believing that the earth is home to all, CREA facilitates analysis of human, social and economic policies from the perspective of their effects on human lives, beginning with the lives of those who are poor.”*

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**Recognition  
of the inherent dignity and  
the equal and inalienable rights  
of all members of  
the human family  
is the foundation of  
freedom, justice and peace  
in the world.**

**Universal Declaration of Human  
Rights. United Nations. 1948**



CREA

# Starting Points

Center for Reflection, Education and Action, Inc. Hartford, CT

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We live in strange times. Around us swirl so many pieces of information: ideas, facts, feelings, etc. Then, we have so many tools through which to communicate these pieces of information. Daily we are bombarded with new forms of technology through which we will communicate these pieces of information. Faster and faster it all comes at us...while at the same time it is harder and harder to find the time and the space to think, to reflect, to ponder. How are we to find ways to put all the pieces together into forms and patterns so that these pieces of information and ideas can be processed and organized....so we can find out what they are really telling us, what it all means.

It can be overwhelming...especially when we think we have to organize all of it on our own, by ourselves. But we don't have to...organize it all on our own, that is.

One of the uses of the name of our newsletter is to invoke the idea that there are many lenses or starting points through which we each look when we are examining any situation, any issue with which we are faced. We accumulate our lenses throughout our lives. Our own experiences, our cultures, our histories, both collective and individual, are lenses that color what we do and how we do it. Gender adds another lens as does age. Our traditions, our faiths, our learnings add other lenses.

Through the years, numerous documents and systems of thinking about the world in which we live and work, in which we love and think and do, have been created. These documents are both systems of organization...and lenses...through which we can learn to understand what we are seeing and what we are hearing. This issue of Starting Points begins to explore one of these documents, to look through one of these lenses.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a foundational document agreed to by the nations of the world more than 50 years ago. It provides a format to examine the state of communities and societies, the changes that are occurring each day, week and year, and standards against which to measure them.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights builds on the basic premise that each and all human beings have certain basic rights... simply because they/we are human. These rights have not dependency, that is, the rights are not dependent on who a person is, where a person lives, the color of the person's skin or the economic situation in which the person lives and works. These rights are stand-alone.

Human rights are not charity. Human rights are not a filter through which we decide how to help others. Nor are they rights that apply only to someone else somewhere else. They are not add-ons, something to be brought in when everything else is done. Human rights are the rights of each and all human beings, no matter where we live, no matter who we are.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights documents the principles upon which all communities and societies should be designed and constructed. It is not enough just to say "Human Rights" as a broad umbrella. It is not enough to consider the document as a whole for much remains hidden when we do so. The principles or components within the Declaration need to be considered individually. They articulate standards of life that to this day serve as goals for peoples of all nations.

CREA invites our readers to spend some time with the enclosed copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also invite you to reflect upon the photographs from different parts of our world. We are all part of this world. We share the same needs, the same strivings. The document helps us to keep these basic truths in perspective.

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*Human rights are not a filter through which we decide how to help others.*

*Nor are they rights that apply only to someone else somewhere else.*

*They are not add-ons, something to be brought in when everything else is done.*

*Human rights are the rights of each and all human beings, no matter where we live, no matter who we are.*

**Privatization -**

In its best form: Contracting community work to for-profit, private companies through well-crafted contracts that permit the community to retain final ownership of its assets and oversight of the private company's work while justly compensating the private company for its risks, expenses, and reasonable profit while managing or operating facilities or agencies.

In its worst form: Either ...ceding management of community assets to for-profit, private companies under contracts that greatly limit the responsibilities of the companies and do not provide for sufficient community access and oversight; or ...outright sale of community assets to for-profit, private companies. Communities receive payment for the asset, but lose control and future profitability. Profits go to the private company.

Challenge: As community members, can we take serious note of the kinds of contracts our municipal, state and national governments are considering and make our concerns heard?

*"...Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible..."*



**Water.** Major issue: An estimated 450 million people in 29 countries suffer from water shortages. But 2025, 2 out of every 3 people will live in water stressed areas. Present efforts by the World Bank and the International Monetary System encourage the privatization of water, requiring full-cost recovery for the service.

Challenge: The decade 2005-2015 will be the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life." Can we keep tuned and act upon the recommendations that will be coming?

*"The right to drinking water and sanitation is an integral part of officially recognized human rights."*

*U.N. Commission on Human Rights*



*"...Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity..."*

**Out-sourcing.** Who is affected? Minimum wage workers, professionals who are told they are now private contractors no longer entitled to benefits. What happens when more than one job at 40 hours is re-



China

**Sustainable Living Wage.** Major issue: What does it mean when workers cannot meet basic needs of their families after working a 40+ hour workweek?

Challenge: Can we think beyond our own needs and wants and work to create a just economic system?



Immokalee, Florida



Kenya

*"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care..."*

Article 25



Vietnam



Brownsville, TX



Kenya



Haiti

*"Everyone has the right to education...Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality..."*  
Article 26

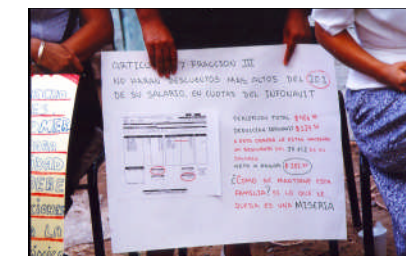
*"Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours..."*

Article 24



Indonesia

What happens when more than one job at 40 hours is required to support a family? What does it mean when the expectation is unlimited number of hours at work?



Mexico



Guatemala

*"Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests..."*

Article 23