



Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Inc.

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For the first time in Atlanta, and perhaps the nation, residents of poverty areas have taken over the task of teaching the more affluent about poverty.

Since they began their START NOW ATLANTA campaign two months ago the poor have scheduled slum tours for more than 2,000 Atlantans. They also have spoken to numerous clubs and organizations and have appeared on radio and TV programs.

The poor have enlisted 202 Atlantans as volunteers for Economic Opportunity Atlanta, the city's anti-poverty agency.

This month they are planning a special tour for lawyers and one for doctors, at the request of the professional organizations for both groups.

The 23 poverty area residents who have led the campaign call themselves V. I. P.'s or Volunteer Information People.

Since they initiated their program January 10, they have completed tours for 1,400 of the 2,000 scheduled. The remainder will be completed during the next month.

Indications are that the tours are really two-way streets; as one V.I.P. put it, "They learn from us and we learn from them."

Those taking the tours are young, middle aged, old. They tour by foot, by car, by bus. They are lawyers, business men, doctors, social workers, club women, church members, journalists, visitors to Atlanta, the already concerned, and those not-so-sure-about-it-all. They come in greatest number from Metropolitan Atlanta, but also from various parts of the United States and from countries over the world.

The 202 volunteers are working in a variety of projects, including Big Sister programs, story hours, adult literacy classes, tutorial programs, and marionette shows.

In addition, four white churches have formed partnerships with black churches, 20 college fraternities are working in volunteer projects and some 200 college students are conducting a comprehensive consumer survey in one low-income area.

Tours, speakers and the volunteer program will continue. The Atlanta Dogwood Festival will feature poverty area tours led by the V.I.P.'s on April 8 and 12.

To volunteer, to arrange a tour for individuals or groups, or to get a speaker or a panel, call 525-4262.