

Recently there has been some attention in this area to the problem of the American poor.

Williams sponsored a Give-a-Damn weekend which concentrated on the urban aspects of poverty.

Bennington was visited by a representative from Vista who sought recruits to work in Vista's program.

But I'd like to bring the problem of poverty a little closer to home, to where everyone in this community who is concerned can do a little something.

Over N.R.T. I worked in a housing project community center in Freeport, N.Y. The housing project is in a ghetto community of about 3,000 people. In 1965, the following statistics were compiled on it:

Family median income--thirty-two hundred dollars
50% of the houses-"dilapidated" or "deteriorating"
More than half of the children in broken homes
The school drop-out rate--80%

This community, as might be expected, suffers from a high rate of delinquency, widespread vandalism, lack of adequate recreational programs, inferior schools, racial discrimination, a deep sense of frustration, and all the other ills commonly associated with a ghetto. It lies on the outskirts of town, which makes it easier for the larger white community to pretend that it doesn't exist. There is much more defeatism there than in a larger ghetto, such as Roxbury or Harlem, because its residents aren't even able to feel that their plight is recognized.

What I want to do probably won't have an effect on the overall conditions in the community, but it may have an effect on a few members of that community.

I'd like to bring five junior high school age young ladies

up to Bennington the weekend of the 16th. Most of them have never been outside of Freeport, although they live half an hour from New York City. I'd like them to see something else besides Freeport, New York. I'd like them to see a college. Maybe they'll go on to college one day.

Five students in Noyes House have offered to give up their beds for the weekend. President Bloustein has arranged for them to have their meals free. Only one problem remains: The girls haven't succeeded in raising the cost of their transportation up here. So far they've raised twenty dollars. They need another seventy.

I'm asking everyone in this community to help them out, to make a small contribution. Bennington has a chance to show that it does care. There is a box at switchboard in which to put contributions. Give-a-Dollar, Give-a-Dime. Show that you give a damn by giving.

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