respect for human rights. However, this good news has been overshadowed by violence and oppression of minority ethnic groups by regimes controlled by dominant majorities.

Ethnicity as a social and political force should not be underestimated. The commitment of people to their own native languages, their own customs, and their own religions is too fundamental and pervasive to be eliminated even by totalitarian oppression over decades or generations. We have seen this in the Soviet Union. Such differences among neighbors, even in the absence of an oppressive regime, are often too intransigent to be resolved or even to be responsive to dialogue or mediation.

Human rights organizations have long publicized increasing problems of ethnic abuses, but for many years these efforts have been largely ignored. Amnesty International has recently documented the persecution of Palestinians in Kuwait and territories occupied by Israel. Violence in Kashmir and Punjab states, abuse of East Timoreans by the Indonesian army, harsh martial law imposed on Tibetans in Lhasa, large-scale extrajudicial executions in Sri Lanka, and in our social structure that it is no longer seriously challenged. In other countries, like Guatemala, Nicaragua, Brazil, and Peru, violence continues because indigenous people are still demanding recognition of their rights.

In too many cases, ethnic discrimination is

Increasingly, many Americans share with developing nations the ravages of insensitivity to the suffering of those who are different. I recently visited Janeiro in Zambia where 23 percent of the babies are born with the AIDS virus. That's shocking. But 20 percent of the babies born at Grady Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, are already addicted to crack cocaine.

It is not sufficient for us merely to enumerate the human rights abuses in different lands. Suffering can be just as severe if caused by neglect as if deliberately perpetrated by despotic rulers. Only with the willingness to share our wealth, security, and influence with others can we hope to alleviate the suffering that we deplore.

We are embarking on an experiment in Atlanta to see if some of these disturbing trends can be reversed. In knowing our own neighbors, we can better understand those who are suffering in