



**The following lists the purpose of the truth commission and the responsibilities of the volunteering commissioners:**

❖ **What is a Truth Commission?**

This is an event focused on organizing and educating the community about the human right violations that currently exist in their area. It is a time where members of the community can come together and learn from one another and their past experiences. The event is an avenue for panelists from the community to share their stories of how their economic human rights have been violated. These stories will be heard and discussed by a diverse group of the community's professionals. These commissioners will then make a collective decision whether the stories that they have heard were actually situations where the individual's economic human rights were violated.

❖ **Purpose of the Truth Commissions**

For years people all across the world have had their economic human rights violated in such ways as children being removed from homes, people living without healthcare, people living out of cars and other basic human needs are not being met just to name a few. The Truth Commission was created to unite people all across the world of different races, class and education to form a foundation for a movement to abolish poverty. It is time to give poor people a voice instead of just a number.

❖ **When and where did the Truth Commissions begin?**

On July 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of 2006 the first ever Truth Commission was held in the United States by the Poor

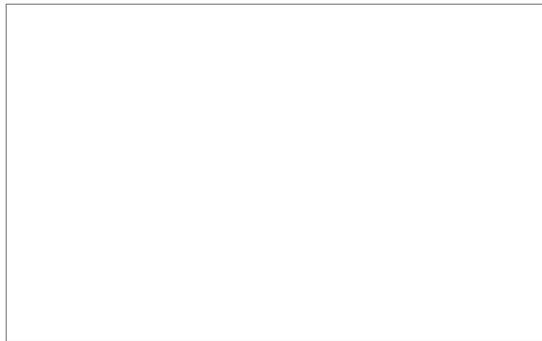
People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC). It was modeled after similar commissions held in Africa and Latin America. This Truth Commission was held in Cleveland Ohio to an audience of over 600 national and international truth commissioners.

❖ **What is a truth commissioner?**

A commissioner is a social movement leader that has interest in economic human rights as a measure of justice.

❖ **What are the duties and responsibilities of the truth commissioners?**

The truth commissioners must be aware of the historic significance of these commissions. These commissioners are responsible for hearing testimonies given by individuals who have had their economic human rights violated. The commissioners will be split into subgroups and listen to different testimonies and then report back to the group as a whole about what they heard and how these testimonies affected them. These leaders then take the information heard from the truth commission and make recommendations about how to improve these conditions and help to accomplish the bigger goal with is to abolish poverty.



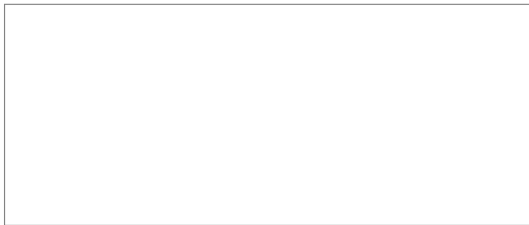
## **Why a Truth Commission in Chattanooga**

The city of Chattanooga TN is rapidly becoming known for its stunning beauty. The Aquarium, the newly constructed River Walk and the growing selection of entertainment and dining choices, are quickly transforming Chattanooga into an enticing spot for tourists and a wonderful place to live. Although, can we truly boast that the resources we contain in the city of Chattanooga are properly being used in the best interest of its people? Sure the city looks gorgeous, but what about the people of the city, what has truly been done to enrich and beautify their lives? There are a great

number of people in the city of Chattanooga who are jobless, without proper healthcare, and without proper education, but where is their help?

In 2005, \$750,000 was given to repave the sidewalks of Chattanooga. In the same year 4.6 million dollars was committed by the city in order to build an animal care facility. In 2006, over 9 million dollars of the city's budget was given to parks and recreation. Does it matter that the sidewalks are flawlessly paved if there are homeless who are sleeping on them? In this year alone the unemployment rate in Chattanooga decreased from 4.9 to 3.7, but where is their help?

With so many different needs in our city it is difficult to know where to begin with the change that is necessary to bring about economic justice. We see the Chattanooga Truth Commission of 2007 as an important step in the process of uniting Chattanoogaans to stand against injustice. This event will be a platform to empower those individuals whose rights have been violated to speak out. It will also allow members of the community, who have been fortunate not to fall prey to the system, to understand and see just how human right violations have negatively affected so many people's lives.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headline: Truth Commission to reveal economic human rights violations in Chattanooga

Event: Chattanooga Truth Commission

Saturday December 1, 2007

10AM until 1PM

Location: Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults

1800 McCallie Avenue Chattanooga, TN, 37404

Sponsors: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Social Work Department)

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“Human rights violations in the shadow of the Tennessee Aquarium? According to the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the answer is yes.” A local group of human rights advocates will hold a “truth commission” on December 1 to document violations of a particular set of human rights—economic human rights—in the Chattanooga area. They hope to launch a grass-roots effort that will explore new ways to correct them.

“When we speak of human rights most people think of torture and political repression,” a group member said. “But when the United Nations General Assembly defined basic human rights, they included such economic provisions as the right to housing, health care, nutrition, and a living wage.” These rights are set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted unanimously by the UN’s member nations on December 10, 1948.

According to human rights advocates, these rights are being violated throughout the United States, and Chattanooga is no exception. According to the city’s Blueprint to End Chronic Homelessness in Chattanooga, more than 4,000 individuals, including almost 1,000 children, experienced homelessness in the Chattanooga in a recent year. Health insurance continues to be a barrier for individuals in desperate need of medical services. An estimated 26,000 uninsured people received health care services through Erlanger Hospital last year. Full-time workers earning the minimum wage cannot support a family of four; according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, he or she would need to make more than \$10.00 an hour just to reach the poverty line of \$20,650.

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

The organizers of the event are a group of social work students at the UT-Chattanooga who affiliated earlier this year with the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC), a national organization which has about 100 member groups, most of which are led by poor and homeless people. PPEHRC works to build a multi-racial movement to end poverty.

The Chattanooga Truth Commission will be held on Saturday December 1, from 10 AM until 1 PM at the Partnership for Families, Children, and Adults, 1800 McCallie Avenue.

