

Agnes Scott College Student Government Association Project for Peace Proposal:  
**Fighting Domestic Violence, Creating Domestic Peace**

Domestic violence against women and its inherently detrimental impact on children is a nationwide pandemic whose effects are seen quite tangibly in the metro-Atlanta area. Every year, over 100 Georgians are killed in domestic violence-related incidents, and approximately 30% of women in Georgia between the ages of 14 and 44 report having been assaulted by an intimate partner at least once.<sup>1</sup> Nationwide, a woman is raped every six minutes and battered every fifteen seconds.<sup>2</sup> While the recently renewed Violence Against Women Act has certainly made great strides combating domestic violence in several areas, there are still hardly enough resources and governmental policies to combat this threat sufficiently.

It is in this alarming context that the Student Government Association (SGA) Executive Board of Agnes Scott College seeks to aid in the recognition of the dire need to develop policies and community programs that advocate putting a decisive end to this grave human rights violation. We desire to achieve such on a grass-roots level in the Atlanta area through an educational forum open to the public as well as the creation of a consciousness-raising community art project.

For our project for peace, “Fighting Domestic Violence, Creating Domestic Peace,” the ten members of the SGA executive board and members of the student body propose hosting a day-long domestic violence teach-in on Agnes Scott’s campus that will be open to the entire metro-Atlanta community. This day of learning, activism, and art-making will occur on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. In addition to having speakers from the Agnes Scott faculty, staff, and student survivors of domestic violence, a number of Atlanta-based not-for-profit organizations have agreed to have representatives give speeches as well as set up informational booths/tents for teach-in attendees to ask questions, learn how to seek help from these various organizations, and pick up informational pamphlets or brochures (for a complete list of speakers, please see page 3). Apart from being purely informational, there will be live music and performances of monologues by Agnes Scott theatre students written by Eve Ensler, whose work deals largely with violence against women. There will also be time for poets and any teach-in attendees to perform spoken word, slam poetry, or simply to speak out about how domestic violence has impacted their lives. So that the impact of this forum will be long-lasting and prompt policy changes affecting victims of domestic violence, we will gather signatures and photos for a petition to present to local legislators regarding the dire need for more shelters for those who have escaped domestic violence.

Upon hearing from keynote speakers, enjoying a picnic, listening to testimonials, theatrical performances, and spoken word, the events of the day will culminate in the distribution of a Plexiglas tiles to each attendee. Upon this tile, the individual will paint or create a collage depicting how his or her life has been affected by domestic violence. We hope that the creative process inherent in decorating such a tile and subsequently sharing the image with others will inspire some type of inner-

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<sup>1</sup> Women’s Resource Center to End Domestic Violence; [www.wrcdv.org](http://www.wrcdv.org).

<sup>2</sup> Atlanta Women’s Foundation; [www.atlantawomen.org](http://www.atlantawomen.org).

reflection on the part of the artists—30% of whom will have undoubtedly either witnessed or been part of a violent, intimate relationship. We hope to have at least 300 participants at our teach-in and art project, and that the varying educational and artistic teach-in activities as well as proximity to a MARTA stop will make our event accessible and appealing to many (for a list of ways we plan to advertise the event, please see page 3).

Upon collecting finished tiles from teach-in participants, we will string them onto a series of eight large garden arches. With the help of Lisa Alembik, director of Agnes Scott's Dalton Gallery, we will situate the arches on a large quadrangle on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, which we have reserved for the months of July through September that is typically dedicated to large-scale art projects. It faces Decatur High School and is on the corner of a busy intersection, and it is thus a site that students and other members of the community view daily. The arches will be arranged in the form of a circle, so that the viewer has to actively engage with the piece as he or she walks under and even around each successive arch. Rather than creating a mural or a more typical, flattened structure often used to display tiles, we chose to form arches as they not only make viewers more active participants in the work, but arches have also long been a recognizable feature of national memorials and represent a site of passage and transition. We hope that this project will promulgate a transition from a community where domestic violence is tolerated to one where it is perceived as a gross violation of human dignity.

In the center of the arranged arches, there will be a circular table surrounded by three wooden benches. The table will be decorated with the logo and description of our project, and we hope this sitting area will provide a restful place for reflection of the work, domestic violence in Atlanta, and perhaps even inspire a dialogue between its viewers. Furthermore, also on the table will be a box full of petitions addressed to local legislators, who will have been contacted through our campus' College Republicans and College Democrats organizations regarding the presently inadequate funding for victims of domestic violence shelters, and we will deliver them to Atlanta representatives in the Georgia Capitol in hopes of affecting a more concrete change in domestic violence policy. We hope that Agnes Scott's close relation to local politician and trustee Kathy Ashe will be helpful in this policy change, and she is working closely with one of our executive board members on this endeavor.

We will dismantle the arches in October, and we will subsequently shatter each of the tiles as a cathartic and symbolic means of ending such violence. We hope to use the shards to create a mosaic either in or surrounding our campus' new chapel, where the once-violent experiences depicted by teach-in participants will be intermingled and conveyed in a presently more peaceful and hopeful light. Overall, we hope that "Fighting Domestic Violence, Creating Domestic Peace" will inspire community building, policy changes, and awareness among all Atlantans of how individuals can fight against domestic violence in one of the nation's most violent cities through the decoration of a simple tile.