



## 100 Projects for Peace Final Report - Summer 2007

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Title: Fighting Domestic Violence, Creating Domestic Peace

School: Agnes Scott College; Advisor: Stephanie Balmer

Student volunteers include: Nancy Thebaut, Rocio Rodriguez, Meg Beyer, Margaret McMillan, Tammy Leverette, Chevonne Golden, Maryam Trowell, Rachel Bunker, Lauren Whitton, Shannon Yarbrough, Martha Lee, Hodan Osman (Somalia), Rhonda Lowry, Colleen McCreight, Hanwen Li (China), Kelso Wyeth, Jennifer Whitton (**unless otherwise indicated, all students are from USA; no student volunteers attended a UWC**)

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### 1. **Project Summary: Describe location, timeframe, participants, other funding involved, scope of work, and goals intended.**

Our intent in creating and executing our Project for Peace, "Fighting Domestic Violence, Creating Domestic Peace," is three-fold: we sought and continue to seek an end to domestic violence in the Atlanta area, to celebrate and heighten awareness of the resources offered by our community to its victims, and to raise funds for sheltering survivors. We realized these goals through hosting a day-long teach-in and creating a large-scale community art project.

The teach-in was held on Agnes Scott's campus on Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, and it coincided with the annual, widely-attended Decatur Arts Festival. The day's events began at 10 am. Following a brief introduction, Dekalb County District Attorney Gwen Keyes Fleming spoke at length of her involvement with domestic violence-related cases and the need for legal change to help women suffering from domestic violence. Following a Q&A period, musician Allison Adams and others performed works pertaining to domestic violence; one song served as a testimonial to the musician's struggle as a victim of dv.

Meanwhile, we invited community members to participate in our community art project. Each teach-in attendee was asked to decorate a wooden circle in a way that showcased his or her responses to a series of questions we posed (including, for instance, how does domestic violence make you feel? What does a world free of domestic violence look like?). Artists and art history professors facilitated the activity and provided each person with a variety of media – paint, pipe cleaners, aluminum foil, string, saran wrap, etc. We encouraged individuals to focus on the experiential process of decorating the circle rather than on the final product. We hoped that the art making would prove cathartic and therapeutic for participants.

Lunch was provided for all attendees at noon, and a panel of local anti-domestic violence activists moderated by our President, Elizabeth Kiss was held at 2 pm. The panel included Stephanie Davis, policy advisor on women's issues to Mayor Shirley Franklin, Amanda Furness, Agnes Scott student survivor of domestic violence, Lee Giordano, a representative of the Dekalb Rape Crisis Center, Joan Prittie, the head of the GA Coalition Against DV, and Shelley Serdahely of Men Stopping Violence. Approximately 80 individuals were present. Following the panel, local musicians performed, and a poetry slam with five renowned artists began at 5 pm. Each of the poets performed works pertaining to personal encounters with domestic violence. Immediately after the poetry slam, musician and actress Doria Roberts performed. She is well known in the Atlanta area for her work with V-Day and other movements aimed at ending domestic violence. To end the day, we held a brief memorial

service for those who have lost their lives due to domestic violence; Georgia ranks 7<sup>th</sup> nationally for the number of dv related deaths per year.

Throughout the day, we asked for donations for the Women's Resource Center's safe house for victims of domestic violence. We raised over \$1,000. There were also representatives from approximately twenty non-profits in the Atlanta area that provide services for victims of domestic violence. The circles made by teach-in participants have recently been nailed to a series of vintage doors (symbolically conveying a site of transition and passageway to a world of domestic peace), and we have created a meditative space with these doors and a series of benches on a large quadrangle facing a major intersection by Agnes Scott's campus. Our instillation welcomes members of the community to learn about the many personal encounters with domestic violence in the metro-Atlanta area. This past Thursday, we had an "opening" for the art instillation, during which a representative from the Women's Resource Center spoke, a series of poets performed work written specifically for our Project for Peace, and we hosted an art-making fundraiser for the Women's Resource Center's safe house.

**2. Project Results: Self-evaluate the project; your assessment should enumerate what goals were and were not accomplished.**

Overall, we feel that our Project for Peace was a great success. We engaged members of the Agnes Scott, Decatur, and Atlanta community in both our teach-in and art project. We are most proud of our panel, which proved to be a very fruitful and informative discussion regarding differing ways of defining and ending domestic violence. The art project has also proven to be very successful, as it has enabled individuals (primarily Agnes Scott students) who were not in Atlanta during the teach-in to still learn about our project, goals, and ways to combat the domestic violence epidemic facing countless women in our very own community. While we widely advertised our teach-in and art project, we were still disappointed with the number of individuals in attendance. We had hoped for 200 attendees or more at the musical and speaking events throughout the day. Most of the events of the Decatur Arts Festival took place in the downtown area, and it was at times difficult to encourage people to leave this area and walk over to Agnes Scott to attend our event.

**3. Implications: What are the project's implications for peace? What are the future prospects for the project? What have you learned?**

This project has not only heightened awareness of the lack of peace in many homes in our own community, but also prompted a discussion of ways to create domestic peace as well as celebrate and identify the individuals and groups in Atlanta that are aiding in the creation of such peace. Our art instillation serves as a meditative space (throughout the fall semester) for viewers to learn about our efforts to create domestic peace as well as teach that domestic violence is a veritable epidemic facing our area. Our very well-attended opening for our art project also proved to be another opportunity to raise funds for the Women's Resource Center's safe house as well as shed light on our mission, project, and outcome with members of the community who could not attend our teach-in in May. Finally, we will be one of ten "Projects for Peace" presenting our work at the American Field Service Global Peace Conference on October 27<sup>th</sup>, where we will have the opportunity to once again underscore the need, before all else, to encourage peace in our homes.

