A society can only truly be peaceful when all of its members can openly express themselves and issues of discrimination can be acknowledged and addressed. When the voices of any portion of the population are silenced or dismissed, it is impossible for the society to move towards peace. While Rwanda continues to heal from past atrocities, the struggles of most of the younger generation have been disregarded. Large numbers of Rwandan youth, who are the future of the country, face prejudice against their identities, yet they are unable to talk about these instances of discrimination. Therefore, there is a need for initiatives that provide the youth the opportunity and platform to share their stories and address the current inequality and hostility. Through storytelling, youth can share their stories of struggles and endurance, highlighting the problems that exist within their communities. This process will not only empower young individuals, but will also lead to initiatives that address and eradicate social inequalities, which will lead to a peaceful society.

Young orphaned girls are a particularly vulnerable group in Rwanda. As a result of limited rights, many of these girls often become the victims of gender discrimination, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. In order to combat these issues, the Agahozo Shalom Youth Village (ASYV) located in Rwamagana District admits such girls to their residential school with the goals of educating and healing them. Recognizing the disadvantages faced by women, ASYV enrolls a majority of female students, and welcomes and supports programs that promote the empowerment and emancipation of women.

Project Overview
For our Project for Peace, we are conducting a two-week summer camp in ASYV with a focus on storytelling. We aim to have a total of 28 participants selected through an application process that will take place from March through May 2018. Students typically look for engaging opportunities during summer breaks, so the camp will be conducted in late July-August 2018, when students are on vacation. The camp will incorporate conferences, group storytelling workshops, a field trip, and various social events. In order to better meet the creative needs of the students, we are going to offer four themes for the group workshops: Writing, Arts, Music, and Digital Media. The students in writing workshops will learn storytelling through poetry, story-writing, or essays, and students in arts workshops will use drawing, painting, or collage. Similarly, music workshops are for students who want to use singing or instruments to express themselves, and digital-media are designed for students who want to make videos or animations of their stories. The students will be placed in the workshops according to the order of preference they indicate in their applications.
Apart from the project leaders, we will have a total of 5 volunteers who will lead the workshops and support the overall program. Volunteers will be graduates of ASYV who are equipped with the creative skills required to lead the individual workshops. We will arrive by early July to plan and finalize program details and prepare supplies. We are deducing a day of the program for a field trip to the Kigali Memorial Site, which commemorates the genocide against the Tutsi. As an important place for remembrance and learning, the trip will be an opportunity for the students to learn about the testimonies provided by the survivors and victims of the conflict. There will be a closing ceremony at the end of the second week where interested students can showcase their work and everyone can reflect on the program. ASYV is a residential school, so our camp will take place on school facilities with room and board for students and volunteers. Our project is being substantially supported by ASYV under the supervision of Director Vincent Kalimba with complimentary room and board, equipment for art, digital, and music workshops, and spaces for the whole camp.

Goals for Sustainability
Our project will be the initiation of an annual storytelling program in ASYV; the student leaders who will organize the next annual event will be the graduates of our pilot program. Therefore, within the application process and throughout the program, we will reiterate the need for future leadership among the participating students. In order to ensure such commitment, during the camp, we will mobilize the interested students to form a “Committee for Storytelling Initiatives”. The students who are part of the committee will be responsible for organizing future programs and continuing the dialogue on storytelling within the campus community. In order to equip the students with necessary leadership skills, we are dedicating one conference day to give lessons on organizational skills such as project management and fundraising for future programming. Secondly, we are going to contribute to the committee, educational materials about said topics, and funds to replenish those resources. The contributed funds will be managed by ASYV’s official student engagement department and will be utilized only for its intended purpose. We will also create a fundraising page on the official ASYV website to collect any additional donations for the annual event. After our departure, under the supervision of ASYV staff members, the committee will be tasked with the goal of coordinating meetings where the students will lead discussions on the topics of leadership, female empowerment, and storytelling. Additionally, we will design a guidebook to help the committee conduct the program annually. We hope to leave a lasting impact on the ASYV community with the expectations that the girls will use storytelling in the future to share their personal stories of struggles, endurance and empowerment, and raise awareness about important issues in their respective communities.

About us
We are both students of International Relations and Economics at Agnes Scott College, with an interest in public policy on economic development within developing countries. We are passionate about issues of social justice such as gender equality and human rights. As Hubert Scholars, we have both designed humanitarian projects focused on female empowerment and child rights in our respective countries of Rwanda and Nepal.