We caught up with Grace Starling (2010) and Kate Napier (2012) to talk about their work in trying to make college a safe space and their work against Georgia General Assembly Bill HB51.

**What is HB51?**

**Kate:** This bill proposes that an institution that receives information about a felony (rape for example) by a student or committed on campus would be required by state law to report it to the police without regard for what the victim of the crime wants. Additionally, schools may not investigate the criminal activity and must defer to a police investigation and subsequent criminal proceedings which can take years to complete. Meanwhile, victims would continue to go to school with their attackers until the investigation is complete. Then the school may take final action on the finding of a criminal charge. This is extremely dangerous for victims’ mental/physical health and well-being as well as a major deterrent to completing their education. Subsequently, victims of sexual violence will feel discouraged from seeking help from their professors and their administration as a result of their fear of the mandatory reporting. This will cause victims to feel further isolated and alone after their attacks. HB51 targets and further silences victims from reporting their attacks.

**What are the consequences?**

**Grace:** As a survivor who was raped during college and a survivor who went through a 2.5 year long investigation, requiring any person to participate in criminal investigation without their consent is re-traumatizing. The choice to report to the police should ALWAYS be the survivor's choice and never anyone else's choice.

**Kate:** This bill would negatively affect victims and survivors of sexual assault by removing autonomy from them. If they choose to tell their story to an employee of the school, with the exception of 'privileged employees,' the employee is required by law to tell the police regardless of what the victim wants. In addition, the bill states that “no disciplinary investigation shall obstruct or prejudice an ongoing criminal investigation.” This could negatively affect those who wish to report because it would strip the school of a lot of its power to make the learning and living environments safe for the victim. HB 51 is a threat to women’s intelligence. An adult who is sexually assaulted has the right to report or not report their assault to the police. Why should it be any different for college students?
What brought you here:

**Grace:** I was raped when I was in college and went through a traumatic criminal investigation that consumed my life and my educational career for 2.5 years. I’ve always wanted to use what happened to me to help others and turn something so negative into something productive for other survivors. When I realized the very terrifying ramifications that come with the bill, I decided this was the time for me to speak out and stand up for other survivors.

**Grace:** I am Catholic, and I love being Catholic. This is exhausting work but when I see all of the amazing things coming from ALL faith communities, beyond just the Christian faith, I am inspired to continue to fight for those that are denied a voice.

**How can someone get involved?**

The most important thing to do to oppose HB 51 is to call and email your Senators. In the next few weeks, the Senate will vote on the bill. In addition, you can like [Students Against House Bill 51 Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StudentsAgainstHouseBill51) on Facebook to stay up to date on protests and lobby days at the Capitol. If you are not on Facebook and want to receive updates, you can email studentsagainsthb51@gmail.com. You can also sign the [Change.org Petition](https://www.change.org/p/georgia-legislature-oppose-hb-51).

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**Jesus always stood up for the marginalized in society**

**Kate:** Last year, I spoke against the Board of Regents’ new sexual misconduct policy. I said that the policy would make the reporting, investigation and decision-making process as cumbersome as possible. I was interviewed by radio and news stations. The policy has not even been in effect for one school year, and yet, Representative Ehrhart feels the need to change it. I will not be silent about issues that violate a person’s body.

**How does your faith play a role in this advocacy?**

**Kate:** I believe that it is a God-given right to be able to live a life free of exploitation. We are each created in God’s perfect image and we are each of infinite worth to the Creator. When someone violates another’s body, they are violating a child of God. Jesus always stood up for the marginalized in society. He showed unconditional love to those society casted aside. Sexual assault on college campuses is one of the largest issues facing our country. There are so many messages that come from our society that try to silence victims and survivors of sexual assault and try to place the blame on them. I am trying to act boldly like Jesus always did and to give a voice to those who have been silenced.

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**I am inspired to continue to fight for those that are denied a voice.**

**Grace Starling** is a YTI alum from 2010. She is currently a law student at GSU law and a survivor of sexual assault. She’s been fighting against HB 51 for about five weeks now. She testified before the Georgia legislature where she came out as a rape survivor for the first time publicly. This is a video of her testimony which she delivered at the first sub hearing: [Georgia House Bill 51 Hearing 2-1-17](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V1nOOGwQ0A). She’s been at the Capitol every single day lobbying against this bill. She’s met with over 50 members of the House on the ropes, attended every single committee meeting (sans Rules), sat down with four Senators in just 24 hours, organized a protest and lobbying day event on Crossover day for over 60 students, organized a lobbying day on 3/10, and organized a rally against sexual violence for 3/24.

**Kate Napier** is a YTI alum from 2012. She is a fourth year physics major at Georgia Tech. She’s passionate about increasing the number of girls and women in STEM fields. She wants to be an astronaut one day and go to Mars.
Love Can Conquer Hate: How to "Pray With Our Feet"

Dr. Jill Weaver (Director of YTI IMPACT) describes an encounter from the "Praying With Our Feet" tour in which high school students walked in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and others as they fought for racial justice. This story and the video which accompanies it show us all how to meet hate with love and compassion.

Our first site visit for PWoF 2017 occurred Saturday morning at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. Our guide, Wanda Battle, graciously volunteered to open early so that our group could see the church before our reservation at the nearby Civil Rights Memorial. We entered the basement of the church from the street level. Ms. Battle immediately endeared herself to all present. She was energetic and began our tour with a spirited group rendition of “This Little Light of Mine” and a chant to help everyone remember the date of King’s birthday. She showed us King’s actual lectern and where the actor who played Dr. King in Selma inscribed it. She showed us King’s study and talked to us about some of the activities that would have happened in there. She asked the group what each of them would be willing to die for and recounted past answers, including a recent fourth-grader who replied that he would die for a stranger. She gave us time to take that in. She talked about King and nonviolence and I took the opportunity to talk to the group about the theology of agape.

As we returned to the part of the basement near the front doors, Ms. Battle heard someone outside and asked me to open the door for them. Three older white people entered. Ms. Battle told them where to sign in and find their tour guide. One man stayed with our group instead. Ms. Battle asked him who he was and he responded with hostility, “You lost my respect when you started talking about the congressman!” [She had been talking about John Lewis and his activity in the Civil Rights Movement. Donald Trump’s Twitter attack on Lewis had happened about an hour before this.] The man went on talking about Trump’s presidency.

Based on facial expressions and body language, the members of our group seemed to feel anger and offense. Some admitted later that they moved in a way to suggest they were willing to protect our dear Ms. Battle. Staff were angry that a person was interrupting the group’s learning and experience of such a sacred place.
Then, Ms. Battle responded to him in kindness and love. She corrected what he had said about Lewis, but explicitly offered unconditional love to the man. Their exchange went on for a little while. We were all amazed at Ms. Battle’s demonstration of agape.

This man continued to be hostile to the rest of us, but he declared, “I like her!” and insisted on joining our group so as to be with her. He joined our group photo and left with us, walking toward the Civil Rights Memorial for some time before he realized that we were moving on to the next thing and turned around, possibly to return to the church.

The scholars and staff felt angry toward the man, but also marveled at how Ms. Battle was able to respond with love to someone who was so unjust and hostile. Students returned to this experience again and again throughout our time together.

How King and other leaders could commit to agape in the face of such hatred and violence was an abiding question the scholars carried with them throughout the trip. It was extraordinary that they got to glimpse a less dramatic, but still powerful example of someone living into that commitment.

Embedded reporters from VOX Teen Communications participated in the trip, and created their own video testimony about the trip.

Because You Gave:

YTI Benefits from Emory’s Day of Giving

Emory University recently embarked on its first Day of Giving. It was a concentrated 24-hour fundraising campaign that invited friends of the university to support what inspires them in a way that can make an immediate and lasting difference. Candler School of Theology, home to the Youth Theological Initiative, ranked third highest in the entire University for number of gifts, which totaled 256. The exciting news for YTI is that while this was a university-wide initiative, YTI generated support from Emory alumni, students, staff, and faculty who had no affiliation with YTI but were inspired by its mission and purpose.

An Emory staff member in the department of development and alumni relations said it best, “I wanted to participate (in Day of Giving), but since I didn’t go to Emory there wasn’t much affiliation to a school. I grew up in the United Methodist Church, and came across YTI when looking at areas to support. Definitely a great program!”

You too have an opportunity to support the transformative program that inspires you. To donate securely online visit http://yti.emory.edu/give or contact YTI’s Director of Development, Jessica McDaniel, at 404.727.0058 or jessica.mcdaniel@emory.edu.
A YEAR-LONG ADVENTURE IN BUILDING YOUR LIFE
A GAP YEAR OPPORTUNITY WITH LAGOM LANDING

Nestled in 60 acres of the Finger Lakes region of New York, Lagom Landing is a place for 18-25 year olds to explore their gifts, learn hands on carpentry, plumbing, gardening, and cooking skills, discern their future, foster their independence while nurturing their understanding of interdependence. Mentors (a life-long builder and PC(USA) minister) live on site with students, but students cook the majority of their meals, grow and source their own food, and participate in a structured program five days/week. In addition to hands-on skills, students create an internship in their areas of interest, read and discuss books, have a daily time of worship, go on field trips learning from both historical and current social justice leaders in the region, work on organic farms, make and market maple syrup, and critique and debate issues of our society and culture in a community setting. Students learn to save and budget their money, and better embrace their physical body through exercise and healthy eating. The wider goal of a year at Lagom Landing is for students to discover what it is that gives them life, and to build a life rule around that continually-unfolding discovery. More information is available at [www.lagomlanding.com](http://www.lagomlanding.com).

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Do you have an update, a story, or a reflection to share? Was there an article that resonated or challenged you? We want to hear from you!

Please contact [ecorrie@emory.edu](mailto:ecorrie@emory.edu) if you are interested in contributing to our newsletter.