



## Press Release

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### Interfaith Peacemaker Teams Win Global Award in Toronto

**Chicago, IL (November 13, 2018)** – The Parliament of the World’s Religions presented a Chicago-based peacemaking organization with its highest award at its global gathering in Toronto last week. The Paul Carus Award for International Interfaith Leadership was presented on November 5th to the OMNIA Institute, which builds Interfaith Peacemaker Teams in Northeastern Nigeria and in Sri Lanka. The Interfaith Peacemaker Teams, a concept developed by OMNIA’s president, the Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, brings together religious leaders of all faiths in communities torn by religion-based oppression, domination, or violence, and trains them to work together across religious lines to address common challenges within their communities.

Citing OMNIA’s unique method of peacemaking, Parliament President Rev. Larry Greenfield said, “The OMNIA Institute is building teams of trained, engaged, and committed leaders who understand that faith, human dignity, equality, and opportunity are vital to achieving basic human rights across the globe.... but also recognizes that these must occur contextually at the grass-roots level. The OMNIA Institute is particularly concerned with challenging what is called ‘received theologies’ and to develop new theologies that arise from the ground and involve the marginalized people of the world.”

There are currently approximately 60 OMNIA Interfaith Peacemaker Teams in Nigeria (52) and Sri Lanka (8).

The award cited both the organization and two of OMNIA’s Interfaith Peacemaker Team Leaders. The Rev. Abare Kallah was part of a team who helped to broker the release of 82 of the Chibok girls kidnapped by the brutal terrorist organization, Boko Haram and has negotiated directly to bring healing and peace to the Northeastern region of Nigeria where Boko Haram’s terror campaign has left nearly 37,000 dead with many more wounded, missing, or displaced.

Ms. Soraya Deen, a Sri Lankan-born American Muslim Attorney who heads OMNIA’s Women’s Leadership Initiative was also cited for her role at OMNIA and for her work calling for “a New American Islam” that promotes a more prominent leadership role for Muslim women. Deen is founder of the Muslim Women’s Speakers Movement and was the first woman to lead prayers at an all-female mosque in California last year.

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