



Contact: Charles Jefferson, Communications Coordinator

Phone: 773.896.2525

Email: charles.jefferson@ctschicago.edu

Vanessa Gomez Brake awarded Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman InterReligious Leadership Award

CHICAGO, November 8, 2017 – Chicago Theological Seminary is pleased to announce Vanessa Gomez Brake as the winner of the 2018 Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman InterReligious Leadership Award, an initiative of the InterReligious Institute (IRI) at CTS.

Over seventeen students submitted proposals identifying a specific issue or gap within a particular context able to be addressed through an interreligious event or initiative. Students included a plan for implementing their event/initiative. Gomez-Brake's proposal was selected as the winning initiative. She will receive a \$500 honorarium plus an additional \$500 micro grant to execute her event/initiative.

"We are pleased to honor the legacy of Rabbi Schaalman, whose life championed interfaith work," affirms Rev. Lisa Seiwert, Project Director of the IRI. "Gomez Brake's project harkens to Rabbi Schaalman's commitments to crossing borders, encountering the other, and sharing our stories."

Gomez Brake describes her initiative as a *Movement/Migration* and is planning "*an evening of multi-dimensional storytelling on the University of Southern California campus. Grounded in the values imparted by religions, cultural traditions, ethical stances and worldviews, student performers will share stories on the theme of movement and migration.*" The event will take place in early March and representatives from CTS and the IRI will be in attendance.

Gomez Brake is the Associate Dean of Religious Life at the University of Southern California. She is the first humanist chaplain to serve in this capacity at any American university. In her role, she works to support and promote university religious and spiritual life broadly conceived, and helps oversee more than 90 student religious groups and 50 religious directors on campus. She is currently completing her master of divinity degree at CTS, where she received a transformative leadership merit award in 2016. Gomez Brake received her bachelor of arts degree in religious studies and psychology from Arizona State University. She received her master of science degree in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University. She holds a certificate in humanist studies & leadership from the Humanist Institute, and is endorsed as a humanist chaplain by the Humanist Society.

ABOUT THE INTERRELIGIOUS INSTITUTE AT CTS

The InterReligious Institute at Chicago Theological Seminary is dedicated to interfaith engagement in our community through academia, theology, and public dialogue for a more just and pluralistic society.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago's South Side, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation of religious leadership... whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary of the United Church of Christ. Since its founding in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives, and denominations.

