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CHICAGO—December 09, 2019 – Chicago Theological Seminary awarded Julie Payne Britton the 2020 Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman InterReligious Leadership Award. The award is an initiative of the InterReligious Institute (IRI) at CTS where Britton is a master of divinity student, and honors the passionate commitment to interreligious engagement modeled by the late Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman.

Students submitted proposals for interreligious initiatives, both contextually centered and issue-specific. Britton's winning proposal will develop a writing group designed to challenge spiritual silos, religious intolerance, implicit biases, and fear of the other in her hometown of Greenfield, Massachusetts. She received a \$500 honorarium and an additional \$500 micro-grant to execute the project. Britton's work will take place in early 2020 during a six-week session where a small group of people who orient differently (or not at all) around religious identity will come together for an interreligious writing group. Through the sharing of their own personal stories, participants will build community and trust, breaking down some of the walls that divide and creating space for nuanced understandings to grow.

"I am excited that we can support this initiative that is very much aligned with the legacy of Rabbi Schaalman and his deep commitment to creating paths for religious pluralism," Lisa Zook, director for the IRI said. "I look forward to supporting Ms. Britton in this important work."



Photo credit: Rachael Jaquay Photography

Britton hopes to complete her Master of Divinity degree at CTS in 2022, she completed her first year of studies at Hartford Seminary and is a graduate of their Women's Leadership Institute. She

is uniquely positioned to facilitate this workshop; she is a published poet and memoirist, licensed psychotherapist and has led long-term memoir writing groups. Her program will culminate with a celebration and public reading of participants' stories, a Q&A session, and the debut of a small, self-published anthology.

ABOUT JULIE PAYNE BRITTON: Britton is an M.Div. student at CTS, psychotherapist, and the survivor of a head-on collision with a drunk driver. Her poetry and memoir has been published in *Silkworm*, *Stonewalls II*, *LaLitamba*, *Toward the Light*, *Tiger's Eye* and *Equinox* literary magazines. She, her wife, and their furry family live in Greenfield, Massachusetts, 18 miles north of Jonathan Edwards' fiery pulpit. Galilea Britton (also pictured) is a 3-legged Puerto Rican street dog who came to Julie in 2007. A story about her journey from Puerto Rico to Vermont appeared in the Spanish version of People Magazine.

ABOUT THE INTERRELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

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. The InterReligious Institute is funded in part through a generous lead gift from the Henry Luce Foundation.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based on Chicago's Southside, 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 engagement, and racial justice. CTS is an affiliated seminary of the United Church of Christ. Since its founding in 1855, CTS has pushed at the 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.



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