



**Alliance for  
Peacebuilding**

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

# **AfP Announces Winners Of Melanie Greenberg U.S. Peacebuilding Award Of Excellence**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 20, 2019

**CONTACT**

Mena Ayazi | (571) 299-8644 | [mena@allianceforpeacebuilding.org](mailto:mena@allianceforpeacebuilding.org)

**Washington, D.C., USA.** – The International Day of Peace was established by the United Nations in 1981 as “a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.” This day provides the world an opportunity to **unite for peace**.

On this International Day of Peace, the Alliance for Peacebuilding stresses the urgent need to prevent and reduce violent conflict around the world, but also in the United States. Conflict experts in the United States are sounding the alarm that an increase in grievances, violence, and rising polarization are creating worrisome



## Alliance for Peacebuilding

trends and divisions. As Alliance for Peacebuilding CEO and President Uzra Zeya explained, “Peacebuilding begins at home. For International Day of Peace 2019, we are celebrating the work of heroic American peacebuilders, from Minneapolis to Milwaukee, in the hopes of inspiring more Americans to step up for peace in their own communities.”

There are many organizations and individuals working to build peace locally and nationally in the United States, however these unsung heroes are all too often overlooked in today’s news cycle. To raise awareness of the growing conflict dynamics and the critical work of peacebuilders in the United States, the Alliance for Peacebuilding established the Melanie Greenberg U.S. Peacebuilding Award of Excellence in 2018. Honoring AfP’s former President and CEO, this prestigious award recognizes innovative U.S. peacebuilding efforts tackling drivers of conflict, from gun violence to intolerance to unhealed trauma, at the community level and beyond.

Meet the winners of the 2019 Melanie Greenberg U.S. Peacebuilding Award of Excellence:

### **Bria Smith**

*President, Milwaukee Youth Council; Board Member, March for Our Lives*



At the young age of 18, Bria Smith has demonstrated an ability to put the hope, suffering, and trauma of her community on her back – leading them towards



## Alliance for Peacebuilding

constructive solutions for peace and nonviolence in Milwaukee. As President of the Milwaukee Youth Violence Prevention Council, she represents the 6th district with Alderwoman Milele Coggs and takes a “versatile approach” to developing solutions in her community.

“Through her leadership Bria has exemplified the spirit of Vel Phillips by helping raise awareness on key issues affecting Milwaukee and our nation, including gun violence, and she has especially captured the attention of young people as an engaging voice for change,” says Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs.

Bria also serves as a national organizer and Board Member with March for Our Lives, the youth-led movement to end gun violence. From marching on the streets to advocating for stricter gun legislation, Bria is eager to build bridges between local and global violence prevention programs and peacebuilding.

“Young people need to know that they have the power to be in leadership positions, Smith said. “Destroy the stigma that young people have to wait till 30 to make an impact.”

Bria is a rising star of the violence prevention and peacebuilding movement, leading her generation to build a more peaceful Wisconsin.

### **Hamse Warfa**

*Co-Founder and Executive Vice President of BanQu*





## Alliance for Peacebuilding

Born in Somalia, Hamse Warfa escaped Somalia's civil war and spent three years living in Kenyan refugee camps before immigrating with his family to the United States in 1994, and ultimately settling down in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis is among the largest Somali-American community in the U.S., and over the past six years there has been a significant rise in tensions between the expanding Somali refugee community and the white community.

As a natural peacebuilder and storyteller, Hamse launched his narrative for peace initiative, Rume, to create opportunities for his community to have authentic dialogue on citizenship and belonging. Hamse's work with the Somali-American community has been replicated globally and he has gone on to become a trusted facilitator and peacebuilder. Hamse has documented his story in *America Here I Come: A Somali Refugee's Quest for Hope*.

Hamse is the highest-ranking African immigrant official in Minnesota State government. As the Deputy Commissioner for Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development, Deputy Commissioner Warfa oversees Minnesota State's Employment and Training programs, the Office of Economic Opportunity, Minnesota's Career and jobs resources and the Governor's Workforce Development Board. He is also the co-founder of BanQu Inc., a blockchain powered software company working to eradicate extreme poverty by connecting the unbanked to the global economy through a secure, portable digital economic identity platform that allows economically marginalized people to access markets and financing opportunities. BanQu was selected for an Innovation Award by the Obama Administration and by MIT. Warfa also founded Tayo Consulting Group, which assists philanthropic clients refine their strategic goals and identify programs to fund.

Warfa holds a Masters in Organizational Management and Leadership from Springfield College in Massachusetts, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from San Diego State University. Hamse is a 2016 Bush Foundation Fellow, recipient of 2017 Minnesota Statewide Facing Race Award winner and Ashoka Global Fellow for social entrepreneurship work.

### **Donna Minter**

*Founder & Executive Director, Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute*



**Alliance for  
Peacebuilding**



**Minnesota  
Peacebuilding  
Leadership  
Institute**

[www.mnpeace.org](http://www.mnpeace.org)

**Transforming Psychological Trauma  
into Nonviolent Power**



Donna is the founder and executive director of the Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute. As a forensic and neuropsychologist for 20+ years, she witnessed patients and incarcerated people with serious unhealed psychological trauma precipitating passive and active violence in their lives and communities. Their peace was stolen from them. They wanted to build peace back into their lives, but they did not know how. Unhealed psychological trauma is a public health epidemic that few know how to talk about or are willing to address.

After attending the 5-day Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) Training, she instigated STAR in Minneapolis in 2010. STAR integrates neuropsychology, trauma healing, resilience, restorative justice, nonviolent conflict transformation, and broadly defined spirituality. STAR facilitates grassroots peacebuilding by transforming psychological trauma into nonviolent power. Twenty-five trainees, representing diverse cultural and religious communities attended. Afterwards they asked Donna to offer STAR for their colleagues. MNPeacebuilding has since offered STAR and related trainings and racial healing events to over 3100 people. The mission is to instigate, train, and support racially, culturally, ethnically, religiously, and economically diverse individuals and organizations to become trauma-informed, resilience-oriented, and restorative justice-focused, empowering communities in Minnesota, the USA, and around the world. MNPeacebuilding prepares trainees for truth-telling, conciliation, and reparations toward making Minnesota the peacebuilding power state for all.

The awards will be presented on October 3rd at the Alliance for Peacebuilding's Annual PeaceCon in the afternoon by AfP's former President and CEO, Melanie Greenberg. The award ceremony will be followed by a celebratory reception.



**Alliance for  
Peacebuilding**

# 2019 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE



Harnessing Collective Action for Peace



---

*With over 110 member organizations, AfP brings together the largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and influential humanitarian and faith-based groups to harness collective action for peace. We build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.*