Written by David Stokes
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As Eleanor Roosevelt, America's first lady (1933-45), once asked, "Where, after all, do universal rights begin?”

She wondered do they begin, "In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world? Yet, they are the world of the individual person – the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity, without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere." With that sentiment, several persons were inducted last month into Ohio's Hall of Fame for Civil Rights. These are distinctive people who espoused the goals and objectives of human rights for all man while moving further into the New Millennium. One of the inductees, although a resident of the Buckeye State of Ohio, has permanent ties to the "Olympic City" that is Atlanta – the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.

Moss, a native of LaGrange, Ga. and a Morehouse College graduate, is one of the United States' most influential religious and civic leaders, and has been actively involved in advocating for the achievement of civil and human rights, education and social justice issues. Prior to earning a doctorate of ministry degree from the United Theological Seminary, Moss received bachelor's and master's of divinity degrees from the Morehouse School of Religion and Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta. Nevertheless, since 1978, Moss has committed years of distinguished service in leading the congregation of the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland as its senior pastor.

Prior to Olivet's pulpit, Moss held numerous pastoral positions at several churches in Georgia and Ohio, including serving as co-pastor with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Moss has also served the community promoting peace and justice on various boards of directors and staff directorships, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during King Jr.'s tenure as founding president (1957-68). Moss has also served as a board member and trustee of the King Center, and his service to Ohio and the country, in general, has been recognized by numerous Ohio governors, the Ohio Legislature, community organizations and national media outlets. Additionally, in 2009, Moss lectured with Rajmohan Ghandi, Mahatma Ghandi's grandson, during a multi-city tour of India illuminating the work of King, Jr. and Mahatma Ghandi.

Moss has been appointed to several key leadership positions by our nation's presidential administrations, including being an advisor to President Jimmy Carter at Camp David (1977-81); in 1994, to President Bill Clinton as a special guest at the peace treaty signing between Israel and Jordan, and in 2009 as President Obama's advisor to the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnership Council. Moss is the recipient of numerous accolades and commendations, including Role Model of the Year from the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development, in 1992, and the Leadership Award, in 1996, from the Cleveland chapter of the American Jewish Committee. In 2007, Moss was inducted into the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame, and in 2004, was bestowed the honor of the Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching at Yale University. Furthermore, he was twice named, by Ebony Magazine, as one of America's Greatest Black Preachers, as well as holds six honorary degrees from universities and colleges in Ohio, Georgia and Arkansas.

Rev. Moss is a lifetime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. Board memberships with Moss' commitment to his brethren include The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Cleveland Foundation. Moss, as a previous board chairman of Morehouse College's board of trustees for more than 10 years, was honored recently with Morehouse naming its newest dormitory suites in his honor. Moss is married to the former Edwina Hudson, and is the father to Kevin Moss, Daphne Moss(deceased) and Otis Moss III. Moss is also the proud grandfather of five and great-grandfather of one.