



# California Institute of Integral Studies

February 26, 2013

World Interfaith Harmony Week Prize Committee  
The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute For Islamic Thought  
Jordan

Dear United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week Officials,

As a professor of philosophy and religion with a special interest in religious and spiritual cinema, I feel very grateful for the creative vision and work of Renee De Palma in producing the World Harmony Interfaith Film Festival, February 6 to February 10, 2013. This outstanding effort, itself a productive collaboration of multiple faith traditions and many participants, was held in several faith venues over five days, and attracted hundreds of people, including many children. It also generated a great deal of positive publicity for World Interfaith Harmony Week itself. In praising this exceptional religious cultural event and the spiritual insights and inspirations that were shared with so many, I wish to draw your attention to the very special nature of this bold and innovative offering.

The extraordinary visual imagery of the film festival, accompanied by beautiful music, eloquent speech, and adept storytelling, engaged audiences in learning about religious traditions around the world. The combination of religion, spirituality, and art is a powerful one that carries its message in an embodied way to the hearts, minds, and souls of the audiences. The great diversity of the film selections, and the inclusivity of the vision of the founder of this film festival, conveyed implicitly the acceptance and affirmation of multiple faith traditions, treated with respect and thoughtfulness.

This film festival brought together for the first time the World Interfaith communities of Southern California, diverse multi-faith films from Canada, Italy, India, Germany, and across the United States, with the interests, skills, and talents of the Hollywood film industry. This groundbreaking event will serve to foster the production of more spiritually inspiring films, and this in turn will work to mitigate and supplant the focus on violence and warfare currently promulgated by the film and television industries around the world.

The World Harmony Interfaith Film Festival took a major step toward shifting the larger culture toward greater mutual understanding around differences, a turn from violence to more constructive means of change, and in creating the cultural basis for a more sturdy commitment to compassion, love, and peace.

I look forward to next year's World Harmony Interfaith Film Festival! I anticipate that this will become a long-standing tradition that will benefit not only the people of Los Angeles and California, but will also have a major impact on many other regions of the United States and the world, far into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mara Keller".

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