



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY
Guest Artists from West Bengal and Malawi Headline
Celebration at the Westin St. Francis on March 6, 2010**

San Francisco, February 23, 2010. Saturday evening, March 6, 2010 the San Francisco-based global nonprofit United Religions Initiative will host its annual Circles of Light Gala at the Westin St. Francis Hotel. Celebrating its 10th Anniversary since the signing of its Charter in Pittsburg, PA, URI will honor its 317,000 members from 72 countries who have joined forces in a global movement for transforming religious conflict into positive social change. The event formally launches URI's second decade of building peace among religions in communities all over the world.

Guest artist Masankho Banda will use dance, theater, music, drumming, and storytelling to tell the story of URI's founding. One of URI's most inspirational and creative members, Mr. Banda uses his Malawi roots to inspire people of all ages all over the world to work together to bring about peace, social justice, and cultural understanding. URI is also pleased to host Biswadeb Chakraborty, a tabla player from West Bengal who also serves as Regional Coordinator in South India for URI. As an artist Biswadeb created Ektaan, which means one note, a cross-caste, interfaith group of musicians. When Ektaan plays, often in rural villages where the divisions of caste and religion are still very real, they are a model of a new future. As one of URI's 16 Regional Coordinators around the world, Biswadeb has helped found 23 Cooperation Circles in East India. He will unveil current plans for URI's work in India.

URI will also premiere *Saying Yes to the Dream*, a new short film by filmmaker Sara Terry, a former, award-winning reporter for the Christian Science Monitor. Proceeds from the 2010 Circles of Light Gala will benefit URI's work in eight regions and seven sub-regions. Through local grassroots, interfaith communities around the globe, URI transforms religious tension into positive social change. URI's Challenge Sponsors this year are Connie and Bob Lurie and co-sponsors include Bank of the West and other generous donors.

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About the event:



Event: URI Circles of Light Gala

Event date: March 6, 2010

Location: Westin St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, California

Beneficiary –The San Francisco-based non-profit United Religions Initiative (URI)

Time: 6:30pm – 10:30pm (Cocktail Reception, Dinner, and Performance)

Tickets: \$125.00

Website: http://www.uri.org/Circles_of_Light.html

About URI:

The United Religions Initiative, or URI, is a grassroots, bridge-building organization that believes when people's passions and initiative are organized, connected and shared, they can create a sustaining global force for good. People from different faiths across the globe are overcoming distrust and hostility to work together in their local URI communities to address urgent human need and to heal the Earth. Joining together in hundreds of interfaith Cooperation Circles worldwide, these individuals are tackling such issues as AIDS work in Africa, conflict transformation in the Philippines, Indigenous leadership for the environment in the Americas, and religious cooperation in the Middle East. While respecting differences among beliefs and spiritualities, URI pursues a common purpose: to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

Since its founding in 2000, URI's network has grown to 444 Cooperation Circles (CCs) in 72 countries that cultivate civic engagement and interfaith, cross-cultural cooperation on a local, regional and global scale to solve the most pressing issues facing communities around the world. For more information about URI visit: www.uri.org

Visit www.uri.org for Further Information on URI's Projects in:

Africa
Asia
Europe
Latin America & the Caribbean
Middle East
North Africa
Southeast Asia and the Pacific
Australia and New Zealand
North America