

# THE EAST-WEST FOUNDATION

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## East-West Foundation and FIU Host Screening of Documentary *The Other* Amid Iran War Crisis, Sparking Urgent Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Regional Futures

*Director Joy Sela and FIU's Jewish-Muslim Student Dialogue Group Address the Stakes of Ongoing Conflict, the Promise of Shared Society, and the Role of Grassroots Interfaith Work*



**MIAMI, FL** — On the evening of March 9, 2026, The East-West Foundation, in partnership with Florida International University (FIU) and the New Israel Fund (NIF), hosted a screening of the acclaimed documentary *The Other* at FIU's Modesto A. Maidique Campus. The event brought together director Joy Sela, FIU's Jewish-Muslim student dialogue group, and a broad cross-section of South Florida's interfaith community for a rare, candid conversation that moved between the intimate and the geopolitical—from the human stories at the heart of Sela's film to the immediate stakes of the ongoing Iran war.

### **About the Film: *The Other***

Filmed between 2017 and 2024, *The Other* documents the transformative journeys of individuals—Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders, former combatants, and bereaved parents—who choose to cross the boundaries of enmity and encounter their perceived adversaries as full human beings. Among those featured are Maoz Inon, whose parents were killed in the October 7 attacks, and Ahmed Helou, a former Hamas member turned peace activist.

Uniquely, the documentary was updated following October 7, 2023, incorporating the additional complexity and trauma of the subsequent war while demonstrating how committed activists maintained their vision for coexistence in the face of devastating personal loss. A central premise of the film—that deeply ingrained generational trauma

and political conditioning can be unlearned through direct human connection and co-resistance against violence—resonated powerfully with an audience navigating their own experience of conflict and division.

## **A Conversation for This Moment: The Iran War and the Future of the Middle East**

The post-screening dialogue, facilitated by The East-West Foundation, proved as consequential as the film itself. Joy Sela engaged in a frank discussion of the current geopolitical crisis, exploring how the outcome of the Iran war could fundamentally reshape the Middle East and America's strategic role within it.

Key themes from the dialogue included:

- **Regime Change and a New Middle East:** Sela discussed the implications of a successful transition away from the current Iranian regime, suggesting it could open a path toward a more integrated regional security architecture—potentially expanding the Abraham Accords framework and removing a primary driver of proxy conflict that has long complicated normalization between Israel and its neighbors.
- **The Danger of Inconclusive Conflict:** Conversely, the group addressed the risks of a frozen or inconclusive war. If the Iranian regime remains intact but deeply destabilized, the likely result is a protracted war of attrition through proxy forces—deepening Israel's isolation, straining American commitment to the region, and foreclosing the conditions necessary for durable peace initiatives.

## **Building the Social Infrastructure for Peace**

Despite the gravity of the military situation, both Sela and Tahl, a student representative of FIU's Jewish-Muslim dialogue cohort, anchored the evening in concrete expressions of hope. They argued that true and lasting stability requires robust social infrastructure alongside any political settlement—and that such infrastructure must be built now, not after the guns fall silent.

- **Givat Haviva as a Model for Shared Society:** The dialogue pointed to Givat Haviva—an initiative focused on Jewish-Arab partnership in Israel through joint education and community building—as a model for the kind of internal reconciliation work that must accompany any regional diplomatic breakthrough.
- **The Role of the New Israel Fund:** Tahl highlighted that the NIF's institutional support for shared society organizations funds the vital middle ground that is most often marginalized in times of war—the space where mutual trust is cultivated so that when political openings arrive, the groundwork for coexistence is already in place.
- **Student Voices as Living Counter-Narrative:** The continued functioning of FIU's Jewish-Muslim dialogue group—a cohort that has persisted through the immense pressures of the ongoing conflict—was itself presented as a micro-version of the future all parties hope to achieve: one where difficult conversations replace policies of separation, and where the generational trauma explored in Sela's documentary is actively, deliberately interrupted.

## Voices from the Evening

*"The East-West Foundation believes that the path to peace runs through genuine human encounter—not the erasure of difference, but the courageous willingness to sit with it. Last night, in a room full of students, artists, and community members, we witnessed exactly that. Joy Sela's film reminds us that even amid war, the human capacity for transformation remains. Our work is to hold that space open."*

— Dr. Iqbal, Executive Director, The East-West Foundation & Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Politics, Florida International University

## About The East-West Foundation

The East-West Foundation is a Miami-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to fostering covenantal pluralism—a model of interfaith and intercultural engagement rooted in deep encounter, mutual accountability, and shared civic life. Through programs including Miami Interfaith and the annual Breaking Bread, Breaking Bias series, the Foundation convenes Jews, Muslims, Christians, and people of all backgrounds across South Florida to build the social infrastructure that durable peace requires. The Foundation is affiliated with Florida International University and maintains a public Substack at [interfaiths.substack.com](https://interfaiths.substack.com).

## Funding and Support

The [David Posnack Jewish Community Center \(DPJCC\)](#) invites the South Florida community to take part in [The Overlap](#), a fun, dynamic, community-building initiative entering its second year after its successful launch last year. Designed to bring people together across lines of culture, faith and identity, The Overlap uses the arts, open dialogue, shared learning and interfaith experiences to bridge communities and build empathy for one another. The upcoming season will introduce expanded community programming, new collaborative partners, and more opportunities for engagement throughout South Florida's diverse communities.

This program is generously funded by the Sam Berman Charitable Foundation and presented in collaboration with the David Posnack JCC's [George Gottlieb Institute](#) and the [Jewish Federation of Broward County](#).

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### MEDIA CONTACT

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