Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute today to the Women PeaceMakers Program at the University of San Diego, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

The award-winning Women PeaceMakers Program, which is based at the university’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ), documents the stories and practices of international women leaders who are involved in human rights and peacemaking efforts in their home countries. It was founded on the idea that history is rarely recorded from women’s perspectives, especially women on the frontlines of efforts to end violence and secure peace.

In 2011, the power of such documentation was confirmed when three women received the Nobel Peace Prize. One was Leymah Gbowee, whose story of pushing for peace in Liberia might have been forgotten if not for the documentary “Pray the Devil Back to Hell.” Similarly, the Women PeaceMakers Program in San Diego records the stories that are overlooked or neglected in the media and in history books.

To date, the program has documented the stories of 35 Women PeaceMakers from 30 countries. This year it has selected four more women, from Colombia, Kenya, Nepal and the Solomon Islands, to reside for two months on the campus of the University of San Diego and have their stories recorded by professional writers and a documentary film team. The location of the university, overlooking San Diego’s Mission Bay and the Pacific Ocean, is an idyllic one for rest and reflection for women who often face violence on a daily basis, and who must struggle for space and security to do their work for peace.

The process of reflection that the women undertake as they share their stories, contemplating their motivation to become leaders, and why the initiatives they developed were successful teaches them how to be more effective peacebuilders when they return to their countries.

It is not only the professional writers, however, who get to hear the women’s stories and learn of their methods of building peace. Members of the local community, as well as students and professors at the University of San Diego and neighboring schools and colleges, have the opportunity to attend the Women PeaceMakers’ lectures and other public events, and those events are often streamed live online for national and international audiences as well. Last year, the university received the Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award from NAFSA: The Association of International Educators, in recognition of the Women PeaceMakers Program and its success in internationalizing the campus.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice and the University of San Diego on a momentous 10th year of the Women PeaceMakers Program.