

EVERGREEN

THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

January 21, 2010

Dr. Geir Lundestad, Secretary, Nobel Peace Prize Committee
The Norwegian Nobel Institute
Henrik Ibsens gate 51
0255 OSLO, NORWAY

Dear Dr. Lundestad;

I am deeply honored to write this endorsement of the nomination of Abdias Nascimento for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. I have known Mr. Nascimento for more than forty years, and I consider his most abiding characteristic to be his unswerving commitment to the principles of equality and justice. It was my privilege to serve as one of his Portuguese-English interpreter/translators in the late 1960's when he first arrived in the United States during the Brazilian National Security State. Our long lasting friendship has been one in which I have learned from--and been challenged by--his struggles for human rights for all, both in his native Brazil as well as the African Diaspora.

I take this opportunity to share with the Nobel Peace Prize Committee ideas that framed the chapter I wrote in an award-winning book, *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics* in which I discussed Mr. Nascimento's germinal work. In that book, I revealed that it was in the context of interpreting/translating for him that I found my first full exchange of ideas about Brazil's dominant myth of racial democracy. Mr. Nascimento's critique of the impact among poor black people of Brazil's Master Narrative was best expressed in his book, *"Racial Democracy" in Brazil: Myth or Reality* and presented a formal challenge to the cadre of social scientists who continue to misrepresent the Afro-Brazilian experience. The most important question Mr. Nascimento's book raised was regarding the unresolved contradiction throughout the Americas: Which came first, the Brazilian culture or the African influence? For Mr. Nascimento, the "Racial Democracy Narrative" weighed heavily on the shoulders of the Black woman in particular, whose social role was tied to both forced labor and physical assault.

Thus, for a person committed to women's equality like myself, it was ironic that it would be a male thinker-activist who helped me reach for an anthropological scholarship that necessarily contributed to activism *and* political