



FORD FOUNDATION
INTERNATIONAL
FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM

January 18, 2010

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

Dear Dr. Lundestad:

I hereby endorse the nomination of Abdias Nascimento, a Brazilian citizen, for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Abdias Nascimento was nominated by Professor Clóvis Brigagão of Cândido Mendes University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It is fitting that I am writing this letter on the occasion of Martin Luther King Day in the United States. Like Dr. King, Abdias Nascimento is a visionary freedom fighter who has devoted his entire life to the struggle for social justice and equality for an African descendant population—in Abdias Nascimento's case, in Brazil. And like the American recipient of the 2009 Peace Prize, Barack Obama, Abdias Nascimento is a pioneer who personally overcame the obstacles of racism and discrimination.

For 75 years, starting as virtually a lone voice in a country that refused to acknowledge its deep structural discrimination against Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples, Abdias Nascimento has been at the forefront of a movement for human rights and social inclusion for all Brazilians.

Abdias Nascimento's work on behalf of social equality in Brazil has taken many forms. He served as a member of the Brazilian Federal Senate and Chamber of Deputies; he brought African, Afro-Brazilian and diaspora culture to the United States and the rest of the Americas as a professor and educator; and he brought African, Afro-Brazilian and diaspora themes to the international community as a gifted poet, playwright, and painter. In all these roles, Abdias Nascimento has been an undeterred champion of full citizenship for African-descendant peoples and a mentor to emerging leaders in Brazil and other diaspora communities.

Dr. Geir Lundestad

Pg. 2

I first met Abdias Nascimento in New York in 1978, when he and other Brazilian exiles and victims of that country's military dictatorship mounted a courageous international campaign to restore democracy in their homeland. Once the dictatorship ended, however, Abdias Nascimento and others in Brazil's black movement continued to make the case that democracy without social inclusion was a false democracy, and that African-descendant and indigenous populations had the inalienable right to enjoy their full share of the country's growing prosperity and freedom.

Today, as Executive Director of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program, I have the privilege of helping to direct scholarship support to African-descendant and indigenous leaders in Brazil, who are using their knowledge and skills to benefit their communities. These leaders are carrying forward the struggle for equality and human rights that Abdias Nascimento pioneered so many decades ago, adding to our hope that the world's largest African country outside of Africa will one day reduce its social inequalities and fulfill the promise of democracy for all its citizens.

Please give Abdias Nascimento your utmost consideration for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan R. Dassin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Joan R. Dassin
Educator
Executive Director
International Fellowships Fund and
Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program
New York