



February 14, 2024

The Evergreen State College
Master of Public Administration
Olympia Campus
2700 Evergreen Parkway NW
Olympia, WA 98505

Re: Musa Abdirahman

Dear Master of Public Administration Admissions Selection Committee:

It is with so much pleasure that I write in enthusiastic support of Musa Abdirahman's application for graduate work in Public Administration at The Evergreen State College. I had my first opportunity to engage with Musa in the classroom in fall 2021, when he took "Narratives of Race" (AFAM 401) with me. I had another opportunity to share the learning-teaching space with Musa the following semester. During spring 2022, I had among the most inspiring of culminating experiences with a student when I served again as Musa's teacher and additionally, thesis guide, when he took my Research Seminar in African American Studies (AFAM 402). It is certainly an especially renewing and rewarding learning and introspective experience as a teacher, to witness a student making turns and movement that reflect critical intellectual and personal growth, risk-taking, courage, passion, integrity, and an unrelenting sense of searching and inquiry. These have been hallmarks of my experience with Musa.

Reflecting on my experience with Musa Abdirahman in AFAM 401, I was taken by the scholarly care and attention to situatedness that he invested in the formulation and execution of his thinking in written and oral forms. This course, in its service to the University's Connections Core, as the capstone for the African American Studies Minor, as part of the Educational Studies and Latina/o Studies Minors and as an upper division requirement for the African American Studies Major, crosses disciplinary lines in the social sciences and the humanities, providing students with substantive exploration of the historical events, visual and verbal images, transnational figures and geographical locations that have shaped the struggles and contributions of African diaspora life, especially, while not exclusively, as these are related to issues of race, racism and racialized and intersectional social identities, relations and life worlds. Musa's offerings in this course journey writ large, and specifically, in the different ways he composed and positioned his classroom interactions, revealed a student-scholar who truly comes alive with the openings, curiosities, and stretching which transdisciplinary work facilitates. His work on the how the public controversies around "African American Vernacular English" forms were produced remains with me.

In AFAM 402, my experience with Musa Abdirahman allowed me to be up-close with his capacities to question conceptual boundaries and foundations, penchants for re-imagining



and re-mapping, and disciplined approach to listening and collaborative space-making that he invested in the formulation of his thinking in written, oral, and visual forms, and in his modes of relationality. Musa's intellectual performance demonstrated his deep valuing of and capaciousness for multiple modes of working that cross-disciplinary lines. Musa's thesis, "Inner Intimacy Empowerment: Exploring Islam's Influence on Black American Muslims" enacted an impressive coming together of his intellectual values, penchants, and capacities and in the process of its development, allowed him to serve as a key thought leader for his peers in their own thesis development journeys.

The research and thesis classroom setting of AFAM 402, not unlike the critical pedagogic environments of African American Studies more broadly, was frequently characterized by shifting, bumpy, and charged learning surfaces. In these kinds of spaces, Musa illustrated a courageous willingness to take on and make public, the affective and analytic challenges of collectively grappling with the moral and intellectual values of our own most cherished or preferred ways of knowing and being, as they are produced by and implicated in the reinvention of differential and intersectional narratives of race. This setting of an African American Studies research seminar also invites, alongside the risk-taking of public-ness, the engagement of small group and one-on-one reading and processing together of charged ideas from disparate and deeply invested perspectives. It was an energizing and a humbling learning experience for me to observe Musa's moving capacities and attunements to leaning into closely to the acts of listening to his peers even as he posed and pressed questions that disturbed and displaced the room, and open himself to being reciprocally pressed and discomforted.

It is this person, Musa Abdirahman, whom I envision in your Master of Public Administration graduate program with so much joy and celebration. Reading from the range and rigor of my observations of and interactions with Musa, I believe that The Evergreen State College will find in him an exceptionally well-prepared and reflexive person, academically, affectively, and relationally. I am truly excited by the prospect of bearing witness to his further compelling growth and contribution. Musa Abdirahman's intellectual dispositions, creativity, and ethical reflectiveness, are most worthy of your institution's investment.

Sincerely,

Grace Livingston, Ph.D.
Professor
African American Studies, Director
Race and Pedagogy Institute, Leadership Team
Interdisciplinary Humanities Emphasis Program, Advisory Board