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My Dear Ethiopian Friends of St Louis:

You do not know how overjoyed I am to hear that you are honoring one of our great Ethiopian compatriots, my dear friend, brother, and a stalwart builder of our Ethiopian community, Ato Gedlu Metafaria.

I have had the privilege of knowing Ato Gedlu for almost thirty one years. I first met him when I was the Executive Director of the National Literacy Campaign Organization of Ethiopia. At that time Ato Gedlu was a student at the Gondar College of Public Health. He was instrumental in and responsible for mobilizing the literacy campaign in the Gondar Area and building the school we called "Berhan Lahulu" - *Light to All*. The about 2 million Ethiopians that were reported literate at the end of 1973 through the effort of the National Literacy Campaign would have not been possible without the dedication of people like Ato Gedlu.

I have followed Ato Gedlu's continued activities and dedication to the Ethiopian community in the USA in recent years. In particular, in his capacity as Director of the Ethiopian-African Community Center of St. Louis in the last few years, he has made personal sacrifices and built up a strong organization for the Ethiopian-African community of the Midwest dedicated to the large community in need of rehabilitation and employment.

During the last decade, Ato Gedlu helped organize at least two symposia to bring together leading religious, civil, and judicial, law enforcement officials and community leaders to participate in dialogues at which I have been the key note speaker. Then admirable objective of these meetings was to promote understanding and tolerance in the wider community in the aftermath of September 11. At this meetings I observed personally and closely how he was committed to better inter-people relations not only among his fellow Ethiopians but fellow Americans and immigrants in the US. He has succeeded to awaken the St. Louis community leaders and convince them of the importance of working in harmony to promote tolerance and inter-people understanding.

I cannot think of many like Ato Gedlu who are as dedicated, hard-working, sincere, honest spiritual person committed to great lofty ideas of human understanding and tolerance for the bettering of society. As a person

with first-rate experience and a top Ethiopian, he is undoubtedly an outstanding asset to our Ethiopian community and citizenship of the world.

Ato Gedlu is such a very pleasant person who exudes kindness and a spirit of helpfulness. He makes those around him feel good and welcome as well as positive about themselves. He is committed to learning as well as to help others. He is enthusiastic and inquisitive, interested in the knowledge of peoples of different cultures, especially Americans and Africans and to give generously of his time and energy to assist the disadvantaged among us. Ato Gedlu is a great loyal Ethiopian national who also loves his adopted country, the US. He has already contributed greatly to bring our peoples together; and I have no doubt that he will continue to serve our two peoples in a very exemplary and responsible manner.

That being said, his intelligence and knowledge base are significant and valuable when it comes to bare on his spiritual integrity. In discussing social, educational and developmental issues with him, I was able to see that he understood things at the top as well as on the ground, and seeks to integrate these understandings in his work. His personal network in the US is significant, and yields great potential for his being both a leader and a ladder in community relations, with potential resonance in African countries. He is a star leader in this arena, beloved by the St. Louis people and held in high regard by the wider community.

His leadership skill and ability to work with others systematically and congenially, and a dedication to lofty objectives make Ato Gedlu a rare individual. In the Ge'ez literature we have a genre of work which call gadl. It refers to the great deeds of saints. The work reminds me of Ato Gedlu's name. He is a man of great deeds. I consider it a privilege to have someone like him to be my friend.

I wish Ato Gedlu God's guidance and strongly endorse his being honored. He is a major asset to Ethiopian-American relations. I strongly and enthusiastically applaud his being honored tonight.

Sincerely,

Ephraim Isaac