

Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute

1 November 2014

Dear Carol,

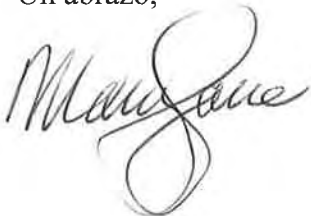
I have witnessed a few tributes in my life that I would call “enviable.” Mainly, they have been at funerals, or celebrations of famous professors. But this is an enviable collection of letters about your career and about you. The effect of reading them as they rolled in one-by-one was quite moving. They reflect the heartfelt opinions of a large number of people, each articulated beautifully in some original or ingenious or simple way.

Some of these letters express well the spirit of this committee – how it has been able to channel the humanitarian concerns of scientists by capitalizing on their international connections and their belief in the importance of freedom of expression. They also show that this has been possible largely because of your amazing ability to make the right connections and get us organized in effective ways.

Being a member of the CHR has added a dimension to my life that otherwise would have been impossible. We have been briefed by extraordinarily competent experts on history and politics of particular countries. We have heard first hand accounts of horrible experiences from colleague-victims and their families desperate for help. From the Mirna Mack case and our mission to Guatemala, and other trips there for a human rights workshop and as a trial observer representing the CHR, I got a taste of what it is like to be in a police state capable of genocide: we saw the cowering fear of an Indian woman waiting to talk with the human rights ombudsman; the stunned silence of a crowd in the plaza when a fleeing child was roughly seized by the police and taken away, as if they knew what would happen to him next; the cocked machine guns at the entrance to the Ministry of Defense; and the evidence that our hotel rooms were bugged and our restaurant conversations observed. From the Thomas Butler case we learned that top scientists in our own country can be victims as well, even when their assumptions about justice and good citizenship are just like our own. In addition I had the immense pleasure of knowing other members of this committee, extraordinarily fine people whose humanitarian decency matched their intellects. Somehow you managed to find all of these outstanding people and make all of this possible.

Reading these letters as they came pouring in was a special privilege. Few people in the world could receive such a collection from so many outstanding people in so many parts of the world. You have earned it.

Un abrazo,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark S. Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Un abrazo,".