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## Introduction

Roderick Douglas Bush (b. November 12, 1945) was a scholar, educator, mentor, activist and loving human being who passed on December 5, 2013. In reflecting on his works and a life well-lived, this anthology aims to reaffirm and demonstrate that Rod Bush's contributions as a radical Black scholar are many and that important lessons can be drawn from his example on how to embed a loving spirit dedicated to justice, liberation, and radical social transformation in everyday living.

Rod Bush was deeply convinced that "Pan-European racism is the Achilles' heel of the modern world-system, and the demographic situation of the United States, with its large, strategically located populations of color, is a key locus of struggle for a more just, democratic, and egalitarian world order" (Bush 2009:20).

His scholarship and life's work thus spanned many important areas related to social movements and social change, and questions of justice, power and politics. His efforts were particularly rooted in commitments to and explorations of: 1) the Black community, such as Black Left, Black Nationalism, the Black Radical Tradition, Black

Internationalism, and Transnational Africa; 2) the Left in general (Marxism, Labor, and Communist movements); 3) critiques of the modern world-system (capitalism, internal colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy, coloniality of power, U.S. nationalism and nation); 4) the relationship between race, class, gender and nation; and 5) critical understandings of Africana Studies, the Black family, and the Black church.

In addition to numerous scholarly articles, chapters, and presentations, Rod Bush's book publications include *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (1999, New York University Press); *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009, Temple University Press); *Tensions in the American Dream: Rhetoric, Reverie or Reality* (2015, co-authored with Melanie E. L. Bush, published by Temple University Press) and the early volume, *The New Black Vote: Politics and Power in Four American Cities* (1984, Synthesis Publications).

This co-edited, co-authored, anthology provides deep reflections on the question of how one can live radical principles in contemporary times. What does it mean to be human? How does one embed love and justice in one's worldview and daily practice? Rod Bush, our partner, colleague, teacher, mentor, comrade, and friend, was well known as an activist scholar who incorporated his values into his teaching, mentorship and everyday interactions. Therefore, his theoretical interests and practical involvements in movements are intimately linked and simultaneous. In his early twenties, Rod Bush dedicated his life to the liberation of Black people and all humankind, working as a full time activist, and then as a movement scholar. He remained deeply committed to that vow throughout his life.

With reflections on how revolutionary praxis was embedded in his writing, mentorship, teaching, activism, and daily interactions, this anthology provides lessons for anyone concerned with where we are headed in the contemporary moment. The volume includes chapters written by a diverse group of scholars, students, and lifelong friends of Rod Bush. It chronicles Rod's transformational praxis while

referencing his example of a life dedicated to love, justice, peace and liberation.

At a historical moment when the political landscape is fraught with volatility, and the Movement for Black Lives and other struggles for dignity and justice gain increasing momentum, Rod's life serves as an example, providing many lessons that we can draw from and practice ourselves. Rod consistently asserted that it is critical to recognize the historical leadership of those involved in struggles for Black Liberation and justice writ large. For, a vision for Black Lives is indeed a vision that benefits all humanity.

The anthology explores Rod Bush's contributions by tracing his scholarship, pedagogy and mentorship, and his daily interactions and practice. The purpose is to show how such activities demonstrated how Rod lived his theory and writings in his everyday personal and social transformative practices and, in turn, how he lived his personal and social transformative practices in his theory and writings.

In his foreword to the volume, Robin D. G. Kelley shares his intimate views and appreciations of Rod Bush's life and works. In Kelley's view, Rod's "commitment to study and struggle in the service of human liberation knew no boundaries. His vision was planetary. He wrote critically and brilliantly about Black radical movements—here and abroad—and about the destructive power of racism, colonialism, capitalism (the modern world-system), all with the goal of transforming a society based on exploitation, subjugation, and war into a society rooted in mutual benefit, life, and love."

### **The Organization of this Volume**

The book is divided into three sections: I. Theory in Practice; II. Practice in Theory; and III-From Rod Bush. They are followed by a memoriam, a photo gallery, a vita, a contributors' list, and an index.

The first section of this book opens with a photo essay by Angelo Taiwo Bush, for his grandpa. Angelo expresses the heart of what he inherited from G-pa (as he was known): a longing for his ancestral home and roots in Africa. Angelo writes, "These images in my eyes

represent love, unity, parenthood, family, unbreakable bonds, and feats of greatness which are all things that cross my mind when I think of my grandfather Roderick Bush.”

Next, from her moving experiences as Rod’s student, Chriss Sneed uses a critical intersectional feminist frame to draw out three themes: radical intimacy, intergenerational mentorship, and a commitment to praxis. She concludes that Rod’s theoretical and embodied praxis expand possibilities for both sociology and social justice.

The contribution by Daniel Douglas places Rod’s praxis within the tradition of radical pedagogy by pivoting between key concepts from the educational theory of Emile Durkheim, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks, and moments from his experience as Rod’s student. Ultimately, Douglas argues that love constitutes the driving force behind and foundation of Rod’s radical pedagogy.

Godfrey Vincent was also Rod Bush’s student at St. Johns University, though one who came to higher education later in life and already with years of experience of work and activism. Godfrey elaborates on Rod’s continuous support throughout his educational journey, from the Bachelor’s degree through the Ph.D., suggesting core practices of radical mentorship.

Amid his activism, Matthew Birkhold self-reflectively explores how Rod Bush contributed to his practice of nurturing, caring for, and practicing love as a constant. Birkhold explains how his own political practice benefitted from his relationship with Rod and the lessons learned from Rod’s involvement in the Black liberation movement in the 1970s. Specifically he notes that when organizers emphasize love more than ideology, they create conditions for not only the political development of people and movements but also their personal transformation.

Independent journalist Loretta Chin reflects on Rod Bush as an exemplar of “how kindness, compassion, humility, and love for one’s fellow human being can manifest in thoughts, words, and actions that can change the world for the better, one person or deed at a time; not just in large shows of grandiose demonstrations, but in the everyday decisions that each one of us must make in how we conduct our lives.”

Former students Latoya Lee and her classmates, Tatiana Chichester and A. Kia Sinclair, also recall memories and trace out themes from their memories of Rod Bush's pedagogy. They go further toward 'paying it forward' by suggesting ways that they have incorporated Rod's lessons and examples in their lives and work in the academy, healthcare settings, and in non-profit work with youth.

In her first chapter in the volume, Melanie E. L. Bush offers reflections from her partnership with Rod over more than thirty years. They met doing movement work, having each dedicated their lives to the struggle for a world rooted in community and justice. She shares everyday lessons from their journey together on how to foster a loving spirit dedicated to liberation and justice.

Many of the authors in the first section of the anthology were Rod Bush's students. Some in the traditional sense, others encountering him as an informal mentor and advisor. Each in his or her own way speaks to the contrasts between Rod's pedagogy and the context of higher education in which it was experienced. Breaking the mold of the professional academic who enacts the split between students and teacher, Rod eagerly incorporated his students into his community and family. This was an act of love and trust on his part, and provided a lifeline for many who arrived in this space without a firm foothold or sense of belonging.

Beyond simply securing a presence in the university system—which by design encourages docility and conformity—Rod vigorously promoted his students' and colleagues' voices. He emboldened them to dissent and encouraged them to make demands, often at his own personal risk. Thus, beyond helping them survive, Rod encouraged others to take ownership of their lives and orient them toward social justice. The writings of his students offer perspectives on Rod Bush's divergence from the traditional role of the professor.

Taken together, the contributions in the first section offer critical lessons for those of us who engage in mentorship inside and outside of the academy. While we all would agree that Rod Bush was singularly equipped for this role, we hope that by reflecting on his praxis and suggesting key elements of it, we can foster a new generation of scholars,

mentors, and friends committed to liberation, love, and justice.

The second section of the anthology is dedicated to a close reading of Rod Bush's writings in and about the Black Liberation movement.

In her opening chapter for the section, Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome laments that Rod Bush has gone too soon, but is comforted that he lives on in the body of work he produced, the lives he touched, and the people he loved, as well as those who loved him. In her view, Rod Bush was the epitome of what the Yorùbá call *Omoluábí*, a concept she explains briefly in the chapter. Okome argues that Bush will never be forgotten, because he kept the faith. She also claims him as her brother.

In her richly nuanced chapter, Natalie Byfield highlights Rod's theoretical sophistication, never far removed from on the ground realities. Byfield notes that all of Bush's work—especially his two books, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in American Century* (1999) and *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009)—contextualize Black struggle in the global capitalist system. Always the internationalist, Rod Bush's approach lifts us out of the narrow nation-state context and makes Black freedom a global issue. Rod's training in world-systems framework (especially at the Braudel Center in Binghamton, NY) shaped his analytical trajectory. He understood clearly that the unit of analysis was the global system, not the U.S. However, his work was much more. He deeply nuanced world-systems theorization through his analysis of white world supremacy. This is a signature contribution articulated early and compellingly throughout his writings.

Bob Barber and Komozi Woodard's chapters speak directly to Rod's analytical contributions.

Barber does a thorough interrogation of Rod's highly acclaimed book, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009). Indeed, what makes Barber's examination especially moving is that he and Rod were comrades, as political and community activists in the 1980s. They worked side by

side in the political work of that historical moment. Barber expresses admiration for the radical intellectual praxis that was at the heart of Rod's life, whether door knocking as an organizer, or leading a seminar.

Woodard takes a distinct path in his piece. He, too, knew Rod and connected with him politically. Woodard is aware of how deeply the theory and practice of Malcolm X shaped Rod's approach to Black liberation. In his chapter, Woodard takes us into the Bandung Age that so catalyzed Malcolm X. His "Citizen Malcolm X" is articulated in the context of the decolonizing struggles of the 1950s and 1960s as the Black Power movement emerged. Rod came of political age during the Black Power period, which critically shaped his understanding of Black social transformation.

In the chapters by Rodney D. Coates and James Fenelon, we are connected both to the man and his theory. Indeed the deep humanity of Rod Bush is articulated in his thought and life practices as a whole, which is warmly conveyed in these pieces through their descriptions of the integrated reality of Rod's life.

Rodney D. Coates, calls it the quest for "understanding and remedies"—that ever present dialectic of theory and practice, of hope and sober mindedness. Coates argues that Rod Bush's quest for social justice derived from his interrogation of imperialism, racism, and exploitation, to move beyond binary constructions of race and class. According to Coates, Rod Bush was critical of a complacent sociology that frequently misdiagnosed social movements, misinterpreted social protests, and misunderstood how to bring about meaningful change. He proposed that the agency of change begins at the grassroots level and extends outward throughout society.

James Fenelon harkens us to a deeper spiritual journey regarding Rod's life and work. He draws on the Dakota tradition to name Rod, *AKICITA SAPA OYATE*, which he says "could be construed to mean *Warrior off for the Black Nation* (or Black Warrior for the People)." Fenelon also explores the relationship of Native and Black struggles, bringing us to the current moment by showing how the Native casino and Black elite have become increasingly disconnected from the masses of their people. Rod recognized this coloniality in his analyses. Fenelon

asserts Rod's clarity on this question of race and class. He draws from Rod Bush the idea that as long as racism is core to capitalism the struggle of the Black liberation movement will continue to be at the vanguard of social change in the U.S.

Charles Pinderhughes's contribution weaves together Rod Bush's mentorship and scholarship, reflecting on their years-long dialogue concerning Internal Colonialism Theory. Therein, we see how Rod was able to support the intellectual growth of people around him in addition to his students, even when their views did not neatly align with his own. The chapter discusses Rod Bush's generous capacity to mentor and support academic comrades. Bush's unselfish example led to a new approach to a part of Charles Pinderhughes' re-assessment of Internal Colonialism Theory.

Walda Katz-Fishman and Jerome Scott share their views on how Rod Bush understood the need to connect theory and strategy to people's lived experiences and daily struggles in the classroom and in the street. Through compelling pedagogy, Katz-Fishman and Scott argue, Rod Bush mentored a new generation of transformative thinkers and movement actors. He did the essential work of nurturing the intellectual side of the twenty-first century revolutionary movement. In celebrating Rod Bush's life, the co-authors re-commit themselves to the revolutionary praxis his life embodied.

The theoretical section concludes with an intimate look by Melanie E. L. Bush at the multiple social forces that shaped Rod's journey as a radical theoretician. The chapter is autobiographical since it involves Rod's posthumously published last book, *Tensions in the American Dream: Rhetoric, Reverie or Reality* (2015), co-written with his political partner and partner in life, Melanie Bush. This piece directly takes on the present moment and offers vital insights on the nature of struggle today in the context of rising white supremacist nationalism in the U.S. and globally.

It is quite clear in all of these chapters that Rod Bush understood and lived the struggle for social transformation. One of his signature contributions was to powerfully show how African Americans, literally living "in the belly of the beast," are a key people for the struggle

against U.S. hegemony and imperialism. And, as Rod Bush so acutely articulated in his exceptional body of work, African Americans will continue to be a key people for bringing fundamental social change worldwide.

The authors in the second section of the Rod Bush anthology make a compelling case for his radical analytical praxis—a phrase that best describes his theoretical gifts. He is rigorous in his analyses and understands, given his long history in the Black liberation struggle, that theory must be deeply rooted in practice. Rod was a remarkable theoretician. The authors of the second section take very seriously Rod's intellectual contributions, leading us on an amazing reading of his writings and the man himself.

Given the time and energy he devoted to the task, it is certain that Rod Bush viewed his work as a university professor as a vocation. His commitment made him a world-class scholar and educator. However, Rod's particular approach to this work is significantly different from many of his colleagues, even many who claim to share his political and social views. His orientation toward pedagogy and mentorship is grounded in and reinforced by his broader commitment to love, justice, and liberation. Rod believed in the interconnectedness of his family, community, and his role as an educator. Blurring the distinctions among these aspects of his life made him a unique presence for his students and others who sought his guidance in the context of his work. In order to best continue his mission of building that world in real time, we must understand critical elements of his practice, so that we might incorporate them into our own.

The anthology closes with a third section that includes two important previously published writings of Rod Bush: one on "Black Internationalism and Transnational Africa," and the second on "The Internal Colony Hybrid: Reformulating Structure, Culture, and Agency." The two rich chapters offer a detailed and at the same time synoptic view of Rod Bush's self-reflections on the nature and potentials of the Black Liberation movement in an autobiographical and historical context. The third section and the book closes with final

words from Melanie Bush.

Each chapter includes an abstract and biographical notes on its author(s). The anthology includes at the end a Memoriam with photos for Rod Bush, his vita including a list of his educational accomplishments, activism, writings, and a list of courses (syllabi included on the website [rodbush.org](http://rodbush.org)), a consolidated biographical list of contributors, and an index.

This anthology can be useful not only for those who knew Rod Bush, but also for those who situate themselves as a change agent for humanity. It provides a model for those involved with the growing contemporary movements and practices of transformational social change. Contributors consider, reflect upon, and address questions such as what Rod Bush's ideas, words and actions mean for them, for particular groups, and for people in general, and what the implications of his ideas, principles and practice, are for an understanding of the contemporary world. They ponder on the question of "What is to be done?" to create a more loving and just future.

The collection is meaningful for anyone who wants to make a difference in their everyday practice, and learn from Rod's example as a warrior for justice. It can be utilized in classrooms dealing with pedagogy, social justice, social movements, as well as several content areas such as in the Social Sciences and Humanities, American Studies, Justice Studies, History, Africana Studies, Inter-American Studies, as well as in Education and Multicultural Studies. It is accessible and could also be used in community settings for study groups or dialogue sessions as the public increasingly engages questions about social responsibilities in the contemporary context.

This book is distinct in several ways. Theory and practice functioned as a unity in Rod's life through his dedication to the liberation of people of African descent particularly, though more generally of all peoples. As such, the many lessons that can be drawn demonstrate the power of ideas in action and action theorized in the form of ideas. Through very specific examples, Rod Bush's praxis makes evident ways that we might all work toward becoming more loving human beings—

to *be* the change that we want to see in the world.

This book elucidates how anyone who believes another world is possible (the slogan of the world social forum) can embody that belief as one's life force, in all activities, and as a daily practice rather than seeing the struggle for justice as something that only involves protest or other traditional forms of activism. It demonstrates in concrete ways how transformative everyday life practices can be, when engaged in a consistent and ongoing manner.

The anthology, in short, addresses the principles and actions involved in being a revolutionary educator and life practitioner. In this way it will also be useful to people in all walks of life who are interested in making the personal transformations involved with committing one's life to radical social change, as expressed in everyday action and interaction with intent and purpose. It serves as a composite of lessons that can be extracted and replicated in the work of scholars, educators, activists, and all people in service to the struggle for justice.

### **Abstract**

This essay is an editors' introduction to the anthology *Rod Bush: Lessons from a Radical Black Scholar on Liberation, Love, and Justice*, edited by Melanie E. L. Bush, and co-edited by Rose M. Brewer, Daniel Douglas, Loretta Chin, and Robert Newby (2019). Roderick Douglas Bush (1945-2013) was a scholar, educator, mentor, activist and a loving human being. In reflecting on his works and a life well-lived, this anthology reaffirms that Rod Bush's contributions are many and that lessons can be drawn from his example on how to embed a spirit dedicated to the radical social transformation in everyday living. Rod Bush was deeply convinced that "Pan-European racism is the Achilles' heel of the modern world-system, and the demographic situation of the United States, with its large, strategically located populations of color, is a key locus of struggle for a more just, democratic, and egalitarian world order." The volume is organized in three parts, chapters on Rod Bush's theory in practice, his practice in theory, and a selection of two of his writings, followed by a memorial, vita, contributors list, and index. It includes chapters written by a diverse group of scholars, students, and friends of Rod Bush.

## The Editor and Co-Editors

**Melanie E. L. Bush** and Rod Bush were partners in their life journey as husband and wife, parents, children, grassroots movement activists, students, teachers, and learners for over 30 years. Their lives individually and together were dedicated to love, family, community, justice and building the better world every day. She is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Adelphi University and a Research Fellow in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of South Africa). Her publications include: *Tensions in the American Dream* (with Rod Bush), *Everyday Forms of Whiteness: Understanding Race in a “Post-Racial” World* as well as many articles and book chapters. Her current research flows from the work she and Rod did together and focuses on solidarity economy projects and resistance to coloniality, white supremacy, capitalism and all forms of domination, oppression and exploitation through the development of a “decolonial” text for the social sciences, with an international team of scholars.. She has long been active in movements for justice and is currently on the Leadership Committee and Strategy Team of May First People Link. At Adelphi she is the founder of the Collaboration Project and the Racial Justice Alliance and continues to be actively involved in raising awareness and engaged action. It is in the everyday struggle for social and racial justice and a more loving world that she finds home. Until Freedom, Always ... and Forever.

**Rose M. Brewer** is a scholar activist and public intellectual. She is a sociologist and the Morse Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor of African American & African Studies, and a graduate faculty member in American Studies and Gender Women and Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She writes extensively on gender, race, class, social movements and social change, and has also published numerous refereed articles, book chapters and essays. She co-authored the award-winning book, *The Color of Wealth* and is the co-editor of several other volumes. She is a founding board member of Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide, was a founding member of the Black Radical Congress and a past board member of United for a Fair Economy. She is a member of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers at the University of Minnesota, a recipient of the Josie R. Johnson Social Justice Award, the American Sociological Association’s Distinguished Teaching Award and was the 2014 College of Liberal Arts Dean’s Medalist, University of Minnesota. Rose M. Brewer is committed to the struggle for radical social transformation and was a core organizer of the 2007, 2010 and 2015 US Social Forums.

**Daniel Douglas** is a Senior Researcher at Rutgers University’s School of Management and Labor Relations. He earned his BA and MA in Sociology at St. Johns University in 2005 and 2008, respectively. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in 2017. His dissertation critically

examines K-12 teacher evaluation systems. His current research examines the role of mathematics in postsecondary education; the connections between higher education and employment; and college students' trajectories in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

**Loretta Chin** is an independent journalist, editor, researcher, and writer who has worked in the field of public higher education for over two decades. She worked closely with Dr. Melanie Bush on a Community Building Initiative as a special projects coordinator in the Division of Student Life at Brooklyn College. Together with Dr. Bush, she collaborated on the development of the Community Building Initiative, Arts of Democracy Project, where she coordinated a series of facilitated "BC Circles" dialogues involving the training of student facilitators and the participation of hundreds of students, staff, and faculty. She also coordinated an Asian Outreach Project to increase the participation of the Asian American/Asian community at Brooklyn College and The City University of New York (CUNY). These efforts helped to establish an Asian Studies minor at Brooklyn College and an Asian American and Asian Research Institute (AAARI) at CUNY. Loretta Chin has presented on numerous panels at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, AAARI, Brooklyn College, and other CUNY campuses. She has worked as a research/conference coordinator, writer, editor, and social media manager for many years in the Children and Youth Studies Program and Center at Brooklyn College/CUNY, which operates under a framework of a human rights perspective for children. Her written and editorial work is published in the Canarsie Courier Newspaper, the Brooklyn College Children and Youth Studies Program and Center, and AAARI/CUNY. Articles she has helped research for award winning journalist, Wayne Barrett, have appeared in major national publications.

**Robert Newby** is professor emeritus at Central Michigan University. He joined the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at CMU in 1988 after being on the faculty at Wayne State University for 14 years. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University. Prior to attending Stanford University for graduate school, Newby received his undergraduate degree in music education at Wichita State University. Newby taught public school in Pontiac, MI. Newby grew up in Wichita, Kansas, and received his undergraduate degree at what is now Wichita State University. While a student at the university, along with Ron Walters, he participated in the 1958 Dockum Drug Store sit-ins in downtown Wichita, this action preceded the 1960 sit-in Greensboro, North Carolina. As a scholar his research and teaching have focused on racism and inequality. His publications include "The Making of a Class Conscious 'Race Man:.' Reflections on Thirty Years of Struggle," in *The Sociology Liberation Movement* by Martin Murray and Martin Oppenheimer. Newby is also the co-editor, along with Robert Smith and Cedric Johnson, of "What Has This Got to Do with the Liberation of Black People?:"

The Impact of Ronald W. Walters on African American Thought and Leadership.” For the 2008 presidential campaign, Newby edited the blog “Black and Progressive Sociologists for Obama.” Lastly, his honors include having been president of the Association of Black Sociologists (ABS), the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists (ASBS), and the North Central Sociological Association (NCSA).