

Melanie E. L. Bush

“Mama, Was it Magic or Just Hard Work?”: Being
with Rod Bush, Always

Over what would now be a partnership of thirty five years, our daughter Sarafina’s question was posed to Rod and me so many times in different ways by a wide range of people who observed the deep connection that we shared truly through sickness and health, good times and bad.

For example, during the week of Rod’s emerging diagnosis in early November 2013, we stopped to conduct some business at the local bank branch that we’d been connected to for over twenty years. The representative we were working with asked us to advise him on how to find his soulmate. He asked for guidance, advice and instructions. Rod, always willing to oblige in the telling of stories, spent the next three hours sharing not only our adventures but also the principles that were the foundation of our soulmate-ship.

Still now, I continue being asked how to achieve “that” kind of relationship. At the core, Rod and I shared a commitment to human liberation that was the foundation of our profound connection. It was based on understanding, and the ability to see, know, recognize and respect each other. We were able to sense what the other was thinking

without the exchange of words. Our sentences and thoughts were often composed in collectivity. We had the capacity to be vulnerable and protected simultaneously, to explore and to try the impossible because we always had a place to call home even when we were without a place to stay.

And so, this chapter attempts to offer the lessons of love and liberation that were central to our partnership. We were incredibly blessed to have found each other and to have located the means for navigating the complexity of life's journey together from that moment forward. Throughout the years there were many nights during which one of us woke and urgently awoke the other to whisper ... how did we get so lucky? We had no precise answer other than the knowledge that we were truly blessed. And so, it very often did feel like magic—it surely was.

Our relationship was a practice of intense engagement where complexity and simplicity sat side by side. I keep wondering, “If there was one lesson to offer, what would it be?” Below I offer five that I believe worked in synchrony and with synergy and one overall sixth lesson about centering our relationships in love and liberation. For ours was a romantic partnership yet most of these principles can be easily applied to other connections as well.

Lesson #1: Love as the Guiding Principle, Always

What Rod and I had in common was our lifelong dedication to the struggle for freedom, justice, and liberation. He had made that commitment as an active participant in the Black radical formations of the late 1960s and mid-1970s. In the same period I committed my life to the struggle though initially without organizational affiliation. We met as cadre in a Marxist-Leninist formation based in the San Francisco/Oakland Bay area around 1979. Both involved with other people, initially I sought his help in trying to recruit my then boyfriend who was more interested in street life than politics, militant activism, or organizing. Rod eagerly took on this task though to no avail.

While we were comrades and friends throughout this period, it

was not until 1983—when we were both part of an organizing team travelling around the United States—that we spent long stretches of time in conversation about our lives and the world around us. We were working with concerned folks in a variety of communities to establish local “tax the corporations” initiatives with the Grass Roots Alliance. Rod remarked then and repeatedly over time that he was awed by the ways that a country boy like him and a city girl like me could have so much in common.

Always present of course, though in a matter of fact way, were the many other aspects of our very different life experiences including racial, religious, family structure, regional (he grew up in central Florida, I was raised in New York), ethnic, class and gender. In our conversations, these dimensions provided the substance that expanded both of our understanding of the lived experience of the different communities within which we were raised. Rod was a devoted, generous listener, learner and an exuberant conversationalist, sharing much about his coming of age in both personal and political terms. I was grateful for his patience and wisdom and willingness to share.

During this organizing trip, we were regularly sent out as a team as we consistently exceeded expectations in the book sale fundraising goals set for us each day. Throughout this time our discussions were deep and lively, exploring far-reaching topics. We talked about our experiences, reflections on the state of the world, and our dreams for the future in conversations that often lasted way into the night. At this point we were also both single.

Rod was to return to the Bay area when we left New Orleans; however, he remained with the Team so he could continue being engaged in a Maoist criticism/self-criticism process, for holding a sexist worldview and practice. Our next stop was Houston, where the team stayed in two locales (homes of people connected with our political work). He and I were in one and the other three members somewhere else. By this time, our conversations had shifted. As we tallied book sales at the end of a long day, Rod confessed that indeed the criticisms must be accurate because he could not hold back any longer that his feelings for a comrade were more than solely political. He said he

wasn't sure what else to do but confess and face the consequences.

There are many more juicy details to this story—such as his claiming he heard angels singing when we first met—ask me if you are interested as I'll gladly share. This was Rod's favorite story to tell and he graciously elaborated on exactly what took place. The point here is that our connection was rooted in love and grounded in our mutual dedication to the struggle for liberation from the very beginning. Those principles guided our process when we made decisions and measured our practice. We were always striving to learn, and to be our better selves, for a purpose. This orientation was active, and a choice that gave our lives meaning and our process, clarity. It was central to our partnership and our capacity to navigate the challenges we faced over the years. And there were many.

Principles—whatever they were in a given situation—anchored our decision-making, reflection, and perspectives; they provided the means to figure out what to do and how to do it, and an indication of when corrections were needed either as individuals or together. They signaled when we needed to push forward or hold back, and when it was time to celebrate.

So this lesson—of love as the guiding principle, always—was established in our decision to come together as a union. It was embodied in our decision to record “material ecumenicalist” as our religion on our marriage certificate. It then provided a path for, how we might grow and learn as a team and individually, and how the diversity of our lived experiences and personalities could foster understanding as partners and provide a lens to understand life and living. It allowed us to reflect upon questions such as what would our “process” be, and based on what values?

For us the guiding principle was to always strive toward a life centered in love, compassion and belief in possibility, as a revolutionary would do. This was (and is) the foundation of our political commitments and the movement work we did (and do) and at the heart of our dedication to seek freedom and justice. These principles were expressed in systemic terms in our love of and belief in the people—especially the most vulnerable and oppressed. It was/is evident in the everyday

appreciation we felt/feel and act/acted upon in relation to those around us. Love is the always we always come back to.

Lesson #2: Humility

These many years we spent together were a long march, not a quick hike. There were mountains, valleys and lots of rivers to cross. There were beaches, boardwalks, parks and city streets; hurricanes and tornadoes. We were blessed in so many ways even as we also faced many challenges of all sorts. Over the years we had many opportunities to travel and interact with extraordinary people (including you). We were the beneficiaries of many gifts of insight, nurturing, wisdom and care that came to us in many different forms.

Both of us had been married before and so when we were asked about what made the difference this time, we took the question seriously. While our coming together was quick—about six weeks after Houston we began living together and sharing resources (whatever we had at the moment), yet it was only over time that we were able to more thoughtfully provide an answer to that question.

Sometime after about ten years, when someone asked about our relationship, Rod proclaimed that it was humility that made all the difference. Humility was our anchor. He explained his proclamation in this way: really believing that being together, sorting things out through different lenses even or especially when we disagreed, working things through, being very honest, continuously untangling knots as they developed, were more important than being right. This deliberate positioning in humility became part of our daily practice in many ways. A few examples are provided here.

One can be right alone, but you can only be together, together. This meant accepting or at least recognizing that we are each perfectly imperfect or perhaps imperfectly perfect, all of the time. Striving to be the one who “knew” the “right way,” or the “truth,” is in fact most often irrelevant. There were no “told ya so’s.” It meant that more often than not, collective insight and understanding brought us closer to clarity and was certainly much more powerful. (See also the next

section on being a team.)

Being together meant learning from each other daily, constantly, listening hard, being up front, being humble though not self-derogatory or negating the particularities of our different positionalities, experiences, or strengths. It meant a complementarity and a willingness to contribute authentically, not being defensive about what we don't know or don't understand, what we struggle with or have a hard time doing, as an expression of our complex beings. It meant taking turns a lot and structuring that into our routines—lots of talking and ultimately really truly loving unconditionally. It meant asking to understand, not to judge or accuse or to prove we were “right” or “better than.”

It meant that each of our particular superpowers benefited us both and were not an expression of something lacking in the other person. These capacities did not represent a statement about our capacities, intelligence or character, whether positive or negative. It's like the quote attributed to Albert Einstein: “Everyone's a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.”¹ We worked to see each other's strengths as providing an opportunity to function in collectivity, to share, to grow, to live our mutual interdependency and be stronger in our shared capabilities than we are in our individual talents.

For example, Rod was our designated social interactor—he did that so well, and I am generally quite awkward. Rod took the lead in social situations except when my whiteness functioned as a capital. I was our dedicated organizer. Anyone privy to Rod's office or his briefcase understands why this was my “assignment.” He was substance and meaning driven, incredibly productive, and had his own meticulous and elaborate systems for getting things done. Anyone who saw his 20 plus pages to-do lists or received emails from him at 3:00 a.m. is witness to his being incredibly dedicated and hard-working. Yet he often searched for papers, books and keys—which was a very time consuming endeavor! And if Rod was fixing dinner, we'd inevitably need a snack because he applied himself to cooking with the meticulousness

1. <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/04/06/fish-climb/>

and thoroughness of an expert chef. Delicious food, though this meant the meal would be served in several hours.

When we worked together on the research and then the writing for the book that was posthumously published, *Tensions in the American Dream* (2015), Rod always wanted the interviews and focus groups to go on for hours and he elaborated extensively on ideas in his writing. He thoroughly interpreted and analyzed what was said; I was able to do so in relationship to what wasn't being said or to how something was said. He was able to expand on ideas thoroughly; it was my job to ask what do we *really* mean, what is the point, and keep us focused. He certainly asked questions and I did much of the writing, though our blessed complementarity allowed space for our strengths to reside side by side in dialogue and in partnership. Together, respecting each other's contributions, we were strongest.

It was thus with humility that we became more together than we were alone. Renzie Taylor, one of Rod's friends since early childhood, described this quality as Rod having found his home base when we came together. He saw Rod as settling down and being able to just be himself, protected in the partnership; the same was certainly true for me. Such a foundation could only be built with humility. It was like breathing freely for the first time ever because someone always had your back. It was not just love, it was unconditional love. It's easy to love us when we do well but what about when we don't? It's easy to love us when we have something to give but what about when we are in need?

We established a routine over time that allowed us to speak directly and honestly about being upset with each other, yet engage with humility. When expressing disappointment, hurt, or anger we used the frame, "I'll apologize for X if you apologize for Y." It really didn't matter what we were apologizing for—just that we both had to be included in the process, affirming that we are both learners and demonstrating that we do indeed all sometimes make mistakes, don't understand things, don't know things; we do all have "issues" and need to grow and we can.

None of that infers less than or better than status. Speaking openly

about disappointments and hurt, upset, and concern was not about judgement, it was about communication and personal transformation, and a mutual trust that was built over time and fostered a depth of connection and understanding. In fact, it is humility in practice that allows us to grow, not “knowing” or “certainty.”

Lesson #3: Everyday Gratitude

Another related principle we established as central to our relationship practice and an extension of working to root ourselves in humility, was being grateful. We sought to consciously appreciate not only the material gifts that we were so lucky to receive over time, but most importantly the people who enriched our lives, and functioned as the very ground we stand on. I offer three examples.

First, when we lived in apartments, we hosted regular gatherings for friends. However, it was shortly after we moved into a house in December 1995 that we began an annual tradition of summer “Celebrations, Thanks and Remembrance” gatherings. Invitations would go out to all those we appreciated in our lives, knowing full well that we could never individually recognize and acknowledge their birthdays, anniversaries, graduations and other special dates.

These full day to night events of usually over 100 people included friends, family, students, neighbors and co-workers who blessed our beautiful Flatbush home and garden. We often cooked for two weeks before and cleaned for two weeks after. We viewed these gatherings as a way to give tribute to the many people we treasured in our lives. We felt so truly blessed and grateful for their presence in our journey. We asked all guests to write on poster boards—something or someone they celebrate, give thanks to or for, and want to remember. I still have some of the boards and post-its. This was an expression of community that at its heart is an articulation of humility and gratitude. The lesson here was about seeing ourselves in collectivity and appreciating people when we’re with them, and moments when we have them, before time slips away.

There was another lesson in this that I did not understand until

after Rod passed. Somehow, living in the present, centered on humility and gratitude had become associated in my mind with some sort of protection against danger and vulnerability. Deep inside, I thought that if we appreciate what we have, that it won't be taken and can't be lost. I somehow thought of gratitude as a shield against harm and losing these precious moments and dearest people. However, what I have had to learn is that gratitude, humility and being in the present IS itself the gift.

Loss, trauma, challenge and crisis are all part of the human experience. To be grateful is not a protection, it is to appreciate freely even as we know all things change. That is the only certainty. Perhaps Rod knew that and giving his all in hosting these gatherings was an expression of cherishing our people, whether in our physical presence or other forms. Pay attention to remember who your people are. Take heed when you can as there may not be another chance.

The second lesson of gratitude, humility and community came after completing my doctoral degree. Throughout the years we spent many a weekend driving up and back to Rochester, in upstate New York, to be with Rod's Mom (aka Momma-Grandma Zoom) and family and friends. This community along with the people in Florida were for us, going "home." After my graduation, Rod wanted to have a party to celebrate this achievement. I relayed my discomfort at receiving this kind of attention. He then taught me a great lesson, for he said this party was not "about" nor "for" me. It is our community's celebration of an achievement which was not mine alone to claim. I had no right to deny them excitement about what they accomplished—in fact, truly WE did it together!

Rod was so right. In general, there is little to nothing we do alone. In this case, this was even more true. I would never have been able to do this project had I not been educated with patience and grace by this community, over twenty years. The lessons Margaret Janette Craddock Bush, along with our Rochester and Florida families, taught me daily indeed shaped my dissertation research and analysis on *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness* (2004). Their generosity, wisdom, clarity, humor, teaching style, knowledge and lived

experience shaped and influenced all that I have come to understand about white supremacy, in both its systemic and everyday forms.

I am the beneficiary of a deep and loving gift. Indeed, it was theirs to celebrate and my time to pay tribute to them. This was also a deep lesson about the meaning of community strongly rooted in the traditions of Black and African descended communities. My presumption was also a profound lesson about my whiteness, individualism and understanding of self.

An extension of this lesson is that when we err, we reflect and grow with deepened humility and we "keep it moving." This wonderful party became an opportunity to celebrate and thank our friends and family for all they had given and done over the years. This was a deep lesson in the power of humility, gratitude and community as well as what white supremacy and coloniality have done to understandings of self and achievement.

Finally, there is one other example of the importance of humility and gratitude, that I will share here, about how Rod expressed this in daily practice. Anyone receiving a greeting card or a book inscription from him will tell you that he let no blank space go uncovered. As with his stories and his writing, Rod's cards were filled with loving, detailed and thoughtful messages, whatever the occasion. He demonstrated living love and liberation in the way he honored the recipient. What a simple yet powerful expression of humility, integrity, dignity and respect. Perhaps we could each take that extra moment to extend ourselves to each other.

Rod's practice—whether we characterize it as humility, gratitude or generosity—was also reflected in the comments he provided on the students' papers he graded. They sometimes exceeded the length of the original essay and students often remarked about what an impression that made on them. It is not easy to do! This practice provides a lesson for how, when positioning ourselves in conversation with each other, we appreciate those around us, and not only speak but embody gratitude. We can have a powerful impact in actually creating the loving world we dream of, and know is possible. Rod's practice provides a shining example.

Lesson #4: Will you Be My Sing-Along?

While the title of this lesson comes from something my mother recently said, it expresses something she values in common with Rod—that of the power of having a team, a crew, a squad—a sing along—having people.

For more than twenty years we, along with my father and our youngest daughter, met regularly for dinners and outings. We would sit around the dining room table to eat, talk, play games, and eat again. Rod deeply enjoyed talking with my father and the feeling was quite mutual. Sometimes agreeing, often not, they traversed topics such as the history of religion and question of liberalism in the twentieth century deep into the night. Rod was patient and always eager to engage cross-perspective discussions as he found a teammate—a sing along for these kinds of conversations.

Most everything is better with a team to share the goodness and to hold the sadness together. When Soji (Sojourner Truth Bush) was killed in a car accident in 2000, it was around that table that we could sit and just breathe together, knowing that we were held and not alone. With my mother, Rod was playful, engaging conversations with all sorts of toy animals together and just having fun. Their last shared pet was a bobble head puppy they named Huey. Here is what she had to say when she decided to bring him to the Memorial we had for Rod in June 2014:

I brought Huey with me because this is an example of the love that Rod always gave to me. Huey was by the front door of my apartment. When Rod walked in, Huey would look up and nod hello. They spent a lot of time talking to each other. It was precious.

Rod showed me how to bring special meaning into every interaction and that people CAN share love and make life sweeter. Rod was one person who did just that. He brought a lot of love to our family.

I miss him terribly and all of the wonderful times we spent together.

Witnessing the interaction between the three of them, one would

think Huey was alive and participating in their conversations. Rod’s willingness to take part in this routine was also evident when he officiated at the Bear Wedding held in Betita Martinez’ yard around 2004, with about 50 guests (roughly half being the teddy bears covered by radicals such as Yuri Kochiyama, Phil Hutchings, and others). Here were people whose lives were dedicated to revolution, participating in a serious ceremony (honey cake, a teddy bear songs mixtape and all). Rod not only wrote the vows but solemnly delivered them and married Betita’s “Herman” and “Rosie” in a moving ceremony. The event was the big scandal of the annual Sociology meeting that year as the event overshadowed official meetings we were to have attended. And, then there was the question of who was and who wasn’t invited! Being present, part of a team, savoring life’s sweetness—being humble with passion, loving all the time and being open to understanding laughter, humor and the absurd, seeking out and treasuring your sing-along partners, every day, not just some days.

For Rod and I, the creation of our team status through our union and reinforcing its development took so many different forms over time. It was the work that fed the magic. For example, we recorded our adventures in many journals over the years. We kept track of our decision making process in those journals, whether about lifestyle (e.g., when might we have funds to get a newspaper subscription) or the annual goals for political education for each of our children. This intentional mapping and recording of our lives formed the building blocks of our partnership; the process was the cement, the ingredients being love and devotion. It’s not that we never faltered, it is that we always returned to “together, always.”

We noted dreams, plans, goals, rules, principles, agreements, reflections, our explorations of the world and affirmations of our love in great detail. For the first decade of our grandchildren’s lives we insisted on their participating in this routine as well, much to their chagrin. For several years running we produced “books” of their adventures with Grandma and Grandpa complete with their illustrations and narratives. This process formed the bylaws and the constitution of our team, the deliberations, the intentionalities, visions and re-visions as

we navigated life from two separate individuals to one sing-along duet.

Another part of this team building was taking turns—deliberate rotations like me driving to places and him driving from—and sharing, for what is most important to one is often less important to another. We took turns being “to the left”—Rod had Monday, Wednesday and Friday; I had Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. On Sunday we centered ourselves together in conversation. To see or enact experiences and inclinations, through different capacities, strengthened us both.

With teamwork, efforts balance out to benefit everyone. In our early years we made charts of household responsibilities, in which even the youngest child rotated into being responsible for preparing meals, and we divided up bread and cookie packages evenly so the slower eaters still always got food. The principle of community, sharing, one for all and all for one was built into our routines. It was the “don’t give up until you’ve really tried—we’re here by your side rooting for you” spirit that led us to insist on Sarafina’s participation in a fundraising walk in the Cayman Islands in 110 degree weather at age 10. Less important was whether she finished the route—more important was that she tried, and you better really try! Again, there’s a longer story here; if you’re interested, ask! It was the “we’ll be with you until you chase us away” that Sarafina still wishes was otherwise when we stood behind trees thinking that would keep her safe.

Being a sing-along meant caring for family together and our students, too. It meant that family and people were to always come first, to the best of our abilities, resources and circumstances. Whatever it was, it was together. We used to joke that in the summer we rarely left each other’s side—aside from when Rod went for a haircut in July. Knowing you have a buddy through whatever you do, matters. Laughing matters. Indeed, we can be each other’s sing-along as friends and as neighbors, not only as romantic partners. It is about being there for each other in whatever ways we can, and knowing that, often, presence alone matters. Breathing together matters. Sitting together matters. Often it is not what we do, but that we do, which matters. We can all do that more often, for each other.

Lesson #5: We Always, Always; Always and Forever

Our household lived by statements of “always.” I don’t entirely recall how this began though it is related to the practice of living by principle, most centrally, love. For, if we are clear why and how we seek to live our lives then to do so “always” makes sense. What follows are personal examples, yet when I reflect on the way that we embedded “always” into our daily life, I believe they were expressions of our determination to live deliberately, by principle and affirm our connection as often and in as many ways as we could.

This meant that we established many routines (perhaps traditions) that connected us with each other. From our first New Years’ Day onward, we had two practices. One was that we spray painted the phrase, “Rod and Mel, Soulmates Forever” somewhere in a public space wherever we were at the time. We moved around a lot during that time so over the years this included the sea walls at San Francisco’s Sea Cliff/Ocean Beach, the side of a building on Boulevard St. Laurent in Montreal and on an overpass stairway by the Verrazano Bridge in Brooklyn, New York. We had t-shirts and sweatshirts made with this saying, replacing them as they became threadbare with wear. The other practice was that we tossed a bottle out to the ocean (or whatever body of water we were near) with a message that affirmed our love and wished the finder a love like ours.

When leaving the house going to work, if we left separately the person still home would stand in the doorway blowing kisses and waving goodbye, calling out “can’t wait to see you” in the mornings and we ran to greet each other in the evening. If we left at the same time, we drove to the corner of Flatbush Avenue and Glenwood Road where Rod turned left, and I went right—and stopped there for our routine, regardless of the horns honking behind us. We always embraced soulfully at night upon our reunion. For many years we fed each other first bites of food at meals (to the dismay of our children), and said “we always ...” whatever we did, even when it was the first time. We always folded laundry together. We always had Adventure Fridays in the summer, eating ice cream for dinner then following our

whimsies for the rest of the night.

We made a list some years ago of the things we would always do when we were apart—like both wear certain t-shirts to sleep in and write nightly letters. We would each have a supply of jellybeans to eat to count the lessening days apart. In the years when we had little money we made narrated mixtapes of love songs for each other as gifts.

Later it was a process of continuously finding new ways to laugh and to play and new things to explore and to learn. This included cultivating a garden, going to spin classes, learning yoga (and routinely getting separated for giggling), roller-blading and travelling to present papers together such as in places such as France, Nigeria, and Brazil. In 2013 we went on three writing retreats to complete *Tensions in the American Dream*, in Grenada and Shelter Island, New York. After Sarafina went to college, more than once we would escape to a hotel somewhere nearby with our stack of papers to grade—not telling anyone we were away. It didn't matter what we were doing. We were together, and triumphant enjoying a secret intimate getaway. We worked so much of the time and so we played as part of our work.

This was especially true as we each pursued doctorates while working full-time and having family responsibilities. We had to use every opportunity presented to enjoy the time we had together. Of course sometimes we got distracted, though we tried to always return to the practices based in our principles. “Always” was one of them and an expression of *intentional living* based on a conscious and deliberately determined worldview centered in love and the pursuit of human liberation.

These routines were concrete demonstrations of our principles: centering love, humility, gratitude, community, consistency, honesty, intentionality, fairness, and presence—even in our imperfections. The lessons are about knowing who your people are and standing by them; knowing where home is and treating it as a sacred space. All of this leads us to a big lesson to learn from Rod and this relationship, which is that love does rock and rule the universe if we let it do so.

The Overarching Lesson #6: Live with Intentionality

Throughout these lessons persists one notion: *while we do not choose our circumstances, we do choose our actions and how we respond*. We have agency. We can live in ways that are aligned with our core values and can correct ourselves when we act in ways that are discordant. It’s a choice. For us, these were centered in values of community, justice, love and humility.

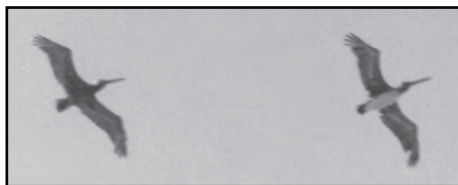
And so that is the “big” lesson I think we can draw from Rod’s ideas and practice—to be intentional, reflective as learners, and to know where we stand in relation to history and tomorrow. There is nothing perfect and so much is not in our control, so choose and act with awareness, mindfulness and determination. This is the record of all human triumph. We can embody this belief in everyday practice, getting better at it all the time and we shall indeed overcome.

And so Llamalita, yes darling, it *was* magic though forged through a whole lot of really hard work.

Grateful.

Always and Forever,

Mama Llama in conversation with Poppa Bear²



Pelicans in Grenada, January 2013, MB

2. These names were given to us, and then adopted not only by family but also some of our students.

Abstract

This essay by Melanie E. L. Bush, titled “Mama, Was it Magic or just Hard Work?” is a chapter of the book *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). It offers reflections from the partnership of Rod and Melanie Bush over the course of more than thirty years. They met doing movement work, both having dedicated their lives to the struggle for a world rooted in community and justice. Their journey together included many lessons for love and liberation. Five lessons are offered, summed up in an overall sixth lesson: 1-Love as the guiding principle; 2-Humility; 3-Everyday gratitude; 4-Will you be my “sing-along”; 5-We always, always; always and forever; 6-Live with Intentionality. “Throughout these lessons,” Melanie Bush argues, “persists one notion: *while we do not choose our circumstances, we do choose our actions and how we respond.* We have agency. We can live in ways that are aligned with our core values and can correct ourselves when we act in ways that are discordant. It’s a choice. For us, these included values involving community, justice, love and humility.”

Author

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. 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.

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