

## Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome

### Rod Bush Fought the Good Fight

In Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, he said in Chapter 4, Verse 7: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ...." This is what Rod Bush has done. He was a man of honor. He had strong convictions. He was committed to the struggle for Black liberation and he never wavered. Among other things, Rod believed in Black Internationalism, which he wrote about extensively. In this essay, I pay attention to this aspect of his intellectual and human contribution.

I learned a lot from Rod and loved him because he personified what the Yorùbá call Omolúàbí. According to Dr. Ademola Araoye, head of the UN Mission in Liberia, in a pre-publication review of a manuscript using the concept, "The concept of Omolúàbí encapsulates or distills the Yorùbá sense of the critical elements in the positive essences of a total/holistic self and being. A paragon of existence that is measurable across a wide spectrum in the unlimited dimensions of life and existence."

Rod was a dear friend, and he became my brother. He embraced me and my family, and we all loved him. Together with Olufemi Vaughan, I

worked with Rod and Melanie (Mel) Bush in a project on Transnational African Communities, which resulted in two volumes, *Transnational Africa* (Okome and Vaughan, *Transnational Africa and Globalization* 2012) and *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century* (Okome and Vaughan, *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century* 2012). It was a joy to work with Rod and Mel. Both of them responded directly and meaningfully to the objective of the project. Rod's chapter, "Black Internationalism and Transnational Africa" was both a great contribution to the book and an account of his thinking about the meaning of transnational Africa to him as a person and scholar. I am glad that he wrote the chapter because it reflects on his life and struggle for Black liberation in an international and transnational context.

The introduction to *West African Migrations* (Okome and Vaughan, *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*, 2012) by Olufemi Vaughan and me expresses how I think of Rod as a member of my family: Rod has left his corporeal body but his spirit lives on. The Yorùbá think of life as an unbroken link between the unborn, living and dead. They believe that people can pass away, but their spirit lives on. Akiwowo, a renowned scholar of the Yorùbá, contends that there are social relations—between past and present that denote ever-changing interactions between àjobí (consanguinity/blood relations) and àjogbé (co-residence).

With Olufemi Vaughan, I said: "New West African immigrants can engage àjobí-àjogbé relations to make meaning of their existence, struggle for relevance, and triumph over adversity. The challenge of àjobí and àjogbé is to be true to oneself, resist oppression, and build ties of àjobí that go beyond consanguinity. After all, West African families draw from consanguine and fictive kinship. Àjogbé ties also can be built through the formation that enables one to live like an Omolúábí (one who is dedicated to the service of a just community and self-actualization). This is the challenge of African immigrants in the age of globalization."

Rod engaged the challenge marvelously and single-mindedly. With Mel and Sari, and me and my family, we established àjobí-

àjogbé relations and became family. Losing him means losing a part of ourselves. He is irreplaceable. But we must remember that he is still with us in spirit.

Rod Bush was always true to his values. This was clear not only in his writings and discourse, but in his everyday life. He was a strong believer in justice and equity. He treated everyone he encountered with respect, dignity, and kindness. I had the opportunity to experience this firsthand as a result of my interactions with the Bush family, particularly when Mel and Rod went to Nigeria with me for a conference. Our hosts at the University of Ibadan were kind enough to give us cars and drivers, as well as the Deputy Vice Chancellor's Assistant to welcome us at the airport in Lagos, and take us to Ibadan. Rod showed the drivers the same kind and considerate attention as he did to the Assistant to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellor himself. He was warm, patient, and ever ready to engage in conversation. When you spoke to him, he paid you full attention, truly listening and talking to you. He did this so well that each and every person he interacted with probably never had any idea that he had wide ranging interests, alliances, and friendships. This is a rare quality in this dynamic and ever-changing world of ours when we are all so busy and harried.

As the Yorùbá say, Rod Bush has gone where the elders go. While he was here he fought the good fight, he finished his course, and he kept the faith. He lived a good life and left a great legacy. It is inevitable that we will all pass away. Fighting the good fight and keeping the faith is a good model of how to be an Omolúàbí, which is what Rod was. This is how I remember him.

### **Abstract**

This essay authored by Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome, titled "Rod Bush Fought the Good Fight," is a contribution 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). According to Okome, Rod Bush fought the good fight. He was an honorable

man, a scholar par excellence who lived a life dedicated to truth, justice, equity and sacrifice to the cause of full equality for people of African descent. Okome laments that he's 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. Rod Bush was, in her view, the epitome of what the Yorùbá call Omolúàbí, a concept Okome explain briefly in the chapter. Okome argues that Bush will never be forgotten, because he kept the faith. She also claim him as her brother. Okome wishes that his soul rest in peace and Mel, Sari, and the rest of the family be comforted and strengthened.

### Author

Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome, Ph.D., is an International Political Economist whose regional specialization is on the African continent. Educated at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Long Island University, New York, and Columbia University, New York, she's Leonard and Claire Tow Professor, 2015/2016; a Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, CUNY; past Women's Studies Program Director and past Deputy Chair for Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science at Brooklyn College. Born in Nigeria, Mojúbàolú has worked on international development issues as a consultant for clients including the United Nations and Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Her teaching interests include focus on the meanings of inclusive, equitable citizenship in the context of relationships between globalization, democratization and economic development. Her research interests include: Effects of globalization, post-colonialism, and post-modernity on economic and political transformation; gender, democracy and citizenship in Africa and African Diaspora Studies. Her most recent publications are: two edited books published in 2013 by Palgrave-Macmillan: *State Fragility, State Formation, and Human Security in Nigeria*; and *Contesting the Nigerian State: Civil Society and the Contradictions of Self-Organization*; and one book co-edited with Afia Serwaa Zakiya published by Bookbuilders, Ibadan, Nigeria: *Women's Political and Legislative Participation in Nigeria: Perspectives From the 2007 Elections*. Previously, she co-edited two books with Olufemi Vaughan (January 2012) *West African Migrations: Transnational and Global Pathways in a New Century*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, and also with Olufemi Vaughan (January 2012) *Transnational Africa and Globalization*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan. Okome founded and edits *Ìrìnkèrindò: a Journal of African Migration*, and also #BringBackOurGirlsNYC.