I. Central Tenets of the Work of Dr. Roderick D. Bush

I first met Rod Bush when I came to St. John’s University in spring 2007 to interview for the job I now have. He was friendly and immediately seemed so supportive. He told me he liked my work. The one academic article in my package did not seem enough to merit this praise, but I was glad for it.¹ Once I landed the job, he was officially assigned to me as my mentor. I was not sure what that would entail, but that relationship took its own shape and form as I got to know him over the course of the six years we worked together in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at St. John’s University in Queens. I’d knock on his door and ask if he had a minute to talk. He had a

quiet way, a quick smile, and an open demeanor. That minute would often extend to 20 minutes or a half hour. He never rushed or hurried me and I tried to be sensitive to his time. Usually I wanted to share something about the latest thing I read that had captivated me or that I had come to view with a new lens. Most of those conversations revolved around the analyses of categories of race, racism, or how those fit into class and gender analyses of the U.S. He always suggested or asked about references.

II. The Role of the Black Scholar in Lifting the Voices of Those Most Suffering

I sometimes shared with him some of the exciting or saddening revelations as they emerged from the examination of the data in my book project. On one particular occasion, I mentioned that the content analysis and the textual analysis of the 251 articles in my data set of newspaper articles about the media coverage of the Central Park Jogger case suggests that the noncitizen status rendered to Blacks with the 1856 Dred Scott decision seemed to be frighteningly salient today.²

He shook his head and said, “I know” and followed with a comment. “Black folks out there know that. The job of the Black scholar is to connect with Black people who are suffering the most and find a way to help communicate their experiences to others.” Their experiences often reflected the changing socio-economic and political sites and techniques used by the state and/or private interests to exert power and control over Black people. Thus I took Rod’s message to mean that the Black scholar should understand the resistance to this power. I was glad for this exchange and took it to heart. For me, it is not often that one gets such a clear and straightforward articulation of the role of the Black scholar. From his work, both his scholarship and his activism, it is patently obvious that he took this role very seriously.

III. Black Resistance in the United States as an Expression of their Role in Global Capitalism

Rod Bush’s work as an academic and activist centered on Black social movements and their role in the creation of a new and just social order domestically and internationally. Thus, in the review of Rod’s 1999 book *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century*, Robert Oden (2000) outlines the “significant contribution” Rod made to “the theorizing and practice of seeking an egalitarian social transformation” of the capitalist world-economic system. That book along with Rod’s subsequent volume, *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009), do a tremendous amount of work communicating and contextualizing the experiences of Black Americans in the global capitalist system and their place in the international resistance to it. Much of his work is about the development of Black Nationalist consciousness in the context of the world-system. He examined how Black folks deployed that consciousness through the various forms of resistance to slavery, slave rebellions, protest marches, uprisings, working class movements, arts movements, unity with socialists/socialism, and unity with communists/communism to name a few. He poured himself into contextualizing these struggles within the development of the socio-economic and political histories of the United States and the international capitalist system.

From this work, Rod concluded, that the anti-systemic nature of radical Black Nationalist social movements pose a trenchant challenge to U.S. hegemony and the world capitalist system. Rod’s investigations of social movements also turns around the lens pointed at poor Blacks to look at how the white and Black Left in a core/metropole nation such as the U.S. treats the phenomenon of race and class in their analyses of the lives of poor Black people. Thus his work also provides critiques of the negative or dismissive appraisals of radical

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Black nationalism/Black Power, particularly coming from the white and Black left who preferred to rely on a more class-specific approach for analyzing the situation of Blacks in the U.S. in the post-civil rights era (Bush 1999).

IV. The Dialectical Interface of Race and Class as Intersectional and Internationalist Praxis

When Immanuel Wallerstein spoke at the community memorial for Rod held in June 2014, he noted that Rod’s scholarship united both theoretically and through praxis those on the left who focused on class and those who had a more race-specific approach to the interpretation of life conditions and the consciousness of Black folks in the U.S. Rod used a dialectical approach that prevented erasures or elision and allowed for deep, deep analysis of the world economic system and the international and national positions members of the African diaspora and other people of color were placed by it in their respective nation states. The last shall be first (Bush 2004:104).5

For Rod, it was that similarity in position of Black folks in the U.S. with other people of color internationally in their respective nation states, downtrodden as they were, that accounted for the upheavals across the globe in the late 1960s. Building on Du Bois6 and Malcolm X7 he focused his attention on “the dark world”8 and the historical and material relationships of African Americans to people indigenous to Africa, the Arab World, Asia, and the Americas. Rod’s work connected the actions of groups from the Black Panthers and other supporters of

radical Black Power in the U.S. and internationally, to the anticolonial revolts in the “Third World,” to the feminist movement, to the anti-Vietnam protesters all over the world, to the student and worker uprisings in Paris and across Europe. For Rod they represented counter-hegemonic or anti-systemic resistance to the same racialized international system of capitalism that was responsible for much of the injustice in the world. Thus he viewed the development of Black consciousness as a democratizing force throughout the world. Rod connected this aspect of its nature to the anti-Black antipathy that existed and continues to exist throughout the world. Rod (Bush 2003) noted:

When Malcolm X argued that the Black Freedom Struggle was a component of the world struggle against capitalism and imperialism, the worse nightmare of J. Edgar Hoover and the U.S. ruling establishment was realized. Thus, when Malcolm X successfully concluded an alliance with Martin Luther King, Jr., this all but signed a death warrant for both of them (p. 49).

In *We are Not What We Seem*, Rod takes a position different from many in both the white and Black left. Not only does he make the case for interpreting the more radical elements of Black nationalism/Black Power in the United States as being tied to the other emergent international social movements, he also argues that it must be seen as a distinct and elemental part of the fight to end capitalist oppression. Anthony Giddens, in his introduction to Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* noted that Weber “separates off capitalistic enterprise from the pursuit of gain” to trace the distinct religious/cultural elements, such as predestination, that lead individuals/labor to organize themselves and in a disciplined way perform acts that spur the development of capitalism ([1930] 1992). It is in a formulation similar to Weber’s linkage between the cultural and the economic that Rod noted that the spirit of the radical nationalistic ethic of Blacks in the U.S. is central to the international liberation from

capitalist oppression. In determining this unique position of Blacks in the U.S. Rod focused on the interaction between the historical class position of Blacks in the U.S.—beginning with slavery—and how that position contributed to how Blacks organized themselves for survival and resistance. The anti-systemic critique used by radical Black nationalism/Black Power did not seek mere inclusion as a solution, nor did it seek access to middle-class lifestyles as a solution.\textsuperscript{10} Rather, this critique viewed the U.S. as organized internally and internationally around the oppression of Black people, other people of color, as well as other groupings of people nationally and internationally. Thus the solution/praxis needed to be transformational. Bush (1999) argued:

I hold that the demand for Black Power constitutes a logical, rational, and sensible response to the social structure of the capitalist world-economy, and particularly the configuration of social groups in the United States. The Left’s traditional invocation of false consciousness as a means of explaining the Black Power movement and its antagonist, white racism, is fundamentally mistaken. (p. 9)

V. Locating Black Nationalism

Building on the analysis of capitalism of Giovanni Arrighi and the world-systems analyses of Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, Rod placed radical Black Nationalism in the context of the international social movements that emerged during the 1960s precisely because of a crisis in capitalist hegemony. Radical Black Nationalists call for a transformation of the world capitalist system united with other anti-systemic strains of consciousness globally at the micro and the macro levels. Rod makes one of his most important contributions by identifying how this articulation of radical Black Power—this Black nationalistic ethic—acts as a unifying force in the global struggle against capitalist oppression as opposed to being inherently divisive as was often suggested by white and Black scholars.

and activists alike.

Many in the U.S. left saw the turn to Black Power in the post-1968 world as a negative outcome precisely because they failed to understand its philosophical and theoretical link to the anti-imperialist struggle of that moment and its inherently democratic nature (Bush 2004). The disregard that many people have shown radical Black Nationalism is heavily critiqued by Rod because he theoretically identified how race and class, as elements of the social structure, intersect in society. Rod argued that what he refers to as “people formation is an integral part of class formation” in a core nation like the U.S. (Bush 1999:61) and as such an examination of the construction of groupings of people within their nation-states and internationally shows that the international capitalist system organized labor into a hierarchical system based on the region of the world their appearances suggested they were from (and this is inflected by genders, I might add.)

Here in the U.S. the class/people formation could be empirically witnessed via the creation of race-based slavery. As such Rod contended “people formation” in the context of this racialized international capitalist system is “class formation” (Bush 1999: 61). Stated another way, a full analysis of the capitalist system cannot be accomplished without incorporating the anti-systemic critique by the radical Black Power/Black Nationalists and their struggle against oppression. Radical Black Nationalists were continuing a fight that began with the resistance to slavery that was international in nature because the scope of the system of slavery was international. Failure to keep this in mind led many people within the white and Black left to misconstrue radical elements of Black Nationalism as divisive. Bush (1999) noted:

The intensification of nationalist consciousness among the Black population almost always appears to most whites as a great ideological transformation, and a quite unfathomable transformation at that. But it should be no mystery. Black Nationalism has been a significant

component of African American thought for more than two hundred years, varying in intensity according to time, place, and circumstance. (Bush 1999: 3)

Attempts to marginalize Black Nationalism has changed the discourse about Black struggles and helped to create the presumption that class status may be a bigger issue for Blacks than race, when it comes to issues of oppression.12

VI. Recognizing the Past in the Present

By the time I met Rod, the core of the social movements of the 1960s and early 1980s had largely crumbled. The impetus that had initially propelled many of the leftist groups forward after 196813 collapsed by the mid-1980s. Between 1960s and 1985, groups in the movement seemed motivated by a variety of things, e.g., desire for communist party rebuilding; the centrality of a labor movement to the demise of capitalism; the need to follow arguments built in the Soviet Union and/or other Pan-European philosophies about “the race question,” or “the national question,” and “the gender question”; and/or the need to follow Third World (China, Cuba, Vietnam, Algeria, Angola and Mozambique) and/or Pan-African philosophies about “the race question,” or “the national question” (Bush 1999; Bush 2004; Elbaum 2002). The implosion in the movement occurred due to internecine struggles among various elements of the previous left-liberal coalitions over the relationship of the aforementioned issues or “questions” to the building of an international movement to create a democratically based egalitarian society (Bush 1999, 2004; Elbaum 2002). In his critique of Elbaum’s book, Rod praised Elbaum for recognizing that the “logic” of the New Left14—many of whom

12. Rod argues that much of this was unfortunately helped along by the work of Black sociologist William Julius Wilson, who “unwittingly codified this approach in his notion of the ‘declining significance of race’” (Bush 1999: 4).

13. Several ongoing internationalist movements across the globe appeared to culminate in a massive and violent student protest in Paris in 1968, which was joined by workers who called a one-day general strike.

14. The leftists who emerged after the years of government repression in
emerged on the other side of some of those questions—“fit perfectly into the most emancipatory visions of the American creed” (Bush 2004:103). Here Rod again reminded us about the uniqueness of the position of African Americans in the world liberation struggles; African Americans are central to this struggle due to their socio-economic and political position in the world capitalist system and because they are imbued with American ideals of freedom. Rod argued that those ideals have been central to left political movements around the globe during the American century and beyond (Bush 2009).

I had been engaged in some of those debates myself in my work as a student activist in the late 1970s and 1980s. Those debates were part and parcel of all our work as activists and how we related to each other. Race, class, and gender were intricately entangled in our organizing as were the need for a revolutionary internationalist perspective. We debated the meaning and significance of Black Nationalism. Were all forms of nationalism counter-revolutionary, i.e. anathema to the future egalitarian society we dreamed of? Or, only some? And, if so, which forms of nationalism should we support? For the Black and other women of color was it patriarchy and/or a form of nationalism and/or both being invoked when men of color expressed dismay that some women of color dated white men. How was that related to the lacking acknowledgment of so many female activists and leaders?15

the 1940s and 1950s in response to domestic anti-communist/anti-Soviet Union sentiments and the growing Cold War. The New Left was made up students (Black and white), Civil Rights activists, anti-war activists, feminists, academics, those who were critical of the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and 1960s. The New Left is said to have reached a crisis point in 1968 with the obvious stepping up of state repression against any movement for social change/social justice. This was evidenced in 1968 in Chicago with the police violence against protesters outside the Democratic National Committee’s Convention to select the Democratic Party nominee for president as well as the suppression of Fannie Lou Hamer inside the convention. See Hall, Stuart, “Life and Times of the First New Left,” New Left Review. Vol. 61, January-February 2010. https://newleftreview.org/II/61/stuart-hall-life-and-times-of-the-first-new-left.

15. Rose M. Brewer notes that “the historical origins of recent Black feminist theorizing, which emphasizes the simultaneity of oppressions of race, class and gender and the interlocking structures of systems of subordination, can be traced to
VII. Drawing Connections between Marxism/Class Struggle and the National Question

For many of us in the U.S., particularly those who were foreign born, the Cuban revolution served as an important model for anti-systemic analysis and action. In the 1970s, Cuba sustained and fought alongside freedom fighters in Angola and Mozambique, and supported the emerging democratic socialist state in Jamaica and the revolutionary state in Grenada. The anticolonial struggles in Africa and Central America were tremendously instructive in addressing questions about leadership and self-determination. Questions were raised about the degree to which we could trust whites, i.e., should they or how could they be incorporated into leadership positions in struggles for self-determination of Blacks and other people of color?

While many of us were strongly influenced by Marxism, there was the question of whether or not to follow analyses of Marxism that came out of the Soviet Union or China. Bush's findings made important contributions to understanding how the Marxists' interpretations provided by the leadership in the USSR and China shaped the resolution of the “national question” in Black social movements in the U.S. In the Soviet Union, within the context of Marxism, the “national question” is important to the degree that it serves the proletarian revolution (Ulyanovsky 1978:7-15).16 Maoism ultimately provided the direction the activism of the Black women of SNCC. It was largely the insights and struggles of the Black Women’s Liberation Committee (first within and then outside SNCC) that account for the emergence of Black feminist thinking today.” See Brewer, R. M., “Black Radical Theory and Practice: Gender, Race, and Class,” Socialism and Democracy, Vol. 17:1:109-122, 2003. http://sdonline.org/33/black-radical-theory-and-practice-gender-race-and-class/ Retrieved October 25, 2015.

16. See Ulyanovsky, Rostislav. (1978). National Liberation: Essays on Theory and Practice. Translated by David Fidlon and Yuri Shirokov. Progress Publishers. Ulyanovsky (1978) was a Soviet theorist, who noted that, “Marx has rendered a historical service not only because he substantiated the proletarian, dialectic solution of the national question in Europe of his day and subordinated the national question to the interests of the class struggle of the West European proletariat, disclosing the agrarian-peasant essence of the national movements, but also because on the example of Ireland and India he furnished a sample of the line which the proletariat of the
for the more revolutionary Black American groups in the movement less so than even Pan-Africanism. Rod identified the importance of Mao in these movements along with the influence of Frantz Fanon and Che Guevara due to their philosophies that addressed not only oppression due to position in the labor hierarchy, but also oppression due to European perceptions of people from “the dark world” and how the degradation of those people served the construction of race/class hierarchies (Bush 1999:193-213). In We Are Not What We Seem, Rod noted from the perspective of praxis the distinctions between the national question and the class struggle in the context of people of African descent in the U.S.:

The African American national question is not a national question of the old type in nineteenth-century Europe. The African American national question has traditionally been posed as a question of a nation within a nation. But the 1930s formulation tended toward dogmatism by freezing the Black Belt South as the homeland of the Black nation in the United States. But the relocation and concentration of Black people throughout the urban centers of the United States deepened rather than weakened the national aspect of their struggle. It did not solve the African America national question as many Marxists claimed. ... (T)he new petty bourgeoisie has followed the trend toward integration. ... But the integration of the African American petty bourgeoisie is still weak. They are still suspect because they maintain an allegiance to their sisters and brothers from the lower stratum. And this lower stratum is hardly integrated. (p. 238)

VIII. Study, Debate, and Action in the Struggle for Liberation

These debates occurred during formative years in my life. And, I was as thankful then as I am now that as these questions swirled within the groups I belonged to, we addressed them through study and deliberation of history, theory, and current events as well as through political engagement within and outside the university. This period covered my four years in university and about three years after
I graduated. Unfortunately, I was coming of age in a period when socio-economic and political conservatism began trekking across the globe and the U.S. government had stepped up the political and violent repression of activists. Many radicals in the movement sought shelter in universities, community organizing, union organizing, or nonprofits. (A few entered the corporate world.) Some, who had access to such shelters, sometimes received harsh criticism depending on the route they chose for survival as neo-liberalism spread throughout the U.S. and the world. I went to graduate school for a while; sought work from the government of the New Jewel Movement in Grenada until the U.S. invasion of the small island ended that dream on October 25, 1983; worked for TransAfrica, the lobby for Africa and the Caribbean\(^\text{17}\); supported the Jesse Jackson campaign for president in 1984; and eventually tried to become a freelance writer in New York City.

Confusion seemed to reign, not just for me but also for anyone intimately involved in the social movements during that period. The collapse of the movement, the rise of the right wing, state repression via police violence, and the criminalization of everything made organizing more difficult. The vacuum was felt everywhere. Eventually I worked for a while in corporate media; began working again in the nonprofit world; and returned to graduate school this time with plans to work in academia. Over the course of this time, one of the hardest features of my life to address was the crushing disappointment and isolation I felt with the collapse of the core of these social movements. At the time I thought that our counterparts in the nations of the periphery, who were able to transform their societies in significant ways, could put their labor and efforts in the post-colonial society in measurable ways toward building the new society. Here in the core, I thought that the nature of the repression, vis-à-vis the reorientation of the moral

\(^{17}\) TransAfrica started the Free South Africa Movement, which played a critical role in the U.S. anti-apartheid movement. Additional information on TransAfrica's role in the U.S. anti-apartheid campaign can be found here: http://africanactivist.msu.edu/advanced_search.php (choose “Free South Africa Movement (Washington, D.C.)” under “U.S. Organizations” tab).
authority, sucked all your labor and efforts into supporting the status quo regardless of what you did.

IX. A Very Nice Man Offers Insight on My Personal History

Back in Spring 2007 when I told a friend of mine, a long-time activist in New York City, that I would be working at St. John’s in the sociology department she mentioned Rod Bush. “I don’t know him personally,” she said, “but I hear he is a very nice man.” I got the sense from her comments that he was well regarded in the activist community. At that time I had not heard of him or his work. When I finally met him and started becoming acquainted with his work, it was like happening in on a part of my past. His first book, The New Black Vote: Politics and Power in Four American Cities, published in 1984, represents an analysis of the significance of the Black movement toward enfranchisement after the civil rights era.\(^\text{18}\) It examined, in the wake of the civil rights era and its success in winning the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Blacks use of the vote strategically and tactically as an element in their liberation struggle. He studied, among others, the 1984 presidential run of the Rev. Jesse Jackson; the success of Harold Washington in Chicago; Ken Cockrel winning a seat on the Detroit City Council; and the Black Panthers organizing against Reagan in Oakland.

I shared with Rod some of my stories from the 1984 Jesse Jackson campaign for president. I had worked in the national office under Dr. Ronald Walters, who was the director of the issues office; I was the assistant to the director. We discussed the feeling of gravitas and power in the national office when Minister Farrakhan visited after he and Jackson formed an alliance during the campaign. Jackson’s building of his Rainbow Coalition always felt like a movement during the campaign; but, the national office always felt removed. When Farrakhan came, we knew for sure there was a movement going on

out there.\footnote{Rod Bush provides an assessment of the relationship between Rev. Jackson and Minister Farrakhan, particularly during the campaign and its significance to the left-liberal coalition that appeared to be the goal of Jackson’s work. See. Bush, R. (1999), \textit{We Are Not What We Seem}, pp. 227-228.}

X. Let One’s Practice Flow from One’s Principles—Ideas, Actions and Interactions All

Although my involvement in social movements as an organizer never reached the level of Rod’s, I discovered that politically we had a lot in common. As I shared stories with him about my work in a variety of places and with a variety of people, I came to realize that we had crossed paths with some of the same people. Telling him the stories of my experience helped me to identify the significance of the approach he brought to the academic environment. First and foremost, like Walter Rodney he created the example that “(o)ne’s political contribution should come out of one’s principal work activity” (Rodney 1990:35).\footnote{Rodney, W. (1990). \textit{Walter Rodney Speaks: The Making of an African Intellectual}. Trenton, NJ: African World Press.} Rod’s presence and demeanor in the sociology department normalized the resistance to white supremacy and the struggle to create a just and egalitarian social order as the main priority of everything we did at work. He did this through his work with his students and the direction he provided them to turn their work toward socio-economic and political transformation. Robin D. G. Kelley argues that this is the only way to prevent alienation among students of color in the context of the space of the neo-liberal university.\footnote{Kelley, R. D. G. (2016). “Black Study, Black Struggle: Opening the Debate.” http://bostonreview.net/forum/robin-d-g-kelley-black-study-black-struggle} Occupy the space within the university as a bridge to spaces outside as part of the work for freedom and liberation.

made me feel as if I’d known Rod for years; intellectually and politically we tilled the same soil. The Social Justice piece titled, “The Civil Rights Movement and the Continuing Struggle for the Redemption of America,” encouraged me to take a look at his second book: We Are Not What We Seem. This book pulled apart all the concerns that had left me bereft by the beginning of the 1990s. He traces the history of the genesis and development of Black consciousness within Black social movements in the United States.

XI. Essential Radical Black Consciousness

Rod theoretically grounds Black consciousness as a central element in the fight against/resistance to international capitalist oppression for it challenges the international color line, the very thing that was used to construct colonialism and imperialism in the world capitalist system. He makes clear why the implosion of the U.S. Left in the early to mid-1980s came with a resurgence of anti-Black antipathy shepherded by the Reagan revolution. This hostility to Blackness has continued unabated since then. Thus, part of the formulation in building a just social order requires black people to love themselves, others to love Blacks, indigenous people, and other people from “the dark world.” It is in the interest of the ruling elites domestically and internationally to keep Blacks and other people of color at the bottom of the race/class/color hierarchy.

Reading We Are Not What We Seem precipitated congeries of images from the days of my political awakening as an anti-apartheid activist at Princeton University.23 The anti-apartheid movement had


23. I am not suggesting here that I had no political rudder before I began university. I grew up in a family in which political conversations were the backbone of our interactions. Anecdotally speaking, I find that many people from periphery nations have this quality because politics is such a bread and butter issue. As my family originated in the Caribbean nation of Jamaica and migrated here in 1969 this was a part of our nature. In addition, my father was a fellow traveler of leftist political organizers in Jamaica and his brother was an organizer for the People’s National Party (PNP). He has an internationalist perspective. As I grew up in New York City, he followed politics in Jamaica, the U.K., the U.S., and the Soviet Union. As my
reached a national scale by the mid-1970s and it took off on many college campuses. Watching the national and international student protests against the Vietnam War on television had normalized for me the role of college students as change agents. Central to student activism at Princeton was the Third World Center; students of color got it after Black students protested the lack of Black/area studies courses and faculty of color on the campus. The Third World Center (TWC) served as a meeting/social space for African-American, Asian American, Latino/a, and Native American students as well as international students from Africa and the Caribbean and South America. At the TWC, a group formed a student organization called the People’s Front for the Liberation of Southern Africa (PFLSA). The leaders were Black and Latino; the group was multicultural and internationalist in perspective.

The anti-apartheid movement at Princeton was one of the most prominent on the East Coast due to its level of activism. We worked with the African National Congress (ANC)\(^\text{24}\), American Committee on Africa\(^\text{25}\), as well as representatives of other groups such as the World Council of Churches and people who supported FRELIMO.\(^\text{26}\) The sister noted, “Thanks to my father, our reading material at home included Time, Newsweek and Soviet Life.” Soviet Life came in the mail wrapped in brown paper. I must add that as children my siblings and I made jokes about this early 1970s attempt to hide the magazine from prying eyes. See Byfield, J. (2010). “Finding Voice, Giving Voice: Gender, Politics, and Social Change,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 109: 357-368.

24. The African National Congress is the oldest contemporary national liberation movement in South Africa. Formed in 1912, it was the party of Nelson Mandela. Representatives from the ANC working through the United Nations often interacted with student organizers of the anti-apartheid movement.

25. The American Committee on Africa (ACOA) was created in 1953 to support the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa. It played a central role in organizing the international as well as national anti-apartheid campaign in the U.S. to end support for the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. See http://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=African+Committee+on+Africa

26. FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front, led the movement for independence from Portugal.
bulk of the student leaders I met there, who were people of color, had been politicized by the anti-war movement, the student movement to create Black studies and other area studies programs, the Civil Rights Movement, the radical Black Nationalist movement, and the Chicano movement. White students were also very involved politically. Many were part of the women’s movement, leftist, and social democratic causes. The PFLSA became an umbrella group led by people of color and supported by a broad-based coalition of white student activists.

The national anti-apartheid movement emerged during the latter days of the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam War era. Within it leftists and liberals of all races, creeds and backgrounds continued their often-contentious deliberations from other as well as earlier movements.

XII. Internationalism and Anti-Capitalism at the Core

Rod’s work highlighted for me how the inherent critique of capitalism in these movements and their internationalist nature intellectually wed the participants to the nations that successfully overthrew capitalism internally, the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba. By tracing these histories, Rod’s work articulated how Third World revolutions, in particular, helped to shape the debates within the anti-apartheid movements as well as other domestic social movements. We were informed by choices made by the leaders of Third World movements about “the race question,” and “the national question.” As such, the philosophies behind those revolutions became constitutive elements within the debates among the activists in the domestic social movements in the U.S. (Bush 1999, 2003, 2009).

The debates appeared to center on two central things: (1) “the race question,” “the woman question,” “the national question,” and the role of the international capitalist system in the construction of race, gender, and class, and (2) how the structure of the international capitalist system created co-determined relationships between race, gender, and class between individuals, among groups, and among nations. It seems so easy to say that now, but back then participants
of the various movements debated components of these issues bitterly. Those were heady and emotional times and it was all I could do to keep up with the alphabet-soup list of organizations, their relationships to each other and their relationships to the Soviet Union and China. Central to those questions about race, class, gender, and nationalism were the issues of democracy, egalitarianism, self-determination and individual and group agency.

*We Are Not What We Seem* critiques Black social movements through an examination of events, individuals involved, and histories, to tease out their importance to the various social movements that arose during the post-war era. Rod Bush ties these movements to their kindred spirits in social time, intellectual space, and political praxis. This allowed for the distance of vision that was impossible in the moment. Simultaneously his work provided evidence for the role of these movements in democratizing aspects of our lives. Rod’s work is a gift to movement activists and intellectuals alike for it made sense of the extreme dissonance of experiencing the collapse of a movement from the inside. The most advanced of those movements recognized by the end of the 1970s the significance of the federal crime initiatives that began in 1971 that (1) focused on street crime and (2) was meant to step up policing of the poor and less powerful, particularly Blacks. I remember conversations about that in Harlem in the early 1980s.

After the period between the mid- to late 1970s, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, there developed an exponentially increased effort on the part of many groups of people and institutions in U.S. society to resist the notion that it is an important element in the fight for social justice to articulate the concept of Blackness as a positive distinction among people on the planet. In my estimation, failure on the part of white liberals, and many among the white and Black Left to adopt that as a tactic and a part of the mission for justice contributed tremendously to the state’s ability to push for the further criminalization of Black bodies in the post-Civil Rights era.27

XIII. Deep Love for and Belief in the Power of the People

Rod Bush carried his ideas and political commitments with a quiet dignity and pride in our department at St. John’s University. Eventually one of the things I learned about survival in those spaces was that the moorings that sustained the development of his ideas came from his approach to and definition of resistance. This understanding framed his conceptualization of African-American social movements. As Ron Jacobs has stated, “Revolutionary movements have tended to be so tightly wedded to the seizure of state power as a strategy for social transformation that they have largely not given due recognition to other challenges to the power of capitalism which I view as a historical social system” (Jacobs 2006).28 In other words, the inability to acknowledge that the intermittent responses of the oppressed that occur outside of the structures of central leadership of movements and/or political parties leaves one blind to all the elemental forces resisting international capitalist oppression (Bush 2003). Rod truly lived this in every fiber of his being. After the death of his mother, he adorned the door of his office with images of her, one of them set in the context of her church. One day as a few members of our department waited in the lounge of our department for a meeting to start he began to share a story of how he missed something so important that his mother’s life had taught him. He recounted a memory of a conversation with his mom in which she turned the table on him.

“Here I was thinking I was telling her something about social movements and the role of women,” he said.


Then he slowly shook his head, while looking down with his smile broadening. He seemed a little chagrined as he added, “Then she starts telling me about her work in the women’s organization in her church.”

“It was right there all along,” he said with a wistful smile.

Maybe he picked up those lessons about social movements from the love and the pride she instilled in him about who he was and where he came from. Nothing veered him from that. And, we all benefitted from this. This approach gave him clarity of thought that allowed him to survive and thrive in spaces that were not an ontological fit.29

XIV. The Complex Existence of “Progressives” in the Post-Civil Rights Era

How does one sustain within oneself the heart and soul of a social movement in a space that negates from an epistemic point of view the implications of the movement? I asked myself that question over and over again as I built my life beyond those earlier years of intense activism. After working about a decade in corporate media, I spent a good part of my time in the nonprofit world, working with a social justice mission in mind, trying to form coalitions and alliances. The element of my life from my activist years that was hardest to reproduce was my studies. (This was particularly the case after I had children.) Missing it sorely I returned to school to complete my doctorate. In my first venture in grad school, my field was political science and my research agenda was the status of blacks in Western society. I focused on contemporary revolutions in Southern Africa and Central America, international relations, and political theory. I look back now at that period and am reminded of how hopeful I had been that transformative

29. The lack of an ontological fit I refer to here is in academia, in general, within the field of sociology, and also within our department. Note comments about the field: “Despite the positive contributions of sociology to the study of race, Du Bois’s marginal position within sociology is consistent as well with the shortcomings on the study of race and racism among sociologists. Sociology, too, was a site of the hegemony of centrist liberalism and the colonial ontology that so dominated pan-European world views (Bush and Bush 2015:11). See Bush, M. E. L. and Roderick Bush. (2015). Tensions in the American Dream: Rhetoric, Reverie, or Reality. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
change was on the horizon.

On my second go-round, I went into sociology and initially focused on the role of language/discourse/ideology in the construction and reproduction of race/class/gender hierarchies. The second time around my research interests had been shaped by my time in the labor force. As a civil rights baby what was so obvious to me was the failure or shortcomings of the Civil Rights movement in its inability to adequately address and analyze the roots of the race/class/gender inequality and oppression in the U.S. and internationally. Race/class/gender hierarchies were being recreated in a world that many whites referred to as color-blind. This time I wanted to bring to bear some of my personal experiences in industries like media or journalism and higher education.

As my mentor, Rod Bush reviewed the description of my research that I provided in one of the bureaucratic forms I had to submit in the earliest period of my tenure at St. John’s. He smiled and said, “It has been a while since I have seen someone in here present ideas like this.” I smiled and nodded, but I did not really know what he meant. It was only after I had been there about a year and had seen some of his publications that I understood what he might have meant. I felt the same way. “It has been a while since I have seen someone present ideas like these.” It is the feeling you have when you realize a long drought may be coming to an end. Even then I did not trust the feeling.

As a Black person, your presence within the context of the white institutional space that most universities in the U.S. represent is a


31. Elijah Anderson defines a white space as follows: “For black people in particular, white spaces vary in kind but their most visible and distinctive feature is their overwhelming presence of white people and their absence of black people. ... Accordingly, the most easily tolerated black person in the white space is often one who is “in his place”—that is, on who is working as a janitor or a service person or
direct result of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. But, the small numbers of Black and other faculty of color and the failure of these institutions to incorporate the histories and perspectives of people of color in the formal and informal curriculum and other elements of the structure of the university creates a level of marginalization that is at once alienating and traumatizing. I had already learned that at every other predominantly white higher educational space I had been in, so why would I think it would be different here. As I got to know Rod, I recognized what the difference could be: there was someone there minimizing my marginalization in the most important way: simply recognizing the significance of my studies and contextualizing it within the larger struggles that had been articulated decades earlier.

XV. Complicated Notions of Liberalism and Progressivism

What complicated our position at St. John’s was the university’s own proclamation of having a social justice mission and working with colleagues throughout the university who exist under the banner labeled “progressive.” The problem at hand was not the lack of nor need for charity. Nor was the problem based on the fact that people considered themselves politically “progressive.” After the collapse of the New Left and/or the left-liberal coalition, after the Civil Rights Movement and the era of Black Power ended, and after the height of the feminist movement, the term “progressive” emerged as a unifier for those critical of inequalities in the socio-economic and political system.

The all-inclusive term incorporated people who identified one who has been vouched for by white people in good standing. Such a person may be believed to be less likely to disturb the implicit racial order—whites as dominant and blacks as subordinate. ... Strikingly, a black person’s deficit of credibility may be minimized or tentatively overcome by a performance, a negotiation, or what some blacks derisively refer to as a “dance,” through which individual blacks are required to show that the ghetto stereotypes do not apply to them; in effect they perform to be accepted. This performance can be as deliberate as dressing well and speaking in an educated way or as simple as producing an ID or a driver’s license in situations in which this would never be demanded of whites” (Anderson 2015:13). See Anderson, Elijah. (2015), “The White Space,” Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, Vol. 1:10-21.
themselves as Marxists; those who wanted to rearrange the deployment of taxes to curtail U.S. military interventionism; those, such as feminists and members of the Civil Rights Movement, who demanded a “refining of the national project”\(^{32}\) to make government direct the reform of institutions to remedy race/class/gender/sexuality/ableness inequalities throughout the public and private sectors; those who wanted to limit or end the rise of the oligarchs by ending severe income inequality, the wealth gap, and the dramatic flow of funds from the bottom 99 percent to the top 1 percent. These groupings of people did not necessarily share many commonalities. But, mostly all of them shared the repudiation of radical Black Nationalism/Black Power. Therein lies the problem. Rod noted:

> It is extremely disingenuous for white public figures and writers to act as if the nationalism of African Americans is totally outside the bounds of reasonable discourse (Bush 1999:32-3).

The inability of African Americans or other people of color, particularly those from the lower economic strata, to become more integrated into the mainstream or as some say, take advantage of “gains” in the post-civil rights era resulted not only from the limitations of the Civil Rights Movement. The continued marginalization of African Americans and other people of color, especially those who are poor, is also due to repression. Michelle Alexander articulated this quite clearly; the federal-level War on Crime and War on Drugs that began with the Nixon Administration were political and economic corrections imposed on the system by the moral authority.\(^{33}\) The stepped up criminalization of Blacks and other people of color and the ease with which neo-liberal policies were able to creep into the domestic and international socio-economic and political systems is

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related to the extensive repression of political activism and activists of all hue during the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. Radical Black Power/Black Nationalist activists caught the brunt of this (Bush 1999; Murch 2010).\textsuperscript{34} Life with “progressives” often gives the impression that the debates about “the race question” and “the national question” from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s had not even occurred. We are still a long way off from learning to address “difference” in this society.

XVI. Compassion Matters Both Intellectually and Interpersonally

Rod Bush never judged people harshly and he treated everyone with kindness. He applied his energies to his scholarship and activism. He sought to tease out and resolve philosophically and methodologically the conflicting interpretations of how race/class/gender operate contemporarily in ways both similar and different from previous eras of intense oppression and degradation. In his earlier work that examined the nature of racism and structures of race in the international capitalist system through the lens of the U.S. Black liberation movements he noted that these movements had been imbued with “the emancipatory creed” of America. His later work philosophically expanded on his analysis of traditional liberalism in American society. \textit{Tensions in the American Dream: Rhetoric, Reverie, or Reality?}, which he co-authored with his wife and life partner in the struggle, Dr. Melanie Bush, examined how the American “principle of equality in citizenship (is) ... reconciled with the principle of inequality in the economic and political structure” (Bush and Bush 2015:11).

Analyses that tease out the premise of a core state like the U.S. grow more salient as the shortcomings of the Civil Rights Movement and the repression of the Black liberation struggles continue to be revealed and interrogated. “One of the palpable things in the debate in the mid-1960s over civil rights legislation is the unresolved

significance of and the relationship between the “metaphorical blood” lines of race and the actual blood spilled by the exploited, enslaved, and colonized” to create racialized capitalism domestically and globally (Byfield 2014). Critical race theorist Derrick Bell noted that racism would be a permanent feature in the American experiment (Bell 1992:10). The symbiosis between racism and liberal democracy makes it unlikely that nothing short of systemic change could ever eliminate racial discrimination or create racial equality. For, in the American experiment, the freedom of some has been based on the oppression of “others” (Bell 1992:1-14).

*Tensions* takes the critique of the U.S. to the foundations of the social and political schema of Western thought on which the U.S. is based, Greek philosophy. Its central question revolves around differences in status, class, as well as race and gender (existing as functions of status and class), and the relationship of all these to membership/citizenship in a society. The political philosopher Sheldon Wolin noted that

35. The term “metaphorical blood” is a reference from the work of Karen Fields and Barbara Fields. The research of Fields and Fields deconstructs, through an examination of the idea that racial group membership is based on genetics/DNA, the concept of race in the collective consciousness of “Americans,” that is, “white” Americans men, the representative norm. Fields and Fields reveal that racism persists because inequality is a necessary feature in the civic ideation of those who are accepted as “American,” in other words a type of civic religion for those who belong. This runs contrary to the conventional wisdom that the longevity and persistence of the notion that racial categories are grounded in biological constructs is caused by people’s failure to be rational and/or to understand science and/or the workings of DNA. Their findings suggest that racism is one of the things that holds people together as “Americans”; it is an elemental feature of the collective consciousness. See Fields, K. E. and B. Fields. (2012), *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, New York, NY: Verso. I use their term “metaphorical blood” to analyze the shortcomings of the civil rights movement. See Byfield, N. (2014), “Targets: The Existential Crisis of Black and Latino Male Youths,” in *Race and the Lifecourse: Readings from the Intersection of Ethnicity and Age*, edited by Diditi Mitra and Joyce Weil. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Herodotus revealed that democracy (meant as equality) stood “opposed to the forms of human difference that other political systems treated as foundational” (Wolin 1993:475). Contemporary “progressives” and/or those in new or old left-liberal coalitions often claim to speak for or act in the interest of “the people.” Wolin (1993) notes that “the people” is a collective term and such collectivities exist precisely because of the diminution of differences, such as race, class, status, gender. However, “progressive” coalitions coalesce at particular moments to corral power; Wolin terms these moments “fugitive” (Wolin 1993:472). After that moment has passed all the “differences” among “the people” again become pronounced/perceptible/consequential (Wolin 1993:472). As Rod and Melanie Bush put it:

When some social scientists and activists responding to the struggle for racial equality began to interrogate the relationship between so-called market-based and status-based inequality, they discovered that substantial portions of what had been considered market-based inequalities were rooted in social status and reproduced by the structures and institutions of society. The Black intelligentsia who identified this connection thereby developed the concept of institutional racism. Thus the question of who belongs to the nation evolved with an increasing demographic and social significance and became a central issue for the twentieth-century development of the U.S. nation. (Bush and Bush 2015:11)

Rod and Melanie’s study is an important one about the contours/ontology of a democracy. It helps to reveal the necessity of the American Dream construct as a vehicle to safely create a type of “sameness” or commonality shared by “Americans.” The American Dream stands counter to the other “sameness” shared by “Americans,” the international system of racialized capitalism that oppresses all the different groupings. While calls for inclusion for those who exhibit “difference” may encourage “progressives” to perceive their political stance as democratic, Wolin (1993) argued that inclusion

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only guarantees recognition, it does not guarantee “re-cognition,” a transformation or recoding of the system. *Tensions* makes clear that the fight against racism is an integral part of that recoding.

**XVII. Building Bridges Between Emancipatory Creed and Freedom Movements**

Rod Bush’s work to construct a theoretical bridge between the emancipatory elements of the American creed and freedom movements across the globe intent on the transformation of international system of racialized capitalism set him apart. As I reviewed my materials for this piece, I came across one of my papers with his comments in the margins. It was a talk I gave in April 2008 at Rod’s request to the St. John’s Chapter of Alpha Kappa Delta, the international sociology honor society, one of the many student-focused groups or events he mentored. I gave an analysis of the mainstream media’s coverage of the 2008 primary race between then-Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton for the Democratic Party presidential nomination.

The speech focused on the disparate and coded racial frameworks used in stories about Obama and Clinton. The racial frame used to present Obama is a historical one in which “Blackness” and/or African Americans are problematized, viewed as a threat to the nation.38 This framework thereby created the expectation that in order for Obama to be successful he had to “transcend” race, whatever that meant to the mainstream forces. I interpreted that to mean he should leave Blackness behind and operate within a framework of white normativity. The media framed Clinton’s campaign in the context of gender. The misogynistic narratives in the mainstream coverage condemned her as incapable of transcending the presumed limitations of her gender. In other words, the possibility existed that white men, particularly

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working class white men, may not vote for her. To gain their support Clinton dog-whistled messages to white working class voters to make clear her allegiance to that group (Reed 2008).

With the expectation that Obama would “transcend” race and Clinton’s penchant for dog-whistle politics to deliver racial messages, the campaign was further complicated when media outlets revealed that Obama’s pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright—with whom the Obama family had a close relationship—had a history of making what the media termed incendiary, anti-American statements. Faced with this dynamic, Obama gave a historic speech on race in America on March 18, 2008. My talk addressed the significance of the speech thusly: “For the first time in my lifetime, an American elected official, who could be president, used a national stage to speak to us as if whites and blacks, browns, yellows, reds were the “we” and the “us,” one nation with a common problem, a people whose destinies are inextricably bound.” Rod would later respond to that statement saying: “It is a powerful statement, and maybe therein lies the threat to the powerful.”

XVIII. Using Our Power to Right the Wrongs

Seeing that old comment from eight years ago made me think of Tensions in the American Dream. I knew Rod and Melanie Bush were

39. During the contest between then–Senator Barack Obama and then–Senator Hillary Clinton for the Democratic Party nomination for president, Betsy Reed, then–executive editor of The Nation, published an article in The Nation critiquing Clinton and her campaign for using race as a wedge issue in the way they painted Obama as an outsider and a foreigner. In so doing, Reed argued, Clinton drove a wedge into the feminist movement harming unity between white feminists and feminists of color and deepening the divide between what she termed “corporate feminists” and “progressive feminists.” See Reed, B. (2008), “Race to the Bottom: How Hillary Clinton’s campaign played the race card—and drove a wedge into the feminist movement,” The Nation Magazine, May 1.

40. This is not only a reference to Clinton’s performance in the 2008 Democratic Party primary race between her and then–Senator Barack Obama. It is also a reference to the politics of triangulation that helped President Bill Clinton to rise to the presidency.

41. Margin comments made May 4, 2008 in a draft of the speech that he reviewed at my request after I told him I planned to turn it into an article.
working on *Tensions*. I guessed at how it would fit into the trajectory of his work; the hope for reconciling American ideals of freedom and democracy with what must be done to ensure an end to oppression and inequality globally, particularly in the context of the current state of liberatory social movements in the U.S. and the world economic system. It is impossible to overstate the centrality and necessity of such an approach to the study of the international system of racialized capitalism led by the United States, which in the American century that much of Rod’s work focused on used military might to reproduce its socio-economic and political system across the globe (Bush 2009).

He was pleased that I saw my work in my first book, *Savage Portrayals: Race, Media, and the Central Park Jogger Story*, in this context. In that book, I made the case for viewing media’s participation in the railroading of five innocent Black and Latino teens for the rape of an affluent, female investment banker as a phenomena that served as a tipping point to step up the War on Drugs and the War on Crime, which were instruments used by the moral authority to as a correction to previous eras of social protest and social change.

*Savage Portrayals* was my tenure book; but it was something much bigger for me. It was political and represented my own attempt to right a wrong inflicted on innocent Black and Latino children. Tenure is the big deal in higher education, particularly when you are a person of color working in a predominately white space. The faculty and administrators at St. John’s are overwhelmingly white; the dominant professional organizations where we must become accepted to gain tenure are overwhelmingly white; and the journals in which we must publish are overwhelmingly white-run.

My concern when working in predominately white institutions is that my colleagues do not share my understanding of how our world has been and continues to be profoundly ordered by race. As I presented my work to one of the committees in which I was under review for tenure, a powerful member of the committee slammed my tenure package. “This is a weak package. Her work does not look as if it could go anywhere beyond the jogger case,” the committee member said. Thank heavens Rod Bush sat on that committee. His
head swiveled around and he said, “The book is about racism. It does not seem to be going away.” In Tensions, Rod and Melanie noted:

Despite the positive contributions of sociology to the study of race, Du Bois’s marginal position within sociology is consistent as well with the shortcomings on the study of race and racism among sociologists. Sociology, too, was a site of the hegemony of centrist liberalism and the colonial ontology that so dominated pan-European world views. (Bush and Bush 2015:11)

Rod understood the challenges of working in white institutional spaces like mainstream U.S. universities. The scholarly disciplines that arose and the divisions that grew between them developed as a result of the European conquest of the globe. Wallerstein and Foucault contend that these disciplines served the spread and development of colonialism and imperialism. They also serve the expansion of neo-liberal globalization in much the same way. Thus the presence of people, who would advance a position in opposition to the epistemic mission of the university in its current iteration, creates a challenge to both the institution and the people in question. As a Black or a person of color, it is difficult to occupy such spaces.

XIX. Strength in the Face of Injustice and Adversity

Rod Bush had been in the Sociology department eleven years before I got there; and he was the first and only tenured Black professor before me. Since his death, I have often thought of the toll it must have taken from him to remain strong, resilient, unerring, and even pleasant after so many years alone in the midst of such institutional dynamics. His internal compass must have rested in a peaceful inner sanctum guided by love.

In speaking here of love I am referencing the way in which the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., described love in the context of the

movement in a 1957 article he wrote titled “Nonviolence and Racial Justice.”

In the piece, King notes that love in this sense means “understanding and good will” (King 1957). In the article, published in *The Christian Century*, King (1957) notes:

> When we speak of loving those who oppose us ... we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate; it means understanding, redeeming good will for all men, an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. It is the love of God working in the lives of men. When we love on the *agape* level we love men not because we like them, not because their attitudes and ways appeal to us, but because God loves them. Here we rise to the position of loving the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed he does.

Love has always been a part of this social justice movement. Historian Robin D. G. Kelley (2016) recently noted this when he said:

> Black study and resistance must begin with love. James Baldwin understood love-as-agency probably better than anyone. For him it meant to love ourselves as black people; it meant making love the motivation for making revolution; it mean envisioning a society where everyone is embraced, where there is no oppression, where every life is valued—even those who may once have been our oppressors. (Kelley 2016)

Rod Bush’s legacy embodies so much of this love. The legacy is about what his intellectual work and activism does in real terms. He has also left us with a tremendous foundation to support future analyses and movement building. I will always feel his presence here at St. John’s and anywhere else I go. It is a presence through ideas. Working on this piece has allowed me to feel as if I walked the halls with him for just a little longer. But, more than anything else it has


44. Ibid.

allowed me to engage in the big ideas he spent so much time with. I hope I have been able to share what I knew of him as lived experience as well as in mind and text.

Abstract

This essay by Natalie P. Byfield, titled “Fighting in the Core: Questioning the Last Century’s Debates over Race, Class, and Gender in Light of the Life and Works of Rod Bush,” is a chapter in 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). The chapter explores Rod Bush’s intellectual and activist legacy in real terms by a former colleague of his at St. John’s University. Through historical notation, anecdote and substantive documentation and in relation to social movements and scholarship, the author articulates many lessons that Rod Bush provided about what is important and how to uphold that in practice. In particular she notes the critical role of radical Black scholars in providing an understanding of the dynamics of a social world designed to negate the humanity of African peoples.

Author

Natalie P. Byfield, Ph.D., is the author of Savage Portrayals: Race, Media, and the Central Park Jogger Story (2014). She is a cultural sociologist, who has taught in the fields of sociology and media studies. She is an associate professor at St. John’s University in Queens, NY, where her research centers on the sociology of knowledge. Dr. Byfield examines how language, media systems, methodologies, and their technologies, such as social media platforms, big data analytics, and artificial intelligence, are used in institutions such as policing, journalism, media, the social sciences, and higher education to create and reproduce inequalities of race, class, and gender. She has worked as a journalist at the New York Daily News and The American Lawyer. She served as a consultant in the documentary, “The Central Park Five.” In 1989 she was a member of a reporting team nominated by the Daily News for a Pulitzer Prize. Dr. Byfield is also the recipient of a Charles H. Revson Fellowship at Columbia University and a National Science Foundation Fellowship. Her current book project is titled Minority Report: Place, Race, and Surveillance of Blacks in New York City.
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