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Black Internationalism and the End of White World Supremacy: An Analysis and Application of Rod Bush’s *The End of White World Supremacy*

I. Introduction

In *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line* (2009), Rod Bush engages readers in a rich intellectual conversation, creating a quilt where each panel contains a story, a point, an example of its own, yet when one stands back, broader themes emerge. As one reflects on these ideas, an even more comprehensive analysis appears, assembled from the many individual panels. To appreciate and benefit from this book, one needs to consider each conversation as well as the perspective of the whole discussion in which Bush engages.

In these times of ever-increasing assertions of white supremacy and ever-increasing forms of resistance by Blacks and other people of color, women, and LGBTQ activists, this book provides a solid grounding in much of the history that got us to this historical moment. Debates
among Black activists and intellectuals in the United States over how to confront the nexus of capitalism and racism remind us of strategies for confronting the degree to which white supremacy is, in Bush’s words, “in the DNA” of U.S. society and culture and of the modern world-system globally.

Even before the Trump presidency, the depth of historical complicity of all social, political, and economic institutions, including elite U.S. universities, in the enslavement of Blacks and the impunity with which police can take Black life, were on display almost daily. Now with Trump’s overt encouragement, attacks against Blacks, immigrants, Jews, queers, progressive protesters, and others are rising steadily. Not only is the depth of racism in U.S. society becoming more visible, so too is the interconnectedness of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and islamophobia, and all systems of dominance and subordination.

If Rod were still alive (he passed away in 2013), we know he would be reaching out to learn and teach at the intersection of movements for peace, justice, and social equality. His life of activism and scholarship was well lived; he leaves much for us to consider about the capitalist world-economy, historical and contemporary forms of resistance particularly by Black people in the United States, and the problem of the global color line. In his absence, *The End of White World Supremacy* provides analytical substance as well as methodological insight to help us find ways forward.

In the 1970s, when Rod was a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Kansas he became actively involved in numerous organizations that were part of the Black liberation movement in the U.S. He moved to California in 1979 to devote himself full time to community work in the struggle for justice. Like many other activists at the time, when efforts to build disciplined political organizations faltered, he returned to school. He pursued a doctorate in sociology at Binghamton University (1988-1992), working with the Braudel Center, and then taught at Seton Hall University and St. Johns’ University. In recent years, he was a member of the National Council of the Black Radical Congress and the Executive Board of the Left
Forum. Anyone interested in his own recounting of his political and intellectual development should read his thoughtful and engaging chapter “Black Internationalism and Transnational Africa” (Bush 2011) in the book *Globalization and Transnational Africa*, included in Section III of this anthology.

I worked side by side with Rod as a political and community activist in the early 1980s in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was a time when the U.S.’s hegemonic place within the capitalist world-economy began crumbling and white world supremacy faced unprecedented challenges while also experiencing a slow simmering resurgence that has only gained momentum since. This was the time of Reaganism and the rise of the right in the U.S. We were members of the Democratic Workers Party, one of the numerous attempts to create a disciplined cadre party in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s.1 We worked for the Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic Crisis (ISLEC), the Grassroots Alliance (GRA), and U.S. Out of Central America (USOCA) and South Africa (USOSA), as well as the Full Employment Project (FEP) of Oakland and many other initiatives over time. Rod was unique in being equally comfortable leading a graduate-style seminar on world-systems theory whether for comrades or for the communities he worked with, while going door to door in San Francisco’s diverse neighborhoods registering voters and turning out votes to raise taxes on big business with the Tax the Corporations propositions that ultimately passed in San Francisco. He was a writer, an educator, a comrade, a friend, a leader, a team member, an organizer, fundraiser, public speaker, media spokesperson, and an activist for peace and for justice. For several years he wrote a column called the Black Workers Forum which emphasized teaching and learning history through dialogue.

Some seeds of his analysis in *The End of White World Supremacy* can be found in writings published in *Contemporary Marxism, Our Socialism* and other DWP literature. In those writings, Rod framed the economic crisis using world-systems analysis and emphasized that

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the struggle of U.S. Blacks was part of a global struggle against the color line. Drawing on the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Immanuel Wallerstein, Bernard Magubane, and Malcolm X, he argued that racism was constitutive of capitalism, not a product of it. Readers interested in looking further into this can go to https://rodbush.org/ and find the articles “Racism and the Rise of the Right” and “Racism and Changes on the International Division of Labor” under Scholarship/Articles.

As a scholar and an activist, Rod centered himself in community while he explored ideas about the emergence and evolution of the modern world-system, in particular the history of the Black experiences in the struggle for liberation and justice. He often raised those ideas in everyday conversation, always seeking to engage others in his reflective process. *The End of White World Supremacy* follows his previous works and builds on several themes:

1. Viewing the contemporary global economy as the product of the modern world-system and emphasizing the importance of taking the long view of historical time. Capitalism originated 500 years ago as a world-system—“globalization” is not something new, but includes the European plunder of the “Americas” and the importation and enslavement of millions of Africans there. Capitalism is premised on global exploitation, and that process was organized from the beginning along the color line; white supremacy is the ideology that structures and justifies it;

2. Recognizing the struggle and resistance of Blacks and other communities of color in the U.S. as a component of the global struggle of the majority of the human race against domination by the white capitalist class based in northern Europe and the U.S. The geo-culture of white world supremacy provides the framework for bi-polar race relations in the United States. Black voices have long articulated this point and defenders of white supremacy have been worried about it for just as long. The struggle against white supremacy and Euro-dominance is far from over;

3. Untangling, yet simultaneously recognizing, the deep relationship between race and class on a global scale, asserting that race has been and remains the fundamental fault line around which the class structure
of the capitalist world-economy is organized. In historical capitalism, race and class are rendered as a unity. In that way he argued that neither race nor class are more important than the other. However, because racial formation was constitutive in class formation, resistance to capitalism in the form of Black Internationalism is the very means for transformative change to occur;

4. Locating the basis for the coalition that can overcome this system at the intersection of race, class and gender. Putting a spotlight on the dimension of gender in the functioning of the historical capitalist world-system and creating a dialogue among partial perspectives in which none of these dynamics is hegemonic nor are they marginalized.

The End of White World Supremacy draws heavily on the work of writers and activists including but not limited to W. E. B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Patricia Hill Collins, Rose M. Brewer, Bernard Magubane, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Aníbal Quijano. Bush recounts and comments on major intellectual and political debates among Black intellectuals and others regarding race, class, and gender in the context of the capitalist world-system, covering over 200 years of U.S. history and firmly rooted in the long historical processes at play for over 500 years. Some of those dialogues are briefly summarized here. They are part of the quilt Bush assembles in his articulation of the encounters among Black Radicalism, Marxism and Black Radical Feminism.

II. Global Capitalism and the Color Line: Immanuel Wallerstein and Aníbal Quijano

Immanuel Wallerstein’s works provide the framework for world-systems analysis (see for example Wallerstein 1999:168-184), within which Bush is firmly rooted. The global capitalist economy is unique in history not only because of the manner in which the Pan-European core (including the white working classes) has controlled and exploited the periphery of Africa, Central and Southern America, and Asia, but also in its ability to emphasize and separate technique in order to obscure underlying values. Bush writes: “It is for that reason that I argue in what may seem a reckless or shocking fashion that a cold-blooded bottom-line mentality has been written onto the superegos of
the populations of the core states” (Bush 2009:91).

In a similar vein, Aníbal Quijano (2000) argues that the European colonial powers imposed upon the rest of the world a particular way of seeing the world, known as modernity or rationality, as if it expressed universal truth and as if there were a straight historical and moral line of progress from the “backwardness” of peoples of color to the natural supremacy of northern European “whites.” He shows how the formation of the color line began with the formation of the Americas by the conquering European powers who instituted a system of exploitation based on the appearance of the conquered peoples. As Bush summarizes:

It would be difficult, Quijano emphasizes, to exaggerate the importance of the meaning of the category of race for the modern, colonial, Eurocentric capitalist model of global power, for this process enabled the production and elaboration of new social identities, and their distribution in global capitalist power relations was established and reproduced as the basic form of societal classification and as the foundation for new geocultural identities and their power relations in the world. (Bush 2009: 89–90)

In other words, the conquest and formation of the “Americas” hundreds of years ago, was, in addition to the enslavement of Africans, at the heart of the racialization of the capitalist world-economy and the formation of the ideology and practice of white supremacy, along with the genocide and epistemicide perpetrated against Muslims at Al Andalus in Spain (the same year Columbus set sail), the slaughter of indigenous peoples throughout the globe, and the assertion of Eurocentrism and Eurodomination as the world order. These all shaped the foundation of the DNA of the “new nation” of the United States.

Joining with others to work out more precisely the interconnectness of the historical experiences of enslaved Africans and the native peoples of the Americas would undoubtedly have been a challenge and priority for Rod were he still at work. He would likely be further noting the commonalities among the experiences of Blacks and Latinos and indigenous peoples, oppressed on the basis of their “race” and defined
as inherently inferior.


In the early twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois brought sharp focus to the global nature of the color line and its fundamental role in the capitalist world-system. Bush writes,

His development of social thought and his political practice constitute the most persistent and penetrating critique and challenge to social justice and social inequality mounted by twentieth-century intellectuals and political activists. It was Du Bois who built on the revolutionary tradition of Karl Marx and ... who indeed surpassed this tradition with even deeper analysis of the social world that had evolved over the previous five hundred years. (Bush 2009:51)

In fact, Bush says that the idea for this book (The End of White World Supremacy) was conceived during the commemoration of the centennial of Du Bois's The Souls of Black Folk. He argues that Du Bois should be credited for a deep critique of the capitalist world-system, including his demonstration in Darkwater that World War I was a contest over who would control the exploitation of the colored races especially in Africa, and his analysis of how the white working classes of Europe and the U. S. came to side with capital against the colored races. Bush continues,

Du Bois argues in contrast to the Communist Party of the United States of America and most other Marxists in the United States and Europe that what is unique about the white working class in the United States is that despite their history as laboring people in the lands from which they emigrated, once they reached the United States they did not regard themselves as a permanent laboring class. Du Bois argues that because of its property, the successful, well-paid American working class formed a

2. The capitalist world-system is the interconnected economic system that has grown to dominate the world economy in the last five hundred years. For further reference see the works by Immanuel Wallerstein and Aníbal Quijano in the reference section.
petite bourgeoisie always ready to join capital exploiting common labor, black or white, foreign or native. (Bush 2009:81)

During his lifetime, Du Bois held a variety of views and allied or opposed himself to other leaders and forces inside and outside the communist movement. Much of the intellectual and political history of the Black liberation struggles of the 20th century is recounted in *The End of White World Supremacy* through the debates among Du Bois and others and by the evolution of Du Bois’s own thinking. Bush cites Du Bois’s debates with Booker T. Washington, the Niagara Movement, Hubert Harrison, the New Negro Movement, the Black Women’s Club Movement, Henry Grady, the Pan-African Congresses, The Communist Party of the USSR and of the USA, and E. Franklin Frazier. Bush also reviews the critiques of Du Bois offered by writers such as Adolph Reed, Jr. These debates engage questions of the positionality of Blacks under capitalism in the U.S. and globally as well as of the appropriate forms of resistance, and thereby represent panels in the quilt of *The End of White World Supremacy*.

But above all, Bush conveys how Du Bois’s observation that the problem of the twentieth century would be that of the color line shone light on capitalism’s deepest fault line. Du Bois put the Black struggle in the U.S. into the context of a worldwide alliance of peoples of color. These deliberations and debates led him toward an embrace with the radicals of Asia, Africa, and Latin America and interaction with Marxists around the world. He led the formation of the NAACP, which had within it tensions between liberal and radical tendencies from the beginning, though he was ultimately expelled for being too radical.

Bush argues Du Bois should be credited for an expansive and inclusive vision of democracy and his forceful advocacy for the centrality of Blacks and women in leading the successful struggle to achieve that vision. Du Bois helped pioneer the notion that social change in the U.S. would be driven by the combination of the forces of women, labor, and Blacks (:Bush 2009:53, citing Gilkes 1996:112)

Du Bois left a legacy of Black Internationalism for others to
continue and Bush takes up that challenge. It was because of Du Bois, Bush points out, that

[when Malcolm X argued that African Americans and other oppressed groups in the United States were not a minority but a part of the majority of the have-nots of the capitalist world, he captured the key point of what Du Bois had argued for most of the century. Malcolm articulated a sense of self that had long existed in the deepest recesses of the Black imagination and had been suggested by the most visionary Black leaders since the time of Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker.3 (Bush 2009:85-86)]

Malcolm X pioneered the trail in the modern U.S. civil rights movement toward placing that struggle in an internationalist framework, including influencing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Where Du Bois was working and interacting with one era’s social movements and political forces, Bush shows how Malcolm X did the same with another era’s organizations and leaders. More panels are added to the quilt. Bush addresses a wide array of writers and activists with whom Malcolm X entered into dialogue or debate, directly or indirectly, including Anouar Abdel-Malek, the New Negro Movement, A. Philip Randolph and others in the Messenger Group, Cyril Briggs and the African Blood Brotherhood, Mir Sayit Sultan-Galiev, George Padmore, and various European socialists and communists.


3. Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker were black abolitionists before the Civil War.
Liberation in the New Negro Movement, 1917-1936”).

Internationally, this thrust was embodied in the 1955 Bandung (Indonesia) conference of “non-aligned” nations. According to Bush,

As expressed by a variety of observers, Bandung represented the death of the inferiority complex of colonial peoples, the threat of a united front of former colonies, and an organizational model for African Americans in the U.S. looking for Third World allies at home and abroad. (Bush 2009:189-191)

I would like to point out how the spirit of Bandung and the significance of Black Power as Black internationalism are captured by the image of Malcolm X in Africa. For Malcolm X, the importance of the Organization of Afro-American Unity was that it sought to elevate the Black freedom struggle above the domestic level of civil rights and to internationalize it by placing it at the level of human rights. (Bush 2009:209, citing Tyner 2006:134)

IV. The Combahee River Collective, Rose M. Brewer, Patricia Hill Collins, and others

In his chapter on Black Feminism, Bush provides an extensive critique of the resurgence of the patriarchal model of society as expressed in the Moynihan Report4, and discusses the thought and action not only of Patricia Hill Collins but also of Barbara Smith and the Combahee River Collective, Angela Davis, Barbara Ransby, Frances Beal, Rose M. Brewer, bell hooks, Linda Burnham, and others.

While the significance of race and class within the Black liberation movement has been debated extensively, the issue of gender and the interplay of feminism and antiracism are not adequately theorized outside the Black feminist tradition. Black feminist or womanist thought, both implicit and explicit, contains a critique of racism, patriarchy, capitalism,

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4. The 1967 Moynihan Report, officially entitled The Negro Family and the Case for Action, was a controversial document produced by then-Senator Daniel Moynihan, which blamed the problems of Blacks in the U.S. on the matriarchal nature of the Black family and called for the re-establishment of black male authority in the family and community.
and Eurocentrism. It also contains a powerful critique of patriarchal notions in Black nationalism while often offering a corrective Black feminist nationalism (or Afrocentrism), oriented not solely toward nation building per se but toward reconceptualizing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression. (Bush 2009:132)

Bush provides a survey of literature based on the framework of intersectionality, which locates the potential for radical transformation in the communities at the crossroads of these social dynamics. Among these works are Rose M. Brewer’s “Theorizing Race, Gender and Class: The New Black Feminist Scholarship”; Linda Burnham’s “The Wellspring of Black Feminist Theory”; and the Combahee River Collective’s “A Black Feminist Statement.” This literature, as Bush and others point out, has arisen directly from the community-based practice of Black and other women of color, as exemplified by the Combahee River Collective, the Black Women’s Caucus of SNCC and the Third World Women’s Alliance. In this context the central role being played by women of color and LGBTQ folks, etc., in contemporary radical movements makes perfect sense.

The Combahee River Collective, named in honor of the South Carolina river where Harriet Tubman freed 750 slaves in 1863, issued a ground-breaking statement in 1977 that identified the particular leading role of Black women, including Black lesbians, in the overall struggle for Black liberation. “[W]e are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking,” the statement said (Combahee River Collective, 1981).

This statement expressed what has become a major thread of activism among Black Radical Feminists and others, emphasizing the autonomous role of Black women and other women of color in pursuing struggles that are antiracist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and internationalist.

Writing in the early 1990s, Rose M. Brewer (1993) argued that black feminist intellectuals and activists needed to theorize the
complexity of the intersections of race, class, and gender, calling for a paradigm shift in “for example, in Black Studies to begin explaining the African-American experience through the multiple articulations of race, class, and gender” (p. 2). Bush notes it is important to place the growing emphasis on intersectionality in the context of the rise of the right under Reaganism.

Bush writes of Patricia Hill Collins:

[From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism (2006)] is a fresh perspective that opens the analysis of social movements like nothing that I can recall since the work of Marx and Engels themselves in their historic Manifesto of the Communist Party. (Bush 2009:145)

Patricia Hill Collins argues that African American women as a group may have experiences that provide them with a unique angle of vision but that expressing a collective, self-defined, Black feminist consciousness is problematic precisely because dominant groups have a vested interest in suppressing such thought. Those who control the schools, media, and other cultural institutions of society prevail in establishing their viewpoint as superior to those of others. Most of us are conscious of this social fact but do not always have the experience base to understand its manifestations in a wide variety of social and intellectual situations. (Bush 2009:143-144)


Bush brings together the social location of Blacks and women, using Collins’ concept of the “outsider within.” Gilkes’ (1996) discussion of Du Bois, referred to above, is relevant here too.

He highlights the “peculiar internationalism of Black nationalism” by emphasizing the “outsider within” status of Blacks. Speaking here of the 1960s, Bush writes:
What is important here for those who are familiar with the dynamics of social movements and the social groups that often come to the fore is that the peculiar position of African Americans, based mostly in the working class and belonging to internally colonized strata, gave them the social distance of the colonized world without but also the geographic and personal proximity to the levers of power, which greatly magnified their social location in the world configuration of the struggles between the powerful and the powerless. Given their social location in the configuration of power in U.S. society at that time as mostly residents of marginalized working class communities with a sense of collective solidarity across U.S. society, they combined class, national, and racial solidarities in a manner that made them the ideal candidates not for simple inclusion in U.S. society but for radical transformation of that society in a manner that was democratic, egalitarian, and just. (Bush 2009:40)

Along the same dimension,

It is important for us to see that Black feminist thought is not a separatist endeavor but one that builds on the marginal position of Black women so that they can use what Collins refers to as their “outsider-within” stance as a position of strength to build effective coalitions and stimulate dialogue. Such dialogue and principled coalition create possibilities for new versions of truth. (Bush 2009:145, citing Collins 1991:36)

Not coincidentally, focusing on the gender aspect of the situation allows another form of voice to be heard, which offers a powerful framework for breaking out of competitive modes of debating the way to proceed.

The power of the theoretical formulations in Black feminist thought is ... to create a form of knowledge that is not simply oppositional but involves dialogue between partial perspectives where there is no need to decenter the experience of others (except for the dominant group, which by definition must be decentered). In this dialogue, everyone has a voice, but everyone must listen and respond to others in order to remain in the community. Collins argues that sharing a common cause fosters dialogue and encourages groups to transcend their differences. (Bush 2009:132)
Putting Bush’s work and this book in a larger current scholarly perspective, the paradigm of Black Internationalism has been expressed in other recent scholarship as well. Examples include Minkah Makalani’s *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London 1917-1939*, Dayo F. Gore’s *Racialism At the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War*, and Cheryl Higashida’s *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995*. It is not accidental that most of these references are by and about black women in the internationalist framework.

V. At an Historic Intersection

Summarizing the main themes of *The End of White World Supremacy*: From the long historical view (longue durée), the capitalist world-system was built on a foundation of white world supremacy. It is currently undergoing a stage where this balance of power is being challenged. Even though the global capitalist system may seem, and may be, more powerful or hegemonic than ever, and white supremacist ideas may be coming into full flower, counterhegemonic forces are also finding new forms of action and new bases of unity. Care is needed to find the balance between short term and long term processes. (Were Rod still at work, he would undoubtedly be profoundly concerned with the really end-game dangers posed by environmental destruction and the ever-present possibility of nuclear war.)

The struggle for Black liberation within the U.S. is part of this international struggle in which Blacks are part of the majority, not a “minority” within one country. This viewpoint extends to other “racial and ethnic minority groups” in the U.S. and as well to women and members of LGBTQ communities and other people whose human potential is constrained by the prevailing relations of power and privilege. The international dimensions of early protests against the Trump presidency may be harbingers of new awareness.

“Race” as defined as part of Eurocentric white supremacy, is the central organizing principle for class exploitation in global world-system not simply one’s class position in the manufacturing centers
of industrialized Europe and U.S. Because of the formation of the capitalist world-system around the color line, white workers in the core countries have traditionally ended up on the side of Capital, forcing a fundamental extension of classical Marxism. Rod joined with other leading thinkers and activists in thinking through this assessment. But, taking the long view of history as he does, Rod might now be wondering how whiteness will continue to be privileged even as sections of the white working classes in the core countries may be increasingly marginalized.

Theory and practice cannot limit themselves to understanding the dynamics of race and class but must incorporate the intersection of gender, race, and class. Black women and other “women of color” represent powerful if not potentially decisive forces for change. And, because of the way that the nexus of race-class-gender has been constructed in the modern world-system, Black Internationalism, with Black women providing significant ideological and practical leadership, provides a framework that challenges the fundamental dynamics and characteristics of the historical world capitalist system.

Readers will come to appreciate The End of White World Supremacy as a rich tapestry that historicizes the contemporary political, economic and social juncture. It is deliberately framed in the long view, recognizing the particular positionality and leadership of peoples of African descent as part of an international class who struggle against white world supremacy and historical capitalism. I am left with the desire to understand this more fully, and some questions come to mind.

How is intersectionality among races, classes, and genders practiced in a non-dogmatic way such that other axes of domination/subordination are also considered? This multi-partite view seems critical to me. To the end, I believe Rod thought that current organizing efforts, particularly by and among youth and with communities of color in leadership roles and women centrally located, provide hope for the future.

He would realize that it is neither accidental nor inconsequential that the three founding women of #BlackLivesMatter are Black
lesbians or that many leaders of the undocumented movement are queer. He would find it not at all surprising that the younger gay, lesbian, queer, and gender nonconforming activists are not only multi-racial but also finding their voices on a wide range of issues. He would be there to engage Movement for Black Lives activists, Dreamers, and others in dialogue about clarifying and advancing the development of program and platform so as to maximize international connections and coalition-building.

How do we take the long view at this moment in time? How in this context do the Americas fit in? Quijano (2000) links the struggle to end capitalist exploitation in the Americas to the need to decolonize the epistemology and culture of the people there, which is now enforced by the modern bourgeois nation state. Bush’s recognition of the role and experiences of African peoples in the Americas, Africa and diasporically can be integrated with the work of those who have analyzed the experience of peoples in the Americas under historical capitalism, as well as be linked and integrated with the work and writing of Latinas, and women of color in general. I believe Rod looked forward to participating in these projects.

He would be finding many with whom to converse, among them the psychologist Aída Hurtado and the long time writer and activist Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez.

Hurtado (2010) builds on the work of Patricia Hill Collins to emphasize the importance of intersectionality, the value of self-reflection, and the critical role of accountability in the production of knowledge, where the issues to be taken up must derive from one’s own lived experience as well as the expressed needs of the community. She also foregrounds Borderlands Theory, originating with Gloria E. Anzaldúa (1987), who argued the U.S.-Mexico border was not only central to the lives of Chicanas but also a metaphor for crossings between geopolitical boundaries, sexual boundaries, social dislocations, cultural and linguistic differences (p. n33).

In her recently republished De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century (2017), Martinez reiterates her long held and practiced views that people must work together across all the
lines that divide us, and illustrates why and how it can be done and has been done by building on her own lived experience in social and political movements for decades.

Bush also addresses some of these questions in his next book, *Tensions in the American Dream: Rhetoric, Reverie or Reality* (2015), co-authored with Melanie E. L. Bush. This book explores the thinking and perceptions of ordinary people in the U.S. about contemporary realities of social and racial inequality in the context of the crisis of the historical capitalist world-economy. How do they perceive the state of the American Dream, and its potential? What is particularly “American” about it? How do people view capitalism in general, and particularly the current economic, political and social crises? What are the implications of their beliefs for the institution of nation? What is the lived experience of community for different constituencies and for all people in the United States and globally? Where does hope reside?

The authors assert that the crisis is one that involves all humanity and that the future is dependent on an understanding of our mutual interconnectedness. In this way, *Tensions* furthers Bush’s argument in *The End of White World Supremacy*. We must simultaneously recognize the temporality of the here-and-now crisis and the long historical arc of the modern world-system’s rootedness in capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. U. S. hegemony is the most recent articulation of those systems. Social transformation depends on challenging not one, but all of these systems simultaneously.

*The End of White World Supremacy* is intellectual history, political history, and activist history. It is a tome worth engaging, exploring and discussing. The issues Bush raises are pressing as we consider ways out of the present mess. The positioning, leadership and experience of resistance within the Black Radical tradition as described by him in *The End of White World Supremacy* provide us with some paths to understanding and to action. And his ability to respect individual intellectual trajectories (including his own), and his desire to center research and scholarship in the needs of the community, provide us with a role model we will miss

To close, I will focus less on the substance of Rod’s analyses and
arguments and more on what we can learn from his methods, which were based on strong links between practice and theory. Certain distinctive methods are woven through his work as he assembled the quilt of ideas represented in *The End of White World Supremacy*.

He believed in learning from and recognizing intellectual ancestors. His study and interpretation of a long line of Black leaders and intellectuals was not an academic exercise to him, but a means of illuminating the pathway from the past to the present and from the present to the future.

He worked hard to keep in mind what might seem to be complete opposites: the systemic nature of oppression/exploitation and the simultaneous presence of resistance; the simultaneous and sometimes contradictory effects of short-term and long-term historical processes; the need for sophisticated theory and analysis that can be applied to different circumstances, communities or times; the imperative to never lose sight of a way forward even in, or especially in, the darkest of times.

Most importantly, he put humanity and human beings at the center of any analysis. His embrace of the principles he cites from the Black feminist tradition, in which all views are centered and none are de-centered (except the views of the oppressor), highlights mutual respect and dialogue. If he could, today he would be gathering activists wherever he could, sitting down and generating discussion: what program can we agree on? What allies do we have? What sources of support and resources do we have? How do we operationalize “justice for all” in a way that addresses the current moment as well as long term trends?

I am reminded of the anecdote with which he closes *The End of White World Supremacy*. Getting out the vote for Obama in North Philadelphia in 2008, he found people feeling the election represented “a potential change in the country that would require continued struggle by the people themselves to advance the agenda toward the change we need” (Bush 2009:219).

Rod found the force of life in the people and community all around him, many people in many communities. Going forward we can be
thankful he so articulated the importance of learning from those who have come before, the necessity of recognizing that contradictory phenomena can exist at the same time, the value of interaction through dialogue, and the belief that people can in fact bend the arc of history.

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Abstract

This essay authored by Bob Barber, titled “Black Internationalism and the End of White World Supremacy: An Analysis and Application of Rod Bush’s *The End of White World Supremacy,*” 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). Barber reviews Rod Bush’s *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line*, published in 2009, which illustrates in detail that W. E. B. Du Bois’s maxim, “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” remains true in the twenty first century. The book is reviewed as a quilt, with many pieces assembled into a coherent pattern, the pieces here being Bush’s discussion of and dialogue with an array of Black and other intellectual and activists voices and tendencies, in their debates over time about what was the source of, and the solution to, the oppression of Blacks and other people of color, in the U.S. and around the world. Bush argues that under the world capitalist system that has arisen over the past 500 years, race and class cannot be separated. While focused on the role of Blacks in the U.S., Bush makes clear that the struggle to end white world supremacy and capitalism has been and will be led by a multi-dimensional leadership especially including women of color, and lays the foundation for understanding the emergence of that kind of multi-dimensional leadership in current social and political movements.
Author

Bob Barber is a long-time community and political activist and a retired community college instructor now residing in Albany, California. He worked in and around the United Farmworkers Union in the early 1970s, and elsewhere, as a journalist/activist, spent time in Washington D.C. on a lobbying effort against military aid to dictatorships, and organized get-out-of-the-vote campaigns for progressive initiatives and candidates in the San Francisco Bay Area, before becoming a community college computer literacy instructor at three colleges in California and Oregon. He worked with Rod Bush on various campaigns in the Bay Area in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

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https://rodbush.org/


