

My Tribute to the Rev. Robina Winbush by the Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith 5/24/19 Memorial Service at Oikoumene Center in Geneva, Switzerland

Executive Committee, World Council of Churches 5/22/19-5/28/19 Bossey Institute, Switzerland



It is with a very heavy heart that I share this tribute concerning the loss of one of my most supportive big sisters in college and one of my guardian angels who became a friend for life, the Rev. Robina Winbush. The announcement was so sudden and difficult for me and all of us in the wider ecumenical community globally. This, in light of those I knew, like Mr. Norman Tendis who was on the plane crash that crashed in Ethiopia who we also remember today. Life is so full of swift transitions. It only seems like yesterday that she was comforting me in the loss of my mother last July, who she knew. She was with me at her service and continually checked in with her usual intuitive gifts.

I am very saddened that the Lord saw fit to take another one of our beautiful flowers for his heavenly garden when the fragrance of such beauty is so needed in our present world. Her legacy is global and personal. The soul of God was in Robina and led her in who she was and how I experienced her sisterhood in Christ and as a Pan African sister from my youth. I have known her since age 17 and have always looked up to her as a beloved big sis and friend for life. We were both Ohio (“buckeye”) products of the Institute of Pan African Studies at Kent State University. In those days she was a poet and I was the dancer and in theatre (ballet, modern, African plays, musicals etc.). Oh! How gifted she was not only in her ecumenical and ministry vocation but the arts! To God be the glory!

Robina saw in me what I may have not have even seen in myself at Kent State University when I didn’t have the resources to complete my college education. I never told her but somehow, she knew my need and my gifts and empowered me to go forth. At that time, I didn’t know that God had already planned for us to be together again in ministry and ecumenical leadership as Pan African sisters in Christ. She brought her acute ability to think critically, soulfully and honestly to her Christian leadership. My story of empowerment and sisterhood has been repeated globally as I have worked with her, learned from her, followed her and sought to honor her in my work. She will be missed by so many who will and could tell a story much like mine.

As it turns out, Robina was supposed to be at this meeting instead of me and soon after she passed, at the same theological colloquium I was on transformative ecumenism and the future of world Christianity and the unity of the churches in Tokyo, Japan. I am honored to have been asked to help put together a memorial service during our worship time while I was there. Here again the global ecumenical community celebrated her life and ministry.

As I continue to have the honor of serving God and neighbor through my church and in the ecumenical movement, I am grateful to carry out, in part, her legacy and want to assure you of my prayers for family and her church. May my dearly beloved sister rest in peace knowing the global difference she made for the sake of Jesus Christ and for the personal difference she made for me.



In Loving Sisterly Memory, Angelique