

# In Memory: Larry Obadele Williams



For over 30 years Larry Obadele Williams (respectfully referred to here as Obadele) was active in researching African and African-American historical studies as a lecturer, curriculum consultant, journalist and archivist. He was a correspondent for the international journal *Africa Must Unite*, published by the Arusha-Konakri Institute under the editorship of Ruwa Chiri. In his student years as a student at the University of Chicago, he was active in the Black Student Union and editor of the Black student newspaper, *Black Rap*. He also attended classes taught by the late pioneering Black psychologist Bobby E. Wright, author of *The Psychopathic Racist Personality* and Anderson Thompson at the Black Community in Chicago, Illinois during the 1970s.

From 1973-1978, Obadele was instrumental in organizing local Atlanta Marcus M. Garvey celebrations along with Akiba Adande and Khusu Wanzu. As a photo-journalist he covered both African Liberation Day Celebrations and the 1st

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday March and Birthday celebrations. During 1976-78, Obadele served as a staff volunteer at the Institute of the Black World. In 1978 thru 1980, he became a member of the Shrine of the Black Madonna of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church and tutored Basic Training members in African history. During 1983 he coordinated the Return to the Source Conference featuring Charles B. Copher, Asa G. Hilliard III, Charles S. Finch III, Runoko Rashidi, Walter Palmer and Charlyne Harper-Bolton sponsored by the Benu Study Group and Morris Brown College.

As a writer, his articles have appeared in the *Journal of African Civilizations*, the *Atlanta Voice* newspaper, *Return to the Source*, *History*, *the Bible* and *Blackman* magazine, *IFA News*, the *Atlanta Inquirer* newspaper, *Kwanzaa Resource Guide* and *RAW* magazine. In 1984, Obadele was co-convener of the historic Nile Valley Conference held at Morehouse College that brought over 2500 attendees. Its central theme was to highlight the African origin and contributions to early civilization. Scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Ivan Van Sertima, Jan Carew, John Pappademos, Asa G. Hilliard III, Beatrice Lumpkin and Hunter H. Adams were presenters.

In 1985, he documented Cheikh Anta Diop's 1st visit to U.S. soil and is the key archivist and co-editor of the definitive treatment of Diop's work on the African Origin of Civilization titled, *Great African Thinkers, Vol. 1: Cheikh Anta Diop*. As a warrior activist in African Studies and research in 1986 along with Asa G. Hilliard III, he founded the Atlanta Chapter of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC). Through his organizing expertise the Atlanta chapter hosted the 1986 Southern Regional ASCAC Conference, the 1988 ASCAC Education for Liberation Mini-conference in Miami, Florida. As a co-editor with Nia Damali and Asa G. Hilliard III he published *The Teachings of Ptahhotep: The Oldest Book in the World, To Be African* with Kwado Burnett Gallman and Marimba Ani and *The Struggle to Bring True African History into Being* (1992) with Asa G. Hilliard III an ASCAC critical commentary. In 1987, Obadele traveled to Egypt to present the paper, "The Kemetic Origins of the Greco-Roman Gods And Goddesses," later published by the University of Sankore Press in *Reconstructing Kemetic Culture* edited by Maulana Karenga. With increased interest and efforts to create an African-centered curriculum in elementary and high schools Obadele served as a curriculum consultant in the Portland and Atlanta Public School's African-American Curriculum programs. A 10 Volume set of videos titled, *African-American Culture: A Second Look* was produced through the collaborative efforts of Obadele, Asa G. Hilliard III and Marti Chitwood.

As an outgrowth of national efforts to infuse African American history into school curricula, Obadele was selected along with Herman L. Reese, Asa G. Hilliard III and Lucretia Payton-Stewart to coordinate the National Infusion Conferences of 1990-1992. Obadele was the chief force behind the publication of *Proceedings of the National Infusion Conference*, 1990 published by Aaron Press and republished by Third World Press. In conjunction with Nancy Harris, Charlyn Harper-Bolton and Asa G. Hilliard III, Obadele co-authored the Portland Public school monograph, *From Ancient Africa to African-Americans Today*. He served as African-American curriculum consultant for In-Service training for teachers at the Atlanta Public Schools from 1992-1995. During that time he edited the publications, the *Atlanta Public Schools African and African-American Curriculum Content Program Guide* along with compiling the *Supplemental Readings/Support for the African-American Curriculum Infusion Project* (1990).

His work was featured in South Carolina E-TV's internationally acclaimed program "For the People" hosted by the late Listervelt Middleton. The award winning documentary of John Henrik Clarke, "Great and Mighty Walk" featured video and slides from Obadele's private archival collection of African history of 40 years. Obadele had one of the world's most extensive collections of articles, books, photos, audio-tapes and videos of John Henrik Clarke. Obadele as a bibliophile researched the created bibliographies of leading scholars in African Studies, such as: Cheikh Anta Diop, Wade W. Nobles, Na'im Akbar, Frances Cress Welsing, Charles S. Finch III, Ivan Van Sertima, Runoko Rashidi, Jacob H. Carruthers, Chancellor Williams, Hubert H. Harrison, J.A. Rogers, etc.

As an African centered research specialist he co-founded of the Bennu Study Group and the coordinator of the ASCAC Study Group of Atlanta. He was appeared on WLIB's *Night Talk with Bob Law*, WRFG's *Round Midnight*, *Spoken Expression* and WAOK's *Chris Askew Show*. As a result of the airing of the Shaka Zulu series, Obadele led a challenge to TV-36's airing of the program with a 10 myth rebuttal with community scholars and activists. Obadele was a member of the Board of Directors and Southern Regional President of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations. He is the recipient of the ASCAC Presidential Award (1989) and the Positive Image Award (1990), co-author of *Egypt is in Africa: Activity & Coloring Book* (1991) with Janet Wallace, and he was honored by being selected as an elder in the Jegna Collective of the Metro-Atlanta area. Also, Obadele was first to mention the name Antenor Firmin and the title of Firmin's monumental 1885 text during a telephone conference with Gershom Williams in the spring of 2012 which resulted in a special print and electronic edition of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, (winter 2014; vol.7, no.2, August 2014) guest edited by Gershom Williams. Larry Obadele Williams joined the ancestors in December 2015.