Donor Profile
RU-N and Newark Come Together to Raise Funds in Honor of Professor Clement Alexander Price

Last November, Rutgers University–Newark lost one of its most beloved faculty members. Professor Clement Alexander Price, a nationally respected figure in the humanities and the arts, and one of New Jersey’s leading public intellectuals, died after suffering a stroke. He was 69.

Professor Price left us with wonderful memories and a towering legacy that includes historical scholarship on African Americans in New Jersey, along with an institute that now bears his name and a series of lectures by noted black scholars that, in 2010, he personally bequeathed $100,000 to endow.

In like fashion, more than 230 people from all walks of life—from Price’s barber, small business owners, educators and childhood friends to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and foundations—stepped forward out of deep gratitude to give back to the man who had given so much to them and their community.

They did so by donating to The Clement A. Price Endowment for the Humanities in the wake of his passing and, within a few months, had done something unprecedented: raised more than $5 million to ensure that the Clement A. Price Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience lives on to serve Newark for generations to come.

Clem Price was born on Oct. 13, 1945, in Washington, D.C., where he grew up, the son of James Price and Anna Christine Spann Price. He arrived at Rutgers shortly after the 1967 riots, after earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Bridgeport. He earned his Ph.D. in history from Rutgers University–New Brunswick, becoming one of the first black scholars to do so.

The Rutgers board of governors later named him a distinguished service professor, one of the university’s highest honors.

In 1981, Price co-founded the annual Marion Thompson Wright (MTW) Lecture Series together with the late Giles R. Wright. The series exemplified Price’s belief in the importance of public humanities—of bringing African-American history and the history of Newark to broad audiences not ordinarily touched by academic scholarship.

The Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, which Price founded in 1997 and now bears his name, serves a similarly lofty purpose, using arts and humanities programming to revitalize Greater Newark.

Over the last 17 years, the Institute has become a national model for how publicly engaged research universities can help cultivate a more livable city.

Price’s passion for Newark continued to shine through in the 2006 documentary he narrated, The Once and Future Newark, which was shown on public televi-

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Clem was extraordinarily generous—
he would go to those lengths for someone
who wasn’t a major player in his life.

While Price’s vast accomplishments will
undoubtedly form the core of his legacy,
his personal touch—his grace, wit,
style, warmth, generosity, and ability to
connect with a wide array of people—
that will live on in the hearts of those
who were fortunate to know him.

RIU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor
summed up these sentiments at Price’s
memorial service: “Wherever he was,
Clem exuded a love of humanity so deep
and wide, so thorough and universal,
that one could not be in his presence
without wanting to join him in whatever
ever endeavor engaged him, because
whatever engaged him was never about
what he needed, but what we all need—
understanding, reconciliation, justice,
generosity, peace, love.”

Below are testimonies from a cross-sec-
tion of people whose lives Price touched:

Stephen Appell (NLAW ’68)
Retired attorney
Lives in Brooklyn, NY

I met Clem at a Rutgers reunion about
four years ago, took one of his famous
Newark bus tours, and was deeply
touched by his passion for and commit-
ment to Newark. I just fell in love with
the guy. After getting a chance to talk
with him about my own experiences in
Newark, he recommended a documentary
film he thought I should see, which I
ultimately had trouble finding. A couple
of years later, I attended a dedication
ceremony at the Institute honoring Marc
Price in my mailbox several days later.

Clem knew that I’m Jewish and also a great admirer of Dr.
Martin Luther King Jr. So what did he do? Unsolicited, he sent me a recording
of a speech King had made at a Newark synagogue. Again, I was just so moved he
would go to those lengths for someone
who wasn’t a major player in his life.

Clem was so warm, passionate and kind,
to say nothing of scholarly. He had such
imposing credentials, but his personality
beyond scholarship is what touched me:
not just that he was a scholar, but that
wanted to spread it and make others feel
passionate and good about themselves
in the process.

I’d met Clem only a few times, but when
he passed, I really felt like I’d lost a close
friend. I gave to the Price Endowment
and Institute because, just as one does
with intimate friends, I wanted to make
a donation in his memory and affirm
that his Institute should live on long
after his physical presence is gone.

Professor Belinda Edmondson
Rutgers University—Newark
Lives in Montclair, NJ

Clem was one of the first people I met
when I came to Rutgers-Newark over
20 years ago. I was walking around in
the hallway, trying to figure out where
the mailroom was, and this man came
up to me, gave me a big bear hug and
exclaimed, ‘I’m so happy you’ve come!
I’ve heard so much about you!’ That was
Clem. I’d never met him in my life. With
anyone else it would have been weird,
but not with Clem. He was just naturally
affectionate.

After that we got to know each other
very well: As a very well-connected
senior scholar, he always looked out for
me, making sure that I was invited to
significant events or recommending me
for various positions. He also chaired the
Department of African American and Af-
rican Studies for a few years, with which
I have a joint appointment, and was
instrumental in ensuring I got tenure.

Clem was extraordinarily generous—
with his time, contacts, advice and
himself.

It’s amazing that so many people feel he
was close to them in particular. They're
not wrong, but I don’t know how he
did it. When I look around my home, I
see bits of Clem because he was always
giving me things, like a CD of a con-
temporary singer he thought I’d like, a
hand-quilted blanket, a painted plate.
But it was the generosity of his friend-
ship—just chatting, giving advice, telling
stories—that I remember most.

The Institute was Clem’s biggest act of
generosity to Rutgers and the Newark
community: He created it, named it,
lived it, breathed it, planned for it all
year long. Clem always saw himself as
rooted in Newark as both a scholar and
a person. He was a pillar of both com-
unities. Going to the MTW lecture was
always a highlight of the year for many of
us, because it was that moment when
“town and gown” became one. So, I gave
funds to help Clem’s vision stay with us.
I’ll keep giving as well, in honor of my
very generous friend.

John Pearson
Retired Director of Leadership Gifts,
Rutgers University Foundation
Lives in Maplewood, NJ

I first met Clem around 1993 when he
and another Rutgers faculty member
helped lead a $5 million special-purpose
campaign for minority scholarships,
fellowships, and faculty and program
support. Clem was probably the most
gracious person I’ve ever met, as well as
one of the most giving. If anyone ever
had a problem or was facing a challenge,
Clem was right there, trying to help.

He was also very affectionate, and I
loved the great big bear hug he always
gave me. I am fond of saying that after
first meeting him, I thought I was one
of his best friends. After seeing him in
public a few times, I realized I was only
partially correct: I was one of his best
friends all right, one of his 10,000 best
friends! He never failed to ask me about
my daughter and how she was doing. He
just brightened my day on any occasion
that I caught even a glimpse of him.

Making a gift to the Institute in his
memory was just one way of expressing
my gratitude for his life and supporting
something that I knew meant a great
deal to him.
From the Desk of the Dean of Arts and Sciences

May is always a bittersweet month at colleges and universities, with the joy of seeing another class walk across the stage at the Pru (where we now hold commencement for all of Rutgers University–Newark) and also the sadness of having to say goodbye to another group of wonderful students.

This spring has brought a spate of honors to our faculty. Not just one, but two of them, History Professor Beryl Satter and MFA Professor Akhil Sharma, were recently awarded Guggenheim fellowships, perhaps the most prestigious competitive fellowships in the academic and creative world. Anthropology Professor Genese Sodikoff won a $220K Mellon New Directions Fellowship, the first-ever to a member of the RU-N faculty. English Professor Jack Lynch has received a fellowship from the National Endowment of Humanities for 2015–’16. Journalism Professor Robert Snyder received a Fulbright fellowship that will send him to teach in South Korea in 2016. And Carlos Seiglie, chairperson of the Department of Economics, was selected for a Fulbright Specialist Project this summer in Bretagne, France.

Two of our young scientists, Jenny Lockard (Chemistry) and Jessica Ware (Biological Scientists), have won highly competitive NSF CAREER awards to fund their research for the next several years. We are enormously proud of our faculty.

But we’ve had more than our share of bitter to mix with the sweet.

We just learned that 2009 NCAS graduate Marisa Eve Girawong, of Edison, N.J., was killed in the avalanche on Mt. Everest caused by the devastating earthquake in Nepal. A biology major at RU-N, Girawong was working for a Seattle-based mountain guide company when the disaster occurred. She was an advanced climber, was working on her second M.S. in mountain medicine at the University of Leicester in the U.K., and by all accounts was a remarkable woman. Our deepest condolences go out to her family.

We also lost two dear friends and beloved faculty members at the end of last semester: Said Samatar and Clement Alexander Price, both of the Department of History. Samatar was born in a remote section of Ethiopia inhabited by Somalis and was a renown expert on Somalia. He was frequently sought out by news outlets for commentary and provided insight on often-tragic events without losing his trademark sense of humor. Price, a nationally known scholar of African-American history and Newark, is featured in this issue of our Newsletter, along with many other NCAS stand-outs, whom we’re only too happy to share with you.

It is with these mixed emotions that I say, on behalf of all of us at NCAS/UICN, thank you for all that you do for the college.

With best wishes,

Jan Ellen Lewis
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Newark
Campus News

Express Newark to Spark Arts Collaboration in Former Hahne & Co. Building

The arts are always in the forefront at Rutgers University–Newark, and never more than now.

The Rutgers University Board of Governors approved a $25 million plan to lease three floors of the former Hahne & Company Department Store and turn it into "Express Newark," an "arts collaboratory" that will bring together the university and greater Newark community.

The space will house a communications media center, print shop, portrait studio and lecture hall, along with gallery and performance spaces for programming by RU-N’s Institute of Jazz Studies, the world’s foremost jazz archive, and the Newark Museum.

Express Newark will link a number of city landmarks, including NJPAC, the newly renovated Military Park, Halsey Studio art spaces, the Newark Museum, the great hall at 15 Washington Street, and the Newark Public Library. In doing so, the ambitious project will become the fulcrum of the Newark Arts District as RU-N works with a number of local arts organizations.

Among the community collaborators, in addition to the Newark Museum, will be NJPAC, Gallery Aferro, Newark Print Shop, Aljira Gallery, Hycide Magazine, Newark First, GlassRoots, the Edison National Historical Park, WBGO, and VII visual documentary collective.

"Express Newark leverages RU-N’s superlative studio, performing and literary artists and combines them with Newark’s assets as a cultural capital of New Jersey," says RU-N Chancellor Nancy Cantor. "It will play a pivotal role as a ‘third space,’ where the university and community come together to advance scholarship, strengthen our community, and build the momentum behind Newark’s renaissance."

The effort to engage the community through all of Express Newark’s programs and spaces is central to the project.

Each component features a community-based aspect and a direct and open link to Newark-area residents, bringing RU-N studio artists, printmakers, photographers, theater director–producers, journalists, authors and humanists together with community arts and culture organizations and local schools to cultivate new talent.

With a focus on fostering collaborative academic and research programs, supporting public scholarship, investing in spaces and places to engage the world, and cultivating civic dialogue—as it will, for example, through the Newark Writers Series—Express Newark directly addresses priorities identified in the RU-N Strategic Plan, which was released in fall 2014, helping to fulfill RU-N’s role as an anchor institution in Greater Newark.

NCAS will have a large presence at the new site. And Dean Jan Lewis is thrilled the project is at last coming to fruition.

“I’ve been at RU-N long enough to remember when Hahne’s was a department store, as well as the many decades that it remained vacant, teasing us with the promise of a revitalized downtown.”

“..."I’ve been at RU-N long enough to remember when Hahne’s was a department store, as well as the many decades that it remained vacant, teasing us with the promise of a revitalized downtown," says Lewis. “Now our fantasies are about to come to life, in a transformative project that will make the abandoned department store a vital hub of creativity in the heart of Newark, one where students, faculty, and members of the community join to create art.”
Faculty Profile: Kusum Mundra
NCAS Professor Finds Immigrants Weathered Housing Bust Better Than U.S.-Born Population

The Great Recession, which was sparked by a massive housing bubble, is widely acknowledged to have been the most devastating financial crisis since the Great Depression. As people lost jobs and ran through their savings, home foreclosures reached record numbers. According to U.S. census data, the overall U.S. homeownership rate fell during the crisis and its aftermath, from a peak of 69.2 percent in 2004 to 64.7 percent in 2014, the lowest it’s been since 1995.

Amid the ashes, however, has come some surprising news: Immigrants weathered the housing bust better than the U.S.-born population did.

Professor Kusum Mundra, who teaches economics at Rutgers University–Newark, co-wrote one of the studies corroborating this, which attracted widespread media attention. She and a colleague at Emory University found that homeownership among immigrants climbed on average from 52.4 percent in the years leading up to the crisis (2000–2006) to 54.3 percent during the recession and its aftermath (2007–2012). The reverse was true for native-born Americans: Their homeownership rate fell from 74.3 percent to 72.4 percent, even though their wages declined less during that time.

How immigrants fared better at keeping their homes or purchasing new ones during the crisis and its aftermath has been the subject of ongoing debate. Mundra and her co-author, Professor Ruth Uwaifo Oyelere, looked at several factors that might have contributed to this phenomenon.

We sat down with Mundra recently to discuss the issue in greater detail.

You specialize in applied econometrics, focusing on issues facing immigrant communities and women. You’ve studied the effect of immigrant networks and diasporas on their trade and earnings, along with access to healthcare for immigrant women. Why was it important to look at immigrant housing?

Homeownership is central to assimilation in the U.S. Immigrants put down roots and invest in and build community, and gain the advantages that come with owning a home: tax relief and home equity wealth, which in turn allows for home equity loans to finance education or business opportunities, as well as for cash reserves.

It’s also timely to look at immigrant housing, yes? It is because immigrants are projected to fuel housing demand in this country. By some estimates, immigrants will account for more than one-third of the growth in homeowners by 2020 because of demographic shifts, migration to the suburbs and other factors.

Your study compares the impact that several factors had on immigrant homeownership both before and during the crisis and its aftermath. While you control for many variables, including household income, savings, years spent in the U.S., and citizenship, one variable stood out among the rest.

That’s right. In our econometrics study, we controlled for many factors. And birthplace networks—social networks of friends and family from the same country of origin—was the most important factor. Nobody had really looked at the role of immigrant birthplace networks on national homeownership, particularly during times of economic stress.

And what did you find? These networks have a significant affect on immigrant homeownership. In fact, we found that birthplace networks are the only housing determinant whose impact on home ownership changed substantially during and after the recession, compared with the years before: The effect doubled.

What are some implications from this? Immediately post-recession, immigrant homeownership increased. Our hypothesis is that immigrants leveraged social networks to take advantage of the weak housing market. So, they got help not only in preventing foreclosures but also in new home ownership. And we find that the impact of these networks on homeownership is stronger for citizens and those who are not recent immigrants. Our future research is focused on digging deeper into birthplace networks and understanding their different dimensions and how they played a role in this interesting trend.

What about the other determinants? They had an effect, but it was minimal. For example, years in the U.S. is usually a prime determinant for home ownership but was less of a factor during and after the recession. And the effect of savings actually declined while networks jumped during and after the crisis, compared with the pre-recession period.

Why is that? Immigrants probably treated savings as the rest of the U.S. population—really, the rest of the world—did during the crisis: They held onto savings and used them in a precautionary way, instead of taking risks or putting them into homes.

And immigrant birthplace networks are important for other reasons as well, yes? Correct. This has been studied in many other disciplines, including sociology. In economics, the impact of networks has been quantified for immigrant employment as well as unemployment duration. Networks also impact education, earnings, assimilation—even trade, as immigrants remove informal trade barriers and open import-export businesses to fill needs both in their country of origin and the U.S., and even form lobbies on the state and national level.

Thank you for sitting down with us. It was my pleasure. Thank you.
Tim Raphael is creative and collaborative by nature. An associate professor of arts, culture and media at Rutgers University–Newark, his background is in theater and performance studies. He also has an abiding passion for political issues like immigration.

He fused the two by starting the Center on Migration and the Global City at RU-N in 2009. As director of the center, he has recently embarked on a multiyear project called “Newest Americans: Stories From the Global City,” a multimedia and multidisciplinary collaboration between journalists, artists, research faculty and students that is documenting unique stories from RU-N, which for nearly two decades has been hailed by U.S. News and World Report as the most diverse campus among those at national universities.

Recently, the Newest Americans project premiered Notes for My Homeland, the first in a series of short documentary films, which is currently showing on National Geographic’s Proof website.

Notes for My Homeland tells the story of Syrian-American composer and pianist Malek Jandali, an American citizen who in the Syrian city of Dara’a. After he performed it during a demonstration in Washington, D.C., his parents were attacked in their home in Syria.

Jandali also has a connection to Rutgers, which comes via his oud player, Mohamed Alsiadi, a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at RU-N. Alsiadi first met Jandali at a music academy in Damascus in 1992 and is also featured in the film.

“It was exciting to produce this piece on Malek,” says Raphael. “The story radiates from Rutgers-Newark, contains both a local and global narrative, and looks at issues of our times through both a cultural lens and from a human perspective.”

Notes for My Homeland was produced by Talking Eyes Media in partnership with RU-N and VII photo agency. The documentary series kicked off by Notes is but a piece of the larger Newest Americans project, which is taking an in-depth look at immigration and the idea of American identity, offering both a glimpse into the world these newest Americans are navigating and transforming, and a vision of our demographic future.

Other components of the project include a Newest Americans website, which will feature a tri-annual digital magazine; audio files of oral histories done by students and Newark residents; faculty and student works created in various classes at RU-N; lectures, film screenings, gallery exhibitions and books; and a special project on immigrant detention and incarceration.

“A half-century from now, the U.S. will look like the Rutgers-Newark campus. So, I wanted to begin to understand what processes are driving change and how we’ll look going forward,” says Raphael. “Bringing smart, creative people together gives us infinite possibilities with this project, and getting students and faculty involved reinforces our campus as an anchor institution in Newark.”

To accompany Notes for My Homeland, in late March the New Americans project held an afternoon panel with artists and documentary filmmakers who have worked in Syria, along with an evening concert at the Paul Robeson Center by Jandali, Alsiadi and cellist Laura Metcalf, who is also in the film.
NCAS Undergraduates Shine at RU-N's 2015 Research Day

At Rutgers University–Newark, undergraduate research offers a chance for students to work side by side with world-class scholars on major projects. Understandably, it has been a high priority of NCAS for many years.

For proof that it is thriving, look no further than RU-N’s third annual Research Day.

Held in mid-April at the Paul Robeson Campus Center, nearly 90 participants convened to explain and answer questions about their projects. They included undergraduates, graduate students and professors. More than 60 undergraduates took part, 70 percent of whom are NCAS majors.

They filled the Essex Room on the second floor of the Robeson Center, situated among rows of tables with tri-fold poster-displays creatively highlighting their work. For three hours, the students held forth for an inquisitive audience surveying their work.

The Research Day ritual has quickly become a staple of the undergraduate experience at RU-N. This year’s event was sponsored by the Office of the Chancellor, Graduate School–Newark, and Honors College, and is the brainchild of Dr. Kinna Perry, Director of the Honors College and Acting Associate Dean of the Graduate School, who oversaw the event.

“We combined the research of professors, graduate students and undergraduates this year so that students not part of the Honors College could also present projects they’ve been working on with faculty advisors,” says Perry. “It gives prospective doctoral students a glimpse at what a professional conference looks like, while giving all undergraduates an opportunity to develop organizational, presentation and interpersonal skills and boost their self-confidence.”

Below, you’ll find a sample of some of the outstanding work being done by NCAS undergraduates.

Nermine Ghazy

Hailing from Kenilworth, NJ, Nermine Ghazy is an Honors College senior with a dual-major in psychology and biology, and a double minor in chemistry and cognitive neuroscience. She also works 15-30 hours per week as a pharmaceutical tech at Walgreen’s to help support her family.

For her project, Ghazy measured the emotional, physiological and behavioral responses to failure by administering a computer game to 38 subjects and giving them various levels of immediate feedback. Her main question was, how do people react to failure: Do they treat it as a temporary setback and plug ahead in pursuit of a goal, or do they give up?

She found that her subjects’ physiological response to failure increased as they were given more information about their performance, as did their level of persistence. Likewise, their negative feelings decreased with more feedback, though there was an insignificant difference in the intensity of those feelings with each level of feedback.

Ghazy’s project arose out of an undergraduate research opportunity in the lab of Professor Mauroco Delgado, of the Psychology Department, which she began last spring. A summer undergraduate research scholarship enabled her to cut back on outside work hours and gain more time in the lab, something she’s extremely grateful for.

The experience has been life-changing.

“It’s made me realize what I want to do with my life. I’ve always wanted to work with kids and better the community, and now I realize I can use neuroscience to change how education works to help kids,” says Ghazy. “Empirical evidence is what moves policy now. What better way to do that then to study the human brain?”

Murad Meshanni

A senior from Hawthorne, NJ, Meshanni is an Honors College senior majoring in political science, with a minor in International Affairs.

His project looked at the history of the demonization of marijuana in the U.S., starting with the outsized role that then Federal Bureau of Narcotics Director Harry J. Anslinger played in the 1930s and ‘40s.

Through a sustained fear campaign aided by Hearst Newspapers and other outlets and mediums, Anslinger whipped up hysteria over the “devil’s weed,” claiming users would experience delirium and turn to petty crime at the very least, and literally transform into axe murders if the habit swerved out of control. Claims played on racial anxieties as well: One asserted that white women who smoked cannabis would be more likely to have affairs with Mexican immigrants and negros.

Theories abound as to Anslinger’s motives, according to Meshanni. Many historians emphasize his connection to the DuPont family, along with Andrew Mellon, who while Secretary of the Treasury, founded the Bureau of Narcotics and was heavily invested in the nylon synthetic fiber DuPont was creating to compete with hemp. Anslinger was also close with newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, who had extensive timber holdings and, as such, had a stake in seeing cellulose-based wood pulp marginalize hemp pulp from the paper manufacturing industry.

Meshanni says there is evidence to support this theory, thought the issue is still hotly debated. Whatever the case, he chose his topic because of its relevance with today’s legalization movement and the overwhelming effectiveness of Anslinger’s campaign.

“The idea to criminalize cannabis was simple, but the campaign was so well-done,” says Meshanni. “That one man’s idea could brainwash 99 percent of the U.S. populace is amazing.”

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Maggie Tchorzewska
Newark resident Maggie Tchorzewska emigrated to the U.S. from Poland at age 9, and has always been interested in history, and WWII in particular.

It’s no surprise, then, that the senior Honors College student, majoring in history and minoring in English, chose to look at the challenges and prejudices women in the U.S. faced in the military—and as factory workers, homemakers and citizens—during that global conflict.

She homed in not only on scholarly literature but also on advertising and propaganda images that show gender as a system of power at work during the era. She also examined this gender discrimination through the lens of race, comparing the experiences of white, African-American and Japanese-American women.

“This was really a war within a war that American women were fighting back home,” says Tchorzewska. “Women faced employment discrimination, and there was pronounced sexualization of the female body—part of the angel/devil dichotomy. Images of the “pin-up girl” were used to boost troop morale, while images of the “patriotte,” a term coined by one scholar, held that women spread venereal disease among troops at home. Either way, women were viewed as a tool for men’s desires.”

The senior research project, which spun out of an Honors College seminar on gender and sexuality, was life-altering for Tchorzewska, helping her delve more deeply into feminist history and spurring her on to graduate school and perhaps one day becoming a teacher.

Albert Appough
A senior from Maplewood, NJ, Albert Appough transferred to RU-N from Essex Community College in 2010 and is dual-majoring in applied mathematics and economics. He is also working toward a teacher certification with the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP), and been tutoring Rutgers-Newark and area middle- and high-school students through the campus’ Academic Foundation Center.

For his project, Appough looked at the significant socioeconomic factors that influence the achievement of U.S. middle-school and high-school students in math, since those are much better indicators, or predictors, than intelligence tests. He examined gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family education level, school and teacher quality, even extracurricular activities and mood.

“What I learned about is these underlying factors of ethnicity-based achievement. It’s much more complicated than I’d originally thought. And that will help me going forward as a tutor or teacher.”

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