Donor Profile: Judith & Milton Viorst
Celebrated Alumni Couple Deepens Their Commitment to NCAS and Rutgers

Judith and Milton Viorst are a special Rutgers couple. They met as students, and both have gone on to have illustrious careers as writers.

Judith (NCAS ’52) is an acclaimed author whose 17 adult works and 19 children’s books include the classic *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, which was recently turned into a major motion picture starring Steve Carell and Jennifer Garner. She is also the author of *The New York Times* best-seller *Necessary Losses.* For 25 years she was a contributing editor at *Redbook* magazine and has written the books and lyrics for three musicals.

Milton (SAS ’51) is a well-known journalist who eventually specialized in Middle East policy, writing six books on the subject. From 1956 to 1993, he contributed to *The New Yorker, Foreign Affairs, Harper’s, Atlantic, The New York Times Magazine, The Washington Post,* and *The Wall Street Journal.* He also taught journalism at Princeton and is a member of numerous professional associations like PEN, the National Writers Union, the Council of Foreign Relations, and the Middle East Institute as a senior scholar.

For both Judith and Milton, who live in Washington, D.C., and celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary this year, the seeds of their success germinated at Rutgers: for Judith, on the Newark campus, and for Milton, in New Brunswick. And while they are a high-profile couple with a gaggle of grandchildren and demanding schedules, they have never forgotten their roots.

The Viorsts, who both majored in history as undergraduates, have been steady supporters of Rutgers for decades, giving to an array of scholarship and annual funds. Milton has done so despite having advanced degrees from (and commitments to) two Ivy League universities. As a couple, they have remained loyal to their alma-mater while giving to a constellation of other causes.

In 2011, the Viorsts deepened their commitment to Rutgers with two planned gifts: $25K Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs) to both the NCAS Academic Excellence fund in Newark and the SAS Academic Excellence fund in New Brunswick.

CGAs allow donors to make a meaningful gift to NCAS while retaining income for themselves and/or loved ones. They are one of many types of life-income gifts that fall under the category of planned giving—and one of the most popular.

The Viorsts also have given their time and expertise along the way, with visits to both campuses to speak with classes, greet faculty, and attend readings and lectures. Judith has spent time with undergraduates in the English program, as well as graduate students in the MFA in Creative Writing Program, both on the Newark campus. Milton has spoken to students at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in New Brunswick.

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From the Desk of the Dean of Arts and Sciences

The arts are always in the forefront at Rutgers University–Newark (RU-N), but never more than this fall. The Rutgers University Board of Governors recently approved a $25 million plan to lease three floors of the old Hahne & Co. Department Store and turn it into “Express Newark,” an arts “collaboratory” that will bring together the university and the community. The space will house a communications media center, print shop, portrait studio, lecture hall, and gallery space, along with RU-N’s Institute of Jazz Studies. It will link a number of Newark 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, Express Newark will become the fulcrum of the Newark Arts District, enabling RU-N to engage the Newark community while working with the aforementioned local organizations, as well as Gallery Aferro, Newark Print Shop, GlassRoots, and WBGO.

Meanwhile, RU-N’s acclaimed MFA in Creative Writing Program continues to shine. Acclaimed poet A. Van Jordan, who recently joined the faculty from the University of Michigan, has been appointed RU-N’s first Henry Rutgers Presidential Professor. Professor Rigoberto González was recently named a United States Artists Fellow for 2014, which brings him a $50K award and recognition as one of America’s most accomplished and innovative artists. This comes on the heels of his winning the prestigious Lenore Marshall Prize and the Lambda Literary Award for his most recent book of poems, Unpeopled Eden.

Finally, the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival once again came to Newark in late October, and our MFA folks were all over the four-day festival program. A. Van Jordan, and Professor Brenda Shaughnessy read or participated on panels all four days. Recent MFA graduate Saeed Jones was also featured. And there was a special RU-N MFA Reading session featuring six current students from the program.

So, great things are happening. And on behalf of all of us at NCAS/UCN, thank you for all that you do for the college.

With best wishes,
Jan Ellen Lewis
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Newark

Celebrated Alumni Couple Deepens Their Commitment to NCAS and Rutgers

When the couple returned to Rutgers University–Newark (RU-N) for a visit in 2009—the first in many years—they were floored.

“The campus has changed so much, it’s unrecognizable from when I went there—in a very good way,” says Judith. “The grounds, the buildings, the cafeteria feeding students from so many different ethnic groups now. The diversity is amazing, and the MFA Program in Creative Writing is just terrific. The faculty. The students. I was stunned and thrilled to be back.”

They’re looking forward to another visit soon, with Judith possibly spending time with MFA classes, and Milton perhaps speaking with graduate students in the Division of Global Affairs.

Milton also plans to donate part of his vast collection of books on the Middle East and French history to the Rutgers University library system, and Judith may follow suit by donating part of her collection as well.

“We’re choosing to give our collections to Rutgers over my other alma-maters [Harvard and Columbia] in part because, as a state school, it could probably use them more than large private universities, and it reaches out to less fortunate kids in N.J.,” says Milton. “I really appreciate that.”

Milton has also pledged to put Rutgers in his will. As for their feelings about their undergraduate experience and what has inspired them to give back, Judith sums it up best.

“Rutgers was the beginning of my intellectual life. I had wonderful professors there at a time when I was hungry and eager for knowledge,” she says. “It’s powerful to have been set on a path that’s led to this moment. I owe so much to Rutgers and NCAS.”

Contributors
Lawrence Lerner, co-editor, writer, photographer; Jan Ellen Lewis, Dean, co-editor; Sherri-Ann Butterfield, Sr. Associate Dean, co-editor
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NCAS Students Roll Up Sleeves to Serve Others in Tanzania and India

Cynthia McCall-Brantley (NCAS ’14) remembers the sweltering hot day in early June, at the Korona Community School in the Himo region of Tanzania. Along with seven other Rutgers University–Newark (RU–N) students and staff, she rolled up her sleeves and got to work, helping parents and community members build a dormitory for the school. “They were making cement with a mixer but brought up all the gravel and water from a nearby river, and they were doing this with no running water or electricity,” says McCall-Brantley. “There were men, and also many women. We got right in there with them. It was an amazing experience.”

McCall-Brantley, a psychology and sociology major, took part in one of two service-learning trips this summer—one to Tanzania, the other to India—that are part of the International Service Learning and Leadership Exchange (ISSLE), sponsored by RU–N’s Office of Service Learning and Student Development.

ISSLE offers RU–N students unique experiential-learning opportunities that challenge them to collaborate with faculty, student leaders, and community organizers who are actively working to create social, political, and economic change around the globe.

During the 10-day intensive trips, students hear talks on the history, culture, and public policy of their chosen country; meet with local university students; visit with NGOs and community groups; and engage in a wide variety of service projects at local schools, hospitals, halfway houses, orphanages, and other facilities—including a photo project with a Maasai village in Tanzania, and a social-media workshop with a female technology group in India.

Prior to the trips, they raise money to help subsidize their travel, while reaching out to community members and local organizations for goods to donate to the groups they visit. They’ve also put through a rigorous orientation program to help prepare them intellectually, mentally, and emotionally for the long days they’ll put in and the exposure they’ll have to new people, languages, and cultures.

“We have the students meet with professionals about some issues they’ll be confronting,” says Clayton Walton, Dean of Student Life and Director of the Paul Robeson Center, who leads the trips. “They also go through an important team-building process.”

NCAS students made up nearly half of the 16 students who participated in the trips this summer. Their majors range from sociology and psychology to art, social work and biology.

Amyjaelle Belot, a senior anthropology major and biology minor from Trenton, N.J., went on the India trip, which she calls a life-changing experience.

As a member of many campus organizations and student director for Student Health Advocates, which works under RU–N Health Services, she’s a seasoned campus leader. Dealing with such a diverse student body on social-justice issues, she thought she’d seen it all. “I realized that the world is much bigger than just the U.S.,” says Belot. “I saw how kids my age in India have it hard—especially women—and often can’t aspire to what they want in life because of the patriarchal and caste systems in place. So, it was great to have an opportunity to make a change in other people’s lives.”

In addition to the summer trips to Tanzania and India, Walton’s office ran a six-week trip to Nicaragua over winter break in 2013-2014. During that excursion, five female RU–N students helped install a solar panel at a remote rural maternity clinic whose electricity routinely went out.

The trips require a time-and-energy commitment, along with a financial one. The six-week excursion runs students $750 without academic credits. The 10-week trips, for which students earn three academic credits, cost them $1,500 plus the tuition fee, totaling $2,700. Students chip away at this cost through scholarships and the funds they raise prior to the trip, and often pay the rest via payment plans set up with the university.

Meanwhile, Walton and his staff have built solid relationships with the organizations they visit, and place a premium on continuity. They have achieved that in Tanzania, which they have been visiting since 2011. “We want students to feel like they’re going into a community that understands them and what they’re bringing to the table,” Walton says. “We also want to make sustainable change and do capacity building. So, the more we return to these groups, the more impact we can have.”

He also witnesses the transformation students go through first-hand, saying that they benefit from stretching themselves in multiple ways—and inevitably come away with a deeper sense of their own identity and their relationship to rest of world.

McCall-Brantley agrees. “I would do it again in a heartbeat,” she says. “The opportunity to travel and serve keeps you in touch with who you are, and helps you realize you have the ability to get outside your comfort zone and give. That’s very powerful.”
Facility Profile: Rigoberto González

Sitting Down with Professor and Acclaimed Writer Rigoberto González

Rigoberto González, Professor of English and Creative Writing, is a versatile, prolific and acclaimed writer who arrived at Rutgers University-Newark in 2008. He is the recipient of Guggenheim and NEA fellowships, and winner of the American Book Award, The Poetry Center Book Award, and the Shelley Memorial Award of The Poetry Society of America, one of the highest honors that can be bestowed upon American poet and whose other awardees include titans of American poetry such as Conrad Aiken, Archibald MacLeish, Marianne Moore, Robert Penn Warren, e.e. Cummings, John Berryman, and Elizabeth Bishop.

His fourth book of poetry, Unpeopled Eden (Four Way Books, 2013), recently won the 2014 Lambda Literary Award, along with the prestigious 2014 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize, given out by the Academy of American Poets and which carries a $25,000 prize. He is the first Latino poet to achieve this honor.

González is part of a rich literary tradition that examines life in the borderlands between Mexico and the U.S. He writes about what it means to be a gay Chicano immigrant in the U.S. and to grow up poor, as well as the hardships and resilience of migrant farm workers, religion, masculinity, and a host of other important issues.

We sat down with González recently to talk about his childhood and his work, along with the importance of reaching out to Latino children through literature and mentoring emerging writers.

You sought solace in books amid a turbulent childhood and adolescence. When did you sense that you wanted to be a writer, and what inspired you?

González: As a teenager I fantasized about writing books—but as far as I knew all writers were dead. No one told me that writers were alive, let alone that writing was a profession. So I opted for the closest thing I associated with books, teaching, because I wanted to hold books, read books, talk about them. I grew up a bookworm as a way to have some private time in a very crowded household, and I knew there was power in literacy because many in my family didn’t know how to read or write.

In college I discovered living writers, and suddenly I picked up that old fantasy again. Many writers visited campus, and the more I met, the more my own dream seemed possible. And then I discovered that the leap from reader to writer was a short one—I had been such a voracious reader all these years that when I sat down to imagine a story, it came so easily, so naturally, so rewarding.

You lay claim to many identities, including Chicano. For lay people who may not be familiar with this term, or may understand it only through popular culture, explain what it means historically.

González: Chicano identity really took hold in the 1960s, particularly in the American Southwest, among young people born and/or raised in the U.S. of Mexican parents. They felt only partially connected to Mexican culture and didn’t quite feel American either. The term Mexican-American was used, but that word implied a border between things Mexican and American. These young people were a combination of both, part of a new cultural awareness that blurred the line between Mexico and the U.S. The term Chicano became popular when young activists, mostly students, organized around social issues like the anti-war movement and César Chávez’ farmworker boycotts. This cultural revolution grew and is still around today, having taken root in college curricula, with a literature of its own, and signals a commitment to political activism. For me, that means being a writer and contributing to the important legacy of Chicano literature.

In your work, you reveal the trials and tribulations of invisible Mexican migrant laborers in the U.S. What do you hope readers will take away from this?

González: Since I come from two generations of migrant farmworkers, that world is important to me. I write about it, I honor it, and I engage in conversations about workers’ rights in this country, especially when it comes to farm labor. I wish that politicians and the media would stop criminalizing the undocumented alien or characterizing field work as labor without value, and those who perform it as invaluable as well. The field worker is a human being with a complex life, with dreams that extend beyond the fields—if not for themselves, then for their children. And I hope that my work is cultivating a portrait of the worker as a person who deserves respect, empathy, support, and understanding. And if the person is valued, then so, too, is his or her community.

You identify as a Chicano gay immigrant. What place do you see yourself occupying in this literature? How important is it for gay Chicanos and Latino/a writers to give voice to these experiences, and why?

González: No person, no community, no culture but will better itself without critique. If I set out to write about Mexicans or Chicanos/Latinos in the U.S., I can’t romanticize, and certainly its sexist and homophobic tendencies need to be recognized and dealt with. These problems and scars have to be named to become visible, and then they have to be processed. That’s why the queer or gay life within the Chicano experience has to be part of the narrative—not as outsiders or marginal characters but as central characters.

What has inspired you to write children’s books and young-adult novels? Do you have specific goals in mind when doing so?

González: I wrote two children’s books because I used to work with children in...
Campus News: Queer Newark

Month-long “Sanctuary” Event Series Highlights Newark’s LGBT History

Newark’s LGBT community has a proud history, one of many strands in the fabric of the city’s larger narrative. But for many years, that story has sat in the wings, while other groups and events that have shaped Newark’s illustrious past and present have taken center stage.

That’s beginning to change, however, as Newark’s LGBT residents coalesce around efforts by community activists and Rutgers University–Newark faculty members.

In 2012, RU-N held the first-ever “Queer Newark: Our Voices, Our Histories” conference, which drew more than 300 people. They listened to three generations of LGBT Newark residents share their stories on an array of topics, including childhood, education, religion, families and parenting, love and sexuality, friendship, and club and ball scenes.

The event also marked the beginning of RU-N’s Queer Newark Oral History Project (QNOHP), an ambitious effort to document the city’s LGBT history.

Cut to fall 2014, and the movement continues.

During the month of October, QNOHP and Newark-based Yendor Productions held a series of art, literary, and historical events called “Sanctuary,” which celebrated the historical role of Newark’s club spaces as sites of LGBT solidarity and sustenance, while also expanding outreach to LGBT people and their supporters in every ward of the city.

“LGBT life in Newark is incredibly vibrant and resilient,” says Beryl Satter, professor of American History at RU-N and one of the driving forces behind QNOHP. "And the club and ballroom scene played a vital role in the history of the city’s LGBT culture. The clubs were a place of sanctuary for socializing and supporting one another, while ballroom families were just that for many years, especially during the height of the AIDS crisis.”

“Sanctuary” kicked off on October 11 with an art exhibit and reception. On October 16, RU-N hosted a panel discussion featuring promoters, performers and participants from some of Newark’s legendary and contemporary club spaces and ballroom houses.

The panelists discussed the worlds they made inside their clubs, the care they took of one another during tragedies— including the AIDS crisis—and the impact that their creativity had on larger national trends of music, fashion, dance, and generational self-expression.

On October 17, “Sanctuary” held a spoken-word performance, and on the 19th, there was a tea party plus a special film screening and panel discussion in conjunction with GET DOWN Campaign’s “No More Stigma” film series.

The month-long “Sanctuary” program culminated on October 25 with “Fire and Ice: The FireBall Returns,” a gala event featuring lip-synching, dance, and live performance at the Robert Treat Hotel. The evening also was a benefit for the Newark LGBT Community Center.

Satter says the idea of celebrating the history of Newark’s LGBT club and ballroom scene came about with the input of city residents.

“We’ve held many outreach meetings with members of the LGBT community, and we want to do programs that reflect their interests and concerns,” she says. "We also have a goal of linking the generations and sharing knowledge among the age groups. Young people are interested in the club and ballroom scenes, and older residents know, from experience, the role that these institutions played in Newark’s LGBT history.”

Satter’s goal aligns with QNOHP’s mission to document and share the history of Queer Newark with both the LGBT community and those outside it. Once history is accessible, she says, it becomes real to those too young to have lived it.

She aims to make QNOHP a true community-based and community-directed initiative, training residents to do oral histories and collect artifacts of the LGBT community. The key, then, is to make them easily accessible.

“We are seeking members of the LGBT community in Newark of all ages so we can interview them, and copy and digitize their papers, photos and other archival information,” says Satter. “These will then be available to all on the web, possibly through a platform hosted by the Rutgers University Library.”

For Rodney Gilbert, founder and CEO of Vendor Productions, and the other half of the duo responsible for “Sanctuary,” the larger archival history project and other events are all of a piece, one that is vital to telling the full story of Newark.

“We are an integral part of this city’s cultural fabric, and we always have been,” says Gilbert. “Sanctuary” gives proof of that fact. We need to show the truth of our past in order to have an inclusive and enriching future for all people in Newark.”
Faculty Profile: Kristi Bergman
New PALS/ESL Director Expanding the Program’s Size and Reach

Rutgers University-Newark has always been a crossroads, an intellectual hub in the center of New Jersey’s largest city, initially drawing students from various parts of the state, then from around country and world.

The campus has also been ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the most diverse in the country for 18 years running. Students often refer to the student body as a “mini–United Nations.”

Many administrative and departmental components support and nurture this diversity, but perhaps none more so than RU-N’s Program in American Language Studies (PALS), the campus’ English as a Second Language (ESL) department.

PALS, an NCAS program that has served all of RU-N for more than 25 years, quietly goes about its business of preparing international students for the rigors of academic work in English, while also reaching out to the greater Newark community with a host of ESL classes.

Earlier this year, PALS got a new director when Kristi Bergman took the helm. Bergman, the former chair of the ESL and Modern Languages Department at Atlantic Cape Community College, has made it her mission to take RU-N’s successful, well-established ESL program and turn it into a powerhouse, and she has the blueprint to make it happen.

We sat down with Bergman recently to get her take on where PALS has been and where it’s going, and how she’s increasing the department’s impact on Newark residents.

Can you describe the student composition of the PALS program at Rutgers University–Newark?
We have 95 students currently, and just over half are of traditional college age (18–24). The largest group is Saudi, followed by students from various Asian countries and others from Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Three-quarters are here for full-time academic study, while others are here on tourist visas and can do part-time study for up to 6 months. The remainder are either citizens or green-card holders. Many of our students have undergraduate degrees from their home country and are interested in pursuing advanced degrees in the U.S., possibly at Rutgers-Newark.

How about your faculty?
This session, 80 percent of our faculty are native American English speakers from various regions of the U.S. with various accents. The remaining non-native English speakers are from other countries and allow our students to be exposed to those different accents. This session, we have one faculty member each from Iran, Haiti, Spain, Turkey, and Moldova.

When you arrived at RU-N in January, what shape was the PALS program in, and what did you set as your goals?
The program had a solid foundation. Where I thought we could add value was by revising the curriculum a bit, enhancing professional development for faculty, and doing an administrative overhaul.

Can you elaborate?
With the curriculum, we combined language strands (reading, writing, listening, speaking) that were previously taught separately, and now have faculty collaborating across those strands to better align our goals and student-learning outcomes. The idea is to take an integrated approach to content so that, for instance, students can take what they learn in grammar class and apply it in writing class so their work has more meaning and continuity. We also shifted the emphasis by doubling the amount of time spent on writing and scaling back on reading, since reading strategies can be covered inside the classroom and students can then read and apply those strategies outside the classroom.

And how have you enhanced professional development for faculty?
PALS faculty used to present to each other about what they were doing in their classrooms, which is important. But now we’re also sending faculty to conferences, widening their base of best practices and then having them share that knowledge with the department. I’ve also encouraged our faculty to submit proposals to conferences so they can be presenters. Not only does it enhance their careers and teaching, but it gets our department and the Rutgers-Newark name out there as well. All of this can only benefit our students in the end.

You also mentioned an administrative overhaul for PALS.
Yes. We’ve been revising how we maintain student records and have been updating our PALS computer lab. And since we’re growing at quite a clip, we’ve also added an administrator to support both the PALS program and our IELTS [International English Language Testing System] test center. International students looking to gain acceptance into U.S. universities must take either the IELTS or TOEFL test. We’re one of two IELTS Test Centers in New Jersey—of the 900 worldwide. We provide this service to both our students and those around the region and Canada, and our center is expected to double in traffic by the end of this year.

And your PALS program reaches many Newark residents as well?
Yes, and our PALS program is also expanding. We’re now offering semester-long Saturday courses and have been marketing this new community-based ESL program—which offers an integrated language experience to people from Newark and neighboring towns who are not seeking an academic degree but are looking for job opportunities and/or wanting to function better in their communities. We look forward to adding evening courses as the program grows. Our goal is to be a full-service program that gives back to the local community.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us.
Thank you. It’s been a pleasure.
Alumni Profile Stan Markowitz

NCAS Alumnus Caps Off Remarkable Career as Academic-Activist

As a Jewish boy growing up in Passaic, N.J., in the 1940s, Stan Markowitz (NCAS ’62) remembers living on an all-white street. Just one block away, but a world apart, was a street full of African American families. Markowitz had little contact with these families—or any people of color for that matter. He wondered why this was the case as a child but never raised the issue with his parents.

Then one day his mother came home with a story: She had been riding a town bus that was nearly full to capacity when a black woman got in and, seeing few empty seats, sat down next to a white woman. When the latter shot up immediately to find another seat, Markowitz’ mother got up and sat down next to the black woman to send a message of solidarity.

“I remember being very proud of my mother,” says Markowitz. “I felt good about what she had done—about her basic decency and sense of fairness. This was a formative moment for me in identifying issues of race.”

Markowitz went on to turn that moment—and many later ones—into a stellar career as an academic and activist, dedicating himself to positive social change both in and out of the classroom for more than 40 years and leaving a legacy in the Baltimore, Md., area that will be felt for generations to come. His time spent at Rutgers University–Newark (RU-N), and later the University of Maryland and Howard University, played a key role in expanding his awareness and propelling him into that remarkable dual career.

In many ways, though, Markowitz was an unlikely scholar-activist.

Raised in Passaic by working-class parents, he remembers few books in their home. His mother had a high-school education; his father dropped out in 10th grade and had difficulty reading, though he’d do his best to read the newspaper aloud to Markowitz and his younger sister, Barbara, and have political discussions with them.

At age 13, Markowitz and his family moved to the largely Jewish Weequahic section of Newark, N.J., where he attended high school. His father had a small paint-and-wallpaper store on Springfield Avenue near High Street. Markowitz remembers a city segregated into different ethnic and racial enclaves. Again, he had little contact with people of color.

He was also a mediocre student in high school, not applying himself despite his high SAT scores. He applied to RU-N and was accepted into the business administration-and-accounting program in 1955. Markowitz floundered, spent much of his time playing cards in the student lounge, and flunked out after a year and a half.

He did a two-year stint in the Army, which matured him, then returned to RU-N, intellectually curious and hungry for knowledge. He dove right in, taking courses in the classics, history and literature, along with geology courses—while working part-time at his father’s store.

“I had some great professors at Rutgers-Newark, including Stringfellow Barr and Dr. [Henry] Blumenthal,” says Markowitz. “They taught me things like the Socratic method, corrected for the biases of traditional Western Civ courses, and really expanded my thinking.”

In 1963, Markowitz moved on to the University of Maryland for graduate work in U.S. History. He was now married and had the first of three children, with two more on the way during the ’60s.

At Maryland, he focused on his course work and connected with a liberal professor who, along with the professor’s wife, took part in protests to create integrated housing and help blacks get hired at a local supermarket. Markowitz joined them and therein began his activist career.

He joined in many other battles while at Maryland, including a fight to find off-campus housing for African American graduate students who typically were turned away by white landlords.

After finishing his graduate work in 1966, Markowitz began a three-year assignment teaching U.S. History and social science courses at Howard University, a historically black university in Washington, D.C. It was a turbulent time, with the Civil Rights Movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and the Vietnam War all part of the political landscape.

“Being at Howard at such a crucial time accelerated my education and activism,” says Markowitz. “I gained much more...”

Continued on page 8
insight into the feelings of black people by being there, saw how racism was not just personal but structural and institutional, and realized there was a lot of material out there that needed to be made available to students but wasn’t.”

Markowitz took part in major demonstrations, including the March on Washington, and put much of his efforts into revising his courses and rethinking how U.S. History was taught.

“I didn’t want to be part of a profession that was distorting American history to maintain a narrative of marching toward freedom and prosperity, while injuries to others were just aberrations,” says Markowitz. “I owed that to my students.”

In 1969, Markowitz moved on to become an associate professor at the Essex campus of the Community College of Baltimore County, in Maryland, where he would stay for nearly 30 years. There he diversified his teaching with specific courses on African American and Native American history, along with women’s and labor history, and expanded his activism both on and off-campus.

He helped African American students create the first Black Student Union at Essex; taught U.S. History courses to prison inmates; co-created a documentary film on labor; took part in protests against the Vietnam War; worked for nuclear disarmament with SANE/Freeze; joined the Piedmont Peace Project in North Carolina to organize poor people of all colors around various issues; ran community-organizing workshops in Hungary after the fall of the Soviet Union; advocated for affordable housing in Baltimore; created a nonprofit that runs anti-oppression workshops.

The list goes on.

Markowitz went into semi-retirement in 1999, teaching U.S. History part-time at the Maryland Institute College of Art until 2004, while continuing his activism. In 2009, he slowed down due to health issues, but he’s still sought out for advice on community organizing by younger generations of Baltimore-area activists carrying the torch of social justice.

In summing up his career, Markowitz returns to that seminal moment of his childhood.

“I just always had a strong sense of the importance of fairness growing up—focusing on anything that gave some people advantages over others,” he says. “That incident with my mother, it still looms large to this day.”

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NCAS Alumnus Caps Off Remarkable Career as Academic-Activist

“I just always had a strong sense of the importance of fairness growing up.”

Continued from page 4

Sitting Down With Professor and Acclaimed Writer Rigoberto González

my 20s, as a literacy specialist at an after-school program, and when I introduced books to the children, I realized how few I found with Latino protagonists, written by Latino authors. So, I set out to write a few of my own. With the young-adult novels, an editor approached me to write one, pointing out the same thing: few Latino protagonists, let alone gay characters, and few Latino authors. So, I took up the challenge, inspired by the death of Lawrence King, the young man from Oxnard, Calif., who was killed after he revealed a crush on another boy in high school. It occurred to me how much we needed to let gay youth know that they mattered, that their lives were important, that life wasn’t easy, but it could be beautiful. And The Mariposa Club series was born.

You’ve taken on a lot of responsibilities in addition to writing. You’re also known for your advocacy of emerging writers. Can you speak to that?

González: I didn’t get to this stage of my career alone. I had so many incredible mentors; so many friends who were there as coaches, cheerleaders, sounding boards, champions; and so many teachers who offered guidance—and readers who wrote to express their gratitude. As solitary as the writing process is, the profession is a community. And I made it my mission a very long time ago to seek out the very early careers and give those with talent and ambition a little boost—because I’ve been there, and it feels so good to have a writer with more experience step in and say, “Hey, I see you; I like what you’re doing.”