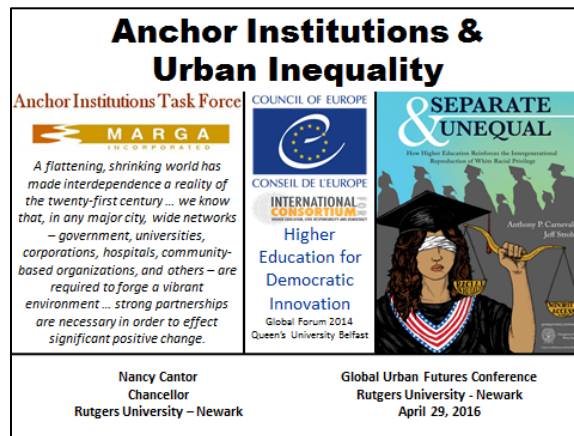


# Anchor Institutions & Urban Inequality

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As we focus today on cross-institutional partnerships to build inclusive cities, I want to begin with a decidedly *local lens* on this topic, focusing “in place” if you will, on anchor institutions (universities, hospitals, cultural institutions) with long standing ties to and commitments in their particular geographies— and then considering how the narratives of these anchor institution collaborations locally expand in networks of similarly engaged anchors in challenged cities across the globe.<sup>2</sup> What, on one hand, is assuredly a distinctly place-based strategy to confront urban inequality can, on the other hand, quickly turn out to be anything but parochial, resonating broadly, even as it remains true to the particulars of deeply embedded and sustained local partnerships and partners.

<sup>1</sup> This speech was prepared for the Global Urban Futures: Inclusive Cities in Theory and Practice Conference, organized by Global Urban Studies @RU-N, panel on Cross-Institutional Partnerships to Build Inclusive Cities, Rutgers University-Newark, April 29, 2016. I appreciate the input of Mara Sidney, Jamie Lew, Kyle Farmbry, and Peter Englot.

<sup>2</sup> See the Anchor Institutions Task Force, [www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf](http://www.margainc.com/initiatives/aitf). And the international partnership network as described in Sjur Bergan, Tony Gallagher, and Ira Harkavy (Eds.). *Higher Education for Democratic Innovation*, Strasbourg: France, Council of Europe Higher Education Series, 2016.



Anchor institutions take their very identity from their connectedness – physical, spiritual, economic, social, cultural and human capital links– to the places, in this case cities, in which they have long roots and interdependent futures. Take, for example, Rutgers University-Newark – an anchor institution that we like to say is not just “in” Newark but decidedly “of” Newark, inhabiting iconic buildings once centerpieces of a proud downtown that is once again being reborn, tracing our institutional identity as a richly multi-racial, multi-ethnic haven for opportunity-making to the narratives of migration, rebellion, and immigration that define the strength and resilience of the city of Newark’s remarkable 350 year history. Where Newark goes is where Rutgers University-Newark goes, and that interdependence also runs the other way for the City, as it does for the City’s relationship with so many of the key anchor institutions here with whom we too collaborate – from Prudential, at home in Newark for 140 years, to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center whose James Moody Jazz festival celebrates a spiritual and cultural arc to today, birthed by Newark’s home-town Jazz legends (Moody, Wayne Shorter, Woody Shaw, and the great vocalist Sarah Vaughn, recently honored with a stamp by the U.S. Postal Service, among others), an arc narrated in the world’s largest Jazz Archive at our Institute of Jazz Studies.



And while the future of Newark and Rutgers-Newark will be written in the stories of the *Newest Americans*<sup>3</sup> alongside those of the children of long-time residents, as they grow up in our neighborhoods, inhabit our classrooms, and create the innovations to power the companies like Audible and Panasonic, new to Newark, the storyline can also be traced back without interruption. The stories of today go back to the aspirations of those who took a long march from the South to the North in prior centuries and the generations thereafter of immigrants from diasporas all over the world who came (and keep coming) in search of justice, and their progeny who protested unfulfilled dreams in the Newark rebellions of 1967 and 1974, and in student protests such as the Rutgers-Newark takeover of Conklin Hall by the Black Organization of Students in 1969. Identities forged in lock-step, defined by struggles for what is still undone, as economic inequality still holds back too much of the talent of Newark in dashed hopes of educational attainment and harsh realities of under-resourced schools, the ravages of mass incarceration, and the architecture of segregation, born of flight to the suburbs and solidified over the ensuing years by subtle but powerful discriminatory practices in real estate and banking.<sup>4</sup>

### *A rebirth of interdependence*

At the risk of over-simplifying what are highly complex systemic patterns of inequality in education, health, public safety, housing, and employment occurring over decades, one recurrent theme that needs turning around has been a widespread failure of *interdependence*, and that is what the promise of good anchor institution-city-community collaborations can hope to reverse. Institutions, sectors, social groups, adjacent communities, all have turned a blind eye too many times to the colossal waste of talent in our midst – failing to understand what Newark Rabbi Joachim Prinz described in 1963, in his speech at the March on Washington, as the moral concept of “neighbor.” He said: “Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man’s dignity and integrity.”

<sup>3</sup> *Newest Americans*, Issue 01: Summer 2015, <http://newestamericans.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> See *New York Times* editorial page, *The Architecture of Segregation*, September 6, 2015, SR8.

A rebirth of a strong, collective sense of interdependence is precisely what is necessary (though perhaps not altogether sufficient) to turn urban inequality on its head in a place like Newark. This is a city where the poverty rate and unemployment rate are all well beyond the national average but we also have prominent and committed corporate anchors ready to hire and source their procurement locally, and looking to support workforce development, including engaging 3,000 Newark youth in summer work employment programs. As in many cities, while the real estate boom downtown may not reach directly into our main residential neighborhoods, it at least does not gentrify spaces already taken by local residents, and promises indeed to connect local artists and entrepreneurs in a district with broad positive ripple effects if there is collaboration with CBOs and an inter-generational population base. There is an alarming scarcity of primary care providers but we also have several major hospitals and Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences ready to be galvanized in support of improved public health, and growing neighborhood mobilization around child and maternal nutrition, through the Fairmount Promise Neighborhood planning, and active engagement of faith-based leaders, Rutgers-Newark, and the State Department of Health around African-American Brain Health. Too many of our neighborhoods are plagued with high crime rates and recidivism amongst a large re-entry population but there are also signs of real progress, including a civilian review board newly appointed by the Mayor, a cross-sector Safer Newark Council, and the engagement of criminal justice and social work faculty with the parole and re-entry court systems, as well as a Youth Violence Consortium and several urban agriculture projects to engage youth in reclaiming vacant lots from havens of violence to productive green spaces. In other words, in each arena, from economic development to public health and safety, progress will depend on the success of many efforts to build on local assets by mobilizing partnerships that cross-sectors and geographies and generations in sustained and sustainable (and that is the key concept) collaborations for change.

Newark Residents Education Attained 2008-12		% Age 25+
Associate's degree	4.5%	
Bachelor's degree	8.9%	
Graduate or professional degree	3.6%	
Associate's degree or higher	17.0%	

- Poverty rate: 28%
- 3,800 disconnected youth of out 10,000 high-school age youth
- Homicide rate of 33.4 vs. 4.5 statewide per 100,000
- 24% of residents reported fair or poor health in last 30 days
- 12% of residents reported eating <1 serving of fruits/vegetables per day

**The Star-Ledger**

Civilian oversight needed to 'build faith' in Newark cops, mayor says

**Newark LandCare:**  
Greening Vacant Lots for a Safer, Healthier City

Perhaps most central to this future, is the movement to reverse the performance of Newark’s K-12 schools – which have been under-performing despite a takeover by the State of New Jersey many years back. Today, there is strong commitment on the part of the City, the School District, and a variety of CBOs, corporations, and all the higher education anchors to

recreate strong pathways for students to educational attainment and the workforce, and there is also a realization of the hard work that this entails. And while educational attainment is only part of the puzzle to economic and community development for Newark, it is a key part of both the problem and the solution, as the OECD has reported in a study of the widening inequality gap across a wide range of countries – “educational attainment is the measure by which people are being sorted into poverty or relative wealth,”<sup>5</sup> and who better than educational anchor institutions – in public-private, cross-sector partnerships – to take some collective responsibility for reversing that trend.<sup>6</sup>

Changing the inequality map in Newark, and for that matter in cities across the globe, requires systematic attention to these *pathways to opportunity* – educational and economic – that change the effects of what Raj Chetty and his colleagues call the “birth lottery” so that inter-generational mobility shifts.<sup>7</sup> It also requires that stronger, healthier, safer neighborhoods replace the current conditions that put in danger the likelihood that individuals and communities can thrive and engage these pathways to opportunity. And all of this work, this change in both the *structure of opportunity* and the *conditions for growth*, demand a collective will to overcome the divisive social landscape that pits people and groups in a destructive zero-sum competition that turns diversity into a threat rather than an asset to be leveraged. If we are to build truly inclusive cities in theory and practice, as the title of this conference calls us to consider, then we need an *ecosystem of democratic engagement* that will undergird and catalyze full participation and partnerships. To make this happen in turn involves embracing a new collective definition of self-interest and mutual benefit -- understanding that where others go is fundamental to where we all go, as individuals, as institutions, as cities.

### *Changing the educational opportunity structure*

## Changing Educational Opportunity

**Newark City of Learning Collaborative**

60+ cross-sector partners including City of Newark, Newark Public Schools, higher ed, & nonprofits collaborating to:

- Expand & strengthen K-16 educational pathways
- Re-engage disconnected youth
- Retain college grads
- Re-engage adult learners



<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/edu/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Anglin, Elise Boddie, David Troutt, Nancy Cantor, & Peter Englot, Fulfilling Martin Luther King Jr.’s Dream: The Role of Higher Education, *The Conversation*, January 18, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, Emmanuel Saez, and Nicholas Turner, Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility, *NBER Working Paper 19844*, January 2014.



In turn, we believe that educational attainment is at the center of changing the urban inequality map, and to this end, in Newark, more than 60 partner organizations, from the 2- and 4-year, public and private, higher education institutions to community-based college pipeline programs to the Newark Public Schools (charter and traditional publics) to corporate partners (like Prudential, Panasonic, and Audible.com) to City Hall and the local philanthropic organizations, have committed to increasing the post-secondary attainment rate of residents of Newark from 17% to 25% by 2025. This collective impact consortium, the *Newark City of Learning Collaborative*,<sup>8</sup> is managed by Rutgers-Newark's Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies as a backbone organization gathering data city-wide and convening multiple "learning groups" drawing on these different partner organizations. *NCLC* works on many fronts, ranging from developing cohort-pipeline programs with middle and high school students, sharing "college knowledge" with students and families (including financial aid information), supporting test preparation, fostering dual enrollment programs for high school students and aligning curricular and transfer pathways from 2- to 4-year institutions, providing leadership training institutes with high school students that engage the corporate community, and working with the City on its summer youth employment program.

Each anchor institution and collaborating partner plays to its strengths and commits its resources to particular projects that facilitate the larger goal of changing the post-secondary attainment map in Newark – whether it is Rutgers-Newark announcing a robust financial aid support program for students from Newark, Essex County College and Rutgers and NJIT creating cohorts of high school students in *Newark Achieves*, the corporate community stepping forward with summer internships, and the City of Newark creating *Centers of Hope* for programming in neighborhoods. Even more critical is the engagement of *NCLC* as a holistic entity in major education initiatives as they arise in the city – for example, the Newark Public Schools and the City of Newark, along with several philanthropic groups and community-based organizations, have embarked on an ambitious program to build neighborhood community schools with social, health, and academic supports throughout the South Ward of Newark, and *NCLC* is at this table; or, similarly, these same groups have combined to tackle head-on the question of educational attainment for "disconnected youth" (some 4,000 or more not in their high school seats) and *NCLC* is once again a central backbone resource to this major city-wide initiative.

In this context, therefore, the critical challenge and precondition for success is that partnerships both focus on doable projects that address shared priorities and goals – be it post-secondary attainment in *NCLC* or spurring entrepreneurship, industrial solutions, technology ventures and local procurement in the economic development arena – and at the same time solidify for the long-haul the collaborative infrastructure across anchor institutions, government,

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<sup>8</sup> Newark City of Learning Collaborative, see [www.nclc2025.org](http://www.nclc2025.org), and <https://www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/newark-city-learning-collaborative>.

the business community, CBOs, and philanthropy, that can jump into action when opportunities arise. We need to address the sustainability of commitments to anchor partnerships and cross-sector collaboration, especially as this work is very “messy,” complex, prone to setbacks, and vulnerable to changes in leadership in any given organization or sector – hence the “whole” has to be as important as the “partner parts” in this work if the map of inequality is to shift for the long run.

### *Changing the (pre)conditions for growth*



If the key challenge for success in changing the map of educational opportunity and economic development is the sustainability of the collaborative infrastructure so that new possibilities can be quickly embraced as they arise (versus recreating partnerships for each project piecemeal), then the precondition for that to happen lies in the trust built community-wide in the inclusiveness of the participating partners. Anchor institutions cannot be seen as “doing things to” or “bringing solutions to” communities in a one-way transaction; there has to be a very broad reach to a wide-ranging “community of experts” engaged in these partnerships. In Newark, therefore, to build strong, safe, healthy neighborhoods (a precondition for success in the education and economic development arenas), very inclusive collaboratives have formed, including a Youth Violence Prevention Consortium, a Health, Education, Advocacy, and Law Collaborative, a Safer Newark Council, and more, and in each case, the aim is to co-create interventions on the ground with as much weight given to those who live the issues day to day as to those who teach it or research it. When the H.E.A.L. collaborative, for example, works with medical students and residents in training programs at the intersection of poverty, health, and disability advocacy, they do so by deeply engaging community and patient groups in the problem-definition and intervention-treatment process, as well engaging State legislators and the legal community in writing progressive policies to strengthen client rights. And the same can be said in all of the community-embedded partnerships networks that Rutgers-Newark scholars and activists are engaged in to strengthen the conditions for growth in neighborhoods across the City. Anchor institutions must learn to be a part of, not the lead in, establishing inclusive collaborative

networks, especially as the insights from those on the ground are critical to any given project's success.

### *Changing the tone and tenor of civic interaction*



At the heart of the sustainability of this work and its potential for success is a foundation of civic dialogue, interaction, engagement across generations, cultures, organizational scale, geographies, and sectors that makes collaboration possible and impactful. And in a time of such divisiveness in our social and political landscape, both locally, nationally, and globally, it could not be more critical for anchor institutions and our many partners to find ways to come together across differences, to leverage our diversity for social justice and social change. In this regard, I would point to the value of what I call “third spaces” of collaboration – places in which, for example, universities and communities come together in literal shared space, on shared work, with multiple generations, organizations, and cultures at the table at once. When this kind of “creative placemaking”<sup>9</sup> is at its best, the boundaries that otherwise separate us in the course of daily life and by virtue of our different (institutional) positioning often fall away, at least after some time of interaction and trust-building. In Newark, for example, we are collaborating with multiple small and large local arts organizations and artists in building a university-community arts collaboratory for exactly that purpose. *Express Newark* will inhabit 50,000 square feet in an iconic, once-abandoned, building downtown and give it a rebirth with all the fervent, contested, honest arts-making possible.<sup>10</sup> In it, the next generation artists, humanists, and creative entrepreneurs at Rutgers-Newark will be on equal footing with Newark school children, local Newark artists and innovators, neighborhood CBOs, and arts organizations of every scale. And scale and position is critical here – we cannot allow the big and relatively resourced anchor institutions – be they Rutgers-Newark, Prudential, or the Newark Museum or NJPAC, to outweigh the impact of and contributions to this collaborative effort in creative placemaking of even the smallest but typically boldest of local arts organizations. This has to be as much an effort at leveling a playing field of culture, expression, and democracy, as are our lofty goals for

<sup>9</sup> See for example the Creative Placemaking Leadership Summit 2016, [www.cpsummit2016.org](http://www.cpsummit2016.org).

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.newark.rutgers.edu/files/express-newark-plan.pdf>



*NCLC* and *Safer Newark*, or any of our educational, economic development, or neighborhood collaborations.

There is, of course, no guarantee that differences in power, position, scale, resources, and backgrounds will be able to be easily bridged – in fact, it is unlikely that anything in *Express Newark* will be easy – but if we can at least set the stage for an ecosystem of civic democracy to grow, that will be a victory of sorts in and of itself. And since Newark is a city with a very long – 350 year – history of creativity, resilience, and most of all expressive confrontation with injustice, I have hopes for this generation too.

### *Resonating from local to global and back*



Finally, when we consider the hard work on the ground in places like Newark, and how informed that work must be by both local history and next generation possibilities, we come to the value-added of seeing the local in a global context. We are reminded of these connections every day, both through the technology revolution that brings us closer (at least in principle if not always in practice) but also through the convergence of movements (from student protests on U.S. campuses to those with such similar strains and themes and demands at universities across South Africa; from the xenophobia, Islamophobia, and inter-cultural conflicts that quite literally dot every landscape across that globe; from the focal point on criminal justice and community justice in virtually every urban setting; from the rise of inequality in the midst of disruptive innovation in economies across the development spectrum, and the critical role that education plays if those opportunity maps are to be rewritten). In Newark, we see the global resonance of what we face and how we need to partner in arenas from justice reform to entrepreneurship to community health, education and the arts, perhaps nowhere so pointedly and productively as with South Africa, as our colleagues from the Community Chest of Cape Town, the Ministry of Social Development of the Western Cape, the University of Western Cape and the phenomenal social entrepreneurs at Arts Township International can attest. And the resonance is very deep, bringing us back to the generations of social activists trained in universities – like our own and those in South Africa – pushing for justice, using the arts and education as stepping stones to

bridge social and economic inequality, understanding how the ghosts of the past revisit us today, and pledging to build a better set of urban futures with a new generation of local citizens in a global world. In fact, as we here in Newark are building our new *Honors Living Learning Community*<sup>11</sup> dedicated to cultivating the talent of students who bring their on the ground knowledge of urban inequality to an interdisciplinary social justice curriculum, we look to exchanges with their South African peers, as together they redraw the map of opportunity in our two countries. Accordingly, as we all look to our global urban futures and to building inclusive cities of opportunity, as anchor institutions and community-based organizations and artists and leaders of all sectors, we must turn to that next generation of hopeful citizens-professionals-partners to move us on forward.

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<sup>11</sup> Honors Living-Learning Community, see <http://hllc.newark.rutgers.edu>