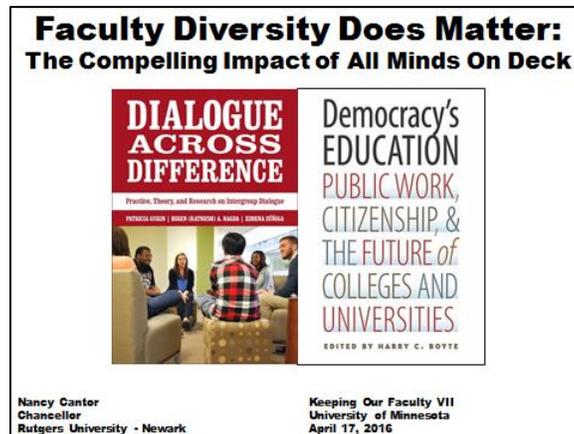


# Faculty Diversity Does Matter: The Compelling Impact of All Minds on Deck

Nancy Cantor  
Chancellor  
Rutgers University-Newark<sup>1</sup>



We live in a time of paradoxes that must confound even the most thoughtful observers of history and societal trends – a time of “exploding diversity”<sup>2</sup> and dynamic intersectionality. Yet a time ripped apart by the persisting ghosts of “hibernating bigotry” as Rupert Nacoste calls out what seems ever so ready to erupt,<sup>3</sup> and by the inequality that seems so durable, as Charles Tilly labelled it decades ago.<sup>4</sup> Yes, our diversity is increasingly defined by the blurring of traditional demographic distinctions, and by the multiple dimensions along which we simultaneously array our identities. But our social, legal, and economic lives are as stubbornly divided along traditionally rigid lines as ever—Black and white (despite all the other colors); American Indians and Americans (despite who came first), undocumented and documented (despite all the generations of documented who came as undocumented), poor and rich (despite more than 50 years of a “war on poverty”), female and male (despite those with transgender identity), Muslim and everyone else (despite the separation of church and state). We may be increasingly

<sup>1</sup> Keynote Address delivered at Symposium entitled *Keeping our Faculty VII: Recruiting, Retaining, and Advancing American Indian Faculty and Faculty of Color*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn., April 17, 2016. I appreciate the input of Peter Englot, Sherri-Ann Butterfield, and Shirley Collado to the ideas and material in these remarks.

<sup>2</sup> William Frey, *A Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Rupert W. Nacoste, *Taking on Diversity: How We Can Move from Anxiety to Respect*, Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2015, p.160. See also Nancy Cantor, *Mirror, Mirror: Reflections on Race and the Visage of Higher Education in America*, *The Conversation*, June 23, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Ca., 1998.

progressive in how we identify ourselves, but we are persistently regressive in how we call out “others.” In fact, *othering* has become a national pastime, more popular even than baseball.



It is against this paradoxical societal landscape that we in higher education need to measure ourselves, using it as a mirror of self-examination, even as we try to transform what we see out there, turning our reflection into a different vision of what we can and should be. Higher education can and should be a place of experimentation and innovation; a place to both grow and to model the best of democracy, for as John Dewey said, democracy needs to be tended to in each new generation.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as any good public humanist will tell us, we can’t know where to go if we don’t know where we came from and how our current state is defined by that past. And as any good social psychologist would say (and I hope I am one), we can’t have a well-functioning democracy without putting those ghosts that we all carry within us on the table. We have to try to deliberately build connections across the psychological and physical boundaries that define “others.” We don’t want to build more walls—we have enough of them—we want to take down walls in the interest of building a more prosperous and just society.

In my community of Newark N.J., where my university, Rutgers University-Newark considers itself an anchor institution not just *in* Newark (by chance) but *of* Newark (in identity and responsibility), understanding where we came from is distinctly the key to understanding how to take down walls and build connectedness and opportunity. The City of Newark, 350 years old this year, and the region of Northern NJ, was built by generations of migration (in the Great Migration from south to north in the early-mid twentieth century) and immigration (for generations from diasporas all over the world) that continues to this day, filling the halls of Rutgers Newark with the most diverse student body imaginable. So when our public humanists team up with photojournalists and social scientists studying immigration, they produce a digital platform, called the *Newest Americans*<sup>6</sup> to give voice to current struggles through the lens of the past. They narrate the stories of three generations of Barakas (including our Mayor, the Honorable Ras J. Baraka, son of the poet-activist, Amiri Baraka and grandson of Coyt Jones who came to Newark from the rural south in 1927) and set them side-by-side with the stories of our current heroes and heroines, our students and their immigrant families. Consider, Marisol

<sup>5</sup> John Dewey, Education and Social Change, *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, 1937, 23(6), 472-474.

<sup>6</sup> *Newest Americans*, Issue 01: Summer 2015, <http://newestamericans.com/>.

Conde-Hernandez, a Mexican-American student at Rutgers-Newark law school who spent all but one of her 27 years in the U.S., but is not a citizen; she has dreams but not yet the reality of practicing law here, to free others like her in her community and ready them for opportunity that keeps eluding some of our newest “Americans,” as it has the African-American community of Newark for generations.

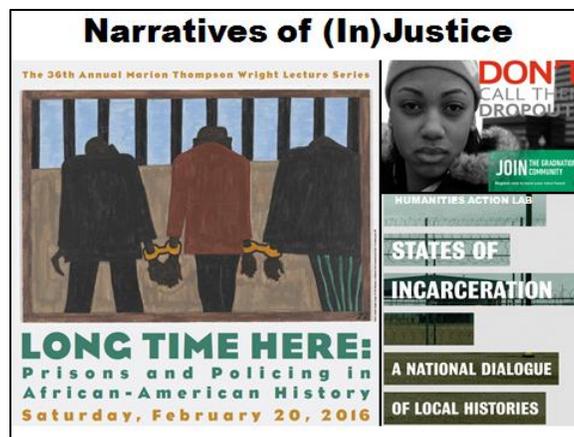


It is this narrative of aspiration, of families who came and families coming, all still searching for opportunity, set against a series of walls to climb or take down, that constitutes the backdrop, the landscape of ghosts, with which to reckon as we try to understand the pressing social, political, and economic challenges of today, including the talent that we aren't cultivating as a nation. It is, for example, the narrative of mass incarceration today—the *New Jim Crow*,<sup>7</sup> as Michelle Alexander calls it out, set against the historical context of policing in African-American communities, that serves as the backdrop when GradNation<sup>8</sup> comes to Newark to consider how to keep the approximately 4,000 “opportunity youth” – those not currently in their high school seats—on a path to educational attainment and away from the criminal justice system. It is the narrative of anti-immigration hysteria today, set against historical moments of similar xenophobia—such as the internment of Japanese-Americans in WWII—that makes the *Humanities Action Lab* analysis of protests of prisoner abuse at immigrant detention facilities right near Newark, in Elizabeth NJ, nestled alongside the Statue of Liberty, so tragically ironic.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, The New Press, N.Y., Revised Edition, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> See [www.gradnation.org](http://www.gradnation.org).

<sup>9</sup> Professor Mary Rizzo's students at Rutgers University-Newark traced the history of the detainee's uprising at the then-named Esmor Detention Facility in 1995, contributing to a travelling exhibition on Global Dialogues on Incarceration as part of the Humanities Action Lab. The Exhibition will be on display at the Gateway Center Gallery, Newark, N.J., Fall, 2017.



### *Measuring Who We Are; Who We Can Become*

Why you might ask is this inter-generational narrative of opportunity-seeking, and talent lost, and walls erected, critically relevant as we consider in this symposium how faculty diversity matters in the cultivation of wisdom and the call to transformative action? It matters I believe because the task still before us in higher education is to build that inter-generational community of diverse opportunity-seekers and knowledge-makers. We need to cultivate the very ones who will take down the walls, reconnect us as an inclusive community, and define a more justly prosperous society, and universities need to be anchors in this process of tending to democracy. To do so we need to pay as much attention to the aspirations and to the obstacles that a new generation of faculty of color and American Indian faculty face as we do to opening the academy to full participation of a more diverse student body. Just as the success of families striving for a place in our country depends as much on the opportunities for parents to work and to be enfranchised fully as on the educational attainment of children, so too do the futures of the new professoriate and the futures of the next generation of leaders, citizens, and professionals we educate go forth in lock step. And just as the obstacles facing the newest Americans in Newark resemble hauntingly those faced by generations here before, the same can be said for the inter-generational “families” of the academy—some things change (perhaps there is more real commitment on the part of higher education to becoming diverse) but some things remain stubbornly the same (a set of obstacles to full participation that must be tackled head-on).

At Rutgers-Newark, for example (and I know it is only one example that one could give of inclusive community building in higher education), we are strongly committed to a city-wide collective effort called the *Newark City of Learning Collaborative* to raise the post-secondary attainment rate of residents of Newark to 25% by 2025.<sup>10</sup> To meet this goal, all of the local higher education institutions must increase our enrollment of students from our Greater Newark neighborhoods. Clearly, our contribution to this effort includes considerable work in the Newark Public Schools and with our sister community colleges and other four year institutions. But it also requires an institutional self-examination in which we are thinking very deliberately about what it means for us to cultivate simultaneously a diverse community of learners and scholars. We are already a very diverse institution, reflecting the diversity of our state, with no majority

<sup>10</sup> Newark City of Learning Collaborative, see [www.nclc2025.org](http://www.nclc2025.org), and <https://www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/newark-city-learning-collaborative>.

racial or ethnic group, a majority of Pell eligible students, and many first generation students. Yet, we like many urban public research universities, do not have anywhere near as diverse a faculty as we have a diverse student body, and so when we think about cultivating the talent in Newark, we also think long-term about growing a more diverse professoriate.

To fulfill our full public mission, therefore, we need to examine who we are and what we can become in an inclusive way, from students to faculty to community partners. Therefore, as we build our new 500 student honors living-learning community (HLLC)<sup>11</sup> dedicated to “local citizenship in a global world,” for example, we are thinking not only of how to re-define “honors” by cultivating the local often ignored talent in our midst (in Newark and beyond), but also of how to directly engage and recruit the wisdom of a “new professoriate,” many of whom also bring authentic experience to this interdisciplinary social justice curriculum.<sup>12</sup> The educational leaders designing the HLLC, with their own personal experiences and expertise at the vanguard of programs for access and opportunity, inter-group relations, and publicly-engaged scholarship, understand how critical it is to take an expansive approach to cultivating wisdom simultaneously at the intersection of students, faculty, and community partners.

**Inclusive Learning Communities**

**NEWARK**  
CITY OF LEARNING COLLABORATIVE  
25% by 2025

60+ cross-sector partners collaborating to:

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

**RUTGERS**  
THE HONORS LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

**Re-Defining Honors**

State-of-the-art facility housing 500 students largely from Greater Newark; admission based on leadership, grit, and entrepreneurial skills—not just grades and test scores; cohorts diverse in every dimension; engaging the wisdom of publicly engaged scholars

**The New Professoriate**

Study group examined:

- Supporting and Evaluating Publicly Engaged Scholarship
- Innovations in Promotion and Tenure Criteria
- Building Institutional Resources for the New Professoriate
- Non-Tenure Track Faculty and Part-time Lecturers
- Graduate and Post-graduate Training

The first and second cohorts of students in the Honors Living-Learning Community include those who are first generation to college, who start at community colleges, who are parents or veterans or have come from (some might say survived) the many under-resourced public schools here. They are LGBTQ students of color working on the intersectional questions of their identities, Muslim students venturing beyond their faith community for the first time, and students for whom the ravages of mass incarceration on communities is more than an “academic” question. In turn, they are taught by, mentored by, and instruct in return, an equivalently talented group of publicly-engaged scholars and educational leaders—a group I would say that distinctly represent the new professoriate, often attracted to Rutgers-Newark precisely because of these students and their communities, and the allied possibility of doing high-impact scholarship on the front lines of the challenges of the American landscape of diversity and its yet-to-be-realized opportunity-making.

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

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.newark.rutgers.edu/strategic-plan-implementation>.

When the students in the HLLC face head-on the implications of inequality in America by tackling the *Architecture of Segregation* in American communities, the history of gay rights activism in communities like Newark, the deterioration of the urban ecology in which they live, they do so with faculty for whom this is also more than *just* an exercise for the academy, but rather one for their world.<sup>13</sup> The faculty of HLLC includes individual scholars across a range of relevant disciplines from criminal justice to social work to theater, history to public affairs, and earth and environmental sciences. They have a commitment to front-line engagement often based on some personal connections or passions—as an African-American former law enforcement officer now publicly-engaged scholar and soon-to-be-dean, as a public historian, gay rights activist and contributor to the oral history archive *Queer Newark*,<sup>14</sup> as a social worker committed to restorative justice and re-entry populations, as a community non-profit organizer, as a minority scholar with an abiding passion for broadening participation in STEM, as a sociologist of immigration and race, using the HBO series set in Baltimore, *The Wire*, as a platform for analysis of life in multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural urban communities like Newark, and the list truly goes on.



Yet, as hopeful as we at Rutgers-Newark are at a future that looks more like the inter-generational inclusive community of scholars and learners at the HLLC than like the past, we also know that we have a long way to go to nurture and empower a fully diverse professoriate in keeping with the diversity of our students. As such, there is much work to be done and we need to ask repeatedly: what and who do we invest in as an institution? For if we can't look our publics, our communities, and ourselves in the eye and say that we are deliberately trying to build inter-generationally inclusive communities of scholars that represent the true range of identities and aspirations of our country, and the many worlds from which they arise, then what gives us credibility in asking for that same public to invest in our university going forward?

<sup>13</sup> See for example 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; Mark Krasovic, *The Newark Frontier: Community Action in the Great Society*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, April 2016; Timothy Stewart-Winter, Queer Law and Order: Sex, Criminality, and Policing in the Late Twentieth-Century United States, *The Journal of American History*, June 2015, pp. 61-72; Editorial, "The Architecture of Segregation," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2015, SR8.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://queer.newark.rutgers.edu/>.

### *The Value-Added of Diversity for Publicly-Engaged Innovation*

Consideration of the public's interests in higher education brings me to the value-added of diversity to solving the significant challenges that our communities (broadly speaking) face. There is a substantial need for universities to nurture a more diverse professoriate, not only to build inter-generationally inclusive communities of learners, but also to produce high-impact scholarship to fulfill our public promise. As Scott Page, Katherine Phillips, and many other scholars of organizational behavior and group problem-solving have demonstrated, diverse groups produce better solutions by bringing a variety of insights to bear on tricky problems.<sup>15</sup> Surely the problems of our disciplines and our communities – from climate change and public health to economic inequality and civic dialogue—require and deserve that universities cultivate wisdom in all ways possible, from all peoples possible.<sup>16</sup> In everything from STEM to the arts and public humanities, we are repeatedly reminded of the simple truth—simple to state and hard as ever to actualize—that the contributions of a diverse community of “experts,” with and without pedigree, of all ages and ranks, from the university and the community in equal proportions, makes for collective impact, transforming sticky problems into exciting opportunities. It is simply true that we need all minds on deck to have a legitimate chance of making progress.

Nowhere is this more strikingly apparent than in the arenas of science and public health, but it is equally true as to the health of our civic democracy. Starting though with STEM and health, consider the value-added when the gender dimension is included in everything from testing the efficacy of new kinds of vaccines on women as well as on men to crash tests of cars, where using the typical male dummies simply (and obviously in hindsight) doesn't forecast the effects for women.<sup>17</sup> Is it a coincidence that generations of scientists and engineers just didn't think to ask these representation questions until awareness started being raised about the utility of broadening participation in STEM? It is no wonder that many of the public health challenges in communities like Newark have gone unsolved when the “experts” impose solutions on communities at a distance. If we do not grow inter-generational diversity and inclusive research communities, we will not only be a society “segregated by science” (as New York Times columnist Charles Blow forecasted) but we will not solve our pressing scientific challenges, as Ira Harkavy, Myra Burnett and I suggested in an analysis of the ways in which community-engaged science can both advance innovation and broaden participation, building a better more inclusive future.<sup>18</sup> And universities must step to the plate on this front.

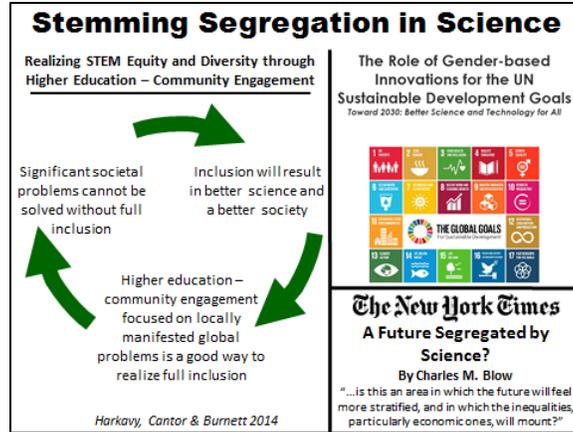
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<sup>15</sup> Scott Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ., 2007; Katherine Phillips, *Why Diversity Matters*, T@lks Columbia, Fall 2015, Season 1, Columbia University; <http://sps.columbia.edu/tals/why-diversity-matters>.

<sup>16</sup> Harry Boyte (Ed.). *Democracy's Education: Public Work, Citizenship, & the Future of Colleges and Universities*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2015; Sjur Bergan, Tony Gallagher, and Ira Harkavy (Eds.). *Higher Education for Democratic Innovation*, Strasbourg: France, Council of Europe Higher Education Series, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.gender-summit.com>.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Blow, A Future Segregated by Science?, *New York Times*, February 2, 2015; Harkavy, I., Cantor, N. and Burnett, M. 2014, *Realizing STEM Equity and Diversity through Higher Education-Community Engagement*, White Paper supported by National Science Foundation under Grant No. 121996, University of Pennsylvania.



Let me illustrate this positive cycle of STEM equity and community-engaged science with reference to the work of Mark Gluck, a Rutgers-Newark neuroscientist who has teamed up with African-American faith-based organizations in Newark, with retired Black nurses as ambassadors, with current Rutgers students who grew up in Newark as scholars and with Newark high school students as pioneers. Together, they co-create and co-implement interventions to get at the considerably elevated rates of brain disturbances (from Alzheimer’s and post-traumatic stress syndrome, to sleep disorders) in our neighborhoods. Not only has Gluck succeeded over the ten years of this work in building trust and enabling a range of interventions to test the science, but he has energized a robust and diverse community of future scholars, scientists, and science-literate citizens to push this work forward considerably.<sup>19</sup>



***Cultivating Diversity and Building Inclusivity for the Public Good***

As this work and work like it around the country suggests, recruiting and empowering a more diverse professoriate engaged with our diverse communities and cultivating a new generation is at the core of our collective public mission. What will it take to succeed at this vital transformation for higher education? As optimistic as I am about the growing commitments of higher education to move to transformative action, I do also believe that this will require real

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.gluck.edu/> for a description of Rutgers-Newark African-American Brain Health Initiative: A University-Community Partnership.

culture change—change that goes well beyond the HR checklist, to addressing the fundamental tendency of our institutions to see diversity as separable from excellence, and the allied tendency of our broader society to narrowly define merit, expertise, and quality in ways that shut out way too many of our freshest minds. What then will it take to change the minds of those with power and influence over the norms of our culture, academic and otherwise?

In this regard, Ira Harkavy suggests that we follow in the great tradition of action research in social psychology, for as Kurt Lewin said, “If you want to understand something, just try to change it.”<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, I think that it is likely that the best way to make progress on our commitments is to do it, that is, to turn from obsessions with being diverse to obsessions with doing diversity. We know, for example, that many faculty of color and American Indian faculty (among others) gravitate toward high-impact, publicly-engaged scholarship.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in the process of trying to figure out how to reward publicly-engaged scholarship at the time of tenure and promotion, we may actually learn the value-added of diversity to excellence, as Tim Eatman and Julie Ellison and others from the national consortium, *Imagining America* have argued for some time now.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, are we ready to roll up our sleeves and try to assess talent in potential students by means other than the narrowest metrics of test scores, using what is euphemistically but certainly incorrectly called “non-cognitive measures” of merit (those that could not be more cognitive as they empower innovation and problem-solving in groups)? When we do this, then we may finally get beyond the walls that separate those that won the family birth lottery from those that didn’t (as economist Raj Chetty calls it).<sup>23</sup> Or, perhaps it is time for us to take seriously Casey Miller and Keivan Stassun’s argument that over-reliance on GREs for graduate school admissions works against broadening participation in STEM.<sup>24</sup> Growing the diversity of the new professoriate will require just such a concerted effort to change what we value by changing the measures we rely on to “select” and reward our students, colleagues, and collaborators. When we change these practices, not only will we likely encourage a more diverse community of scholars and students, we may also come to better understand excellence.

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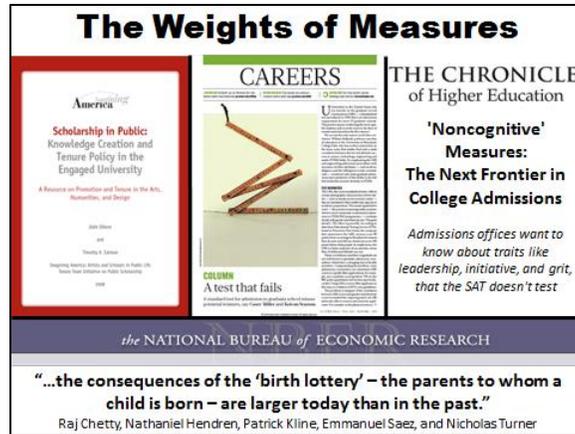
<sup>20</sup> Kurt Lewin, Action Research and Minority Problems, *Journal of Social Issues*, 1946, 2(4), 34-46; Lewin’s quote cited by Ira Harkavy (CEOSE Meeting, NSF, Feb 25, 2016) from compilation by James Neill in “Field Theory-Kurt Lewin,” *Wilderness*, in <http://www.wilderness.com/theory/FieldTheory.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Stephanie Fryberg and Ernesto Martinez (Eds.), *The Truly Diverse Faculty: New Dialogues in American Higher Education*, Palgrave MacMillan Press, London, England, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Julie Ellison & Timothy Eatman, *Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*, Syracuse, N.Y.: Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, 2008; Nancy Cantor and Steve Lavine, Taking Public Scholarship Seriously. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2006, 52(40).

<sup>23</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, 2015, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19844>.

<sup>24</sup> Casey Miller and Keivan Stassun, A test that fails: A standard test for admission to graduate school misses potential winners, *Nature*, 2014, 510, 303.



And speaking of valuing diversity, not surprisingly, it comes down to investing in it, and I believe there is nowhere better to start this than in deep and expansive partnerships with a wide-ranging community of collaborators across sectors and ages and groups. When we do the hard, messy work of trying to get beyond the confines of our disciplines, our campuses, our comfort zones, and invest our time and resources for sustained periods, then it creates an interdependence with “others” that does more for cultivating wisdom and enriching our social and intellectual connectedness than anything I can imagine we would concoct by ourselves. I have seen this work in many places, but in Newark, most recently, in what we are calling Express Newark, a university-community arts collaboratory. Express Newark will soon inhabit 50,000 square feet of a newly renovated iconic building in downtown Newark, filling it with Jazz and makers spaces and multi-media centers, portrait studios and print shops, all steered by an operating committee full of both local and university artists and humanists partnering to embrace deliberately and expansively the assets of a diverse, multi-generational community like Newark.<sup>25</sup> To make Express Newark work, the university has to invest in the community; the community has to trust the university—and that will be a constant work-in-progress, hopefully demonstrating that Lewin was exactly right—we will come to understand each other by trying to change how we interact, share, and depend upon one another.



<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.newark.rutgers.edu/files/express-newark-plan.pdf>.

### *Transforming Ourselves to Transform Others*

Imagining what it will take for higher education to more respectfully value the contributions of those outside the academy and to share and collaborate in more inclusive inter-generational environments like Express Newark, leads us back to where I began this speech. We, like our neighbors, have a penchant for “othering,” blaming other kinds of institutions and professionals—K-12, the courts, politicians, corporations—for the sorry state of our polity. And surely some of this is justified. Yet clearly we also have to undergo a transformation ourselves so as to model something different than the discord and wasted talent we see around us, on one hand, and to then leverage our diversity, on the other, to build a thriving inclusive community of scholars capable of more fully addressing the public good.

There is no ready-made recipe for institutional transformation, to be sure. However, at the least it starts with committing ourselves as institutions—but more pointedly, as communities of scholars and citizens, friends and strangers—to discussing, reflecting upon, and taking steps to put our own ghosts on the table before we can move forward. We have to discuss the ways in which we contribute to the very fraying of nerves in the world outside our landscapes and learn to model a different, more expansive value system and the concrete norms and practices that allow it to be realized. This is why students across the nation are quite reasonably raising calls for institutional examination of everything from campus icons to curricular content. This is why more and more faculty are asking when we’ll finally recognize the value of their mentoring of a diverse next generation of students (whose progress depends disproportionately upon the work of faculty of color and American Indian faculty)<sup>26</sup>. And it is why many of our admissions professionals are telling us that we contribute to the facile stereotyping of whole groups by our over-reliance on tests known to produce disparate outcomes by race and class. This is why in our surrounding communities, our neighbors fail to fully trust the knowledge we produce, as it is often based on insights that ignore the contributions of their experiences. We can change—by cultivating more wisdom and calling for more transformative action and investment—but we have to start by really listening, as a wise grandmother in the ninth poorest census tract in America once told me—“just ask us; we lay our heads down here at night.” This symposium is dedicated to just such deep and expansive listening, and that is a hopeful sign in itself.



<sup>26</sup> Stephanie Fryberg and Ernesto Martinez (Eds.), *The Truly Diverse Faculty: New Dialogues in American Higher Education*, Palgrave MacMillan Press, London, England, 2014.