Coming Home: Ex-N.J. Legislator, Governor’s Cabinet Member to Head Cornwall Center

by Mike Sutton

After a decades-long journey that included stops on the southern and western coasts of America, East Orange native Stephanie Bush-Baskette’s desire to unite the brainpower of academe with the political brawn of public-policy makers — and thereby improve the lives of urban citizens in the very metropolitan area where she’d grown up — led her home.

Bush-Baskette assumed the post of director of Rutgers-Newark’s Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies Feb. 1.

The Cornwall Center, which opened its new headquarters in a renovated Bleeker Street brownstone in May, was developed through a $2.4 million gift from the Fund for New Jersey. Its two-pronged goal is to advance research on cities and metropolitan areas, and to apply that research to urban public-policy issues and neighborhood revitalization.

“What drew me to this position is that it mirrors exactly what I want to do professionally, and have been doing my entire career: providing the tools for people to empower themselves,” Bush-Baskette said. She stresses that academics, public-policy makers and people in...continued on page 6
From the outside, Conklin Hall looks like a typical, barebones 1960s-style academic building; there’s no hint that Rutgers history was made there. But if its walls could talk, Conklin Hall would tell of a learning experience that took place outside its classrooms on a winter’s day almost four decades ago, and how Rutgers-Newark’s transformation from a mostly white institution into the most diverse university campus in the United States really began in that unassuming building on Feb. 24, 1969.

On that day, the Black Organization of Students (BOS) occupied Conklin Hall to protest the scarcity of black students, black faculty and programs of interest to blacks and other minorities, such as Latinos, as well as to demand changes, both in Newark and at the university. The occupation lasted only 72 hours, but it helped trigger a chain of events that forever changed Rutgers, adding new energy to initiatives such as the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) and sparking the creation of the Academic Foundations department.

Provost Emeritus Norman Samuels—who was a faculty member during the occupation of Conklin—believes that eventually Rutgers would have evolved into a more equitable learning institution, if not for the occupation in 1969.

The 1969 occupation of Conklin Hall took place within a climate of nation-wide dissent and protests over racial discrimination, and followed months of efforts to effect changes at Rutgers. When members of the Black Organization of Students (BOS) occupied Conklin Hall, the challenge for white students such as myself was to find a meaningful way to support the BOS. Our greatest fear was that reactionary white students supported by off-campus militants would storm the building and trigger a full-scale race war. Forming an ad-hoc Concerned Student Coalition, we joined black community activists who maintained an around-the-clock vigil in Ackerson Hall. When a small group of whites who opposed the occupation sought to batter down the doors of Conklin, they were successfully turned back. We initially breathed a sigh of relief when an
Provost’s Research Day to Feature ‘Hot’ Media Topics
Nine Rutgers-Newark faculty, as well as presenters from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), and the Public Health Research Institute (PHRI), will assemble to showcase their research on Rutgers-Newark’s annual Provost’s Research Day April 20. The program will be held 2:30–5 p.m. in the University Club at the Paul Robeson Campus Center.

“The overall theme for this year’s Research Day is topics that have been of particular interest to the media,” said Rutgers-Newark Provost Steven Diner. “This event gives the presenters, as well as the other faculty, graduate students and undergraduates in the audience, a special forum to share the work going on at all three schools and the institute.”

The diverse subjects will range from a critical look at whether waging war is an inherent human behavior (an especially apropos presentation given 2003’s violent tenor) to how sexual pressure and trust affect the transmission of HIV to young urban women.

From Bach to Bebop
“Can you imagine how much fun Bach would have had with 88 keys to compose his preludes and fugues?” comments Henry Martin, professor of music at R-N, noting that the keyboard Johann Sebastian Bach composed on had many fewer keys than the kind on a modern piano.

Martin was musing on his own award-winning Preludes and Fugues, a set of piano pieces written as a kind of homage to Bach’s Well Tempered Clavier, which contains 48 preludes and fugues and is considered an icon among classical compositions. Martin will be playing selections from his work, along with some Bach and some ragtime (another influence) at Rutgers-Newark Feb. 19, 12:30 pm, in the Center for Law and Justice Atrium.

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The R-N women’s volleyball team in action against Montclair State University.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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A partnership that built new bridges of understanding between Rutgers-Newark faculty and the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) has drawn plaudits from both sides. The Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience (IECME) taught classes in cultural awareness last fall to all 2,700 of New Jersey's state troopers.

The New Jersey attorney general's office entered into a contract with the IECME to create the classes in an effort to encourage both professional and personal growth for state troopers. The sessions stem from a consent decree issued by a New Jersey district judge in December 1999. The consent decree was the settlement of a lawsuit alleging racial profiling brought against the NJSP, the State of New Jersey and the N.J. Department of Law and Public Safety by then-U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno. The classes are scheduled to continue for at least two more years under the consent decree.

The professors from Rutgers-Newark offered a large and rich humanities context for the troopers – not simply Diversity 101 or Good Policing 101,” Price said. “This is an example of public intellectual work that really matters to our community.”

N.J. State Attorney General Peter Harvey is an enthusiastic proponent of the training. “The richness of our world, and indeed, New Jersey, results from different people, different cultures and different experiences,” he said. “The enlightened among us see difference as an opportunity to learn and grow beyond the narrow confines of our own self-imposed limits or acquired prejudgments.”

Rutgers-Newark faculty and administrators provided the training under the supervision of IECME director and Rutgers-Newark history professor Clement Price, who developed the multidisciplinary curriculum with his staff.

The Rutgers University Board of Governors shortly issued a statement that it planned to create “a new and pioneering program by September, 1969, which initially will open college doors to educationally and economically disadvantaged graduates of the secondary schools in those communities where Rutgers has its primary locations and its most significant community obligations—Newark, New Brunswick and Camden.”

A New York Times headline the next day declared: “Rutgers Opening Doors To Needy.”
the community need to learn from each other, and envisions the Cornwall Center as a nexus for this to occur. “Stephanie Bush-Baskette is the ideal person to link the urban research interests of our faculty with the needs of the Newark metropolitan area and the state,” said Rutgers-Newark Provost Steven Diner. “She believes deeply in the importance of research for the well-being of cities and communities.”

Prior to joining Cornwall, Bush-Baskette was director of government relations and a senior researcher at the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) in Oakland, Calif. She earned a law degree from American University in 1978 and a Ph.D. in criminal justice from Rutgers-Newark in 2000.

Starting in 1987, she was elected to three consecutive terms in the N.J. General Assembly, resigning from the legislature in 1992 to join Gov. James Florio’s cabinet as commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. Later, she moved into academe as a professor of criminology and criminal justice, as well as director of the Juvenile Justice Role Model Development Program, at Florida State University.

“Coming back to my ‘hometown’ will enable me to put the skills that I have accumulated to maximum use,” Bush-Baskette said.

Lanzone was so focused on the play in the game where she reached her 2,000th kill that she said she didn’t even realize it had happened at first.

“I didn’t really know until they stopped the match and made the announcement,” said the 6-foot-1-inch criminal justice major. “I just ran up to all my teammates and gave them a big hug. It was great.”