



THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
5 WASHINGTON STREET, NEWARK, NJ 07102

PRESS RELEASE

October 20, 2015
For Immediate Release
Please Contact: Heidi Cramer, hrcramer@npl.org or 973-733-7837

Retiring Director Wilma Grey Honored at Newark Public Library's *Booked for the Evening Benefit*

On Wednesday, October 14, colleagues, friends, family, and supporters gathered at the Newark Public Library for the Booked for the Evening benefit held in honor of Wilma J. Grey, retiring Director. Ms. Grey, who has had a forty-six year career at the Library, was appointed as the tenth Director of the Newark Public Library in August 2005 and was the first African-American woman to hold the position. More than 200 people attended the festive event which began with a reception in the Library's elegant marble lined lobby and continued with a formal program in Centennial Hall on the second floor.

Event Chair Richard T. Thigpen, Esq., Vice President, State Governmental Affairs, PSEG, introduced featured speaker Anthony W. Marx, President of the New York Public Library, who shared his exciting ideas for reimagining libraries for the future focusing on the acceleration of digital initiatives, educational programs, and other innovative methods of serving the public.



Guest Speaker, Anthony W. Marx, President of the New York Public Library and Wilma Grey, Director of the Newark Public Library. (Photo by Phil Leo)

Benefit guests spoke warmly and admiringly of Ms. Grey. Newark Council President Mildred Crump called her a "living legend" and said "knowledge will be forever in the hearts and minds of those you have helped."

Linwood Oglesby, Executive Director of the Newark Arts Council, praised Ms. Grey, saying “Wilma herself is a cultural treasure for Newark,” noting the work that she has done to keep the Library “vibrant” and “central to the life of Newark.”



Trish Morris-Yamba, NPL Board Vice President; Director Wilma Grey; Anasa Maat, NPL Board Member (Photo by Phil Leo)



Wilma J. Grey with Assemblyman William D. Payne (Photo by Phil Leo)

President Timothy Crist and Vice President Trish Morris-Yamba presented Ms. Grey with a tribute gift on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

Mayor Ras J. Baraka and Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr. served as Honorary Co-Chairs.

Generous sponsors include: Prudential, Timothy and Gloria Crist, PNC Bank, PSEG, Rosemary and Rob Steinbaum, Audible Inc., William J. Dane, and Verizon.

During her tenure Ms. Grey managed the neighborhood branches including the refurbishment of five buildings, expanded literacy programs, and emphasized outreach to diverse communities. She introduced services for sight and hearing impaired patrons and played a key role in providing access for the physically challenged by spearheading the effort to provide a barrier-free entrance to the Library’s historic landmark building on Washington Park. She was instrumental in expanding the spectrum of public programming, and under her guidance exhibits of library materials flourished.

Her enthusiasm and activism have benefited many arts and cultural organizations. She has generously given her time and energy to serve on the Advisory Board of Read Up, the Newark Arts Council, the South Orange Library Board of Trustees, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, and the Rotary Club of Newark. For many years she was a board member and advocate for the Newark Literacy Campaign. Ms. Grey has been an influential board member of the New Jersey Center for the Book. In addition, she has been a driving force for over twenty years on the Newark Black Film Festival Committee. She also worked on the Arts, Cultural Development, and Tourism Transition Committee of Mayor Ras J. Baraka’s Transition Team. At present, she sits on the Advisory Board of the Jewish Museum of New Jersey and is a Trustee on the Board of Newark 350 Celebration.

A long-time member of the American Library Association and the New Jersey Library Association, Wilma Grey has served as president of the New Jersey Library Association's Adult/Young Adult Section and was a member of the Young Adult Guidelines Committee for the New Jersey State Library. She has also been a member of the Association of Black Librarians of New Jersey and an active member of the Essex County Library Directors organization.

About the Newark Public Library

The Newark Public Library is the largest municipal library in New Jersey with a collection of more than 1.5 million books, audio and visual materials, and unique collections of prints, photographs, and historical documents. The historic Main Library is at 5 Washington Street in downtown Newark. The seven branches serve as neighborhood anchors in the City. Among the many free resources offered to the community throughout Newark are assistance with employment searches, cultural programs and films, exhibits, book signings, business research, and other events for adults and children. The Library is a vital part of the civic and cultural fabric of Newark.

Additional photographs from the Booked for the Evening Gala can be found on the Library's Flickr page: <http://tiny.cc/gtxx4x>

Please credit: Photo by Phil Leo. Courtesy the Newark Public Library.

#####