



## THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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[www.npl.org](http://www.npl.org)

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### ***Gone Too Soon* Documentary Explores the Impact of Newark's Cultural Greats Premieres October 9 at the Newark Public Library**

**Newark, New Jersey, September 22, 2021** – The new documentary [\*Gone Too Soon: The Life, Legacy and Loss of Newark's Cultural Icons\*](#) examines the lives and cultural contributions of 11 of the city's most influential artists, arts leaders and history keepers, including WBGO Jazz-88 CEO **Cephas Bowles**; poet/playwright/activist **Amiri Baraka**; poets **Breya “Blkbrry Molassez” Knight** and **Halim Suliman**; actor/director/arts administrator **Rodney Gilbert**; historians **Dr. Clement Alexander Price**, **Charles F. Cummings** and **Dr. Robert Curvin**; artists **Russell A. Murray** and **Jerry Gant**; and theater producer **Kabu Okai-Davies**.

The film will have its premiere at the [Newark Public Library](#) (NPL) on Saturday, October 9, part of the free, citywide Newark Arts Festival 2021 produced by Newark Arts. The [event](#) featuring the screening of *Gone Too Soon* will start at 1 p.m. with a reception and include a discussion with the production crew after the film is shown. The documentary's debut is presented by NPL in partnership with [Celeste Bateman & Associates, LLC](#). Free parking for the event will be available at the Bears & Eagles Stadium Lot. The entrance is located on Bridge Street.

Through interviews with the people who knew and worked with these Newark greats, director/producer Celeste A. Bateman has produced a film that offers lively vignettes of people well known and well loved by the community.

“Our mission in creating this documentary is to memorialize the lives and contributions of these individuals who factored significantly in the artistic and cultural landscape of Newark but died before they were able to enjoy the fruits of their labor,” Bateman said. “We also want to create awareness among emerging artists about those who came before, giving them a strong foundation for their own contributions.”

She added, “Finally, we want those who are new to the city – residents, workers, students, teachers, developers – to understand and appreciate the rich tapestry of Newark's culture and those who in recent decades helped weave it.”

Joslyn Bowling Dixon, director of NPL, said the library is delighted to partner on presenting such an important documentary. “Newark Public Library has been at the center of the city's cultural and educational programming and services for many generations,” she said. “We are honored to play a role in commemorating the work and outreach achieved by this amazing group of men and women.”

The crew for the documentary consists of professionals who are either natives of or based in Newark. Creating this film with a crew that cares so deeply about the city gave the finished piece even greater emotional depth,” Bateman said. “I believe this film will bring these incredible people and their works to life for the viewer.”

Funding for the documentary has been provided by the M&T Weiner Foundation; Newark Arts (ArtStart Grant); the City of Newark Creative Catalyst Fund in Partnership with Newark

Arts; and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Family members, colleagues and friends also provided generous contributions.

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[Newark Public Library](#), home of the [Philip Roth Personal Library](#), is located at 5 Washington Street in downtown Newark, NJ. Built in 1899 with a design inspired by a 15<sup>th</sup> century Florence palazzo, the library also includes an interactive art gallery, large-scale event space and an auditorium. The library's major departments include its [Reference Center](#); [Special Collections](#) which includes graphic and visual arts; the [Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center](#); the [New Jersey Hispanic Research and Information Center](#) and the [James Brown African American Room](#), noted for their collections of books and archives; and the [LGBTQ Resource Center](#).

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