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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – NEWARK, NJ – (September 22, 2021) – On Saturday, October 9, 2021, The Newark Public Library and Celeste Bateman & Associates, LLC will host the Newark premiere of the new documentary, Gone Too Soon: The Life, Legacy and Loss of Newark’s Cultural Icons, as part of the Newark Arts Festival Open Doors exhibits. Directed by Celeste Bateman, Gone Too Soon is an examination of the lives and cultural contributions of eleven of Newark’s most influential artists, local leaders and historians 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 Newark premiere of Gone Too Soon is free of charge and will begin with a reception at 1 PM followed by the screening in the James Brown African American Room at the Newark Public Library and a post-show discussion with the production crew. Registration is required to attend this event. Interested guests may RSVP at https://bit.ly/3hh0K2h. 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 delivers lively vignettes of these beloved icons. The film is an opportunity for 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.

“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,” said Bateman. “We also wanted to create awareness among emerging artists about those who came before, giving them a strong foundation for their own contributions.”

Joslyn Bowling Dixon, director of NPL acknowledges the significance of this presentation and her delight in the library’s co-presentation to the public. “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 natives-of or based-in Newark. Director Bateman recognizes crew members’ commitment to the film’s subjects and their everlasting legacy as reasons why the finished piece is emotionally rich. Gone Too Soon will bring the incredible works of these icons 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.

Please visit www.npl.org for updated COVID-19 precautions and additional information about this event.
**About Newark Public Library**

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 15th 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; the James Brown African American Room, noted for their collections of books and archives; and the LGBTQ Resource Center.

**About Celeste Bateman & Associates, LLC**

Celeste Bateman & Associates, LLC launched in 1997. The firm specializes in arts and cultural programming, arts management consulting, special events production, arts advocacy and the Nia Network, a roster of artists and speakers of African descent who specialize in and present art forms relative to the African Diaspora. Celeste Bateman has an extensive history in arts production including concerts, exhibitions, school programs, lectures series, symposia and other public programs in the greater Newark community.

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