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Interview: Marcia Wilson Brown, Taquan Williams, Tynesha McHarris, Shirley Grundy and Mubarak Guy discuss how Rutgers' Newark students are reaching out to high school kids

STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Building bridges to Newark's high schools: A look at Rutgers' Newark Student Ambassador Program next on CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by: Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health-care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas Company, proud to support education in our communities; Verizon Communications; and by QualCare Inc, a local managed care company covering 550,000 New Jersey residents.

ADUBATO: Welcome to this very special edition of CAUCUS Up Close. I'm Steve Aduabato.

Joining us to discuss how Rutgers' Newark students are reaching out to high school kids and offering a path to a brighter future are a group of very talented people. We're joined by Marcia Wilson Brown, vice provost of Student and Community Affairs at Rutgers Newark and creator of the Student Ambassador Program. Taquan Williams is a senior political science major who became a student ambassador in December. Tynesha McHarris is a sophomore majoring in social work and student coordinator of the student ambassador program at Rutgers Newark. Shirley Grundy is the director of student services for the Newark public schools. And finally, Mubarak Guy, who joined the Student Ambassador Program this semester, is a senior majoring in English.

I want to thank all of you for joining us. Now, Marcia, let's, you know, be honest about this. We've been colleagues for a long time at Rutgers-Newark. You've been talking up this Student Ambassadors Program. You had this idea for a while, right? It comes out of your experience in the Peace Corps?

Ms. MARCIA WILSON BROWN (Vice Provost, Student & Community Affairs, Rutgers-Newark): No. But the Peace Corps was a way for us to think conceptually about this program. The idea is to try to get our undergraduate students out into the Newark community, saying to Newark kids, 'Listen, college is an experience that you have to think about, dream about, aspire to. We know. We've come from similar backgrounds, experiences, environs, and it can be done. And we want you to think that same way, too. Not only that, we also want you to think about coming to Rutgers-Newark.' So the message to Newark students is there's a campus and a university right here in the midst of your community that sees itself as a part of your community, and we want you to come and be a part of it.

ADUBATO: But, you know, it makes perfect sense--I mean, it makes perfect sense, but as I'm--you know, as a kid from Newark, I'm thinking about this and I'm saying, 'Ms. Grundy, why would we even need Rutgers-Newark to be doing this? Wouldn't it be obvious?'

Ms. SHIRLEY GRUNDY (Director of Student Services, Newark Public Schools): No, we need Rutgers-Newark to be doing this because--from the aspect that it's

coming from, it's coming from students with similar backgrounds.

Ms. BROWN: Right.

Ms. GRUNDY: Our students need role models. They need mentors. They need to see that this young man is doing it, and so can I. And for them to come in and talk with our youngsters and to tell them what they're doing and they have not yet graduated Rutgers-Newark...

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. GRUNDY: ...they feel that it's possible for them.

ADUBATO: So let me ask you, Taquan, you actually worked on Capitol Hill...

Mr. TAQUAN WILLIAMS (Rutgers Student Ambassador): Yes.

ADUBATO: ...as the first...

Ms. BROWN: Congressional intern...

ADUBATO: ...congressional intern for The Honorable...

Ms. BROWN: ...from our campus.

ADUBATO: ...Donald Payne, who's a very good friend of ours. So you have that experience on Capitol Hill. You go into a series of high schools, right?

Mr. WILLIAMS: Yes.

ADUBATO: What do you tell those kids?

Mr. WILLIAMS: First of all, I always--Congressman Payne, in addition, you know, or in response to, like, all he has pretty much done for me, he and Mayor James, all they ask from me is that I share these learning experiences. Congressman Payne also sent me to Korea in the summer of 2003 on a learning experience. So what I do is in my presentation, I try to incorporate what's going on on Capitol Hill. They don't know that pretty much everything, every aspect of our life is decided in the halls of Congress. They don't know that, so, you know...

ADUBATO: These Newark high school young people.

Mr. WILLIAMS: Yes, the students, they don't know. That's why they're not very interested in it.

ADUBATO: But beyond the whole Capitol Hill thing, they look at you, they look at the two of you. What do you think they see?

Ms. TYNESHA MCHARRIS (Rutgers Student Ambassador): They see people that are the example for them. A lot of us come from the same communities that they do. And we show them that, 'You know what? We're here, and we fought to be here, so you can be here, too.' And it's a great program.

ADUBATO: So let me ask you this. Say Rutgers-Newark sends out--I mean, I know you happen to have great brochures at the university. They send out a brochure, and we say, 'You know, US News & World Report has picked us for the

eighth straight year'--I can say this as a faculty member at Rutgers-Newark, and I happen to know this--`eighth straight year most diverse...

Ms. BROWN: Most diverse.

ADUBATO: ...campus.' The brochure says it. All the material says it. You log on to the Web site--by the way, the Rutgers Web site will be listed throughout the program. That's not the same as seeing one of you, is it? What's it like when they see you?

Mr. MUBARAK GUY (Rutgers Student Ambassador): Well, first of all, it's like they see a reflection of themselves, you know, 'cause most of us went to these same high schools that these students go to now. And when we walk in through those doors and we talk to them, they say, `Hey, I remember you. I remember you went to our football game. You was at the basketball game, you know. I remember you.' And they feel inside that actually, `I can relate to you,' and that's the most exciting part about it; they can relate.

ADUBATO: Now a lot of these young people would not see themselves being able to, as Marcia said, go to college. They wouldn't--a lot of these young people wouldn't see it if they didn't see you. Isn't that a lot of pressure?

Ms. MCHARRIS: It is, but the opportunity is worthwhile to show them their expectations. I've been in the classroom before where students say to me, `You know, I don't think I can do it. I don't think I can do it.' And I say, `You know, your sky's the limit for you.' It's a lot of pressure, but the opportunity to help a student reach the stars is enough.

Ms. BROWN: One of the interesting things about this program is that the types of students who become ambassadors are students who can relate to the experiences that these young people...

ADUBATO: How do you pick them?

Ms. BROWN: Well, there's a set of criteria. One, they have to be full-time students. They have to come from Newark or from urban communities that are similar to Newark. They have to have some leadership potential, have good communication skills and be recommended.

ADUBATO: Be recommended by whom?

Ms. BROWN: By a faculty....

ADUBATO: By a faculty member.

Ms. BROWN: ...or an administrative person.

ADUBATO: So--go ahead.

Ms. BROWN: So it's somebody who knows something about what it is that these students have to bring that they could talk about that can really capture the imagination of these students.

ADUBATO: How many ambassadors do we have?

Ms. BROWN: There are 10.

ADUBATO: Ten.

Ms. BROWN: Ten ambassadors, and they go out every month to a Newark school, mostly in pairs. So we're hitting 10--predominantly 10 Newark schools every year. But they're going out to one or two schools a month.

ADUBATO: Why Newark? Is it because you're in Rutgers-Newark?

Ms. BROWN: Well, that's part of it.

ADUBATO: It is Rutgers-Newark, so you pick Newark?

Ms. BROWN: Right. It's part of our good neighbor policy. It's part of our recognition that we are a community within a community. It's a recognition that as a university with a vast amount of not only intellectual resources but other kinds of resources, we owe an obligation to apply those resources to the community in which we live in.

ADUBATO: We owe?

Ms. BROWN: Yeah. I think as a public institution, we have an obligation, a moral and a social and an institutional obligation to use those resources in a way to what? To advance the interests of the community and the society in which we are part of.

ADUBATO: So we have three...

Ms. BROWN: And we, you know, historically had that mission as a campus.

ADUBATO: Absolutely. Now we have three of the role models in the Ambassador Program, Ms. Grundy, but we talk about role models. Much of the discussion--and I'm not going to bring up Bill Cosby and get all caught up in it, but much of his discussion was about who we have as role models. And much of what he said is we need to have academic educational role models even more so than having sports-related role models. Is that part of this for these young people in Newark...

Ms. GRUNDY: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...for these high school kids?

Ms. GRUNDY: Yes, definitely, because our students see themselves in these student ambassadors. They see themselves. And as older people or people from different generations, students don't relate to us as well as they relate to their peers. And they relate more to their peers, they talk more with their peers and they see the possibility for them through the eyes of their peers.

ADUBATO: But is it a tough sell? Do you find that many of these young people--and by the way, every month there, I imagine, you can't go in and say the same thing. You're mixing your message up.

Ms. BROWN: Right.

ADUBATO: But it's always about striving to be the best, shooting for the stars, to use your words. You're talking about Rutgers-Newark the whole time.

Ms. BROWN: There's a general script, right. We tell them to go in and say

who they are, you know, give sort of a profile, but why are they doing this? And then they can tell a story from their own individual backgrounds and experiences. It has to be their story...

ADUBATO: Well, let's talk about stories.

Ms. BROWN: ...so that the students--yeah, they should talk about it.

ADUBATO: Yeah, let's talk about a story. Give me a story that you've shared that you believe helps you connect with these young people.

Mr. GUY: Well, first of all, you know, I go straight to them. These students, they can see right through you. They know if you're just giving lip service, if you're just telling them what someone told you to tell them. They see right through that.

ADUBATO: All right. You ready? You ready to play the game?

Mr. GUY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Now Tynesha is not who she is. She is a senior at Malcolm X Shabazz High School. And she's not sure what she wants for herself. She's not sure what she's capable of. And she's actually not that confident of herself. Talk to her.

Mr. GUY: How you doing, Tynesha? I'm Mubarak.

Ms. McHARRIS: Doing all right.

Mr. GUY: I just want to talk to you for a moment.

Ms. McHARRIS: OK.

Mr. GUY: Look, I went to this high school, West Side High School. I sat in this very same chair you're sitting in right now. I sat here.

Ms. McHARRIS: Wow.

Mr. GUY: I was one of the few students who actually paid attention. But you know what? Let me tell you something about that. They may clown you for paying attention and doing work. You know, they may say you're not cool. What is it exactly to be cool? Does it mean not doing work to be cool? Because most of those people who you see who are not doing work, they're standing outside, they're going to still be there. So let me tell you something from experience, you know. It's not always about trying to impress the people you're around, because nine times out of 10, when you graduate--and you will graduate; I'm going to make sure you graduate--you're not going to see those people again, so why are you spending your time trying to impress them? You know, it's about self-actualization. It's about you. It's about developing your potential. And I know you have potential, because I didn't think I had some until someone grabbed me, the same way I'm trying to do for you, and said, 'Look, Mubarak, I know there's something inside of you, and I'm gonna pull it out of you, you know.' I'm telling you from experience, heart to heart. Forget scripts. Forget what they told me to tell you, I'm tell you from heart to heart, being a student who sat in this same seat, and I'm back to tell you.

ADUBATO: Man, that guy's good. Oh, I was like--you know, I didn't want you to stop. My producer was, like, 'Don't stop him, but we're, like, running out of time.' But I just asked you to do that. I didn't tell you I was going to ask you to do that before. Where did that come from?

Mr. GUY: It come from my heart, because I had a similar experience like that. And when I walk into that high school, West Side High School...

ADUBATO: Tell you what, actually, I said Malcolm X Shabazz only because it was the name that came to me, but your high school was...

ADUBATO and Mr. GUY: (In unison) ...West Side High School.

ADUBATO: Going back to your school...

Mr. GUY: Exactly.

ADUBATO: ...gives you even more of that juice.

Mr. GUY: Yes, that adrenaline is rushing, because you remember walking these halls, you know, sitting in these seats, playing on that basketball court, that football field. It gets the adrenaline rushing. And you know what? It gets your heart pumping, too, and everything comes out from the heart.

ADUBATO: So let me ask you--I'll come back to you in a second--if you were really that junior or senior, what do you think you would be thinking?

Ms. McHARRIS: At first, I'm thinking, you know, 'He doesn't really care about me. He doesn't, you know, know my struggle. He doesn't know what I have to go through.' But listening to him tell me that he's been where I am now kind of--I guess it would encourage me a little bit, and I kind of want to see if they'd come back again.

ADUBATO: Let me ask you, just as effective, a young man talking to a young woman as opposed to same-sex situation?

Ms. McHARRIS: Sometimes, you need that person that looks like you, talks like you and is a female. A lot of times, you know...

ADUBATO: What do you say to girls?

Ms. McHARRIS: I say--I mean, I say to women that we are beautiful, that we are just as intelligent as everyone else, and that we have to lift ourselves up and change the city.

Ms. BROWN: One of the reasons that Tynesha is the student coordinator is because she has a maturity and an intuition about how certain ambassadors might present themselves to some of the students. For example, she has to go in and sort of assess what's going on in that--there may be some classes that are...

ADUBATO: Go in and evaluate the other ambassadors?

Ms. BROWN: Yeah. Well, not evaluate them. Evaluate the context. Evaluate where they're going into.

ADUBATO: OK.

Ms. BROWN: So she may go into Shabazz High School, and it may be an English class or an AP class, and they've just finished taking a test, and they're not going to be listening that well. So she might decide that it's better for Taquan to come and start first and start his story about, you know, he comes from Newark, and here he is in college. How did he get there? And then he tells that story...

ADUBATO: So timing...

Ms. BROWN: ...as opposed to--yeah.

ADUBATO: Timing matters?

Ms. BROWN: Yeah, timing matters, and the differences, the personality and the articulation differences amongst these students.

ADUBATO: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Now you lost me. The articulation...

Ms. BROWN: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...differences.

Ms. BROWN: Well, they speak differently, OK? Not that they're not articulate, but the way in which they articulate their message, their story, it's different. Mubarak is, you know, has...

ADUBATO: He's pretty smooth.

Ms. BROWN: He's sort of got that, you know...

ADUBATO: Go ahead.

Ms. BROWN: ...'I'm cool and I'm down,' you know, but...

ADUBATO: Look at her smile. You see the big smile on your face when she's talking about that?

Ms. BROWN: And Taquan can relate perhaps more to--I think he comes at it in a way in which some of the more harder students who may not want to listen or who may not feel like this is a genuine initiative will perk up and listen to him, because he's from--you know, he's from the 'hood.

ADUBATO: Describe where you're from.

Mr. WILLIAMS: I'm from the South Ward of Newark.

ADUBATO: Describe for folks who are over in Connecticut, watching us on PBS, who don't exactly know where the South Ward of Newark is, describe it.

Mr. WILLIAMS: The South Ward of Newark is one of the hardest places, growing up, to live in, you know, as well as one of the best places. We have a lot to offer, the parks, and we have schools and things, but on the flip side of that, we also have, you know, gang violence. We have murder. We have prostitution, drugs. Just about every urban problem, we have it, unemployment, etc., etc. So growing up and leaving--hopefully, leaving the South Ward, you know, using that as inspiration, you know, I want to share

that with the students.

ADUBATO: How? Describe it.

Mr. WILLIAMS: The ins...

ADUBATO: He now is not who he is, this smooth young gentleman you just talked about, but rather he's hard, he's angry, potentially violent, but most of all, scared, and he's 17 years old. Talk to him.

Mr. WILLIAMS: When I'm talking to them, I ask, `How are you? My name is Taquan Williams. I'm from Newark, New Jersey, and I'm going to be frank with you. I come from one of the roughest backgrounds that pretty much you can name. Everything that can possibly happen to a family has happened to my family. I've grown up--since the third grade, I've been pretty much been taking care of myself. In third grade, I was getting on the bus, going to the laundromat, getting my own hair cut and different things, so I know what it's like to feel like you have to put on, you know, this facade so that you can look hard in front of your friends, but at the end of the day, that's not going to get you a job. That's not going to get you the car you want. That's not going to get you the house that you want to live in. So you have to go to school and get your education. And what's wrong with wanting to aspire to be, you know, a writer and, you know, with a big bank account? What's wrong with that? You can't sell drugs, you know, 60 years old in the wheelchair. How can you manage to do that?

ADUBATO: Be a little difficult.

Mr. GUY: What if I don't want those things? What if I'm happy where I'm at right now?

Mr. WILLIAMS: But you have to look at it. You'll always have the idea that the police can come and get you and you can be locked up for the rest of your life.

Mr. GUY: What about all those people who made it to success and they're all criminals anyway? Why can't I do that?

Mr. WILLIAMS: Those are celebrities, people like the president, and people like--but here in Newark, you know, you just can't make it with that hard attitude. You can't make money like that, and you can't be successful.

ADUBATO: Well, I just want to clarify something. You were talking about people who make money in crime...

Mr. GUY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...and drugs. And you didn't mean the president of the United States?

Mr. WILLIAMS: No, that was a joke.

ADUBATO: Oh, OK. Hopefully, we'll get to cut that out. But I was watching you, and for most of the time, as Taquan was talking, you had a sense of pride on your face.

Ms. GRUNDY: I did, because Taquan represents what our students need. He

talked about academic achievement and the value of an education and how, in the long term, that is going to get you where you want to be. And what the other young man was doing was talking about immediate gratification.

ADUBATO: Right.

Ms. GRUNDY: I have it now. But what about the future? And he was trying to tell him, 'When you're 60 years old, what are you going to be doing, still standing on the corner?'

ADUBATO: So Mubarak was actually talking--you were saying just some of the things young people would say. But they also could say, 'Hey, look, I am. I'm doing well. I'm making money on the street. I mean, you're telling me, I mean, great, good for you. But I'm making money on the street, and I'm taking care of my family, and it's not going to work for me.' I mean, that's just the beginning of what some young people say, right?

Ms. GRUNDY: Correct.

ADUBATO: And what do you say to them when they say that?

Ms. GRUNDY: When they say that, we try to give them other ways in which they can do the same thing that they're doing but in the correct manner. Our big thrust right now is character education, and one of our goals--actually, the first goal is academic achievement, is what you spoke about. But it's also developing moral and social responsibility.

ADUBATO: Moral and social responsibility?

Ms. GRUNDY: Definitely.

ADUBATO: What does that mean?

Ms. GRUNDY: It means that if you sell drugs to someone, and this person takes the drugs and then they die from it, how do you feel inside by knowing that you did something to hurt someone else and not just that person but the entire family and the entire community.

ADUBATO: Does that matter to most of these young people, or is it simply about their own survival?

Ms. BROWN: It depends on the context. I think it is about their own survival. I think that's immediate, because they're young. Their experience in understanding the world around them is really driven by, 'What do I think about today, this moment, right now?'

ADUBATO: And they're seeing some around them dying right in front of them.

Ms. BROWN: Exactly. But, you know, it's our responsibility, 'our' meaning that village and all the people in that village, the institutions, the schools and others who can serve as mentors, to find ways to really craft very creative ways to get that message out to them. My students--when we send out these students, we know that we're not going to change their character, but we are trying to say, 'This is something you could think about, because these people are like you. These students are like you. If they can do it, why can't you do it?' Are we going to reach everybody? No. But the few that...

ADUBATO: Is it a numbers game, or is it one by one by one?

Ms. BROWN: Not right now. It's one by one by one right now, because the numbers of students who are dropping out, if not physically but, you know, conceptually, philosophically, just dropping out of the world around them and getting caught up into what's in their community. If schools around the state, around the country do not begin to do what we're trying to do here in Newark...

ADUBATO: It's a model.

Ms. BROWN: It's a model, and the whole metaphor related to the Peace Corps is that eventually, we want to send hundreds of undergraduate students out to the community.

ADUBATO: But it takes money, right?

Ms. BROWN: It's just that it takes money, and it takes...

ADUBATO: So you have 10 right now...

Ms. BROWN: We have 10 right now, right.

ADUBATO: ...but you obviously have limited resources. What would it take to expand this kind of program? And by the way, wouldn't you need a track record of success?

Ms. BROWN: Exactly.

ADUBATO: Can you point to some young people who actually have made some decisions that are positive and healthy and just constructive for them? You're shaking your head. Why?

Ms. MCHARRIS: I can tell you a story, because I was walking into the Dunkin' Donuts, and I think it was in the North Ward in Newark. And I'm walking...

ADUBATO: My old neighborhood. Go ahead.

Ms. MCHARRIS: And I'm walking to get my cup of coffee and my glazed doughnut, and a student pulls me to the side, and he says, 'You don't remember me.' And I said, 'I really don't.' And he looked at me, and he said, 'You came to my class one day, and because of you, I applied to Bloomfield College.' Now he didn't come to my school, but at the same--you know, it's like, 'You should have come to Rutgers-Newark.' But he said, 'By talking with you, I realized that my expectations that I had for myself were too low, so I decided to raise them and apply to college.'

ADUBATO: What did it feel like right at that moment in Dunkin' Donuts?

Ms. MCHARRIS: Oh, it felt--I mean, when you're in the classrooms, and you're dealing with 20, 30 students, sometimes you realize that you're not going to reach all of them, but that symbolized success, reaching one student. That was enough for me to keep on going.

ADUBATO: What do you get?

Mr. GUY: It's a weird, you know, story. Before I joined the Ambassadors

Program, I used to come back during, you know, my off season from college and just visit my old high school, because you never let go...

ADUBATO: West Side High School.

Mr. GUY: West Side High School.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. GUY: I'm a Roughrider for life, you know. And I used to go back, and I went...

ADUBATO: Explain that to folks.

Mr. GUY: Well, it means that it doesn't matter what you do; you're going to always have a tie to West Side High School Roughriders. That's our mascot.

Ms. GRUNDY: Mascot.

ADUBATO: I know the West Side Roughriders.

Mr. GUY: Yes.

ADUBATO: And so you're always a Roughrider for life?

Mr. GUY: You're always a Roughrider for life.

ADUBATO: So you would go back anyway, but it was an informal thing.

Mr. GUY: Yeah, just went back to visit...

ADUBATO: Yeah.

Mr. GUY: ...because you never let go. And once you graduate, you'll understand, you never let go of West Side, because the simple fact that it's so hard for many, you know, African-American males to make it out of West Side. I went to a high school that was stereotypically, you know, negative, that if you went to West Side, you were violent, you were a drug dealer, you know, you were in the gang, you weren't smart. So when you graduate from West Side, you feel like, 'You know what? It is a laugh in the face, like, you know, I made it, you know. I made it. I'm a Roughrider for life.'

ADUBATO: Your principal over there, may not have been there when you were there, Nathaniel Potts?

Mr. GUY: No.

ADUBATO: OK. You know Mr. Potts? 'Cause I went to high school with his son, and he was there for, like, 20, 25 years. You know who I'm talking about.

Ms. GRUNDY: I do.

ADUBATO: And he used to talk about that kind of same thing. Let me ask you, the greatest satisfaction you've gotten out of the program is?

Mr. WILLIAMS: The greatest satisfaction I've gotten is the opportunity to share knowledge and to hopefully urge these students to come to

Rutgers-Newark, because it's a great school, a great learning experience, the most diverse campus in the nation, and just a myriad of cultures and opportunities and learning experiences. It has so far been one of the best experiences of my life.

ADUBATO: You're a better person because of this.

Mr. WILLIAMS: Yes.

ADUBATO: Better people? Better citizens?

Ms. BROWN: Absolutely. I think that the other part of the mission of this program is to create opportunities for these young people to grow, to grow themselves, to develop their own unique talents and abilities and to give back. I think probably one of the best things that mature us as human beings and as citizens is the opportunity to give, not just to get, but to give. That's what expands their consciousness, their world view. And they're being exposed to their own colleagues or their peers in a way that wouldn't normally happen.

ADUBATO: So let me ask you this. On campus--we got a couple minutes left. On campus, on this very diverse campus that we talked about, Rutgers-Newark, which is just a couple miles away from where we tape this program, your colleagues, your fellow students know what you're doing. Are they--OK, say they find out you're an ambassador, you're a Rutgers-Newark student ambassador. Do they have any idea what it means?

Ms. BROWN: They ask.

Ms. McHARRIS: They...

ADUBATO: They're curious.

Ms. McHARRIS: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: When you explain it to them, what happens?

Ms. McHARRIS: It's funny, 'cause I think that's how he got this deal. I mean...

ADUBATO: That's how you got hooked up into this?

Mr. GUY: Yeah.

Ms. GRUNDY: I think they stopped him on the street...

Mr. GUY: Yeah. It's a remarkable story.

ADUBATO: You stopped him on the street and said, 'You belong with us?'

Mr. GUY: It's very remarkable how that happened, and I want to tell you a story.

ADUBATO: Real quick.

Mr. GUY: I write for the Rutgers Observer, which is a university-based...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. GUY: ...newspaper, and I was actually working on their article for Central High School, you know, the relationship between the college and the high school. And I was...

ADUBATO: One of the other high schools right across the street.

Mr. GUY: Yeah, directly across the street. And I was interviewing the president, you know, of the school, you know, and some other students about, you know, some of my facts. And then I ran into them, they said, 'You know what? We're having a meeting right now about the same exact topic you're talking about. Why don't you come with us?'

ADUBATO: No.

Mr. GUY: And at that moment, it was so ironic how that happened, and from that moment, you know, I was, like, 'Wow,' and I've been going ever since then.

ADUBATO: Changed your lives.

Mr. GUY: Changed my life completely.

ADUBATO: Dest--that's not an accident, is it?

Ms. GRUNDY: No, it's not an accident, because these are opportunities we'd like to try to provide. And one of the things that the Newark Public School has done is to--add as a graduation requirement is volunteer service, so that students can have--because it's such a wonderful experience, just like you described, that we want all of our students to experience that.

ADUBATO: And they have, and they are continuing to. By the way, a plug for the superintendent of Newark Public Schools...

Ms. GRUNDY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...Marion Bolden...

Ms. GRUNDY: Yeah.

ADUBATO: ...who is just a great friend of ours. Thirty seconds left. Listen, you came back to Rutgers, right, after a stint and doing some other things, right, in the corporate and foundation world? Greatest satisfaction you've gotten out of this, 20 seconds.

Ms. BROWN: It's connecting with this other generation and helping them to try to find their passion.

ADUBATO: 'Cause you have it, don't you?

Ms. BROWN: 'Cause I have it.

ADUBATO: And you're not even close to...

Ms. BROWN: But I'm old now.

ADUBATO: You're not old.

Ms. BROWN: Now I've got to pass it on.

ADUBATO: You got to pass it on.

Ms. BROWN: You know, I'm that '60s kid, you know.

Ms. GRUNDY: She really has the passion.

ADUBATO: You guys are great.

Ms. GRUNDY: You know why?

ADUBATO: We'll keep talking off the air. Go ahead.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program, or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at [info@caucusnj.org](mailto:info@caucusnj.org). And visit us on The preceding program has been a production of the Caucus Educational Corporation, Rutgers Newark, NJN Public Television and Thirteen, WNET New York.

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