



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
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Author Camron Wright Delivers Opening Convocation Address at Ramapo College

MAHWAH, N.J. – Author Camron Wright delivered the keynote address at the Opening Convocation on September 3 at Ramapo College of New Jersey before an audience of nearly 2,000. Wright discussed his award-winning book, *The Rent Collector*, which was chosen as the summer reading selection for Ramapo’s first-year students. The book, based on true events following the Vietnam conflict in the mid-1970s, chronicles the story of a young mother, Sang Ly, struggling to survive by picking through trash in Cambodia’s largest municipal dump. Although the book is a work of fiction, it is inspired by real people who lived at the Stung Meanchey dump and suffered the atrocities of political oppression.

“My son Trevor was a film student who had worked on a documentary [*The River of Victory, 2010*] about the Stung Meanchey and a family living there. I was so intrigued watching all the hours of footage that I fell in love with the story,” said Wright. “It made me realize that even though the family was poor and I was living in a wonderful home, that our problems are the same. We’re all just people and we all want the same for our families—to be healthy and happy.”

Wright said the message he also hoped to convey was the importance of learning and literature in our lives, and how being able to read and communicate can “give us a sense of understanding that can change our lives.”

“When I went back to Cambodia with my son to do more research for the book, I met the real Sang Ly. Something she said has stayed with me: once she learned to read, she wasn’t as afraid to be in the dump at night. It took away her fear and brought her courage. That was a powerful message,” Wright said.

The Rent Collector won Best Novel of the Year from the Whitney Awards and was nominated for the prestigious International DUBLIN Literary Award. Wright’s first book, *Letters for Emily*, was a Reader’s Choice Award winner, as well as a selection for the Doubleday Book Club and the Literary Guild. Wright’s other works include *The Orphan Keeper*, *The Other Side of the Bridge* and *Christmas by Accident*.

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice, and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a "Military Friendly College" in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education.