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Director of Centro Primo Levi to Deconstruct the Life and Career of Italian Holocaust Hero

(MAHWAH, NJ) - Natalia Indrimi, executive director of the Centro Primo Levi, New York, will speak at Ramapo College of New Jersey on Thursday, April 11 from 3:45 to 5:15 p.m. in the Robert A. Scott Student Center, Friends Hall (SC-219) about "Deconstructing a Hero of the Holocaust." The Morton and Clara Richmond Endowment will underwrite the event and the Italian Club of Ramapo College will co-sponsor it.

Indrimi will present the rationale and preliminary results of a research project promoted by Centro Primo Levi dedicated to reconstructing the life and career of the Italian police officer Giovanni Palatucci (1909-1945).

Palatucci of Montella, Naples was an adjunct deputy police superintendent in Fiume between 1937 and 1944 and died in Dachau in 1945. He is believed to have saved between 5,000 and 8,000 Jews by supporting clandestine emigration through the port of Fiume and by "officially deporting them to the internment camp of Capagna (near Naples)." There, his uncle, Giuseppe Maria Palatucci, was the bishop and allegedly assisted Jewish internees to safety. It is believed that, after the armistice of September 8, 1943, Palatucci saved the Jewish population of Fiume from the German round ups by alerting the community and destroying police records of over 5,000 individuals. In 1990, Yad Vashem recognized him as Righteous among the Nations and, in 2001 the Catholic Church opened a process of beatification.

During more than 50 years in which this story took its shape, the academic world has remained silent. Most studies on the persecution of Jews in Fiume, Fascist concentration camps and Jewish clandestine emigration from the Adriatic coast contradict the possibility of such massive rescue operations. The State of Israel, the Italian government as well as Jewish-American and Italian-American organizations have invested greatly in the celebration of Palatucci's deeds.

In 2010, Centro Primo Levi began to dedicate attention to the growing presence of English language literature on Palatucci and to the circulation of material that, while giving a new fictional dimension to his story, denied basic facts in the history of the persecution of the Jews of Italy. The center established a collaborative research project aimed at documenting from different historiographical perspectives of Palatucci's life and career. The project resulted in the creation of a database of hundreds of documents from Italian, Israeli, Croatian, German, American and British archives that challenge the alleged deeds of Palatucci and poses the question of how his fame was constructed.

Indrimi received a degree in Philosophy from the University of Rome La Sapienza. Since 1985, she has developed international cultural partnerships and curated exhibitions and conferences in the U.S., Europe, Australia and Latin America. Between 2001 and 2007, she was the program director of the Center for Jewish History.

Centro Primo Levi (CPL) is the English Language portal for Italian Jewish studies and community news connecting the Italian Jewish worlds in Italy, Israel and the U.S. Based at the Center for Jewish History in New York, CPL serves scholars and the general public through resources, programs, networking, exchange opportunities and educational initiatives. CPL's monthly online publication, "Printed Matter," features research and current affairs from the Jewish communities of Italy.

The presentation is free and open to the public. For more information or to reserve a seat, please call 201.684.7409.

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Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as sixth in the Best Regional Universities North category for public institutions, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,008 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

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 nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers five graduate programs as well as articulated programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.