



## Background

To provide you with some context, the idea for the Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage came about at a recent meeting of the Employee Forum's Executive Committee. The committee discussed how it could recognize staff members on campus who have advocated on behalf of other staff at the University and who have improved working conditions for others on campus. We discussed the idea of proposing that an award be created and conferred at University Day alongside the Edward Kidder Graham and Distinguished Alumnus Awards.

## Naming of the Award

The award is named for Rebecca Clark, a deceased former UNC Chapel Hill staff member, African-American political activist, and civil rights organizer who fought against unequal pay and workplace discrimination. Clark worked at Carolina in the late 1930s briefly as a maid at the Carolina Inn and again in the 1950s as a nurse until her retirement in 1979. She became the first licensed practical nurse to work in the campus infirmary. She worked with administrators on obtaining affordable housing for Carolina's lowest-paid employees. Clark also tirelessly registered African-American voters and gained the respect of many local and state public servants.

As a result of her efforts, the University named the Cheek-Clark Building, formerly the University Laundry, after her and Kennon Cheek, organizer of the Janitorial Association.

Clark is an important figure in our University's history because she always stood up for her fellow workers and advocated for better working conditions. She was so persistent that her coworkers nicknamed her "Squeaky Clark."

It is fitting that this award be named the Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage because Clark exemplified a courageous spirit and willingness to speak out about inequities from a vulnerable position despite potential retaliation. Her strong sense of fairness, personal integrity and insistence on equality are values that the Employee Forum would like to promote among all staff and the greater UNC Chapel Hill community.

## Funding of the award

Should this award be approved by Chancellor Folt and the Employee Forum, the Employee Forum would request \$2,500 (before tax) and a plaque to be provided to the winner annually at University Day.



## **Draft award description/criteria:**

### **Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage**

This award celebrates the contributions of a staff member at UNC Chapel Hill who has selflessly advocated for better working conditions for staff. The award is conferred annually and presented at University Day. Any member of the UNC Chapel Hill staff is eligible for nomination, except current members of the Employee Forum's Executive Committee. Any member of the University community may submit a nomination. The Employee Forum Executive Committee will select the recipient.

About Rebecca Clark (from the Carolina Story: <http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/names/kennon-cheek-rebecca-clark-building/>)

Clark joined the university as a maid at the Carolina Inn in 1937 and later worked in the laundry building. She advocated for better working conditions for her fellow housekeepers. Clark returned to the university in 1953 as a nurse's aide and became the first licensed practical nurse to work in the campus infirmary. After retiring in 1979, Clark continued to contribute to her community. She encouraged university officials to provide opportunities for the lowest-paid employees to buy their own homes.

### **Tentative timeline and process for 2016**

- March 2, 2016: Employee Forum votes on whether to create the award (See attached resolution)
- June: Call for nominations would go out via Gazette, Informational email, DMA Newsletter, Employee Forum newsletter, Faculty Governance News
- June 30: Deadline for award submissions
- July: Employee Forum Executive Committee meets to select recipient and submits nominee to Chancellor's Office for award arrangements.
- October 12, 2016: Inaugural Rebecca Clark Award for Moral Courage conferred at University Day

## **Proposed Resolution On the Establishment of the University-Wide Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage**

Submitted by Katie Turner, Division 6 for consideration at the Employee Forum meeting on March 2, 2016

BE IT RESOLVED, the Employee Forum establishes an award in memory of Rebecca Clark to promote the recognition of staff who have advocated for better working conditions for their fellow employees:

### **Rebecca Clark Staff Award for Moral Courage**

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### **COMMENT:**

More information about Rebecca Clark can be found at the following links:

Kennon Cheek, Rebecca Clark and the Kennon Cheek/Rebecca Clark Building (<http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/names/kennon-cheek-rebecca-clark-building/>)

Documenting the American South Interview with Rebecca Clark (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/K-0536/menu.html>)

Rebecca Clark dies (<http://www.ibiblio.org/carrborocitizen/main/2009/01/08/rebecca-clark-dies/>)

Names in Brick and Stone: Cheek-Clark Building (<http://dhpress.unc.edu/unhistory/building-narratives/cheek-clark-building/>)