

Delany Lofts Art Contest: A Glimpse of Harlem's Future

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Kenneth Olson, CEO of POKO Partners and Casper Lassiter, Director of the Drew Hamilton Learning Center with the winners of the Delany Lofts Art Contest.

"Harlem is like a father to me," wrote ten year-old Chamylah General in her winning essay for the Delany Lofts Art Contest. In this simple yet touching sentiment, Chamylah reveals as much about herself and her values as she does about what Harlem means to her. She added, "Harlem is not only my home, but also my family."

On March 26, [POKO Partners, LLC](#) celebrated Harlem's youth, and in many ways, Harlem's future, as they announced the art and essay winners for the Delany Lofts Art Contest. The event was hosted at a vibrant reception at the [Delany Lofts](#) in one of their beautifully spacious duplexes overlooking 115th Street and Frederick Douglass Avenue.

Named after the legendary Harlem sisters, Sadie and Bessie Delany, the newly constructed Delany Lofts project is part of a 20-year plus relationship POKO has had with Harlem. In their ongoing commitment to community revitalization and providing affordable housing, POKO collaborated with [The Children's Aid Society](#) and their local Harlem centers to celebrate the voice and creativity of Harlem's youth. Participants from the Dunlevy Milbank, Frederick Douglas, East Harlem, and Drew Hamilton centers were asked to write an essay or create an art project that captured the theme, "A Glimpse of Harlem's Future."

The response from these young Harlem voices, ranging from ages 5 to 17, was nothing short of impressive, poignant, and insightful. Students from the East Harlem center created a colorful collage entitled, "A Glimpse of Harlem's Future through Romare Bearden's Eyes," reflecting their knowledge and appreciation of the legendary Harlem artist. Meanwhile, ten-year old Promyst Brooks from the Milbank Center said that her vision for Harlem includes a community that took care of people that are homeless. Without doubt, a new generation of socially conscious Harlem writers and artists is well on its way.

To further support The Children's Aid Society and their continuing service to Harlem's talented youth, POKO presented the local [Drew Hamilton Learning Center](#) with a \$5,000 donation. In addition, a plaque honoring the Delany sisters was unveiled and now graces the lobby of the Delany Lofts. Both Sadie and Bessy Delany were staunch proponents of education and advocated tirelessly on behalf of children in Harlem. Harry Delany, the great-nephew of the sisters, remarked that he was grateful that the legacy of the Delany sisters continues to have an impact in the community.

-Grace Aneiza Ali