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Art Show Examines Harlem Gentrification

By [Timothy Williams](#)



Dionis Ortiz's "Self Portrait" is part of a new art exhibition at Columbia University. (Photo: Orit Darwish/Columbia University)

A bus is parked in central Harlem: As white people get off on their way to new homes, black people get on, headed to an unknown destination.

In a photograph, an enraged young white woman shoves a black man who is wearing a T-shirt that reads "I ♥ Harlem" as they stand in front of a new housing construction site.

On a quilt, a black woman peers out with a no-nonsense look as she stands between the viewer and a row of pretty town houses behind her. A canvas with strokes of yellow, blue, red and black illustrate the joy felt on the first springlike day in the neighborhood.

These images are part of an art exhibition at Columbia University in which 26 Harlem visual artists weigh in on gentrification in their neighborhood.

The artists in the exhibit, "[Evolution: The Changing Face of Harlem](#)" [pdf] range from lifelong Harlem residents like [Dionis Ortiz](#), whose haunting "Self Portrait" is dominated by a black-and-white photograph of himself superimposed over images of playing children and crumbling tenements, to more recent arrivals like Harrigan Bowman, a photographer who contributed three portraits of her neighbors in "Know Your Neighbors: The Southwest Harlem Project."

Another photographer, [Evi Abele](#), shot photos in the [Manhattanville area of West Harlem](#), where Columbia University plans to build a new campus and demolish nearly all of the neighborhood's existing structures. [Jeeyun Lee](#) etched a series of images of chrysanthemums to represent immigration in the neighborhood.

"There are perspectives from all different sorts of people, and how they feel about the changes happening in Harlem," said [Misha McGlowen](#), the show's curator, who also contributed a large canvas, "Harlem Renaissance," of a composer at work in front of a piano. "There are people angry about the changes, and there are people here who are oblivious, who are not thinking about everything that's going on around them."

The exhibition kicks off the fourth annual Harlem Open Artist Studio Tour, which will be held at studios throughout Harlem on Oct. 4 and 5. (See [artHarlem](#) or [Columbia's Neighbors Web site](#) for more information.)

"Evolution: The Changing Face of Harlem" is being shown at two spaces: the Russ Berrie Medical Science Pavilion at 1150 St. Nicholas Avenue, at 168th Street, and at the Lasker Biomedical Research Building at 3960 Broadway, at 166th Street. The show runs through Nov. 6.