Epatha Merkerson opened the first to reimagine number of artists proached his number of media. ways in which he inspired artists in a symposium—part of a citywide cel-

World, “a weekend-long University S African-American Studies, noted in with a keynote addr ess by Nobel the series examined Bearden’s life three panel discussions. Punctuated by friends, art historians and artists in influence by bringing together his for Jazz Studies and sponsored in The sym-

elists is still being uncovered. cicians, playwrights, dancers and nov-

ists is still being uncovered. SEEING ROMARE BEARDEN

Artists, he believed, have an important role to play in constructing society. THE ARTIST’S AESTHETIC

Romy, as he was known to friends, began his college career at Lincoln University and transferred first to Boston University before completing his degree at New York University. After joining the Harlem Artists Guild, Bearden began a life-

long study of art history; he took inspiration from a wealth of cul-

tures—Western masters such as Cezanne and Picasso, African sculp-

tures, Byzantine mosaics, Japanese prints and Chinese landscapes.

Bearden’s synthesis of these various systems and methods led him to approach his work with the notion that art should satisfy emo-
tional needs rather than concen-

trate on relating particular pieces of information. According to Morrison, this was Bearden’s defi-
nition of an artist’s aesthetic. He reasoned that he could best satisfy viewers’ emotional needs by aban-
doning traditional linear sequenc-
ing and instead imitating the way

human imagination works, flitting from one topic to another, jump-

ing from one point in time to another. Jazz musicians, chorogra-

phers, writers and others were fol-

lowing Bearden’s lead in this respect, and he nurtured relations-

hips with like-minded thinkers such as James Baldwin, Stuart Davis, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Joan Miro, George Grosz, Alvin Ailey and Jacob Lawrence.

NATION BUILDING WITH ART

Today, the words “nation build-
ing” conjure images of armed troops and civil engineers. Bearden had an alternate vision. Artists, he believed, have an important role to play in constructing society. Artists are human and thus, he reasoned, are not imperious to the inherent-

ly social and political nature of our society. Artists have a duty to respond to these pressures, he implored. Morrison echoed Bearden’s sentiments when she ended her address “Artists who claim to be apolitical, they’re happy with the status quo, which is a polit-

ical position.” Learn more about Bearden by vis-

iting www.beardenfoundation.org.

There Go Those Kid Witness News Kids

By Kristin Sterling

T ake a walk on the wild side of campus one Saturday, and there’s a chance you’ll encounter some surprise camera crews. These grade-schoolers cum Fellinis, who had from New York and New Jersey schools, are participants in the Kid Witness News program.

Elementary through high school students come to campus for a day-long session led by School of the Arts (SOA) filmmakers. Morning workshops provide an intensive, hands-on exploration of the equip-
ment, as well as lessons on story-
telling, directing, camera tech-
niques and editing. In the after-
noon, students break up into teams and go on campus to create a short film in an amazing 90 minutes. The films are then shown on a full-size movie screen to the entire group in the Lifetime Screening Room in Dodge Hall.

The students are very excited to see their work on the big screen, says Eugene Ramos, SOA’05, and a KWN volunteer. “I think it is a great idea to encourage students to do something artistic at such a young age. This is a great way to show the students that they can have a future in film and for us to showcase the skills we have learned.”

For many of the KWN students, it is the first time they have set foot on a college campus, and they often surprise their SOA mentors with their level of attentiveness and the quality of their work. Volunteers feel a great sense of accomplishment seeing the younger students work together, and they share the kids’ excitement about holding the camera for the first time.

“There exists a great degree of opportunity for student creativity, individuality and expression,” says Jon Hammert, a teacher at Theodore Roosevelt School in Weehawken, New Jersey. “As they share the story they want to tell their peer audience, the realization emerges that an excellent new video can be produced when everyone works together.”

Since the program’s inception in 1990, nearly 60,000 students have participated from more than 200 inner-city schools in 155 cities. Panasonic provides the schools with the necessary equipment: a digital video camera, digital editing deck, television monitors, VCR, tripods and other accessories, and KWN chooses the schools.

Colombia is the only university affiliated with the program. While local participants are able to come to campus for workshops, the majority of KWN participants learn filmmaking techniques from their teachers, courtesy of teaching materials provided by Panasonic, Students around the country research, write, act in, produce, direct and edit a variety of videos featuring current events, news reports, public service announce-
ments and more.

The students then submit their short films for the annual KWN New Vision Awards. SOA volunteers review the films, and the top entries in each category are sub-

mitted for a final round of judging by an independent panel of profes-
sionals. The winners spend a week-
end in New York and are honored at a special ceremony.

Everyone has stories and the ability to tell them through the medium of film,” says Nelson Walker, SOA’05. “No matter how old you are, something meaningful, per-
sonal and special can come from the experience.” For more information, visit www.panasonic.com/kwn.