

***Silent Wishes, Unconscious Dreams and Prayers...Fulfilled*** is a public artwork commissioned by Real Art Ways and created by artist Carl Pope, Jr. It was first dedicated in September 1996, and installed temporarily in a vacant lot on Albany Avenue in Hartford. The intent of the work is to help community people reflect upon and heal the pains of urban violence with the hope of preventing more deaths. "Silent Wishes...." consists of seventeen brownstone slabs engraved with quotations of Hartford youth who died untimely deaths as the result of domestic or gang violence, drug abuse, or AIDs. Their words are haunting testimony to feelings of hopelessness and expectations of an early death: feelings which—particularly when expressed by our young people—must be of concern to the entire community.



The whole project involved community input. Artist Carl Pope, Jr., began with research about the youth who died. To search out the words of these young victims of violence he spent time walking the neighborhoods and talking with their families, neighbors, friends and girlfriends.

Their remembrances formed the quotations inscribed in the stones. While the project was being installed, neighborhood members spoke with the artist and Real Art Ways representatives on an ongoing basis. Conflicting gang factions showed up to check out the project and agreed to protect it. After "Silent Wishes...." was installed, informal dialogue took place at the site of the artwork and publicity was generated by neighborhood organizations, the media, and Real Art Ways. There was substantial editorial coverage in the local newspapers describing this public art work as a call to Hartford to "wake up."

"Silent Wishes...." has found a new and permanent home on the lawn of Church of the Good Shepherd at 155 Wyllys Street in Hartford, where it will be re-dedicated on Sunday, September 11, 2011 as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Hope Out Loud Peace and Arts Festival.

### **Information Sources**

Interview, Aaron Wartland, visual arts curator and Will K. Wilkins, executive director, Real Art Ways, project materials.