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DORCHESTER, ROXBURY

## In Dorchester, a slain youth is remembered through art

Posted by Patrick Rosso

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By Patrick D. Rosso, Town Correspondent

A girl who was cut down by gunfire in 2002, will be remembered through art as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative unveiled its renovations to the Trina Persad

Park in Dorchester Thursday evening.

Persad was 10 year old when she was murdered near the Jermaine Goffigan Park in Roxbury.

The park on Judson Street near the Roxbury-Dorchester border was constructed and dedicated by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and Dudley Neighborhoods Inc. in 2003.

Thursday's ceremony was intended to make sure Trina's memory and the lessons from her life won't be forgotten.

"It eases the pain because it's all about her," said Bernadette Persad Fernandes, Trina's mother.

With three new art installations reflecting Trina's passions and new landscaping, organizers at DSNI and the youths who helped create the art said they wanted to make a safe and welcoming space for the neighborhood's children. When Trina was reportedly gunned down in gang crossfire, she was walking to park because her neighborhood didn't have one.

"It's a representation of the values and the cultures of the neighborhood. The folks here care about how things look and how we are represented," explained Chris Jones, executive director of DSNI. "It's a way for us to come together in a space that is safe and beautiful. There is a sense of place that happens when you have a space that has been beautified."

At Thursday's ceremony, as the sun set and gospel music played over the speakers, neighbors and relatives reflected on the values of the neighborhood and the sometimes all too common violence that finds its way in.

"This piece of land use to be just a vacant lot," explained Representative Carlos Henriquez, who lives across the street from the park. "In this neighborhood we have an obligation to remember and to prevent it from happening again, but we also have a strong obligation to make sure we carry that person's memory."

"This park will forever hopefully be a safe place for the neighborhood's children to play," Henriquez said as he addressed the children in the audience. "You should come and you should remember that you are a part of this neighborhood and there are adults here that care about you and love you."

The panels that line the chain link fence that surrounds the small park are adorned with things that reflect Trina's life, from the paint in her favorite color of purple, to flags from Jamaica and Trinidad, where her family hails from.

"It was kind of like we were giving a gift to someone," said Nathian Hernandez, a 16-year-old Dorchester resident who contributed to the project. "We spoke with her mother and family to find out things she liked and how we could incorporate them into the art."

The new panels and the landscaping add a certain flair to the neighborhood space, giving it an almost suburban feel, and although the family welcomes the memorials, the pain for them never really lessens.

"I don't think it ever gets easier," said Keila Barros, Trina's godmother. "But I think as time goes by you continue to remember what Trina was all about and not what ended her life."

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