



## **The New York City Street Memorial Project**

[www.ghostbikes.org/new-york-city](http://www.ghostbikes.org/new-york-city)

The Street Memorial Project honors cyclists and pedestrians that have been killed on New York City's streets. We seek to cultivate a compassionate and supportive community for survivors and friends of those lost and to initiate a change in culture that fosters mutual respect among all people who share the streets.

The Street Memorial Project was developed in 2007 to incorporate all the volunteers involved in creating ghost bikes and to include pedestrian memorials. Through the project, individuals work together to construct the memorials and organize memorial rides and walks to highlight the prevalent safety issues on our streets and remember those killed. By 2010, 67 ghost bikes will have been placed in New York City.

### **WHAT IS THE GHOST BIKE PROJECT?**

Ghost Bikes are dignified and somber memorials for bicyclists killed on the streets. A bicycle painted all white is locked near the crash site accompanied by a small plaque. We endeavor to recognize every cycling fatality, but limited news coverage, changing statistical counts, and the lack of publicly available information make it difficult to learn about every death. As part of our annual Memorial Ride, we install a ghost bike in remembrance of all the individuals whose names never made the news.

Each installation is meant to be a reminder of a tragedy that occurred on an otherwise anonymous street corner and a quiet statement in support of cyclists' right to safe travel. The first bike memorials were created in St. Louis, Missouri in 2003, and the idea has since spread to over 100 locations throughout the world. The first New York City ghost bikes appeared in June 2005.

Creating and installing a ghost bike is a sad and moving process. The death of a fellow bicyclist hits home, since we travel the same unsafe streets and face the same risks; it could just as easily have been one of us. Each time we say we hope to never have to do it again – but we remain committed to making these memorials as long as they are needed.

## **WHAT DO WE WANT?**

### **We want a change in culture.**

To encourage mutual respect among all street users.

To instill the responsibility we share to look out for each other.

### **We want to incite more humanity in this city.**

To assure that every person is remembered.

To build solidarity among non-drivers and create a space for mourning and support.

To acknowledge each death as a tragic, but not isolated, event.

To recognize the ripple effect that one person's death has on their family, neighborhood, and community and to acknowledge that the loss of one life affects us all.

### **We want improvements in policy.**

To make the City follow through on necessary improvements in engineering, enforcement, and public education.

To compel the City to conduct full investigations of crashes and their causes and to take action to improve safety.

### **We want outrage that makes a lasting difference.**

To encourage the media to report on all deaths in a sensitive, educated manner.

To hold the City accountable for street safety issues and to force each agency to respond to these preventable tragedies.

To inspire all New Yorkers to be grieved and angered when someone is killed.

### **We want to stop having to do this.**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How many ghost bikes are there? How many fatalities each year?**

By 2010, 67 ghost bikes will have been placed in New York City. There were 24 cyclist deaths in 2005, 18 in 2006, 25 in 2007, 26 in 2008, and 12 in 2009 according to DOT and NYPD as quoted in the media. In 2006, 166 pedestrians were killed and over 10,000 were hit, and in 2007 at least 136 were killed. We make ghost bikes for as many crashes as we can obtain information about. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to get this information, and there may be many more crashes than those that we commemorate with ghost bikes, simply because we are not able to find out about them. There have been 43 cyclist deaths since 2005 for which we have no information about the individual killed or the crash, and we remember these deaths each year on our Annual Memorial Ride and Walk.

### **How do you make the bikes?**

Ghost Bike memorials are very easy to create and require only basic supplies available at any hardware store. We try to salvage as much material as possible, paying only for paint, a lock, and a chain, with a total cost of about \$20 per memorial. We usually get free “junk” bikes from bike repair shops or friends’ basements. We strip each bike of non-essential parts (cables, grips, brakes) and recycle them; this makes it easier to paint and also less attractive to thieves.

There is a very detailed guide to painting bikes at WikiHow ([www.wikihow.com/paint-a-bike](http://www.wikihow.com/paint-a-bike)), but the basics are: degrease and clean the bike before painting; apply primer; apply 1 to 2 coats of flat white spray paint; let dry for 24 hours. Most groups use stencils to create plaques, but painting by hand, silkscreening, and other printing techniques can also be used. Most hardware or art supply stores sell pre-cut stencil letters. There is a detailed guide to making stencils at Visual Resistance ([www.visualresistance.org/wordpress/zine/stencils](http://www.visualresistance.org/wordpress/zine/stencils)). In New York City, street signs are on nearly every corner and are perfect for installing plaques. We bolt the plaques into place using ¼” bolts and nuts and lock the bike in place as if it was a functioning bike.

### **Does the city take the bikes down? Are ghost bikes meant to be permanent?**

Though most of the memorials can still be found at the crash sites, we have discovered that some ghost bikes have been removed. Often, this happens when a memorial is in a less public location or a park. City officials threatened to remove Andre Anderson’s memorial in Far Rockaway, but did not follow through when family and community members rallied to maintain it. Private business owners have also removed ghost bikes that were near their property; Jen Shao and Angel Quizhi’s bikes were removed from their Wall Street and Queens locations.

Ghost bikes can last a long time if there is community and family support for them. They are likely to last longer when well-maintained and visited often. In other cities, ghost bikes are sometimes removed and sometimes remain, depending on the situation. Different groups have found creative ways of keeping bikes intact, including hanging them off of high posts or encasing a wheel in a concrete block. Ultimately, the problem ghost bikes represent is unsafe streets, and they will remain a presence as long as the problem remains unsolved.

### **How do you find out about these deaths?**

Most of the time, we hear about crashes from the news. On occasion, a family member or friend will contact us. Unfortunately, not all deaths are reported in the media and the City is not forthcoming with information. Many times we do not know about a death, or find out months later through an article. The numbers reported by the NYPD or DOT each year do not always match up with our counts. It is possible to fill out FOIA requests to get information about crashes; unfortunately, this process is time-consuming, expensive, and slow, and reports that we do obtain are often incomplete.

### **How do the families of those killed react to the ghost bikes?**

Every person's reaction is different, but the family members we have spoken to have been overwhelmingly positive. Relatives have written to thank us for making memorials and remembering their loved ones. Often, people are not named or we are unable to reach the family.

### **How do community members react?**

We've found that neighbors, even those who did not know the person, are often very protective of the memorials. When Andrew Morgan's ghost bike was hit by a cab, the owners of a local restaurant held on to the memorial until they could give it back to us. We receive e-mail updates and reports from family members or strangers, and often find that a memorial is quietly maintained by local residents. The memorials give people a place to mourn or meditate, and leave a lasting mark at the site of a crash that would otherwise have been forgotten. Their presence also helps to connect families to the larger cycling community, safe streets advocates, and the media.

### **What is the process for installing a ghost bike?**

The process and time it takes to install a bike varies widely. Our goal is to install a ghost bike for every death we learn about before the Annual Memorial Ride. The process of installing a ghost bike is different in each city and is determined by the amount of local support and the local project's decisions.

### **Have you known someone who was killed on a bike?**

The volunteers of the Street Memorial Project all have very different experiences with ghost bikes. Some have been very close to a fallen cyclist, while others simply feel connected to the cycling community and the project's goals. Ultimately, each person killed is a member of our community and the fallen cyclists are so diverse that they are a microcosm of the city as a whole. We feel accountable to each person and recognize that it could just as easily have been one of us. We wish to honor each person and believe that all deserve recognition, respect, and mourning.

## **How did you start this project?**

The project continues the work of various groups and volunteers, who for more than a decade have created memorials for those lost in crashes in New York City, starting with Right of Way's memorial stenciling project from 1996. The arts collective Visual Resistance began making ghost bikes in June 2005, when a member came across the site of Liz Padilla's crash minutes after it happened. The project was inspired by Ghost Bikes Pittsburgh, which was inspired by a similar effort in St. Louis. The act of painting bikes white originated from Jo Slota's *Ghost Bike* art project in San Francisco. There are now ghost bikes in over 100 locations on 5 continents.

The Street Memorial Project was developed in 2007 to incorporate all the people involved in creating ghost bikes and to include pedestrian memorials. Through the project, volunteers work together to construct the memorials and organize memorial rides and walks to highlight the prevalent safety issues on our streets and remember those killed.

## **How do ghost bikes in New York City relate to those in other cities?**

Ghost bikes in each city are installed with different intentions and methods. Many aspects, such as whether bikes are installed for injuries in addition to deaths, the type of sign, the condition of bikes, and the technique of installation, vary from city to city. [GhostBikes.org](http://GhostBikes.org) documents the ghost bike projects in each city, and was started by volunteers in New York City. Some groups maintain their own city's page, while others are completed by New York City volunteers using information found in blogs, Flickr photo comments, and media reports. For information about a local project, we suggest you contact that city or research local cycling-related sites and groups. We do not always have information about each city's project, but we support the efforts of each group that chooses to maintain a ghost bike.

## **Why do you make ghost bikes?**

The project started as a way to cope with these deaths but became something larger. We all have something at stake in this, whether to remember those who would be forgotten or to make our city the place we want it to be.

## **Do ghost bikes scare away would-be cyclists?**

We believe that drawing attention to unsafe conditions and advocating for better cycling amenities, as well as uniting the cycling community around these issues, is the best way to encourage new cyclists. Ghost bikes don't create unsafe streets; they remind everyone that initiating safer streets is a collective act and requires participation of all street users. They also make visible the cost of ignoring traffic justice issues.

## HOW CAN OUR STREETS BE SAFER?

Our objective is to create a culture of mutual respect for all users of New York City's streets. We suggest that this could be achieved through methods that simultaneously improve cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, educate all road users on their rights and responsibilities, and increase enforcement of violations that put cyclists and pedestrians in peril. Improved media and government reporting would help draw attention to the need for all road users to exercise due caution and respect by emphasizing the fact that cars and trucks do not have a greater right to the road than cyclists and pedestrians. The pedestrians and cyclists we memorialize do not die as the result of "accidents" as frequently reported in the press; they are killed in preventable collisions.

We believe that our recommendations can decrease the likelihood of crashes resulting in death and serious injury of cyclists and pedestrians, and in the long term will foster mutual respect among drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, walkers, joggers, skaters, and all street users.

### **Improving Existing Cyclist and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

Improved street design is an essential key to improving safety. A safer and less stressful environment will increase the use of bicycles for daily transportation, which in turn will make cycling safer, as drivers become accustomed to sharing the streets. While New York is a pedestrian's city, reckless driving still results in numerous fatalities and injuries each year. The design of the urban environment affects the behavior of all road users, so all efforts must be made to improve infrastructure in ways that can protect people who walk, skate, jog, and cycle.

We suggest improvements to create an infrastructure that provides:

- physically separated spaces, including truly car-free greenways and buffered bike lanes
- intersection improvements, including sidewalk extensions and variations in signal timing
- traffic calming measures
- common sense mapping and demarcation of bike lanes and crosswalks
- complete streets that offer integrated street space accommodating all users
- visible and well-placed signage denoting bike routes

### **Enforcement of Existing Traffic Laws**

The NYPD too often neglects to enforce existing traffic laws, and our legal system fails to prosecute drivers who severely injure and kill pedestrians and cyclists. In most cases there are no repercussions for drivers who kill or maim; the majority never even receive a summons, regardless of evidence or their own admission of disobeying traffic laws. The NYPD regularly fails to hold drivers accountable for their actions, not even serving summonses for the most obvious violations. Protecting cyclists and pedestrians will make New York a more livable city. In turn, cyclists and pedestrians are responsible for respecting applicable rules of the road.

We believe that the NYPD should do everything possible to:

- discourage dangerous driving by issuing summonses to those who break laws, especially for routine violations that endanger non-drivers
- practice active and equitable enforcement of traffic laws against all road users
- better educate and train officers regarding traffic laws and crash response procedures

- ensure accurate and pedestrian/cyclist-sensitive NYPD response and complete investigation of crashes

### **Education, Outreach, and Reporting**

Rigorous ongoing outreach and education will help ensure that all road users understand their rights and responsibilities. Because of their potentially deadly force, it is particularly important that drivers of motorized vehicles recognize the rights of more vulnerable road users. In addition, the City should analyze crash data to determine what improvements to make.

#### We suggest this outreach should include:

- driver awareness and education, including public awareness campaigns, mandatory driver education courses for traffic violators, and bicycle and pedestrian awareness curriculum in driving tests and programs for MTA, City government, and large vehicle operators
- 311 and 911 services for cyclists and pedestrians to report unsafe conditions and emergencies
- accurate, coordinated, and transparent recording of summonses, crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities by all involved City and State agencies
- analysis of reports and examination of contributing factors to crashes
- improved data collection and public disclosure by the City regarding crashes and subsequent investigations

### **Media Response**

In relaying information on crashes that result in deaths or serious injuries, we urge representatives of the media to discuss safety issues with cyclist and pedestrian advocates and to provide as complete a picture as possible of the incident. There is much room for improvement in the City's reporting of crashes, enforcement of dangerous driver behavior, and implementation of infrastructure improvements. We look to the media to inform the public in a fair and balanced manner. Press can play an important role in highlighting driver responsibility and opening the discussion to safety improvements.

#### We propose that improvements to media reporting of crashes should include:

- increased media access to information on deaths and injuries of cyclists and pedestrians
- use of appropriate language in reporting on crashes, avoiding use of words such as "accident" that connote lack of culpability for the driver
- avoidance of crash descriptions that unfairly blame the victim. Journalists often describe common driving violations that cause collisions in ways that give the impression that the cyclist or pedestrian was at fault. For example, bicyclists do not hit car doors; people open car doors into cyclists' paths. Cyclists and pedestrians do not move into the paths of turning vehicles; drivers of vehicles do not look for cyclists and pedestrians and fail to yield to them at intersections. All of these are illegal actions, punishable under New York vehicular law.
- focus on driver behavior rather than the presence or absence of helmets, lights, reflectors, or bells, which do not prevent collisions.

For further recommendations on how to bring about improved street safety, please read suggestions from the New York City Bicycle Coalition at [www.transalt.org/campaigns/safebiking/Bike\\_safety.html](http://www.transalt.org/campaigns/safebiking/Bike_safety.html)

The NYC Department of Transportation released a report on traffic safety improvements in NYC that includes year-to-year data on fatalities and severe injuries: [www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/safetyrpt07\\_1.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/safetyrpt07_1.pdf)

The NYC Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation and the NYPD released a joint report entitled "Bicyclist Fatalities and Serious Injuries in New York City 1996 - 2005": [www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/bicyclefatalities.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/bicyclefatalities.pdf)

To find bicyclist and pedestrian crash data for a specific location in NYC, please visit [www.crashstat.org](http://www.crashstat.org)

## WHO ARE THE GHOST BIKES FOR?

At the end of 2009, 67 ghost bikes had been placed in New York City.

Two Unknown Cyclists of 2009: placed on January 3, 2010

[Solange Raulston](#): December 13, 2009

[Julian Miller](#): September 18, 2009

[Eliseo Martinez](#): August 27, 2009

[James Langergaard](#): August 14, 2009

[Pablo Pasarán](#): August 8, 2009

[Juan Espinoza-Navarrete](#): July 10, 2009

[Unnamed](#): June 27, 2009

[Stephen Hoadnett](#): May 6, 2009

[Aurelio Perez](#): May 28, 2009

[Dan Valle](#): February 18, 2009

[Thirteen Unknown Cyclists of 2008](#): placed on January 4, 2009

[Faustino Morales](#): November 18, 2008

[Arturo Flores](#): October 21, 2008

[Unnamed](#): October 1, 2008

[Jonathan Millstein](#): September 10, 2008

[Alexander Toulouse](#): September 6, 2008

[Rasha Shamoon](#): August 5, 2008

[Sze Man \(Josephine\) Chan](#): August 4, 2008

[Amelia Geocos](#): July 11, 2008

[Pedro Fernandez-Pacheco](#): July 10, 2008

[Michael Needham](#): June 5, 2008

[Alvaro Francisco Olsen](#): April 16, 2008

[Jian-Lan Zhang](#): April 16, 2008

[Asif Rahman](#): February 28, 2008

[Eleven Unknown Cyclists of 2007](#): placed on January 6, 2008

[Franco Scorcio](#): December 6, 2007

[David Smith](#): December 5, 2007

[Sam Hindy](#): November 16, 2007

[Unnamed](#): October 18, 2007

[Craig Murphey](#): October 18, 2007

[Habian Rodriguez](#): September 1, 2007

[Elijah Armand Wrancher](#): August 28, 2007

[Carolina Hernandez](#): August 17, 2007

[Luis Ramos](#): June 22, 2007

[Juan Luis Solis](#): June 22, 2007

[Mark Grichevsky](#): June 6, 2007

[Jeffrey Moore](#): May 29, 2007

[Unnamed](#): May 18, 2007

[Anthony Delgado](#): April 29, 2007

[Eve](#): December 13, 2006

[Eric Ng](#): December 1, 2006

[Jamel Lewis](#): November 30, 2006

[Frank C. Simpson](#): November 9, 2006

[Reginald Chan](#): September 18, 2006

[Jose Mora](#): September 4, 2006

[Keith Powell](#): August 20, 2006

[Jonathan "Bronx Jon" Neese](#): August 12, 2006

[Darren Lewis](#): August 10, 2006

[Shamar Porter](#): August 5, 2006

[Derek Lake](#): June 26, 2006

[Dr. Carl Henry Nacht](#): June 22, 2006

[Donna Goodson](#): June 5, 2006

[Twelve Unnamed Riders of 2005](#) and [Five Unknown Cyclists of 2006](#): placed on January 8, 2006; second plaque added January 7, 2007

[Angel Quizphi](#): October 30, 2005

[Eulene Bryant](#): October 29, 2005

[Miguel A. Molina](#): October 20, 2005

[Andre Anderson](#): September 24, 2005

[Liz Byrne](#): September 23, 2005

[Jen Shao](#): September 16, 2005

[Keith Alexander](#): July 11, 2005

[Andrew Ross Morgan](#): June 22, 2005

[Elizabeth Padilla](#): June 9, 2005

[Brandie Bailey](#): May 8, 2005

[Jerome Allen](#): April 26, 2005

[Chaim Goldberg](#): January 3, 2005

[William Rodriguez](#): October 8, 2002 (placed October 8, 2009)

## HOW DO PEOPLE REACT?

“I started making ghost bikes for strangers in June 2005. A year and a half later, my friend Eric Ng was killed by a drunk driver while riding on the West Side bike path. Eric was 22 and had just started teaching math in a Brooklyn high school. He was the kind of person that made you want to live a little more. A year later I still expect to see him when I show up somewhere. His death ripped a hole in my heart.

When we make ghost bikes we tap into the hurt of the world. Each person is part of the soul of their city. These stories can make headlines one day and are forgotten the next – we try to make the city remember. We choose to honor that stranger we know could just as easily be our friend, our sister, our own self. That choice makes us whole.”

*-Ryan Nuckel, [NYC Street Memorial Project](#) volunteer*

“While checking your site for news on Elizabeth Padilla, I learned that yet another cyclist has been killed by a truck in New York in the days following Liz’s death - Andrew Morgan. I am Sara Padilla, Liz’s older sister. I am devastated, angry and hurt and so is my family: Liz’s younger sister Rebecca, my parents, my husband Andrew and Liz’s husband Tim. This past weekend we traveled to Brooklyn to collect Liz’s things and mourn, again, together, at the site of the Ghost Bike memorial for Liz. What a beautiful and heartbreaking tribute to my sister. While words cannot adequately convey the depth of our loss, I believe the Ghost Bike Project makes a difference by providing a powerful visual image of a life taken from us senselessly and also by revealing our sadness publicly; in the hope that others – cyclists, pedestrians, and most importantly, drivers – will help prevent these accidents from happening again. I watched as strangers walked slowly by Liz’s ghost bike, stopping to read my sister’s name, and reflect upon a life that they did not know. Flowers and notes were left by those who knew Liz and others who did not. Thank you so much for taking such care and demonstrating this kindness to a woman, and countless others, that you did not know. It is shameful that the authorities in New York, including the Mayor, have responded to these tragedies in such a heartless way. We will never get over these losses. They represent not only loss to their families but to all who knew them.”

*-Sara Padilla, sister of [Liz Padilla](#)*

“Your placement of a bike at the site of my husband’s (Dr. Carl Henry Nacht) fatal accident was an extremely meaningful act. For myself, my children, our family and friends, it has provided solace at the place of great tragedy. I have visited the bike often and use it to meditate about my husband of 33 years...I have seen people stop, read the plaque and think about its simple but poignant message. I will be sending out hundreds of thank you letters in the next week to people who have been supportive of us throughout these difficult months. I wanted you to know that in my letter to them, I will be acknowledging your contribution to our healing. My husband’s 83-year-old aunt comes into Manhattan from Queens on public transportation to visit the bike.”

*-Mary Beth Kelly, wife of [Dr. Carl Henry Nacht](#)*

“Last night I took a cab, and the driver was talking about the challenges of life as a cabbie. He was complaining about bike messengers and then suddenly shifted gears, lowered his tone, and said, ‘Do you ever see those bikes painted white, hanging up? That means someone died there. When I see them it reminds me to be careful for the bikers.’ In other words, people notice.”

**-Anonymous**

“The Ghost Bikes memorialize people who deserve to be remembered for their bravery, both physical and cultural (subverting the dominant paradigm). They are an antidote to the sad, ordinary fate of deaths by automobile – to ‘flicker briefly across the city’s consciousness and then flutter away, leaving in their wake only grieving families and friends,’ as we wrote in *Killed By Automobile*.

The Ghost Bikes are authentic, artistic and poetic. They are perfectly proportioned to the story they seek to tell. They grew organically out of a specific instance and need rather than from some grand design. Their vernacular expression is an implicit rebuke of standard, corporatized ‘art.’

The Ghost Bikes and Memorial Ride create an opportunity for victims’ families and friends to engage publicly and politically. The Memorial Ride promotes cyclist solidarity. Sunday’s ride reached further across the multiple tendencies and factions in our movement than I’ve ever seen, including the magnificent 1987 bike ban protests.

I’ve been a full-fledged cycle activist for 21 years now (including a long stint as TA president). Most of the time I’ve let myself be guided by an existential sense of struggle – What Would Camus Do? In ‘The Plague,’ Camus’ alter ego, Dr. Rieux, led the resistance against the deadly virus, not for strategic reasons but in order to remain human. The virus we face now is the destruction of the environment and the dehumanization of life via automobiles. The Ghost Bikes simultaneously memorialize and resist. They are our way of being human.”

**-Charles Komanoff, author of “[Killed by Automobile](#),” co-founder of [Right of Way](#). From a longer article on [Streetsblog](#), “[In Defense of Ghost Bikes](#).”**

“The Ghost Bike Project is a very unique and symbolic way to memorialize fallen cyclists. I think it is the perfect way to pay tribute to cyclists killed on the street. It reflects the loss of a precious life and the passion of the person killed. It should serve as a vivid reminder to everyone who travels that route that the most precious gift anyone could have, the gift of life, was lost because of the carelessness and recklessness of another person. We hope that it sends a very clear and strong message to the driving public to be extra careful when sharing the road with others.”

**-Audrey Anderson, mother of [Andre Anderson](#)**

“When I placed the first ghost bike in Tucson, little did I know the wrenching reactions it would cause all over the spectrum. I also didn’t realize the cascading effect it would have, as several other bikes have gone up since. The power of this urban symbol is clear.”

*-Ari Shapiro, [Tucson Ghost Bikes](#) volunteer*

“I will continue to ride my bicycle in New York City and everywhere else, and do so with the understanding that I am mortal. It is a pleasure and a necessity for me. And I hope that we, as creatures with incredible ingenuity, can create a safer environment for all pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, preferably in that order.

The Ghost Bike Project is not intended to frighten those that ride or wish to; it’s making visible the cost of a city dominated by car culture.”

*-Kevin Caplicki, member of [JustSeeds/Visual Resistance Artists Cooperative](#). Kevin helped to install some of the first ghost bikes and initiate the project in New York City.*

“We’re not yelling for bike lanes. What we’re looking for is a little more intangible. We’re hoping that the culture changes.”

*-Rachael Myers, former [NYC Street Memorial Project](#) volunteer*