

## Ottawa

# Well-wishers pack Ottawa synagogue for multi-faith response to racist graffiti



Community gathers after graffiti targets Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities

[Andrew Foote](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 19, 2016 5:40 PM ET | Last Updated: November 19, 2016



A line stretches back from the door of the Machzikei Hadas synagogue in Ottawa before a multi-faith solidarity gathering on Saturday, Nov. 19. Cameras weren't allowed inside because it happened on the Jewish Sabbath. (Andrew Foote/CBC)

Down Virginia Drive they came, a steady flow of people lining up to enter the Machzikei Hadas synagogue in south Ottawa on Saturday morning.

Through the doors that had been [marked with pro-Nazi symbols two days earlier](#) they went, wearing their hijabs, yarmulkes and crosses until there was no more room in the main hall to hear from an imam, rabbi, pastor and other community leaders about a string of similar acts of vandalism.

Many stuck around in the lobby to read a message of solidarity together, sing the national anthem and hear the surprise news that [a teenager was under arrest](#) after another religious building in Ottawa had been defaced overnight.

- [Teen charged after spate of racist graffiti in Ottawa](#)
- [Racist graffiti spray-painted on Parkdale United Church, Ottawa Muslim Association](#)
- [Anti-Semitic graffiti spray-painted on Machzikei Hadas synagogue](#)

"This is an amazing show of solidarity with the community. It shows Ottawa's true colours," said Samuel Kardash, who was part of the crowd of 600.

"It shows how Ottawa really feels about racism, how there's no place for this kind of thing in our society, in our city, which has accepted so many people from so many places and cultures."

"It was a beautiful hour and heartwarming experience for me and everyone who participated," said Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson.



A line stretches back from the door of the Machzikei Hadas synagogue in Ottawa before a multi-faith solidarity gathering on Saturday, Nov. 19, 2016, following a week-long racist vandalism attack targeting synagogues, a mosque

and a church who's reverend is black. (Andrew Foote/CBC)

## 'We're all in this together'

About 600 people came to the synagogue for the multi-faith "solidarity gathering," organized the day before after [someone left racist messages in red paint on a mosque and church](#) — on the heels of three [similar acts of vandalism against Jewish people](#).

"There's certainly no place in Ontario or in Canada for those acts of hate," said Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, who came to the meeting with local MPPs and former premier Dalton McGuinty.

"It really flies in the face of everything I believe we stand for."

"We're all in this together. This is not about the Jewish community or about the United Church or the mosque. When one person, one institution, one community gets attacked we all get attacked," said Imam Sikander Hashmi of the Kanata Muslim Association after the gathering.

"I think it's imperative [for] every single member of society to speak up for what's right."



**Andrew Foote**

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Imam Sikander Hashmi of the Kanata Muslim Association says this week's vandalism was an attack on everyone.



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Rev. Anthony Bailey, a black pastor whose Parkdale United Church has now been targeted with racist graffiti [twice this year](#), said he shared a "daily call to action" with the people inside.

"What I was saying in there was I felt that people need to... speak up when they hear hateful jokes being made, people being treated differently, ostracized and made fun of. If we don't speak up in these small instances then that kind of behaviour and language becomes normalized — and when it's normalized, it's easier for it to gain traction," he said.

"But I think that if people take a personal responsibility and challenge those types of ways that we disparage each other when they happen — [and] it takes a lot of courage — then we'll be better."



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Rev. Anthony Bailey was one of the recipients of some "art of solidarity" by children from the Orthodox Church this morning.



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[See Andrew Foote's other Tweets](#)

There's [a community solidarity walk happening Sunday](#) as another response to the graffiti, organized by a group of city councillors.

It starts at the corner of Island Park Drive and Scott Street at noon and finishes at Preston Street and Somerset Street West.

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*With files from Claudine Richard*