

METROWEST

Kristallnacht remembered at Rutgers interfaith gathering

by Enid Weiss
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An interfaith crowd of clergy, students, and government and campus officials gathered outside Rutgers University Hillel in New Brunswick Monday night to commemorate the 65th anniversary of Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass.

Kristallnacht, which occurred Nov. 9-10, 1938, has been called the beginning of the Holocaust. Thousands of Jews were killed, injured, and arrested by rioting Nazis during the conflagration. Jewish businesses and homes were looted and synagogues were desecrated.

The commemoration, organized by Rutgers Hillel and the Anti-Defamation League New Jersey region and cohosted by state and campus Christian groups, was also intended to draw attention to what organizers called "a series of anti-Semitic attacks [at Rutgers] that reflect the global wave of anti-Semitism."

The program included a responsive reading of a prayer service in memory of the victims of Kristallnacht and a candle-lighting ceremony.

The Rev. Monsignor William Benwell, vicar general of the Diocese

of Metuchen, spoke on behalf of Bishop Paul Bootkoski, bishop of the diocese. A moment of silence in memory of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America was also included in the program.

It is important to speak out against suffering and to learn from the harmful lessons of the past, said Benwell, a Rutgers alumnus.

"St. Paul talks about when one part of the body suffers the whole body does," Benwell told NJ Jewish News when asked why he felt participation in the program was important. "As Christians we suffer when there's anti-Semitic violence, and it's important for us to speak out against it."

During the service, he read a passage about Pope John Paul II's visit to Auschwitz and how such a place demands reflection.

The service was part of the ADL's ongoing effort to encourage non-Jewish leaders to promote Israel and confront anti-Semitism, according to ADL's NJ director Shai Goldstein. The ADL promoted the program as a response to "attacks on Jewish students and Jewish institutions at Rutgers," including swastikas that were painted on the Hillel building and the "intimidation" of Jewish students for their support of Israel.



Lighting six candles for the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust are, from left, front row, Seema M. Singh, public advocate for State of New Jersey; Neva Lawson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Woodbridge; Rutgers president Richard McCormick; Greg Trevor of Highland Park, a survivor of the 9/11 World Trade Center attack; and, back row, right, the Rev. Veronica P. Palmer, assistant dean at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. Photo by Sunny Vellien

Shortly before the program began, participants signed an ADL-prepared statement about anti-Semitic attacks on the Rutgers campus.

"The Jewish students at Rutgers University have faced a series of anti-Semitic attacks that reflect the global wave of anti-Semitism," according to the statement. "We are gathered here together to break that wave of anti-Semitism. Criticism of

internationally, we have seen an increase in anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic attacks. We the undersigned are committed to confronting all manifestations of anti-Semitism and bigotry. We will not stand silent."

The event was cohosted by Christian campus ministries, the NJ Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen, the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry, and the First Baptist Church of Woodbridge.

Participants included Richard McCormick, president of Rutgers University; Jean-Marie Dimech-Juchniewicz, chaplain of the Catholic Center at Rutgers; the Rev. John David Larson, pastor of the Lutheran Campus Ministry at Rutgers; the Rev. Jack Johnson, NJ Council of Churches; and Seema M. Singh, public advocate for State of New Jersey.

Also taking part were Roy Tanzman, ADL board member; Rutgers Hillel executive director Andrew Getraer; and Bill Davidson, president of NJ ADL.

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