



# CHRISTIE PITS RIOT

90th Anniversary Commemoration

2023

To commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christie Pits Riot, the Toronto District School Board Jewish Heritage Committee (May) and Italian Heritage Committee (June) have gathered these daily quotes from notable individuals. These quotes demonstrate the effects of the riots on our Canadian history that we remember today and always.





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*"The Christie Pits Riot 90th Anniversary Commemoration Project is a truly meaningful initiative for students. This educational experience provides a valuable opportunity to reflect upon and learn important lessons about fighting racism, injustice and other forms of hate that are as relevant today as they were when this tragic event occurred almost a century ago. Villa Charities is proud to support this project, which demonstrates the collaboration between communities and aims to increase multicultural understanding in Toronto and across the nation."*

*- Marco DeVuono, President and CEO Villa Charities Inc.*





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*"90 years later, the Christie Pits Riot remains a painful chapter in Canadian Jewish history. Jewish Torontonians faced hostility and violence, the culmination of rising levels of antisemitism. As time passes, we must remain vigilant and ensure hate finds no home in Canada."*

*- Michael Mostyn, Chief Executive Officer, B'nai Brith of Canada*





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*"My father was a Holocaust survivor. He finished his speeches by saying:  
"We must fight hatred and protect the freedom of all Canadians." The  
Christie Pits Riot reminds us that antisemitism and hate have no home  
in Toronto. We must protect each other, and drive hate away for good."*

*- Marilyn Sinclair, Founder, Liberation75*





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*"The Riot has left its mark with many citizens of Toronto that had grandparents who were near or at the Riot. The impact is vast and deep with me and my family. The Riot is when Jewish and Italians came together and said ENOUGH! This part of the story, standing up together against hate really showed me what people can do when they are pushed beyond their limits."*

*- Sam Rosenthal, Producer/Director, Hogtown Collective*



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*"Toronto the Good wasn't so good. My grandfather was mayor when the riot happened. He was horrified. He banned the swastika. I know he'd see painful similarities between then and now. Let's work together to peacefully oppose bigotry and injustice in our city and everywhere."*

*- Ted Staunton, author of "The Good Fight"*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot is a timeless – and timely – reminder of the dangers of hatred against a minority. We must never allow random hatred to overcome us."*

*- Wendy Switzer Myles, President, Canadian Friends of Herzog Hospital*





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*"The greatest friendships and best ideas are born around the dinner table. Let us bond over delicious meals, find how we intersect and connect, and create a better world for our children."*

*- Lili Zohar-Pittari, K-12 Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Learning Coach, Jewish Heritage Committee member, and mother of a daughter who is the result of a Jewish-Italian- collaboration*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot revealed an antisemitism that was already lurking beneath the fabric of "Toronto the Good." Its impact 90 years later shows us that the tireless work of pushing back racism in all its forms is the responsibility of every community member - not just those directly impacted."*

*- Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, Canadian Soprano*





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*"The 90th anniversary of the Christie Pits riot is a stark reminder that Holocaust denial and antisemitism threaten global communities and undermine democracy. We have a shared responsibility to stand as a bulwark for freedom, peace and compassion, never turning a blind eye to hate. Instead, let us stare down intolerance together."*

*- Steven Del Duca, Mayor of Vaughan*





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*“Educating students about this significant event in Toronto’s history underscores the importance of protecting human rights, combatting antisemitism, and promoting understanding and appreciation of cultural differences throughout our diverse school communities.”*

*- Dr. Brendan Browne, Director of Education,  
Toronto Catholic District School Board*





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*"As someone who grew up in the 70s and 80s near Christie Pitts and often played on the field and sat in the stands where the riot began, I was shocked when I first learned about this historical incident as a young adult. Today it is a constant reminder for me that we need to challenge radical and extremist political views because they often go hand in hand with violence."*

*- Ralph Nigro, TDSB Secondary School Principal, Chair of Toronto School Administrators' Association, and President-Elect of Ontario Principals' Council*



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*"The Christie Pits riot is a stark reminder of the long struggle for change & serves as a testament to the power of community solidarity in the fight against antisemitism, hate & injustices. We need to find more ways to unite & build relationships in our stand against hate."*

*- Rashmi Swarup, Director of Education, Peel District School Board*



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*"Canada was the first country in the world to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism over 50 years ago in 1972. Multiculturalism is the idea that we are not required or pressured to conform to a Canadian mandate for how we live. Rather, we are permitted to bring our own diverse looks, practices, languages and ideals together in one Canadian society that treats us all equally."*

*- Aldo Di Felice, President of TLN Media Group*



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*"The Christie Pits riot exposes the danger of racist words and symbols. It reminds us not to get caught up in the swell of hate - but instead to stand against it. As my father, Holocaust survivor Bill Glied said, "Do one good thing today and together we can make the world a better place.""*

*- Michelle Glied-Goldstein, Carrying Testimony*



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#### Your Tree at Christie Pits

*we gather on a spring afternoon, the ground moist with the season, a handful of us and your tree,  
it will grow tall and colourful, as you were strong and beautiful, without violence or pain  
here between city and sky, among so many other souls, marked by trees where we come now,  
to laugh and picnic to let the children, play in their uniqueness discover,  
every language in its distinctive melody, my father once told me of the sadness of this park long ago  
the ground wet with blood, back in 1933 when he was young, sometimes I worry about history,  
is it ever just history, if the trees could talk, would it sound like prayer*

*- Gianna Patriarca, author and poet*





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*"It's hard to look at the Toronto of today and imagine what it looked like in 1933. Swastika pins, paranoia, fighting in the streets. A city divided by hate. We look back as a reminder of how important it is to stand up to bigotry. And make sure we never become that way again."*

*- Josh Rosen, cartoonist and illustrator, Illustrator of book about Christie Pits Riot "the Good Fight"*





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*"One of the most powerful lessons from the Christie Pits Riot in which over 10,000 people were involved, was the fact that the Italian Team helped defend their Jewish counterparts who they were playing against when the Jews were targeted by the Pit Gang as they unfurled a banner with the swastika and shouted "Heil Hitler". Standing up for others - standing up against all hate whether it directly involves you, or not, is a key lesson for all students."*

*- Shelley Laskin, TDSB Trustee for Ward 8 and member of Jewish Heritage Month Committee*



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*"I think the impact of the Riot is still being felt, 90 years later, by members of the Jewish community (specifically), as well as all new Canadians and immigrants. Even if people have not heard about the riot, the event created a ripple effect by standing up to hatred, racism and intolerance. It was a direct challenge to antiquated and status quo ways of thinking and treating other people."*

*- Drew Carnwath, Editor, Musician, Performer, Playwright, Producer*



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*"Sadly, the hate that fueled the anti-Jewish riot at Toronto's Christie Pits in 1933 isn't confined to the past. It lives on in today's widespread antisemitism in Canada. It underscores the need to teach young people relevant lessons from history to help build a more tolerant, more inclusive, more equitable future for all."*

*- Michael Levitt, President and CEO of Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot is a terrible moment in our city's history but it is so important to acknowledge and learn from that event. Over the last 90 years, our city has grown into a place where everyone is welcomed, and our communities stand together. We are a city that embraces and celebrates diversity because we know that is our strength."*

*- Jennifer McKelvie, Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto*



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*"Growing up, I never learned about the Christie Pits riot. Antisemitism wasn't a big concern. Sadly, with a rise in hate crimes in Toronto, our city's young people must be aware of our past and feel empowered to speak up against antisemitism and hate in all its ugly forms."*

*- Dara Solomon, Executive Director Toronto Holocaust Museum*





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*“As we remember the riot at Christie Pits, this historic event remains a symbol of pride in our Jewish community’s fortitude against the antisemitism of the day, and a testament to the lasting bonds and ongoing allyship with our Italian neighbours.”*

*- Adam Minsky, President & CEO of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto*





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*"As an Italian Canadian, I am so extremely proud of my fellow Italians who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with their Jewish friends and neighbours as they were being attacked by the pro-Nazi Anti-Semitic mob that were spewing hate and anger towards Toronto's Jewish Community."*

*- Mike Colle, Toronto Councillor, Eglinton-Lawrence*





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*"My late father grew up playing baseball at Christie Pits in the 30's and hearing his stories as a young boy left a huge impression on my identity and my understanding of the history of Toronto. I was so happy to read about this program."*

*- Andy Stein, City of Toronto, Chief of Staff*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot marked a pivotal time in Toronto's history. This event brought communities together to confront racism. By learning about this event we affirm the truism that through education, we can foster empathy and tolerance. By fighting antisemitism and prejudice we can build a safer, liveable Toronto and prevent history from repeating itself."*

*- James Pasternak, Toronto Councillor Downsview - York Centre*





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*"I read about the riot while writing my second book, hold the note. I wrote a poem as a young 1930s Italian Canadian reacting to the violence and the rising anti-semitism and discrimination felt by both marginalized groups. I wanted the reader to imagine how it must have felt."*

*- Domenico Capilongo, author*



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*"If we don't learn from our past, then we are bound to repeat it. It is vital that all Torontonians know the history of the Christie Pits riot and the continued need to #CombatHateandRacism"*

*- Colleen Russell-Rawlins, Director of Education,  
Toronto District School Board*



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*"One of Canada's first anti-hate speech policies was born out of the Christie Pits Riot implemented by then Toronto Mayor William James Stewart. 89 years later, with a rise in anti-Semitic racism, the fight against hate remains to be a vigilant task of mine as an elected official."*

*- Josh Matlow, Toronto Councillor, Toronto—St Paul's*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot symbolised the beginnings of multiculturalism. A desire to change and call out actions of antisemitism, racism, exclusion and injustice against all minorities."*

*- Lenny Lombardi, President and CEO of CHIN Radio/TV International,  
Canada*





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*"The Christie Pits riot was a dark moment in Canadian history when ordinary people succumbed to violent antisemitic and anti-Italian hate," said Stephen Lecce, Ontario's Minister of Education. "With antisemitism and hate rising across our country, we are taking action by introducing mandatory learning on the Holocaust, to ensure "Never Again" is an enduring reality, here at home and around the world."*

*- Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot and its aftermath helped to share a generation of advocacy. This advocacy still has an impact on our lives. We would not have York University in my district, for example, without that desire for change that existed in the post-Christie Pits Riot era. York University was in great part created as an alternative for non-traditional groups to have access to post-secondary education and it is where I attended university. It is also where tens of thousands of students, mostly of immigrant background, attend university to this day."*

*- Anthony Perruzza, Toronto Councillor, Humber River-Black Creek*





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*"90 years after the Christie Pits riot, it is important to learn the lessons of this dark chapter of our past in order to ensure a brighter future. Antisemitism and other forms of hate are on the rise, and we must all join together in pushing back against them. Education is the right place to start."*

*- Noah Shack, Vice President, GTA,  
The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)*



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*Prior to the Christie Pits riot, the Jewish and Italian communities were separate with little interaction. During the riot, the alliance was brought together by reaction due to discrimination both groups faced. After the riot, they realized how important it was for them to come together in other areas such as: the union movement and the political arena. Eventually they began to interact as well in the economic and cultural life thus making Toronto a better community."*

*- Alberto Di Giovanni, Author, Founder and Director of Centro Scuola e Cultura Italiana, the Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot, although 90 years ago, shows how interconnected our global society truly is - it does not matter where wars occur - the conflict exists with all of us, in the concepts, ideas, and philosophies that inspire us. Hate is everyone's responsibility to resolve."*

*- Patrick Nunziata, TDSB Trustee for Ward 3*





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*"By working together, our heritage committees celebrate and promote greater understanding and appreciation of and for the many waves of immigrant communities — both historical and current — that make up our school board and city's rich, diverse tapestry. By celebrating our differences and finding common ground, we can build a stronger and more vibrant Toronto that represents and includes all Torontonians."*

*- Rachel Chernos-Lin, TDSB Chair of the Board of Trustees*





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*"Evil has no place in our society and those seeking to promote their own interests over others are ultimately doomed to fail. Antisemitism. Once again those seeking to hurt those of the Jewish faith had their plan backfire as people rose up together. Together we can overcome any injustice."*

*- Sam Rosenthal, Producer/Director, Hogtown Collective*





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*"My late husband, the legendary and beloved designer Lou Myles, was Toronto-born of Italian heritage. Growing up in the Toronto of the 1930s and '40s, he encountered tough times –the same difficulties and hostilities so achingly familiar to our Jewish community. Living side by side, the Jews and Italians formed, out of necessity, a joint front. During the Christie Pits riot, it was the Italians who came to the defence of the beleaguered Jews."*

*- Wendy Switzer Myles, President, Canadian Friends of Herzog Hospital*



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*As we know, every good relationship is built upon trust. We build trust slowly, one story at a time, so we need to make time for stories. We sit around tables, laugh, argue, eat, and share until more and more layers of who we are on the table. Gradually, we get to see how much we have in common, where we intersect, how we complement one another, what we can create together. That is how we build strong and lasting allyships. That is how we slowly change the world for better."*

*- Lili Zohar-Pittari, K-12 Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Learning Coach, Jewish Heritage Committee member, and mother of a daughter who is the result of a Jewish-Italian- collaboration*





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*"Don't be naive. We are never that far from a race riot. Do not take your freedoms for granted and do not give them up for any price or convenience. Peace is not guaranteed so long as humans are running the show. Every single one of us is capable of ending up on EITHER side of this riot."*

*- Measha Brueggergosman-Lee, Canadian Soprano*



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*"Discrimination of any kind based on identity – who you are, how you look, sound, eat, pray, love - is a violation of the core equality principle on which multiculturalism is based. Hopefully, all generations of Canadians and all levels of government will stay true to the promise of multiculturalism and embrace equality as a guiding principle. If we do so, we will all be richer for it."*

*- Aldo Di Felice, President of TLN Media Group*





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*"The Christie Pits Riot exposed untenable social conditions that demanded change. Today there is no need to wait for eruptions of racial violence to work towards a more tolerant, just, and egalitarian Canada."*

*- Jamie Michaels, Writer and Educator, Author of the graphic novel  
Christie Pits*





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*"The Christie Pit riot is a warning and a guide. It warns us that our city is not immune to racism and prejudice. We are guided to work together to fight racism and prejudice through vigilance and allyship. 2023 can be 1933 if we are not careful."*

*- David Matlow, Chair, OJA Foundation Board of Directors*



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*"The more we learn about each other, and our differences, the more respectful and understanding we'll be. So much of the hate-based racism comes from ignorance, and fear I believe the more we talk about it, and create safe spaces for talking, the better off we will be. In an ideal world, we should be able to 'call out' examples of hatred without fear of repercussions."*

*- Drew Carnwath, Editor, Musician, Performer, Playwright, Producer*





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### 2023

*"Although Christie Pits remains the largest race riot in our history; hate still exists. We too often hear about micro-aggressions in the classroom, hateful graffiti on bathroom walls, and outright hate in the online environment. Learning about our past can prevent these acts now."*

*- Dara Solomon, Executive Director Toronto Holocaust Museum*