

Swastikas, racist slurs painted on a playground and a golf course outside Philadelphia

By [Benjamin Cohen](#) October 5, 2026



Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro during an election night event in Warminster Township, Pennsylvania, on May 19, 2026. Photo by Joe Lamberti/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The police were still there when neighbors arrived to clean up the Philadelphia playground where vandals had struck.

They had come to a playground in Abington Township, just outside Philadelphia, on Saturday morning with cleaning supplies. Officers had been called and were still collecting evidence from the swastikas that someone had spray-painted on the playground equipment and the blacktop, and from the N-word painted on the playground's sign. So the volunteers waited. Then dozens of them, along with volunteer firefighters and school district staff, went to work.

Abington Township police have several investigative leads, Deputy Chief Ed Quinn told the *Forward*. “I’m confident we’re making an arrest and holding those responsible accountable for their actions,” he said, adding that it is too early to say whether charges would include a hate crime.

A week earlier, about 25 miles away, someone carved swastikas and a racial slur into the greens at Yardley Country Club, a private golf course. The similar incidents occurred at both the start and the close of the festival of Sukkot.

No arrests have been announced in either case. Neither police department knew about the other’s case until the *Forward* called. Quinn said he had never heard of the golf course, and Yardley’s police chief, William Golden, said the same of the playground. Golden declined to discuss leads or whether the vandalism would be charged as a hate crime.

Golden said he had also learned of a golf course about five miles away in Morrisville that was vandalized a week before Yardley’s. The course, he believed, did not report it to police and repaired the damage on their own. Golden said there were no swastikas in that vandalism, but that it included a racist slur.

The Yardley Country Club is adjacent to the Abrams Hebrew Academy, a Jewish elementary school with close to 200 students. Rabbi Ira Budow has run the school for more than four decades. His car is parked beside the hole that was hit, he said, and golf balls sometimes sail onto the school grounds.

“I really think it was probably a prank,” he said, noting that he can’t recall any other local antisemitic incident in his time there. “This is a good town.” Yardley, where Budow lives, is also home to three synagogues. The local police work with the school on security, and he is scheduled to speak to the Borough Council on Tuesday night.

The school already receives state security money. Applications ask whether a school feels threatened and requires them to provide an example – which gave Budow a message for whoever did this.

“This person should know that because of him, the school will be able to get more security grants,” he said. “They did the job for me.”

Why Shapiro is watching

Abington Township is also home to Gov. Josh Shapiro’s private residence.

“Gov. Shapiro has always been clear: antisemitism and hate have no place in Pennsylvania,” Rosie Lapowsky, a spokesperson for Shapiro, told the *Forward*. “These acts

are intended to intimidate our neighbors and we condemn them unequivocally. Every Pennsylvanian deserves to feel safe in their community.”

For Shapiro, it is close to home in more than one way. His wife, Lori, went to elementary school at Abrams, in the building beside the golf course. Shapiro was Pennsylvania’s attorney general on Oct. 27, 2018, when a gunman killed 11 worshippers at the [Tree of Life synagogue](#) in Pittsburgh. That anniversary is three weeks away. He was sworn in as governor on three Bibles, one of them [rescued from the synagogue](#).

His own brush with violence [opens his memoir](#), *Where We Keep the Light*. In April 2025, hours after the Shapiro family hosted a Passover seder, a man firebombed the governor’s residence in Harrisburg while the family and guests slept inside. Shapiro writes that it sharpened his sense that antisemitic violence is a lived reality, even for a governor with a police detail. “The bubble burst that morning,” he writes.

Shapiro is up for reelection next month. He is also widely seen as a possible Democratic candidate for president in 2028, which would make him [the nation’s first Jewish president](#) if he won.

Two communities, one response

Jason Holtzman, who runs the Jewish Community Relations Council at the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, has been watching the headlines pile up. The region’s Jewish community, which he puts at between 250,000 and 300,000 people, now responds to incidents “far more often than we were a few years ago,” he said.

In August, the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia [was vandalized](#), the [third attack on it in one year](#). “These headlines are regular to us,” he said.

What worries Holtzman this week is the setting. “It’s really concerning that it’s also moving into everyday spaces,” he said, like a playground and a golf course. The one in Yardley, beside a Jewish school, “definitely affects children and it definitely affects people in our community.”

He also sees an opening. Antisemitism and anti-Black racism, Holtzman said, “grow from the same root,” and local churches, synagogues and elected officials have rallied together. “While this is a horrible thing, we’re hoping that this is an opportunity to actually bring people together in both communities.”

The Salem Baptist Church of Abington said much the same [in a statement](#). The church called the N-word “the nuclear weapon in the English language” and the swastika “the symbolic equivalent.” Ignorance, it said, “has shown its vile face. At a park. The symbol of civic unity.” It called the vandalism “yet another opportunity for Blacks and Jews to be

reminded that our enemies are two sides of the same coin. Unity. Not polarity. Not isolation.”

On Thursday, the town is set to hold a vigil at the park. The idea, [the invitation says](#), is to “reclaim a shared community space from hate.”

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