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Eaton Centre shooting: Citizens aim to reclaim Centre as their own

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Staff Reporter

Sasha Valentine was shoe shopping at the Eaton Centre when [she heard the shots](#).

"I heard shooting, saw people screaming, running to our levels," she said. "I was freaked out, shaking and crying."

Yet one day later she was back, standing at Dundas and Yonge, joining Torontonians in an effort to reclaim the space they know as their own.

"You know what? I'm still going to the Eaton Centre," she said. "I'm not going to stop because of one stupid act."

A sheet of white paper with pink flowers scrawled with messages in black pen was taped to the centre's rotating glass doors. "I wish that was the last," said one. "Peace is on the way," said another.

Across the street, a vigil was taking place in Yonge-Dundas Square. There was a small crowd of people, some holding clear plastic cups with tea candles inside. Four policemen on bikes stood close by, casting long shadows in the evening sun.

"There is a feeling of helplessness," said vigil organizer Karen Ho. "The person who died was very close in age to myself."

Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale-High Park, said earlier in the morning at church she prayed for the shooter to turn himself in.

"It's shocking and it's sad," she said. "It's our community's hurt."

More: [Shooting suspect arrested, police say](#)

Jennifer Wiechen used to work in the Eaton Centre, a place she describes as home.

"I know a lot of people there," she said. "It's a sad day for the Eaton Centre, it's a sad day for Toronto."

Many people, like Spencer Hotton, a 21-year-old welder, were calling for an end to violence. "We have the right to be safe, we have the right to be happy," he said.

Jason Goldberg, a student, said he visits the food court often, sometimes more than two times a week. How it became a crime scene is "shocking" to him.

"Why did they call it the Urban Eatery? Urban can be construed as a gangster thing," said his friend Mike Lee, a musician.

"I always thought Canada was way stricter on gun laws," said David Tieck, an Australian visiting the city. "No one has guns in Canada."

The mall remained closed Sunday evening, in some places still cordoned off with yellow police tape.

Usually the James St. entrance, near the Aritzia, is a shopper's thoroughfare. On this night, it was empty, save for a newly engaged couple posing for photos in the courtyard.

"These doors will reopen on Monday, June 4th at 5:45 am," said a sign.

Fiorito: [Eaton Centre shooter a loser](#)



Karen Ho, right, is the organizer of a vigil held Sunday night outside of the Toronto Eaton Centre in the Yonge/Dundas Square.

RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR