

# THE TATTOO

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MAKING A PERMANENT IMPRESSION SINCE 1994

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## Trying to bring tolerance to Terryville

By **STEFAN KOSKI**  
The Tattoo

Gays are people, too - and with Amnesty International on a mission to spread the word, its student chapter at Terryville High School is launching a controversial tolerance campaign to crush discrimination.

"This is our initial campaign, and it's the first attempt at making gay issues known and to confront fears," said Robert Nave, the school's Amnesty International faculty advisor.

The campaign includes several factual morning announcements about bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people and signs posted throughout the school advocating equality among people of all sexual preferences.

Laura Kwasniewski, the school's Amnesty International chapter president, said the campaign is aimed at encouraging tolerance and respect towards people of differing sexual orientations and making people aware that hate and prejudice still exist.

But not everyone is tolerating the campaign.

The response so far, according to Nave, is "very broad, very diverse."

"Some don't understand and leave it at that," said Nave. "Others don't understand why and why it's being made into a big deal. Very few people don't care. Then there are some people that are fiercely protective."

Many of the signs posted around the school before the end of the year were torn down within a week, only to be replaced by more signs created by Amnesty International students.

Students and teachers are polarized on the issue.

"The signs are making the issue worse," said junior Seth Greenlees.

Junior Robert Skoczylas agreed.

"They [Amnesty International] made an issue out of something that was not an issue," said Skoczylas.

Biology teacher Phil Lyga said, "I don't think there's harassment. In my personal opinion, I think the student body is very caring about feelings of other students."

As for his students' reaction, Lyga said, "I think they think of it from a comical viewpoint. They don't see it as a problem. They see it as a waste of time."

One of the key signs in the campaign is a multi-colored triangle, with the colors red, orange, yellow, and green descending from top to bottom representing bi, gays, lesbians, and transgender people, respectively.

The sign reads, "This is a bi, gay, lesbian, transgender safe zone."

Student members of Amnesty International approached many of the teachers in the school and asked permission to post the signs in their rooms.

Kwasniewski said most of the faculty were supportive.

**The campaign includes signs posted throughout the school advocating equality among people of all sexual preferences.**

"They hang our signs in their rooms, support the cause and even lend us their tape," Kwasniewski said. "We started this, of course, with the agreement of the principal, Mrs. Lavery, and support of some key faculty members. Although some teachers disagree with the commotion and discussion raised over the issue and feel that maybe school is not the place for such a campaign, the reactions overall have been good."

Principal Andrea Lavery declined to be interviewed on the subject, but Plymouth Superintendent of Schools Anthony Distasio said, "I know this is a campaign for tolerance, which is something we promote. We believe in tolerance of all people, regardless of sexual preference, race, or gender."

Other colorfully decorated signs, crafted on construction paper and posted in the school's hallways and stairways, featured various slogans including, "Let's get together and feel alright," "Stop the Hate, Spread the Love," and, "What's wrong with being gay?"

"We tried to make them as informative, politically correct, and kind as we could," said Kwasniewski.

Some people opposed to the campaign question whether the discussion is appropriate for school.

"I think people are aware of it in

the media," said Lyga. "I don't think it belongs in a public school."

Others, such as Spanish teacher Maria Pomianowski, say it's an important subject to bring up.

"I think it's good," said Pomianowski. "Maybe some people feel uncomfortable, but that's important too. It's part of the process."

"If not in school, then where?" asked Kwasniewski.

Kwasniewski said her group believed that they needed to bring issues "to the surface" so they could be addressed.

"I used to think we were all right, some - where in the middle, but now that I see the reactions that some simple signs have brought about, I think that we could be a lot more tolerant," said Kwasniewski.

The campaign wasn't started in response to any particular incident of discrimination or harassment at the school or in the community, Nave said, adding that to his knowledge, there haven't been any incidents.

"There seems to be an undercurrent of respect" among students, Nave said. But he said the movement's "time has come."

The effort will be much more successful now than it would've been years ago, Nave said, because "a lot of people know a gay person and are much more accepting... What I hate is when people say, 'That's gay,' or, 'That's retarded.' I want to see it obliterated."

Kwasniewski said, "I know that this is not an example of the road to hell being paved with good intentions. I know that the leaders of all other civil rights movements had the same doubts and problems we're facing today, but just look at the progress we've made for equality of race, sex and religion."

The effects of the tolerance campaign on the gay student body at Terryville High School are unclear.

Nave estimates that statistically speaking, the Terryville student body likely includes about 10 percent, or about 50 to 60 bisexual, gay, lesbian or transgender people.

The Amnesty International campaign isn't in conjunction with any other gay rights organizations, or with counsel from the gay student body.

Asked what the impact of the tolerance campaign has been on gay students at the school, Nave admitted, "I have no clue."

According to Kwasniewski, the gay student body has had mixed reactions.

"Some feel it was better the way things were because at least for the most part they were left alone," Kwasniewski said. "Others feel that this was a needed confrontation in order to bring total acceptance."

Kwasniewski said it's sad that the campaign brought "occasionally unwelcome attention" to openly gay students, but said there was also welcome support.

At the school this fall, Amnesty International plans to form a Gay - Straight Alliance at the school, Kwasniewski said, with open discussions, speakers and movie nights.

Nave remains optimistic that, despite the harsh initial reaction from a lot of students, the campaign will be successful.

"The initial reaction to it is as bad as it's going to get. This school is fairly tolerant," Nave said, adding, "It's going to take weeks for it to settle in. Next year is when you're going to see the results of it."

Kwasniewski is also confident that the effects over time will be positive.

"I must say that a lot of the reactions saddened me," Kwasniewski said, "but Amnesty International and our soon-to-be Gay-Straight Alliance will not be easy to discourage."

Pomianowski said the campaign is good "as long as people don't misinterpret it."

"It's just being kind to everybody," Pomianowski said. "Don't make anybody suffer."

Some are skeptical whether the campaign will change public opinion.

"This is a small town - people have their views set," said Greenlees.

Of the disapproving backlash, junior Neil Patel said, "Hopefully it'll change, but so far I haven't seen any."

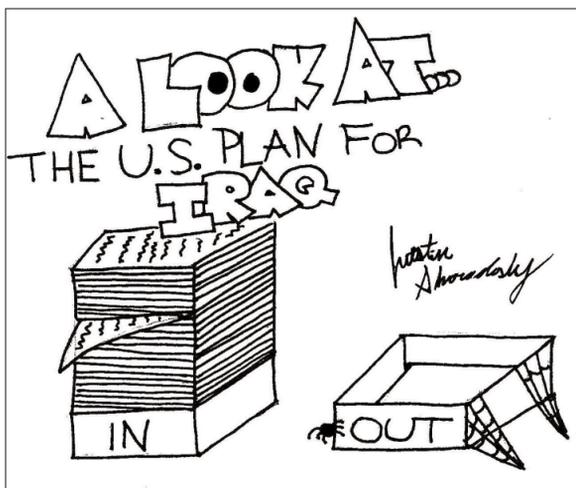
Nave doesn't mind the disagreements so long as the subject is being talked about.

Dialogue, Nave said, will be key to bringing change.

"I'd like to welcome people into the discussion of this topic. The topic is on tolerance, not homosexuality," said Nave.

Pomianowski concurred.

"Everyone is entitled to their opinion," she said. "This is America."



Justin Skaradosky / The Tattoo

## That was my double decker bus...

By **HAYLEY SLADE**  
The Tattoo

When I saw the images of train stations I learned to love throughout my childhood growing up in London totally devastated, I felt truly sick and terrified.

To see them destroyed made me feel scared as well as angry - angry that these terrorists can steal away the safety of my country and could have potentially taken my life.

I have been extremely disturbed to think that it could have so easily been me on one of those trains, or someone in my family.

I was working when I heard of the bombings, and quickly cycled home to watch the news, with a wrenching feeling in my stomach.

When I turned on the TV,

### My view from England

tears entered my eyes as I realized just how severe the attacks were.

The image of the obliterated bus stunned me.

It was one of the regular double decker buses that I use

in London. Seeing one torn apart, I suddenly felt engulfed with insecurity.

I know the Underground in London well and associate the stations with my first memories as a child.

Being on one of the underground trains is something I am so used to that I would never question it, except from now on it will never feel as safe.

The underground trains are so busy - and always so packed - that it makes my heart ache to think of the lives shattered when the bombs went off.

July 7 was a day of true sorrow for all British citizens

I feel sympathy for those

affected in my country, but triumphant that as a nation we will not bow down to these terrorists.

### Teens react to terrorism

We couldn't fit all of the pieces on last week's terrorist London bombing on this page, but you can read what more *Tattoo* writers from England and around the world had to say by checking out our website: [www.ReadTheTattoo.com](http://www.ReadTheTattoo.com).

## London bombers killed hope

### Action must replace fear

By **CHLOE STEAD**  
The Tattoo

The first inking I got that something was wrong came when I walked into the cafeteria at dinner time and realized that the television was not, as it should be, tuned onto MTV.

A group of fellow students were sitting in a semicircle around the TV, watching open-mouthed. My eyes traveled up to read the news bulletin.

It told me everything I needed to know: 'London blast.'

I hurried on to my usual table.

"Seven bombs ... they won't tell us anything," my friend hurriedly informed me.

And it was like all the positive things which had happened in the past few days vanished.

Gone was the euphoria we felt as the teachers told us our Olympic bid had been successful.

Gone was the triumph of the amazing Live 8 concert.

Gone was the feeling we could really do something for Africa at the G8.

### My view from England

We continued our morbid discussion of the events throughout dinner.

Someone voiced their concern there would be another bomb: "Well there's been 7, and it is the G8."

We imagined what it would be like to be in London, hearing of the other bombs and fearing the worst, that a bomb could explode next to you at any moment, with no way of escape.

At home I managed to get the facts from the news, which proved more informative than gleaning bits from other students who were as misinformed as I was.

There were four bombs, 49 dead and counting.

Shocked as I was to discover that intelligence suggests 'homegrown' terrorists, I recognized it would be easy for the

people of London to stop riding public transport and everyone to avoid big cities.

But this is what the monsters responsible want. And we should not let them get away with this.

I expect President Bush's response will be that his so-called 'War on Terror' is more important than ever.

I fear that Prime Minister Tony Blair will be given the ammunition he needs to push through identity card legislation that the British public doesn't want.

I can envision in the near future 'Not in Our Name' signs marching through London like they did those few short years ago in New York.

However, we cannot predict or change the actions of those in charge any more than we can the actions of the al-Qaeda, so we should not dwell on this.

Although the victims of the tragedy should never be forgotten, I can't help but feel that we should focus not on what has happened and cannot be changed, but what continues to happen.

I for one will be looking on news of Africa's plight and seeing what I can do to help, not sitting at home terrified to go out in case my city is next to be targeted.

## We must fight terrorism

By **GERALDINE SOON**  
The Tattoo

With millions of viewers around the world glued to their TV sets watching the 117th Session of the International Olympic Committee that was taking place in Singapore at the Raffles City Convention Centre, a terrorist attack was probably the last thing on everyone's minds.

No one expected it. Just seven hours after the results were announced that London had won the rights to host the 2012 Olympics, the party of ecstatic supporters in London crashed to a halt, with the breaking news of the terror bomb blasts that had just torn through London's transport network.

When I heard about the attacks, the first thought that crossed my mind was that it had something to do with London's victory, but I knew immediately that was not possible: It had only been hours after the Olympic results were announced.

The attack was definitely the work of terrorists, just when everyone was least expecting it.

Amidst of all the things that were going on - the excitement of the five cities bidding to be

host country for the 2012 Olympics, along with the crucial G8 summit - the attack has, once again, served to remind us that the "war on terror" is far from over.

The fact that the attacks were targeted not at the rich

### My view from Singapore

and politically famous, but at average, working, middle-class Londoners of all races and religions in revenge for Britain sending troops to Iraq, just goes to show that perhaps President Bush has been mistaken all along.

Perhaps this "war on terror" has been fought at the wrong place and wrong time.

But I beg to differ.

I strongly believe that Bush is right in taking a firm stand against terrorism as well as adopting a militarized approach towards it.

At what cost, you may ask? The innocent lives of loved ones, civilians and soldiers alike?

Yes, it is indeed a hefty amount to pay, but what message do we send the terrorists if we do not harden our line against them?

It is clearly unacceptable for such horrible attacks to take place.

We can't let the culprits get away with it.

The branches of terrorism are stretching and reaching ever further, but I firmly believe that the "war on terror" can be won.

And I am not talking just about giving our full support to our world leaders out there who condemn terrorism, but by doing our part, as citizens of the world, to prevent such attacks from happening again.

We can do so by keeping a watchful eye out for any suspicious people, behavior or articles and reporting them immediately to authorities.

A new era has come when we cannot sleep with our doors unlocked and open, but have to be on constant guard to ensure security for ourselves and the society.

By cooperating with government, perhaps one day in the future, we will be able to earn the peace that the world deserves.

It has to start with us.

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