

Cambridge Rindge and Latin rallies to begin healing

By Gal Tziperman Lotan | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT APRIL 28, 2013



DINA RUDICK/GLOBE STAFF

Shaki Begum, a senior at Cambridge Rindge and Latin, wrote this message that quotes an e-mail sent to the Islamic Society of Boston by a Christian supporter.

High school senior Shakhi Begum walked from her mosque Sunday afternoon to a rally for Cambridge Rindge and Latin School students, alumni, and other community members affected by the Boston Marathon bombings.

She had just read an e-mail a Christian supporter sent the mosque, the Islamic Society of Boston on Prospect Street, from which Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev was ejected twice after outbursts. A line from the message resonated with Begum. She wrote it on a path near the rally in pink and green chalk: "We don't have to see eye to eye to hold hand in hand."

"Everybody is cooperating and healing together," said Begum, a leopard-print hijab wrapped around her hair.

About 150 alumni and students of Rindge and Latin, which Marathon bombing suspects Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev attended, gathered with community leaders and Cambridge residents Sunday at Joan Lorentz Park.

"We can process things alone or we can heal together," said organizer Samuel Gebru, who graduated from Rindge

and Latin in 2009.

The speakers did not mention Dzhokhar, who graduated in 2011 and is now in custody, or his older brother Tamerlan, who was killed in a shoot-out with police last week.

“We didn’t want to focus on them,” Gebru said. “We all know what happened. We want to talk about healing.”

Instead, they spoke about the diversity of the school’s student body, the different languages students hear when they walk the halls, and how students and alumni can support one another.

On April 20, the day after the younger Tsarnaev brother was found hiding in a boat in Watertown and arrested, Gebru said he contacted friends about doing something to bring their school’s alumni community together. Over the next week they held meetings and conference calls and spoke with city officials.

“It’s horrible no matter who it is, but when it’s one of your own, it disorients you even more. To think, we walked the same hallways, ate the same food,” Gebru said.

The office of Mayor Henrietta Davis donated white T-shirts bearing the words “Cambridge Strong,” hastily printed on Friday, said Matt Nelson, Davis’s chief of staff. The shirts were free, though people were encouraged to donate to the Friends of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School foundation.

Rindge and Latin senior class president Mahmood Abu-Rubieh said he recognized Dzhokhar Tsarnaev’s face the moment he saw the FBI security camera photos of the bombing suspects days after the Marathon.

He spoke with some friends to verify that the young man in the white hat looked like the person he had sparred with during wrestling practice, the guy he considered a “friendly face” but didn’t know too well. One of his friends called authorities.

Abu-Rubieh said the events of the last two weeks will bind his classmates.

“We’ll always be a community. We’ll keep in touch on Facebook, I’m sure,” he said. “It’s hard to understand that we’ll need to deal with a situation like this.”

Gebru said he hopes to plan another, larger gathering in late May to raise funds for the One Fund for Marathon bombing victims and their families.

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