



KEVIN CULLEN

# It doesn't matter why they hate us, they just do

By [Kevin Cullen](#)

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Somebody who went to high school with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev described him as a class clown.

Well, that 19-year-old class clown has somehow managed to trap 1 million people in Boston and its western suburbs in their homes as he and the police officers who think they might have him surrounded prepare for a final encounter, the outcome of which we all think we know.

Dzhokhar -- the American kids he went to school with pronounce it Ja-har -- is alone now. Unless he has hostages.

His big brother, 26-year-old Tamerlan, is dead, a fate big brother must have known awaited them. He probably even welcomed it.

By some accounts, he, the big brother, dragged the class clown into his huge orbit of grievance, real or perceived, about the great Satan. That, of course, being the very country that gave the Tsarnaev brothers more opportunity than they ever would have had if they had



AP PHOTO/THE LOWELL SUN, JULIA MALAKIE

**Tamerlan Tsarnaev is seen in a Feb. 17, 2010, photo after winning the 2010 New England Golden Gloves Championship.**

stayed in the troubled, poor country where they were born, Kyrgyzstan, or if the troubled, poor country where their ancestors came from, and that would be Chechnya.

Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest countries spawned by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of its 5 million people bugged out of the central Asia country in the years that followed the collapse of a system of government built on repression and corruption. It appears the Tsarnaev brothers, ethnic Chechens, began a nomadic trek that eventually brought them to, of all places, Cambridge.

I hear that poor, put-upon Tamerlan complained that Americans didn't like him. That he didn't have any American friends. Blah, blah, blah. He thought Harry Potter books created pagans and condemned anyone who let their children read J.K. Rowling's books. Now that's some pretty forward thinking.

Cambridge is probably the most tolerant swath of these United States. It is a sanctuary city for immigrants. We're not just talking about a few well-meaning lefties wearing Birkenstocks and "Free Tibet" T-shirts. The people of Cambridge, the city government of Cambridge, have created a wonderful community, the most inclusive, generous community to outsiders I have ever encountered. People in Cambridge go out of their way to be nice to, and genuinely supportive of, people like the Tsarnaev brothers.

I wouldn't doubt that Tamerlan Tsarnaev encountered some jerks over the years. We all do. It's called life. If Tamerlan Tsarnaev nursed murderous grudges because it was so hard to grow up and live in Cambridge, then he was, as his uncle said, a loser.

Kids who went to Rindge and Latin High School with Dzhokhar said he was a terrific wrestler, which makes sense. In the country he was born, the Kyrgyzs are among the best wrestlers in the world. They regularly medal in Greco-Roman wrestling in international competitions, including the Olympics. One kid told me Dzhokhar got a scholarship, which he used to attend the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth.

Here's the portrait emerging, still subject to lots more reporting and confirmation and separation of fact and fiction: Tamerlan Tsarnaev had an overweening sense of grievance. He

decided to kill and maim innocents. And he dragged his little, more impressionable brother into the whole thing.

Now, that might change. It probably will change. It will become more nuanced, more complicated, as the hours and the days and the weeks pass.

If they were, as has been suggested, Chechens, they had a beef with the Russians, not us. They certainly didn't have a beef with the people whose lives they ended, whose legs they blew off, last Monday on Patriots Day. But they have no right to attack Russians, either.

I was on an NPR show this morning, talking as I drove back from Cambridge to write this column, and a caller came on the air and started talking about how we've got to look in the mirror and ask what we as Americans have done to create angry young men like this.

I almost drove off the road.

No one who lost their life or their limbs on Boylston Street last Monday did anything to create angry young men like this. And I know that 8-year-old Martin Richard, a beautiful little boy from Dorchester who was killed by a bomb the authorities say the Tsarnaev brothers prepared and left near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, never hurt a soul. He was a kind little boy who was unfailingly nice to his classmate, the daughter of the Boston firefighter who knelt over his body.

Sean Collier, the 26-year-old MIT police officer who was shot to death Thursday night, was a wonderful young man. He worked as a civilian for the Somerville Police Department, but desperately wanted to be a cop. He was thrilled when he got the call to join the MIT force last year, and he was willing to put his life on the line for all of us, as he did late Thursday night when he responded to a call in Kendall Square and was, the police say, executed by the Tsarnaev brothers before he could even get out of his cruiser.

I am willing to bet my life on the certainty that Sean Collier would have laid down his life for anybody, including immigrants from Kyrgyzstan or Chechnya. In the end, he did lay down his life, trying to protect others.

I don't want to listen to how innocent people bear some responsibility for creating the twisted minds of the Tsarnaev brothers, who emerged from the break up of a totalitarian form of government that collapsed under the weight of ordinary people wanting freedom.

The Tsarnaev brothers are responsible for twisting a great religion to foment hatred. They don't speak for Muslims any more than I speak for overweight Irish-American guys who like to play hockey. It would be a horrific insult to their victims, and to the unimaginably brave first responders who ran toward the bombs last Monday, if there is a backlash against Muslims.

But, please, spare me the guilt.

At least let's see how this ends. At least let us bury our dead first. At least let us heal our wounded. At least let us take care of our first responders. Then maybe I'll listen to "what did we do to make them hate us" claptrap. Then maybe I'll go to some soul-searching debate about how our foreign policy is screwed up and how we're creating too many enemies and too few allies.

But then, maybe I won't.

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