



PERSONAL ACCOUNT

Telling their stories

Boston Strong

Nadeem Bezar on being a part of 'bad history' AS TOLD TO ANDREW BRANDT



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KLINE & SPECTER

PERSONAL
INJURY - MEDICAL
MALPRACTICE:
PLAINTIFF

PHILADELPHIA

The first time I ran, in 2010, I was probably in boat shoes—I had blisters, but it made my heart feel good. To keep going after the high, by 2011, I set my sights on half marathons; in 2012, full marathons.

Boston was my third full. The energy there is wonderful. You run through all these beautiful towns, and people are wonderfully supportive. You run by Wellesley College, Boston College; you see the famous Citgo sign; you come around the bend, and you're almost done. The race is on Patriots' Day. It doesn't get much more American.

Everything about that day still has a filter of fuzz on it. When I crossed the finish, I remember being disappointed because I wanted to do sub-four, and I came in at 4 hours, 2 minutes.

Then I remember hearing something go off. I didn't think anything of it until the ground shook. It sounded like glass or metal hitting the ground. I thought it was a power surge because the officials cover power lines with plastic mats so people don't trip.

I discovered later that the bombs went off maybe 15 seconds apart. In my mind's eye, they were minutes apart. I remember looking over and seeing a woman crying, and thinking, 'Why is she crying? She doesn't think something bad is happening here, does she?' And I remember a bunch of people running past me, toward the finish line.

Then I got scared. Where people were running—and where I now realized that bombs exploded—is where I would see my family. I staggered around in a half daze, not being able to contemplate what just happened. I couldn't find my family.

I walked over to my hotel, and they wouldn't let me in because I didn't have identification. I said that I just ran and that I was staying at the hotel, and he let me in. A woman in the lobby helped me call my wife to let her know where I was. When I finally found my girls, I remember my 11-year-old daughter screaming at the top of her lungs while we hugged. She

was there to support me, but she also ran in the 5k that's always the day before the marathon.

The next day, walking around was surreal. It looked post-apocalyptic. After the bombs went off, people just jumped out of the restaurants. There were men with machine guns. There was a baby stroller sitting in the street. It was chilling.

Within a week, I committed to running Boston 2014. I could've just curled up, but then I would've let the terrorists win. All you needed to run was a pair of shoes—that's all. It is so pure. The attackers invaded that but couldn't take it. My daughter returned to run again, too. I thought that was pretty brave.

As an ex-New Yorker, and a current Philadelphian, Boston was not a city I high-fived with. But now it was "Boston Strong."

The feeling the day of the 2014 race was indescribable. People were so supportive. It was appropriately solemn, but mostly upbeat. It was an incredible example of the American public rallying and saying that we will not be denied this thing we love.

I don't have a tremendous story other than that I was *there*, but it hurts. I was very lucky—five minutes later, and I would've been in the thick of things. I tend to shy away from talking about it. I haven't seen any of the movies. I won't. It doesn't feel good to be a part of bad history.

There's been some discussion that the people who weren't physically affected may have experienced PTSD. In terms of my practice, that connects for me. I represent children who have been sexually abused. That does not always leave an observable mark. It takes a lot of time with clients to understand what they're going through because they can't articulate it. I don't flinch when firecrackers go off or have flashbacks, but I have had an experience and it's hard for me to articulate how it carved out a piece of my soul. On a much, much larger scale, the kids I represent have a similar experience. At a time when they were supposed to be protected and able to just be kids, hoping to find a quarter in the couch to buy a piece of candy, they're getting that knock on that door and someone does the unspeakable. Now I think I understand that vulnerability a little better, and that impacts how I connect with them. 



Bezar running Boston 2013, before he became a part of "bad history"; Bezar's daughter, Mia, after placing 14th of 111 in the Under 14 5k category at Boston 2014.