



September 2011 – Keep Calm & Carry On

This is a well known British expression that you see everywhere in London – from tea towels to T-shirts. It was produced by the British government in 1939 before the Second World War as a morale boost in anticipation of a potential German invasion but was never actually used. The intent was to act as a rallying cry to bring out the best in everyone, enlisting every citizen in the war efforts even if they were still at home. The poster that is synonymous with the expression was re-issued by a number of private companies in 2000. It's only since then that it's become the icon with which we are so familiar.

The interesting thing is that even though it was never actually used in wartime and is only a commercial vehicle now, it is one facet of the spirit of the British people that I have witnessed recently.

There is very much the feeling when something negative happens on a large scale to keep a stiff upper lip and persevere through it. This was evident the morning after the July 2005 terrorist attacks in London when commuters boarded buses and tubes as a sign that their lives would continue as usual – lives were lost in the explosions and the remaining public didn't want more lives lost figuratively speaking.

I saw this same spirit a few weeks ago with the London riots in August. In the area of London where I live the trouble flared up between 8-9pm Monday night and did not end until 4am. Cars were set on fire, windows broken, shops looted, one store and adjacent flat burned and sadly a physical altercation with a local citizen trying to stop a bin fire. By 9am the next morning most of the common areas had been cleaned up (except felony crime scenes) and in fact, the greens looked more immaculate than usual. People went to work, shops opened, people volunteered for more clean up, and people helped their neighbours. Most importantly people connected with each other – checking in with each other to ensure everyone was safe, talking to strangers in the street and banding together in support of the community.

In my own vow of 'carry on' in a positive manner this week I shopped at a store badly damaged by the riots. It is a store I've never entered before and I felt if I could find a gift there suitable for my need I would support them by buying it, which I did. And there were others like me in the shop. The employees were still getting the store up to its pre-riot condition and were lovely, optimistic and grateful.

Keep Calm and Carry On is a facet of the English culture, has a place in society and it's nice to also see everyone lending a hand to others and watching good triumph evil.

Live your potential

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