



Top: Signs are seen outside the Dove World Outreach Center, run by Terry Jones. Above: Paula Pope protests against Terry Jones in Gainesville, Florida, on Friday.

PHOTOS: EPA AND APF

## Gainesville tries to deflect church's anti-Islam firestorm

Many of the city's residents are pondering how to distance themselves from neighbor Terry Jones

BY DAMIEN CAVE  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

Stephanie George used to see members of the Dove World Outreach Center at her neighborhood grocery store, wearing T-shirts that said "Islam is of the devil." But on Friday, she and her friend Lynda Dillon showed up early at Dragonfly Graphics to order a dozen shirts with a different message: "Love, not Dove."

The design itself, complete with a lyric made famous by Elvis Costello ("What's so funny 'bout peace, love and understanding") takes direct aim at the Reverend Terry Jones, his church and his threat — now suspended — to burn copies of the Koran yesterday.

But George and others who have lined up for the shirts from Dragonfly frown and sigh with exasperation that such a public stand is even necessary.

"He's a lunatic, and yet I still feel like I need to get the message out that we're not lunatics with him," said George, 46. "I don't want this to represent my neighborhood."

Jones has become a reviled figure around the world. But the people of this youthful city in central Florida are taking his actions personally, with anger and heartbreak, as one of their neighbors drags their hometown into nearly nonstop news coverage and infamy.

Gainesville, after all, is a university town that until a few months ago was best known for producing college football champions, Gatorade and rockers like Tom Petty. Educated and progressive, with a gay mayor and a City Commission made up entirely of Democrats, Gainesville is a sprawling metropolis of 115,000 people where smoothie shops seem to outnumber gun shops.

Fanatics can come from anywhere, Gainesvillians will tell you, but why did this one have to come from here?

"He doesn't represent the community," said Larry Wilcox, 78, reading the newspaper at a local Panera restaurant. "This guy is obviously a publicity hound and a weirdo."

On Friday, Jones once again turned the lawn at Dove into a spectacle, featuring dozens of photographers and newly arrived supporters, including a former Marine in full camouflage holding an American flag and demanding an apology from Muslims for the

Marine barracks bombing in 1983 that killed 241 service members in Beirut.

"It's frustrating," said the Reverend Larry Reimer, pastor of the United Church of Gainesville. It was just before noon and he was standing at the door of Dove in a pressed sport coat, with a pile of 8,048 signatures and comments from 97 countries, all demanding that Jones unequivocally call off his plan to burn the Koran. The thick document was carefully tied in a white ribbon.

Reimer said people from all over the world had called him and sent e-mails offering to help Gainesville counter Jones. Mayor Craig Lowe said he, too, had been inundated with suggestions.

One local resident said he might sue the city or Jones so the community would be forced to go to court and talk through what happened. Someone from out of town suggested using the National Guard to stop Jones from setting the holy texts ablaze.

"The amount of e-mail that we've gotten is just massive," Lowe said in an interview. "It's almost one a second."

The challenge for many seems to be managing their anger, and figuring out how to keep Jones in perspective. Some are looking to direct confrontation; Jose Soto, a leader with Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Florida, stood across the street from Dove on Friday afternoon with a group of students shouting, "Hey ho, hey ho, Dove Outreach has got to go."

He said that even after this weekend, his group was thinking of following Dove's leaders when they wore their "Islam is of the devil" T-shirts and surrounding them with signs that identified them as hate-mongers.

"Ignoring them hasn't worked," he said. "They just escalate."

John Esposito, a scholar of religion and international affairs at Georgetown who has acted as a consultant to the State Department, offered a different option. Politicians, the news media, all of Gainesville, he said, should stop pleading or arguing against the Koran burning and shift their energy toward all that Jones is not.

"What we have to start doing is delivering

the positive side of our message of who we are, and then that will set an example for others in our society who are maybe on the fence," he said.

That seemed to be exactly the goal of Dragonfly. For 24 years, the tiny four-person company (with part-time help from the owner's mother) has been printing T-shirts for companies, students, events and churches.

Joy Revels, the owner, said she even used to print generic polo shirts for Dove, before last year, when Jones put a sign outside his church saying, "Islam is of the devil."

"He called me for the T-shirts," with that slogan she said — T-shirts that young

members of the church wore to school last year and that led to standard uniforms this year. But she refused.

On Tuesday, after seeing the firestorm Jones created, she decided to act. She said "Love, not Dove" sounded like a good motto, and her graphic artist — Josh Huey, 24, thin, scruffy and lip-pierced — turned out a tattoo-like image of a dove in distress.

Because that seemed a little harsh, Revels returned to a favorite Elvis Costello song (written by Nick Lowe), which sets peace, love and understanding against an opening of "As I walk through this wicked world searchin' for light in the darkness of insanity."

### Koran plans started a fire that spread without ever burning

BY BRIAN STELTER  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

A renegade pastor and his tiny flock set fire to a Koran on a street corner, and made sure to capture it on film. And they were ignored.

That stunt took place in 2008, involving members of the Westboro Baptist Church from Topeka, Kansas, an almost universally condemned group of fundamentalists who also protest at military funerals.

But plans for a similar stunt by another fringe pastor, Terry Jones, have garnered worldwide news media attention this summer, attention that peaked Thursday when he announced he was canceling — and later, that he had only "suspended" — what he had dubbed International Burn a Koran Day. It had been scheduled for yesterday, the ninth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Jones' planned event in Gainesville, Florida coincided with the controversy over the proposed building of a Muslim community center in Lower Manhattan near ground zero and a simmering summerlong debate about the freedoms of speech and religion.

Jones was able to put himself at the center of those issues by using the news lull of summer and the demands of a 24-hour



Would-be book burner Terry Jones.

PHOTO: APF

news cycle to promote his anti-Islam cause. He said he consented to more than 150 interview requests in July and last month, each time expressing his extremist views about Islam and Shariah law.

Jones' plan, which he announced in July, slowly gained attention last month, particularly overseas. It became a top story in the US after protests against Jones in Afghanistan and after the commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General David H. Petraeus, warned that the Koran burning could endanger troops.

"Before there were riots and heads of states talking about him, it could have been

Perfect, she thought. She printed 200 shirts to test demand, asking only for donations. As of Friday evening, more than 1,000 shirts had flown out the door.

By nightfall on Friday, Revels, looking younger than her 50 years, with spiky hair and long plaid shorts, was in the back working the presses with Huey. Strangers and friends streamed in asking for shirts. One gone. Six more. Then a dozen.

"Whatever Mr Jones does, it's still the same in our community," Revels said. She struggled to explain conflicting emotions. "This isn't 'We hate you, Terry Jones,'" she finally said. "It's 'This is who we are, Gainesville.' We're not going to stoop to his level."

a couple of paragraphs in a story about Sept. 11 commemorations," Kathleen Carroll, the executive editor of the Associated Press, said Thursday. "It's beyond that now."

In some ways, this week's events were the culmination of a year's worth of hateful statements and stunts by Jones and the few dozen members of his church.

Jones started to make noise in Gainesville in the summer of last year, when he posted a sign outside his church that read "Islam is of the devil." The *Gainesville Sun* (which is owned by the New York Times Company) wrote about the sign, under the headline "Anti-Islam church sign stirs up community outrage."

News executives said the proposed burning took on a greater significance after the protests in Afghanistan and in other Muslim countries. In Kabul last Sunday, up to 500 people attended a protest at which Jones was burned in effigy, according to the Associated Press.

The episode has given rise to at least a little soul-searching within news organizations. Chris Cuomo, an ABC News anchor, wrote on Twitter Thursday afternoon, "I am in the media, but think media gave life to this Florida burning ... and that was reckless."