

NEW YORK NEWS & FEATURES



‘If You See Something, Say Something’: The ‘Homeland Security Equivalent’ of ‘Just Do It’

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If you’ve ever wondered about the origins of the pervasive and oft-parodied slogan “If You See Something, Say Something” — which has seen something of a renaissance in light of the Times Square street vendors who alerted police to the smoking Nissan Pathfinder on May 1 — the *Times* has issued a definitive history.

The brainchild of Manhattan ad agency Korey Kay & Partners’ chairman Allen Kay, the line was conceived by Kay for the MTA on September 12, 2001, as he “wanted to help prevent another disaster and to do something positive in the aftermath of the attacks.” By January 2003, the slogan was plastered across subways and buses as part of the MTA’s security-awareness campaign. The authority has spent \$2 million to \$3 million per year on advertising the phrase, with a large part of that amount supplied by Homeland Security Department grants.

“It has since become a global phenomenon — the homeland security equivalent of the ‘Just Do It’ Nike advertisement — and has appeared in public transportation systems in Oregon, Texas, Florida, Australia and Canada, among others. Locally, the phrase captured, with six simple words and one comma, the security consciousness and dread of the times, the “I ♥ NY” of post-9/11 New York City,” the *Times* posits.

And the paper deserves particular kudos for tracking down Joy Rumore, a 31-year-old who got the slogan tattooed on her right leg in 2007 (in English and Spanish, to boot). “It was just sort of a geeky thing to do; I didn’t get it to make some sort of political statement,” she said, before adding: “I got it because I love the subway,” a standpoint which reveals that the most unusual thing about Rumore is arguably not her unique tattoo.

[After 9/11, a Phrase Reverberates Beyond New York \[NYT\]](#)

By: Josh Duboff

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