

First Place – Alameda County Mock Trial Journalism Competition

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Piedmont High School

A tense silence fell over a small Alameda County courtroom as the judge, with a grim manner that echoed the gravity of the case at hand, called the court to order.

So began the trial of Miss Casey Campbell, 17, a high school student who described her own high school career as “typical”. But the occasion that brought her to this courtroom was anything but typical. For on this night Campbell was being charged with terrorism, attempted murder and putting an offensive substance in a public place in the attempted bombing of her high school.

After a two-hour trial, however, the Honorable Judge Jason Clay ruled that Miss Campbell was not guilty on any of the charges brought against her, since her guilt could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

“I’m an artist, not a murderer,” said Campbell during the trial.

Before the trial began, the defense successfully lobbied to have a fourth charge against Campbell, the possession of a video game called “High School Slasher III” in violation of the *School Violation in Video Games* statute, dropped on the grounds that the statute was unconstitutional.

The bomb scare in question occurred at Park Lane High School in the town of Park Lane on April 7, 2006. Detective Rory Riley of the Park Lane Police Department was called to the school by an anonymous phone call saying that a suspicious container had been found at Park Lane High School. After investigating the device and determining that it was in fact a time bomb, he ordered the school to be evacuated.

Both Detective Riley and expert bomb technician Dr. Kyle Killian testified on behalf of the prosecution, saying that the device found at the school was a working time bomb. However, weapons expert Dr. Avery Atkinson, testifying on Campbell’s behalf, successfully argued that the device was simply a harmless stink bomb.

Campbell had been arrested after the bomb was discovered because, according to her own testimony, she felt resentment against a group of kids known as “The Crew”, who would almost certainly have been near the bomb if it had detonated. According to the prosecution, she had allegedly begun plotting against her archenemy, the Crew’s leader Sawyer Simpson, and intended, in their words, “to destroy Miss Simpson once and for all”.

However, Campbell’s arrest was made using rather dubious evidence. Campbell’s neighbor, Jackie Jefferies, testified that she had heard Miss Campbell testing what appeared to be a bomb in her backyard, but she had never actually seen a bomb or explosion of any sort. The prosecution also attempted to use certain pictures drawn by Campbell of violent acts against the school and Simpson against her, but it turned out that a friend of hers, Jamie Jefferies, and Campbell’s guidance counselor had suggested that Campbell use art to vent her frustration at being picked on by Simpson and the Crew.

Campbell, along with her guidance counselor, Miss Jefferies and Dr. Atkinson, testified that the “bomb” had not been placed by Campbell and, indeed, it was possible to reasonably suspect Simpson of framing Campbell to get her in trouble.

“I wanted her kicked out, not dead,” said Campbell.