



Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

Enough blast videos!

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How many times and from how many different camera angles are we to view yesterday's finish-line blasts? Sure, the local media are all competing for viewers with their marathon coverage of the marathon bombings. But their obsessive highlighting of the moments of terror, rather than the response and recovery, has grown excessive.

It is important and helpful that the local television stations have switched to non-stop reporting of our local tragedy. We want to understand what happened and learn of the latest developments surrounding the investigation. We need to know how the city -- and city services -- are adjusting to the disruption in our normal routine. We watch with prayer hoping that the critically injured survive rather than add to the death toll. We also want to know what we can do to help.

But what we don't need are the images and sounds of explosion played in quick succession over and over. And one major local news outlet made the highly questionable and disrespectful decision to show several video clips of the blasts in a split-screen box right next to President Obama as he delivered his heartfelt and somber message to the nation concerning the awful event. The station didn't even lower the volume on the bomb sequence, allowing the sound of the eruption and subsequent cries of terror to drown out the President's words.

I'm not suggesting the hundreds, if not thousands, of professional and amateur videos of the explosions and the time-frame leading up to them are not worthwhile. To the contrary, investigators are seeking as much video evidence as possible with the hope that someone inadvertently captured suspicious activity on video while recording images of runners crossing the finish line. But the rest of us are not investigators, and being presented with a seemingly endless array of treated repeated videos adds nothing to our grasp of the horror associated with Monday's terror attack. Besides, those who have some desire to watch bomb blasts and listen to the cries of injured spectators can always find plenty of material online for on-demand downloading.

beyond the question of whether the frequent replays of the moments when all hell broke loose has any value besides feeding our fascination with violence, one significant downside is possible. If this stunning event was the work of some insignificant malcontents who sought power, then they are undoubtedly reveling in their accomplishment every time one of the many blast videos is shown. Better they see and hear of stories that reflect upon the strength and resilience of the people of this great city.