

A few links about yesterday's bombing in Boston

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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When Ross Douthat's right, [Ross Douthat's right](#):

What I hope we don't see, when the next race or a parade or festival looms up in front of us, are layers of extra stops and searches and checkpoints, wider and wider rings of closed streets, the kind of portable metal detectors that journalists remember unfondly from political conventions, more of the concrete barriers that Washingtonians have become accustomed to around our public buildings ... more of everything that organized officialdom does to reassure us, and itself, that soft targets can somehow be eliminated entirely, and that everything anyone can think of is being done to keep the unthinkable at bay.

This kind of security theater is a natural response to terrorism, but it's a response that since 9/11 we've done an absolutely terrible job of reasoning through and then gradually ratcheting back.

Law-enforcement authorities are certainly right to take steps to prevent future incidents like the horror in Boston yesterday. But as a culture, we need to unlearn the idea that all security measures are good ones—and especially the idea that we can ever be 100 percent safe. (For more perspective on terrorism in the U.S., I recommend [Brad Plumer's post](#).)

Elsewhere, the story of Martin Richard, the eight-year-old who died in the bombing, [is heartbreaking](#). So is the story of the past few years in the life of [Carlos Arredondo](#), who acted heroically yesterday. And for a smaller-scale look at the human goodness this tragedy has provoked, see [this shared Google Doc](#).

Which brings us to Patton Oswalt, whose [Facebook post about goodness and evil](#) went viral yesterday. I agree with him that humanity is not simply evil, full stop. And I appreciate his call to courageously look evil in the eye.

Still, it's a little chilling to see hundreds of thousands of likes on a post that compares the perpetrators to a *virus*. If humanity isn't inherently evil, then neither is any particular human being—however disturbed they might be, and however evil

their deeds. So I'd like to replace Oswald's slogan—"The good outnumber you, and we always will"—with Desmond Tutu's: "Goodness is stronger than evil."