NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Bob Costas' controversial discussion on gun violence

Pat Perriello | Dec. 5, 2012 NCR Today

It has become all too predictable and all too frequent. An incident of gun violence occurs -- in this case, Kansas City Chiefs player Jovan Belcher shooting his girlfriend then himself -- and some express their concern. Immediately, there is an outcry from gun enthusiasts to remind us that guns don't kill people. Bob Costas experienced some of that in his comments on his "Sunday Night Football" telecast, and conservatives were quick to pounce [1].

To begin with, a number of people questioned whether "Sunday Night Football" was the appropriate venue for such a discussion. Former presidential candidate Herman Cain called Bob Costas an idiot. A staffer for Gov. Mitt Romney called the comments embarrassing and said NBC and Costas should be ashamed. National Rifle Association President Wayne LaPierre said Costas was making excuses for the murderer and should stop whining about his social agenda of banning guns during a football game. Finally, Todd Kincannon, the former head of the South Carolina Republican Party, said Costas owed the American people an apology and should be fired from "Sunday Night Football."

I almost don't know how to respond to such comments, but let me first remark about the football venue. Anyone who has watched much of ESPN or any other sports channel will know that sportscasters these days focus on much more than just the game on the field. All one has to do is think about the coverage of the Penn State sex-abuse scandal as one example. One wonders if there is no problem with such coverage except when the topic happens to be gun violence.

A second apparent concern is the timing of the comments so close to the current tragedy. Blogger Travis Waldron wonders [2] exactly what the right time would be. Specifically, what event would be an appropriate catalyst for such a discussion? My suspicion is that for the critics mentioned, there is no right time. Such discussion is to be forbidden. Anyone who attempts to broach the subject needs to be severely criticized at once.

Finally, I believe most telling is the request for an apology and a conviction that what Bob Costas said is worthy of dismissal from his job. This notion adds to my growing belief that the gun lobby is determined to squelch the smallest voices that may rise to address gun violence. Their determination seems to go as far as to abrogate the First Amendment to the Constitution in order to deify the Second Amendment. In other words, they are determined to protect their understanding of the Second Amendment, even if they have to eliminate free speech in order to make that happen.

Costas is to be applauded for speaking out and having the courage of his convictions to express himself on this issue. It is unfortunate that exercising what is a basic inalienable right for Americans should have to require such courage.

My questions to those who might respond to what some may call an anti-gun screed: First, are you against reducing gun violence? Second, are you against exploring strategies that might help reduce gun violence? Third, would you be in favor of legislation that would reduce gun violence if it did not diminish your right to bear arms under the Second Amendment? Finally, do you believe it might be possible, even in a limited way, to reduce

gun violence without interfering with the Second Amendment?

Source URL (retrieved on *12/12/2013 - 13:26*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/bob-costas-controversial-discussion-gun-violence

Links:
[1] http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/12/conservatives-sound-off-on-bob-costas-halftime-gun-control-push
[2] http://thinkprogress.org/alyssa/2012/12/03/1270841/bob-costas-jovan-belcher-gun-control/