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**Think Piece
Bill Bennett and Other Runaway Ideologues
by Anthony Asadullah Samad**

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Former Education Secretary, William Bennett’s comments last week, tying the crime rate dropping to giving every black woman an abortion (his quote exactly; “*But I do know that it’s true that if you wanted to reduce crime, you could, if that was your sole purpose, you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down.*”), is just the latest of a string of vile excrement coming from a conservative far right movement gone awry. They’re outta control, so arrogant, so disconnected from reality, so full of their own twisted ideology that they can’t even see how insensitive they seem, how incoherent they sound, and how weak they’re making America look.

How do other nations respect a nation that doesn’t take care of its own? With the confirmation of Chief Justice, John Roberts, under their belt, the Republican Party’s neo-con element are “feelin’ themselves,” “teeing off” with regularity on how they see the world from their ideological prism, and with a consistency that they couldn’t do in Baby Bush’s first term.

Now whatever crazy, asinine, rhetorical diatribe, espousing their ideological bent, they can come up with, they’re bringin’ it. Be it, President Bush’s insistence that staying in a \$200 Billion War in Iraq is still right thing to do (even though all can see it’s not and that democracy efforts in a theocracy driven Iraq is failing), or his momma’s (Barbara Bush’s) statement that underprivileged Blacks had it better at the Houston Astrodome than in their own (pre-hurricane) homes, or Rush Limbaugh’s Freudian slip of the tongue in his critique of New Orleans Mayor, Ray Nagin (calling him Ray “Nagger” – replace one letter and you get the point), or Bill O’Riley’s (O’Riley Factor) rant (that poverty circumstance is the poor’s fault because they don’t want to compete in a capitalist society) at Congressman’s Charlie Rangel’s suggestion that the federal government take a renewed effort to eliminate poverty, or former FEMA director, Michael Brown’s assertion that the federal government’s slow response to Hurricane Katrina was because “Louisiana (Governor and Mayor) was dysfunctional,” the far right calling the poor and disenfranchised responsible for their own fates, is like the “pot calling the kettle, black” – or hot – or rusty – or similarly situated. Rich, middle class, poor, or ideologically twisted, we’re in the same boat.

Ideological warfare in America is as much responsible for the socio-economic conditions facing the now

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“permanent underclass” as the persons impacted themselves. Republican “bootstrap” mentality has long been bankrupt of shoe laces. What are the poor supposed to pull themselves up with? By stripping government of its social welfare role that builds the infra-structure for emergency preparedness, the social safety net for children, seniors and the poor, the capacity for the middle class to rebuild their lives, runaway ideologues attack any solution that suggests we have the ability to do for ourselves – in America’s cities – what we seem to want to graciously do abroad. These runaway ideologues are so blind to America’s social, political and economic vulnerability that they cannot see that their own fates are tied to those less fortunate. The rich cannot run away from the conditions of the poor, though they may try. This country is rich enough to fix all of its economic and social ills. But the ideologues that run this nation won’t let it. Isn’t this how the last “Great Society,” Rome collapsed – under the weight of its own decadence? Well, this one is fading fast because ideologues think what happens to the least of us won’t affect the rest of us. They need to think again, take responsibility – then action that’ll benefit the whole, not the few.

These ideologues take responsibility for nothing, and take the blame for nothing, act on nothing (except things that enrich themselves) and then spin the media in ways that deflect criticism. Spin is their game. There is no spin like “Republican spin.” Nothing is these guys’ fault. Not the economy, not the war, not raising inflation or oil prices, not the widening class conflict between the rich and the poor, not the underlining race divide; nothing is their fault. They not only insult your intelligence, they assault your sense of collective responsibility that representative leadership can be trusted to do what is right, and to do what is expected to keep the democracy stable. Their issue is to hold power, regardless if the nation crumbles in the process. With two major cities now in ruin, natural disasters flooding the nation, and their flawed ideology exposed, our democracy is destabilizing with each hit it takes. And the poverty question is not going away.

No nation can survive if it does not establish a quality standard of life for the masses. America has been running from the war on poverty for a long time (since President Reagan abandoned most of the LBJ’s Great Society programs, stating that in the War on Poverty, “poverty won.”). Now we have a President who calls himself “a war president,” and likes to finish unfinished wars of his “daddy.” He once called Ronald Reagan his “ideological father.” Why doesn’t he take up the unfinished business of his “other daddy,” and spend \$200 billion on America’s unfinished war on poverty? But that would be too much like the pot calling the kettle...right.

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