

Responding to an Outrage!

■ What Motivated Bennett's Comments?

"I do know that it's true that if you wanted to reduce crime, you could -- if that were your sole purpose, **you could abort every black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down.** That would be an impossible, ridiculous, and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down." - **Bill Bennett**, *Bill Bennett Morning in America*, 9/28/05

Bill Bennett's comments are neither trivial nor off-the-cuff. They were deliberate, and their destructive impact was planned and anticipated by social conservatives long before his horrible declarations about 'aborting all black babies' were uttered in public.

During a period in which the racist aspects of social conservatism are taking a bashing in the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster crisis, Bill Bennett is deliberately firing back against that bashing. Bill Bennett is an extremely intelligent man and is a leading, veteran strategist in the social conservative movement. There is no doubt in my mind that his comments were deliberately meant to be inflammatory to once again 'raise the flag' of race-baiting politics to: **1) rally social conservatives; 2) deflect focus from Katrina.**

■ Hurricane Katrina and Racist Remarks: Comparisons to Past Acts of 'Domestic Terrorism.'

Bill Bennett's remarks constitute an act of incitement to racist domestic terrorism, similar to yelling 'fire' in a crowded movie theater. In this case, the only victims at risk of 'getting burned' are non-white Americans.

Both the act of domestic terrorism that was the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and the Hurricane Katrina FEMA disaster management debacle showed racist far-right-wing conservatism in the worst possible light.

In both cases, racists in my racially integrated community and around the country had to hold their heads low, as they faced depression and a lack of visible public support from the public, national leaders and the mass media for their immoral acts.

The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 forced such racists to suppress their true intentions [of promoting racial division in the U.S.] for a decade. That act of domestic terrorism was too horrible for America to fathom, and its impact destroyed adults and little children in daycare... of all races (as did 9-11). U.S. FEMA and the rest of the federal government responded to the Oklahoma City and September 11, 2001 terror catastrophes with speed and concern. **Why did Hurricane Katrina victims not receive equal treatment?**

■ Hurricane Katrina, Black America and Federal Responses

The Hurricane Katrina crisis affected Black Americans disproportionately, at least in New Orleans. The reaction of FEMA and other federal agencies was obviously *not swift*.

Reasonable people can conclude that race was a factor in that 'slower' response to a disaster that was greater than Oklahoma City and (perhaps the 9-11-2001 attacks). Certainly, watching 60,000 Black U.S. citizens starve for 4 to 5 days live on CNN while nothing was done by FEMA to feed or rescue them was... an unspeakable abomination.

In the wake of the stinging public criticism of the President Bush's policies of gutting FEMA; cutting New Orleans levee reinforcement funding for years; and FEMA's sitting around during the Katrina disaster while thousands suffered and died in New Orleans (*not to mention FEMA's prohibiting the Red Cross and volunteer doctors from assisting*), some far-right social conservatives apparently see a window of opportunity to exploit these conditions, justify federal inaction in New Orleans and earn points with their racist constituents.

Bill Bennett's openly racist remark is but the latest round in efforts to re-ignite the 'racist wing' of the social conservative movement.

By making his outrageous and blatantly racist declaration about 'aborting all Black babies' in the immediate aftermath of the Katrina crisis, Bill Bennett is trying to justify and legitimize the federal government's decision to not feed, protect and rescue the 100,000 people trapped in New Orleans after the flood.

The federal government's role in handling the Katrina disaster exposes ugly truths in America. As CNN news anchor Soledad O'Brien stated while interviewing (then) FEMA director Michael D. Brown: **'After the Tsunami the U.S. airlifted food aid to the people of Banda Aceh [Indonesia] within two days. Why, 4 days after Katrina, can't you airlift food to the [starving] American people in New Orleans [30,000 Americans in the convention center and 30,000 Americans in the Superdome]?'**

FEMA director Michael Brown responded by lying through his teeth and stating on national television that FEMA had provided 150,000 meals to the people in the New Orleans Convention Center and elsewhere at the time of the interview.

That was a direct lie on Michael Brown's part. Those people were, at the time, starving and dying!

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Infants and elderly were dying from starvation and dehydration. CNN could drive to the scene, but the Red Cross (not allowed to deploy by FEMA) and the queued trucks of food and water could not find their way into New Orleans until 4 to 5 days after the hurricane. The New Orleans Times Picayune newspaper's editorial made this point clearly in the days after the arrival of food and water at the Convention Center (see below).

A CNN news anchor commented at the time in a way that dismissed the Times Picayune editorial as a heated expression of [the anchor's tone of voice implied 'unjustified'] anger in the immediate aftermath of the Katrina disaster's destruction of New Orleans. **Shame on CNN's anchor for saying that!** ...Unjustified anger? Based on what? Republican talking points maybe, but not the facts.

From an African-American perspective, it is clear as a bell that Michael Brown saw the masses of Black faces starving, shrugged his shoulders, and, together with a vacationing George W. Bush said: *So what!* - We are no stranger to that racist attitude in America.

That scenario is, I believe, how most Americans view the Katrina crisis (as Bush's dip in the polls show). **Only the mass media refuses to address the topic of racism in federal crisis response in such a direct and honest way.**

■ The Impact of the Katrina Debacle on Social Conservative Morale

In the Washington, DC region, I saw the reaction to the criticism of the handling of Katrina disaster relief express itself via the previously mentioned sullenness among racists, and also in the form of public increased public hostility towards African Americans. As a personal note, during a visit to Reston, Virginia several days into the controversy, I was subjected to hostile interactions in public places, and a driver almost ran my car off the road.

Bill Bennett's remarks are intended to pull out the old 'race card' and use it in politics again. **The Republic Party higher-ups have just recently apologized for past use of the 'race card' (race-baiting) used against African Americans.**

■ Deflecting Culpability for Katrina from the George W. Bush Administration to Black Leaders

During recent days, CNN and other media have downplayed the role of the Bush administration's cronyism in gutting FEMA's disaster response capability.

This has been done largely by making the supposed defects in the leadership capabilities of Black public officials, and the Democratic Louisiana governor, a bigger focus of news coverage than the missteps of FEMA and the George W. Bush administration.

Among the Black public officials targeted for critical review by CNN, for example, is New Orleans Police Superintendent Eddie Compass (who is Black). In an interview with Republican Louisiana Senator David Vitter, CNN news anchor Miles O'Brien called the Chief's behavior and statements "bizarre" and "erratic." Did Miles O'Brien have to walk in Commissioner Compass' shoes? No!

Louisiana Republican Senator David Vitter responded [to O'Brien]... 'I wouldn't read too much into Compass' resignation... he has been to hell and back [during the Katrina crisis].'

Senator Vitter also stated that the focus should be on Michael Brown of FEMA, and that Brown criticizing Mayor Ray Nagin (who is Black) and Governor Blanco... "is like the president of Enron criticizing another corporation's ethics."

Other easy targets have been New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin and Democratic Louisiana governor Blanco. They have generally received a more intensive criticism in the mass media than the Bush administration has received. CNN and others seem to have amnesia when they trash Nagin's performance. Do we not recall that only Nagin's screaming on the phone that the governor and the fed's needed to "get up off your asses and respond to the biggest disaster America has ever had"... got the U.S. military's C5 heavy air transports and the heavy helicopters and military field hospitals into the air and flying frantically towards New Orleans? Bush, Brown and even Blanco didn't make that happen, Nagin [and General Honore] did!

The National Guard escorted visit by Rep. William Jefferson, to visit his flooded New Orleans home after a day of reviewing the crisis zone, is also a failed target-the-Black-man story that seeks to deflect culpability by focusing on the Black Congressman's innocent desire to get some of his belongings [long after the day's disaster inspections had been completed, and the National Guard troops were going back to their barracks]. General Honore' was recently reported in the press as having done the same thing. He is not being criticized. Why not (not that he should be, but why the double standard... because he has helped the President save face)?

When Rep. Jefferson was interviewed on CNN's Aaron Brown show, he gave a reasonable, non-defensive explanation for his action. He also stated that: "I know the Republican National Committee is playing up talking points about me." That one statement burst the bubble on the newsworthiness of the Jefferson story right then and there. Yet, conservative CNN anchors continue to raise the issue.

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In addition to deriding Black leaders, the press (including CNN) has heavily emphasized the so-called fact that a number of people were murdered in the Superdome and New Orleans Convention Center. Press reports from late September, 2005 stated that coroner's office examinations have concluded that **NONE of the dead persons found in the Superdome were murdered**. A number of more recent press articles have challenged the original rumors. The fact is, most of the atrocities originally attributed by the national press to Black Katrina victims did not happen at all! **Thanks to the New Orleans Times Picayune for revealing the truth!**

The fact is that, as every day passes, the Republican 'talking points' marketing mechanism floods the press with their rationale... to provide a smokescreen for the Bush administration's culpability for abandoning the taxpaying U.S. citizens, the children, women and men of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The administration must respond. Their reputation and their political survival during the 2006 mid-term Congressional elections depend upon repairing their credibility. **The Republican Party must denounce Bill Bennett!**

■ **Why Engage in Race Baiting in 2005?**

Bennett has very publicly made a statement that openly advocates the genocide of every Black child in America. How, my friends, do you think that the Black community feels?

We have just had a major Republican leader advocate our genocide! And all the press and politicians can do is to provide America with a watered down milk-toast discussion of the issue, without addressing its true nature and gravity? That is not acceptable!

Do those who rationalize Bennett's remarks, on CNN and throughout the press, feel that Black children, mothers of newborns, women who are pregnant, and everyone else in the Black community can feel comfortable living in America in 2005 (*given a long history of past racist terrorism*) when Bennett gets away with openly advocating our genocide on a public scale akin to the actions of the 1940's Nazi German Reich?

Bill Bennett effectively achieves several important results with his violent, obscene and genocidal statement:

- Bennett presents a very public rallying cry for racist right-wing conservatives who's spirits have been pulled down recently by the very legitimate criticisms of Bush's federal response to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and its failure to feed 60,000 innocent women, children and men in New Orleans for 5 days after the crisis started.
- Bennett's remarks - rationalize - (seek to justify) the Bush administration's apathetic and indifferent response to tens of thousands of Black victims in the wake of Katrina, America's worst mass-casualty disaster ever.
- By declaring, effectively, that all Black Americans are criminals [the logical extension of his abortion comments]... Bennett seeks to provide a rationalization for the brazen act of the abandonment of Katrina's victims... because those victims were (according to Bennett) Black criminals.
- Bennett's rallying cry will serve to energize the currently depressed forces of racist thought and action in mainstream America. Those who are racist tend to keep their hostile thoughts to themselves when no national political figure takes the lead. Now, Bennett has chosen to take the lead (and the heat) to make a bold stand for re-asserting the power of racist traditionalists over the power of compassionate conservatives.

(The phrase 'compassionate conservatism' implies that 'normal' conservatism is not compassionate - that it is, among other things... racist.)

- Bennett's racist statement about abortion comes immediately in the wake of the appointment of John G. Roberts, Jr. as Chief Justice of the United States. Considering that Roberts had to be asked if he believed in a right to vote and desegregation (in *Brown v. Board of Education*)... Bennett's racial assault represents a second shot over the bow of the ship of the march towards racial equality and harmony in the U.S.
 - The racially skewed lack of federal response to the Katrina disaster.
 - The declaration by Bill Bennett that all Black babies should be aborted.

These are bold steps by social conservatives. They require a bold, articulate and civilized response by all decent Americans.

■ How Should Americans Respond to this Thinly Veiled Call to Commit Racist Genocide on Black Citizens?

Bill Bennett should not be allowed to continue to expound his ideas on anti-Black Genocide without a demand that the Republican Party openly and (more) forcefully denounce his remarks (President George W. Bush and the Republican National Committee stating that the remarks were "not appropriate" ... is NOT enough to repair the damage done). **They must, as Colin Powell asked Republicans to do during the 1996 Republican National convention: "Cut racism out of the heart & soul of the Republican Party."**

Last, there is a far-right-wing faction in America that actively promotes the idea of 'ethnic cleansing' America of Black and brown peoples. Bill Bennett's remarks cater very directly to this sizable group of people. Thanks to Bill Bennett, those people (and the 12 mostly young White Americans who have tried to run me over as I cross the street in my well-to-do suburban community during the past 18 years [especially during the 'angry white male revolution of the 1980's] are among them)... will once again feel emboldened, and they will again feel comfortable in committing acts of domestic terrorism against children, women and men of color in the United States.

One of the most visible markers of racist domestic terrorism against Black Americans occurred about 15 years ago when racist domestic terrorists burned down 300 African American churches in the southern United States. Even then social conservatives tried to argue in the press that no pattern of racism was involved. *Really?*

Bill Bennett's remarks are a continuation of a centuries old pattern of racial attack on Black Americans for no reason other than the fact that we are African Americans.

Bill Bennett engaged in a long-used tactic in his latest utterance about '*aborting all Black babies.*' That tactic, which I have faced many times personally, is to have a white racist person walk near a Black American person, and state the word n****r so softly that, the Black listener cannot openly accuse the racist of having made the remark to others (police, school authorities, workplace managers, etc.)... so that the racist assailant completes their act of psychological rape uncontested by justice. It is a modern form of racist guerrilla warfare.

Bill Bennett, despite his denials, has just deliberately pushed all Americans deep into a hell-hole of open racial conflict. The only way out of that hell is to demand that the mainstream Republican Party and the mainstream press openly and unequivocally **denounce Bill Bennett's remarks as what they are: a deliberately inflammatory race-baiting instigation to commit violent domestic terrorism.**

My quiet suburban neighborhood has a gun club gunnery range in it. Members of the range have come out and excitedly shot many boxes of ammo in rage during several well-known public events:

1. When, during the 1996 presidential campaign, far-right Republican candidate Pat Buchanan said at a rally: "*Don't just stand there, mount-up!*" (as in – mount-up to partake in a racist lynch-mob). I still recall former CNN reporter Judy Woodruff shaking her head while Buchanan said that.
2. When Democratic President Bill Clinton was acquitted during his impeachment trial.
3. When Venus and Serena Williams played each other at Wimbledon for the first time.

These were all public events that enraged social conservatives.

I fully expect the local gunnery range to be packed in the coming days and weeks, in response to Bill Bennett's openly inflammatory racist remarks.

Bill Bennett's intentional act of 'kick-starting' the process of re-legitimizing racial hatred and racist domestic terrorism in 2005 America requires a forceful, articulate and persistent response by all people of good will! We will not allow racists to put our children and families in danger once again!

WE WILL NOT REMAIN QUIET while a leading conservative Republican leader advocates our genocide!

WE WILL STAND UP and denounce this open call to genocide, that will embolden domestic racial terrorism!

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