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[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

**Another Thought on why no Criminal Actions
Against Bush Administration Officials
African World
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There has been a great deal of both chatter and analysis - on the Internet and in other media - regarding the Obama administration's seemingly lackluster response to demands that officials from the Bush administration (up to and including the former President himself) be investigated and possibly prosecuted for abuses of authority. There are probably many sources for this hesitation, but I will offer one that I have not heard discussed: the classic "American" view on history.

Hard-wired into the culture of the USA is what I have called the "*from now on*" philosophy. This philosophy (and practice) recurs throughout US history. It is actually very simple to identify and understand. In essence it suggests that what is done is done; that there is no use harping on the past because it has happened; and, that the focus should be on the future. Thus, irrespective of any crimes that are committed (and by the way, this applies to the actions of the ruling elite as well as how they are perceived by the non-elite, but does not apply to the actions of the common folk), that does not matter so much as what is anticipated to take place. In other words, our crimes do not matter as long as FROM NOW ON we are committed to a different and nobler practice.

The "from now on" philosophy helps to explain how and why US history is not investigated and analyzed in our schools and institutions of higher learning more fully than they are. The myths that pass for US history cover over amazing crimes that have been committed. The current PBS Series on Native Americans, "***We Shall Remain***", which details key elements of US history from the standpoint of the Native American, catalogues any number of crimes, atrocities and broken agreements committed by the US against myriad Native American tribes. Not only do most people in the USA fail to grasp the depth and scope of these crimes, not to mention their significance, but to the extent to which they are acknowledged, it is often with a dispassionate, almost bored response. Implicit in the response is that irrespective of the crimes, that is all in the

past and in the future the USA will not commit such actions.

The problem, obviously, is that the failure to understand the roots of the various crimes that have taken place, be it the genocide against Native Americans, slavery and Jim Crow against African Americans, seizure of northern Mexico, demonization and oppression of Asian immigrants, and annexation of former Spanish colonies such as Puerto Rico, results in the re-commission of those crimes in various contexts.

The "from now on" approach allows the perpetrators to ignore not only the roots of the crimes, but the notion, quite ironically, of personal responsibility. I remember back in the 1980s watching an episode of the show **Lou Grant** (the Ed Asner series about a fictitious newspaper in Los Angeles). In this particular episode the publisher discovered that her late husband had benefited from the World War II incarceration of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in detention centers. Specifically, land and homes that had been lost by the internees came into the possession of her late husband and helped him to become the wealthy person that he was. The publisher was shocked that her husband could have been such a person because, other than participating in this fraud, he was supposedly a wonderful individual. At that moment she had to decide how to approach the situation and whether to admit his actions and accept her own liability.

US reality is far different from that episode of **Lou Grant**. Rarely does the upper-crust, unless otherwise compelled, acknowledge their complicity in one or another crime. Instead, they color over the past and contribute funds to foundations in order to ease their conscience, but more importantly, appease their critics.

For these reasons it has come as no surprise that the Obama administration has been less than zealous in pursuing the various criminals of the Bush administration, specifically, those who ignored all the warning signs about the pending 9/11 attack; those who carried out the detention of immigrants; those who constructed the Guantanamo facility; those who brought us the Afghanistan quagmire and the Iraq disaster; and those who authorized torture, with their fine words and disingenuous qualifiers. It is less a matter of whether the Obama administration wishes to continue these practices, but more that there is a deep reluctance to open up the past. Once that door into the past is opened, it is often very difficult to shut. An examination of what led to the invasion of Iraq, for instance, might expose a great deal about the US role in contributing to weapons of mass destruction going to Iraq in the first place. An examination of torture, may not only go up the ladder to the Oval Office of one George W. Bush, but may also expose various and sundry activities by the Central Intelligence Agency.

For these reasons it is far easier to suggest that FROM NOW ON the USA will be on good behavior. FROM NOW ON the USA can be counted upon to be a friend to democracy and a friend to the world's people.


Knock-knock: there is a little problem with this. For the most part, the people who have committed the crimes have not disappeared nor have they done penance. They have just relocated. Second, these crimes were not committed in a vacuum; there were many people who let them happen, either through cowardice of inaction or because they allowed themselves to believe the rationales. In other words, the conditions for a repetition of these various crimes have not disappeared. Only the "pause" button has been pushed.


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[Contents of Issue](#)
[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

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