

SORRY - Politicians' Apologies

Image references from top left to right:

“I am sorry that we weren’t more vigilant—that I wasn’t more vigilant...” in preventing the misdirection and misuse of public money as revealed during the inquiry into the sponsorship scandal by the Gomery Commission. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, *National Post*, 22 Apr 2005.

“I am truly sorry, and I am going to say it again, I’m sorry that my comments were inappropriate...” for saying “What the hell do I want to go to a place like Mombasa? I just see myself in a pot of boiling water with all these natives dancing around me.” Mel Lastman, Mayor of Toronto, *Toronto Star*, 22 Jun 2001.

“...offered a full apology to Chinese Canadians...‘This was a grave injustice, and one we are morally obligated to acknowledge...” for the Head Tax begun in 1885 and imposed on Chinese newcomers until 1923 when the government banned most Chinese immigrants from coming to Canada until 1947. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1219, 22 June 2006.

“If I could go back to that day, I would not use the words that I used. It was a poor choice of words... As a Nova Scotian, I apologize...” for saying that immigration would “run the risk of diluting the population.” Steve Streach, City Counsellor, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. *Halifax Daily News*, 4 Dec 2004.

“I apologize to everyone, including my family, my colleagues and the people of British Columbia...” for driving at twice the legal blood-alcohol limit. Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia, Canada, *Globe and Mail*, 11 Jan 2003.

“I am truly sorry for the pain and suffering that you have experienced...” for the Walkerton tainted water tragedy. Mike Harris, former Premier of Ontario, *Ottawa Sun*, 19 Jan 2002.

“On behalf of the Halifax Regional Municipality, I apologise to the former Africville residents and their descendants...” for the forced relocation and demolition in the 1960s of the Africville community that was located on the Bedford Basin for more than 150 years and for the resulting pain and loss of dignity. Peter Kelly, Mayor of Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia, Canada www.halifax.ca/Africville/apology.html, 24 Feb 2010.

“...the Government of Canada sincerely apologises and asked the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. Nous le regrettons. We are sorry...” for the residential schools system and for policies of assimilation based on the assumption that aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=2149, June 11, 2008.

“The knowledge that I’m responsible for such human suffering and for soiling the character of my people will always be with me...” for her role in ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the 1992-95 Bosnian war. Biljana Plavšić, former Bosnian Serb President, *National Post*, 18 Dec 2002.

“...I speak for members on all sides of the House today in offering Japanese-Canadians the formal and sincere apology...” for being forced into internment camps during World War II because of their Japanese descent. The work of gaining this apology was led by Art Miki of Winnipeg. Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxVZtQULIMQ, 22 Sept 1988.

“... to those Iraqis who were mistreated by members of the US armed forces, I offer my deepest apology...” for abuse of Iraqi detainees while in US custody at Abu Ghraib. Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defence, www.washingtonpost.com, 7 May 2004.

Undocumented apology made on the phone in an effort to mend fences after a diplomatic crisis provoked by revelations of US surveillance of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's mobile phone. US

President Barack Obama, *Morocco World News*, 8 Jan 2014. **“We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians...”** for injustices committed on Australia’s Aborigine population over two centuries of white settlement. Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia, *www.citizen.co.za*, 13 Feb 2008.

Apology for a “shameful defeat,” to the relatives of the eight Turks and one Greek murdered between 2000 – 2007 for the failure of German police and intelligence services to trace the series of murders to the Nationalist Socialist Underground between 2000 – 2007, German President Joachim Gauck, 3 Sept 2013.

“I apologize for opening old wounds and for hurting many Americans...” for saying the United States would be better off if segregationist candidate Strom Thurmond had been elected President in 1948. Trent Lott, US Senate Majority Leader, *Globe and Mail*, 14 Dec 2002.

SORRY is an archive-based artwork of the mouths of public figures apologising – religious leaders, sports stars, CEOs, politicians and other public figures – all taken from newspaper and online news sources. Each time I show this work, I make it site-specific. For this occasion at Emerson Gallery on Schiffbauerdamm, a few minutes away from the Reichstag, I selected public apologies of politicians. I then added an image of President Barack Obama apologizing to the Chancellor Angela Merkel for the CIA eavesdropping on her cell phone (2014) and President Joachim Gauck for police and intelligence services' apparent inability to solve the murders of Turkish and Greek immigrants (2013). I see public apologies as symptomatic of this time of the insatiable appetite for emotionally-charged news. They act as fodder for the multi-channel newsworld while at the same time they may be historically very important.

Cathy Busby
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