

Let's learn, evolve, not apologize for our past

Mark Pavilons



Hindsight, they say, is always 20-20.

It's easy to comment on something after the fact, when the dust settles and we can examine all the facts.

But the nitty gritty takes place in the heat of the moment, during the battle cries, bombings, political rallies, government curfews and church sermons.

We are human beings, with all our imperfections. We plan, consult, gather input and together, create laws, guidelines, policies, codes, strategies and rule books. We make decisions, relying on the information available, facts, opinion and a dash of emotion and instinct. Did I mention we were imperfect?

The best laid plans are often a mess. But we don't realize this until they're implemented and we can see, for ourselves, the actual practical ramifications.

We are reactionary by nature, we humans who are propelled as much by logic as we are by our appetites, desires and sinful ways. We are, too often, smug in our confidence that we know what we're doing and that we are doing the right thing.

The trend, in the last few years, has been for governments, politicians and groups to apologize for wrongdoings in the past. How much weight does an apology carry when it's given by a generation far removed from the actual events? We all know what we did was wrong, why are we expending such effort to be remorseful?

Action speaks louder than words, and to heal old wounds, we need to move forward with innovative, responsive, compassionate, legal and sensible methods.

We also can't judge our past by our current standards.

We've been battling racism in Canada for more than 150 years, since we created the Underground Railroad. It still exists. Canada legalized gay marriages yet we're still trying to come to grips with attitudes towards the LGBTQ community.

There was a time when women were not allowed to vote, and the term 'housewife' was commonplace and recognized as a legitimate role. Did anyone apologize to the suffragettes?

Saudi Arabia issued its first driver's licences to women in May, as they prepare to lift the world's only ban on women driving. This is 2018! Don't expect an apology from the Saudi government on this, ever.

The days of the Cleavers are long gone, but again, that was the era.

Our entire human history is filled to the brim with misconduct, murder, mayhem, abuse of civil rights, genocide, racism, sexism and a bunch of other isms.

We humans have only been living together in organized settlements and colonies for the past 10,000 years. From crawling out of caves, walking upright and establishing rules, it's taken us thousands of years to evolve.

We spent millennia killing animals for food and then killing each other for territory and power.

Our ancestors committed horrible acts throughout our 'coming of age'.

You would think we would have learned from the fall of the Roman Empire or the demise of Ghengis Khan that tyranny always ends badly.

The atrocities of the Second World War are well documented. To this day, sanctions remain against Germany in terms of military might and possession of nuclear weapons.

Today, both Germany and Japan are strong allies and trading partners of the western nations. The Germans are still apologizing, even though very few remain who were actually there.

To this day, the U.S. has not apologized for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing an estimated 214,000 people (largely civilians) and leaving tens of thousands more with chronic illnesses and cancer.

The U.S. will also never apologize for the use of the toxic Agent Orange in Vietnam, or the invasion of Iraq in 2003, or countless CIA-backed coups.

The Vatican (under Pope John Paul II) did apologize for or the actions of the Crusader attack on Constantinople in 1204; burnings at the stake following the Protestant Reformation, and even how Galileo was treated.

We can all stand up in our seats and shout out a collective "we're sorry" for what happened in our past.

We study all aspects of human history to not only learn about our humble beginnings, but to understand how and why things happened. We can't change the past, but we can learn from it.

That's the lesson here. Apologizing for our entire existence on this planet is pointless.

Our fellow humans have gone through a particularly disturbing year of apologies for sexual indiscretions from politicians and Hollywood legends, all the way down the list. Some incidents date back decades.

So now we're at the point in our ongoing saga where we've risen above all those petty biases, discriminations and conflicts, right? We're almost perfect, right?

A new marijuana law is coming into effect in this country. How will this milestone law change our society? How will the history books recount this weird chapter in our development?

I can hardly wait to recount these tales to my grandchildren!

The point I'm trying to make is by evolving and moving forward, we will one day eliminate the need to apologize for our behaviour. Wouldn't it be nice to have a spotless record to brag about? Let's make it happen!