

I'm sorry, so sorry; please accept my apology

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By **LEONARD PITTS Jr.**
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Let me tell you how President Bush ruined my weekend.

But first, a little background.

I write two columns a week, one of which has a Friday deadline for publication the following week. It's a tricky proposition; you're tasked with writing something that will still be relevant three days later. So you look for subjects that are timely but not fluid, not likely to change too much over the weekend.

I figured I'd found such a subject Friday before last when I wrote about former U.S. weapons inspector David Kay's testimony before a congressional panel. Kay said that he and the Bush administration "were all wrong" in believing Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. The existence of said weapons was, you will recall, President Bush's chief rationale for invading that nation.

Kay thought there should be an independent investigation into whatever intelligence failures led our government to believe there were weapons where there are probably none. Aides to the president promptly dismissed the suggestion and as late as Friday, the president himself was refusing to support it. So I wrote a column sharply critical of his position.

Sunday comes. And with it, news that the president, under pressure from political foes and allies alike, has reluctantly changed his mind and will now support an investigation. He has decided, of all the dirty tricks, to do the right thing.

This is where the weekend turns sour, because I know what's going to happen Monday. And it does. Most newspapers kill the column, but a few run it. So on one page, I'm blasting the president for not supporting the investigation and on another, he is supporting the investigation.

This leads to a handful of nasty notes from diehard Bush fans. Some make reference to an "affirmative action" columnist. Some suggest that I now owe the president an apology.

Which is a real jaw-dropper. He had to be dragged into this like a toddler to a doctor's office, but I owe him.

An apology?

Very well, then. Here it is.

Mr. President, I apologize for writing that column. I should have realized that even the most mulish obstructionism has its limits.

While I'm at it, allow me to express contrition for a few other things that are probably somehow my fault.

I apologize that some of your supporters are so ignorant as to think criticism of your war has to do with affirmative action or, more frequently, lack of patriotism. I should have done a better job educating them.

I apologize that more than 500 Americans have died defending a cause that is apparently not what they were told. I should have protested more vigorously.

I apologize that thousands of other people have died and been maimed. I should have cried out a little louder.

I apologize that much of the world hates us. I should have warned you more insistently.

I apologize that a minority of voters, some hanging chads and the Supreme Court got you into this mess. I should have voted twice.

Finally, Mr. President, I apologize that you rammed through laws making it possible to lock up American citizens indefinitely without trial, charges or access to attorneys. I should have fought you hard-

er. But I was scared.

Funny thing is, I'm still scared. More scared, in fact. I fear terrorist fanaticism, of course. But I also fear what my country has done and become in response to it.

Unfortunately for me, Mr. President, this is another column written on a Friday. Meaning I run the risk that by the time it is read, the world will no longer hate us, your supporters will have stopped questioning the patriotism or credentials of dissenters, the Patriot Act will have been repealed, the Supreme Court will have reversed itself, and all those people will no longer be dead.

I apologize in advance.

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