

Inauguration already? I'm still busy apologizing for the election



BARB GUY

Next week will be tough for 49 percent of America.

The people who didn't vote for George W. Bush are going to get edgy again now that his inauguration is upon us. Expect symptoms of crabbiness, obstinacy, malaise and increased sarcasm. Everyone who couldn't get out of bed on Nov. 3 will probably have trouble again on Thursday.

Many of us haven't recovered from the shock and blah of the election. I'm still busy apologizing for our election to friends in blue states and friends outside the United States and it's already time to swear W into office.

For those who can't stop swearing long enough for the swearing-in, there's an antidote. It's <http://www.sorryeverybody.com>.

com, where, since Nov. 2, people have been posting self-portraits and messages about the election on the Internet.

It began with a college student who posted a photograph of himself holding a crudely drawn map of the world and this message: "Sorry world, we tried. - Half of America." And he added a few sorrys in other languages.

Other people began submitting their own photos and messages and now the site has more than 7,700 entries. In general, the founder's format has been preserved: people hold a handwritten message to the world and pose for a photo. Most folks are apologizing for the re-election of George Bush; many are also sorry for the way our country is perceived by others, especially vis a vis the war in Iraq.

It's addictive to visit the site.

There are pictures of people, all ages and races; babies, sweethearts, grandparents, sometimes three and four generations at a time. We see people's homes, their hearths and mantels, their yards and offices, their dorm rooms and grandkids, their pets.

The missives run the gamut. Many are poignant: A Marine in his dress uniform, with his arm around a young woman, holds a

sign that says, "Sincere apologies from Evanston, IL and Fallujah, Iraq."

There's a photo of someone completely in shadow holding the message, "God help us all." Another says, "Still working for a nation where charity and love prevail - sorry from Texas."

One man holds a placard that says, "Impeach Bush." He adds, "Carried this sign 335 miles through Salt Lake City, Utah, and got a surprising amount of support." Another Utahn says, "Dear World, 227,286 of us in Utah are very sorry. Hope we live to vote another day. Love, XO, Shauna."

Lots of messages are funny. There's a man in his shop window holding a sign that looks just like the ubiquitous open/closed signs, only it says, "Sorry, we're stupid." Another man holds up a big stack of medical bills. His sign says, "I voted so hard I gave myself a freakin' hernia."

Early on, postings from other countries began to appear, with messages of solidarity and forgiveness. So, as things often seem to happen on the Web, the sorryeverybody site spawned **www.apologiesaccepted.com**, where people from around the world - I counted more than 50 countries - respond to what they've read from Americans.

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The ability to use English varies a great deal (just like in the Americans' messages, now that I think about it), but they all acknowledge the apologies. A young girl writes, "I'm so moved by your messages. What you did is meaningfulness! Kyoto, Japan." Another makes sense but just barely: "Learn better for future, then to be 100 percent support democracy. - Moldova."

Many of the apologies accepted postings are charming. A woman writes, "We know how hard you tried. If you need a place to crash for four years, we have a couch you can use. Lots of hugs, your friend, Canada."

An older couple sitting in a classic pub holds a card saying, "Apologies Accepted! Us English people who love the USA are confident that Hillary will be Great in '08." One photo shows a man next to a game board where his note, written in wooden tiles, reads, "You gave us Scrabble and Seinfeld - consider [the election] water under the bridge - Australia."

In a heartrending posting, a little girl holds the Iraq flag. Her message says, "To all who knew we are not terrorists, to all who care about my wounded country, please, I want to go to my school without bombs." That last one's what got us here in the first place, with very nearly half the country wanting to dump President Bush (mainly for going to war) and just over half of the country wanting to keep

President Bush, maybe for the same reason.

So if you know someone who has trouble facing Inauguration Day, you might want to send them into cyberspace. There's a friendly community growing there that just may end up bringing the world closer together, and we owe it all to George Bush.

I warned you to watch out for sarcasm.

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