

The Blue Banner's View

Tea Party protesters cross line on Capitol Hill

Hopefully now that the debate over health care reform is winding down, some small semblance of respect and civility can return to the American political process.

The chances of that happening completely are slim, but the least we can hope for is a dissolving of the racist imagery and hurtful and inappropriate words the Tea Party used in the anti-government/anti-health care protests last summer will cease to exist.

While it is great that Americans have the right to free speech, there are times when the idea of free speech gets distorted into something it is not.

Last Saturday's protests on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. on the eve of the health care vote in the U.S. House exemplify this distortion vividly.

So long as those anti-health care protesters had the correct permits to protest outside the Capitol, which they seemingly did, they had every

right to be there and to let their voices be heard.

What was not part of the permit they received from the city was the right to spit on members of Congress, yell racial epithets at them, call them "faggots" or physically push them as they passed by the protesters.

According to accounts from various news organizations, Capitol Hill staffers and members of Congress, all of those things happened.

On their own, those actions are despicable and unacceptable, but when one takes into consideration that Republican members of the U.S. House were actually there at the protests making speeches, it really reaches another level of absurdity.

As if that were not enough, not a single Republican there (or not there) has yet to come out and apologize or denounce the behavior of their supporters.

The least they could do is make a private apology to Rep. John Lewis, D-Md., a civil rights pioneer and a

man who marched with Martin Luther King Jr. Congressman Lewis was spit upon and called the N-word numerous times as he passed by the Tea Party protesters on Saturday afternoon.

So far, there is no word of a private apology.

The actions of the anti-health care protesters were just plain unacceptable.

The fact that in the year 2010 these kinds of things still happen just goes to show how little many Americans have learned from the past and how far we still have to go.

After Obama's election, television pundits across the land started to talk about how America is now some sort of post-racial, colorblind country and just how incredible it is that a black man could be elected president.

Unfortunately, that whole "post-racial America" thing was a bunch of baloney and was never really the case.

Nothing has made this clearer than

the actions of the Tea Party protesters over the past eight months or so.

Calling your president a socialist, fascist, communist, anti-American, Muslim-terrorist and Kenyan-Nazi is really nothing of which to be proud. Bringing guns to protests, yelling racial and homosexual slurs at members of Congress, and then spitting on and pushing our elected officials is nothing to go around celebrating about either.

In some parts of the media and in certain political circles, these protesters continue to be touted as some sort of "freedom-loving patriots."

This needs to stop and they need to be called what they really are: ignorant, pathetic and embarrassing.

There is simply no place for these kinds of actions and behaviors in a civilized society.

Even in protests, a line needs to be drawn, and in the case of these most recent anti-health care reform protests, that line has been crossed and this nation is worse off for it.

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The Blue Banner is a designated forum for free speech and welcomes letters to the editor, considering them on basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be e-mailed to the editor-in-chief or the appropriate section editor.

Letters should include the writer's name, year in school, and major or other relationship to UNCA. Include a telephone number to aid in verification. All articles are subject to editing.