

OPINION

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Fear, Anger and Denial Symptoms of America's changing majority

BY BENTLEY DE BARDELABEN

"Baby killer," "Reload," and "Hell no, you can't," are some of the phrases pronounced by conservative Republican leadership Randy Neugebauer (Texas), Sarah Palin (Alaska) and John Boehner (Ohio) about the passing of President Obama's health care reform bill.



Prior to its passage, openly gay Congressman Barney Frank (Massachusetts) was called the "f" word. Even members of the Congressional Black Caucus were called the "n" word, with one person, Emanuel Clever (Missouri), being spat upon as members of the Tea Party chanted, "Kill the bill!" through the halls of Congress. Sadly, Michele Bachmann (Minnesota) stated that because there was no video or audio evidence of such incidents, the incidents never happened. How ludicrous is that?

These constant hurls of insult, disrespect, and threat to our nation's African American or gay American leaders by other voices of leadership and their following have presented a constant trek up the hill of hatred for awhile.

As a person who has trained hundreds, perhaps thousands, in cultural diversity workshops, I believe that racism is a possible underlying cause of the recent insanity. I have often wondered what will result from people's fear of the changing demographic landscape of the United States by 2040-2050. After all, the media continues to hype these projected changes: "Whites no longer to be the majority by 2050."

Since the election of Barack Obama, we have been told there was record turnout for people of color and the youth who helped to make history. While that has seemed wonderful for some of us, it angers, frustrates, and incites others. Presidential candidate Obama received more death threats, and continues to receive more death threats, than any other U.S. President. Simply stated, racism is the cause for that.

It is not my intent to say that all European Americans are racists. However, my professional experience has taught me that most European Americans do not have to think

about their skin color as the means holding them back from accomplishing their dreams or desires. Unfortunately, this is not the case for people of color, not one.

With a struggling economy, along with constant barrage of hate mongering from the right wing media and some conservative legislative leaders, we may be seeing only the beginning of a new trend.

It is my hope that we can begin to speak openly and civilly about our anxieties. Other-

wise the waters ahead will be even more difficult to navigate for our elected leaders. That would not be good for any of us, black, white, brown, red or yellow skinned, for we all love our country and are proud to be American.

Only together can we go through these difficult times.

Bentley de Bardelaben is executive for administration and communications for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

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