

Omaha World-Herald

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The Public Pulse: Reject this hateful rhetoric

Earlier this month my family, including our daughters, who are 5, 4 and 1, attended the re-election kickoff event for Gov. Pete Ricketts in downtown Lincoln. Upon exiting the event, members of Betsy Riot, a liberal activist group sporting crude T-shirts and signs, were chanting vulgar words and called my wife, who was pushing the baby in the stroller, a Nazi. My children were visibly shaken by the anger, the language and the outfits of Betsy Riot.



Protesters with the group Betsy Riot carry signs outside a luncheon meeting of the Lincoln Independent Business Association, at which Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer was speaking Tuesday. A different group, "Indivisible Lincoln," called the protest to object to Fischer's willingness to speak to special interest groups but not with the general public.

MATT MILLER/THE WORLD-HERALD

It would be compelling to write these protesters off as a lunatic fringe, but that would be inaccurate. The Betsy Riot Facebook page has more 10,000 followers and has in the past been praised by community leaders. In February, Lacey Merica, the president of the Omaha Public Schools board, took to social media to declare she wished she "was as amazing as the Lincoln Betsies!"

Elected officials should re-evaluate their association with groups like Betsy Riot that feed into the anger and vitriol threatening our country today.

Brad Stevens, Lincoln - June 20, 2017