

Partisanship & Pretense

April 11, 2023

Protest is a tricky business.

Had those in power their druthers, no protest would be allowed. Had those out of power their way, all their demands would be met.

I'd say the necessary middle ground lies in the rule of law.

Did the recent Tennessee legislature's reaction to three legislators who broke House rules follow the law?

Not according to *The Washington Post*, which provided the "Democracy Dies in Darkness" [spin](#) in the headline: "Tennessee House expels two Democrats in historic act of partisan retaliation."

Of course, the whole idea of legislators jumping sides to pretend they are "voiceless" protesters is itself absurd, making the issue here neither partisanship nor racism.

In the wake of the shooting at the Covenant School in late March, with its death toll of six, "activists descended on the Tennessee Capitol and demanded that lawmakers pass gun-control legislation. Republicans, with supermajorities in both chambers, refused to do so. The three lawmakers — dubbed the Tennessee Three — said they joined the protests inside the legislative chamber to speak out for Tennesseans whose voices have been ignored."

But what they did is disrupt the proceedings of the



legislature. Noisily. Angrily. Not-very-reasonably.

While it's true that the votes to remove two of the three offending members were along partisan lines, it's also true that *all three* offending members were unified by party.

But only two were removed from the legislature. Both are black, and the woman *not* removed is white. So of course the big issue for many became *racism*.

She escaped expulsion by one vote.

Was that vote racist?

Well, the two who were ousted used bullhorns within the legislative chamber. She did not.

That does seem an extra-outrageous breach of decorum.

Of course, the whole idea of legislators jumping sides to pretend they are "voiceless" protesters is itself absurd, making the issue here neither partisanship nor racism.

It's a question of posturing and pretense.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

Note: After his expulsion last week, the Nashville-Davidson Metro Council yesterday voted to [return](#) Rep. Justin Jones to the state legislature on an interim basis. A special election will be held to fill the seat in the coming months.