

# MALIGNING PRO-LIFERS

*The following article was written by the Catholic League's communications director Michael P. McDonald:*

The National Abortion Federation's (NAF) "2020 Violence and Disruption Statistics" report has a dearth of information to support any of its claims. But what NAF lacks in facts, it makes up for it in hyperbole, innuendo, and hypocrisy designed to portray pro-life activists, many of whom are Catholic, in the most negative light possible.

On the first full page of the report, NAF lists the first major instance of "violence" by pro-life advocates to be "anti-abortion protesters congregated outside abortion clinics." The problem with calling this "violence" is that this is totally legal. It is true that the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act creates a bubble around abortion clinics where pro-life advocates cannot demonstrate; however, as long as they stay outside of the bubble, pro-lifers can congregate to their hearts content.

What is not legal are the pro-abortion advocates protesting outside of the homes of Supreme Court justices. 18 US Code Section 1507 clearly states, "Whoever...with the intent of influencing any judge...in the discharge of his duty, pickets or parades...in or near a building or residence occupied or used by such judge...or resorts to any other demonstration in or near any such building or residence, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both." The pro-abortion advocates clearly violate this statute making their congregating an illegal act.

NAF should know all of these rules, but it would rather make a scurrilous and hypocritical claim to portray pro-lifers as the wrong-doers.

In addition to "congregating," NAF points out that many of

these pro-life advocates failed to observe “stay-at-home orders and public health guidance to avoid group gatherings.” But when Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Antifa took to the streets in 2020, failing to observe stay-at-home orders, over a thousand doctors declared these actions justified because “white supremacy is a lethal public health issue....”

Even government officials, tasked with enforcing stay-at-home orders, cheered them on. Former New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, for instance, decreed, “We’re in the middle of a national crisis.” Of course, he was referencing systemic racism and used this logic to justify easing COVID-19 restrictions for BLM and Antifa.

NAF also asserts that many of the congregators were “white supremacist individuals.” Yet it provided no evidence to prove this. How did it know these people were white supremacists? Did everyone outside have a swastika tattooed on his forehead? Without any evidence to back up this claim, NAF just grabbed the current buzzword the Left has adopted to attack people that do not agree with its policies.

Another act of violence NAF highlights is “protestors co-opting language of the movement for Black lives in their attempts to intimidate providers and patients.” This is a preposterous claim. Just because BLM uses certain words does not forbid anyone from using similar slogans. Further, employing copy-cat language for a peaceful demonstration does not constitute violence.

After making these arguments, NAF attempts to appeal to authority in an effort to add a veneer of credibility. Citing a January 2020 unclassified report from the FBI, NAF declares that “there is an ongoing increase in anti-abortion threats, disruptions, and violence.” Setting aside the over-politicized nature of the FBI, there is a serious flaw citing this bulletin. If one reads the first bullet from the FBI, the Bureau uses information provided by NAF. They are quoting

themselves as a source.

Finally, NAF attempts to present data to support its several pages of innuendo that pro-life activists represent a clear and present danger. But even in this section, the facts are weak.

They claim that their “members report an increase in assault and battery outside of clinics with the majority of incidents involving anti-abortion protestors having altercations...[including] shoving, pushing, tripping, and spitting on clinic escorts, staff, and others outside of clinics.”

While no one should engage in such actions, a little perspective is required. The BLM and Antifa riots in 2020 caused over two billion dollars in property damage according to insurance payouts. They also left at least 25 people dead. Pushing, shoving and tripping are not even in the same league as BLM and Antifa.

In addition to “pushing” and “shoving,” NAF claims that there were 115,517 instances of picketing. However, the “picketing” NAF describes is not similar to a wildcat strike with disgruntled laborers physically attacking scabs for trying to get to work. Starting in 2011, NAF’s own statistics make a distinction between people obstructing the entrance to a clinic and people picketing, which is to say peacefully protesting. In other words, pro-life advocates exercising their constitutionally protected right to assemble is what NAF considers violence.

Ultimately, no one should consider “2020 Violence and Disruption Statistics” a serious report. Rather than using facts and data to support their claims, NAF does everything it can to make pro-lifers look like violent extremists. No, if one really wants to see genuine abortion-related violence, they would do well to look at the pro-abortion camp,

particularly Antifa-affiliated Jane's Revenge or Ruth Sent Us.