

Judge Declares Pro-Life Advocate Not Guilty in Bizarre Umbrella Case

Thomas More Society attorneys achieved victory in a Montgomery, Alabama, municipal court for pro-life advocates Daniel and Valarie French, who are still reeling over the absurd charges that got them there.

The City of Montgomery prosecuted Daniel French for destruction of property, after an abortion facility escort manager had him arrested, claiming that he was responsible for breaking a \$25 umbrella. The Thomas More Society was able to demonstrate that accusation to be false, and that the umbrella was ruined as an angry abortion clinic escort smashed it over Daniel's head.

Thomas More Society Special Counsel Samuel McLure explained, "We are pleased that Daniel was vindicated. The entire situation was ludicrous. Daniel and Valarie were peacefully offering life-affirming alternatives, as they regularly did, outside of Montgomery's only abortion facility. An angry abortion clinic volunteer assaulted Valarie, and as her husband came to her rescue, the man turned his attack on Daniel. Then the woman who coordinates the abortion clinic escorts had the police arrest Daniel."

The incident occurred on May 18, 2018, outside of Reproductive Health Services, 811 South Perry Street, in Montgomery. The abortion clinic deploys a squadron of volunteers as escorts who carry umbrellas. They deliberately place themselves between abortion-bound women and the pro-life sidewalk counselors who offer support and information on alternatives to abortion and pray with those women who are willing to talk.

Travis Jackson, an abortion clinic escort whose problematic

misbehavior was well known, was volunteering the morning of May 18. His virulent hatred for the pro-life movement was well-documented on social media, and it concerned the Frenches. Jackson had often hurled vulgar and sexually harassing communication at Valarie French and other pro-life advocates, as he did on May 18.

That particular day, after making vulgar sexual gestures towards Valarie French, Jackson became enraged at her suggestion that his obscenities negated his claim of “championing women’s rights.” He charged toward her waving the umbrella as a weapon, apparently intent on physical assault.

Daniel French, who was recording the incident on his phone, stepped toward Jackson, deflecting the umbrella with his hand, shouting, “Don’t you do that to my wife!” With Daniel’s phone still recording, Jackson quickly raised the umbrella and brought it crashing down on Daniel’s head, destroying the umbrella.

Later that day, the coordinator of the abortion clinic escorts signed a warrant for the arrest of Daniel French for destruction of property—the umbrella that Jackson smashed over Daniel’s head.

The City of Montgomery began its prosecution of Daniel French for criminal mischief on the afternoon of September 20, 2018. The prosecution’s first witness was the abortion clinic escort coordinator, who testified that she did not actually see the event—but she pressed for charges because the \$25 umbrella belonged to her pro-abortion group.

Daniel French’s clear video evidence showed that he held the phone throughout the incident and was the victim of assault with the umbrella, and successfully negated the testimony of abortion escorts that he used both hands to smash the umbrella over Jackson’s head. {eo}