

J.M.J.

Senate testimony
Michael Knowles

Thank you, Chairman Schmidt, Ranking Member Welch, and all members of this committee. In light of the murder of my friend Charlie Kirk by a leftist assassin, I'm pleased to see that at least some members of our federal government are now confronting the consistent and escalating pattern of left-wing terrorism in this country.

Even honest liberals have had to admit in recent weeks that left-wing terrorism exceeds right-wing terrorism. On September 23, no less an emblem of American liberalism than *The Atlantic* magazine admitted that fact in an article, based on a recent study, under the headline, "Left-Wing Terrorism Is On The Rise."

Less honest liberals, including members of Congress, have nevertheless persisted in denying this fact. Democrat congressman Seth Moulton reacted to a leftist's assassination of the most prominent proponent of civil debate on the American Right by blaming the Right. He claimed that three-quarters of political violence in the United States comes from the Right, while only four percent is committed by the Left.

That claim struck me as suspect, so I looked into just a few examples of left-to-right political violence. Consider the Covenant School massacre in Nashville, for instance, in which a trans-identifying shooter murdered Christian children at school after leaving a manifesto outlining ideological motivations, such as gender ideology. That incident, according to authorities, lacked an ideological motive. The Black Lives Matter riots—overtly leftist demonstrations that left dozens of people dead and over a billion dollars' worth of property damage—likewise fail to show up on registers of left-wing political violence.

Even an attack by Antifa operatives that targeted me personally for my conservative political views appeared in official records and data sets as nothing more than "obstructing law enforcement" on the rare occasion it appeared at all. It turns out the Left commits relatively little political violence when one does not count the political violence that the Left commits.

I'm here today to speak about that single, illustrative incident. On April 18, 2023, I was scheduled to participate in a debate at the University of Pittsburgh on the topic of transgenderism. Before the debate, left-wing protesters gathered outside the O'Hara Student Center, many dressed uniformly in black with face coverings. The demonstration grew to an estimated 300-350 people, who lit the street on fire while burning me in effigy with a miniature mustache drawn on my lip. All because I held the opinion that men cannot become women.

I awaited the start of the debate from inside the auditorium and therefore did not witness these events directly, though many were filmed and posted to social media. But according to an FBI affidavit, at approximately 7 p.m., the demonstrators moved to the front entrance of the student center and prevented vehicles from passing, despite that road's serving as the main access to the hospital. Buildings in the area were placed on a "soft lockdown."

As the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire put out my burning effigy, an Antifa operative named Brian DiPippa rolled a smoke bomb under police barricades. Twelve minutes later, Dipippa, hiding behind his wife Krystal, lit a second smoke bomb and placed it among the attendees as well as the University of Pittsburgh Police officers who had been called to maintain order.

Attendees waiting in line scattered while demonstrators shouted, “Fascists, go home!” The demonstrators then moved to the side of the building with window access to the auditorium in which my debate was set to begin. Police, seeing the threat, moved to create a barrier between the leftists and the building.

The debate moderator, my interlocutor, and I began to walk to the stage one minute after the event’s scheduled start time. But before we reached the stage, we heard an explosion, which caused our security personnel to escort us back into the wings. A demonstrator, later identified as DiPippa, had thrown a lit firework into a group of police officers protecting the rear of the building. The explosion injured several officers, including severe and life-altering injuries to a female officer. Even the less severe injuries included burns, bruises, hearing loss, and possible concussions.

Demonstrators continue to disrupt and threaten us in the auditorium after the event began. Four protesters began to shout, “Trans lives matter!” before security agents escorted them off the premises. Toward the end of the debate, a protester in a hat, sunglasses, and face mask stood up and walked threateningly toward the stage before taking a seat in the second row after the protection team began walking toward her. The debate ended early after campus police notified security personnel inside the auditorium that protests outside were becoming even more destructive, and the campus had issued a “safety emergency” notification.

While Democrat politicians and liberal journalists have sought to downplay and even deny the existence of organized, left-wing terror, the attack at the University of Pittsburgh provides just one example among countless of serious and increasing leftist terrorism.

Brian and Krystal DiPippa were not merely two citizens impelled to protest a speaker with whom they disagreed. According to reporting by investigative journalist and Antifa expert Andy Ngo, the DiPippas were members of an extremist left-wing cell that met at the Big Idea Bookstore in Pittsburgh. Such anarchist bookstores operate as meeting and training grounds for left-wing terror attacks. The Torch Antifa Network later claimed the DiPippas as members and offered the opportunity to donate money for them through a tax-exempt non-profit organization.

Thanks to the efforts of a courageous FBI agent who happened to be on the scene, the Department of Justice was impelled to bring charges against the DiPippas. Unfortunately, our justice system gave them only a slap on the wrist. Throwing an explosive into a crowd of people constitutes attempted murder. Justice calls for life in prison. Our justice system sentenced Brian DiPippa to minimal jail time for “obstructing law enforcement.” His wife got off with probation.

The federal government must act now to stop the consistent and accelerating trend of leftist terrorism. For a legislator to deny the threat and neglect the remedy might once have been chalked up to ignorance; today, it is nothing less than complicity.