“NPR’s Disgrace” by Rich Trzupec

Juan Williams put it simply: “I was fired for telling the truth.” That’s about as succinct a summary of the situation as you’re likely to find. NPR CEO Vivian Schiller terminated Williams’ contract because he veered off of the leftist reservation, and to make things even worse from Shiller’s point of view, he did it on Fox. If Williams is one of the tens of millions of Americans who gets nervous when he’s around people dressed in Muslim garb, NPR believes that he ought not mention it, or – [as Schiller said](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2010/10/21/npr_ceo_williams_views_should_stay_between_himself_and_his_psychiatrist.html) – he should discuss his problems with “his psychiatrist or his publicist.” Schiller would eventually apologize for that demeaning insult, but it’s far too late for NPR to recover from this fiasco. Liberals, conservatives and even some Muslim groups expressed shock and disgust over this assault on free speech and open discussion.

Williams’ sin, according to NPR, was that [expressing his personal feelings](http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/10/21/npr-fires-juan-williams-oreilly-appearance/) violated NPR’s code of conduct that forbids their on-air talent from taking a position on “controversial issues,” from participating “…in shows that encourage punditry and speculation rather than fact-based analysis” and from expressing opinions on other shows that “…they would not air in their role as an NPR journalist.” At least that’s the official version, as expressed in [an internal memo](http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/10/21/raw-data-npr-internal-memo-juan-williams/) that Schiller wrote explaining her decision. One suspects that the Council on American Islamic Relations had something to do with it as well. [CAIR was outraged by Williams’ remarks](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2010/10/21/juan_williams_npr_fired_him_for_making_bigoted_statement.html). In a statement, CAIR said that “NPR should address the fact that one of its news analysts seems to believe that all airline passengers who are perceived to be Muslim can legitimately be viewed as security threats.”

Well, yeah. Political correctness may demand that we subject 80 year-old Swedish grandmothers to the same level of scrutiny at the airport that we do to young Muslim males, but we know – beyond doubt – which demographic represents a potential threat and which does not. Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, acknowledged this basic truth, pointing to the fact that most victims of Islamic terrorism are Muslims and that even a Muslim woman wearing a burka is a potential threat. “We are victims of these guys. A number of suicide bombers who have attacked have killed people [while] wearing the burka,” Fatah said. “This is the truth, we should be speaking the truth rather than what people expect us to say.” Yet, NPR cut Juan Williams loose for expressing his personal opinion, and – worse – for expressing a personal opinion that is entirely reasonable and rests on a solid foundation of fact.

This is another example of what [the left has become](http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/10/21/brief-history-nprs-intolerance-imbalance/). They are, to paraphrase William F. Buckley, interested in your opinion so long as that opinion dovetails with their worldview. They’re not liberals, not even remotely in the classical sense. Classical liberalism encouraged debate and welcomed the intellectual enrichment that grew out of discussions of opposing viewpoints. The left, of which NPR is unquestionably a part, believes that it is the sole gatekeeper of truth, thus removing any obligation to consider other views. Even if Vivian Schiller’s hypothesis were true – that NPR personalities don’t opine, only guests on their programs do – it would not matter. Somebody has to choose what guests to interview. Somebody has to decide on the questions to ask them. Somebody has to figure out which interviews NPR will feature and how to edit them. All of these decisions involve people who have personal opinions about the way the world works and their decisions reflect it. If you’ve spent any time listening to NPR, you can’t have any doubt that the people making those editorial decisions are leftist through and through. Thus, their demand that on-air personalities remain “neutral” is meaningless. NPR, like every other media outlet, is not neutral. The decision-makers have an agenda, at NPR and everywhere. The difference between NPR and outlets like Fox and MSNBC is that taxpayers fund NPR’s ideological bent, instead of letting the free market figure it out.