

December 8, 2015

Kevin Williamson has been prolific lately. In one 10 day period he kicked out a thousand word essay each day. We'll catch up a little today. His first article is titled "Black Lives Matter" and closes with these paragraphs;

... And thus we have the very peculiar situation in which "Black Lives Matter!" but black perpetrators don't. Only white perpetrators matter. And if, as in the case of George Zimmerman, they are not exactly white, then they can be declared white by the New York Times. Only white perpetrators matter to the people behind the Ferguson protests because only white perpetrators are politically useful.

The overwhelming majority of violent deaths suffered by black Americans are the result of simple crime, and crime is, as an issue, of no use to the Left. But when a black man dies at the hands of a white man — especially a white police officer — then that breathes life into the ghost of "white supremacy," the infinitely malleable, endlessly useful set of imperial robes detectable only by the finest sensibilities on MSNBC. Actual white supremacists represent a dwindling and (metaphorically and, more often than you might expect, literally) toothless tendency restricted mostly to hillbilly precincts and anonymous Internet cowards. But if one already wants to boycott Wal-Mart, and a white cop shoots a young black man, then — abracadabra! — the Left is boycotting Wal-Mart because of . . . white supremacy, or something. Agitating for a \$40 minimum wage? "Justice for Mike Brown!" Looking for even more generous solar-power subsidies? "Justice for Mike Brown!" Anointing AFL-CIO boss Richard Trumka president-for-life? "Mike Brown would have wanted it that way!"

If you believe that black lives matter, then you should be working for school reform, economic growth, and — yes — more effective law-enforcement and crime-prevention measures to protect black communities, which suffer an enormously disproportionate share of crime and violence. Never mind the stagecraft: That's what you actually do if you think black lives matter.

And the drama that's going on in Ferguson right now? That's what you do if you think black lives are merely useful to you — and, in the end, expendable.

Speaking of boycotting Wal-Mart, Williamson has this to say;

... There's no sign of it here in Magnolia, Ark., but the boycott season is upon us, and graduates of Princeton and Bryn Mawr are demanding "justice" from Wal-Mart, which is not in the justice business but in the groceries, clothes, and car-batteries business. It is easy to scoff, but I am ready to start taking the social-justice warriors' insipid rhetoric seriously — as soon as two things happen: First, I want to hear from the Wal-Mart-protesting riffraff a definition of "justice" that is something that does not boil down to "I Get What I Want, Irrespective of Other Concerns."

Second, I want to turn on the radio and hear Jay-Z boasting about his new Timex.

It is remarkable that Wal-Mart, a company that makes a modest profit margin (typically between 3 percent and 3.5 percent) selling ordinary people ordinary goods at low prices, is the great hate totem for the well-heeled Left, whose best-known celebrity spokesclowns would not be caught so much as downwind from a Supercenter, while at the same time, nobody is out with placards and illiterate slogans and generally risible moral posturing in front of boutiques dealing in Rolex, Prada, Hermès, et al. ...

...Ultimately, these campaigns are exercises in tribal affiliation. The Rolex tribe, and those who aspire to be aligned with it, signal their status by sneering at the Timex tribe — or by condescending to it as they purport to act on its behalf, as though poor people were too stupid to know where to find the best deal on a can of beans. Or call it the Trader Joe's tribe vs. the Wal-Mart tribe, the Prius tribe vs. the F-150 tribe.

*We see this everywhere: In Ferguson, self-righteous and self-appointed spokesmen for the marginalized point to the fact that the criminal-justice system generally produces far worse outcomes to the poor and the non-white than it does to the well-off and white. This is, generally speaking, true. And though the dynamics are equally complicated, the same thing is true of the government schools, which do a pretty good job for rich white kids in the suburbs while functioning as day prisons and incubators of dysfunction for poor minority kids, especially in big cities. But the social-justice warriors in Ferguson will fight on bloody stumps to prevent reform of the government-school cartels, the endless failures of which do far more to harm the lives of the economically and socially vulnerable than any police department does. Why? The teachers are part of the tribe, and the cops are part of a rival tribe, which is why nobody ever bought a Rolex out of the royalties of a song titled "F**k the Milwaukee Public Schools."*

Kevin next turns his thoughts to where the 2016 conventions might be held.

... The Democrats, if they had any remaining intellectual honesty, would hold their convention in Detroit. Democratic leadership, Democratic unions and the Democratic policies that empower them, Democrat-dominated school bureaucracies, Democrat-style law enforcement, Democratic levels of taxation and spending, the politics of protest and grievance in the classical Democratic mode — all of these have made Detroit what it is today: an unwholesome slop-pail of woe and degradation that does not seem to belong in North America, a craptastical crater groaning with misery, a city-shaped void in what once was the industrial soul of the nation. If you want to see the end point of Barack Obama's shining path, visit Detroit. ...

... Then there's Philadelphia. ...

... Philadelphia-style misgovernance is not funny at all: The city's murder rate is three times New York's and even higher at the moment than murder-happy Chicago's. It graduates barely half its high-school students, and black students drop out at twice the rate of whites. Its median household income is 30 percent less than the national average, and 26 percent of its people live in poverty. Which is to say, it's more or less like most cities where Democrats have long enjoyed uncontested dominance. ...

Mr. Williamson's Thanksgiving message celebrates the ungovernable colonists.

The American colonies must have been an unruly place, full as they were of religious fanatics and slave traders, second sons and fortune hunters, criminals and former political prisoners, and all manner of people in between. The first settlements hugged the coast, where one set of adventurers looked seaward while another looked to the interior wilderness. It was, in retrospect, almost inevitable that North America would quickly become the wealthiest place in the world by the 17th century.

Why? Because those seditionists, fanatics, and gamblers were impossible to rule. While we are counting our blessings this Thanksgiving, let's not forget to count that one: Our ancestors did not much like being told what to do, and we — and the world — are immeasurably richer and happier for that. ...

... There's a famous meme that made the rounds during Occupy Wall Street, with a hippie-dirtbag protester labeled "Wants More Government" and menacing police in riot gear closing down on him labeled "More Government." Those of us who want less government do not want only that: We want what flourishes when men are left free to pursue their own ends. The Left, on the other hand, takes every instance of unhappiness as an argument for more government — including bad government. Our founding fathers knew when to build, and when to fight. More importantly, they knew what to build, and what to fight.

The most shocking act of nonconformity in Ferguson, the boldest declaration of independence, would be starting a business rather than burning one.

For his next act, Kevin turns his attention to pundits and their predictions. *It's December, meaning that the pundits-and-predictions season is upon us. In the name of public safety and common-sense reform, somebody has to put a stop to this madness.*

Regular readers will have by now detected my pronounced skepticism of government regulation — of both its wisdom and its effectiveness. But even the most gimlet-eyed small-government man has his hesitations — e.g., William F. Buckley Jr.'s late-in-life confession that he would, despite his free-market principles, ban smoking, had he the power to do so. If I were inclined to violate my own libertarian leanings, I'd lobby the new Republican majority in Congress to enact the Better Expertise Through Monetary Exposure Act of 2015 — the BET ME Act. The purpose of the BET ME Act would be two-fold: First, it would impose accountability on pundits and self-appointed experts of all descriptions by requiring them to wager a month's pay on the real-world outcome every time they published a prediction.

Second, and consequently, it would surely eliminate the national debt in a matter of months.

I was on the fence about this until I read the latest from UberFacts, the runaway leader in the race to be the most boneheaded thing on Twitter not called Sally Kohn: "Experts predict that solar power will be the primary source of energy on the planet in 2025." That may be true if by "solar power" we mean the solar energy stored in dead dinosaurs and pumped out of the ground by Exxon; if by "solar power" we mean photovoltaic cells and the like, then I want these so-called experts to put their money where their tweets are. Similarly, unless you're ready to take the appropriate position on oil futures, I don't want to read your apocalyptic "peak oil" pabulum. ...

And, just in time, Mr Williamson kicked out a Corner Post on the topic de jour - Rolling Stone's embarrassment.

When I was a student at the University of Texas, I served as managing editor of our school paper, the (all hail!) Daily Texan, as a consequence of which I did something that no self-respecting journalist should do: I took a journalism class, media law and ethics, which was a requirement for serving as M.E. For my sins, I drew as my professor the daft left-wing windbag Robert Jensen, whose first lecture consisted of a screed against the presence of sports sections in newspapers, which Professor Jensen considered an ethical problem in that they contributed what he believed to be an unhealthy competitiveness in our society. Naturally, I never went to Professor Jensen's class again, and got my media law and ethics from the superb Mike Quinn, who also had some

interesting observations about JFK conspiracy theories. (Quinn had covered the assassination for the Dallas Morning News.) I learned some useful and practical things, one of which was how to go about preventing myself from publishing lies fed to me by others, a useful skill if you spend time around politicians and political activists.

Rolling Stone could have used the services of the mighty Quinn. ...

... A responsible critic would have concluded that the Rolling Stone account was a defective piece of journalism as journalism even if every single word of it were true. The reason we have safeguard processes is to ensure that we present reasonably reliable information — that we do not go willy-nilly accusing people of rape based on the say-so of one anonymous person. We know — for a fact — that people sometimes lie about having been raped, just as they lie about all sorts of things. Horrible as it is, that is a fact, and one that cannot simply be set aside for reasons of ideological expedience. If the story had turned out to be true, Sabrina Rubin Erdely would not be a better journalist — she simply would have been lucky. And Rolling Stone would not be a better magazine. It would only be one that had escaped its current embarrassment.

You would think it improbable that Kevin Williamson would get cross ways with Rush Limbaugh. But he did, and he tells that story in another post to The Corner in [The Curious Case of Williamson v. Limbaugh](#).

So Rush Limbaugh is a little upset with your favorite correspondent today, because of some remarks I made on the Bill Maher program on Friday. Rush, usually an astute observer, is off-target here: He has simply misunderstood what I said.

What I said was that the Republican party has a problem telling its entertainers from its elected officials and office-seekers. It is one thing to have Rush say something outrageous or cutting, but another thing to have a governor or a would-be senator say the same thing in the same way — or, more accurate, to try to say the same thing in the same way. Rush has a particular rhetorical gift that is seldom found in other talk-radio hosts, much less in office-seekers. That is why I once described him as the “only man in the Republican party who speaks English.” When office-seekers try that, they usually end up embarrassing themselves and, not infrequently, losing their races.

This all took place in the context of a discussion of Mississippi governor Phil Bryant’s boneheaded remarks about working mothers. It was conventional-wisdom stuff — that children do better when the mother is at home rather than working outside it — and, as is very often the case, the conventional wisdom is wrong here. ...

This issue is good enough for it to be left up for a couple of days. The next posting will not be until Monday evening.

Kevin D. Williamson is National Review's roving correspondent. His Exchequer blog covers debt, deficits, and the intersection of finance and politics. He is the author of [The End Is Near and It's Going To Be Awesome: How Going Broke Will Leave America Richer, Happier, and More Secure](#), [The Dependency Agenda](#), and [The Politically Incorrect Guide to Socialism](#), and contributed chapters to [The New Leviathan: The State Vs. the Individual in the 21st Century](#) and [Future Tense: Lessons of Culture in an Age of Upheaval](#). When he is not sounding the alarm about Fiscal Armageddon, he is the theater critic at The New Criterion.



Williamson began his journalism career at the Bombay-based Indian Express Newspaper Group and spent 15 years in the newspaper business in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Colorado. He served as editor-in-chief of three newspapers and was the founding editor of Philadelphia's Bulletin. He is a regular commentator on Fox News, CNBC, MSNBC, and NPR. His work has appeared in the New York Post, the New York Daily News, Commentary, Academic Questions, and other publications. He is a native of Lubbock, Texas, and lives in New York City. Follow him on Twitter [@KevinNR](#).

National Review

[Black Lives Matter](#)

And so, therefore, must black perpetrators.

by Kevin D. Williamson

David McKenna, the screenwriter who penned Tony Kaye's American History X, committed one of the great acts of intellectual cowardice in the history of modern American cinema. Telling the story of Derek Vinyard, a violent neo-Nazi who reexamines his squandered life while being tormented in prison, McKenna explores the origins of the angry young skinhead's predispositions by revisiting Vinyard's high-school days: In flashback, we see a breakfast-table conversation between the young man and his father (played by the excellent Edward Norton and William Russ, respectively). Vinyard and his father get into a discussion of affirmative action. His father, a fireman, makes a reasoned and principled case, if not an entirely eloquent one, that by promoting two black candidates over two better-qualified white candidates, affirmative action has put his life in danger. He resents that he must entrust his life to two men who are less qualified for their positions but who were hired nonetheless because of their race. "Is that what America's about?" he demands. "No! America's about the best man for the job." But before the point can quite settle in, the father starts speculating about the "hidden agenda" and, finally, leans in and whispers conspiratorially to his son: "It's n****r bulls***."

Dramatically, that makes no sense. American History X would be an even more powerful story if the transformative moment in young Derek's life — his father's murder at the hands of black

criminals during a firefighting call — had sparked a different and more radical sort of transformation in the Vinyard family, from the well-intentioned, best-man-for-the-job philosophy of the resentful but reasonable working-class father to the violent extremism of the son. Instead, the story is simply one of explicit, banal racism that deepens between generations, at a time when American society was overwhelmingly on the opposite course. But the father's principled criticism of affirmative action cannot be allowed to stand; it must be thoroughly hosed down with racism, conspiracy-theory talk, and the totemic deployment of that infamous racial epithet.

In the view of America's race-hustling professionals, there is no principled disagreement with them — there is only gross racism, either hidden or open.

It is possible — barely possible — that this is in fact how the Left sees the world: That behind every criticism of affirmative action, behind every anti-crime measure, behind every proposal for welfare reform, behind every expression of capitalism, behind every measure taken against voter fraud, behind every criticism of the Ferguson lynch mob — [and even behind every fraction](#) — a burning cross looms, men in white hoods await, and the lynching noose is being prepared. That view is borderline insane and contrary to the overwhelming evidence of contemporary American life as lived, but people hold all sorts of loopy views, so it is just within the boundaries of plausibility that people on the Left, so-called progressives, genuinely hold this view.

More likely, the spectral evidence of white supremacy in our modern Salem race trials is simply a rhetorical tool, a way for well-fed progressives to beat their critics into submission if one of them should happen to point out that progressive policies seem to produce reliably horrific results for people who are poor and, especially, [poor and black](#). That Thomas Edsall sincerely believes that welfare reform is shaped in part by ugly stereotypes about blacks malingering on the dole is, despite the man's intellectual dishonesty, more plausible than Jamelle Bouie's daft and hallucinatory suggestion that my description of a thin black kid with long braids as resembling a scale-model of Snoop Dogg is a coded racist dog-whistle referring to the infamous Three-Fifths Compromise. Students of history will recall that Mr. Madison's ugly political expedient did not refer to [three-fifths of a Snoop Dogg](#).

It is a seldom-appreciated irony that irresponsible allegations of racism are politically effective in the American context precisely because American society takes racism so seriously; in a society with more cavalier attitudes toward racism, such dishonest opportunism would bear less fruit. Politicians in Spain and the Republic of Korea, for example, worry a good deal less about insinuations that they might harbor insensitive racial attitudes. But in the context of the United States, one can effectively win a political argument not by demonstrating to any reasonable standard of evidence that one's opponent is a racist but simply by maneuvering him into explaining that he isn't a racist. It's the "Have you stopped beating your wife yet?" gambit on a grand and nasty scale.

So when former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani takes seriously the operative slogan of the Ferguson protests — "Black Lives Matter!" — and asks the obvious question — "Don't they matter in the 93 percent of cases when the lives of black murder victims are taken violently by black criminals?" — the Left's reflexive response is to denounce him as a racist. The Washington Post's hilariously Orwellian fact-check column labeled Giuliani a liar even as it confirmed that his observation is, as a matter of fact, [entirely true](#). If David McKenna had been writing the scene, Giuliani would have leaned across a table and whispered to Sean Hannity that this is all "n****r bulls***."

But real life doesn't go according to script. That's why we have the New York Times et al. — to write the script according to the Left's dramatic imperatives, regardless of what actually happens. The media may not control the stage entirely, but they do control the lighting and the sound.

The reality is this: Black men, especially young black men, die violent deaths at appalling rates in these United States. But they do not die very often at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, thugs reminiscent of characters from American History X, police officers of any race or motivation, lynch mobs, the Koch brothers, Karl Rove, Walmart, the Tea Party, Goldman Sachs, [carbon dioxide](#), or any other bogeyman currently in vogue among so-called progressives. As Giuliani noted, blacks die violent deaths almost exclusively at the hands of black criminals. But attempting to accommodate that reality in any serious way does not pay any political dividends for the Left. It does not put any money in Jesse Jackson's pockets or create any full-time jobs for graduates of grievance-studies programs.

And thus we have the very peculiar situation in which "Black Lives Matter!" but black perpetrators don't. Only white perpetrators matter. And if, as in the case of George Zimmerman, they are not exactly white, then they can be [declared white by the New York Times](#). Only white perpetrators matter to the people behind the Ferguson protests because only white perpetrators are politically useful.

The overwhelming majority of violent deaths suffered by black Americans are the result of simple crime, and crime is, as an issue, of no use to the Left. But when a black man dies at the hands of a white man — especially a white police officer — then that breathes life into the ghost of "white supremacy," the infinitely malleable, endlessly useful set of imperial robes detectable only by the finest sensibilities on MSNBC. Actual white supremacists represent a dwindling and (metaphorically and, more often than you might expect, literally) toothless tendency restricted mostly to hillbilly precincts and anonymous Internet cowards. But if one already wants to boycott Walmart, and a white cop shoots a young black man, then — abracadabra! — the Left is boycotting Walmart because of . . . white supremacy, or something. Agitating for a \$40 minimum wage? "Justice for Mike Brown!" Looking for even more generous solar-power subsidies? "Justice for Mike Brown!" Anointing AFL-CIO boss Richard Trumka president-for-life? "Mike Brown would have wanted it that way!"

If you believe that black lives matter, then you should be working for school reform, economic growth, and — yes — more effective law-enforcement and crime-prevention measures to protect black communities, which suffer an enormously disproportionate share of crime and violence. Never mind the stagecraft: That's what you actually do if you think black lives matter.

And the drama that's going on in Ferguson right now? That's what you do if you think black lives are merely useful to you — and, in the end, expendable.

National Review

[Who Boycotts Wal-Mart?](#)

Social-justice warriors who are too enlightened to let their poor neighbors pay lower prices.

by Kevin D. Williamson

Columbia County, Ark. — There's no sign of it here in Magnolia, Ark., but the boycott season is upon us, and graduates of Princeton and Bryn Mawr are demanding "justice" from Wal-Mart, which is not in the justice business but in the groceries, clothes, and car-batteries business. It is easy to scoff, but I am ready to start taking the social-justice warriors' insipid rhetoric seriously — as soon as two things happen: First, I want to hear from the Wal-Mart-protesting riffraff a definition of "justice" that is something that does not boil down to "I Get What I Want, Irrespective of Other Concerns."

Second, I want to turn on the radio and hear Jay-Z boasting about his new Timex.

It is remarkable that Wal-Mart, a company that makes a modest profit margin (typically between 3 percent and 3.5 percent) selling ordinary people ordinary goods at low prices, is the great hate totem for the well-heeled Left, whose best-known celebrity spokesclowns would not be caught so much as downwind from a Supercenter, while at the same time, nobody is out with placards and illiterate slogans and generally risible moral posturing in front of boutiques dealing in Rolex, Prada, Hermès, et al. It's almost as if there is a motive at work here other than that which is stated by our big-box-bashing friends on the left and their A-list human bullhorns.

What might that be?

If you want an illuminating example of the fact that there is more to the way that prices work in a free market than can be captured by the pragmatic calculations of cold-eyed util-traders, consider the luxury-goods market and its enthusiastic following among people who do not themselves consume many or any of those goods. One of the oddball aspects of rich societies such as ours is the fact that when people pile up a little bit more disposable income than they might have expected to, they develop a taste for measurably inferior goods and outdated technologies: If you have money that is a little bit obscene, you might get into classic cars, i.e., an outmoded form of transportation; if your money is super-dirty obscene, you get into horses, an even more outmoded form of transportation.

Or consider the case of fine watches: Though he — and it's a "he" in the overwhelming majority of cases — may not be eager to admit it, a serious watch enthusiast knows that even the finest mechanical timepiece put together by magical elves on the shores of Lake Geneva is, as a timekeeping instrument, dramatically inferior to the cheapest quartz-movement watch coming out of a Chinese sweatshop and available for a few bucks at, among other outlets, Wal-Mart. (To say nothing of the cheap digital watches sold under blister-pack at downscale retailers everywhere, or the clock on your cellphone.) But even as our celebrity social-justice warriors covet those high-margin items — and [get paid](#) vast sums of money to [help sell them, too](#) — they denounce the people who deal in less rarefied goods sold at much lower profit margins.

If economic "exploitation" means making "obscene profits" — an empty cliché if ever there were one — then Wal-Mart and the oil companies ought to be the good guys; not only do they have relatively low profit margins, but they also support millions of union workers and retirees through stock profits and the payment of dividends into pension funds. By way of comparison, consider that Hermès, the luxury-goods label that is a favorite of well-heeled [social-justice warriors of all sorts](#), makes a profit margin that is typically seven or eight times what Wal-Mart makes, even though, [as rapper Lloyd Banks discovered](#), its \$1,300 sneakers may not always be up to the task. If Wal-Mart is the epitome of evil for selling you a Timex at a 3 percent markup, then shouldn't Rolex be extra-super evil?

Strangely enough, Jay-Z remains "[a celebrity quite serious about social justice](#)," according to the Huffington Post, even as he offers paeans to high-end horologist Hublot; though he does, as advertised, seem to favor the [platinum Rolex Day-Date II](#). Celebrity dope Ashton Kutcher angrily demanded: "Wal-Mart, is your profit margin so important you can't pay your employees enough to be above the poverty line?" It is safe to bet that Rolex earned a much higher margin on the [Milgauss watch that Kutcher wears](#), as surely as does the maker of the fairly spendy [Baume & Mercier watches](#) for which he served as a celebrity pitchman.

A few weeks ago, I was very much amused by the sight of anti-Wal-Mart protests in Manhattan — where there is no Wal-Mart, and where, if Bill de Blasio et al. have their way, there never will be. Why? Because we're too enlightened to let our poor neighbors pay lower prices. The head-clutchingly expensive shops up on Fifth and Madison avenues? No protests. Rather, they were bustling with the same class of people behind the protests, people busily accumulating — or at least making like Holly Golightly in the window at Tiffany's

Here in Columbia County, Ark., a not-especially-prosperous locale behind the Pine Curtain where the median household income is about half the national average and where a few twists and turns down county roads find you in a world of shacks and chained-up dogs out of a Snuffy Smith cartoon, nobody is boycotting the local Wal-Mart. In fact, the locals seem rather fond of this purported outpost of economic exploitation and wicked capitalist blah-blah-blah. And it is not difficult to understand why: It is an important part of local commerce in a community that is hungry for enterprise.

People buy Rolex watches for reasons other than their timekeeping excellence, just as people buy Ferraris and horses for reasons other than going to the store to pick up a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread. Economists talk about "[Veblen goods](#)," which are more valued because of their high prices rather than in spite of them, coveted not for their conventional utility but for their exclusivity. Owning a Rolls-Royce isn't about the car — it's about you. Which is why you see magazines such as The Robb Report — one of those glossies full of "bland advertisements for being wealthy," as the novelist William Gibson put it — for sale in places such as Wal-Mart, where the typical customer is not actually in the market for a yacht or Kiton overcoat. If you've ever seen the heartbreaking sight of a young woman stopping a Wal-Mart checker three-fourths of the way through ringing up her purchases — because she does not have enough money to pay for what's left in her cart — then you can be pretty sure that what's going in her sack is more or less the opposite of Veblen goods.

Ironically, the anti-Wal-Mart crusaders want to make life worse for people who are literally counting pennies as they shop for necessities. Study after study has shown that Wal-Mart has meaningfully reduced prices: [3.1 percent overall](#), by one estimate — with a whopping 9.1 percent cut to the price of groceries. That comes to about \$2,300 a year per household, savings that accrue overwhelmingly to people of modest incomes, not to celebrity activists and Ivy League social-justice crusaders.

Ultimately, these campaigns are exercises in tribal affiliation. The Rolex tribe, and those who aspire to be aligned with it, signal their status by sneering at the Timex tribe — or by condescending to it as they purport to act on its behalf, as though poor people were too stupid to know where to find the best deal on a can of beans. Or call it the Trader Joe's tribe vs. the Wal-Mart tribe, the Prius tribe vs. the F-150 tribe.

We see this everywhere: In Ferguson, self-righteous and self-appointed spokesmen for the marginalized point to the fact that the criminal-justice system generally produces far worse outcomes to the poor and the non-white than it does to the well-off and white. This is, generally speaking, true. And though the dynamics are equally complicated, the same thing is true of the government schools, which do a pretty good job for rich white kids in the suburbs while functioning as day prisons and incubators of dysfunction for poor minority kids, especially in big cities. But the social-justice warriors in Ferguson will fight on bloody stumps to prevent reform of the government-school cartels, the endless failures of which do far more to harm the lives of the economically and socially vulnerable than any police department does. Why? The teachers are part of the tribe, and the cops are part of a rival tribe, which is why nobody ever bought a Rolex out of the royalties of a song titled "F**k the Milwaukee Public Schools."

National Review

Conventional Wisdom

Where the Democrats should convene in 2016

By Kevin D. Williamson

The Democrats have scratched Birmingham, Ala., off their list of potential convention cities, and that's probably a good thing: The last time the Democrats put on a big to-do in Birmingham, their supremo was a guy called Bull Connor and there were fire hoses involved. Birmingham has mellowed out a great deal since then, but, still, not a part of Democratic history that they're going to want to remind people about. Phoenix got cut, too, though the local Greyhound station would make an excellent place to talk about the merits of President Obama's amnesty diktat. That leaves three finalists to host JackassFest 2016: New York City, Philadelphia, and Columbus, Ohio. One of these things is not like the others . . .

I've argued for years that political parties should hold their conventions in the city that best represents their policies. For Republicans, that would probably be somewhere in the Houston suburbs, or possibly San Diego, one of the few big U.S. cities where Republican mayors are not extinct. Or maybe Indian Wells, Calif., a gated citadel full of older white people fond of golf and low capital-gains taxes. The Libertarian party should hold its convention at the Boot Track Café in Loving County, Texas, the least populated place in the United States; the café is closed at the moment, but I am sure that they would open it up to give the Libertarian party a place where its members — both of them — can be lonely together.

The Democrats, if they had any remaining intellectual honesty, would hold their convention in Detroit. Democratic leadership, Democratic unions and the Democratic policies that empower them, Democrat-dominated school bureaucracies, Democrat-style law enforcement, Democratic levels of taxation and spending, the politics of protest and grievance in the classical Democratic mode — all of these have made Detroit what it is today: an unwholesome slop-pail of woe and degradation that does not seem to belong in North America, a craptastical crater groaning with misery, a city-shaped void in what once was the industrial soul of the nation. If you want to see the end point of Barack Obama's shining path, visit Detroit.

My guess is that the Democrats do Columbus. The Republicans, for their sins, are going to be in Cleveland, and the 2016 presidential election will probably come down to Ohio and Florida, like the last few have. (Conventional wisdom aside, election scholars do not find parties more likely to win the states in which they host their nominating confabs, and may in fact do slightly worse than usual in them. With politicians, familiarity really does breed contempt.) There is not much to say about Columbus, Ohio. It's the city that [murdered Dimebag Darrell](#), and it revels in the title "third-largest metropolitan area in Ohio," the corporate home of Big Lots, Inc. It's the 40-degree day of U.S. cities, as the philosopher Stringer Bell might have put it.

But there's a case to be made for New York City, too. Most important is that it would make things much more convenient for National Review. If you've never been to a party convention — lucky you — a little background: These things really are run by the parties, down to assigning various media outlets to certain hotels. The last time around, the Democrats assigned National Review a [roadside crack-and-crack-whores place](#) — not an exaggeration — on the wrongest side of the otherwise charming city of Charlotte. One reporter remarked that he "wouldn't take a hooker" there. ("I would," [Roger Stone](#) replied.) Do it in New York City, and those Weekly Standard chumps will be the ones at the Hotel Chlamydia up in Hunt's Point.

Beyond my own convenience, there's a policy case for having the Democrats convene in New York City. With the new Sandinista regime of Mayor Bill de Blasio under way, New York finally has its first Democratic mayor since the 1990s — and the city is falling apart. New York is once again the city where you get [stabbed waiting on the subway at Grand Central](#), and the transit system itself is going literally (literally, Mr. Vice President!) [off the rails](#). Shootings are up across the city — and up [31 percent in public housing](#). De Blasio's first move as mayor was to ease up on the stop-and-frisk program directed at criminals and implement a [shoot-first-ask-questions-later](#) policy for charter schools. Naturally, Mayor de Blasio's next move is to ask for a big tax increase.

Then there's Philadelphia. I am very fond of Philadelphia — it was very good for me during my years as a newspaper editor there and in the city's suburbs. But Philly is a pretty good example of how Democrats misgovern cities, too: It is the home of some truly ugly racial politics, deeply dysfunctional schools, a couple of neighborhoods largely abandoned to crime, and shocking nepotism. My favorite example of how Democrats do it in Philly was a \$1 million-a-year contract for airport services awarded to a firm owned by Milton Street, whose brother, John Street, was the mayor at the time. Notlim (that's "Milton" backward) Services won a contract to do maintenance and repairs for baggage carousels in the Philadelphia airport, which apparently is a million-plus-per-annum proposition. Notlim Services had no background or experience maintaining baggage carousels. It also lacked other things that a business awarded a contract like that might be expected to have, e.g. employees. Milton Street's main professional experience had been running a firm that specialized in the management and deployment of mobile distribution services for perishable goods — i.e., a hotdog vendor.

That sort of thing is hilarious to observe if you're a comfortable, middle-class guy in the suburbs; if you're a poor and vulnerable person in the city, Philadelphia-style misgovernance is not funny at all: The city's murder rate is three times New York's and even higher at the moment than [murder-happy Chicago's](#). It graduates barely half its high-school students, and black students drop out at twice the rate of whites. Its median household income is 30 percent less than the national average, and 26 percent of its people live in poverty. Which is to say, it's more or less like [most cities where Democrats have long enjoyed uncontested dominance](#).

On second thought, maybe the Democrats were too quick to write off Birmingham.

National Review

[Those Ungovernable Colonists](#)

Our founding fathers knew when to build, and when to fight — and what to build, and what to fight.

by Kevin D. Williamson

The American colonies must have been an unruly place, full as they were of religious fanatics and slave traders, second sons and fortune hunters, criminals and former political prisoners, and all manner of people in between. The first settlements hugged the coast, where one set of adventurers looked seaward while another looked to the interior wilderness. It was, in retrospect, almost inevitable that North America would quickly become the wealthiest place in the world by the 17th century.

Why? Because those seditionists, fanatics, and gamblers were impossible to rule. While we are counting our blessings this Thanksgiving, let's not forget to count that one: Our ancestors did not

much like being told what to do, and we — and the world — are immeasurably richer and happier for that.

Edmund Burke called the Crown's attitude toward the colonies "wise and salutary neglect," but it was as much pragmatism as it was policy. There were many colonies and colonists, they were not of a uniformly obedient type, they were far away — and, most important, they were extraordinarily productive. By the latter half of the 18th century, there were more iron forges in the American colonies than in Britain, the colonies were exporting millions of barrels of flour and tons of other agriculture products, and one out of three ships in the British merchant fleet was American-built. The economy was booming, and most of the population still lived in rural or semi-rural areas, far from the amusements of urban life, which may explain why the ratio of colonists to subjects back in England went from 1:20 to 1:3 in the course of just a few decades.

One of the reasons why the Industrial Revolution — which is to say, modern civilization — first rumbled to life in Britain rather than in Spain or Germany was the secret unruliness of the English, seemingly one of the world's ruliest peoples. A combination of happy historical accidents and cultural predisposition meant that Englishmen were relatively free to pursue their own economic ends; even in the late medieval period, England did not have anything so strict as the German guild system or serfdom as intensely enforced as French villeinage. The American colonists regularly flouted laws purporting to regulate trade and manufacturing, and the Crown wisely looked the other way. (Until it didn't, at which point it got a fight and lost.)

The division of labor is the essence of civilization, the underlying source of practically every good thing about the material conditions of the modern world. It is why civilized countries do not have famine any more, why we are surrounded by technological wonders, why things like air travel and mobile phones go from being restricted to millionaires to being ho-hum over a short course of years. Most of the technological ingredients for the Industrial Revolution had been in place not only in Britain but in Spain, France, Italy, etc., for years. But British subjects and American colonists had the opportunity and the inclination to begin a finer and more robust division of labor than did their European counterparts. They were just a little bit more free — and a little bit more determined to be free — and that little bit made an incalculable difference, not only to them, but to the world. They built something remarkable. And the idiot children of the Left are today cheering those who would [literally burn it down](#), in Ferguson and elsewhere.

I am generally inclined toward outbreaks of orneriness, whether in Nevada or in Missouri. If the people of Ferguson believe that they are misgoverned, that their police are a problem, that the usual forms of legal and political redress have failed them, then, by all means, shake the foundations. And there may have been about five minutes at the beginning when that's what this was about. The crowd in Ferguson is now very little more than a [lynch mob](#). Maybe I should be ashamed of it, but there's a little part of my heart that would leap at the sight of Americans setting fire to a tax office. But setting fire to an Autozone? Pathetic.

There's a famous meme that made the rounds during Occupy Wall Street, with a hippie-dirtbag protester labeled "Wants More Government" and menacing police in riot gear closing down on him labeled "More Government." Those of us who want less government do not want only that: We want what flourishes when men are left free to pursue their own ends. The Left, on the other hand, takes every instance of unhappiness as an argument for more government — including bad government. Our founding fathers knew when to build, and when to fight. More importantly, they knew what to build, and what to fight.

The most shocking act of nonconformity in Ferguson, the boldest declaration of independence, would be starting a business rather than burning one.

National Review

The BET ME Challenge

BET ME would put the pundits' money where their predictions are.

by Kevin D. Williamson

It's December, meaning that the pundits-and-predictions season is upon us. In the name of public safety and common-sense reform, somebody has to put a stop to this madness.

Regular readers will have by now detected my pronounced skepticism of government regulation — of both its wisdom and its effectiveness. But even the most gimlet-eyed small-government man has his hesitations — e.g., William F. Buckley Jr.'s late-in-life confession that he would, despite his free-market principles, [ban smoking](#), had he the power to do so. If I were inclined to violate my own libertarian leanings, I'd lobby the new Republican majority in Congress to enact the Better Expertise Through Monetary Exposure Act of 2015 — the BET ME Act. The purpose of the BET ME Act would be two-fold: First, it would impose accountability on pundits and self-appointed experts of all descriptions by requiring them to wager a month's pay on the real-world outcome every time they published a prediction.

Second, and consequently, it would surely eliminate the national debt in a matter of months. I was on the fence about this until I read the latest from UberFacts, the runaway leader in the race to be the most boneheaded thing on Twitter not called Sally Kohn: "Experts predict that solar power will be the primary source of energy on the planet in 2025." That may be true if by "solar power" we mean the solar energy stored in dead dinosaurs and pumped out of the ground by Exxon; if by "solar power" we mean photovoltaic cells and the like, then I want these so-called experts to put their money where their tweets are. Similarly, unless you're ready to take the appropriate position on oil futures, I don't want to read your apocalyptic "peak oil" pabulum.

You really think New York City and London are only [a few decades away from being uninhabitable](#) because of climate change? BET ME. Are you a [dopey royal](#) who fears that mutant corn is going to kill us all? BET ME. Are you a [highly credentialed but sort of sloppy academic](#) who believes that the Western world is headed toward Dickensian social conditions? BET ME.

I anticipate an objection here: "These predictions are free speech, protected by the First Amendment." Yeah, yeah, yeah — I know how the theory goes: The free exchange of ideas and views leads to a better state of public knowledge, and that is so valuable to a free society that it is worth bearing the costs of all the lies, ignorance, Cosmopolitan articles, superstition, and malfeasance that are also protected by the First Amendment. [Areopagitica](#) and all that. Well, screw John Milton — I have it on the excellent authority of [Harry Reid and all the other Democrats in the Senate](#) that freedom of speech applies only when Congress believes that it is consistent with the public good, and that we can restrict — with prison time, if necessary — attempts by irresponsible or self-interested parties to influence public-policy debates. If there's a public-interest defense of Matt Yglesias's predictions — "I wanted to once again take the opportunity to lay down a marker and say once again that Obamacare implementation is going to be a huge political success" — or Nancy Pelosi's — "Everybody will have lower rates, better quality care, and better access" — it is far from obvious what that is. Pelosi clearly is motivated by craven political self-interest, while Yglesias is motivated by the magical goblins in his head, but there's a good case that both should have been sanctioned for such fantastical tomfoolery.

BET ME.

Given the [real-world costs](#) of such uber-wrongness, I am tempted to set aside First Amendment principle broadly. In fact, since we're all supposed to be good, nice, sweater-wearing, empiro-pragmatist PTA dads abjuring "extremism" in this enlightened epoch, why be a Charles C. W. Cooke-style extremist on the question of free speech? Requiring pundits to put real money on their predictions in the name of the public interest is, if you think about it, a relatively mild demand. Current legal precedent suggests we could go much, much further.

Why not treat the First Amendment the way we treat the Second Amendment? Want to start a blog? You have a constitutional right to do so — provided you pass the federal background check to ensure that you will exercise that right responsibly. If your background contains sunny predictions about the Obamacare rollout — sorry, but you cannot be trusted. Want a high-capacity, fully automatic press that can spit out thousands of copies of what may very well be arrant nonsense in a matter of minutes? Fine, so long as it was [manufactured before 1986](#). Maybe you're a writer living in New York City and planning to write a book on atheism; you're entitled to do so, so long as you can persuade the NYPD that there's a legitimate purpose for it — and there may be some paperwork to fill out and fees to pay. Operating a bookstore or publishing a periodical? Only with Washington's permission, and we might stage some surprise inspections and demand fairly detailed records of your transactions. If the right to keep and bear arms should be restricted to government agents — if "the people" does not mean "the people" — then surely [The American Prospect](#) cannot complain if other constitutional rights, such as freedom of the press, also are restricted to government agents. And, as every reporter and editor knows, mistakes happen. But is publishing a correction really enough? [How about jail time?](#)

I anticipate an objection here: "Guns are dangerous, so we need to regulate them carefully. Free speech isn't dangerous, so we can afford to give it free rein." Oh, you poor, naïve people! Words and the ideas they carry are more dangerous than any gun ever invented. Never mind the millions of murders inspired by [Mein Kampf](#) and the 100 million murders inspired by [The Communist Manifesto](#) and Mao's little red book. Nonsensical beliefs about the dangers of vaccines already have led to outbreaks of preventable diseases such as mumps and whooping cough. People who would ban many modern agricultural techniques would starve millions, perhaps billions. The so-called experts helping to steer the Obama administration's energy policy helped put millions of dollars into useless and wasteful enterprises — depriving productive alternatives of that capital. You think that has no real-world costs? The experts predicted that the stimulus bill would have radically different effects from the ones it actually had. As a result, we threw away the better part of a trillion dollars, but the so-called experts who guided that policy paid no price.

Has Paul Krugman "gravely misled the American public"? Who am I to argue with [The Nation](#)? But if anybody can afford to place a bet, it's the guy getting paid 25 grand a month to think about economic inequality.

For the record, I am willing to wager on my own predictions, too, starting with this one: In 2015, the pundits' 2014 end-of-year predictions — mine included — will prove effectively indistinguishable from randomness.

Anybody want to bet me on that?

The Corner at National Review

Bad Journalism, Even If It Were True

by Kevin D. Williamson

When I was a student at the University of Texas, I served as managing editor of our school paper, the (all hail!) *Daily Texan*, as a consequence of which I did something that no self-respecting journalist should do: I took a journalism class, media law and ethics, which was a requirement for serving as M.E. For my sins, I drew as my professor the daft left-wing windbag Robert Jensen, whose first lecture consisted of a screed against the presence of sports sections in newspapers, which Professor Jensen considered an ethical problem in that they contributed what he believed to be an unhealthy competitiveness in our society. Naturally, I never went to Professor Jensen's class again, and got my media law and ethics from the superb Mike Quinn, who also had some interesting observations about JFK conspiracy theories. (Quinn had covered the assassination for the *Dallas Morning News*.) I learned some useful and practical things, one of which was how to go about preventing myself from publishing lies fed to me by others, a useful skill if you spend time around politicians and political activists.

Rolling Stone could have used the services of the mighty Quinn.

One does not expect the journalistic home of witless uptown communist Jesse Myerson to be a paragon of journalistic integrity, critical thinking, or good taste, but its getting took by that University of Virginia rape fantasist's tall tale is an object lesson in journalistic malpractice.

Rolling Stone's Sabrina Rubin Erdely, who has written for everybody from *GQ* to *Mother Jones*, is a practitioner of the Red Queen school of journalism: execution first, trial after. She went out looking for a gonzo campus-rape story and, when she could not find a real one, found a woman willing to supply her with a fake one, an obviously suspicious tale of a vicious gang rape over several hours at the hands of UVA fraternity members, complete with dialog right out of an after-school special — “Don't you want to be a brother?” “Her reputation will be *shot* for the next four years” — and inconsistencies that require the active suspension of disbelief. Whether Erdely knew that the story was fake is not *entirely* beside the point, but ignorance is not an excuse, either — not for her, and not for her editors. She had a positive obligation not to publish the story she had, because the story was insufficient on any responsible journalistic grounds. It was rubbish, she knew it, and *Rolling Stone* managing editor Will Dana damned sure should have known it. This is stuff they teach to freshmen reporters at college newspapers.

Generally speaking, serious allegations such as the one in question require one of two things: 1. corroborating evidence or documentation; 2. a victim or witness willing to go on the record under his own name. Preferably, both are available, but that is not always the case.

As a small-town newspaper editor, I received all sorts of wild complaints about the local police, the township commissioners, prominent public figures (especially judges), and the like. Some of those turned out to be true, but that truth generally took some digging. If somebody had a story about police misbehavior — and we covered quite a bit of that — but was unwilling to lodge a formal complaint or go on record with the allegations under his own name, then we did not have very much to work with. If the story seemed to us credible enough, we might go looking for evidence or witnesses ourselves, but any good editor knows to be skeptical of anonymous, undocumented complaints.

But that skepticism is insufficient if the editor wants very badly to believe.

Amanda Marcotte, the dim house feminist at *Slate*, earlier this week complained that skepticism about Lena Dunham's dubious story about being sexually assaulted by a campus Republican at Oberlin — a story that I believe to be false as presented in her memoir, and perhaps entirely fictitious — is akin to Holocaust denial: "Rape denialism is like Holocaust denialism," she wrote. That is exactly the sort of sloppy half-thought that passes for analysis among feminists, who represent one of the laziest intellectual tendencies in our public life. To express skepticism that the Holocaust happened is one thing; to express skepticism that a 32-year-old accountant in Portland who has never been outside of the United States but claims to have been imprisoned at Auschwitz is telling the truth is a different thing. The question in that case is not whether the Holocaust happened, but whether this person was a victim of it. "But who would lie about having been raped?" the feminists demand. Lots of people, as it turns out, just as people lie about having been the victims of Nazi atrocities. Questioning whether *this* rape happened is not the same as questioning whether rape happens.

Rape hoaxes, like the sometimes related hate-crime hoaxes that have become so common on college campuses, do not condense spontaneously out of the ether. The Left is committed to the notion that American colleges are hotbeds of sexual violence, racial bigotry, hatred of homosexuals, etc., because they are committed to the notion that the largely white and male upper echelons of American society — mostly products of those colleges — are secretly but unalterably committed to white supremacy, homophobia, and to using the threat of sexual violence to keep women in their place.

The evidence suggests otherwise: Far from being an epidemic, sexual assault today happens at a rate about one-third that of 20 years ago, and rape seems to happen *less* often on college campuses than it does elsewhere. That should not be entirely surprising: Rape, like other crimes, tends to disproportionately affect people who are poor and non-white. As expected, the evidence points to sexual assault's being more common in poor rural areas, Indian reservations, poor urban areas, etc. It is also more common where people tend to be relatively isolated, with Alaska having the nation's highest rate of sexual assault.

The political aspect of this is not too hard to see. Campus hate-crime hoaxes, including rape-threat hoaxes, are generally targeted at Republicans and conservatives, and they very often feature comical, cartoonish conservative villains: "That chick that runs her liberal mouth all the time and doesn't care who knows it," read the fake rape threat in the University of Wyoming case; those are not words that an angry, knuckle-dragging conservative says about an outspoken feminist — those are words a self-admiring feminist says about *herself*. In Colorado, the target was a National Guardsman. At Duke, the target was the lacrosse team, while at UVA the target was a fraternity. All of those are engraved, gilt-edged invitations to another one of those tedious conversations about "male privilege" we're always supposed to be having. Colleges become the locus of these fantasies because, as anybody who has watched one of our missing-blondes-of-the-week sagas knows, there is more juice to be had from the victimization of bright young college women than there is from the victimization of poor single mothers in obscure backwaters.

In Colorado, Wyoming, and Virginia, all of those stories were lies.

In truth, the Left does not care if they are lies. The Left believes that lies can serve a greater truth, e.g., Stephen Schneider's infamous plea in *Discover* that climate activists mislead the public in the service of bringing them to the right side in the global-warming debate. The people and institutions who ran with *Rolling Stone's* fake story — Jamelle Bouie, Sally Kohn, CNN, Amanda Marcotte, *Jezebel*, etc. — did not err in an ideological vacuum. They are not *dupes*; they are *opportunists*.

A responsible critic would have concluded that the *Rolling Stone* account was a defective piece of journalism as journalism *even if every single word of it were true*. The reason we have safeguard processes is to ensure that we present reasonably reliable information — that we do not go willy-nilly accusing people of *rape* based on the say-so of one anonymous person. We know — for a fact — that people sometimes lie about having been raped, just as they lie about all sorts of things. Horrible as it is, that is a fact, and one that cannot simply be set aside for reasons of ideological expedience. If the story had turned out to be true, Sabrina Rubin Erdely would not be a better journalist — she simply would have been lucky. And *Rolling Stone* would not be a better magazine. It would only be one that had escaped its current embarrassment.

The Corner at National Review

[The Curious Case of Limbaugh v. Williamson](#)

by Kevin D. Williamson

So [Rush Limbaugh is a little upset](#) with your favorite correspondent today, because of some remarks I made on the Bill Maher program on Friday. Rush, usually an astute observer, is off-target here: He has simply misunderstood what I said.

What I said was that the Republican party has a problem telling its entertainers from its elected officials and office-seekers. It is one thing to have Rush say something outrageous or cutting, but another thing to have a governor or a would-be senator say the same thing in the same way — or, more accurate, to try to say the same thing in the same way. Rush has a particular rhetorical gift that is seldom found in other talk-radio hosts, much less in office-seekers. That is why I once described him as the “only man in the Republican party who speaks English.” When office-seekers try that, they usually end up embarrassing themselves and, not infrequently, losing their races.

This all took place in the context of a discussion of Mississippi governor Phil Bryant’s boneheaded remarks about working mothers. It was conventional-wisdom stuff — that children do better when the mother is at home rather than working outside it — and, as is very often the case, the conventional wisdom is wrong here.

Rush seems to think that I was attributing Governor Bryant’s errors to him. I wasn’t, and in fact would be surprised if Rush had taken that point of view: He is nothing if not consistently pro-entrepreneur, pro-working, and a reliable voice for the self-sufficiency and self-improvement that comes from having a job. Rush is simply arguing with something I did not say.

I don’t mind that Rush misunderstood my point, which is the sort of thing that happens all the time, but I could do with a good deal fewer butt-hurt lamentations from him and his radio brethren about how National Review “used to be a conservative magazine.” Given that Rush has filled up many minutes of his precious airtime reading my work to his audience, it is strange that he would think of National Review, or me, as something other than conservative.

The Republican party is plagued by leaders who really want to be Fox News personalities and talk-radio hosts rather than politicians. Those professions have very different skill sets and very different success metrics. They simply are not the same thing. There’s a reason Bill Buckley never expected to win his mayoral race. Rush of all people should understand that. If you are good at what Rush does, you end up becoming Rush; if you’re not very good at it, you end up becoming Christine O’Donnell. Q: Who thinks the Republican party or the conservative movement needs another Christine O’Donnell?

If Rush has a signature weakness, it is thinking that a conversation that is about something else is a conversation about him. It is a common error. My advice to Rush is to take a minute, have a cigar, and [read my new book on the transformative and revolutionary powers of capitalism](#), which I suspect he will find useful, as he so often has in the past, back when National Review used to be conservative.



and Democrats

