

Corporate America has always been careful. Careful about presenting the right image. Careful about not offending potential customers. But in the quest to be perfect for all, corporations have become the "King of Political Correctness" - and our country is not a better place for it.

The latest issue where political correctness overpowers common sense involves Juan Williams and his now-former employer, National Public Radio. Williams was a well-respected opinion journalist with NPR when he appeared on TVs "The O'Reilly Factor" this week and, during a candid conversation with show host Bill O'Reilly, said: "I mean, look, Bill, I'm not a bigot. You know the kind of books I've written about the civil rights movement in this country. But when I get on a plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous."

NPR summarily fired Williams.

First of all, Williams wasn't saying anything that a majority of travelers don't agree with. Since the 9/11 attacks on the country, we would guess that most travelers will tell you that they at least notice someone in Muslim attire at an airport. It's a natural reaction. It doesn't make it right, but does it make it wrong?

Secondly, a government-subsidized national media outlet should respect America's mantra of free speech. Williams didn't attack Muslims or their faith. He didn't demonize them. He didn't call for attacks on mosques. He spoke honestly about Muslim relations in this country and what Muslims face. We can't see that as a fire-able offense.

News shows Friday morning quoted an NPR spokesman as saying Williams was fired for giving those comments on a television show on a rival network. That is hogwash. Williams has reportedly been appearing on "The O'Reilly Factor" for over 10 years. Is this the first time anyone at NPR has noticed it?

The truth is NPR officials are afraid of a liberal and Muslim backlash. So they canned one of their best. At least they got the political correctness factor right - and that is a shame.