

Fair Debate, Consistency and Hypocrisy

One of the more common problems that arises when discussing issues of importance is that proponents become emotionally invested in their position to the extent that they become unable to engage in rational discussion or compromise. Anyone advocating a contrary position must be ignorant, deranged, evil incarnate or worse. Facts that do not fit the preconceived narrative must be ignored or shouted down. Informed debate and discussion become impossible.

If the consequences to society were not so serious, watching this self-delusion in action can be quite entertaining as such advocates will cite almost anything in support of their position without regard for the veracity or acceptability of the source or for consistency with their previously stated positions. One Poster I watch on Facebook is a typical example. His current agenda is gun control and he posts five or more items daily from a range of sources advocating various bans and other regulatory measures.

He is so obsessed with the issue, however, that he will post basically anything suggesting that a ban of particular firearms or additional regulations are needed with no consideration of whether the posts are consistent or conflict with one another. Over a several day period he made multiple posts in support of laws banning the sale of any firearms to those under the age of 21. Following the Parkland School shooting and gun control advocacy efforts by some of the students, there were those who suggested that the students perhaps lacked the



students perhaps lacked the

maturity to pass judgment on the subjects they were raising or to fully comprehend the issues. Like many gun control advocates, the reaction of my Poster was swift and decisive. In defense of the Parkland students he posted the image on the left.

Clearly, the Poster gave no thought to the consistency of his position or the fact that men so instrumental to the founding of this nation were under 21 years of age at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed. Had he thought things through, he also would have realized that the men listed were but a fraction of the total which also included Major Thomas Young (Age 12), James Armistead (Age 15), Peter Salem (Age 16), Gilbert Stuart (Age 20), John Trumbull (Age 20) & John Marshall (Age 20).

Taking the point a step further, he would have been forced to acknowledge that each of those “youngsters” whose right to own firearms he would now ban, were all also owners and users of the most lethal and sophisticated firearm of their day; the smooth bore flintlock musket. [The more accurate and longer range “Kentucky” long rifle was still relatively scarce and would remain so throughout the Revolutionary War, though its occasional appearance in the hands of snipers would wreak havoc among the British Officer ranks. It therefore is unlikely that these gentlemen owned what was actually the most sophisticated, but relatively rare, firearm of the time.] The related issue of the insensitivity and arrogance required to tell someone who has taken up arms in defense of this country that he or she cannot buy a firearm is discussed in this post [[REF LINK](#)].

Another of the Poster’s crusades involved so-called “high capacity” magazines which, like other gun control advocates, he regarded as any magazine having a capacity of more than ten (10) rounds. He made post after post on the subject, each calling for a ban on such magazines. Then the Parkland School shooting happened and with it came renewed calls to arm teachers and other school personnel. In response, our Poster immediately uploaded the following quote from celebrity chef, Anthony Bourdain:



Anthony Bourdain ✓
@Bourdain

Before entertaining the ridiculous notion of arming teachers, worth considering the NYPD stat for hitting their target in gun fight is 18%

The statistic cited by Bourdain is actually correct and comes directly from NYPD data as reported in a 2008 study by the Rand Corporation. Rostker B. D., et al., *Evaluation of the New York City Police Department Firearm Training and Firearm-Discharge Review Process*, Rand Corp. (2008) [[REF LINK](#)]. The 18% “hit ratio” is for gun altercations where the suspect was returning fire. The NYPD Officers did somewhat better (30%) where the suspect was not shooting back, but considering that Officers are trained to shoot for center mass and that most gun altercations happen at a range of 3-15 feet, both figures represent a surprisingly low hit percentage.

But the Poster was blissfully unaware of what that statistic meant to his and others’ arguments regarding magazine capacity. It is relatively undisputed that two center mass hits are required to disable an assailant, and law enforcement officers are trained to continue firing in a deadly force situation until the threat is neutralized. If you are acquiring a firearm for home defense, a primary consideration must be the worst case scenario you might encounter as that will define the particular firearm you should purchase. A true worst case scenario would be four gang bangers hopped up on PCP armed with illegal machine pistols and planning the rape and murder of your family in addition to robbery – but let’s dial that nightmare scenario back a little.

Let’s instead assume two armed intruders in your home. That was the assumption I made when I found myself compelled to respond to the Poster’s Bourdain post – I could not help myself, and my response went something like this...

I am buying a firearm for home defense and the information in your post was very helpful. If I am doing the math correctly and my shooting accuracy is as good as that of the NYPD which is unlikely:

2 armed intruders requiring 2 hits each to disable equals 4 total hits.

4 total hits at an 18% hit rate will require a total of 22 rounds fired (Had to dust off my Algebra!).

So I will need a firearm with a magazine capacity of at least 22 rounds, right? But since I probably would not be as accurate as a trained police officer shouldn't I go with a 30 round magazine? Can I find that capacity in anything other than an assault rifle? My wife would prefer something that looks less menacing.

Thanks for the help. 😊

Are you having a problem wrapping your mind around that number? Give it a moment to sink in, and then check the math yourself because you read that correctly. To put 4 rounds on target at an 18% hit rate ***will require you to fire a total of 22 rounds.***

I have been picking on the individual Poster because his posts demonstrate the problems so well. But the problems are not confined to individuals, nor are they limited to gun control which I have used as an example only because it is both a current issue of interest and one that people get emotional about. The National Rifle Association ("NRA") steadfastly refuses to engage in any meaningful discussion where the regulation of firearms is concerned. That position is understandable, in part, because of concerns about a "slippery slope" once the door to any regulation is opened. But public pronouncements by the NRA and its unofficial spokespersons often are subject to many of the same criticisms as our Facebook poster.

While it may sometimes reference questionable sources or adopt inconsistent positions, it can never be said that the NRA is ignorant about the subject matter. The organization and its advocates know

guns and speak with authority and detail about the pertinent facts. They may cherry pick facts to support their position, but you cannot accuse the NRA of not knowing the facts about guns and gun control.

The same cannot always be said of gun control advocates and their supporters, many of whom lack even a basic knowledge of the firearms they seek to ban or regulate. That has resulted in many misconceptions and in some cases led to needless and unproductive debate about the wrong issues. The media, either willfully or through ignorance, has furthered the misconceptions. For a detailed discussion of actual firearm facts, click here [\[REF LINK\]](#).

The net result of the foregoing is that we all too often find ourselves debating the perceived as opposed to the actual problem. Countless hours are then spent in ultimately futile argument attempting to move one another from positions so firmly entrenched that no solutions are likely to be found to what in fact may be an illusory problem. Please see the other articles linked on the [Main Page](#).

Celebrity Hypocrisy

I am tired of hearing celebrity opinions and speeches on politics, social justice, the environment and other issues. You probably are as well. I was ranting a bit in the preceding section, but on this issue the rant will be unleashed in earnest.

Have you ever watched or listened to a celebrity interview where someone actually asked them legitimate questions? While there are exceptions, like Matt Damon, Jodie Foster, & Natalie Portman, most celebrities are dumber than your Grandma's pig. But they have something you don't – money and power – and those attract the sycophants who not only cater to their every whim but who treat each word they utter as if it should be carved in golden tablets for all eternity. It is that latter indulgence that leads these fools to believe they have opinions of value to bestow upon the rest of us.

Unfortunately, they live in gated estates surrounded by press agents, personal trainers, free range chickens (just kidding) and armed security, so we cannot easily reach out to them and tell them we do not want or need their advice. So, on the off chance that someone in Hollyweird is browsing and sees this:

Dear Celebrity:

- Don't fly 6,000 miles on your private jet then give a speech lecturing me about how my 12 year old SUV is contributing to greenhouse gases and global warming. There are multiple examples of this type of thing but as just one example, we don't need Harrison Ford lecturing us on global warming when his carbon footprint includes a helicopter, seven airplanes and he admits flying his private jet up the coast solely to get a cheeseburger!
- On that same subject, don't urge us to purchase "clean" electric vehicles when you have no clue that the electricity we must use to charge them comes from power plants powered predominantly by carbon emitting fossil fuels like coal (30%) and natural gas (31.7%) that were mined, drilled or extracted by processes like fracking. And the rest? Most of it comes from nuclear plants (20%). Only 7.6% of all energy generated in the U.S. comes from wind or solar power and just 7.5% of the population is fortunate enough to be located close to a source of hydroelectric power. The remaining 3.2% get their energy from other gases, oil, geothermal sources or biomass. The referenced percentages are for 2017 energy production as reported by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, an agency within the U.S. Department of Energy [[REF LINK](#)].
- Don't preach women's rights while staying quiet knowing that powerful men in your industry are abusing women. While you are at it, stop celebrating the rapists and pedophiles among your ranks. Woody Allen won the lifetime achievement award at the 2014 Golden Globes; Meryl Streep went on stage and called Harvey Weinstein a "god" at the Golden Globes in 2012; and Roman Polanski received a standing ovation at the Academy

Awards in 2002. Even more important, stop protecting them. While those who abuse or take advantage of women are likely to be quickly exposed in the current “Me Too” environment, Hollywood's pedophilia problem remains and must no longer be ignored. Like Weinstein, the names of those who abuse children also are known and whispered throughout the industry. What is needed are people with the courage and conviction to speak up.

- Don't appear in, produce or direct films funded by entities or groups with interests antithetical to those you advocate, and don't participate in advertising for them. That means, for example, that you should not join the Occupy Wall Street protesters as Alec Baldwin did to complain about the excesses of Wall Street and the top one-percent, while at the same time shilling for the Capital One credit card.

It also means that you should not warn about climate change while writing and starring in a film produced “in association with” a company wholly owned by a wealthy oil rich middle eastern nation and a member of OPEC. That is what Matt Damon did with *Promised Land*; a 2012 film that villainized the natural gas industry practice of “fracking” and was produced in association with Image Media Abu Dhabi, a company wholly owned by the government of the United Arab Emirates (“UAE”). The UAE is a member of OPEC and produced roughly 1.13 billion barrels of crude oil in 2016 [[REF LINK](#)].

Had Damon (one of the few smart actors) been paying closer attention, he also would have realized that his UAE benefactor was using him and actually had an ulterior motive in helping insure the film was made and distributed. Fracking has begun to revolutionize oil and natural gas production in the United States to the point that domestic producers were expected to exceed Saudi Arabia and Russia in oil production by 2017, and the U.S. is poised to become a net energy exporter within a decade [[REF LINK](#)]. Because the U.S. is one of the UAE's largest customers, a film with the potential to undermine fracking and reduce U.S. production could be beneficial to the UAE.

- Don't even think about lecturing us on morals unless you first set an example.
- Stop claiming to be an advocate for the rain forest, its animals and indigenous people until you have pressured the Studios to stop using lauan plywood in set construction that is almost always discarded after use. They pledged **over 26 years ago in 1991** to phase out the use of this wood but have so far failed to make any substantial progress in fulfilling that promise. Continued logging to supply demand for lauan threatens the survival of many species in Indonesia, including Orangutans, Hornbills and other critically endangered wildlife. As forests in that and neighboring countries have been depleted, logging in Brazil has increased, threatening the indigenous species of that country as well.
- Don't lecture us on social justice and equality when female stars command salaries far lower than those of their male counterparts.
- Don't lecture us on social justice and the rights of the disabled when 95% of characters with disabilities are played by non-disabled actors. Woodburn D., *On Employment of Actors with Disabilities in Television* (The Ruderman White Paper, Ruderman Family Foundation 2016) [[REF LINK](#)]. There are thousands of capable actors with real disabilities. Why are they not cast in those roles?
- Stop decrying violence while making millions displaying gratuitous depictions of it in your movies.
- Don't advocate taking my guns away while insisting on your own armed security detail.

MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL...

- If you say you will move to Canada if Event X happens, then please follow through on that threat/promise – assuming Canada will take you.

The media bears much of the blame for the belief by celebrities that their opinions have gravitas and that people actually care what they have to say. Being famous should not automatically grant a platform to promote a personal agenda, but it does as media outlets trip over one another to be the first to press with the latest news from Hollywood. And usually cynical journalists somehow forget that being well known does not equate to being well informed. Statements made by celebrities should be evaluated with the same scrutiny given to statements by anyone else, and their opinions should be tested against the facts and on the merits. Equally important, journalists cannot allow themselves to be star struck but instead must challenge celebrities and hold them accountable for inconsistencies in both their positions and their lifestyle.

Not one mainstream U.S. journalist challenged Harrison Ford about his global warming advocacy despite his well-known fleet of personal aircraft and public statements about making casual flights solely to get a cheeseburger. Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is one of the most vocal alarmists in Hollywood on the issue of climate change. He even hosted a 2016 documentary on the disastrous consequences of “man-made” global warming called appropriately *Before the Flood*. The U.S. media, however, have so far failed to seriously challenge him on his own carbon footprint which reportedly includes: cruising on his private yacht; commuting regularly by private jet between his sprawling Hollywood and Palm Beach mansions on the West Coast and his two New York apartments on the East; renting the 470-foot yacht of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahayan, the chair of Abu Dhabi’s International Petroleum Investment Company, to co-host a 1980’s themed party with Jamie Foxx and Orlando Bloom; and flying from Sydney, Australia to Las Vegas on a chartered 747 just to attend two New Years’ Eve parties. In early 2014 he was quoted as saying that that he planned to take some time off from acting to “fly around the world doing good for the environment.” The irony in the statement was apparently lost on him. Just one transcontinental flight discharges roughly as much carbon into the atmosphere as a typical year’s worth of driving.

James Cameron, the Director of *Titanic* and *Avatar* is another strident Hollywood vegan and environmentalist who has called those skeptical of climate change “swine” and “boneheads”, and when asked if his movie *Avatar* was a perfect recruiting tool for eco-terrorists said he regarded that as a positive review because he believes in eco-terrorism. But his lifestyle fails to match either his public positions or his expectations for the rest of us. As of 2010, his primary residence in the hills of Malibu included a guest house, heated pool, six bedrooms and seven bathrooms spread over 8,272 square feet. Not content with that, Cameron purchased the 6,672-square-foot house next door for use by his film production staff and crew. What use they make of that home’s heated pool is unknown. It has been reported that he owns a third neighboring home for a total square footage of approximately 24,000; more than ten times that of the average American home. In 2012, he acquired another multi-million dollar home in New Zealand. In addition to the mansions, the Cameron real estate holdings include a ranch, a vineyard, a walnut orchard and 2,400 acres of New Zealand farmland purchased for \$16 million that includes the 124 acre Lake Pounui. He has since increased the New Zealand real estate holdings to over 3,700 acres.

In addition to owning a Bell Jet Ranger Helicopter, a yacht and a fleet of submarines, Cameron’s personal vehicle collection in 2010 included three Harleys, a Ducati, several dirt bikes, a Corvette, a Ford GT, and a red Humvee fire truck. Somehow becoming aware of the obvious hypocrisy, he recently seems to have made minor adjustments to that vehicle fleet mix. Some of the motorcycles and the Humvee apparently have been disposed of in favor of a Toyota Highlander Hybrid, Chevrolet Volt, and a Model S Tesla Roadster; the latter two requiring charging using electricity generated primarily by burning fossil fuels.

Perhaps Cameron should heed his own advice. While discussing global warming in 2010, he told a reporter "we are going to have to live with less", but what he apparently meant was that you should live with less, not him.

While the actions of many celebrities fail to match their rhetoric, the statements of some are inconsistent on their face. Charlize Theron has starred in violent and firearm heavy action films like *Atomic Blonde*, yet is a vocal proponent of gun control. At a March 17, 2018, appearance in Dubai, she spoke against proposals for arming teachers and repeated a story about "a very personal experience with gun violence" as support for her opposition to firearms, explaining that, "I lost my father to gun violence." [\[REF LINK\]](#).

What Theron failed to mention but has discussed in multiple interviews is that her father, Charles Theron, was an alcoholic. In 1991, when she was 15 years old and living in South Africa, Charles and his brother returned home after a night of drinking. According to a report on ABC, after first shooting at the locked gate and through the kitchen door, Charles began banging angrily on the door of the bedroom where Charlize and her mother, Gerda, were huddled shouting, "Tonight I'm going to kill you both with the shotgun." He then discharged the firearm through the bedroom door at which point Gerda grabbed her handgun, shooting and killing him in self-defense, and wounding his brother. No charges were filed against Gerda [\[REF LINK\]](#).¹

Theron has since admitted that she would do the same thing as her mother in that situation but she otherwise seems to have confused the lessons to be learned. It technically may be true to say she lost her father to gun violence if the violence we are describing is his; but what of the use by Gerda of her handgun in self-defense? That critical part of the story has been overlooked by Theron. Had that firearm and the will to use it not been present, Theron could well have ended up dead or being raised motherless by an abusive, alcoholic father or the state; with a future far different from the life she now enjoys.

To summarize, celebrities and others should educate themselves before presuming to educate us. They should think before speaking to maintain consistency in the positions they advocate. Finally, if they are going to talk the talk, they need to walk the walk.

¹ The official investigation files on the incident apparently remain sealed. If they were publicly available, we would provide a link.

* While not an example of hypocrisy *per se*, a 2006 study found that the film industry had the second largest environmental impact in the greater Los Angeles area. Only the petroleum refining industry had a larger impact. Corbett C. J., et al., *Sustainability in the Motion Picture Industry*, (UCLA, November 2006) [[REF LINK](#)].

If you have something to say about this or any of the other subjects we discuss, please click below to...

[Send us an E-Mail](#)

Author Note: Like many young men growing up in the rural South, the author owned a .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun, both of which were used for hunting and sport shooting. He no longer hunts and has passed the .22 rifle on to his son, but he still owns firearms for recreation and personal defense. He is not a member of the NRA and has no vested interest in the gun debate, but is tired of hearing heated arguments presented on both sides of the issue without bothering to learn the facts.