

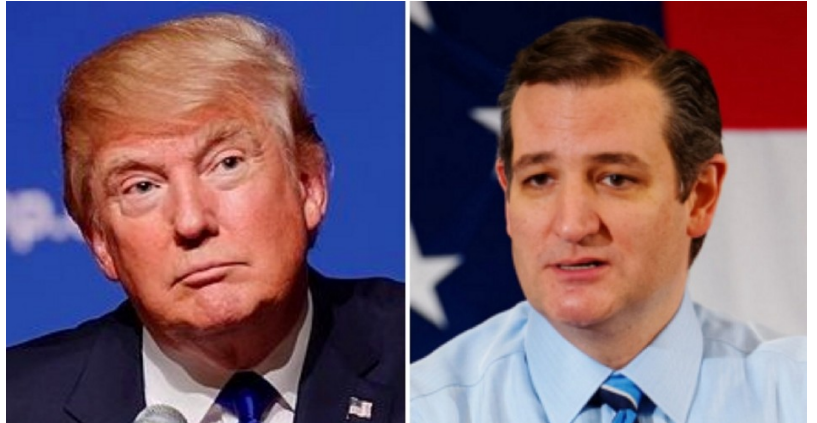


Written by [Steve Byas](#) on March 29, 2016

Republican Battle Degenerates

On the heels of businessman Donald Trump and Senator Ted Cruz splitting wins last week — Trump taking Arizona by a decided margin, and Cruz doing the same in Utah — the intensity of the Republican presidential race between them has only escalated, becoming extremely personal.

After Cruz won Utah by a margin of 69-11 over Trump, Trump tweeted images of his wife, Melania, and Cruz's wife, Heidi. The photo of Heidi was unflattering, catching her in a grimace, while the photo of Melania, a former model, was glamorous. Trump commented, "No need to spill the beans, The images are worth a thousand words."



Trump said he was responding to what he charged was an attack upon his wife by Cruz. The ad was circulated via social media in Utah, at the time of the contest between the two Republicans. The ad took a photo of Melania, in the nude, from a *Gentleman's Quarterly* shot years ago when she was a professional model, with the caption, "Meet Melania Trump. Your Next First Lady. Or, you could support Ted Cruz on Tuesday."

While Trump misidentified the ad as having been put out by a "Cruz Super PAC," it was actually produced by an anti-Trump Super PAC, Make America Awesome Again, which has also run material critical of Cruz in the past. In Trump's original tweet, he warned Cruz, "Be careful, Lyin' Ted, or I will spill the beans on your wife!"

Media personalities Sean Hannity, Greta Van Susteren, and Rush Limbaugh all mistakenly called the group which marketed the ad a "Cruz" Super PAC, but later retracted their statements.

Many Trump supporters, however, refused to accept that Cruz had nothing to do with the nude Melania ad in Utah, claiming that there must have been coordination — that is, coordination between independent political action committees and the official campaigns of candidates, which is against federal law.

Cruz was quick to deny any involvement in the anti-Melania ad, while castigating Trump for attacking his wife. "Donald, you're a sniveling coward. Leave Heidi the Hell alone!" Cruz defended his wife as the daughter of Christian missionaries to Africa. Heidi Cruz herself addressed the issue, asserting, "The things that Donald Trump says have no basis in reality."

Katrina Pierson, a Trump campaign spokeswoman, insisted that Cruz should have denounced the ad, regardless of whether his campaign was connected to it. Trump himself rejected Cruz's disclaimer. "Lyin' Ted Cruz denied that he had anything to do with the *G.Q.* model photo post of Melania. That's why they call him Lyin' Ted!"

If this was not divisive enough, almost immediately the supermarket tabloid *The National Enquirer* published a cover story proclaiming that Cruz had carried on affairs with five mistresses.



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A visibly angry Cruz denounced the *Enquirer* and tied Trump to the story, calling the story “garbage” and Trump himself “Sleazy Donald.” When asked by a reporter if he still stood by his pledge to support Trump in the general election, were Trump to win the nomination, Cruz testily responded, “I don’t make a habit out of supporting people who attack my wife and family.”

Trump denied having anything to do with the *National Enquirer* article, asserting, “Unlike Lyin’ Ted Cruz, I do not surround myself with political hacks and henchmen and then pretend total innocence.” He noted that the *Enquirer* had been right about its stories on the adulterous affair of Democrat hopeful John Edwards back in 2008, but then added, “I certainly hope they are not right about Lyin’ Ted Cruz.”

The story took an amazing twist on Friday during a segment on CNN. Without being asked about it, *Boston Herald* columnist Adriana Cohen, a staunch Trump supporter, brought up the *Enquirer* story, saying the tabloid had “reported that Ted Cruz has had affairs with five mistresses, including you’ve been named as well, Amanda.” Amanda Carpenter, a former communications director for Cruz, was the other guest on the program, and the clearly stunned CNN host Kate Bolduan tried to shift the conversation back to the campaign.

Cohen demanded that Carpenter either denounce or confirm the story, to which an angry Carpenter responded, calling the story “tabloid trash,” and adding that Cohen should “be ashamed for spreading this smut.” She also stated that the accusation that she had had an affair with Cruz was “categorically false.”

Even radio talk-show personality Michael Savage, who has publicly supported Trump’s presidential campaign effort, was upset with the *Enquirer* report. He threatened to withdraw his support from Trump unless he repudiated what Savage called “assassination by innuendo.”

Savage said that the owner of the *Enquirer*, David Pecker, is a “close friend” of Trump’s, having flown to Florida on Trump’s private jet, and that Pecker is “personally involved in the anti-Cruz stories.” He added, “I supported Trump, and probably still will, but if he won’t disavow this guy Pecker and this story I may withdraw my support ... I am not going to support anyone who engages in assassination by innuendo.”

Most importantly, Savage told his radio audience that he had learned “the scandal is false” from “someone who I work with closely, who I would trust with my life,” and whose contact with the *Enquirer* bluntly conceded, “‘We don’t have it,’ meaning it’s all innuendo.”

The *Enquirer* has certainly not been averse to going after any candidate who has become an electoral threat to Trump. For example, when Ben Carson surged in the polls late last year, and appeared poised to overtake Trump, the *Enquirer* ran a cover story claiming that Doctor Carson, a world-renowned brain surgeon, had once left a sponge in a patient’s brain. Trump told people shortly before the article’s publication that Carson had “a lot of medical malpractice suits.”

In one of the early debates, Trump referred to Carson (known to have separated the first conjoined at-the-head infant twins) as an “OK doctor.” Perhaps the most bizarre slur Trump used against Carson was when the New York tycoon compared him to a pedophile.

The *Enquirer* was also quite negative toward former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, reporting that he was “involved in the drug trade,” and that he had had an affair with a Playboy Bunny. Another target of the *Enquirer* was former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina. The *Enquirer* called her a “homewrecker.”

Rolling Stone quoted Trump as essentially dismissing Fiorina as ugly. “Look at that face! Would anyone



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vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?"

Incredibly, the *Enquirer* even named Trump spokeswoman Katrina Pierson herself as one of Cruz's supposed lovers. Pierson has called that "100% false."

It was Pierson who finally "spilled the beans" to MSNBC's Steve Kornacki about Heidi Cruz. While Trump's junior-high-level attacks upon the looks of Fiorina and Mrs. Cruz only contribute to the incivility of the present campaign, the political connections and views of a spouse can be a legitimate issue.

"Spilling the beans is quite simple when it comes to Heidi Cruz," Pierson said. "She is a Bush operative; she worked for the architect of NAFTA, which has killed millions of jobs in this country; she was a member on the Council on Foreign Relations [which] — in Senator Cruz's own words — [he] called a nest of snakes that seeks to undermine national sovereignty; and she's been working for Goldman Sachs." However, Pierson did not mention that Trump has cited Richard Haas, the president of the same Council on Foreign Relations, as someone whose advice is considered valuable. Perhaps Trump could explain why he would want to take advice from the top man at the CFR.

But the junior-high level taunts, for which Trump has become known (even ridiculing Senator Rand Paul's curly hair in one debate) certainly add nothing to helping us make a decision as to which candidate is the best. In the case of Mrs. Cruz, there is no question that she is a politically sophisticated individual. As such, the voters are entitled to some explanation of her political philosophy — since a woman with such obvious ability could be expected to possibly influence her husband on certain issues.

While she worked as a money manager for Goldman Sachs, Mrs. Cruz was made a "team member" of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which as Pierson noted, is an organization that Cruz has rightly denounced — as recently as this month. Her having worked for President George W. Bush is not a major issue in and of itself. Well-known conservatives such as Ezra Taft Benson and Pat Buchanan, who worked for non-conservative Republican presidents — Benson for Eisenhower and Buchanan for Nixon — were apparently "uncontaminated" by such employment.

But the voters are entitled to know what Mrs. Cruz's views are on NAFTA, the North American Union proposal, and the Council on Foreign Relations — and even more importantly, what Senator Ted Cruz's views are on those issues. The CFR, founded in New York in 1921, has for decades steered U.S. foreign policy in an internationalist, interventionist direction, as its members have occupied key Cabinet posts in both Democratic and Republican administrations for decades.

These are legitimate issues, much more so than who has the better-looking wife, and what is written in supermarket tabloids. Perhaps Senator Cruz and his wife could address these very issues before the voters go to the polls in Wisconsin Tuesday.

Hopefully, the political debate won't be diverted again from such issues of much greater importance to the future of the Republic.

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book History's Greatest Libels is a refutation of several lies told about personalities in history like Joe McCarthy, Thomas Jefferson, and Clarence Thomas.



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