

Megyn Kelly Shouldn't Pay for Trump's Obsession



In 2013, a fascinating story out of Iowa about a dental assistant and her former boss made national headlines. The assistant – a woman named Melissa Nelson – was fired from her job, not because she didn't perform her duties adequately, but because her male boss no longer felt *he* could perform *his* duties around her.

What was his problem? Apparently, the dentist (Dr. James Knight) found Nelson so irresistibly attractive that he couldn't focus on his work. He thought about her night and day, and even worried that his fixation would end up ruining his marriage.

Nelson, on the other hand, was happily married with children. She never had any romantic interest in her boss, and never led him to believe otherwise. She did her job well. She was a professional. Yet, she lost that job, and her career took a hit, because Dr. Knight simply couldn't deal with his obsession.

Last night, after four days of [demanding unsuccessfully](#) behind closed doors that *Fox News* remove Megyn Kelly from the moderation table at Thursday night's GOP debate, Donald Trump's campaign announced that their candidate will *not* be appearing at the event.

Many people are aware of Trump's history with Megyn Kelly, who is one of FNC's most popular personalities. In early August of last year, Kelly was one of three moderators in the very first Republican presidential debate of the 2016 election season.

That night, Kelly asked Mr. Trump an uncomfortable (but perfectly legitimate) question: How would he deal with criticisms surrounding some high-profile, derogatory statements he'd made about women – statements that would most certainly be used against him in the general election by Hillary Clinton?

This was a potential political liability that many observers had been talking about, being that the “War on Women” campaign strategy had worked well for the Democratic Party in recent years. The question may have surprised Trump, but I doubt it surprised Kelly's regular viewers.

As I said of Kelly in [a column](#) back in 2013 (shortly after Fox News had announced that she was getting her own prime-time show), she is “someone who is very much in touch with the concerns of her viewers. She listens to them, and does an excellent job of pinning down guests with the questions people want answers to.”

That's what she was doing in the debate, not just with the GOP front-runner, but with the other candidates as well.

No one could tell by Trump's response to Kelly that night just how badly the exchange had rattled him, but it became clear in the days that followed that his ego had suffered a major blow. And as we all know, Donald Trump doesn't take well to being slighted, even when the slight is a figment of his own imagination.

What began with a suggestion by Trump that Kelly's menstrual cycle was to blame for her debate conduct has extended into nearly six months of the candidate demonstrating a disturbing fixation (some would call it an obsession) with the Fox News host.

Trump has regularly trashed her on Twitter with hostile rhetoric that has included sexist slurs, the mocking of her personal life, and the encouraging of his supporters to

pressure the network into taking disciplinary action against her. All the while, Kelly has soldiered on like a professional, and has continued to offer her nightly news coverage without participating in a tit-for-tat quarrel with Trump.

Trump had likely hoped his wild popularity with the Republican base, and his aggressive efforts to discredit her, would sink Megyn Kelly's media influence. Instead, the ratings for her show have only grown. She's as relevant and as credible as ever, and that has to just eat away at him.

While the basis of Trump's preoccupation with Kelly is quite different than that of the dentist and his assistant (I'm not at all suggesting a physical attraction), its effects are quite similar. In trying to get Kelly tossed off the debate stage, Trump was attempting to do exactly what Dr. Knight did in Iowa – rid himself of a manic distraction that he believed would keep him from delivering a successful performance. Unlike Knight, however, Trump wasn't the decision-maker. Roger Ailes was.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

Trump of course says that Megyn Kelly is biased against him, and that *that's* the reason he won't appear. That rationale, however, is silly. Kelly asked tough questions of a number of candidates at the first debate (none of whom complained of bias afterwards). And while Kelly has indeed criticized Trump on her show, so has a plethora of other national journalists who Trump has happily appeared in front of (sometimes multiple times) to field questions.

No, the problem isn't Megyn Kelly; she's no more guilty of wrongdoing than dental assistant Melissa Nelson. The problem is Donald Trump's ongoing infatuation with Kelly, and his inability to get past whatever internal torment he suffered at her hands back in August. If he truly can't perform with civility and a clear head in her presence, it's probably best for everyone that he's not showing up at the debate.

There are things more important than television ratings. Journalistic integrity should be one of them. Roger Ailes made the right decision.