

If Kids Are Off Limits, Don't Use Them as Props



You can get away with a lot of things in the world of politics – just ask Donald Trump or Bill Clinton – but making fun of a candidate's kids apparently is not one of those things.

Yes, I'm referring to the Washington Post cartoon that portrayed Senator Ted Cruz as an organ grinder in a Santa Clause outfit and his daughters, age 5 and 7, also in Christmas outfits, as ... trained monkeys. The caption read: "Ted Cruz uses his kids as political props."

Just about everyone has condemned the cartoon, starting with Cruz who said, "Not much ticks me off, but making fun of my girls? That will do it. Don't mess with my kids. Don't mess with Marco's kids. Don't mess with Hillary's kids. Don't mess with anybody's kids."

A Fox commentator said the cartoon was a form of "child abuse."

Others were satisfied simply saying what the Post did was disgraceful and pointing out the media's double standard – noting that it's hard to believe a big city paper would ever run such a cartoon about the children of a liberal Democrat.

And just a few hours after the cartoon went up on a Post webpage, Fred Hiatt, the paper's editorial page editor, yanked it and replaced it with a personal note – not quite an apology, but an admission of a kind of, sort of, mistake.

"It's generally been the policy of our editorial section to leave children out of it," Hiatt wrote. "I failed to look at

this cartoon before it was published. I understand why Ann [Telnaes, the cartoonist] thought an exception to the policy was warranted in this case, but I do not agree.”

Fine. But if kids are off limits, someone apparently forgot to tell Ted Cruz.

It’s one thing to use your family as props, showing off your lovely wife and beautiful children around the Christmas tree – and leave it at that. But that’s not what Ted Cruz did.

In the video, Cruz, his wife and two daughters are sitting on the living room couch in front of the family Christmas tree with Daddy – the Senator – reading Christmas stories that are takeoffs on the classics. There’s “How ObamaCare Stole Christmas,” and “Rudolph the Underemployed Reindeer,” and “The Grinch Who Lost Her Emails.”

Take a wild guess who that would be.

In the ad, Cruz’s 7- year old daughter (over-dramatically) reads a parody passage from the book: “‘I know just what I’ll do’, she snickered, ‘I’ll use my own server and no one will be the wiser.’”

Take that Hillary!

Then the 5-year old says, “Please read this one Daddy,” handing him a book titled, “The Senator Who Saved Christmas.”

Let’s see if I have this right: It’s okay to use your daughters to make political points that you hope will help you win the GOP nomination for president, but it’s child abuse for a cartoonist to point out that you’re using your kids as political props?

As for Ann Telnaes, the cartoonist, she was unapologetic. “When a politician uses his children as political props, as Ted Cruz recently did in his Christmas parody video in which his eldest daughter read (with her father’s dramatic flourish)

a passage of an edited Christmas classic, then I figure they are fair game," she wrote.

Oh yeah, one more thing: Cruz is using the episode to raise \$1 million for his presidential campaign. "I knew I'd be facing attacks from day one of my campaign, but I never expected anything like this," Cruz said in a fund-raising email. "Help me send a message to the Washington Post. My daughters are NOT FAIR GAME!"

And what's the morale of this Christmas tale? Never let a crisis – even a phony, trumped-up crisis – go to waste, especially if you're running for president and need money.