



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 5, 2018

## People Magazine Scrubs Pornographic Image to Hide Hypocrisy

Like most media reporting on the story, *People* magazine presented disgraced teacher Mateo Rueda in a flattering light. He was recently fired from Lincoln Elementary School in Hyrum, Utah, for showing young children nude “artwork.” But he’s actually, we’re to believe, an intrepid martyr persecuted by prudish, uncultured rubes who can’t distinguish between porn and fine art. And to prove its point, *People* printed a couple of the pictures shown to the fifth and sixth-graders, one of which was a full-frontal female nude titled “Iris Tree.”



Only, *People* obscured the woman’s nipples and nether region.

Apparently adult readers shouldn’t see what the children saw.

Now the magazine is trying to obscure the truth. After I and others called it out on Twitter — I wrote, “If the ‘artwork’ Iris Tree really is appropriate for 10-year-olds, why are you blurring out part of the picture in your article?” — the image completely disappeared from the piece.

Thanks to Internet archiving and the computer function “Print Screen,” however, the evidence remains. The article originally appeared as shown [here](#) (thank you, *Wayback Machine*).

And [here](#) is the deforested version, with “Iris Tree” sent to the e-sawmill.

Here are [the tweets](#) that started it all:



**Selwyn Duke**  
@SelwynDuke

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Thought of the Day: The conservative attitude generally is "live and let live."

The liberal attitude: "Someone somewhere disagrees with me. He must be destroyed!"

5:19 AM - 2 Jun 2019

\* \* \*



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**K. Petersen**  
@Irishimay

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Replying to [@cathyjfree](#) [@people](#)

Your article censors the nudity. You just proved those opposed to their kids viewing it were correct. Excellent journalism.  
[#howdoyoulivewiththehypocrisy](#)

5:33 PM - 4 Jan 2018

Unsurprisingly, *People* also blurred the truth behind the story (which I [reported](#), conducting interviews with local parents), but didn't scrub from its article Rueda's posturing, moral preening and demeaning of his adopted community. Its writer, Cathy Free, quoted Rueda as saying, "[E]ven though I was overqualified, I took the [teaching] position with an open heart to make a difference in a predominantly-Mormon community where there isn't much culture. I hate that this controversy happened, but I stand for art, altruism and enlightenment, and I'll never back down from that."

Rueda, a native of Colombia, also said, "There are a lot of skeletons in the closet of the repressed culture here ... and there is very little freedom of expression," reports Free. Rueda had earlier [characterized](#) his fellow Cache Valley residents as "cultural dead-ends" and members of a "narrow-minded community."

What Free didn't report is that, [according](#) to the parents I interviewed, Rueda forced the children to view the nudes and belittled students who complained, telling them they had to "grow up." (A local source tells me he is *not* getting his job back.)

Of course, the article by *People's* Free is now free of the Tree, but observers note the hypocrisy. As the aforementioned Twitter respondent also [opined](#): "You are really something. First, *People Magazine* blurs the pubic hair and nipples in the offensive artwork they included in the article. You must have realized the hypocrisy because now it's been completely removed from the article. You lack journalistic integrity."

It's interesting that *People* didn't demonstrate its own "enlightenment" and react to the initial criticism by uncovering "Iris Tree" for all to see, but instead decided it didn't want to be mistaken for *Hustler*. The only question now is whether, using descriptions Rueda and his defenders have generously applied to opponents, the people at *People* are best characterized as narrow-minded, repressed prudes, puritans, Nazi-like censors or cultural dead-ends. Because the magazine knows something: Certain images are too indecent for it to publish.

But are just fine for 10-year-olds.

*Photo: IvelinRadkov/iStock/Getty Images Plus*

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