

Gawking at TransKid's Genitalia is "Freedom of Speech" says Philly PD

By Cristan Williams

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Abstract

A much older adult, who was famous in the eyes of a kid, talked the minor into exposing themselves to the adult. The adult then took a good long look - long enough to memorize the details of the kid's genitals. The adult then wrote an article featuring the explicit details of what the underage [...]

Article

A much older adult, who was famous in the eyes of a kid, talked the minor into exposing themselves to the adult. The adult then took a good long look - long enough to memorize the details of the kid's genitals. The adult then wrote an article featuring the explicit details of what the underage kid's genitals looked like.

While this might elicit a strident response from folks who care about things like the age of consent, the use of power, corrosion and exploitation, nobody seems to care in this case - especially the Philadelphia police department.

Yes, a minor really was talked into exposing himself to an adult but here's the rub: the kid was trans and that, apparently, changes everything.

A reporter named Brownworth decided to do a story on a dangerous underground body modification scene which uses silicone injections to change the shape of the body. This practice is called "pumping." It's illicit because pumping kills. The resulting story was gritty. However, it was pushed into the lurid territory when the reporter went into explicit detail, recounting what the minor's genitalia looked like:

"Devon tells me he should have been a boy... He's handsome and, in the loose shirt, no one would ever guess he was born female... I ask him how old he is. He turns away as he mumbles "18" and I subtract two, possibly three years.

Devon has been getting testosterone and steroids from Rolanda for over a year... Devon drops his pants and gets a cartoon-large injection in his thigh... Then Rolanda applies the breast pump to what was once his vulva and what is now being turned, slowly in this cut-rate plastic surgery clinic, into his scrotum. Rolanda says she is very pleased with how Devon is progressing.

It's awkward, but I ask if I can look. Devon looks away and then asks Rolanda to remove the pump.

He turns toward me and places his hands on his thighs. There is thick black [CENSORED] and in the middle of this is a [CENSORED] -- his [CENSORED] is growing from the testosterone injections and now

looks like [CENSORED]. It's very [CENSORED], but [CENSORED]. The [CENSORED] had become [CENSORED] also, and looks almost like [CENSORED]. I ask Devon how it feels. His right-hand moves involuntarily toward the [CENSORED] and he smiles a little for the first time. "Good," he says softly."

- Excerpt from Brownworth's article

Here's the original article. I've edited the part where she describes the 15-year old's genitalia because it's disgusting and likely criminal. The article is actually good - right up until Brownworth gets into describing what the minor's genitals look like for the sake of a little sensationalistic flair.

It should be noted that Devon, the minor in this story, made an explicit attempt to have some privacy. He never offered to let Brownworth see him. He never extended that invitation to her; rather, the adult who (is described by Brownworth as the "high priestess of the pump") was supplying his testosterone and body modification made that invitation to Brownworth on his behalf:

...everyone is watching me, I'm equally sure that they would prefer I just leave so that they can just get on with it. But I don't leave. I go to the kitchen, sit down on a chair and watch Rolanda prep her first patient, one of the boys. - Brownworth's article

Brownworth clearly knew that the minor didn't want her there. Devon tried to give himself some privacy. Devon turned his back to Brownworth. However, just looking at Devon's back wasn't enough to satisfy Brownworth's morbid curiosity. She wanted to see it all.

Let's be clear about Brownworth's power and status at this moment. For Devon, Brownworth was a famous gatekeeper who was revered by the only person who he thought cared enough to help him transition (nevermind that this "priestess of the pump" - this adult - was knowingly putting Devon's life at risk for some quick cash). Brownworth had the power to tell Devon's story and make even more people care:

Everyone in the room had been warned I was coming and apparently been told by the breathless Rolanda that I was "famous." The pomegranate juice and the signed copy of one of my recent books that I had brought for Rolanda solidified my status.

Brownworth was someone that promised to tell people Devon's story and she wanted him to give up the little privacy he had made for himself:

It's awkward, but I ask if I can look. Devon looks away...

What does that body language tell you when you see it? When you ask a 15-year-old something personal and they look away, what is that body language generally communicating to you?

Our culture has a very strong bias towards believing that it needs to know - and/or has a right to know - what the genitalia of trans folks look like. I've found that this bias has influenced the way people have viewed this incident. For example, some feminists - who have an otherwise finely tuned moral compass when it comes to exploitation - have asserted that the 50-something-year-old had a right to get the minor to expose himself. Others have excused any possible criminal activity on the part of the adult because it was a story about "pumping."

When I made a report to the Philadelphia police about this incident, the officer asserted that the

reporter had a right to have access to the minor's genitalia because it was a "freedom of speech issue."

I want you to pause just for a moment and let that sink in.

Fortunately, Child Protective Services viewed it differently. They said what the reporter had done is called "child exploitation." The case has now landed in the DAs office... though I'm doubtful that it will go anywhere (more about that later).

For those of you who are still struggling with this because of the trans thing, ask yourself how you'd react if someone your 15-year-old kid thought was famous asked them to show them their genitals - and worse, your kid did it. Then ask yourself how you'd react if they wrote an article which explicitly detailed what your child's genitalia looked like? How would you as the parent feel? What would you do about it?

On July 2, this image [warning, graphic] made the front page of Reddit. The older man in the image had looked into the window of a fully clothed 15-year-old. Within 19 hours, the image had been viewed 638,562 times. The internet seems to think the pummeling this older man received was warranted.

However, quite a number of people seem to take no issue with what happened to the 15-year-old Devon. I know I won't ever forget hearing the Philadelphia Police Department endorse what happened to him.

Strangely, the reporter at the center of this issue is the self-identified radical feminist journalist, Victoria A. Brownworth. The newspaper that published the article is the Philadelphia Gay News newspaper. Here's an article that they just published wherein they defend and support Brownworth.

Even more strange, Brownworth recently sent the motorcycle group, Rebecca's Army a long and rambling diatribe about how she's really the one who was victimized after they had sent her a very respectful email with simple questions about a recent article. A self-identified radical feminist site known as GenderTrender came out in support of Brownworth and denounced the motorcycle group for bothering Brownworth with the few questions they asked, asserting that the group is anti-lesbian.

Also, here's another very important detail: The article in question was published FIVE years ago. And in that time, apparently nobody thought there was any problem with Brownworth's behavior:

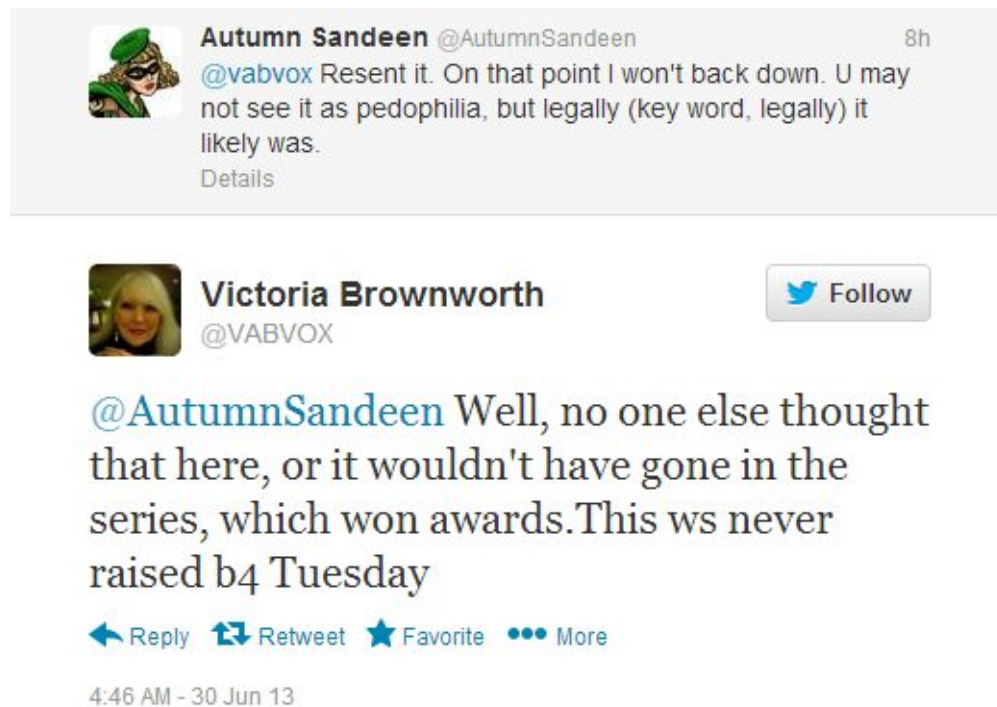


Figure 1. Name The Problem: Your Cisprivilege

Some self-identified feminists seem to think that there's nothing wrong with a 50-something year old requesting that a 15 year old give them access to their genitals:



Figure 2. Victoria "I Don't Know What Emancipated Minors Are" Brownworth

What's Brownworth's defense for gaining access to the 15-year-old's genitals?

Because: They asked me to.

Seriously.

Let's revisit what Brownworth wrote in 2008:

...everyone is watching me, I'm equally sure that they would prefer I just leave so that they can just get on with it. But I don't leave. I go to the kitchen, sit down on a chair and watch Rolanda prep her first patient, one of the boys.

Now, in 2013, she claims that they wanted her to have access to their genitals.



Figure 3. 'Because they asked me to...'

It's telling that Brownworth admits that she felt that what she was going was "creepy" and "wrong." And yet, she did it anyway. Moreover, she used graphic descriptions of the kid's genitals as a shot of sensationalism for her story.

I could almost understand had she waited in another room and simply reported what Devon said his experience was. But she didn't do that. Allowing Devon to interpret his own experience to her wasn't what Brownworth was looking for that night. Even though she felt it was wrong and even though she felt awkward and creepy about it, she was nevertheless really curious about what this minor's genitalia looked like. The need to satisfy her curiosity was apparently so great that it overrode her own internal moral compass and she just had to have a good look.

She went on to assert that what she did helped this kid.

Really?

- Did she clothe him?
- Did she see that he was housed?
- Did she feed him?
- Did she try to even set up a free Hep C and/or HIV test?
- What about spending even just 30 mins. of her day advocating for access to appropriate medical/social services for Devon?

No?

Clearly, she knew that what Devon was being duped into was possibly deadly. Did she even call in an anonymous tip about the person doing the underground injections?

No?

The reality is that after Brownworth's story, the individual doing these underground injections wound up killing people with her illicit silicone injections. The reality is that had police caught this back alley surgeon after Brownworth's story, lives would have been saved.

If I had to, I'd bet that she offered no actual help and that she never lifted a finger to stop a butcher from going on to kill other vulnerable people. I'd bet that Brownworth tells herself that her behavior was motivated out of real concern. I bet that's easy for her to do.

Was she investigated for her actions? Nope.

Was there a public outcry? Nope.

Actually, she was given an award for it.



Figure 4. VB-1

Of course, Detective Marabella of Philadelphia PD agrees with her. The Detective reviewed the story and concluded that Brownworth's apparent right to know - well, not only to know, but right to actually see - what was in the minor's pants was a matter of Brownworth's freedom of speech.

Cisprivilege: It's a thing

Cisprivilege refers to a set of unearned advantages that individuals who represent as the gender they were assigned at birth accrue solely due to having a cisgender identity and it's a problem when one's privilege distorts perception to the point so that it becomes okay for adults to talk minors into exposing themselves.

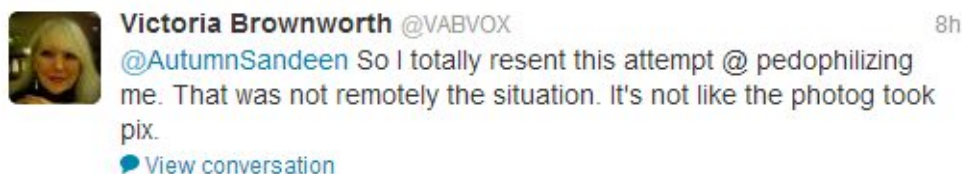


Figure 5. It's not rape-culture if I do it!

With the cisprivilege blinders on, it's wrong to notice that Brownworth's behavior was possibly criminal. Nevermind that Brownworth herself already states that she felt she was both "wrong" and "creepy" for what she did.

From a place of cisprivilege, an adult requesting access to a 15-year-old transkid's genitalia isn't problematic. In fact, it's a right. Just ask the Philly PD!

From a place of cisprivilege detailing what a 15-year-old transkid's genitalia looks like for the titillation of a newspaper's readership (just to give an otherwise gritty tale that little something extra) isn't problematic. In fact, according to the Philly PD, it's freedom of the press!

Should a transperson take issue with what happened to the minor, Brownworth becomes both a victim and a hero.



Figure 6. VB-2

From a place of cisprivilege, nobody will notice that Brownworth's factual recounting of the incident seems to be inconsistent. In 2008, she strongly suspected that she was asking to look at the genitalia of a kid. When I interacted with her on twitter, she clearly states that she knew Devon was 15. When she's talking to Autumn, she didn't know until after the story was published. When she's talking with other TERFs, she knew Devon was 15 but claims that she made it clear that he was "emancipated" (BTW, at no time in the story does she say that Devon was emancipated).

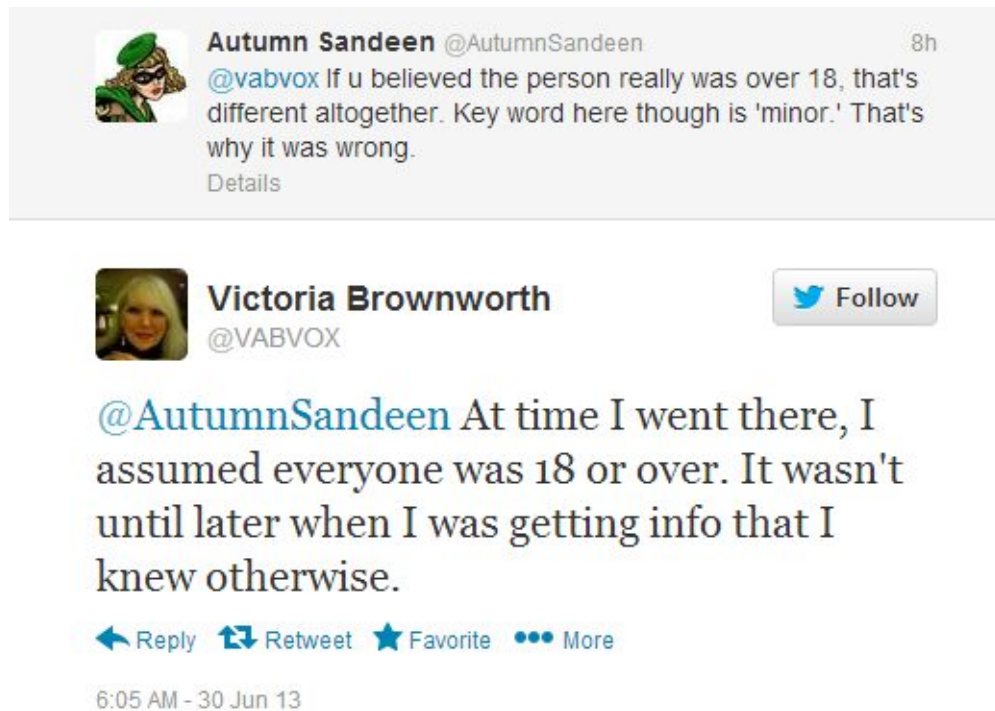


Figure 7. 'But officer, they told me they were 18!' 2008: She claims she knew, 2013: She didn't until later.

Cisprivilege means that our society won't care. It means that YEARS will go by without anyone taking action because, from the perspective of those with the privilege, no wrong ever occurred. In fact, society will give her a freaking award for what she did. It means that when the police are notified, the cop will claim that adults get to have access to a kid's genitals "because of freedom of the press."



Figure 8. 'It's not a crime because LOOK AT THIS STRAWMAN!!!!!!'

My prediction is that because it's been 5 years since Brownworth wrote her article and because Devon isn't likely to be available to testify, Brownworth will get away with it.

I've done everything I know to do to advocate for the transkid I believe Brownworth took advantage of. It seems like the Philadelphia Gay News (PGN) doesn't care. It's obvious that Brownworth and numerous self-identified feminists feel satisfied with what happened. It seems that much of the cis-establishment - up to and even including the police - are defending Brownworth's right to have access to a transkid's genitals. Devon's own invisibility due to being pushed to the fringe of society will work in Brownworth's favor (if he's not, in fact, dead due to the pumping). It seems like PGN is happy to cover up Brownworth's tracks (the story at PGN has been erased) and pretend that the trans community is being unreasonable in their criticisms of Brownworth.



Figure 9. (T1) I'm struggling to understand how the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) erases the experience of Trans*? (T2) Irony: writing series on poor, black, transwomen sex workers, showing how they are abused. Getting shit from transwomen because of "cisprivilege" (T3) Cristan Williams is a violent man, and the twitter men fall in line with anything that affirms their "womanity"

And besides, cisprivilege isn't even real...



Figure 10. VB-3

Oh, and to add irony to insult, Brownworth just did a story about a child exploitation on the Advocate.

Examples of arguments excusing the behavior:

It looks to me like the activist here has something personal against the author because she's known as a not-so-trans-friendly radical feminist. But wow, that's not a good reason to start screaming over crotches. I hope she never finds out /cd/ at 420chan exists where trans people do this to themselves all the time.

Oh yeah and I don't know why Cristan Williams' opinion means more than Victoria Brownworth's here because she's Williams is trans and Brownworth is cis. Like wow, it's one thing to point out where she might be missing perspective because she hasn't had the experience of being trans but it's not okay to start saying she's cis therefore wrong.

Figure 11. r1

Honestly, I think if someone wants to observe and write about teenage genitalia in order to edify the public, that's fine. I see this as being in the same vain as having a doctor observe something.

Figure 12. r3

She asked, he did it (quite happily apparently), she looked, she wrote about the encounter, she advocated for better treatment for him, it was brief, trans minor's genitals should be treated as seriously as adults, your genitalia are an important part of being trans and half the article was about the desperate things being done to it because of how society treats trans kids (a lot like you do - objectified and off limits), looking is not a crime, there was nothing sexual at all about the situation, I don't have a problem, and I'm done here.

Figure 13. r2

If there are cases where society had a problem with an adult seeing a child's genitals in this context, I'd kinda be surprised since doctors and researchers probably deal with that all of the time.

Figure 14. r4

UPDATE, 8/26/13: And, from the self-proclaimed feminist site, The Lesbian Mafia:

are judging her for this singular "damning" article. Their big complaint is that in that series written for Philly Gay News about the dangerous trend of DIY transitioning and "pumping parties" (google it, pumping is very dangerous, as are most DIY transitioning methods) Ms. Brownworth describes the effects of one young trans man's attempt to turn his vulva into male genitalia. Yes she looked and she described what she saw. And guess what? NOBODY including the trans community had a problem with that article when it was published. Not the subjects, not the editors, not the paper, not the trans community, not feminists, NO ONE. Why? Because how transgender issues were dealt with when it was written was different, it only became a problem when she started tweeting us (let's be honest) and some self stylized misogynistic trans-women activist stalkers decided to try to dig up some dirt on her and "ruin" her. They used their feigned moral outrage concerning the article to go after her but make no mistake, she gets attacked not for the article but because she was tweeting with us and has a different opinion about the clash in rights between lesbians and trans-women; trans-activists do not like her being vocal about her opinions. The

Figure 15. LM-VB

Learn how Brownworth retaliated against the author of this TransAdvocate post here

Suggested citation

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