

TRANSADVOCATE

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# [UPDATED] Toronto Star's editorial problem

By Cristan Williams

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[https://www.transadvocate.com/toronto-stars-editorial-problem\\_n\\_11348.htm](https://www.transadvocate.com/toronto-stars-editorial-problem_n_11348.htm)

## Abstract

*On Saturday, January 4, 2014, the Toronto Star published an anti-trans hoax without first fact checking. The claim was that a 70 year old woman was undressing in a Toronto-area YMCA when a male-bodied individual “who was pre-everything” and who had been given access to the women’s changing area merely because they claimed to be trans, [...]*

## Article

On Saturday, January 4, 2014, the Toronto Star published an anti-trans hoax without first fact checking. The claim was that a 70 year old woman was undressing in a Toronto-area YMCA when a male-bodied individual “who was pre-everything” and who had been given access to the women’s changing area merely because they claimed to be trans, stripped nude, walked around, and with an erection hit on the elderly woman.

The Toronto Star twice published this claim. On Friday, the Star tried to justify their actions with minimal retroactive fact checking in two separate articles. Here are the Star’s points:

Kathy English, Star Public Editor’s piece, 1/17/14:

- It was verified that the email came from an actual person.
- The person stands by their claim.
- The person sent two emails in October, 2013: 1 to the Toronto Star and 1 to someone at the YMCA.
- The person insists that she remain anonymous.
- The person claims that the incident happened sometime within the last few years.
- The woman knew that her claim was referred to as a hoax.
- While there is no way to prove that this isn’t a hoax, lying over the phone and in 2 emails constitutes a “grand and elaborate” hoax in the eyes of the Star.

Ken Gallinger, Star Journalist’s piece, 1/17/14:

- All questions come from real readers, except when he made up the questions in the beginning.
- Gallinger isn’t going to reveal who the email’s author is.
- The journalistic responsibility to verify a claim that sex crimes are happening at the local YMCA is similar to the journalistic responsibility to “verify that a black lab really did eat those slippers.”

So, there you go. Gone is any tarnish marring the Star’s reputation. Right?

Actually, the Star's "fact checking" failed to address the very real issues of concern while inadvertently raising even more doubts about the veracity of the claim. According to English's story, we now know that this rude, nude, and erect male-bodied individual was walking through the women's changing area during one of the busiest times of the day and yet, no complaints or police reports were made by anyone else. In fact, nobody has ever heard of anything this extraordinary ever happening at the YMCA. No employees, volunteers and after a month of press, still no other member.

Like the elderly Colorado school board member who went to the press to talk about the supposed sexual motivation of trans children who use the restroom, there maybe there is a kernel of truth to story. While it was true that a trans kid used the restroom in an Colorado school district, the hoax happened when a very real adult took to the media to fraudulently claim that she was doing it for sexual reasons. While it was true that a trans kid used the restroom in an California school district, the hoax happened when a very real adult took to the media to fraudulently claim that she was doing it for sexual reasons. While it was true that a trans adults used the changing facilities of Maryland fitness clubs, the hoax happened when a very real adult took to the media to fraudulently claim that it was for sexual reasons. For the Star, learning that a real adult made a claim is enough to make the story probable.

The Star claims that sending two emails and not recanting them over the phone constitutes a grand and elaborate hoax. As English wrote, "Having talked several times to the woman, it's a stretch for me to think the letter was some sort of hoax." With this statement, the Star has either exposed breathtaking credulity or a significant bias among the Star's editors. Every hoax of this precise type has a real person behind it. In each case, they make an extraordinary claim and in each case, the uncorroborated claim lands in the media.

While interviewing the real person behind the emails on multiple occasions, why did the Star fail to ask the important questions? Why didn't the Star ask:

- You say this rude, naked, and erect male-bodied individual was walking around and hit on you during one of the busiest times of day. You claimed that there were no secure areas for changing. Taken together, this certainly means other people observed what you did. Why, after around a month of publicity, do you think none of the other eye witnesses have come forward to corroborate your extraordinary story? Why do you think none of them complained in the first place?
- You claim that after this incident happened you did, in fact, complain to the manager. The manager has no record of your complaint and doesn't recall ever hearing of anything like this happening. Why do you suppose they're lying?
- You now say that this happened a couple of years ago. Why wait until October 2013 to contact the media? What was going on during October that made you contact the media?
- You've not given a date that lends itself to fact checking. When you say, "a couple of years ago," exactly what do you mean? What year did this happen? Was it summer or winter? Do you recall a month?
- You claim you spoke to a manager. Can you please describe to me what the manager looked like? How tall were they? What color was their hair? If you recall, what was the manager's name?
- You said that you know that your claim is being called a hoax. The TransAdvocate is who used that term to describe your claim. How do you know about the TransAdvocate?
- You describe the process this male-bodied person went through in order to access the changing room.

How did you come by that information?

- You claim that someone like this can access the women's changing area by merely asserting that they're trans. That is exactly opposite of the YMCA's policy. How do you explain that discrepancy?
- You claim that the YMCA has no secure changing areas. In fact, the YMCA has numerous secure changing areas. How do you explain that discrepancy?

Those are the types of questions I would ask. In fact, I generally dig a bit deeper to see if the person making the claim has a bias because in cases like this, it's critical to know if the person making the extraordinary claim has a motivation they may be hiding. And no, simply asking them if they hate trans people doesn't count; even a Klan member will tell you that they don't hate the certain types of people they wish to oppress.

These kinds of direct questions and investigations are a non-negotiable pre-publication necessity when dealing with these types of claims precisely because they impugn an entire class of people. Recall the question asked in the original email published by the Star, "I understand that gender is no longer judged solely by genitalia, but does a brief contact with the duty manager mean that men not yet committed to gender reassignment are free to disrobe anywhere they choose." What narrative theme does this question posit?

Setting aside the proven falsehood that merely asserting that one is trans is all one need do in order access sex-segregated areas at the YMCA and the omniscience needed to describe the process this claimed male-bodied person went through in order to access the changing area, note the theme that is asserted. Where have we encountered that theme before?

*There are absolutely no safeguards against abuse. Any boy who "identifies" with girls must be given full access to... bathrooms and locker rooms. This is not equality; it is insanity. - Gender Insanity website*

*Forcing boys and girls to share bathrooms, locker rooms and sleeping arrangements is not equality; it is insanity - Brad Dacus, PJI*

*Maryland officials are considering and Congress has considered passing legislation that will force innocent girls into dealing with she-males, cross-dressers and transvestites in their shower stalls and locker rooms. Why does a man who thinks he's a woman deserve special protections to use girl's restrooms and locker rooms? - Andrea Lafferty on MD non-discrimination ordinance*

*The lines will be forever blurred now that any youth can use any bathroom or locker room... they feel like. - Louis Sheldon, Traditional Values Coalition*

*[T]here is no way to deny [someone] from saying "Y'know," a boy saying "I am female." And, one day he goes into the girls showers... he's in the girls restrooms -- What is going to happen in those restrooms? - Randy Thomasson, from Save California*

*Clearly the California Republican Party understands that AB 1266 is a threat to the privacy and safety of public school students throughout California. Forcing boys and girls to share bathrooms, showers and locker rooms will not decrease bullying. It is bullying. - Gina Gleason, Privacy for all students*

*School boys have always made excuses to get into girls locker rooms -- now they won't need any. - Karen England, Capitol Resource Institute*

What message does the claim make? Why did the Star fail question how this person knew that this

male-bodied person had but a brief contact with the duty manager wherein this person simply asserted themselves to be trans and was therefore given access to the women's changing area? Why did the Star fail to ask why the changing room access process the anonymous woman described is exactly opposite of the actual rigorous process trans people go through to access sex segregated areas at the YMCA?

None of the Star's extensive coverage addressed the actual red flags the anonymous claimant's assertions raised. Certainly if I were tasked with fact checking this story, these red flags would be my focus and I wouldn't be satisfied until I found my answers. Since the Star has yet to address the red flags raised and considering the red flags raised in their newest 1-2-punch defense of their original story, I stand firm in my assertion that this claim retains all the hallmarks of a hoax. I called BS when the story first broke and again I call BS.

Since the anonymous claimant apparently keeps tabs on what the TransAdvocate publishes, I invite her to contact me for an interview. While I will keep her identity concealed, I will ask the important questions the Star either cannot or will not.

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UPDATE:

Congratulations Toronto Star:



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## Ontario rights chief defends man's 'right' to be nude in women's change rooms

BY THADDEUS BAKLINSKI

Fri Jan 31, 2014 16:45 EST

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TORONTO, January 31, 2014 (LifeSiteNews.com) – The head of Ontario's human rights commission is defending the right of 'transgendered' men to use women's changing rooms in response to a woman's complaint that she was ogled by a naked man who was sexually aroused at her local Y.

In a [letter](#) to a *Toronto Star* ethics columnist earlier this month the woman complained that the man, who claimed to be transgendered, asked her uncomfortable questions, including if she "came here often."

"I understand that gender is no longer judged solely by genitalia," the woman wrote to the *Star*, "but does a brief contact with the duty manager mean that men not yet committed to gender reassignment are free to disrobe anywhere they choose?"



Figure 1. Hoax: successfully implemented

### Suggested citation

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