

# MEDIA LITERACY: How do you know what's fake?

**MEDIA LITERACY IS THE ABILITY TO ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, AND CREATE MEDIA.**

## Tips for smarter reading:

1. **DON'T BE SUCKERED BY HEADLINES.** If it sounds too good (or too bad!) to be true, it probably is. **Read the whole thing!**
2. **EVALUATE THE SOURCE, AND THEIR SOURCES.** **Who's writing, and who are they quoting?** Can you find the original?
3. **CHECK THE FACTS,** and don't believe what you read until you've confirmed it, preferably with **more than one good source** to corroborate what you read.
4. **LEAVE YOUR THEORIES AT THE DOOR.** Your biases can lead you to disregard real news and gravitate toward things that confirm your perspectives. **Be open to challenging truths!**

## Why does this matter?

**IN THE PAST, we could TRUST our media.**

The American Society of News Editors writes in their Statement of Principles that *"The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by **informing the people** and **enabling them to make judgments** on the issues of the time. **Newsmen and women who abuse the power** of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes **are faithless to that public trust**. The American press was made free not just to inform or just to serve as a forum for debate but also to **bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power** in the society, including the conduct of official power at all levels of government."*

**NOW,** in opposition to that principle, **fake news websites deliberately publish hoaxes,** propaganda, and disinformation to drive web traffic inflamed by social media. Social media trends mean that **things get shared very quickly** and widely, **and people believe lies** spread by their trusted friends and family, because we are accustomed to trusting the media.

One prominent fraudulent news story released after the election—that protesters at anti-Trump rallies in Austin, Texas, were "bused in"—started as a tweet by one individual with 40 Twitter followers.

Over the next three days, the tweet was shared at least 16,000 times on Twitter and 350,000 times on Facebook, and promoted in the conservative blogosphere, before the individual stated that he had fabricated his assertions.

Worse, **people are acting on these lies,** thinking they're truth.

In early November 2016, fake news sites and Internet forums falsely implicated the restaurant Comet Ping Pong and Democratic Party figures as part of a fictitious child trafficking ring, which was dubbed "Pizzagate". The restaurant's owners and staff were harassed and threatened on social media.

The conspiracy theory was debunked by the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia, fact-checking website Snopes.com and The New York Times, and Fox News.

On 4 December 2016, an individual from Salisbury, North Carolina, walked into the restaurant with a semi-automatic rifle, and fired one or more shots inside the building before being arrested; no one was injured. The suspect told police that he planned to "self-investigate" the conspiracy theory.

## FAKE NEWS SITE

Intentionally misleading logo and URL

ABCnews.com.co



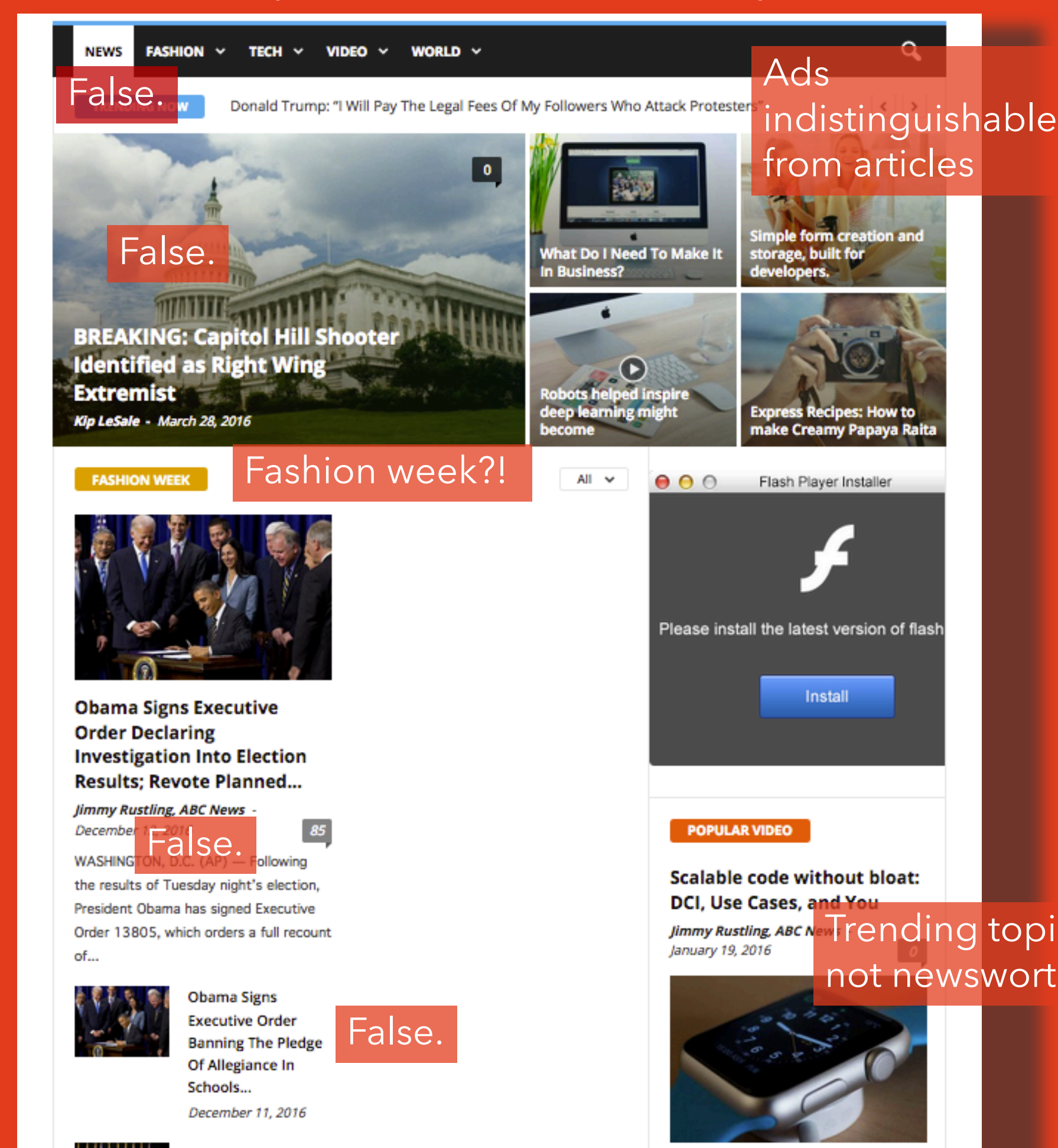
Intentionally spoofing the

## REAL NEWS NETWORK

ABCnews.com



**They want to fool you!**



**IT'S NOT ABOUT POLITICS OR IDEOLOGY.**

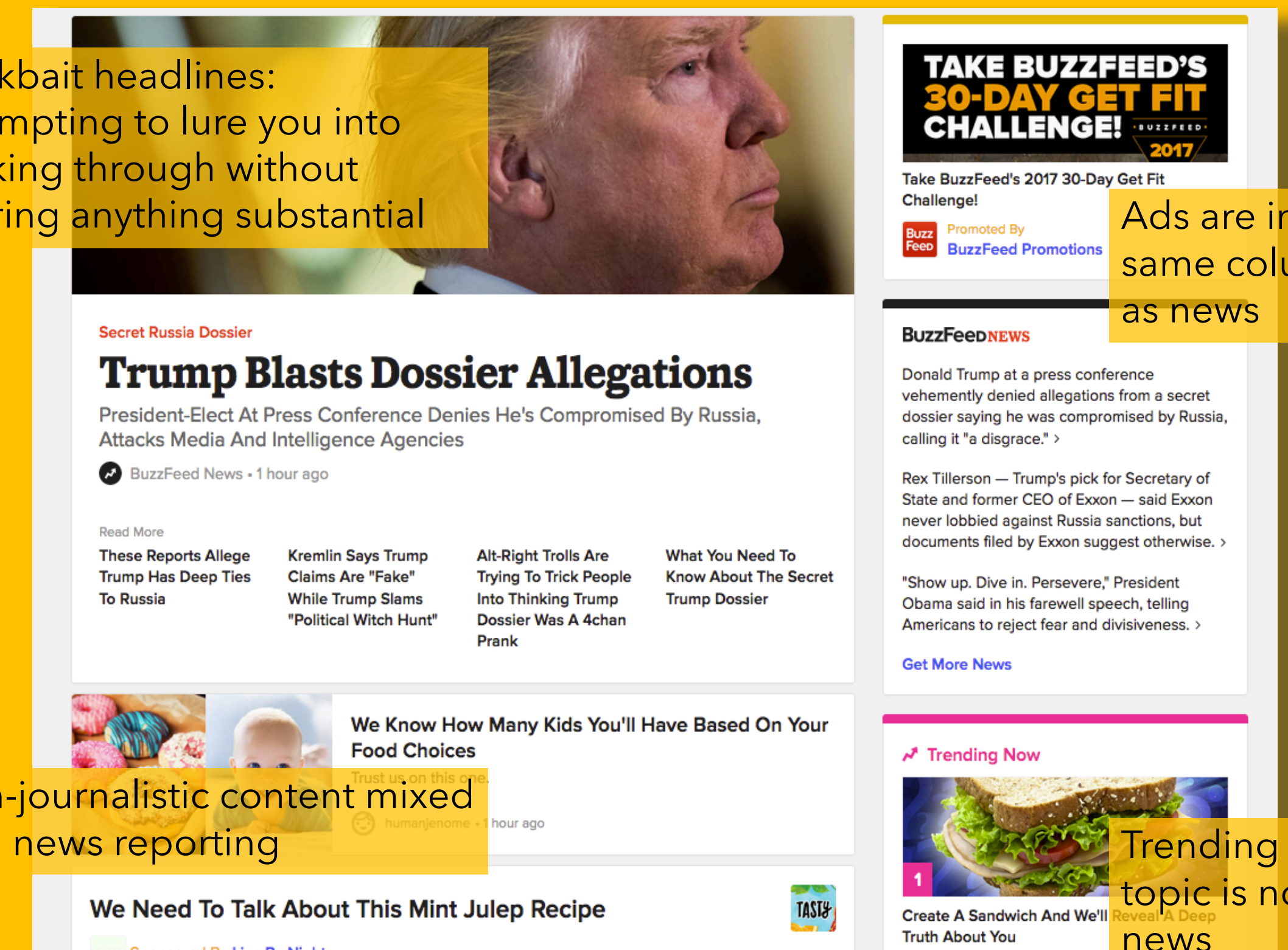
**IT'S ABOUT FACTS, CONTEXT, AND INTENT.**  
**CHECK OUT THESE EXAMPLES.**

## BuzzFeed

### CLICKBAIT (NOT GREAT)

Clickbait headlines: attempting to lure you into clicking through without sharing anything substantial

Non-journalistic content mixed with news reporting



The New York Times

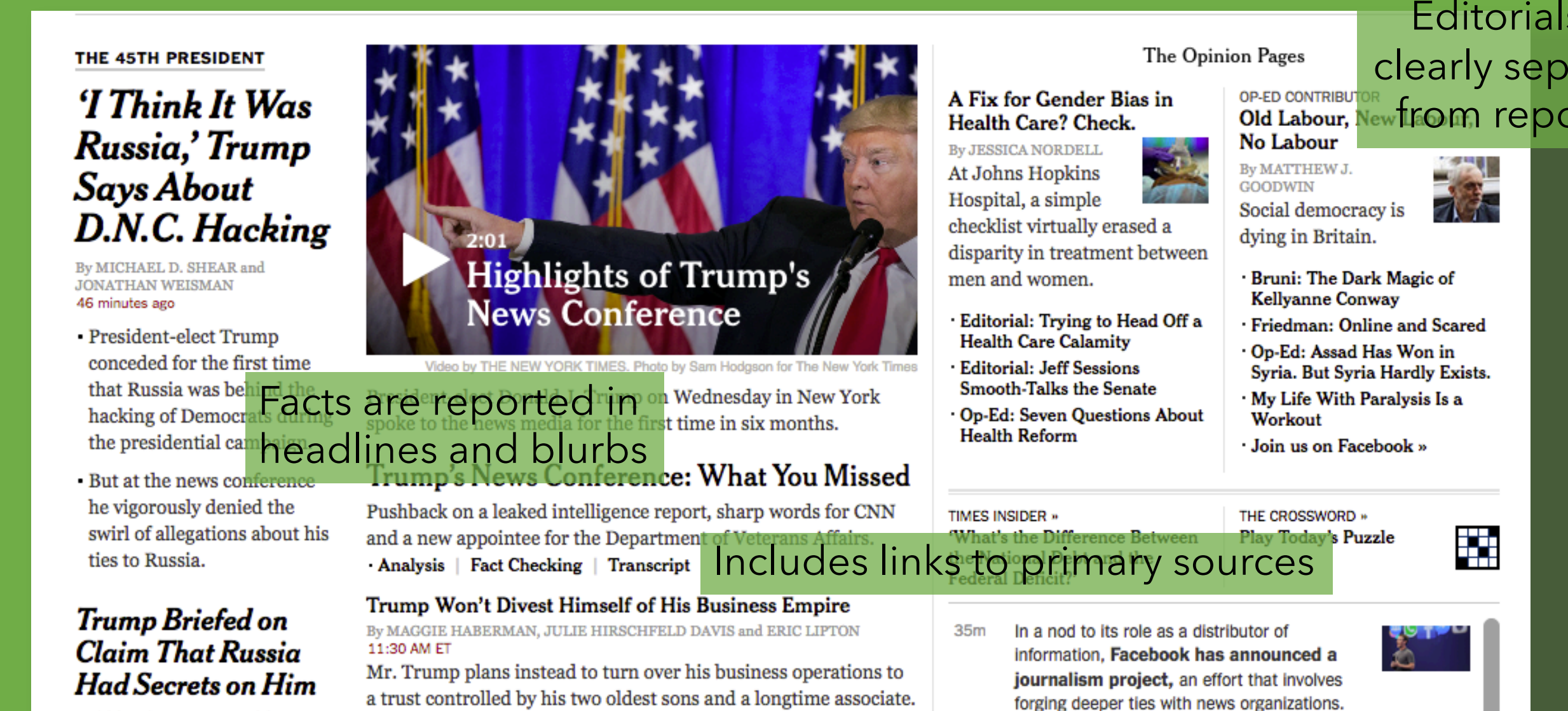
MEETS COMMON JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS

Screenshots captured on 1/11/2017:

Resources quoted are from:

<https://www.nytimes.com/>  
<https://www.buzzfeed.com/>  
<http://abcnews.com.co/>

<http://asne.org/content.asp?pl=24&sl=171&contentid=171>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fake\\_news\\_website](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fake_news_website)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism\\_ethics\\_and\\_standards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism_ethics_and_standards)



Facts are reported in headlines and blurbs

No ads mixed in with the reporting

Editorials are clearly separated from reporting

Includes links to primary sources

Trending stories are news stories