



## Facebook's Snopes Fact-checkers: A Prostitute, a Dominatrix, an Accused Embezzler

**CLAIM:** "Facebook 'fact checker' [who will arbitrate](#) on 'fake news' is accused of defrauding website to pay for prostitutes — and its staff includes an escort-porn star and 'Vice Vixen dome.'"

### ✓ TRUE

Although the above is the form used to introduce topics at "fact-checking" website Snopes.com, don't hold your breath waiting for this particular claim to appear there anytime soon. This isn't because the quoted sentence, a *Daily Mail* headline, is true or untrue. It's because it's all too revealing about Snopes' CEO — in a "the emperor has no clothes" kind of way.



The claim of embezzlement was made by Snopes founder Barbara Mikkelson against co-founder and ex-husband David Mikkelson; the pair are locked in a bitter legal dispute in which they accuse each other of financial impropriety.

This he-said/she-said story takes on importance because of what Facebook recently said: that Snopes will be one of the fact-checking outlets it will use to determine if news is "fake" and should, therefore, be discredited and sent to Internet Siberia. Other Facebook fact-checkers are media organs such as ABC, the Associated Press, and Politifact — left-leaning entities all.

Not surprisingly, the Snopes fact-checking couple can't agree on the facts surrounding their own decoupling. As the *Daily Mail* [reports](#):

Legal filings seen by DailyMail.com detail a lengthy financial and corporate dispute which stretches long after their divorce, and which one lawyer describes as 'contentious' in court documents.

In the filings, Barbara, 57, has accused her former husband, 56, of 'raiding the corporate business Bardav bank account for his personal use and attorney fees' without consulting her.

She also claimed he embezzled \$98,000 from the company over the course of four years 'which he expended upon himself and the prostitutes he hired'.

... In court records, Barbara alleged that her ex-husband removed thousands from their business accounts between April and June of 2016 to pay for trips for him and his 'girlfriend'.

She claimed he spent nearly \$10,000 on a 24-day 'personal vacation' in India this year and expensed his girlfriend's plane ticket to Buenos Aires.

'He's been depleting the corporate account by spending monies from it on his personal expenses,' said Barbara in a filing last June.

Of course, David disputes the above. He says the India trip was business-related — he was getting a



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sense of the culture because he's considering establishing a fact-checking website on the subcontinent — and that he went to Buenos Aires for a fact-checking conference. The *Mail* doesn't indicate that he disputed the allegations about company funds used for prostitutes.

What is not in dispute is that Snopes smacks of a den of iniquity. Having divorced Barbara last year, David married 47-year-old Elyssa Young, a longtime escort and porn actress whose working name is "Erin O'Bryn." Note, David had previously hired Young to be an "administrative assistant" at Snopes.

Young has an "escort"-oriented Twitter page and website, which the *Mail* states appear to still be active, and has described herself as "a mature and experienced courtesan [what the less sophisticated call a 'hooker'], idealist, activist & dreamer."

The fees she dreams of, and presumably received, are \$1,200 for four hours and \$5,000 for a full 24. For that you can have "'an elite and discreet companion' who 'understands that while pleasure and passion may be explored in the bedroom, it is hardly the only place,'" wrote Young.

It's not known if David Mikkelson advertises for hires in a red-light district, but Young is perhaps not the strangest Snopes fact maven. As *Breitbart* [informs](#), "Writing under the pseudonym Vice Vixen, Snopes fact-checker Kim LaCapria regularly wrote about sex and fetish gear on her own blog, which was described as a lifestyle blog 'with a specific focus on naughtiness, sin, carnal pursuits, and general hedonism and bonne vivante-ery.' LaCapria's blog often featured reviews of sex toys.... On another blog, LaCapria once described what she did on her day off, writing that she 'played scrabble, smoked pot, and posted to Snopes.' She then added, 'That's what I did on my day 'on,' too.'"

In other words, she admitted she has done her Snopes work while stoned.

LaCapria also revealed that she has strong dominatrix instincts and, more bizarrely still, said she was "addicted to smutty HP [Harry Potter] fanfic," according to the *Mail*.

Why does this *Enquirer*-worthy story matter? Well, would you buy a used "fact" from these people? "The eye altering alters all," observed poet William Blake. People enthusiastically indulging vice and unapologetically proclaiming it are called vice-ridden, and it's risky to assume that amidst a pattern of vice a person would exhibit the virtue of honesty. Moreover, this quality and another virtue, diligence, are prerequisites for competence. Just ask yourself if you would retain the services of an auto mechanic, a baby-sitter, or a brain surgeon you knew had a LaCapria-like altered eye. Would you want to elect a politician who did?

Losing sight of the virtue/vice character yardstick creates an altered eye resulting in altered judgment. Just consider the Duke University [rape frame-up case](#) in 2006. Media and social activists formed a life-rending lynch mob against three white Duke lacrosse players who were falsely accused of rape by black stripper Crystal Mangum (now incarcerated for murder in an unrelated incident). As *New York Times* public editor Dan Okrent put it, alluding to the prejudices coloring judgment, "It was white over black, it was male over female, it was rich over poor, educated over uneducated."

In fact, Durham County District Attorney Mike Nifong was so corrupt in his prosecutorial efforts of the Duke trio that he was forced to resign and was disbarred. Yet common sense should have informed that strippers aren't exactly reliable sources. Mind you, I'm not saying a rush to judgment should blithely dismiss such a person's claims — only that a bigotry-born rush to misjudgment caused them to be blithely labeled gospel.

As for Young and LaCapria, a discerning eye can easily judge their politics. Young ran for "U.S.



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Congress in Hawaii as a Libertarian in 2004, during which she handed out ‘Re-Defeat Bush’ cards and condoms stamped with the slogan ‘Don’t get sc[\*\*\*\*]d again’,” reports the *Mail*. And the *Daily Caller* [informs](#) that LaCapria “describes herself as a liberal and has called Republicans ‘regressive’ and afraid of ‘female agency’”; she also labeled the Tea Party “teahadists.”

Unsurprisingly, this is a bias that fancies fallacies and falsehoods fact. Here are a few examples, [according](#) to the *Caller*:

- “TheDC exposed a Snopes lie about the lack of American flags at the Democratic convention, trying to pass off a picture from day two of the convention as though it were from day one.”
- “[A] Snopes attempt at discrediting a news story from The Daily Caller News Foundation earlier this month was riddled with factual errors and omissions.”
- “Lacapria even tried to contradict the former Facebook workers who [admitted that Facebook regularly censors conservative news](#), dismissing the news as ‘rumors.’”

Of course, LaCapria did state that a “special focus” of her blog was “sin.” So maybe it’s no surprise that this would include the sin of lying — and that it wouldn’t be confined to only her more perverted pursuits.



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