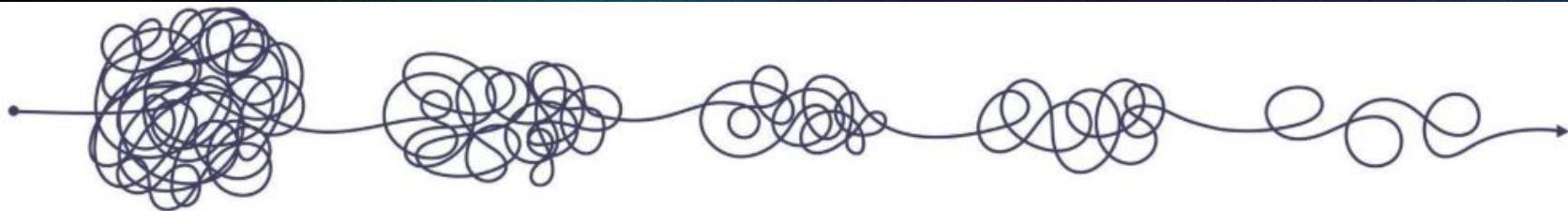


Scholarly Approaches to Misinformation

Hope and Help for the Overwhelmed



SCHOOL OF LIBRARY &
INFORMATION STUDIES
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Tara Zimmerman, PhD
Assistant Professor

TODAY'S AGENDA



CURRENT
INFORMATION
ECOSYSTEME



HISTORICAL
CONTEXT

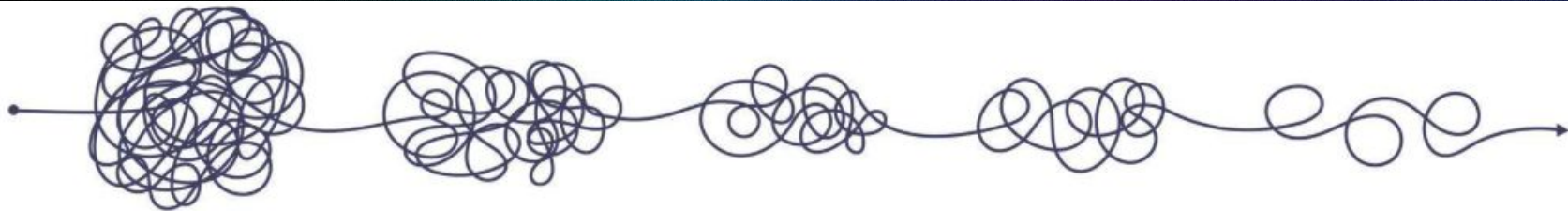


CURRENT
RESEARCH



MEDIA LITERACY
SKILLS FOR ALL

Current Information Ecosystem



www.californiafirefacts.com



The devastation of the Palisades Fire is seen in the early morning in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, Jan. 10, 2025.
John Locher/AP

Sources:

[https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-track-record-disaster-misinformation-casts-blame-california/story?id=117547205;](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-track-record-disaster-misinformation-casts-blame-california/story?id=117547205)

<https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/gov-gavin-newsom-launches-website-to-fight-misinformation-about-californias-fires>

Disaster Relief

The New York Times | <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/06/us/hurricane-helene-north-carolina-misinformation.html>

Another Hurdle in Recovery From Helene: Misinformation Is Getting in the Way

In North Carolina and other states, a barrage of conspiracy theories and false claims over efforts to bring relief after Hurricane Helene is alarming and disheartening officials and workers.

Listen to this article · 8:40 min [Listen to audio](#)



By Emily Cochrane, Christopher Flavelle, Michael D. Shear and Tiffany Hsu
Emily Cochrane reported from western North Carolina, Christopher Flavelle and Michael D. Shear reported from Washington, and Tiffany Hsu reported from San Francisco.
Oct. 6, 2024

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's devastation in western North Carolina, the public meeting in Rutherford County last Wednesday was essential business. Officials from several shellshocked communities convened to talk about the extensive damage and ongoing search-and-rescue efforts.

But within hours, a conspiracy theory took hold. The meeting, social media posts claimed, was a secret discussion about bulldozing, confiscating or even selling land for profit or to mine lithium.

"The only lithium for sale in Rutherford County is at the local Lowes stores in a 9-volt battery," said Bryan King, the chairman of the county commission, who was at the meeting. The power of the conspiracy theory, he added, "is just disheartening."

"I have been doing disaster work for nearly 20 years, and I cannot think of another acute disaster where there has been this much misinformation."

Samantha Montano, assistant professor emergency management at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

Source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/06/us/hurricane-helene-north-carolina-misinformation.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

Health Misinformation



Sources:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/meta-ending-fact-checking-lead-rise-health-misinformation/story?id=117480644>

[https://www.msnbc.com/deadline-white-house/deadline-legal-blog/supreme-court-rfk-jr-doctors-covid-misinformation-rcna187395;](https://www.msnbc.com/deadline-white-house/deadline-legal-blog/supreme-court-rfk-jr-doctors-covid-misinformation-rcna187395)

<https://www.theguardian.com/wellness/2025/jan/08/health-misinformation-online-tips>

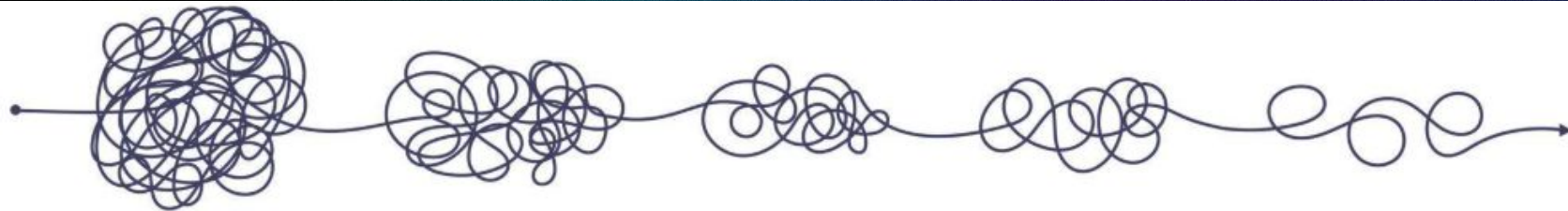
Basic Definitions



Source:

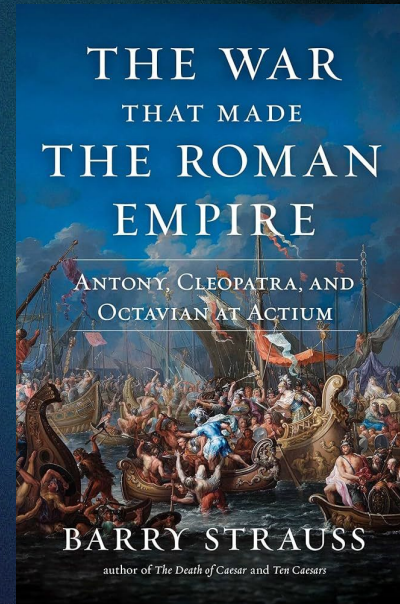
<https://apnews.com/article/trump-gulf-of-mexico-bc438f4feca1234475a1adef99344da7>

Historical Context



Misinformation in Ancient Rome

By Till
Niermann,
CC BY 2.5,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25421745>

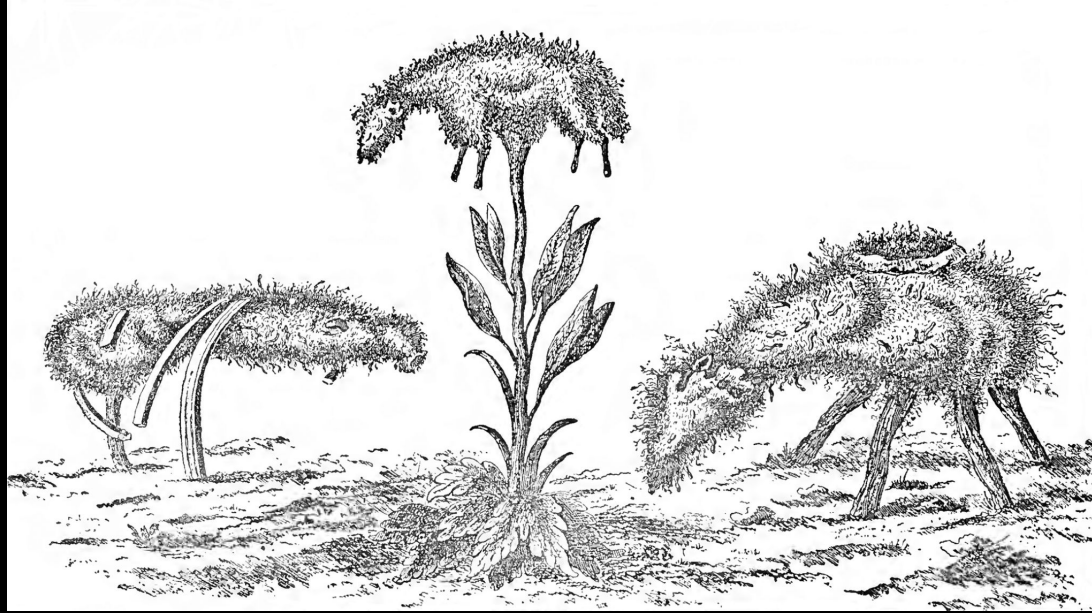


<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-War-That-Made-the-Roman-Empire/Barry-Strauss/9781982116682>

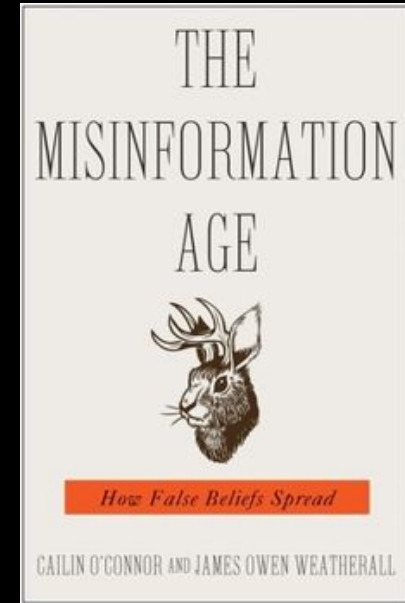
Source:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwcgn9q#:~:text=To%20win%20the%20war%2C%20Octavian,news'%20war%20against%20Mark%20Anthony.>

Vegetable Lamb of Tartary



“The ‘Borometz,’ or ‘Scythian Lamb,’ ” from *Connubia Florum*, by De La Croix, 1791, reproduced in *The Vegetable Lamb of Tartary: A Curious Fable of the Cotton Plant*, by Henry Lee, 1887. [The Internet Archive](https://www.archive.org/details/vegetablelamboftartary1887/henry-lee), University of Toronto.



Source:
<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300251852/the-misinformation-age/>

Misinformation in the Revolutionary War

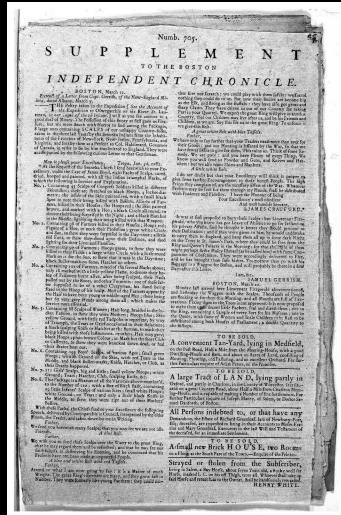


FIGURE 1. Franklin's hoax, *Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle*, first edition, printed at the press at Passy, April 1782. American Philosophical Society. Reproduced with permission.

Source: Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association (Dec. 2008)

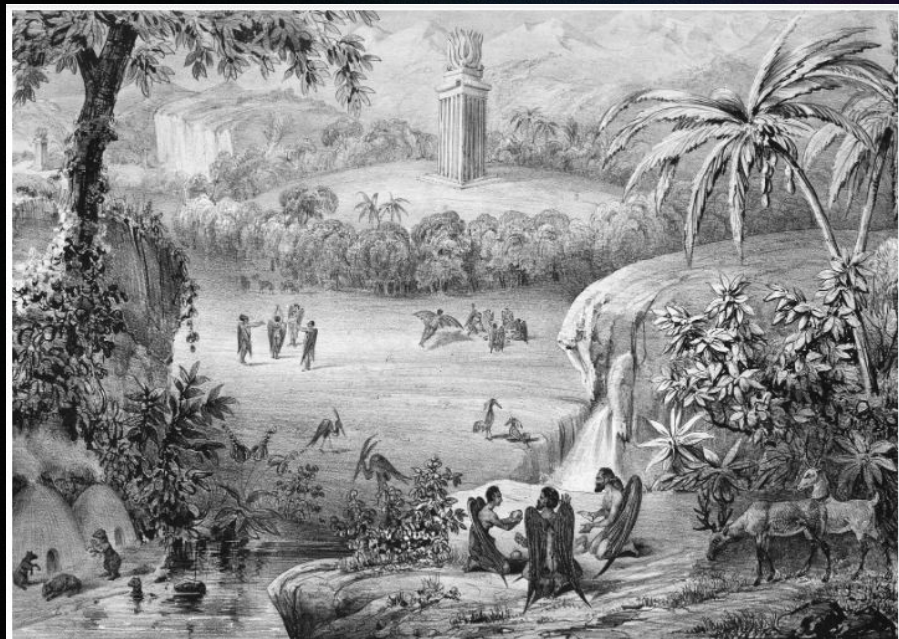


Benjamin Franklin by
David Martin - The White
House Historical
Association
<https://www.whitehousehistory.org/photos/benjamin-franklin-by-david-martin>

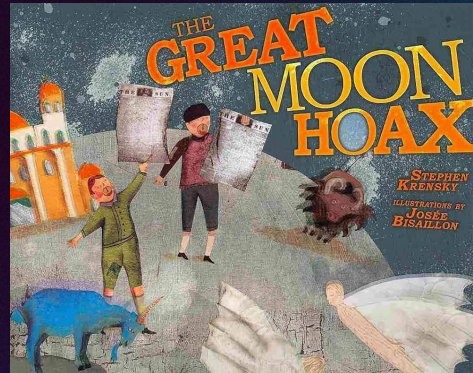
Propaganda Warfare: Benjamin Franklin Fakes a Newspaper - Journal of the American Revolution

Source: <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/11/propaganda-warfare-benjamin-franklin-fakes-a-newspaper/>

Misinformation...on the Moon?



A French print, published in the New York Sun newspaper, in 1835, purported to show all manner of plants and life on the moon's surface. Photograph by SSPL / Getty



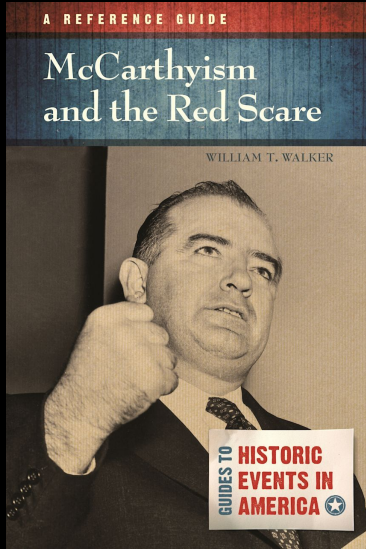
Source:

<https://www.juniorlibraryguild.com/the-great-moon-hoax-9780761351108j>

Library of Congress

Source: <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2014/08/the-great-moon-hoax/>

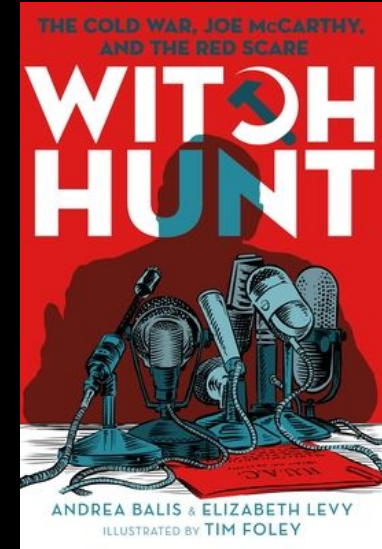
McCarthyism



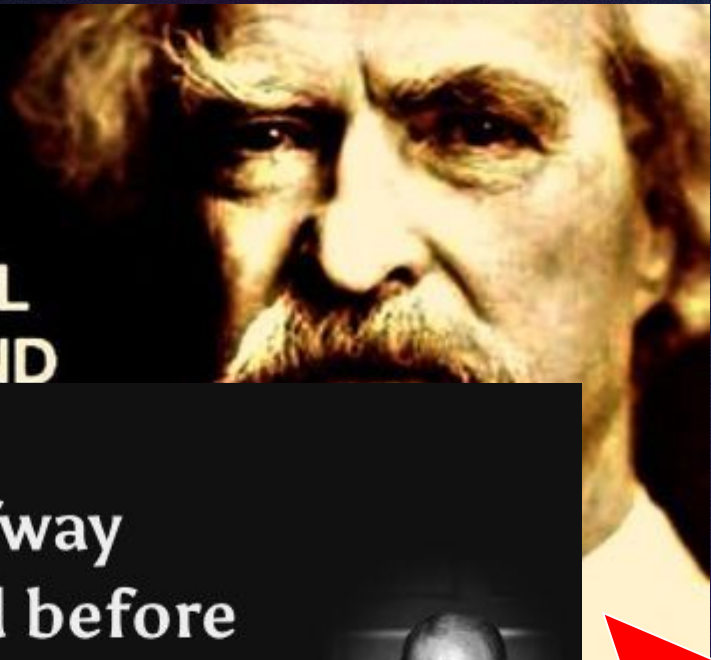
Source:
<https://www.abebooks.com/9781598844375/McCarthyism-Red-Scare-Reference-Guide-1598844377/plp>



Joseph McCarthy
running for Senate 1946



Source:
<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250246813/witchhunt/>



“A LIE CAN TRAVEL
HALFWAY AROUND

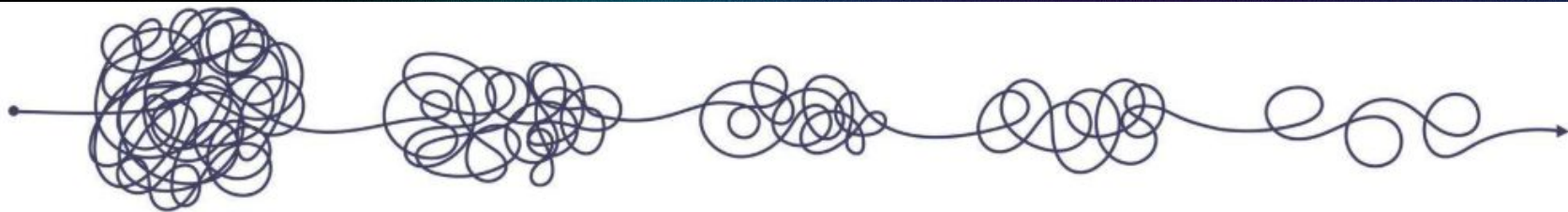
A lie gets halfway
around the world before
the truth has a chance
to get its pants on.

Winston Churchill



NOTE:
These are both
misattributions

Current Research



INFORMATION POVERTY

ELFREDA CHATMAN
1996

Power affects an individual's
ability to seek, find, and use
information

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

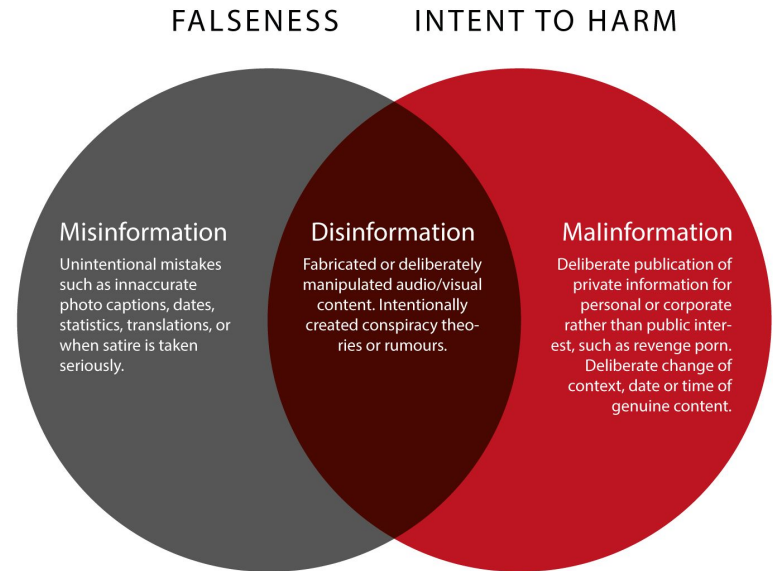
EPPLER & MENGIS
2004

Information processing
requirements being greater
than information processing
capacities

INFORMATION DISORDER

WARDLE &
DERAKSHAN
(2017)

TYPES OF INFORMATION DISORDER



INFORMATION MARGINALIZATION

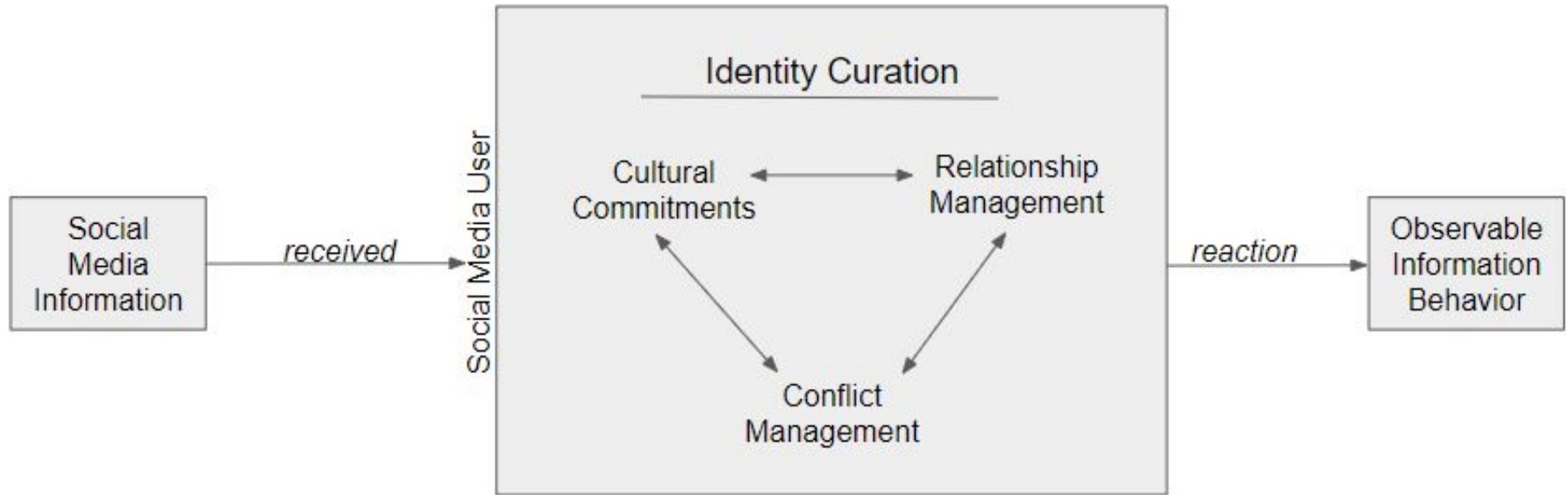
GIBSON & MARTIN
2019

Systemic, contextual barriers
to information access

SOCIAL NOISE

ZIMMERMAN
(2020)

Influence of personal and
relational factors on
information received via
social media



Social Noise

Zimmerman (2020)

Social Noise Examples

Avoidance

I am interested in that news item but don't want to click on it because I'm afraid I'll be flooded with more links for things like that...

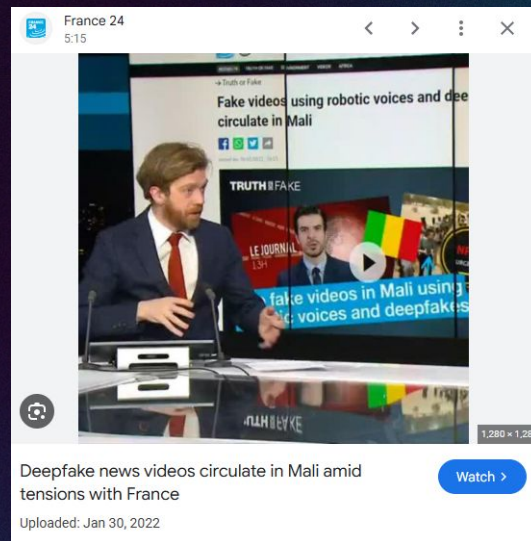
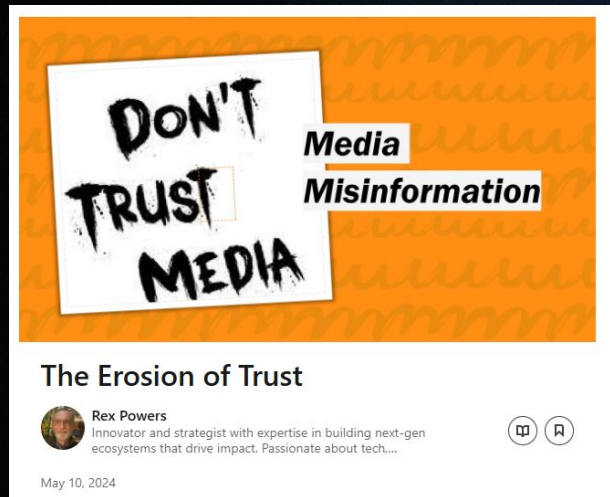
Assumptions

Because I know [this person] I assumed the post was something negative and biased, so I didn't even look at it"

Showing Support

I'm not really involved in [this animal rescue organization] but I clicked like on it because I know it is important to [the poster]."

Current Research



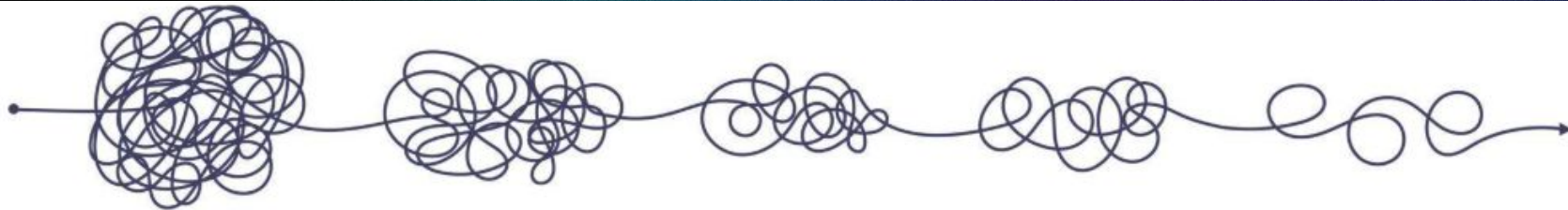
Spillover Effect

Van Der Meer, Hameleers, and Ohme (2023)

Multimodal Disinformation

Lee, Hameleers, and Shin (2024)

Media Literacy Skills For All



What is Media Literacy?

Ability to:

- Access
- Analyze
- Evaluate
- Create
- Act

Using all forms of communication

“Media literacy empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens.”

Awareness & Critical Thinking (ACT) Program:

How School Librarians Can Teach Children to Detect and Avoid Misinformation



Dr. Faith Rogow
Insighters Education



Baby Shark Dance | #babyshark Most Viewed Video | Animal Songs | PINKFONG Songs for Children 



PINKFONG





Clickbait



You'll never believe what people did to these puppies!

[Click Here to Read the Full Story](#)

Importance of Context

7



1 MILLION



Importance of Context



Expertise



CoachCoach @urbballcoach

Check it out. Great video. Tips from an all-star to make your game better.

<https://youtu.be/S8oBB0VBcQw?si=icHdHn7IKLxudDC3>



Expertise



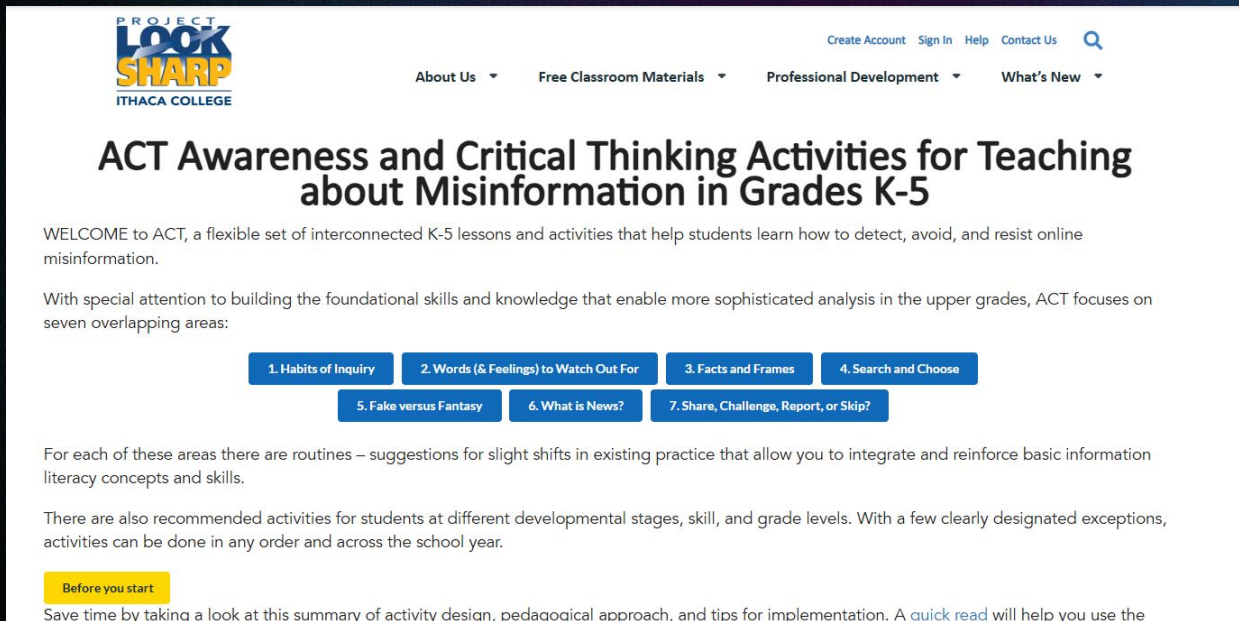
Framing



Framing



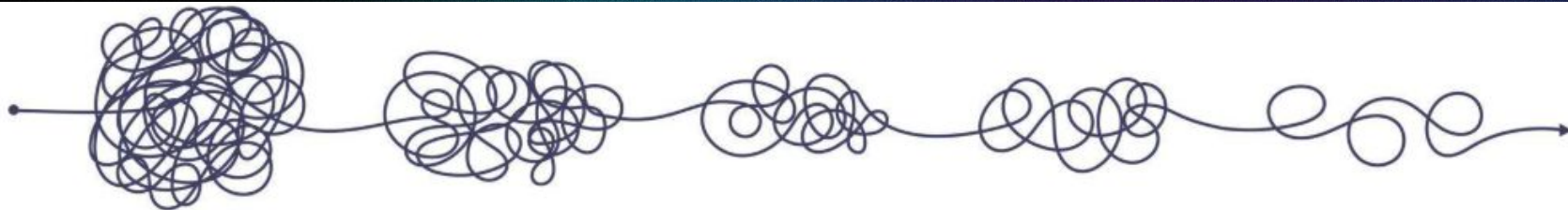
Project Look Sharp



The screenshot shows the Project Look Sharp website. At the top left is the logo, which says "PROJECT LOOK SHARP" in blue and orange, with "ITHACA COLLEGE" below it. To the right of the logo are navigation links: "About Us", "Free Classroom Materials", "Professional Development", and "What's New", each followed by a dropdown arrow. Further right are links for "Create Account", "Sign In", "Help", and "Contact Us", followed by a search icon. The main heading is "ACT Awareness and Critical Thinking Activities for Teaching about Misinformation in Grades K-5". Below this is a welcome message: "WELCOME to ACT, a flexible set of interconnected K-5 lessons and activities that help students learn how to detect, avoid, and resist online misinformation." This is followed by a paragraph: "With special attention to building the foundational skills and knowledge that enable more sophisticated analysis in the upper grades, ACT focuses on seven overlapping areas:". Below this paragraph are seven blue buttons arranged in two rows. The first row contains: "1. Habits of Inquiry", "2. Words (& Feelings) to Watch Out For", "3. Facts and Frames", and "4. Search and Choose". The second row contains: "5. Fake versus Fantasy", "6. What is News?", and "7. Share, Challenge, Report, or Skip?". Below the buttons is a paragraph: "For each of these areas there are routines – suggestions for slight shifts in existing practice that allow you to integrate and reinforce basic information literacy concepts and skills." This is followed by another paragraph: "There are also recommended activities for students at different developmental stages, skill, and grade levels. With a few clearly designated exceptions, activities can be done in any order and across the school year." At the bottom left is a yellow button that says "Before you start". Below this button is a line of text: "Save time by taking a look at this summary of activity design, pedagogical approach, and tips for implementation. A [quick read](#) will help you use the".

projectlooksharp.org/?action=act#

What Can I Do?



Awareness



© Nobel Prize Outreach.
Photo: Geir Anders Rybakken

Maria Ressa
Nobel Peace Prize 2021

Born: 2 October 1963, Manila, Philippines

Residence at the time of the award: Philippines

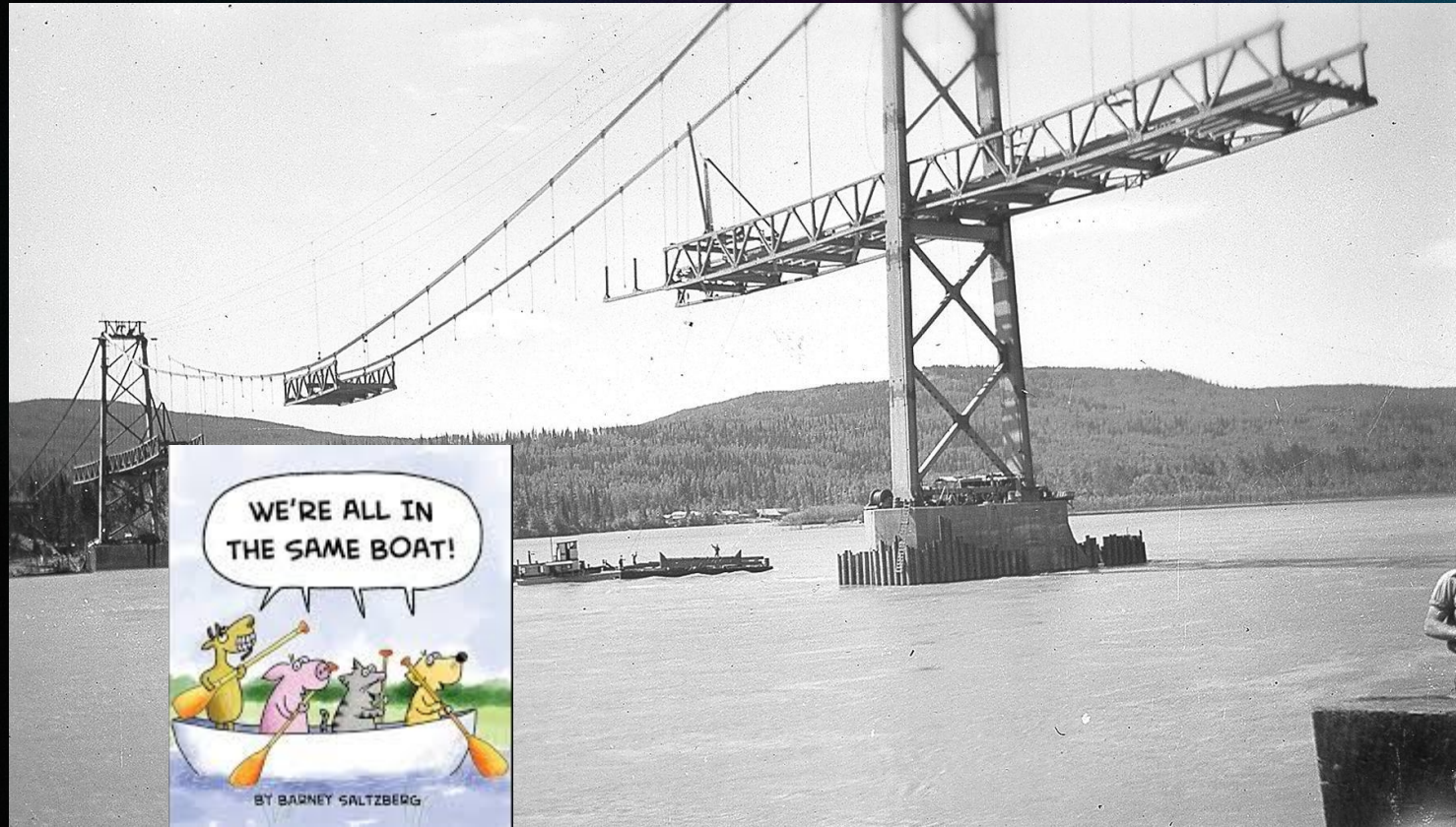
Prize motivation: “for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace”

Prize share: 1/2

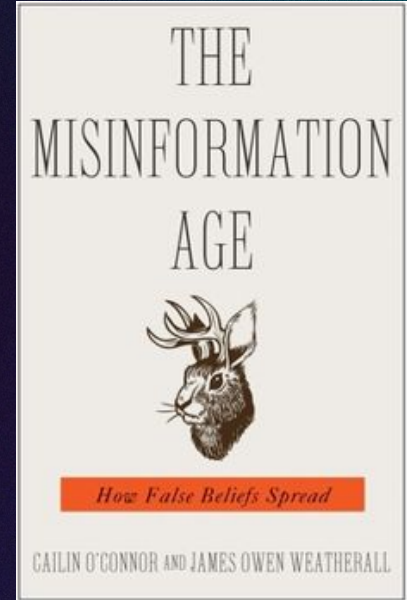
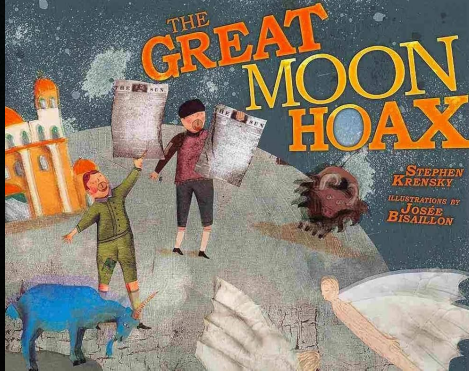
“ If you don't have facts, you can't have truth without Without truth, you can't have trust. Without these three, you don't have a shared reality...

You can't have democracy.”

Building Bridges



Sharing What We Learn



Media Literacy Resources

Ask Yourself Questions

- Why was this made?
- Who made it?
- What is missing?
- How might different people interpret it?
- What techniques are used and why?
- Who might benefit from this message?
- Who might be harmed by this message?

Key Steps for Digital Media Literacy

Key Steps for Digital Media Literacy

Modern technology continues to make the spread of propaganda and the manipulation of information easier. Social media and traditional news media sources can be both victims and perpetrators of spreading misinformation and disinformation. There are, however, basic steps that every individual can take to identify and mitigate these harmful narratives.



Consider the source	Is this a well-known or trusted news outlet, and are they reputable for the subject at hand?
Triple check the source	Sites designed to spread false information often try to mimic legitimate news sources. Check the name, logo, and "About" section to verify.
Identify the author	Misleading and false articles often do not include authors. If authors are listed, do a quick search to see if they are trusted sources.
Inspect the URL	Webpages that notoriously spread disinformation often have odd web domain names that try to imitate real sources (e.g. nbcnews.com.co)
Examine spelling and punctuation	Webpages with misspelled words, unnecessary ALL CAPS, poor grammar, and excessive punctuation are often unreliable.
Seek alternative viewpoints	Search for other articles and sources on the same topic. If there are limited or no results, or you find contradicting information, you may want to do further research and fact-checking.
Think before you share	Damaging disinformation spreads quickly via shared posts. Emotional and sensitive topics are often used to manipulate readers into sharing without thinking. Review the above steps and be wary of content that seeks to sow discord and provoke audiences.

Sharing Thoughtful Resources



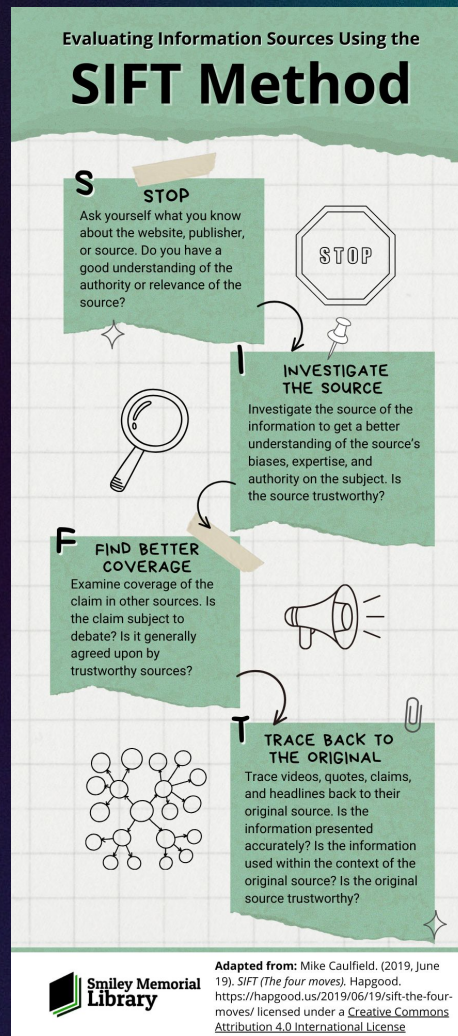
Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Video

<https://youtu.be/GoQG6Tin-1E>

AUSTIN
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Media Literacy Resource Guide

(<https://library.austintexas.libguides.com/medialiteracy>)



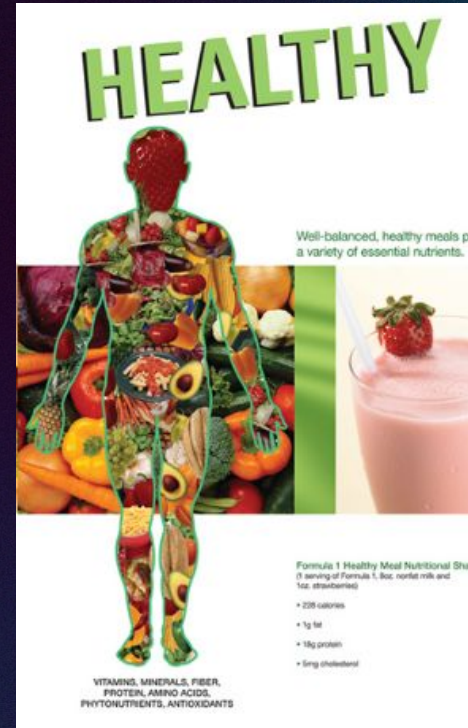
“Our desire for quick answers may overpower the desire to be certain of their validity.

And when this bias can be multiplied by billions of people around the world nearly instantaneously, more caution is in order.”

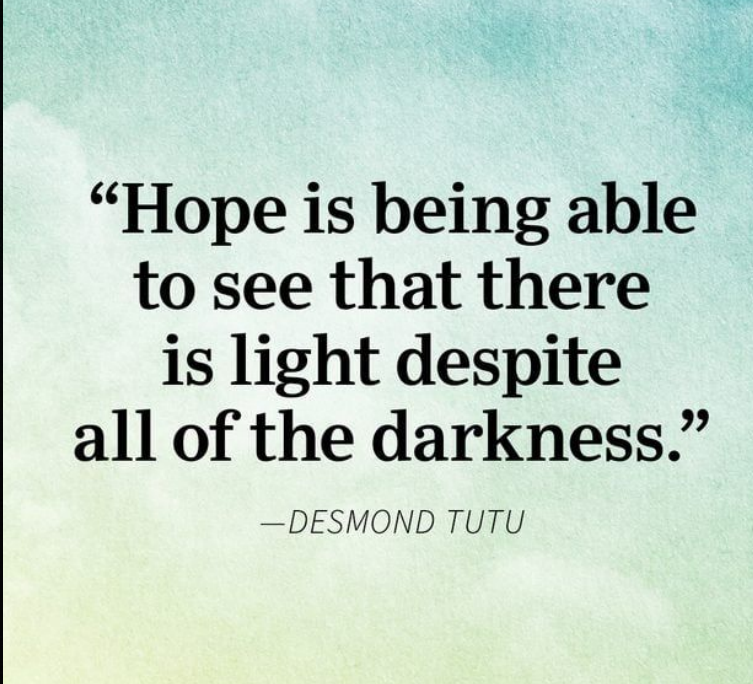
Source: "How False News Spreads" Noah Tavlin, TED Ed video. https://youtu.be/cSKGa_7XJkg



Fight Information Malnutrition



Moving Forward



**“Hope is being able
to see that there
is light despite
all of the darkness.”**

—DESMOND TUTU

Hope

Education

Agency

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- Zimmerman, T., Shiroma, K., Fleischmann, K.R., Xie, B., Jia, C., Verma, N., and Lee, M. (2023). Misinformation and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. *Vaccine*, 41 (1), 136-144.
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Thank You

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TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY