

# powderedwigsociety.com

A conservative website that has published false and unsubstantiated claims about U.S. politics and the COVID-19 pandemic.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

## Ownership and Financing

PowderedWigSociety.com appears to be owned by a man named Tony Blasioli and the private company Hawaii Business Brokers. Blasioli and the company are named as registrants of the site's domain name. Blasioli's LinkedIn profile identifies him as the "web publisher" of PowderedWigSociety.com.

The site's only content creator, who said in an email to NewsGuard that he uses the pseudonym Thomas Madison, did not answer NewsGuard's emailed question asking whether Thomas Madison is Tony Blasioli.

The website runs advertisements.

## Content

PowderedWigSociety.com describes itself as "dedicated to the restoration of and strict obedience to the United States Constitution" in a banner that heads every page of the site.

The website primarily covers U.S. politics, publishing partisan conservative opinion on news of the day. Stories are sorted into categories such as Terrorism, Second Amendment, Russiagate, and 2020 Presidential Election.

Typical headlines include "When will people see this coronavirus insanity for what it is, a political manipulation?", "As Russia and the Saudis drive US domestic oil producers into bankruptcy, someone please tell me why we can't establish our own oil market and price," and "DHS whistleblower who uncovered a network of radical Muslims during the Obama admin and was fired for it found dead from gunshot wound. Imagine that!"

Score: 0/100

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✗ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Articles often add commentary to news stories reported by other sources, which range from reliable newspapers such as The Detroit Free Press and the San Diego Union-Tribune to sites NewsGuard has found to have repeatedly published false content, such as DCClothesline.com and TheWashingtonStandard.com.

#### Credibility

The website has promoted false and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, in a May 2020 article with a headline that begins, “This is America! You have been lied to by the left and the MSM and you are a chump for falling for it,” the site promoted the false claim that the COVID-19 virus was engineered. The article based its claim on a YouTube interview with Dr. Rashid Buttar, a North Carolina doctor who claimed that the virus was created in the U.S.

“I started seeing this is actually a chimeric version, something that was developed here in the United States,” Buttar said. “In 2015, it was published in Nature magazine, it was developed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where all the research was done.” Buttar went on to claim that this UNC study took an existing coronavirus and “brought in the backbone from the SARS coronavirus, put them together, and inserted HIV and [Middle East respiratory syndrome] orthologues on top of it to create a more virulent, more detrimental virus.”

While the UNC study cited by Buttar, which was published in the journal Nature Medicine in November 2015, did conclude that viruses similar to the SARS coronavirus were capable of directly infecting humans, it did not mention the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus or “inserting HIV,” as Buttar claimed in the video reposted by PowderedWigSociety.com. An editor’s note added to the Nature Medicine study in March 2020 said, “We are aware that this article is being used as the basis for unverified theories that the

novel coronavirus causing COVID-19 was engineered. There is no evidence that this is true; scientists believe that an animal is the most likely source of the coronavirus.”

A February 2020 study in the journal *Emerging Microbes and Infections* found there is “no credible evidence” linking the coronavirus strain used in the UNC study to the COVID-19 virus.

There is also no evidence to support Buttar’s claim that the COVID-19 virus was engineered. A March 2020 study published in the journal *Nature Medicine* concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.”

An April 2020 article headlined “BOMBSHELL! Cooking the books! Doctor reports that Medicare is paying docs and/or hospitals to list admissions as COVID,” suggested that hospitals and doctors had exaggerated the number of deaths from COVID-19 to receive more money from the U.S. government. “Now, it appears that Medicare is piling on, stoking the hysteria by cooking the books, padding the number of COVID-19 deaths,” the article stated.

A provision in the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act adds 20 percent to Medicare payments to hospitals who treat COVID-19 patients. However, there is no evidence that policy has led to “padding the number of COVID-19 deaths,” as the article asserted.” According to an April 2020 article from fact-checking website PolitiFact, the add-on was intended to help hospitals which have lost revenue from delaying routine care and elective surgeries during the pandemic.

In a May 2020 article, headlined “YouTube removed the original video, so we found this one: Virologist who was jailed for defying Fauci is naming names, beginning with Tony Fauci,” the website advanced unsubstantiated claims that a physician was sent to jail for defying infectious diseases specialist Dr. Anthony Fauci.

The article was based on comments by Judy Mikovits, a molecular biologist interviewed in the first part of “Plandemic,” a documentary that promoted false claims about the COVID-19 virus.

“In the following video, Dr. Mikovits, who was jailed for defying Fauci, sees the coronavirus pandemonium for what it is, a leftist- and media-generated hysteria, no doubt engineered to damage President Trump’s reelection effort,” the article stated.

Mikovits was not jailed for “defying Fauci,” who is currently director of the U.S. National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as PowderedWigSociety.com claimed. According to a November 2011 article in the Chicago Tribune, she was arrested on charges that she stole lab notebooks and a computer from the Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-Immune Disease in Reno, Nevada, after being fired as the institute’s director. The charges were later dropped, according to a 2012 article in Science magazine.

Mikovits has claimed without evidence that Fauci, along with the heads of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other government agencies, led a conspiracy to cover up and discredit her work. Mikovits alleged in a 2014 book that Fauci threatened to have her arrested if she came onto the National Institute of Health’s property, according to a fact-check by Snopes. Fauci told Snopes in May 2020, “I have no idea what she is talking about. ... I would never make such a statement in an e-mail that anyone ‘would be immediately arrested’ if they stepped foot on NIH property.”

The site has also promoted false claims that former U.S. President Barack Obama’s birth certificate is not valid. An October 2018 article asserted, “Barack Hussein [Obama]’s birth certificate, [is] a clear and very poorly-contrived fabrication that a pimply-faced teenager could have manufactured far better and cheaper in his parents’ basement.” The validity of

Obama's birth certificate, which he released in 2008 and in 2011, has been confirmed numerous times by the state of Hawaii, where he was born.

In a September 2018 article, titled "BOMBSHELL! The letter from Christine Ford to Dianne Feinstein is apparently as fake as Barack Hussein's birth certificate," The PowderedWigSociety.com said that Christine Blasey Ford, the California professor who accused Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault when they were teenagers, did not write a letter to U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein outlining her accusations in July 2018. Its claims were based on an article from NaturalNews.com, a network of sites that NewsGuard has found to have repeatedly published false claims.

"Two professional writers have evaluated Christine Blasey Ford's letter to Dianne Feinstein and determined that it is a total fake, riddled with mistakes one might expect of an adolescent or an individual for whom English is a second language, not his or her native language," the article stated.

A day after the article was published, Blasey Ford testified under oath before the Senate Judiciary Committee that she wrote the letter in question. The PowderedWigSociety.com post was not updated or corrected.

A May 2017 article, headlined "BREAKING! Seth Rich was indeed the source of the 44,000 leaked DNC emails, reinforcing theory that Rich was murdered for leaking emails to WikiLeaks," promoted the unsubstantiated claim that former Democratic National Committee staff member Seth Rich, who was killed in July 2016, leaked thousands of DNC emails to WikiLeaks.

"Two independent law enforcement sources have reported that Seth Rich was indeed the source of the 44,000 leaked DNC emails, reinforcing the theory that Rich was murdered for leaking the emails to WikiLeaks," the article stated, citing a report from Fox

News. The article did not mention that Fox later retracted the story, though it did acknowledge that Rich's family denied that Rich had a connection to WikiLeaks.

There is no evidence that Rich leaked DNC emails to WikiLeaks. According to the April 2019 report from U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller, Russian hackers were the source for the DNC files and Rich had died four days before WikiLeaks received the emails. Washington police have said that Rich was killed as a result of a botched robbery.

Because PowderedWigSociety.com, has repeatedly promoted false and misleading claims in its articles and headlines, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, fails to gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The site's only content creator, who goes by the pseudonym Thomas Madison, denied that the website published false content in a response to NewsGuard's email seeking comment on the stories. Madison did not "Your allegation that we are publishing 'false claims' is no more credible than Mad magazine," he said in an email. "I cite my sources and you say that someone else says that is false, and you accept their claim as gospel. Total absence of proof, only one opinion against another, total lack of credibility!"

The website does not post a policy explaining how it corrects errors and NewsGuard could not find any corrections. Madison did not provide any examples of corrections to NewsGuard and did not answer a question about why the website has left numerous false claims uncorrected.

PowderedWigSociety.com does not explicitly disclose its conservative point of view. The site's banner says, "Dedicated to the restoration and strict obedience to the United States Constitution. The About Us page explains that the site takes its name from the "Declaration of Independence" painting that hangs in the U.S. Capitol,

stating, "It's our hope that our representatives, who walk by this painting regularly, come to fully understand its significance."

Articles often contain opinionated statements from authors favoring conservative policies and U.S. President Donald Trump, while criticizing liberals and Democrats.

For example, a March 2020 article, titled "Based on swine flu figures, the coronavirus hysteria appears to be a massive political hoax. Allow me to explain," said, "If the Trump haters would go to this level of evil to remove a sitting president, terrifying hundreds of millions of people, would they hesitate even a second to arrange delivery of a suitcase nuke to terrorists to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people, then blame it on President Trump? No, they wouldn't!"

In a February 2020 article, the site stated, "Bottom line: If Bernie Sanders or any Democrat is elected president in November, you can be certain of one thing – equal misery, the promise of communism. Vote Trump!"

A January 2019 article, headlined "At this point, nothing short of a massive march on Washington will restore America. President Trump cannot do it alone. He needs YOUR help!, described President Trump as "the finest patriot to occupy the White House since John Adams" and said "he is under constant attack by Democrats, the mainstream media, Hollywood, academia, and even a few disgusting Rinos like Mitt Romney."

Because the website regularly includes opinionated statements in its news articles without disclosing its conservative perspective, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Asked why the site does not disclose its conservative perspective, Madison told NewsGuard, "I don't need to tell you my 'political perspective.' You have already made that determination on your own, erroneously, I'm

sure. A guy wearing shoulder pads and a football helmet shouldn't need to announce to the world that he is a football player. It is readily apparent.”

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Transparency

PowderedWigSociety.com provides no information about its ownership or who is in charge of its content.

Asked why the site does not identify its owner, Madison said in a May 2020 email, “Anyone can look up the ownership of Powdered Wig's domain. It isn't rocket science.” Madison did not answer NewsGuard's question about the site's lack of disclosure about editorial leaders.

Articles are credited to Madison, and a biography is included at the end of every article. However, in a May 2020 email, Madison said that he used a pseudonym “because there are a lot of crackpots out there.”

Because the site's only content creator is identified by a pseudonym, PowderedWigSociety.com does not meet NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators.

The website provides contact information on a Contact Us page.

The site carries stories from content-sharing platform Zergnet. Articles in these sections, which are labeled as “From the Web,” include headlines that resemble news content, such as “Jimmy Carter's Surprising Comment About Trump Is Turning Heads” and “Historically Accurate Model Predicts a Surprising 2020 Election.” These sections are labeled as “Powered by Zergnet.”

Asked why this is not labeled as commercial content, Madison said, “I have no idea who Zergnet is. I get paid nothing for that content. I have an ad agency that handles all advertising. I'm guessing that that is where Zergnet comes from. I don't have time to micromanage my ad agency. Furthermore, I have no responsibility whatsoever to disclose to you or anyone else what is paying content and what is not.”

Despite Madison's claim that he is not paid for this content, Zergnet's content-sharing program allows participating sites to derive revenue from the traffic generated by those stories. PowderedWigSociety.com does not disclose the commercial nature of that content, which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for making clear which content is paid for and which is not.

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## History

The PowderedWigSociety.com domain name was created in 2013. A page on crowdfunding platform GoFundMe says the website "was started in 2013 as a protest to the anti-American actions of Barack Obama, and took off almost immediately, becoming a growing, self-sustaining operation within one year."

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on May 14, 2020, with a review of the site's newer comment, as well as comments from the site's editor. Its rating has changed to reflect NewsGuard's determination that the website does not meet NewsGuard's standard for clearly labeling advertising or for providing information about content creators. The criteria checklist has been updated accordingly.*

**Written by:** [Sam Howard](#)

**Edited by:** [John Gregory](#), [Amy Westfeldt](#)

**Send feedback to NewsGuard:** [Click Here](#)

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