“Barack Obama, the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review, was born in Kenya and raised in Indonesia and Hawaii.”

1991 booklet by Acton & Dystel

“This was nothing more than a fact checking error by me ... There was never any information given to us by Obama ... suggesting in any way that he was born in Kenya and not Hawaii.

Miriam Goderich, 2012
Proofreader (1803, OED): A person who reads text in proof in order to find and mark errors for correction.
Copy editor (1899, OED): One who edits copy for printing.
Fact-checker (1920s): A person who verifies the factual accuracy of an article before publication.

“Any bright girl who really applies herself to the handling of the checking problem can have a very pleasant time with it and fill the week with happy moments and memorable occasions.”

*Time editor, 1920s*
“Each word in the piece that has even a shred of fact clinging to it is scrutinized, and, if passed, given the checker’s imprimatur, which consists of a tiny pencil tick.”

Sara Lippincott, New Yorker fact-checker
“Daisey lied to me and to This American Life producer Brian Reed during the fact checking we did on the story, before it was broadcast. ... In the end, this was our mistake.”

This American Life’s Ira Glass
NEW DEVELOPMENTS

DONALD TRUMP ANSWERS HIS CRITICS
Romney supporter under fire for "birther" views

Romney campaign spends $2 million for week's worth of ads
Fact check
Did Hillary Clinton not have a position on the Keystone pipeline?

Fact check
Bernie Sanders said, "It is wrong today in a rigged economy that 57% of all new income is going to the top 1%."
What do fact-checkers do?
“In the last two years, the federal government spent $7 trillion and our economy lost seven million jobs. I guess we ought to be glad they didn’t spend $12 trillion. We might have lost 12 million jobs.”

Mr. Barbour is among the wide field of Republicans who are considering entering the fight for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination. He has said that he intends to make a decision after the Mississippi legislative session ends next month.

In a 30-minute address to business leaders, Mr. Barbour offered a preview to the message of his potential candidacy, with a heavy emphasis on traditional Republican themes of economic growth, job creation and increasing oil production through expanding drilling. He delivered more criticism than specific policy proposals.
“It was a fact that went completely unchallenged by the New York Times reporter, and the New York Times is one of the — is the best paper that we have in the country.”

author’s fieldnotes, 2011-06-09
“Haley Barbour grossly exaggerated the nation’s job losses under President Barack Obama in a March 14 speech in Chicago. ... Barbour is dead wrong about job losses in the last two years. He’s not even close.”

Although not in Barbour’s prepared remarks, the New York Times reported that Barbour added to his joke when actually delivering his speech, saying: “I guess we ought to be glad they didn’t spend $12 trillion. We might have lost 12 million jobs.”

Barbour was going for a laugh, but he’s taking liberties in his laugh line. Let’s look at the record.

It’s true that the federal government has spent about $7 trillion over the past two fiscal years: $3.5 trillion in fiscal year 2010 and an estimated $3.8 trillion in the current fiscal year, as Table 1.1 of the president’s latest budget proposal shows. It’s not exactly “the last two years,” since the current year started in 2011.
“It’s standard journalism practices that should be used more by more journalists, but sometimes they don’t have the time or they’re on deadline, and you just — so it becomes ‘he said, she said,’ and the reader is left confused and not really knowing what’s the truth. And that’s where we try to come in.”

author’s fieldnotes, 2011-06-09
“When using a word amounts to taking sides in a political dispute, our general practice is to supply the readers with the information to decide for themselves.”

*Bill Keller, NYT*

“Our language in general is totally evaluative and loaded with meaning, and so whatever someone uses, if someone else disagrees with it, then that language is wrong.”

*Alicia Shepard, NPR*
“PolitiFact is different. And it can feel awkward at first. You have to decide which side is right. And I have to say, the first time I wrote the words, ‘President Obama exaggerated’ ... it made me feel really uncomfortable.”

author’s fieldnotes, 2011-06-15
Where does fact-checking come from?
“All the waste in a year from a nuclear power plant can be stored under a desk.”

“Trees cause more pollution than automobiles do.”