



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on July 23, 2025

Why Trump Won in 2024

[*Butler: The Untold Story of the Near Assassination of Donald Trump and the Fight for America's Heartland*](#), by Salena Zito, Center Street: Nashville/New York. 2025, 242 pages, hardback.

This book is the story of the 2024 presidential election, centering on the almost-successful assassination of Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13 of that year. The author, [Salena Zito](#), was positioned within a few feet of Trump when he was shot in the ear.

Zito specializes in documenting the stories of everyday Americans. She contends that most journalists write from the “artificial bubbles of Manhattan and the Beltway,” and have little understanding of — or sympathy with — Middle America. Which explains why much of the national media are perplexed as to why Trump is so beloved by those Americans.



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Trump's Candidacy

Although it is clear that she greatly admires Trump, and Trump admired Zito, her book does not gloss over Trump's tendency to divide the world into his supporters and his opponents. For example, she recalled that months before the Butler event, Trump had become quite upset with her because she had interviewed Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in February 2023. At that time, it appeared that Trump's chances of making it back to the White House were quite slim, and DeSantis was believed to have had an excellent chance of supplanting him for the Republican nomination in 2024. Many Republicans viewed Trump as a liability, as the Republican Party had under-performed in the 2022 midterms, with Trump endorsing weak candidates like Dr. Oz, who lost the Senate race in Pennsylvania.

Zito notes, “By January of 2023, the esteemed New Hampshire University poll showed Trump garnering only 30 percent of the New Hampshire electorate to DeSantis's 42 percent in the country's first primary state.” But, shortly thereafter, Trump began to “claw his way back into the hearts of Republican voters.” He showed up in East Palestine, Ohio (about 40 miles from Butler), in February 2023 in rain and sleet after a Norfolk Southern train derailed, spewing vinyl chloride and butyl acrylate. In stark contrast, President Joe Biden did not come to East Palestine.

The Comeback

She contends this was the inflection point of Trump's amazing comeback, as shortly thereafter Trump's rise in the polls began. As Trump's political revival began to drive up his poll numbers, the Deep State



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began its “lawfare” assault. This had the opposite effect of what they intended, and Republicans began to rally around Trump, recognizing the legal assaults as political.

As Trump coasted to the Republican nomination, Pennsylvania was seen as perhaps the key state to win in 2024. Thus, the Butler rally. Butler was an example of the places in America that were ignored — even resented — by the national media and the coastal elites. Places like Butler are the homes of Americans who are, in Zito’s words, “rooted,” in contrast to places like the Beltway, Manhattan, and large metropolitan areas, where there is much “rootlessness.” Americans in Butler are not as influenced by the progressive views that are assumed as valid in many of the nation’s larger cities.

A geography professor at Ohio’s Youngstown State University told Zito:

Placeless people, like those highly critical of fly-over folks, develop affinities for ideology and abstractions, as opposed to neighborhoods and cities. The lives of the coastal elites, academics, big-business owners, high-tech innovators, entertainers, and media personalities have led to this because they are so mobile.

In contrast, Zito explained:

The people who came to see Trump in Butler had come from a long line of families who were intentionally not mobile. According to US census data, seven in ten people in Pennsylvania live within just a few miles of where they grew up. The proximity to family, traditions, and a way of life were more important to them than upward mobility and a nice bonus check.

“God Has Been With Me”

Trump avoided assassination because he turned his head to the right a moment before the bullet struck him in the ear. Ordinarily, Trump does not take his eyes off his audience. However, he does use a chart about illegal immigration on a giant screen, positioned to his right, and he turned to point out figures about illegal immigration to the crowd. This was usually done near the end of the speech, but for some reason Trump opted to use the chart near the beginning of the speech. The slight turn of his head meant the bullet that otherwise would have entered his head at the temple, almost certainly killing him instantly, instead nicked his ear.

“I got impeached twice, the endless court cases, so when I think about it,” Trump told Zito the next day, “while none of that compares to what happened yesterday, I cannot dismiss that God has been with me. This time, though, it was a big one.”

The book details the security failures that led to Thomas Crooks being able to take a clear shot at Trump from only about 150 yards away, and the tragic death of Corey Comperatore, the Trump supporter who was killed by Crooks just a few feet away from the podium.

The 2024 Campaign

For those who want to relive the campaign of 2024, Zito’s book does a good job of recalling the major stories of the campaign, such as Biden’s being pushed aside by Democratic elites in favor of Vice President Kamala Harris. Other incidents covered include Minnesota Governor Tim Walz calling Senator J.D. Vance “weird”; the role of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.; Harris’ failure to submit to a media



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interview (even with “friendly” media); and the Trump-Harris TV debate.

A longtime Pennsylvania Democrat explained to Zito why the Harris campaign was not giving interviews, nor holding many rallies:

The plan is to run out the clock with tightly orchestrated events to avoid little to any contact with the press. They see this tactic as having little risk. They are banking that voters don't want more from their presidential candidates.

In stark contrast, Trump served average Americans going through the drive-thru at McDonald's. He drove a garbage truck to highlight Biden calling Trump supporters “garbage.” Democrats' efforts to dismiss Trump and large portions of his voters as fascists and Nazis had little effect. They may have actually been counterproductive. Efforts to paint Trump and his base as a bunch of racist bigots also did not work, as increased numbers of Hispanics and blacks backed Trump.

Zito wrote:

Inside each event venue a keen observer could witness the emergence of a new coalition of Republican voters that I had been reporting about for the past few years: union workers, nurses, janitors, businessmen and women, doctors, lawyers, police officers, and college students of every race and generation.

Not the Cause, but the Result

While Zito argues that “there will never be another candidate for president of the United States like Trump,” she contends that his detractors should not be relieved about that. Trump's supporters are not going away, even after Trump:

They have seen what the power of the cultural curators in our country — in academia, media, Hollywood, institutions, corporations, and bureaucracies — has done to their lives, and they rejected it.

She added that “the elites had mocked them for too long,” attempting to change their values and their children's values. “The elite movies insulted them. The elite reporting was biased against them.”

However important Trump was to this movement, Zito argues that he did not create this coalition. Rather, he is “the result of it. That is what the people who want the Republican Party to be the party of Dick Cheney do not understand. Both parties have changed.”

She notes that President Barack Obama was reelected in 2012 with a smaller percentage of the vote than in 2008. The problem was that Republican nominee Mitt Romney was not able to take advantage of the shift going on in the country, because he seemed more like the guy who was telling you that your job is no longer needed. Trump, on the other hand, seemed like the guy who was for you, trying to save your job. The guy who would stop the endless wars, the selling out of the country to globalism.

In short, Zito's book explains much of what has happened in the country over the past several years. Given a choice between the Democrats and Republicans like the Bushes, John McCain, and Romney, many Americans saw little choice. Trump, on the other hand, spoke to their concerns.



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And that is why he won the election.



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