

Cultural Curators Face Reckoning for Mocking Middle America

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People complete their ballots as the sunset is reflected in the glass of a precinct in the Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on Nov. 5, 2024. Rebecca Droke/AFP via Getty Images



By Salena Zito

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Commentary

PITTSBURGH—Walking out of the Allegheny County Republican election night event at a local luxury hotel, the young men waiting to valet my car got into a discussion with me about the just-announced election results.

All four men were in their 30s. Two were white, one was black and the other Hispanic. As I traditionally do, I asked them how they voted, and they all answered with President-elect Donald Trump.

Share The conservative populist coalition was always right in front of



reporters and experts in working-class neighborhoods, suburbs and cities. If only they had not treated those voters as either racists,



fascists, misogynists, garbage, stupid or outliers to their narrative of what Americans should look like.



These voters were directly observable. I saw them, heard them, and reported that welders, cosmetologists, barbers and mechanics, as well



as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects of all shapes, sizes and colors, would be voting for their communities to thrive and for prosperity, safety, and more money in their pocketbooks.

These voters were much more concerned that they would be able not to go into debt if their “check engine” lights went on in their cars than if there was access to abortion. They were more concerned that the school districts in their communities had enough funding, weren’t overcrowded, and were serving the future’s potential than if fossil fuels were causing the climate to burn. They were more concerned about the cost of butter than the insane notion that Trump is a fascist.

They grew weary of the national news’ doomsaying or inaccurate reporting. Their pro-Trump votes should provide a reckoning to the industry that lost the trust of a large majority of voters.

In a series of really bad “takes” coming from the national news, never mind the inaccurate reporting for a second, one of my favorites came toward the final days of the race when reporters, goaded in private messages from the Democrats, exulted that Trump rallygoers were leaving early or sleeping, or that rally events were half empty.

The Associated Press reported the night before the election here at the same event I was attending with a headline that read, “Empty seats become a more common sight at Trump’s final rallies,” suggesting his support was waning with the sentence, “The occasional scenes of empty seats offered a notable contrast to Democratic nominee Kamala Harris’ biggest events.”

That silly focus and suggestion that Trump was losing is exactly why, for the entire cycle, the press missed what mattered to voters in the rush to get a click over a story that was clearly not true. The events were full of enthusiasm. A person leaving early did not mean the person wasn’t voting for Trump. And if someone fell asleep waiting, which is another favorite story, it simply meant the person was tired.

Trump’s win was evident in every state he won where I drove, talked to voters, and reported—from here in my home state of Pennsylvania to North Carolina, Georgia, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Arizona. It was also evident in the places that did not end up mattering in the states I covered that he did not win, such as Virginia, New York, and New Jersey. Even there, Trump performed considerably better than reporters and experts believed he could or should.

What reporters missed because of their dislike of center-right belief systems was that it was not Trump who was the fluke in politics in 2016. It was President Joe Biden who was the fluke in 2020, thanks in large part to COVID-19. They thought Biden was a rejection of the center-right trajectory of the country, but the results of 2024 show the opposite.

Voters weren’t turned off by Trump’s brash approach. They wanted the bull to break up the china shop. Black, white, Asian, and Hispanic voters told me that, and AP VoteCast, a survey of more than 120,000 voters nationwide, confirmed it in a postelection analysis that showed well over half of voters said they wanted to see substantial change.

Trump and Republican candidates were picked over Democrats because of the impact the economy was having on voters’ bottom line

and the abysmal way Biden and Harris handled the enforcement of immigration laws or, for that matter, almost any kind of law.

It was ridiculous to voters to see officials acting as if it were OK not to prosecute someone for breaking into neighborhood businesses or homes. Or to assault someone and be let out, often the same day, with cashless bail.

Because 2016 was dismissed as a fluke, there was little reckoning within my profession in the national media or in the other powerful cultural curators in academia, corporations, institutions, Hollywood, and government to stop doing the things they always do. All insulated in counties of power and wealth, they spent four years bashing Republicans when Trump held the White House and four more years mocking Republicans and their voters all the way up until Election Day this year.

That is why they never saw it. They thought this coalition had shrunk and that they had had the power to do that through the institutions they run. They didn't. Voters didn't just vote for Trump. They voted against the elitist institutions. After two full days, post-election, of watching left-leaning cable news and the once-vaunted national news reports, it is clear they still don't understand not only what just happened but also what is continuing to happen.

Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

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Salena Zito has held a long, successful career as a national political reporter. Since 1992, she has interviewed every U.S. president and vice president, as well as top leaders in Washington, including secretaries of state, speakers of the House and U.S. Central Command generals. Her passion, though, is interviewing thousands of people across the

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