

Trump v. Biden: What Pennsylvania Felt Like Post-Election



Words by Haley Bartel
Photos by Lauren Hoffman

Driving through rural Pennsylvania on Nov. 7, you'd have no idea a major presidential election was just announced. It was calm and quiet, in spite of the fact that it was the state that just decided one of the most stretched out, pro-longed elections in American history. The public displays of politics of this area varied: in stretches of small towns, Biden/Harris signs dominated, but the further out into the country you went, the more Trump flags flew.

I spent that weekend in the car with my fellow reporter, Lauren Hoffman. We wanted to capture diverse reactions to the election results.

Reading, Pennsylvania. Saturday, Nov. 7 at 1:30pm -- roughly 2 hours after Joe Biden was declared President-Elect.

Our first stop was the small city of Reading, Pennsylvania, located in the red Berks county. Participants in a pro-Trump rally had parked at a church, and walked over to a nearby bridge above a highway. There, they raised flags that read a number of different slogans, including: "Trump 2020 Keep America Great," "Women for Trump," and "Trump 2024". They did not wear masks, nor did they practice social distancing.



A Make America Great Again flag flies from the back of a truck in Reading, Pennsylvania



A group of Trump supporters disrupt traffic on a highway in Reading, Pennsylvania. The rally was organized by the local church.



A man holding a Trump 2016 flag



A mother and her child walking on the overpass as the rally disbanded. She can be seen holding a Trump 2020 flag, while her child holds one that reads “Don’t Tread on Me”

A woman stood in the middle of the bridge with a megaphone in hand, but her words were muffled by noise from the highway. The people around her cheered.

50-year-old Janelle from Reading declined to share her last name. Although her blue and red Trump sign made her vote plainly obvious, for the sake of accuracy I asked her who she voted for. She laughed and responded that she, of course, voted for Donald Trump.

I hope the next steps will be prosecution and processing of corruption. If there were fraudulent votes, the public wants to know. It’s not a Democratic or a Republican issue, it’s an American issue,” Janelle said in response to my question about what they hope to achieve at the rally.

As we were talking, cars drove by making noise. Some honked in support, giving thumbs up out the window. Others drove by revving their engines loudly while blasting FDT by YG, a song whose chorus repeats “F*** Donald Trump” over and over.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Saturday, Nov 7 at 3pm
-- roughly 3 ½ hours after Joe Biden was declared

President-Elect.

The next event was much larger in scale, and much more organized. It took place outside of the State Capitol building in Harrisburg.

Before we came across the main event, we saw a small group of people gathered on the steps of the State Capitol building. It turned out to be two separate groups, one of Biden supporters and one of Trump supporters. Police stood in the middle acting as a barrier between them. The Trump supporters stood at the top of the steps, while the Biden supporters stood towards the bottom. They taunted one another and yelled things, most of them inaudible from where we stood, more than six feet away. It was a stark physical representation of the division between two different political voices in Pennsylvania.

On the other side of the building, the rally took place. There were easily hundreds of people there, all decked out in Trump gear, none of them wearing masks. Based on the atmosphere of the event, and the way in which speakers confidently declared that Donald Trump would be the next president of the United States, Biden's win seemed imaginary.

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Crowd at Harrisburg. They listen to a speaker emphatically declare that this election is illegitimate.



Gino Harris poses with another member of Black Voices for Trump inbetween speaking with rally attendees.



A woman in a mask that reads "Wash Your Hands & Don't Be Racist" holds her pepper spray as an unmasked man speaks to her. As she watches the Trump rally, the man continues to try and engage in a political debate, to which she responds shortly, trying to end the interaction.



A woman on the steps of the capitol singing "God Bless America" and waving her flag, as one of the other protesters

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Sunday, Nov. 8 at 1pm
-- roughly 25 hours after Joe Biden was declared
President-Elect.

“I think it’s just kind of funny, like why are you still going with this? They already lost, at this point it’s just kind of ignorant,” said Love Jr., a 15-year-old from West Philadelphia. Lauren and I spoke with him by a growing crowd of Trump supporters in front of the Philadelphia Convention Center.

Love Jr. was out on a bike ride with his father, Love Sr., who asked that their last name not be used, when they stopped in front of what appeared to be a stand-off between Trump and Biden supporters. The group was standing outside of the Philadelphia Convention Center, holding up Trump signs and blasting country music. Across the street from them was an even larger group of Biden supporters, holding up Biden signs and waving BLM and LGBTQ+ Pride flags.

Though the atmosphere in Philadelphia wasn’t quite the party it had been the day before, I felt a sense of relief and lightheartedness as people hugged at the counter protest.



Love Jr. and Love Sr. pause on their bike ride to pose in front of the American flag hung from the Convention Center. They ride their bikes together every Sunday, but wanted to see what the reaction downtown was like.



One of the Trump protesters yelling at the Biden supporters.



A member of the Proud Boys mocks a Biden supporter who is speaking. He and his friends didn't say much of anything, but made their presence behind the police barricade known.



Kevin Prochner and his friends from Lehigh Valley. They drove down from the Poconos where they had been camping just to see the reactions in Philadelphia.

“I feel like [Trump’s] followers, a lot of them blindly follow him and don’t really understand what he’s for,” Love Jr. then pointed to the group of Trump supporters across the street from us. “This is a perfect representation of how dumb - well, I ain’t going to say that, - of how they should think a little better before doing things like this. I’ll just say that,” said Love Jr.

I talked to the father-son duo a little bit more, and asked what they thought of the rally.

“Personally, I think they have a right to do it. I think that’s what makes our country great is that we’re comprised of different people with somewhat similar ideals, but just different ways of getting there. However, the data is the data, right? So we got the data, and the data says Trump lost,” said Love Sr.

Love Jr. piped back in with his own opinions about Trump himself. “I feel like with Trump, he’s a dividing person. His name divides people, you know. And I think that, if that’s really not what he wanted to do, if he wanted to be more of a positive person, and for the people, he should have looked out for everybody,” he said.

“That’s the issue, Donald Trump’s rhetoric is so damaging. And he’s convinced millions of people that this election was stolen, and skewed against his favor. I feel like every piece of evidence of that so far has been debunked so fast,” said 20-year-old Kevin Prochner, another counterprotestor that had come in from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He and his friends were among the group of people holding Biden signs and waving pride flags.

“Trump discouraged them from using the mailing system. So right now, he wonders why none of the mailing ballots are for him,” he said. “It’s because he told his supporters not to. So he shouldn’t be surprised.”