THE
GREAT
REVOLT
INSIDE THE POPULIST COALITION
RESHAPING AMERICAN POLITICS
Salena Zito and Brad Todd
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First Edition

With a smile, a tear, and an abundance of love,
this book is dedicated to my children, Shannon and Glenn,
who fill my days with all three;
to my parents, Joan and Ron, whose guidance surrounded me
with love, family, and traditions;
to my sisters and brother whose dedication to family
and community inspire me;
to my virtuous son-in-law, Michael;
and to my granddaughter, Eleanor.

—Salena Zito

For dad, Ron Todd, my first editor,
who hauled me around when I got my first writing job
at age fourteen and could not drive myself.
And for Elizabeth, who has the patience to endure
the first oral draft of everything,
long before it’s worth hearing.

—Brad Todd
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The best analysis marries smart empirical research with on-the-scene, shoe-leather reporting. That’s the premise behind the collaboration that brought this book to life.

We first met more than a decade ago—a reporter covering national politics from Pittsburgh, far outside the Beltway, and a political strategist whose roots were at the other end of the Appalachian mountain chain in Tennessee. Populism is not just a subject to study for us; it’s a worldview we understand genetically. When a populist wave swept an unconventional candidate into office in 2016, we gravitated to each other to combine our expertise and analyze the unique moment in American political history.

Like most professionals in our respective businesses—journalism and Republican campaign strategy—we did not predict Trump’s rise from the start. One of us, Brad Todd, even predicted his coming demise, wrongly, multiple times in the course of the Republican nomination fight. But in the general election campaign, we each had front-row seats to the tidal wave as it formed far out in the political ocean.

Salena Zito lived on the road, reporting for the New York Post and the Washington Examiner, while contributing pieces to publications such as The Atlantic. For a long article in the Post, Zito traveled the length of the old Lincoln Highway, highlighting the record surge of support for Trump far off the beaten path. In his role as a strategist
and ad-maker advising Republican campaigns and conservative groups including the National Rifle Association, Todd watched focus groups of undecided voters, especially in the Midwest, process their hesitations about Trump and their overriding anxiety aboutglobalism and traditional politics.

These experiences witnessing real, and largely forgotten, people process the choices in this election led to the conclusion that this election might be more than a single event and perhaps a whitecap in an ongoing tide. It is our hope that the combination of our expertise not only brings a unique method to telling the story of one election but also introduces the faces of a movement that may well go beyond it.
Ed Harry

Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

Within moments of meeting Ed Harry, you understand he is the kind of guy you want on your side.

His impression is blunt and immediate; you also understand that if he were to become an adversary, he would be a relentless opponent.

Harry sits in the last booth of D's Diner, a Plains Township eatery just over the border of Wilkes-Barre's city limits. He is leaning against the tiled wall facing the dining room and the broad rectangular windows that look out onto the parking lot; white eyelet lace curtains and red-white-and-blue stars in the windows add to the charm of the diner.

Up front, the place is filled with customers at a chrome lunch counter as waitresses busily fill coffee cups, take orders, and greet regulars with a warm hello and the universal diner question that implies familiarity: "The usual?"

"The usual" repeatedly is, of course, the answer.

A double-layered white cake with whipped white icing and toasted coconut sits on the counter covered in a glass cake dome. It is 7:30 in the morning and already two pieces have been served.

For twenty-nine years D's Diner had been Eddie's Place; when the owner fell ill in late 2016, it closed. But unlike most businesses that close in this county, this one reopened with a new owner and a remodel.

But the menu, the hospitality, and the servers remained, as did the loyal customers. The waitress explains there is a line to get a seat at the counter or in a booth on most days; that was certainly the case on this day.

Outside on Fox Hill Road, some businesses are gone or vacated; there is a Ford dealership, a pet cemetery, and a scattering of homes.

Overlooking the diner on a hillside less than half a mile away is Pennsylvania's first casino, the Mohegan Sun Pocono.

For generations the Wyoming Valley—where Luzerne sits along the banks of the mighty Susquehanna River—has been the home of the quintessential blue-collar worker, the sons and daughters of the sons and daughters of immigrant coal miners and factory hands.

Today, Luzerne County is one of the sweet spots for finding the kind of Trump voter who has received the most public attention—the Red-Blooded and Blue-Collared voter.

Harry, like so many others in Pennsylvania with a lifetime of loyalty to the Democrats now disrupted by globalization and Donald Trump, fits the bill—and he's quick to spot others who do too.

On this day, seven men under the age of thirty, dressed in utility uniforms and hard hats, take seats across from Harry in an oversized booth. They squeeze a chair in on the end. He nods and smiles; they nod and smile.

"You see all of those young men," he says, loud enough for them to hear, "they probably all voted for Trump. They were all Democrats and they all voted for Trump," Harry says.

Harry orders the ham-and-cheese omelet with white toast; he doesn't notice that they heard him.

As Harry makes his way toward the restroom, one of the young men grins sheepishly, leans over, and says, "Shhhhhhh, you know we can't talk politics when we have our company uniforms on," pauses, and then pulls out the familiar red MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN ball cap from his back pocket.

His friends laugh, as he hurriedly stuffs the ball cap safely back into its hiding place.

For most of his life, Harry was a Democrat. He still is. "I wasn't just a guy who voted straight Democrat up and down the ballot, it was religion to me, it was my identity, and it was also an essential part of my job," he says.

Harry's father worked the coal mines here in Luzerne County for thirty-three years, as did his father before him and his father before that, four generations to be exact, part of the great Welsh migration that came to this part of the country in the mid-nineteenth century.
When Harry was a senior in high school, his father almost died in a mining accident. “I don’t know how he didn’t die, but his belt got caught on his buddy’s there in a shaft hanging from a sixty-degree angle. At that time, he weighed like 260 pounds, so my dad’s weight brought him against the side of the shaft, saved his life,” Harry says.

“He came home and walked in the house when he wasn’t supposed to be there. He was working the afternoons, so I wouldn’t expect him home until after eleven. He was there like seven, seventy-three. I’m doing homework. He comes in and gets a glass and fills it up with whiskey and drinks it straight down, which was quite unusual since he normally drank beer. He filled another glass up and drank half of it and then sat down and started crying.

“First time I ever saw my dad cry, and he told me what happened. His biggest concern was, ‘How am I going to support my family now, when I can’t go back in the mines because I’m afraid?’ ”

His father eventually took a Republican patronage job at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). His son called that moment the time his father “sold his soul.”

Harry’s mother was first-generation American, and his maternal grandfather was Russian: “He worked on the railroads, spoke broken English up until the day he died,” he explains.

After high school, Harry went to college “mostly to satisfy my parents,” but then the Vietnam War got in the way. Harry spent four years in the U.S. Air Force, two years rotating between Thailand and Vietnam and two years working for the NSA.

Harry says his unit’s primary function in Southeast Asia was to cancel attack flights. “If the pilots gave out their strike coordinates in the clear and they get canceled, chances are they’re going to get shot out of the sky, because the Vietnamese had a very sophisticated communications-intercept system. They knew exactly where they were going to come in.

“I rotated back just after we broke the whole Laotian war. Our commander was given twelve hours to get to the Philippines to tell them how and where we get that information, because it was top, top, top secret. When he came back he said that they had every intelligence organization that existed [in 1968 and ’69; from the

White House intelligence to the Defense Department to the CIA, the NSA, all of them there.”

In the end, he wound up on a different assignment. “I had been scheduled to go to train the CIA operatives in Laos on how to use the equipment they never used before. Me, a kid from Allentown.

“The funny thing is, when I rotated out, they rotated another kid from Allentown in to do the training. He ended up getting shot, but he survived okay. That’s a long time ago,” Harry says.

When Harry came home, the experience left him with the ability to do only two things for an entire year. “I went to night school and I drank. I drank a lot.”

But college didn’t really stick, “and drinking has no good end-game,” he says.

So he got a job locally, working for a supermarket service, but lasted only a year before he got laid off. “Then I took a job in a state facility, in a mental institution, as a custodian, and honestly, I loved it.”

It was there he discovered his calling: persuasion.

Harry became part of the organizing force during the explosive rise of public-sector unions in the United States in the early 1970s, which was very similar to the previous rise of industrial-based unions during the Great Depression.

Teachers, firefighters, sanitation workers, police officers, as well as secretaries and custodians, beefed up the union membership rolls in record-breaking numbers in the early ’70s.

Harry’s job was part of an extensive campaign to turn public-sector facilities in Florida into union facilities.

“I would go to mental health centers at five in the morning, stand outside that gate, and pass out notices of a meeting for maybe that night or the next to test the interest of the workers,” he says.

Beforehand, he would go in and meet with the management to find out where he should be, or shouldn’t be. “Usually nobody showed up in the beginning, so it’s a process.”

He was there for a six-month assignment that turned out to take two years, ending up at the University of Florida in Gainesville. “I was there to win over the custodians, all the maintenance people, all of the assistants to the deans, etc.

“It turns out I was very good at winning over the trust and
confidence of people. It wasn’t an easy job, you know, these guys understand that if the shop they work in doesn’t become unionized they might be risking their jobs. But I was taught at a young age your work ethic was your word, and whatever you did in your life you were only as good as your word,” he says.

After two years he left Florida and brought his skills to work in his hometown. “My job switched to being someone who did contract negotiations, and I also handled arbitration cases and labor board stuff,” he says.

When he returned home he found that his father’s patronage job was gone, the Republican governor had termed out of office, and a new Democratic governor, with Democratic patronage hires, was now in charge of PennDOT.

“So I am registered as Democrat, which pissed everybody off; I was sort of disowned. To make a long story short, I ended up helping Dad get a job back with PennDOT because of all the Democratic friends I had. I did not participate in my sister’s wedding. I wouldn’t be an usher because we had words over politics.”

Eventually they made peace.

Politics for him became part of the job; he always voted Democrat; so did his friends. As he rose up in the ranks he became deeply involved in national politics, eventually serving as a delegate at the national convention for Bill Clinton in 1992.

From 1980 until he retired he was in charge of the eight or nine northeastern counties in Pennsylvania for the Democrats. “I coordinated all the phone banks, the door-to-door knocks, anything that was related to any election, from gubernatorial elections, to presidential, to local.”

Harry also spent much of his time as a union arbitrator, representing members of his union—a position that earned him their trust, a critical relationship to have to convince voters who candidate for office would have you back.

Harry adjusts his navy blue Penn State ball cap. At seventy, he looks fifteen years younger despite his bushy gray hair; his eyes are dark and piercing, his beard trimmed neatly, his voice deep and commanding. If anyone went to central casting looking for blue-collared union boss type and Harry was in line, he would be the first man picked.

The job eventually started to take its toll.

“I can remember one arbitration case I had, a PennDOT driver, drunk. Didn’t think anything of it. I go to the arbitration case, he comes in drunk. In our position, you can’t say no to anybody. You have to represent the people—which a lot people thought, ‘How could you?’ ”

He pauses, rubs his deep-set eyes, then continues. “I represented pedophiles, rapists, bookies. I had to. I don’t have any other choice. When you are an arbitrator, that is no different than being an attorney. You have to fulfill that requirement. You’re taking their money, so you have to defend them; good, bad, and the ugly.

“I’ve been in the middle of an arbitration case when I found out the evidence that gets presented by the other side and I’m not aware of it, and I should be because my people should be telling me, so I’d call a time-out and say, ‘Let’s go talk’ to the person I am defending.

“And I ask them: ‘Did you know about this? Why didn’t you tell me? Well, just so you know, we’re going back in there and the case is over.’ Boom, so I’ve done that, gone back and said, ‘My apologies for wasting everybody’s time.’ Then I withdraw my grievance and leave. Because that is the right thing to do.”

In 2003, he retired after twenty-five years. “I didn’t want to work any longer. I was burned out. I ended up protecting people who shouldn’t have been protected. They should have been fired. The whole workforce changed from people who looked forward to going to work, to people who make excuses not to,” he says.

Even after his retirement, he served as the president of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council, serving as the powerful business agent for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). He was still the face of the labor movement in Luzerne County, he was still the guy who met with the local politicians, negotiated events, helped folks find jobs, and led protests when Washington stopped listening.

But when the establishment Democrats stopped caring about his people, he stopped caring about them.
Harry's fracture from the Democratic Party started with the trade agreements that he says are structured in such a way that they incentivize corporations to base themselves overseas. "Outside of our country they don't have to worry about paying decent benefits, living wages, and providing salaries as a worker moves up the ladder," he says.

"My party, the party that was supposed to be the party of the working guy, the guy I stood up for and worked for all of my career, was no longer part of this new ascending Democratic coalition. Blue-collar America essentially had the door shut in its face," he says.

Traditionally, Luzerne County has been emblematic of the heart and soul of the working-class wing of the Democratic Party. Its residents personified the character traits of the New Dealers; they supported government social programs that served as a safety net for the residents, they were pro-life, pro-gun, they joined unions and churches alike, they were multidenominational but were likely found in someone's pew most Sundays.

Drive through Wilkes-Barre, or Hazleton, or the dozens of coal-patch towns that make up this Wyoming Valley county, and you will see churches of all denominations clustered in every corner. Each one was built to accommodate the wave of immigrants that flooded this region a hundred years ago, and each represented a different ethnic group that established footholds in tight-knit city blocks.

Today, those ethnic churches stand like stone sentinels guarding parishioners who have long been gone; most have closed. In the past decade, dozens of churches have been shuttered, some demolished or left vacant. The once glorious stained-glass windows have been sold or vandalized, their prized artifacts spread to other parishes across the country.

The small groceries, movie houses, diners, taverns, and schools that surrounded them are also gone. Many of the homes are worn away by decay, neglect, or abandonment. When the jobs left, the people left.

This area thrived during the country's first industrial revolution. It is sputtering during the technological revolution. Automation and technology are its enemies.

"Economically, we have been struggling for a generation, probably two; the mills, factories, and coal mines are essentially all closed, the labor unions have weakened, we don't have the members or the power to persuade or punish big corporations if they cut jobs or benefits or threaten to pack up and leave if we don't concede," he says.

Even when the unions did concede, the final humiliation was that those companies left Luzerne County anyway, according to Harry.

When this region was nothing more than a frontier settlement, a new form of coal, anthracite, was found along the riverbanks of the Susquehanna all throughout the valley. But that discovery presented a problem: anthracite was so hard and dense, it could not sustain a fire. Tradesmen could use it for forging, and they did during the Revolutionary War, but little else; and no one had yet figured out how it could be used for commerce. It wasn't until a couple of decades into the nineteenth century, when Judge Jesse Fell invented an iron grate capable of maintaining a fire using anthracite, that the Wyoming Valley found its way into the center of the Industrial Revolution.

That invention changed the course of the Wyoming Valley in the final decades of the nineteenth century; it brought commerce, great wealth, and a massive migration of European immigrants to the county. Coal-patch towns, unincorporated towns, and company towns all sprang up and began to dot the valley at a rapid pace.

The coal brought the canals, the canals brought the railroads, and the railroads brought the rapid transportation of commerce that lured the immigrants, hundreds of thousands of them, including Harry's ancestors.

At the turn of the twentieth century, it is estimated that as many as 100,000 immigrants ended up in the coalfields and coal towns of Luzerne County. The first wave came from Wales and England, like Ed Harry's family; then came the Germans, Poles, Italians, Slovaks, Russians, and Ukrainians. By 1930, immigration had taken Luzerne County to its peak population of 445,109 souls. Today, with only 91,383 people in residence, evidence of the immigrant influence is everywhere, from the architecture to the old ethnic clubs, to the current heritage festivals that dot the county's calendar.4

"They were mostly poor people, peasants from the Old Country
who came here to make a better life, to become this great thing called 'an American,' and to work. Oh, did they work," says Harry.

One hundred years ago, miners here produced nearly 100 million tons of coal—ten years ago that number had tumbled to 1.7 million tons. But even though for decades coal has had barely an echo of its former impact, the people of Luzerne still identified with the life.

"It was that promise of a better life that became their identity, and that identity has been passed down generation after generation; even if you never stepped in the same coal mine your father or your grandfather did, you still identified as that being part of who you are," he says.

In an irony only nature could produce, the same high-heat geological forces that made Luzerne’s coal rich, and ensured it would not cash in on the region’s economic boom of the twenty-first century—fracking. The Marcellus Shale formation that has revitalized much of northern Pennsylvania with oil and gas production ends before it reaches the Luzerne County border, along what one prominent geologist called a "line of death."

The same heat that made the coal "cooked out" whatever gas existed in prior millennia. So while counties just north or west move on to a new fossil-fueled economic era, Luzerne must stare at its past.

The enduring self-identity of the mining life is part of the mystery of Luzerne that reporters and pundits and national Democrats missed when calculating who a Luzerne County voter is, according to Harry. They made the same mistake in places like this around the country.

Throughout and after the 2016 campaign, national news outlets were full of derision for this easy-to-spot hard-core type of Trump voter. "Trump owes his victory to the uniformed," screamed a piece in Foreign Policy magazine two days after the election, under the unnuanced headline "Trump Won Because Voters Are Ignorant, Literally." It became formulaic for analysts who did not understand the Trump voter to ascribe their motivations to either economic desperation or a lack of intelligence, or both. "Why are white, uneducated voters willing to vote for Trump? Job unhappiness to be sure, but I would posit that it is also because they have not been adequately educated to understand just how dangerous a Presidents Trump would be to the Constitution," wrote one Newsweek pundit.

Those insults say more about their writers than the Luzerne County voters who too many journalists, sitting an easy drive away in their New York bureaus, did not come to meet. The common analytical inaccuracy of describing Trump supporters as unthinkful rubes is driven as much by the lifestyles of the analysts as the intellect of those analyzed.

Luzerne County might be just 135 miles from the heart of New York City, but it is light-years away from many of America’s cultural influencers who live there, and that disconnect made it difficult for most of those analysts to crack the code on the Red-Blooded and Blue-Collared voters.

"They were not able to understand that you didn’t have to work in a factory or a coal mine to identify with the sentiments of that worker, it was part of your legacy, your heritage, if you grew up here. So you would see someone who spent their whole life in a factory and a young person who was college-educated and doing okay sharing the same sentiments about how the system needed an overhaul," Harry says.

In 2008, Barack Obama beat Republican nominee Senator John McCain of Arizona by 9 percentage points in this county; he beat Mitt Romney in 2012 by 5 points.

Four years later, Trump crushed former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in Luzerne by a whopping 20-point margin. Not since Ronald Reagan had Luzerne County voted for a Republican for president by any margin, much less a runaway. More important, Trump’s 26,237-vote edge in Luzerne alone accounted for nearly 60 percent of his margin statewide in the Keystone State. He had similar rock-star status in the Pennsylvania primary in Luzerne County, racking up 77 percent of the local vote over Senator Ted Cruz and Governor John Kasich, compared to 57 percent statewide.

The state and federal governments are the top two employers here now. The third largest is perhaps the best metaphor for the new economy in which Luzerne County struggles to find its place. It’s the Internet giant Amazon.com, which has a monstrous fulfillment center in Pittston Township, where the average annual salary
for warehouse work is $27,040, well below the standard of living paid by the smokestack jobs it replaced.10

That salary makes it difficult to support a family, people start losing hope, especially people who aren’t book-smart but excel at working with their hands. We just don’t have room for them anymore,” Harry says. “We have cut them out.”

Harry saw the rise of discontent years ago. “This did not happen overnight, people just didn’t wake up on election night and say, ‘I am going to do something different,'” he says.

“And this did not end on election night either. I would argue that the election of Donald Trump wasn’t about him, but about those of us who want something more from Washington. Maybe we just wanted to shake things up. Maybe we wanted to send a message. Maybe it was a lot of both,” he says.

Unlike the 3,832 Democrats in Luzerne County who changed their party registration to Republican, ostensibly so they could vote in the closed 2016 Republican primary, Harry did not.11 He didn’t formally leave his party at the beginning of the election—but his eye did wander.

At the diner, Harry dusts the crumbs from his white toast off of his deep-navy Penn State sweatshirt and switches from coffee to pop. As the young utility workers at the next table leave, he tips his hat, and they return the gesture.

“I made a promise to myself, four years out, after Obama won his second term, that I would never vote for a Bush or a Clinton. That was absolute. Nothing would ever change that. I thought they were both corrupt,” he says of the former Democratic nominee and Jeb Bush, son and brother of a former U.S. president.

“When Trump first announced, I laughed. I just couldn’t believe that he even had a chance,” he says, but Harry was dead set on someone outside of the establishment so he started to look at the other choices.

“The only other nonpolitician was Dr. Ben Carson. Everybody else, outside of [Kentucky senator] Rand Paul, I didn’t really have any use for. Put them in a bag and shake them and they all come out the same.”

As the campaign went on he wasn’t committed to anybody. “The only person I liked the best was Jim Webb,” Harry says of the Democratic ex-senator from Virginia and former secretary of the navy, “and I thought he was probably the best candidate out of everybody, but he didn’t last except for a couple of months.”

The more he listened as the campaign went on, he explains, the better he understood that the Democrats definitely hated Trump, and the Republican establishment hated Trump. All the lobbyists on K Street hated Trump. The Chinese came out against him. India came out against him. Mexico came out against him.

“I figured I must have a candidate, because everybody who’s coming out against him are all corrupt, and he’s an outsider. So, I said, ‘I think I found my candidate,'” says Harry.

Then he made the announcement. “I had decided to go to the rally he held here in Wilkes-Barre and I ran into a local radio reporter who knew me as a Democrat union official. She said, ‘What are you doing here?’ I said, ‘I guess I saw the light. I’m going to support Trump.’ She said, ‘You want to get interviewed?’”

He told her bluntly, “Actually, I don’t care.”

During the course of the interview she asked him if he was involved in the labor community in the area.

“I said, ‘I just happen to be president of the labor council. When we got done, I said, ‘Well, that should get me a resignation tomorrow.’ Sure enough, I got a phone call from them the next day,” he says. He voluntarily resigned, and he did it in person, in front of the entire council.

Harry has lost trust in everything big in this country. “Big banks, big Wall Street, big corporations, the establishment of both parties and their lobbyists, and the big media corporations; gone are the days of the network news just delivering the news,” he says.

“This Russian shit day-in and day-out is just absolute nonsense, as far as him being in cahoots. I watched ABC last Thursday; the first ten minutes dealt with nothing but the allegations that he was in bed with the Russians. The big storms that hit the Midwest got a minute. Nothing else got any time. It was just all this bullshit.”

Harry is optimistic about Trump. “But it is going to be a hard slog, he has to work against the Democrats and the Republicans.

“In his heart I know he wants to do well. But Washington’s culture
is so embedded that it may be a year before he gets a handle, or eighteen months before he gets a handle on everything,” he says.

And no, he does not care about what Trump tweets. “We knew exactly who he was when we voted for him, tweet and all.”

Harry is looking forward to watching Trump negotiate and spar with Washington. He’d like to see him bring them to their knees, but is realistic. “I used to hate to negotiate labor contracts,” Harry admits. “Absolutely worst job in the world. Time-consuming, petty, you had to play games, it’s a tough thing to do, and you’ve got a responsibility for everybody you represent to do the best you could, and you got to be good to the employers because you don’t want them to go out of business,” he says.

“It’s a fine line that you walk, and you had to be conscious of all of that. I think he’s learning that right now, because what he was used to doing as a CEO, and he can’t do that now.

“What I liked about Trump was that it was more than about Trump, it was about people, it was about being part of something bigger than just me, I felt as though I was part of something important and worthy of accomplishing something better than what have had,” Harry says.

As long as Trump stays away from becoming a Bush or a Clinton and stays tough, Harry is in for the long haul with this new alliance. “If he becomes one of them, then I think this movement continues, without him.”
**Appendix**

**Data and a Note on Methodology**

This book makes multiple references to two important data sources: a geographical analysis of Trump’s vote by county and the national electorate by population tiers, and the Great Revolt Survey of Rust Belt Trump voters.

A broader exposition of these two data sets follows.

The analysis of Trump’s vote by population tiers is one of the best ways of understanding the trends in American politics as it realigns along not just regional lines, but educational and density faults as well. More than any recent election, the 2016 contest showed a polarization between those who live in dense cosmopolitan communities with higher-than-average education levels, and those who live in rural, exurban, and industrial locales that as a rule have less density, lower-than-average education levels, and less transience. Interestingly, the data suggests strongly that the emerging schism is not related merely to the income and education levels of an individual voter, but to the income and education levels of those who live around them. Voting is an inherently communal and social process, and social pressures are driving American politics as much as, or more than, demography—and that fundamental difference is a major part of the story of the miscalculations made by Clinton’s campaign, Republican political experts, and media analysts in the run-up to the 2016 balloting.

The divisions of counties by population used in this book’s analysis are as follows, utilizing the Census Bureau’s 2016 population
estimates for categorization—treating independent cities as county units for this purpose and excluding Alaskan jurisdictions, where census data and electoral jurisdictions are not aligned:

Mega Counties of more than 1,000,000
Extra Large Counties of 400,000-1,000,000
Large Counties of 200,000-400,000
Medium Counties of 100,000-200,000
Small Counties of 50,000-100,000
Rural Counties of fewer than 50,000

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<th>AVERAGE TRUMP MARGIN MINUS AVERAGE ROMNEY MARGIN IN COUNTIES WITH ABOVE-AVERAGE BACHELOR'S DEGREE HOLDERS</th>
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<td>0.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>37,409,571</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>27,304,177</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>39,888,929</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stark County, Ohio, which includes the city of Canton, and Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, which includes the city of Wilkes-Barre, are both Large Counties in our classification and typical of the smaller, not-quite-urban population centers that pervade that group nationwide.

Kenshia County, Wisconsin, is a prototypical Medium County—a growing place that sends commuters to two distant metropolitan centers, Chicago and Milwaukee. Erie County, Pennsylvania, represents another common Medium County type—an urban area that is losing population and no longer carries the political weight it once did in its state.

Ashtabula County, Ohio, population 98,231, is a representative Small County—a place with an industrial past and an agricultural component as well.

The book includes interviews from four Rural Counties—all with unique attributes—which is fitting, considering that Trump's coalition is more rural than any other winning effort in the current era. Lee County, Iowa, is an industrial county along the Mississippi River that has two old small towns; Howard County, Iowa, is one of that state's smallest jurisdictions and sits squarely in the northern agricultural belt of the state; Vernon County, Wisconsin, is a Mississippi River county that is rapidly changing, and even growing in spite of its distance from any metropolitan area, thanks to its toehold in the organic agriculture of the future; tiny Lake County, Michigan, is featured because it spent decades as a lone Democratic holdout in that state's very Republican north woods region.