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Trump raised-fist photographs

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One of the photographs in the series

Artist [Evan Vucci](#)

Year 2024

Type [Photojournalism](#)

Medium [Digital photography](#)

Subject [Donald Trump](#) gesturing while being escorted away by Secret Service agents after [his attempted assassination](#)

Owner [Associated Press](#)

American photojournalist [Evan Vucci](#) captured a series of photographs of [Donald Trump](#) raising his right fist shortly after he was injured during an [attempted assassination at a political rally](#) near [Butler, Pennsylvania](#), on July 13, 2024. In some of the photos, Trump's mouth is open as he says "Fight!"; in others, Trump's mouth is closed. The photographs were reposted widely on social media and received substantial press coverage; commentators praised their composition and predicted they would become iconic images of the event.

"It was a situation where that vast experience absolutely does [prepare you]. To have that experience behind you sort of allows you to remain calm. It wasn't the first time I was in that situation. So I was able to keep my head, I was able to think. I was able to compose pictures. I think all of us were there and we just stayed in the moment, stayed on the story. In my head, I just kept saying to myself, 'slow down, slow down. Compose, compose.' Okay, what's gonna happen next? What's going on here? What's going on there? Just trying to get every angle on it."

–Vucci on how his prior work affected his photography of the assassination attempt.^[1]

At a campaign rally near [Butler, Pennsylvania](#), on July 13, 2024, former US President [Donald Trump](#), then the presumptive [Republican Party](#) nominee for president in the [2024 United States presidential election](#), was shot in an [attempted assassination](#).^[2]

[Evan Vucci](#), the [Associated Press](#) (AP)'s chief photographer in [Washington, D.C.](#), was one of four photographers stationed in a buffer area near the stage.^[3] He had covered Trump for years and had photographed hundreds of political rallies.^[4] He previously covered the [wars in Afghanistan](#) and [Iraq](#),^[5] and had captured a well-known photograph of [an Iraqi journalist throwing his shoes at then-US President George W. Bush](#).^[6] He won a [Pulitzer Prize](#) in 2021 as part of an AP team covering the [George Floyd protests](#).^[7]

Seeing [United States Secret Service](#) agents rushing towards Trump, Vucci ran to get a better vantage point and began photographing.^[8] "I knew it was a moment in American history and it had to be documented", he said of the attempted assassination.^[9]

Evan Vucci's photographs depict Donald Trump moments after an assassination attempt. His right [fist is raised](#) in the air and there is blood on his face. He is surrounded by United States Secret Service agents, one of whom stares at the camera. A [US flag](#) waves in the background in front of a blue sky.^[10] Trump holds a "[Make America Great Again](#)" hat in his left hand.^[11] In some of Vucci's photographs, Trump's mouth is open as he either mouths^{[12][13]} or shouts "Fight!"^[14] while in others Trump's lips are pursed.^[15]

A published analysis from Sara Oscar for [The Conversation](#) said that "[in order] to understand exactly what it is that makes this such a powerful image, there are several elements we can parse; [...] The agents form[ing] a triangular composition that places Trump at the vertex; [...] The agent draw[ing] us into the image, he looks back at us, he sees the photographer and therefore, he seems to see us; [...] Set against a blue sky, everything else in the image is red, white and navy blue. The trickles of blood falling down Trump's face are echoed in the red stripes of the American flag which aligns with the republican red of the podium." Oscar noted Vucci's knowledge of "the importance of retaining a sense of photographic composure in being able to attain 'the shot', of being sure to cover the situation from numerous angles, including capturing the scene with the right composition and light."^[16]

Writing in [The Washington Post](#), [Philip Kennicott](#) described a close-mouthed photograph as "strongly constructed, with aggressive angles that reflect the chaos and drama of the moment, and a powerful balance of color, all red, white and blue, including the azure sky above and the red-and-white decorative banner below. Trump seems to emerge from within a deconstructed version of its basic colors." He described it as "Densely packed with markers of nationalism and authority — the flag, the blood, the urgent faces of federal agents in dark suits", and predicted that it will encourage more political violence. Kennicott wrote: "Vucci's photo will create a reality more real than reality, transforming the chaos and messiness of a few moments of peril onstage in Pennsylvania into a surpassing icon of Trump's courage, resolve and heroism", and that "It is a photograph that could change America forever", comparing it to the [Zapruder film](#) and [the 1988 image of Michael Dukakis in a tank](#).^[17]

Noting that the photos quickly appeared in [Internet memes](#), Jason Farago of [The New York Times](#) said that "image of authority also invites its own parody; that is the secret of its strength". He wrote that the photos conveyed a different message from video: "[T]he fist had a more warlike aspect, suggesting fearlessness and indomitability." Farago compared the photographs to [Eugène Delacroix's](#) 1830 painting [Liberty Leading the People](#) and [John Singleton Copley's](#) [The Death of Major Peirson](#).^[18]

Carla Bleiker of *Deutsche Welle* described one of the close-mouthed photographs as an "image for the history books". She compared it with *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. She wrote that "Trump's raised fist and his facial expression, accentuated by the blood splatters across his cheek, can be read as an declaration of defiance in the face of adversity", in an "'I'm still standing'-gesture". Bleiker compared the U.S. flag that is the centerpiece of the Iwo Jima image to the U.S. flag in the background of Vucci's image, noting the flag's importance as a cultural image to Americans, especially [conservative Americans](#).^[19]

Impact and reception

[\[edit\]](#)

Vucci's photographs were widely shared on the Internet.^[3] Republicans and Trump's allies circulated the photos immediately after the event; some had used the photos as "an opportunity to tout conspiracy theories and stoke political tensions".^[20] The photographs appeared on newspaper front pages in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia.^[21] Two of the photographs had been used almost 4100 times by AP customers by the day after the shooting, compared to the typical 700-800 times for the week's most-used photo.^[22]

The Spectator's Fraser Nelson wrote of an open-mouthed version: "[any critic] would have instantly recognised that this is a once-in-a-generation photograph – an image that will become one of the most potent in American politics and history", and hailed Vucci's work as "photojournalism at its most powerful ... the image will be remembered as one of the most important political photographs ever taken".^[23]

Benjamin Wallace-Wells of *The New Yorker* wrote of a close-mouthed photograph, "It is already the indelible image of our era of political crisis and conflict." He noted that "some of the elements in Vucci's image are familiar from the countless others of Trump", and concluded, "It is an image that captures him as he would like to be seen, so perfectly, in fact, that it may outlast all the rest."^[24]

Tyler Austin Harper of *The Atlantic*, describing one of the open-mouthed photographs, wrote that it "became immediately legendary", and "However you feel about the man at its center, it is undeniably one of the great compositions in U.S. photographic history." Harper wrote, "I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the photo is nearly perfect, one captured under extreme duress and that distills the essence of a man in all his contradictions." Harper predicted that the photograph would be used in campaign merchandise and advertisements, and that the image will help Trump win the election.^[25]

Yudhajit Shankar Das of *India Today* anticipated Vucci's work as a "defining photograph of US history", and noted that his prior work photographing in war-torn Iraq likely absolved him of fear of bullets. Das mused that Vucci's work could "act as the [Napalm Girl](#)" of the 2024 election.^[26]

Jeremy Barr wrote in *The Washington Post* that one of the open-mouthed versions was "sure to go down in the pantheon of American photography".^[27] Geordie Gray wrote in *The Australian* that one of the open-mouthed photographs was "destined to become one of the defining images of our time", describing it as "perfectly composed".^[28] Ashima Grover in *Hindustan Times* described an open-mouthed photograph as a "legendary American photo for posterity".^[21]

"Multiple photographers worried privately", Aïda Amer of *Axios* reported, "that the images from the rally could turn into a kind of 'photoganda'" for the Trump campaign. Speaking anonymously, the photographers told Amer that it was "dangerous for media organizations to keep sharing [the Vucci] photo despite how good it is" because it was "free P.R. for Trump" that made him a "martyr". Amer wrote that the open-mouthed photograph by Vucci and other notable images of the shooting by Anna Moneymaker of *Getty Images* and Doug Mills of *The New York Times* quickly became known in newsrooms as the "Evan photo", "Anna photo", and "the bullet photo", respectively.^[29]

The Daily Telegraph's Roland Oliphant felt that "[Trump] could not have looked more like an American hero if he tried", and called it "a product of world-class photojournalism – and also, perhaps, of Trump's innate political instincts".^[30] Timothy Garton Ash said on social media that the photograph would "change the course of history of the world".^[23] Piers Morgan called it "Already one of the most iconic photographs in American history – and one that I suspect will propel Donald Trump back to the White House".^[22]

The Guardian's art critic Jonathan Jones compared the images to other "timeless patriotic images" such as *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* and Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, as well as to Joan Miró's *Aidez l'Espagne*. He also drew similarities to religious works including Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent from the Cross* and Caravaggio's *The Entombment of Christ*. Jones observed that "there is something genuinely uncanny, not quite explicable, about this image: how a scene with such deep meanings and a positively religious suggestiveness can happen spontaneously" and opined that the images may win Trump re-election.^[31]

- [Public image of Donald Trump](#)
- [List of photographs considered the most important](#)

1. [^] [Milstein 2024](#).
2. [^] [Bleiker 2024](#); [Donastorg 2024](#); [Frazier & Herszenhorn 2024](#); [Gray 2024](#); [Grover 2024](#)
3. [^] Jump up to: ^a [Barr 2024](#); [Grover 2024](#).
4. [^] [Grover 2024](#); [Milstein 2024](#).
5. [^] [Grover 2024](#); [Milstein 2024](#); [Oliphant 2024](#).
6. [^] [Gray 2024](#); [Oliphant 2024](#).
7. [^] [Barr 2024](#); [Bleiker 2024](#); [Harper 2024](#).
8. [^] [Barr 2024](#); [Bleiker 2024](#); [Gray 2024](#); [Grover 2024](#).
9. [^] [Bleiker 2024](#); [Donastorg 2024](#); [Associated Press 2024a](#); [Associated Press 2024b](#); [CNN 2024](#).
10. [^] [Barr 2024](#); [Bleiker 2024](#); [Frazier & Herszenhorn 2024](#); [Gray 2024](#); [Grover 2024](#); [Harper 2024](#)
11. [^] [Kennicott 2024](#); [Nelson 2024](#); [Wallace-Wells 2024](#).
12. [^] [Orie, Amarachi; Liakos, Chris; Millman, Andrew \(July 14, 2024\)](#). "What was said on stage in the seconds after Trump was shot". *CNN*. Archived from the original on July 14, 2024. Retrieved July 14, 2024.
13. [^] [Layne, Nathan; Larson, Soren \(July 13, 2024\)](#). "Pop, pop, pop, then a bloodied Trump rushed from election rally". *Reuters*. Retrieved July 13, 2024.
14. [^] [Barr 2024](#); [Frazier & Herszenhorn 2024](#); [Gray 2024](#); [Grover 2024](#); [Harper 2024](#); [Nelson 2024](#)
15. [^] [Bleiker 2024](#); [Kennicott 2024](#); [Wallace-Wells 2024](#).

16. [^ Oscar 2024.](#)
17. [^ Kennicott 2024.](#)
18. [^ Farago 2024.](#)
19. [^ Bleiker 2024.](#)
20. [^ Frazier & Herszenhorn 2024.](#)
21. [^ Jump up to: ^a ^b Grover 2024.](#)
22. [^ Jump up to: ^a ^b Bauder 2024.](#)
23. [^ Jump up to: ^a ^b Nelson 2024.](#)
24. [^ Wallace-Wells 2024.](#)
25. [^ Harper 2024.](#)
26. [^ Das 2024.](#)
27. [^ Barr 2024.](#)
28. [^ Gray 2024.](#)
29. [^ Amer 2024.](#)
30. [^ Oliphant 2024.](#)
31. [^ Jones, Jonathan \(July 15, 2024\). "Is this what a second Trump presidency will be like?' – our art critic on the chilling shooting image". *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 24, 2024.](#)

- [Amer, Aïda \(July 15, 2024\). "How photographers view the photos of Trump's assassination attempt". *Axios*. Archived from the original on July 17, 2024. Retrieved July 17, 2024.](#)
- [Barr, Jeremy \(July 15, 2024\). "'I have to do my job': Photojournalists capture images of Trump shooting". *The Washington Post*. ISSN 0190-8286. Retrieved July 15, 2024.](#)
- [Bauder, David \(July 15, 2024\). "In a world of moving pictures, photographs capture indelible moments in Trump assassination attempt". *Associated Press*. Retrieved July 18, 2024.](#)
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