

A *Loud* Unflinching **VOICE AGAINST** Antisemitism BY MALINA SAVAL

Bari Weiss, the Recipient of the Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism, Lives by Her Beliefs, No Matter the Cost

In 2019, a spate of violent attacks besieged the Jewish community in the United States, including a mass shooting at Chabad of Poway, an ultra-Orthodox synagogue in Poway, Calif., and an attack at the home of a rabbi in Monsey, New York over the Chanukah holidays. During the latter incident a man wielding a machete murdered one person and wounded four others.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, antisemitic hate crimes hit an all-time high in 2019, with more than 2,100 assaults against the Jewish community. That same year, the FBI recorded 953 hate crimes against Jews, a 14% increase over 2018. According to the FBI, hate crimes against Jews comprised 62% of all religious hate crimes, making Jews the target of more such attacks than any other religious group in the United States.

Journalist and author Bari Weiss, then a staff writer and editor for the Opinion section of the *New York Times*, penned a column about the antisemitic assaults—but that column never ran. It was, explains Weiss, the 2021 recipient of the Los Angeles Press Club's Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism, one of several watershed moments that made her realize she could no longer work for the *Times*.

"I wrote a column that was called something like 'America's Bloody Pogrom,' and it never ran," says Weiss, a Pittsburgh native who grew up attending Tree of Life, the synagogue at which

a white supremacist opened fire during a Shabbat service in 2018, killing 11 congregants, several of whom were Holocaust survivors.

The attack on Monsey was different. The perpetrator wasn't a white supremacist, but a mentally ill person of color. This did not mesh with what Weiss calls "the neat worldview" of the *New York Times*, and her column on that incident was squashed.

"That was an early moment of me thinking, I can't last here," says Weiss, whose book *How To Fight Anti-Semitism* won the 2019 National Jewish Book Award. "I can last here only if I'm willing to suppress things or willfully ignore things. But if I'm going to fulfill the mission that



drove me here in the first place, I will not last. And that was kind of the choice, and I think it's a choice that is not unique to me. I think it's a choice that a lot of people in a lot of historically liberal institutions that are undergoing a kind of ideological transformation from within are having to make right now."

Weiss, who also worked as an Op-Ed and book review editor at the *Wall Street Journal* and a senior editor at *Tablet*, and is a steady fixture on such shows as "Real Time with Bill Maher" and "The View," was undeterred in her mission to fight antisemitism. She resigned from

the *Times* and launched her own newsletter on Substack, "Common Sense with Bari Weiss." With the tagline "honest news for sane people," Weiss continues to doggedly raise awareness about antisemitism—both in left wing and right wing political circles.

"I'm proud of working hard to ignore the noise and to tell the truth," says Weiss, who also hosts "Honestly," a weekly podcast. "I strive very

Bari Weiss is a guest on Bill Maher's panel in 2019 with: Charlie Sykes (Contributor, MSNBC), Eliot Spitzer (former NY-D governor), Maher, (unseen Martin Short, George Will, *Washington Post* columnist).

Left: Weiss shares a moment with her sisters.

Far left: An early photo of Weiss working on her computer.

Opposite page: Weiss is surrounded by books during her book-signing event.



Weiss has a conversation with Natan Sharansky, an Israeli politician, human rights activist, and author who, as a refusenik in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s, spent nine years in Soviet prisons.

hard to ignore what people tell me is the narrative in favor of what I think all good journalists are supposed to do, which is to pursue the truth, and pursue the hard story, even when it's politically inconvenient. The other thing I'm proud of, frankly, is walking away from the *New York Times*, which, by at least by all external measures, is the pinnacle of American journalism. I walked away because there are things that I feel are more important than having a prestigious job or bragging rights."

Weiss, who graduated from Columbia University and was the winner of the Reason Foundation's 2018 Bastiat Prize for her writing, notes that, "It is extremely easy to use antisemitism as a political cudgel against the side you hate. For someone on the right to point to someone like Rashida Tlaib and say, look, the problem is on your side. And for someone on the left



In 1987, the Weiss family, with Bari in a stroller, took part in Free Soviet Jewry marches.

Above:: At a young age, Bari and a sister show their support for Israel.

REMEMBERING RUTH PEARL

Press Club Awards Dedicated to the 'Warrior' Who Formed the Daniel Pearl Foundation

BY ROB ESHMAN



RUTH PEARL, who died July 20 at the age of 85, fought a thousand battles in her lifetime.

She didn't look like a warrior—barely five feet tall, rail thin with cropped brown hair and a soft voice that quavered, especially as she fought respiratory problems in later life.

But when I first met her, almost two decades ago, I quickly learned she was, as her late son Danny's friend Asra Nomani described her, "strength incarnate."

Ruth achieved unwelcome fame as the mother of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped by Pakistani terrorists on Jan. 23, 2002, and executed nine agonizing days later. It was a very public tragedy that would have sent most people into a life of mourning and bitterness. But Ruth, along with her husband Judea, led a long struggle to turn their son's death into an opportunity to con-

nect people, to bridge cultures and to increase understanding.

Tonight's Southern California Journalism Awards are dedicated to Ruth Pearl.

"I'm sure the killers of Danny didn't have a sense of the humanity that connects us," she said in an interview with the USC Shoah Foundation. "For them Danny was an object, and that can happen only if you don't have your own self-respect and respect for other human beings."

Ruth and Judea formed the Daniel Pearl Foundation with the mission to bring these values—their son's values—into the world. They spent the next almost two decades organizing music events, lectures and journalism fellowships, authoring books, bridging cultures and religions around the world.

Ruth worked closely with the Los Angeles Press Club to establish the Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism in 2002, honoring journalists like her son. She took great care in thinking through the possible recipients, who have included

the assassinated Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, the French satirical journal *Charlie Hebdo*, and Richard Engel.

I regularly moderated discussions that the Pearl Foundation sponsored along with the L.A. Press Club featuring Daniel Pearl Journalism Fellows, Muslim journalists from Pakistan, the Middle East and Indonesia who worked for six months at U.S.-based news organizations. Ruth took charge of all the details of those fellowships, from rental cars to where we would go out to eat after the event.

She had, in the words of Pakistani journalist and former Pearl Follow Amal Khan, an "unnerving kindness."

One of my favorite moments in our dinners with the Fellows came when Ruth would lapse into flawless Arabic. That was when I realized it was her own life story, as much as the tragedy that befell her later, that drove her to bridge cultures and bring people together.

Ruth was born Eveline Rejwan on Nov. 10, 1935, in Baghdad, in a family whose roots in Iraq went back before the birth of Islam. Her father, Joseph, was a successful importer, her mother, Victoria, an accomplished tailor. Ruth and her four siblings lived in the city

center among their Muslim neighbors.

Some of those same neighbors protected the family during the June 1941 Farhud, a pogrom in downtown Baghdad that left 180 Jews dead and hundreds injured. When the mob rushed the Rejwan home, where 6-year-old Ruth and her family were hiding, neighbors told the crowd, "There are no Jews here."

"We thanked them, and they said, 'Well, we're keeping you for last.'"

The family remained unhurt. Ruth joined a Zionist underground movement, eventually taking part in a mass exodus of Jews to Israel in 1951. Shortly after she received word that her older brother had died fighting in the Israeli army, news that further devastated her family.

The family settled in Tel Aviv. Ruth would eventually join the Israeli Navy, then earn her electrical engineering degree at The Technion—Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa—one of four women in a class of 120.

She met Judea at Technion. They married in 1960 and moved to Princeton, New Jersey, for their graduate studies. Ruth would earn a Masters as she and Judea had three children, Tamara, Daniel and Michelle, in eight years.

In 1970 they moved to Los Angeles, where Ruth worked as a computer software analyst and Judea began a career as a UCLA professor and researcher.

In her later years, Ruth's physical strength ebbed, but not her conviction. In May, she recorded YouTube testimony calling on Pakistan to reverse its Supreme Court's decision to release from prison the man responsible for Daniel's kidnapping and murder.

After greeting viewers in Arabic, she said, "I am Ruth Pearl, mother of Daniel Pearl. Since 2002, when our son was kidnapped and murdered in Pakistan, our lives have been upside-down. There's not a single day we don't miss our son."

The Ruth in that video is the one I knew: brilliant, humane, tenacious, driven.

"We have to educate the next generation differently," she said in her Shoah Foundation testimony.

She was far too modest a person to say it, so I will: we have to educate them to be more like Ruth Pearl.

Rob Eshman is the National Editor of The Forward, where a version of this article originally appeared.

DANIEL PEARL AWARD BARI WEISS

Weiss appeared on *Real Time with Bill Maher* in 2019 to discuss her new book, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*.

to point to, say, Marjorie Taylor Greene. Or Steve King. What's hard is calling it out when it comes from inside your own house. That, for me, is one of the litmus tests. If you are serious about fighting antisemitism, you'll start by cleaning up your side of the street."

Being honored with an award named for Pearl, the American-Jewish *Wall Street Journal* correspondent who was kidnapped and murdered by Pakistani terrorists in 2002, "means more to me than I can possibly express," says Weiss.

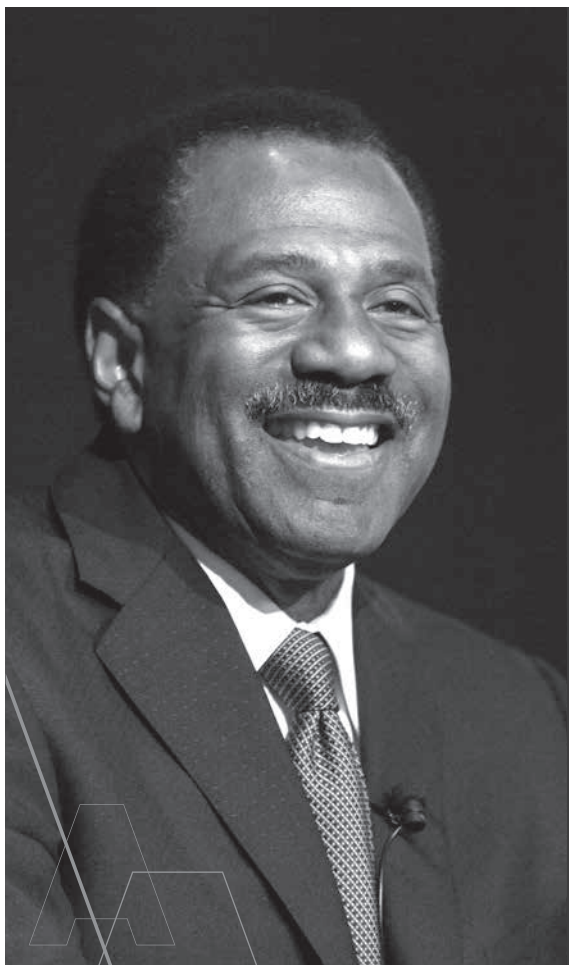
"To be associated in any way with this family and the virtues that they carry the torch for is a profound honor," she adds.

"The Pearls are not just mensches," says Weiss of Daniel's parents Judea and the late Ruth, who passed away in June. "They are also proud and public Jews and Zionists in an era where too



many are closeted about such commitments. It's hard to think of a man that deserves to relax more than Judea Pearl. But he is the opposite of relaxed. And I mean that entirely as a compliment. He is tireless in the fight against Jew-hate and especially in his support for young people.

"If I can imitate him, if I can make a tiny percentage of the impact he has made, I will consider myself successful." 🕊️



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