

Daniel Pearl Journalism Internship Essay

“As you begin your journey to dare the impossible, remember one thing: The impossible is just a fake caricature of the possible.”

The words reverberated across the stage to my classmates and I, as we listened to Judea Pearl, Daniel Pearl’s father, deliver a commencement speech to our high school graduating class of 2021.

As a graduate of Daniel Pearl Magnet High School— a school named after Daniel, who was an alum— I always knew our school was more than just a namesake painted on walls throughout the building. Rather, our school carried Daniel’s spirit and “made Danny come to life,” as Judea Pearl liked to say when he would visit our campus in the San Fernando Valley.

My introduction to journalism was not easy. I walked into high school a shy freshman who knew little to nothing about the field. As a daughter of undocumented immigrants, I rejected the power my voice could have. However, I was immersed in the difficult but powerful teachings of Daniel’s legacy by my high school and realized that finding my voice was not a choice. It was a necessity.

Daniel’s spirit is what guided our reporting of the historic LAUSD teacher strike in 2019, when we— as high school students— took complete control of our student paper’s coverage, producing daily, on-the-ground reporting about the strike and its impact on our campus. We navigated difficult conversations with administration who tried to reprimand us for choosing to stay at the picket line to report. However, we didn’t back down— not after everything the Pearl family taught us.

Once I graduated high school, I knew I wanted to dedicate my life to uncovering truths. I implemented Daniel’s teachings as I wrote a story for the LA Times about a California university who chose to shift from using the term ‘Chicano’ to ‘Latinx.’ Although at face value, this could seem like a simple switch, I spent weeks talking to sources to weave in the experiences of a Latinx community at a crossroads. On one hand, there was an older generation of Chicano

activists, who felt pride in the name and their fight for equality. On the other was a younger generation, who craves a new era of inclusivity.

Daniel's spirit for persistently questioning power helps guide me through difficult coverage at The Stanford Daily, where I've covered Stanford police violence, various labor struggles from custodial workers and helped investigate university leadership.

Judea Pearl ended his 2021 commencement speech by saying, "Whatever your vocation— be it business, science, art or journalism, Daniel will be with you, shining your path and telling you: question authority, worship truth and insist on understanding it in your way." These words and Danny's teachings continue to guide my reporting today.

Attending Daniel Pearl High School unequivocally changed my life. However, I'm certain that change doesn't start or end with me. Danny's legacy will live on in every graduate of my high school and beyond. It will live on because truth-seeking will always prevail.