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Mondoweiss Podcast Ep. 56: Alice Rothchild on bringing the Palestine story to young adult fiction

Dave Reed (00:00:03):

This is the Mondoweiss Podcast. I'm Dave Reed. Alice Rothchild is a doctor, writer, filmmaker, and activist who has spent decades in key social justice movements. She is the author of three books. "Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: stories of Jewish and Palestinian Trauma and Resilience" was released in 2007. "On The Brink, Israel and Palestine on the eve of the 2014 Gaza Invasion" came in 2014 and "Condition Critical Life and Death in Israel Palestine" was published in 2017. This year, Cune Press will publish her first young adult novel "Finding Melody Sullivan. It's the story of a half-Jewish, half Catholic, 16 year old girl told against the backdrop of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Phil Weiss spoke to Alice recently about the book and about her journey from a conservative Jewish upbringing in New England to become an outspoken activist for Palestinian Freedom.

Phil Weiss (00:01:09):

Hi, Alice.

Alice Rothchild (00:01:10):

Hello.

Phil Weiss (00:01:12):

Oh, well, it's a real pleasure to have you on the podcast today. And I wanted to begin by introducing you. The reason that we're talking to you is that you have a new novel out called "Finding Melody Sullivan" that has a large component of Palestine in it, and the American relationship to Palestine and Israel and the American Jewish relationship. So you and I are old friends. We met, I guess, around 15 years ago in Boston when you lived there, now you're living out west. You are a physician, a retired health public health person. You're a filmmaker. Let's see, I have other stuff written down. You have so many chapters and you've a longtime social justice activist, and now you've written a novel is, I believe this is your first novel.

Alice Rothchild (00:02:07):

That's right. Okay. First novel and first children's book.

Phil Weiss (00:02:11):

Wow. Okay. And I love it. We will get to it in this conversation. I find it extremely charming and challenging, and it's about things I care about, including chiefly, I think the American lens on Palestine and the American Jewish lens. But let's get to that a little later. And let's start by you tell us, can you give us a little not a long biography autobiography, but of your relationship to this question, how you got engaged on it, and leading to why you are publishing a book about a 16 year old American Half-Jewish Girls response, a visit to Palestine and Awakening, or it's about

Melody Sullivan. This book is about Melody Sullivan's awakening, and which God knows we want a lot of people to have in America. <Laugh>. So I've said enough, Alice, please.

Alice Rothchild (00:03:14):

Okay. So I was living my life as an obstetrician gynecologist. I was involved in various progressive movements around healthcare reform, women's reproductive freedom, childbirth, those kinds of things. And in the 1990s, I became more interested in my lack of knowledge about Israel Palestine and the contradictions from my early Zionist upbringing with my adult politics understanding, colonialism and imperialism and racism, and all the things that we were beginning to really grapple with at that point. And so I got involved with a bunch of other agonized and questioning Jewish people in the Boston area through the Workman's Circle, which is now the Worker's Circle. And as we explored this and listened to the narratives of Palestinians and Lefty Israelis we really wanted to bring this to our community. And so we started doing events and we were very quickly blacklisted.

Alice Rothchild (00:04:13):

And then a bunch of us realized we were all in the health field, and we were all actually doctors, and that we could explore this region of the world through the lens of healthcare and human rights. So in 2003, we started organizing health and human rights delegations to the region. I first went in 2004 and then went basically almost annually until the pandemic hit. And so I developed a huge amount of on the ground experience and understanding of the realities in Palestine and also in Israel. And I became more and more obsessed with the idea of writing about this. So this led to my writing three books about health and human rights in Israel-Palestine, about my Jewish journey about basically what I had learned from the people I was interacting with. And this led to a whole life of speaking engagements and writing in anthologies and all that kind of organizing, cultural kind of work.

Alice Rothchild (00:05:17):

And then in 2016, on a fateful day, I was giving a talk for a bunch of Quakers. And this teacher said to me, you should write a book for kids about Palestine. And I said, basically, I don't write books for children. I had children of my own. I knew nothing about writing children's books. And that night I dreamt a picture book, and I woke up and thought, oh my goodness, there's a picture book in my head. And it was basically modeled after Naomi Shihab Nye's "Sitti's Secrets." So I wrote it down and I, you know, started thinking about, well, maybe I could write a picture book. And then I moved to Seattle and kind of realized as I struggled over this, that I knew absolutely nothing about writing children's books. So I joined the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, the Pacific Northwest Writers Association.

Alice Rothchild (00:06:05):

I got into a critique group, and I basically developed an unofficial MFA in writing children's books. And the picture book turned into a middle grade novel, which is currently being seriously considered by a publisher. And the rule is that after you finish a book, you need to move on to the next one, otherwise you will, you know, die waiting for the first one to get published. So I

wrote a graphic novel, which took a whole lot of education on how to do that, about a cat that lives in the Shuafat Refugee Camp in Jerusalem. And I've been working with various Palestinian graphic artists who for various complicated, mostly political reasons, have not followed through. But I'm now working with an artist in Gaza, which has its whole other challenges, as you can imagine. But he's a brilliant artist, and we will see if we can pull this one off. There's a publisher also interested in that one.

Phil Weiss (00:06:58):

Great.

Alice Rothchild (00:06:59):

And then I wrote this young adult novel. So that's sort of the arc of my children's writing history. And as I did all of this, I became, you know, I started reading what's called Kid Lit.

Phil Weiss (00:07:13):

Mm-hmm. <Affirmative>.

Alice Rothchild (00:07:13):

And I became intensely aware that there's almost no kid lit that has a sympathetic view of Palestine or Palestinian.

Phil Weiss (00:07:21):

Mm-hmm. <Affirmative>.

Alice Rothchild (00:07:21):

So that just upped my motivation.

Phil Weiss (00:07:24):

Thank you for that wonderful tour. I wanna drill down into a couple things you've said. Before we get to Finding Melody Sullivan, you began as I began in a very parochial Jewish space, or not very, but a parochial Jewish space. And today we find ourselves in a much more diverse cultural space, and we are grateful for that. And it's essential to our work and the work of others who care about Palestine. But I wanna start in that space with you and, and, and ask you a couple questions, just two in, in that regard. First, what is it about, how do you, how would you explain, you know, Jews of our generation we're roughly the same age, are largely much more pro-Zionist pro-Israel than you and I are. And so I, and, and the Holocaust very important. And Israel's the answer to the Holocaust, the litany.

Phil Weiss (00:08:24):

I'm curious about psychologically character, logically, personally, how you explain because I have my own answer to this for myself, how you explain that you, in the nineties were able to say, gosh, this is a question of social justice, and I'm not on Israel's side necessarily, and it, I'm not on

Israel's side. Okay. How did, how do you explain that you made, jumped the fence and I jumped the fence? What is it about you that may, that allowed you to, to reach this understanding when there's so much cultural inhibition and omerta and other forms of repression and that, that make this a heresy in our community?

Alice Rothchild (00:09:09):

Right. So, you know, that's a complicated question. I think that for Jews in our generation we lost a lot of the attachment to the religion. And so the way to be Jewish in this country was to love Israel. So Israel became the religion. And you know, I don't quite know why I turned out the way I turned out, but, you know, as a physician working with all different kinds of people, all different kinds of populations, as someone who felt that the way I could express my Jewishness was in, you know, "Tikkun Olam" to healing the world, you know, that that was also my doctor job. Not only healing patients, that it all came together along with what we learned from the Vietnam War and second wave feminism and all the sort of historical movements that were going on at that time, that it really came to a place where I had to question my love of Israel.

Alice Rothchild (00:10:03):

Because I definitely loved Israel. I mean, I went there when I was 14. It was like the trip of a lifetime. We were back to the homeland, although we never actually wanted to live there. So I had to grapple with this. And I found that storytelling and hearing people's histories was an incredibly powerful mover for me. So just, you know, listening to Palestinians tell their stories, just like this light bulb went off in my brain, like, oh, that's the history. That's the problem. You know, and then it, it's like all the discordant pieces of the puzzle plunked together. You know, this is not a story of, you know, all these antisemitic Arabs trying to kill the Jews. This is about, you know, the impact of Jewish settlers coming into a region that already had people in it and their desire to hold onto their land.

Alice Rothchild (00:10:51):

And, you know, it, it suddenly made a tremendous amount of sense for me. So once that clicked, then the rest of the story kind of followed and it meant that I questioned everything and I questioned what Jewish leaders said, and I questioned sort of the narrative on Israel. I mean, the other thing is, you know, I've always been an outsider. You know, I was like a smart girl when you were supposed to be dumb. I was you know.

Phil Weiss (00:11:16):

Mm-hmm. <Affirmative>,

Alice Rothchild (00:11:17):

I had brown hair when you were supposed to be blonde. That, you know, I went to a smart girl's college when you were not supposed to do that. And, you know, people said, you'll never find a husband. You know, I, I mean, I always was on the outside.

Phil Weiss (00:11:28):

Mm-hmm. <Affirmative>.

Alice Rothchild (00:11:28):

And so being on the outside of the Jewish community was not a, a scary position for me. It was actually a pretty comfortable position for me. And then I found this whole other community that totally welcomed me. And it was, you know, lefty Jew, lefty Christians, you know Palestinians. You know, it was a whole opening to a place where I actually felt like I belonged and that's very powerful. And so I've stayed there, <laugh>.

Phil Weiss (00:11:54):

That's great. That's a wonderful answer. Thank you. Can you situate that, can you situate your story a little bit with geographical details, where you grew up and what and, and when you say a Zionist community where, where that community was and how strong the indoctrination was?

Alice Rothchild (00:12:15):

Sure. So yeah. My mother is from an Orthodox family. Like my grandfather visited us once, my Zaide, for my brother's Bris, and he took his own food and his own plates because we didn't have enough kosher. I eat none. But nothing we could do would be good enough. My father was from a you know, a very traditional family in terms of being immigrants, but they weren't particularly religious, they were almost anti-Semitic in their anti-Jewish. And so my parents, after the war, had me in 1948. And I think that my mother was sort of the driving force. She was a writer and although she was not a, a quote orthodox religious person, you know, she had the mentality of someone who grew up in an immigrant community who was, you know, lived through the news of the Holocaust and the reality.

Alice Rothchild (00:13:07):

She wrote a book about the Holocaust. So that was a very defining element in my growing up. And I remember as a teenager reading everything I could find on the Holocaust and knowing who in our little town were Holocaust survivors and, you know, so Israel just grew out of that. Um and so I was born in Boston and I mostly grew up in Sharon, Massachusetts, which is, it was then an exurb of Boston. And basically it was a little, you know, very small 3000 people, New England town, you know, Paul Revere built the bells and the church and blah, blah, blah. And my parents moved there because it had a lake. And they wanted to live like Thoreau and Walden Pond, but they couldn't afford where Walden Pond was located. And so Sharon, basically over the years we lived there you know, grew enormously in size and it was all Jews that moved in.

Alice Rothchild (00:13:57):

And it was Jews who had been living in places like Dorchester and Roxbury in the inner city who finally got enough money to move out, but couldn't afford Newton and Woburn and Lexington and those kind of places. So it was an interesting community. And so very rapidly it had three temples and <laugh>, you know, a big Hebrew school and all that kind of jazz. So my parents situated themselves in the conservative temple. So I went to Hebrew school three times a week.

I had a sort of second rate bat mitzvah, which was what conservative girls were offered at the time. But it was like a no-brainer that you loved Israel. It was just part of the air we breathed. And having a mother writing about it meant that I didn't question it until I started, you know, questioning everything. Which basically happened in college. I was a very good girl and I stuck with my mother through thick and thin until I had trouble doing that. And then, you know, things started coming apart.

Phil Weiss (00:14:53):

Did your mother witness your transformation into an anti-Zionist?

Alice Rothchild (00:15:00):

She did witness the beginnings of it. Her turning point was she came to a meeting at my house. At that point I lived in Brookline, which is another Jewish, big Jewish community right next to Boston. And she sat there and she thought she had figured out who the Jews were and who the Palestinians were in the room. And it turned out she was wrong and it really shook her up. And so she really acknowledged what was going on.

Phil Weiss (00:15:24):

Wonderful.

Alice Rothchild (00:15:25):

She said to me that I took it further than she could bear. So I watched her heart being broken by what I was telling her about, you know.

Phil Weiss (00:15:34):

Wow.

Alice Rothchild (00:15:34):

I mean, she did, she did writing you know events in Israel and my father was all involved with the you know, businessmen and that kind of stuff.

Alice Rothchild (00:15:45):

You know, when I was 14, we actually went to the nuclear reactor in Israel because he was worked with nuclear medicine.

Phil Weiss (00:15:52):

Wow.

Alice Rothchild (00:15:53):

I had no idea at that point that Israel was denying that it had a nuclear reactor. Yeah. So my parents had bought into the whole thing. And I understand why and how and all that stuff. But this was exquisitely painful for her. I don't know much about how my father felt, because he was

not a big talker, because my mother was always talking. But yeah. I suspect he agreed with her since he tended to do that.

Phil Weiss (00:16:14):

Okay. You know, I was, I should just tell you, I was born in the Boston Lying-In.

Alice Rothchild (00:16:17):

Me too.

Phil Weiss (00:16:18):

That's what I assumed. So I, because most babies born in Boston in our era were born in the Boston Lying-In, in Brookline. Okay.

Alice Rothchild (00:16:28):

Although a lot of Jews went to Beth Israel Hospital because that hospital was founded because Jewish doctors couldn't get admitting privileges at the Boston Lying-In.

Phil Weiss (00:16:36):

Oh, I didn't know that.

Alice Rothchild (00:16:37):

Early 1900s. Yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:16:38):

Fascinating. Thank you. Okay, so another two-part question. How, and I'm sort of segueing to your book now and it's about the audience for your book. That's the second part of the question. The first part of the question is, as you know, there is often a debate in activist circles about how much we should care about Jews or the Jewish community. And I mean, it's, I don't know, I don't care that much about the debate because I know how much I want to care. I care about the American Jewish community. Although activists, some activists will say they're very conservative slash reactionary on this matter. Zionism, by and large, and forget about 'em. Organize a larger community and they'll come along and, and left-leaning Jews will come along in whenever, just when people are ready to deal with this issue, let 'em just join our group and our, our our this movement. And, you know, when people are expressing high bound and ugly attitudes about Palestine, just sort of ignore them or fight them. But, you know, just don't put your energy into it. I put my energy into it for whatever reason. This isn't about me. So my question is, who is your audience for this book and how much do you care about the American Jewish community?

Alice Rothchild (00:18:03):

So this book is a self Palestine book, like Finding Melody Sullivan. You wouldn't know it's a book actually, where Palestine is a character in the book. So my audience is actually young adults,

kids, 15 to 85. And it's not, it wasn't geared towards the American Jewish youth or Jewish community, but I wanted it to be accessible to American Jews or to people who felt like they had to, you know, hang in there with American Jews. And I also wanna make it clear that American Jews are a very heterogeneous community. And so it's, it's a bit dangerous to have one word for all the different opinions that we have in our community. So that's why I had Melody have a Jewish mother. So she's technically Jewish, but a Catholic father, but to be secular, which is really where a lot of kids are these days.

Alice Rothchild (00:18:54):

You know, mixed, quote, mixed marriages are extremely common. And, you know, growing up without a significant religion is extremely common. But I also had this Jewish character, Aaron, the Boy who is, you know, wants to be a rabbi, wears a kippa, you know, he's very involved in his temple. I wanted to have him there so people could hang someone, find someone they could attach to if they were that person. So I, you know, I wanted people to attach to him if that's where they were, and then follow his journey along with Melody and her friend Yasmina. So, you know, I tried to play it so that different voices were present so that people could see themselves as they needed to in the book. I would love for this book to be, you know reading in young adult groups and temples, et cetera.

Alice Rothchild (00:19:42):

You know, I have had a long experience of not being that welcomed in most temples. You know, there are reconstructions, temples that will sometimes take the plunge and let me actually speak, but it's pretty rare. So I don't feel that welcome there. But I would be, I'm always trying and I'm always, you know, nudging people who have rabbis that they can talk to, to say, gee, could I come and do my thing? But it's, it's very interesting when I do, you know, I make rabbis incredibly nervous as a general rule. You know, I've had people just, you know, falling over themselves trying to negate everything that I'm saying. So it, you know, it's a, it's a difficult place for me to be, but I certainly welcome being there. And that's why Aaron is in the book. I mean, one of the many reasons.

Phil Weiss (00:20:28):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, you said a lot that I wanna ask you about. Before we get to Aaron and Melody and Yasmina and Melody's father too and her late mother what can you make that a little bit real about those rabbis falling over themselves to negate everything you've said? I, I, I would find that a very uncomfortable place to be. Can you tell me how many times you've been in that type of situation and how you conduct yourself in, in those forums?

Alice Rothchild (00:21:02):

It's probably over the past 25 years, maybe, I don't know, 10 times, 15 times. You know, but I'll give you an example. We were this was when I was I, I did a lot of talks with people about health and human rights because we felt like you may be fighting over Zionism, but I'm sure you don't think women should deliver at checkpoints. You know, I felt like this was a place where we could have a conversation. And then we say, gee, why is this woman delivering at a checkpoint duh,

<laugh>? So we were doing one of those talks and the rabbi, this was a reconstructionist temple in the Boston area. And the rabbi got up to introduce us and she said, and we always remember that we have this conversation out of a love of Zion. And I was like, huh, you know, I am not having this conversation out of a love of Zion.

Phil Weiss (00:21:50):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Alice Rothchild (00:21:50):

I'm having this conversation out of a love of social justice and I hope Jews are gonna be positive in this regard. So that for me, really, crystallized how we were coming at it from very different places. So it, it was very powerful. I mean, I still remember her saying this, and I'm like, oh my God. How, you know, what do I say after that? You know, <laugh>.

Phil Weiss (00:22:10):

Ah-Huh. <affirmative>. Did you, were you confrontational or did you let that one pass?

Alice Rothchild (00:22:16):

Well, first of all, I'm never confrontational. That's part of my deal. If you know, talk strong with a soft voice.

Phil Weiss (00:22:23):

You do. That's true.

New Speaker (00:22:24):

So the more controversial I am, the softer and gentler my tone.

Phil Weiss (00:22:30):

Wow.

Alice Rothchild (00:22:30):

I am not interested in having a fight with someone.

Phil Weiss (00:22:32):

Wow. Wow.

Alice Rothchild (00:22:34):

Fighting is not something I will do because I don't think people's ears are open when they're screaming.

Phil Weiss (00:22:40):

Wow. If only I could have channeled you a million times in my life. Go on. Sorry,

Alice Rothchild (00:22:45):

<Laugh>. So, you know, it's like, so she was then very upset because we showed a map. And I don't remember, you know, there was something with the map. And so, you know, I took a very deep breath and, you know, continued explaining, you know, what I'd seen personally, what people told me personally, you know, I retreat back into this is what I saw, this is what I heard, this is the experience of Mahmoud who blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Cause it's very hard to fight over a personal experience. S that's sort of my strategy in that kind of setting. And it gets, you know, people get very upset because they feel like, well, that can't possibly be right, or Yeah, that's the one good Palestinian you've ever met, or, you know, whatever the context is. So that's sort of my strategy.

Phil Weiss (00:23:29):

I'm impressed by that. And you know, I wanna say that you know, while we're speaking personally, I think that your parents deserve some credit for.

Alice Rothchild (00:23:39):

Oh yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:23:39):

Your, your strength and independence and that if for all the anguish it might have given your mother, you, you,

Alice Rothchild (00:23:47):

I'm a lot like my mother. I mean, she was a public speaker.

Phil Weiss (00:23:50):

I see. Okay.

Alice Rothchild (00:23:50):

But we had our differences. I do give them credit. They send you to a good school. You know, they raised a fighter. So

Phil Weiss (00:23:58):

Birth order, birth order?

Alice Rothchild (00:23:59):

I'm first, I'm a classic first child of, of, well, there were four, but one died shortly after birth. So there three,

Phil Weiss (00:24:06):

Sorry. Yeah. Oh, okay. And

Alice Rothchild (00:24:09):

I should just say that with the fighting question. If someone is that angry, they're not gonna change. Just like, you know, I wouldn't go to a talk by Dershowitz because he's not gonna change my mind. So if someone is that dug in, forget it. They're not my audience. I'm interested in the edges. I'm interested in their children and their grandchildren. I'm interested in the people who are squirming. Wow. I'm not interested in someone who says, I know I'm right. Because, you know, they're, they're, that's okay. They've got their opinion and, you know, we'll move on and we'll deal with someone else. So I, wow. I don't have to win. I just have to have people listen. And that's a very good way to deal with controversy, I think.

Phil Weiss (00:24:49):

Wow. Wow. Wisdom. Wisdom that I've ignored all my life until now. <Laugh>.

Alice Rothchild (00:24:55):

Well, it's never too late.

Phil Weiss (00:24:56):

<Laugh>. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Okay. So Alice, let's talk about the book for a little bit. Um and then and and then, and then get back to larger questions. That the book reflects. So let's just, I'm gonna dig into the life, the interior life of this book for a moment and ask you about how you, your decision making around it and that kind of thing. And I've I'm not finished the book yet. I'm two-thirds the way through, I think at this point.

Alice Rothchild (00:25:31):

Lots of exciting things are gonna happen.

Phil Weiss (00:25:32):

I can see that on the horizon. I can see it the, the storm clouds have gathered. Yes. this book is about a 16 year old girl from the Boston area named Melody Sullivan, whose mother has died of cancer, I think around a year.

Alice Rothchild (00:25:49):

Breast Cancer.

Phil Weiss (00:25:50):

I'm sorry?

Alice Rothchild (00:25:50):

Breast cancer.

Phil Weiss (00:25:51):

A year, a year before the book. This the story begins and whose father is Irish, I guess of Irish extraction. And an anthropologist, or

Alice Rothchild (00:26:04):

Archeologist

Phil Weiss (00:26:05):

Archeologist, sorry, sorry, sorry. Who is going over toward the beginning of the book is going over to Jerusalem to do studies that he has long been. Yeah.

Alice Rothchild (00:26:15):

He's delivering a paper at a conference. Yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:26:17):

Okay. And he, I get, did I see the word drag somewhere? He drags Melody. Oh. He,

Alice Rothchild (00:26:26):

He's a kind of guy who's like actually quite lost in his own grief and not as, as Melody says, didn't get the parenting memo, you know. So he hasn't been really able to parent her that well after the death of the mother. So he sees this trip as this like, big opportunity to have some bonding experience with his alienated, depressed, angsty teenage daughter. So he does drag her along and she's like, she would rather, you know, go to the moon than go anywhere with her father. And the idea of going on a trip just with him to some, you know, foreign place she knows nothing about and has no interest in is really low on her list of things to do. So he did drag her along. Yeah. So she's hostile in a teenage kind of way. <Laugh>

Phil Weiss (00:27:08):

Thank you. And she is exhibiting certain behaviors. I mean quite a part, the life of this book. It's a rich book about that, that really is made for me. The pleasure of the book is the main character, Melody Sullivan. She's you know, I didn't really wanna read YA stuff. I was gonna send you a note saying, you know, I don't know that I can read YA stuff. I'm just, you know it's very, she's a very compelling and charming character. And she's flawed, she's ignorant. She has, she's done some cutting, some self-cutting in her anguish and depression. She has been in therapy. She is and yet it's her journey we're following of awakening. And so some of the, the places that Melody goes and, and, and it begins, the book really begins in this kind of triangle of social triangle that she exists in, of her friend Yasmina, who lives in occupied, who has family and unoccupied, in Boston, Yasmina. And they actually

Alice Rothchild (00:28:18):

In Vermont, but that's okay.

Phil Weiss (00:28:19):

Oh, oh, they're in Vermont when that, at the cabin. Yeah. That's

Alice Rothchild (00:28:23):

A college town in Vermont.

Phil Weiss (00:28:24):

Oh, right, right. I say that's why she's saying I'm from Vermont. Sorry. Sorry, I, I got that wrong. Okay. I

Alice Rothchild (00:28:29):

With nice little colleges with, you know, places like the Buttered Biscuits.

Phil Weiss (00:28:33):

That one. Yeah, I like that. It begins in a cafe called The Butter Biscuit. Or a restaurant. Anyway Yasmina has family in Hebron and can't really explain who she is to Melody toward the beginning book.

Alice Rothchild (00:28:50):

Chooses not to explain. Yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:28:52):

Okay. And Aaron, on the other hand, is much more open about his identity as this religious Jew. And Aaron sort of accompanies Melody on the trip in that she is often texting Aaron from over there and he is floored. And by the idea that he would go, she would go anywhere near Arabs. There is, in addition to that I'm, I'm just gonna throw a lot of the plot out that I've been in so far, which I find compelling there. She has cousins as so many Jews do. She has family in Israel, and I believe in this case it's her cousin Malka and her brother who live in Tel Aviv. And Malka's brother is in the Israeli Defense Forces. And he has a roommate who's in the Israeli Defense forces. And there's a very unpleasant encounter with these soldiers you know, swaggering sort of pot smoking soldiers in their Tel Aviv apartment. But what I'm getting right now is that this person who doesn't really think much about Israel and Palestine, Melody Sullivan has and has been thrust into this very political situation. And, and, and, and I'm at a point in the book where she has crossed a checkpoint in order to visit Yasmina. She's crossed a checkpoint into Bethlehem and then is gonna travel by car onto Hebron, is already encountering settlers. And Aaron meanwhile is talking about Kiryat Arba, which is a religious settlement in Hebron.

Alice Rothchild (00:30:44):

Where his cousin lives, right. Oh,

Phil Weiss (00:30:46):

His cousin lives. Okay. So we are getting this character, this sort of innocent American of 16 years old who is being plunged into the conflict. So I've set it up in that fashion. Can you tell me what I've gotten wrong? What, how you would, and, and why you chose to do to to frame the book in this, I mean, it seems obvious when, as we talk about it, but what, what your choices were with respect to this plot.

Alice Rothchild (00:31:16):

So, I mean, that is largely much of the plot. You know, she's had this traumatic experience and just, and just in a teenage frenzy decides she's gonna figure out how to get to Yasmina because she didn't understand that Yasmina couldn't just hop on a bus and come meet her in Jerusalem. So that was her first big shock. I mean, this book is about trauma, you know, personal as well as political. And part of the arc, I, I wanted each character to have an important arc. So her arc is partly becoming aware that she's not the only person carrying trauma and woundedness and to suddenly become aware of the world outside of her. And so the way that happens is that the journey from the Bethlehem checkpoint, which is this big, you know, awful military terminal to Hebron, which she didn't have any understanding would take so long is narrated by this woman on the bus, the taxi driver.

Alice Rothchild (00:32:10):

You know, these are people who are just living there who say, you know, this is what you're seeing and this is what you're seeing, and let me explain this. And meanwhile you're hearing her process it from her, you know, American teenager, oh my God, am I being kidnapped? Oh my God, they're giving me coffee. You know, kind of way. And also it allows the Palestinian characters to show some of their trauma and also to show some of their strengths. And also to be the narrator as she looks out the window and, you know, what's that and what's that and what's that? Because you could drive through the West Bank and if you don't translate that, that thing on the hill is a settlement. And that barefoot kid is at a refugee camp and you know, this checkpoint is here because blah, blah, blah.

Alice Rothchild (00:32:52):

You need a translator. So, for me, having heard, being in the taxiing, being in the bus gave me the opportunity, which I also had as a person traveling in the West Bank. I had translators who just, you know, happened to be the taxi driver just explaining everything. And of course I was asking, but that's how I learned about Palestine was listening to people, you know, taxi drivers were a big source of information. So it felt right to me that for her, the first interpreter of the environment was, were the people getting her to Hebron And then when she got to her, you know, she meets this, you know, multi-generational, overwhelming Palestinian family. And so part of her arc is she didn't, you know, people talk about when you write a novel, what is the want of the main character? And the want of the main character is not only what they think they want, but what they don't know they want.

Alice Rothchild (00:33:42):

And what she didn't know she wanted was a loving family that would just embrace her warts and all and you know, feed her until she was about to pop and, you know, love her to bits. And so that's what she gets when she goes there. So it's an interesting, you know, and then having her be in this family, you know, she's cooking with them, she's making tomato sauce with them, you know, she's playing music with them, you know, she's doing things that people do. So I get to talk about Palestinian life, but it's not we will now learn about Palestinian life. It's like, this is all part of the story. So I love the way, you know, I learned about Palestine through storytelling and now I can share my knowledge of Palestine with people who don't know that they don't know about it and need to know about it through just a good story. You know? And a good story involves really making people care about the characters, have all sorts of terrible things happen to them and then have some kind of resolution and nice thing about, you know, middle grade novels. You have to have a happy ending. Young adult novels, you can have a complicated difficult one. <Laugh>. So, that's

Alice Rothchild (00:34:44):

Partly one of the many reasons it had to be a young adult novel because there's not an easy ending. There's, everybody moves from where they are to where they get to and then they have to keep working, you know? So that's what I liked about that style.

Phil Weiss (00:35:00):

Wow. Great. And remind me the book that's unpublished, you have a, an an earlier book that is is that, that's, you have of the cat in Shuafat refugee camps?

Alice Rothchild (00:35:12):

Yeah, that's the graphic novel. And then there's a middle grade.

Phil Weiss (00:35:14):

Yeah,

Alice Rothchild (00:35:14):

Yeah. There's a middle grade novel that's hoping to find a home.

Phil Weiss (00:35:19):

And middle grade means younger than,

Alice Rothchild (00:35:21):

Yeah. Seven to 12.

Phil Weiss (00:35:23):

I see. Okay. Okay. And how you

Alice Rothchild (00:35:25):

Can't have, you know, you can't have sex, you can't have swearing. I mean, there are all sorts of rules about middle grade novels, <laugh>.

Phil Weiss (00:35:31):

Okay.

Alice Rothchild (00:35:33):

So it had to be a book that didn't have those things. Whereas a young adult, you know, all hell breaks loose and that's fine.

Phil Weiss (00:35:39):

Got it.

Alice Rothchild (00:35:40):

You have all sort of things in young adult.

Phil Weiss (00:35:42):

Interesting. Okay. What, how did you do your research for this book?

Alice Rothchild (00:35:47):

Well first of all, I just thought about all the things that I know and I, you know, I've written a ton of blogs, so I read through some of my blogs. But the main thing I did, because I have a lot of just knowledge in my brain is to constantly be checking back with Palestinian colleagues. Do I have this right? Is this how it'll be? How long does it, you know, I've been to the West Bank a ton of times, but do I know how long it takes to get from point A to point B? Or I've been to East Jerusalem to the wall a million times, but you know, where exactly was the women's section, you know, I mean, I kept checking back with people and also with some Israeli friends.

Alice Rothchild (00:36:30):

Do I have, you know, do I have Tel Aviv right? Do I have this beach? Right. A lot of it was checking back, checking back, checking back. And then when I get to a place, I have a very dear friend who grew up in Hebron, who actually lives in the US now. So she was my, like, guardian angel to be sure. I got the details right. The, you know, the name of the drum that the brother plays is the right name. You know, I kept making sure, got it. Cause I'm an old white Jewish lady, I know a lot, but I don't, it's not my culture. So I have to be really careful that I get it right. And I get the words right, and I get the scene right. And I, you know, I get how they get their tomatoes right. And, you know, so I did a lot of checking in with the people who actually know this stuff from the personal, lived experience. The other thing is that because I was a gynecologist, I dealt with a lot of teenagers, I dealt with lot.

Phil Weiss (00:37:21):

Oh, I was gonna ask.

Alice Rothchild (00:37:22):

Teenagers who've had trauma. So I have a sort of intrinsic knowledge of teenage trauma. I had a teenager twice. So I know a lot about how that works and what teenagers think. And in my critique group several of this critique group, the women are 20 years younger than me, and so there's some teenagers around, so they also validated my teenager-ness. And then I had some teenagers read the book, which is a hard thing to get a teenager to read a book. And unfortunately, you know, the feedback was No, it was good, it was like, hello, you know? Yeah. It's ok, fine. I thought it was good. You know, that was like a teenager's one. So I figured, well, it's not terrible, you know, they, they read it. Yeah. That's

Phil Weiss (00:38:04):

Funny. So

Alice Rothchild (00:38:05):

I did that too.

Phil Weiss (00:38:07):

Got it. Can we review, I know you already said the, explained this somewhat, but can we talk for a moment about your decision making around Melody's father artistic decision making, but political, artistic around her father? The non-Jewish, the Jewish and the secular and also the ignorance about Israel Palestine.

Alice Rothchild (00:38:43):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Phil Weiss (00:38:44):

Why you, why you made her as ignorant as she is? Why you made her quote unquote half Jewish. I know you brought this up earlier, but can we go over it again? So

Alice Rothchild (00:38:54):

I needed to have characters that would end up <laugh> in Israel Palestine. So that meant that Melody had to have some Jewish connection mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, which was through her mother's sister who made Aliyah. It was through her father being an archeologist and having a paper accepted in Jerusalem. So that was the method that I got her there. And then I got her interacting with, you know, Aaron wandering by text message and him falling in love with her in east Jerusalem, and then her having to visit the cousins and all sorts of things happened, you know, and so it was a tactic to be sure there was a reason that they got there. Most teenagers are completely ignorant about Palestine. And so that was no problem. That's like how people are yeah. You know, and I think that at this point in history, the teenagers who think they know something are religious Jews and Christian Zionist, teenagers. And so I needed someone to represent, you know, a nice decent kid. No one's evil in this, you know, even the cousins who, you know, some terrible things happen, they're decent people. Um I needed someone to

represent the sort of what teenagers know about Israel. Yes. And that had to be for me a religious kid because I don't think other kids have an opinion. So that's

Phil Weiss (00:40:14):

Oh, that's interesting. That makes sense. But

Alice Rothchild (00:40:17):

I needed to have a real reason why, why would they end up there? You know, why doesn't her father take her to, you know, Somalia? I, you know, I needed to have a reason why I was picking this place

Phil Weiss (00:40:27):

I was moved by the relationship she had with Malka and that her mother had with Malka's mother. I don't know if Malka's mother comes into this story.

Alice Rothchild (00:40:38):

Yeah. I mean, she's peripheral because this, she just appears at the beginning with the, the dinner at their house. I mean, she's a, you know, well, the lady who in '67, you know, got religion and went to Israel to make Aliyah and, you know, settled there and has her kids and, you know.

Phil Weiss (00:40:53):

Right. But that, that, that chasm

Alice Rothchild (00:40:56):

Right.

Phil Weiss (00:40:57):

Spiritual chasm between Malka and Melody is one that any American Jew who's gone over there and met close friends or family can relate to. As sort of like, wait, this is our family. They've made very different choices than we've made. Right. They're on a different path. Yeah.

Alice Rothchild (00:41:20):

Pretty typical.

Phil Weiss (00:41:21):

Yeah. Well, you say

Alice Rothchild (00:41:23):

Melody is also, she's like, you know, a big environmentalist. She's against armies and here she has cousins who are in the Army. You know, she just like, it's a disconnect for her that I wanted to show.

Phil Weiss (00:41:34):

You say pretty typical, but I'm, I think that you do it very well and that it's has a vivid and cutting quality and very, to me, very familiar and dead-on.

Alice Rothchild (00:41:46):

And I did things that you know, people may miss, but like the meal that the the aunt makes for her that she says is really great. Israeli food is largely Arabic food, you know. So I'm playing with the, the tropes yes. That you know, probably just goes by people, but has meaning to it.

Phil Weiss (00:42:03):

Great. thank you. I, I think I might have missed that. Although so Alice, let's step outside the book now a little bit. And what, what do you is this book, you're a very political person, an intentional person. What, what is the political, what, what is the political intention of this book? What do you wanna, what do you, where do you want this book to go? Who do you wanna read it? And, and et cetera?

Alice Rothchild (00:42:35):

So I have spent my life talking very much to the choir. I mean, sometimes I get beyond the choir, but mostly I'm in some variant of the choir. There may be people that are yelling at me, but mostly it's people who agree with me or I'm making them uncomfortable, but they're willing to sit through it, blah, blah, blah. Yeah. So my goal with this book was to get out of the choir.

Phil Weiss (00:42:56):

Okay. So

Alice Rothchild (00:42:57):

I, you know, in my wildest fantasy this book is part of curricula in high schools that deal with the Middle East, that deal with personal narrative, the deal with trauma, the deal with you know, Jewish study, whatever category it can fall into. I think it's a good book for that category, <laugh>. So in that way you know, as I've learned more about young adult literature you know, young adults don't buy books. Their mothers and fathers buy books. They're teachers, they're librarians. So it's a weird marketing thing where you're selling to the people who buy the books, but you're trying to get the people who read the books interested. So interesting. You know, I'm doing a lot of public events and readings that will get mostly adults because that's who comes to these things, but they're the ones who are gonna buy the book.

Alice Rothchild (00:43:47):

But I also need to get into schools and libraries. So that is a big wall to cross over. So, you know, I've applied to talk at the American Library Association. I've made myself available to the Seattle Public Libraries and to the King County libraries. And I'll tell you, librarians are not calling me to say, oh, I wanna have a controversial book about, you know, I'm, I'm I'm, it's an uphill battle. So I am trying to interest people through the world of multiculturalism through faith-based youth groups. I'm gonna talk to a bat mitzvah class <laugh> in a couple of weeks. You know, I'm trying to find ways that I can get a population that are teenagers that have to be there for some reason, and oops, here's an author who's gonna talk about it.

Phil Weiss (00:44:39):

Wow. Great.

Alice Rothchild (00:44:40):

And it's, it's a big struggle because if you think about it, there's very, very, very, very, very, very little YA literature on Palestine or sympathetic to Palestine. And when teachers or librarians do occasionally bring up a book there's often tremendous pushback. Teachers have been doxxed, they've lost their jobs. They've been challenged by, you know, Zionist organization, America, or ADL or whatever it's, um there's a huge, you know, industry monitoring all speech on Palestine and on Israel. And so if someone, if that group notices this book and understands that it's an Israel Palestine book, then you know, I'm, there's gonna be even more pushback right now. You know, it's only been out a couple of months and it's under the radar, which is both good and bad, you know, maybe under the radar because no one's reading it.

Alice Rothchild (00:45:30):

But, you know, I'm working on getting it beyond the radar <laugh>. Yeah. and so that's, that's the real challenge. But I see it as a way to talk with kids because, you know, they're part of the world and they form opinions and they're learning about, or except in places like Florida you know, settler colonialism or Native American history. And I think this should just be part of that world. I don't want it to be exceptionalized. I want it to be, you're studying immigrants, you're studying refugees, you're studying war. Plop. There goes my book. So I'm hoping that it sneaks in that way and becomes just part of the conversation, is normalized that it's okay to talk about Palestine without getting your head cut off. And that's gonna take a lot of support and bravery and work from teachers and librarians.

Alice Rothchild (00:46:19):

And I'm actually involved in a project with Nora Lester Murad, who you highlighted in Mondoweiss, who has also written the young adult book called *Ida in the Middle*. And we are interviewing teachers and librarians about their experiences, which are pretty stunning. And developing a resource and guideline list for teachers who do teach Palestine and who then get accused of anti-Semitism, like what to do about that and what is anti-Semitism and you know, blah, blah blah. So there's a lot of ways that this is working in terms of political organizing and education. But the big challenge is how do I get this into schools as part of the curriculum? And that's really hard. I'm also working with a group called New Story, New Storytelling Advocates, I

think is the name ,we do you know, conferences with kids, writing conferences, that kind of thing. And they're going to use my book as a mentor book. So, you know, I'm playing all the places that I can find. But it's an uphill battle.

Phil Weiss (00:47:20):

Got it. Although to be clear it's an uphill battle for many authors, in any genre.

Alice Rothchild (00:47:28):

Oh, absolutely. Yes. I mean, the budget from my publisher for marketing is about 5 cents, and that's how marketing is

Phil Weiss (00:47:35):

You know, Alice, can you be you mentioned that you've already done some events speaking this, that, and the other. Have you had any political encounters in that, in those events so far?

Alice Rothchild (00:47:46):

No.

Phil Weiss (00:47:48):

Okay. Yeah,

Alice Rothchild (00:47:49):

In, in Seattle I had 50 people in Brooklyn, hundred people. Very positive reception.

Phil Weiss (00:47:55):

Receptive. Beautiful.

Alice Rothchild (00:47:55):

Yeah. Because it's stealth, you know?

Phil Weiss (00:47:58):

Yeah, yeah. Well, I mean, the story is, is enchanting and, you know, it can be dealt with strictly on its on, on on certain terms. Well, what, so as we wind down, I have a few more questions. One of them is but before we get into the larger picture of the discourse, which of course you just addressed I wanna ask you tell me what is wrong with, because I think there, well just tell me what is wrong and what is right about speaking to the choir. So is there anything right about speaking to the choir? Oh,

Alice Rothchild (00:48:39):

Absolutely.

Phil Weiss (00:48:39):

Why? Tell me.

Alice Rothchild (00:48:41):

It's right to speak to the choir because the choir can always learn more. And I learn from speaking to the choir. I learn where they're at and they learn where I'm at. And so it's always important to speak to the choir. It's important to build their resilience. I mean, people in the choir get tired and drop out and blah, blah, blah. It's important to find all the intersectional ways that the choir can deal with other choirs. So we're all in a bigger choir and, you know, I mean, the choir has changed over the last 25 years. You know, at the beginning when we did this work and, you know, we're debating whether we could use the word Palestine in our name it was just like a bunch of agonized Jews and a couple of Palestinians, and now it's like Black Lives Matter and First Nations. And blah, blah, blah. So the choir has broadened enormously and that comes from continually speaking with the choir. So choir is perfect.

Phil Weiss (00:49:29):

Interesting.

Alice Rothchild (00:49:30):

Speaking beyond the choir is critical because if the movement doesn't grow beyond the choir, then it withers and dies. So both are important.

Phil Weiss (00:49:40):

Okay. That's a great answer. Helpful. Thank you. What about so in, in the last part.

Alice Rothchild (00:49:46):

I have one more, can I say one more thing?

Phil Weiss (00:49:47):

Sure.

Alice Rothchild (00:49:48):

Also, the choir has friends that are not in the choir and just like you know, gay marriage became okay because partly it was about love and everybody knew someone who was gay. So I want everybody to know someone who's questioning Israeli policy and have to grapple with that. And I want the person who, who is questioning to feel brave enough to talk to their friends. So, you know, there's also the subversive element as well. Yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:50:14):

Wow. so as are we winning you just mentioned a little while ago how much the scene of activism has dramatically shifted just over since I've met you and the sort of the small and almost frightened circle that we were in then compared to now in part thanks to the

intersectional issues that you raised. So you, you've already mentioned that, but I guess in a larger, how do you feel, how optimistic do you feel about this movement right now? And and, and and also the political dimension of it, if you're, to the degree that you're engaged in that the, the, the sort of,

Alice Rothchild (00:51:01):

So, you know, I am pessimistically optimistic. I think we're winning and we're losing at the same time. Uh we're winning because the younger generation in this country is very different than their parents and their grandparents in many instances on this topic. And so there's a, a much broader analysis and questioning and a different vocabulary. You can use the word apartheid and no one chops off your head or very few people chop off your head. So in that way it's a much broader movement now, and it's not exceptionalized, it's within a broader intersectional movement for justice and social justice against militarism and all that kinda stuff. And things that were unspeakable are now, you can see it even in the New York Times, which is my measure of where we're at <laugh>.

Alice Rothchild (00:51:54):

Um and you know, there are, you know, reporters for the New York Times that are not Jewish Americans who live in Israel and have sons in the IDF. So we're making a little bit of progress there. We're losing in that there is a massive right wing pushback in this country and globally and, as you know, in Israel. Which I think is a measure of the fact that we were starting to have some inroads. You know, the pushback against the boycott, divestment sanction movement, the pushback using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism which includes any criticism of Israel, which, you know, was adopted by the US State Department. So that's, and you know what, 35 states or something like that. So that's highly problematic. So and if you look at life for Gazans life for people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, life is worse.

Alice Rothchild (00:52:49):

Life is harder. You know, people in Gaza live under a crushing siege, Hamas, and the PA have gotten nowhere and Palestinian leadership is bankrupt. Um you know, drones hover over Gaza all the time. Uh you know, the Israelis repeatedly bomb them at will. And I'm just worried since Netanyahu's been backed into a corner that he's gonna have to start another war on Gaza, which is what he usually does. Things are terrible and in the West Bank things are terrible. The settler movement is growing. You know, the people that are the most right wing fascistic people who, you know, like Smotrich and whatever the guy's, Ben-Gvir you know, who couldn't serve in the Army because they were so right wing are now in charge of security. I mean, this is catastrophic.

Alice Rothchild (00:53:36):

And the thing that's also catastrophic is that a, although hundreds of thousands of liberal Zionist Israelis are marching in the streets for democracy, they seem to not have noticed that there is no democracy for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and for Palestinians in the occupied

territories. So, you know, things are better and things are terrible. And so, you know, when you look at, you know, Biden's relationship to Israel, Palestine is abominable. You know, what's gonna happen with Saudi Arabia and China, some other big players. I mean, US hegemony is shrinking and we can't know what that's gonna look like. So yes and no is my answer. But it doesn't mean you should stop trying.

Phil Weiss (00:54:24):

And what about the local politics of it? Do you see positive changes? I'm, I'm feeding the witness here. Do you see any positive changes in your community among your political representatives or your media? Do you, are you at all heartened by the, those changes?

Alice Rothchild (00:54:43):

Well, you know we have Pramila Jayapal. She's not my rep, but she's next door. You know, people like that. Give me some hope, but they're still a minority in our completely dysfunctional Congress. You know, my reps are completely not in the program as far as I can tell. You know, I've met with Adam Smith a number of times. Not a very positive experience. There is, you know, I, I've only lived in Seattle for about eight years, so I'm just, and you know, three of them were a pandemic when I didn't leave my house. So I'm just sort of beginning to understand the lay of the land here. And there are a bunch of different groups that are working on this that I'm getting to know and, you know, speaking at and that kind of stuff.

Alice Rothchild (00:55:30):

I think Jewish Voice for Peace has been very good at creating a space for anti-Zionist Jews and is really trying, you know, through their 501c4 to have political action moments. So those are all very good things. And, you know, we, we are the, the side of the country that had unions that wouldn't let the Israeli owned ship dock in Oakland, you know, so these are good things. Yes. So, you know, we creep along and we do the best we can. It's not overwhelmingly positive victorious yet.

Phil Weiss (00:56:08):

Got it. Alice what did you just mention? Somebody Smith? I just wanted to, oh,

Alice Rothchild (00:56:14):

Adam Smith. He's my rep.

Phil Weiss (00:56:16):

Oh, he is? Okay.

Alice Rothchild (00:56:16):

In the US Congress. Yeah.

Phil Weiss (00:56:18):

Okay. Last question. I, because we're up at against the hour, it has been a delight. But just to be another specific buttonhole let's say that you ran into Pramila Jayapal, and she said at some event I am for a two-state solution. When someone was questioning her about this and what would you, what would you, what would you say to her if you were having coffee with her? Uh about that messaging? Right. Which is all through the Democratic Party, including from Bernie Sanders and, okay. Got it.

Alice Rothchild (00:56:54):

So

Phil Weiss (00:56:54):

What's your answer?

Alice Rothchild (00:56:55):

My answer very briefly is that the two state solution devised at Oslo may or may not have been a good idea then. But at this point in history, if you look at the realities on the ground, yes. The growth of settlements, the growth of Israeli takeover of the Jordan Valley, Area C the declaration that East Jerusalem is the eternal undivided capital of Jerusalem. All those kind of maneuvers point to the fact that the two state solution has died a miserable and sad little death. And that what we have in actuality is Israeli control from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River in various ways. And so we have a one state, but it's an apartheid state. And so the struggle right now is not to create a two-state solution. The struggle is to create one democratic state that allows all of the citizens to have a viable level of existence without persecuting each other. So for me, it's a civil rights struggle. It's an anti-apartheid struggle. It's a human rights struggle. But the two state solution is quite quite dead. And I think the Israeli government is certainly saying that for their own particular reasons. Lots of Palestinians are saying that. So I think that that's the direction we're moving in. And to hold onto the two state solution is to hold onto something that is no longer even a viable possibility.

Phil Weiss (00:58:22):

Wow. Great answer. Very concise and helpful. Another bite of the apple, if I could, although we're at an hour I'm about to do a post about a big rabbi named Brad Artson in Los Angeles, a dean of a rabbinical school, his Zionist propaganda is very intellectual, but Zionist propaganda, just the same. And one of the things he said is, you know, all these criticisms of China and Tibet in the UN, none of them are about eliminating, the answer isn't eliminating China, but the criticisms of Israel. That means you're gonna eliminate Israel. And certainly he might say that about the answer you just gave. Can you respond to Rabbi Artsen. For me, right. If I've given you enough information? No,

Alice Rothchild (00:59:16):

No interest in eliminating Israel in terms of, I'm not talking about taking all the Jews and sending 'em back to Poland. I'm talking about the fact that there are people who live there, that were born there, that claim some connection to it, that have to figure out how to live and share the

land, and that the current idea that the Jewish supremacy as outlined in the nation state bill is the way to go. And that Israel will survive by putting down and killing and massacring and starving the people around them that they don't want to be there has not proved to be a viable plan. And so we need to sort of stop and say, is this the Israel that we want? Is this the Israel that our parents and grandparents fought for? Is this the Israel that most epitomizes the best in Jewish tradition?

Alice Rothchild (01:00:06):

And I think the answer is no. And you know, I see the current flail to the right that's going on is not an aberration. It's the logical direction of Zionism, because Zionism says the Jews are privilege in historic Palestine, and we're gonna make that happen. And I think that that is not working out so well. And that it also creates a society that's very militaristic, that's very intolerant. And that is ultimately gonna be more and more of a disaster because people who are oppressed don't lie around and say, thank you for oppressing me. They fight back. You know, Israelis have been actually incredibly fortunate, Jewish Israelis, that Palestinians haven't fought back more than they fought that they're fighting has mostly been non-violent, persistent. I stay here, I don't leave.

Alice Rothchild (01:00:56):

I have my key. That kind of resilience and that kind of resistance. And so I think that we need to really take a deep breath and look at what we're doing and that, you know, the the, the settler colonial movements of the past have all been challenged. And so, this is one of the last ones that we need to challenge. And it is painful and it is scary for Jews, but I think we'd be better off, we'd be safer in a multicultural, tolerant world than in one that's, you know armed to the teeth and hates all the Arabs and the Iranians. And whoever else they're hating this week. So that's my answer.

Phil Weiss (01:01:33):

Beautiful. That's a very helpful answer. Thank you so much. And I should say that, you know, I see that that is in Melody Sullivan's consciousness too, because she's getting texts from Aaron saying, the Jews hate Arabs. I mean, the Arabs hate Jews. They hate, they're gonna kill you. They're gonna kill you. And it's just this issue of consciousness is very, I obviously, I don't think that Melody Sullivan is gonna be speaking the way you just spoke <laugh> at the end of this book.

Phil Weiss (01:02:02):

<Laugh>. Okay. Well, again, this has been a great pleasure, Alice. I thank you so much. I congratulate you on the book. I wish you the best. And we'll continue to follow it. And thank you for your patience. Yeah.

Alice Rothchild (01:02:17):

I should just say the book people should check out my website, Alice Rothchild books, which has information about the book and how to get it. It's also available on Amazon and I'm working on getting it to be an audible book, so tune in for that to happen too.

Phil Weiss (01:02:32):

Wow. Great. Who's gonna read it?

Alice Rothchild (01:02:35):

I'm before the part of who reads it, not me,

Phil Weiss (01:02:38):

<Laugh>. Okay. Oh, okay. Right

Alice Rothchild (01:02:40):

Now I'm interviewing different companies and trying to figure out how to do this.

Phil Weiss (01:02:42):

Wow, okay. Okay.

Alice Rothchild (01:02:44):

But young adults use you know, books on tape, so,

Phil Weiss (01:02:48):

And so how long, how many, how long is your book in terms of time.

Alice Rothchild (01:02:53):

It's 53, I don't know. I've never read it out loud. It's 53,000 words.

Phil Weiss (01:02:57):

I understand, but do, do you know, you don't know what that equates to in minutes. I see. Okay. Well, Alice, thanks again. Good luck with that. And good luck with the cat book, Shuafat Refugee Camp and the other book, and, with all your projects, this has been a great pleasure, and I am reminded again, what, how, how, how coherent and pithy your answers are. I've always enjoyed that when you've spoken publicly and now I, I've had the pleasure of getting it one-on-one. So thank you.

Alice Rothchild (01:03:29):

It was a pleasure to talk with you.

Dave Reed (01:03:32):

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