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ENNVIE!

A MAGAZINE FOR THE LITERARY CURIOUS



JUNE 2020 EDITION



FEATURING
INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST & AUTHOR,
NICKI WEISENSEE EGAN

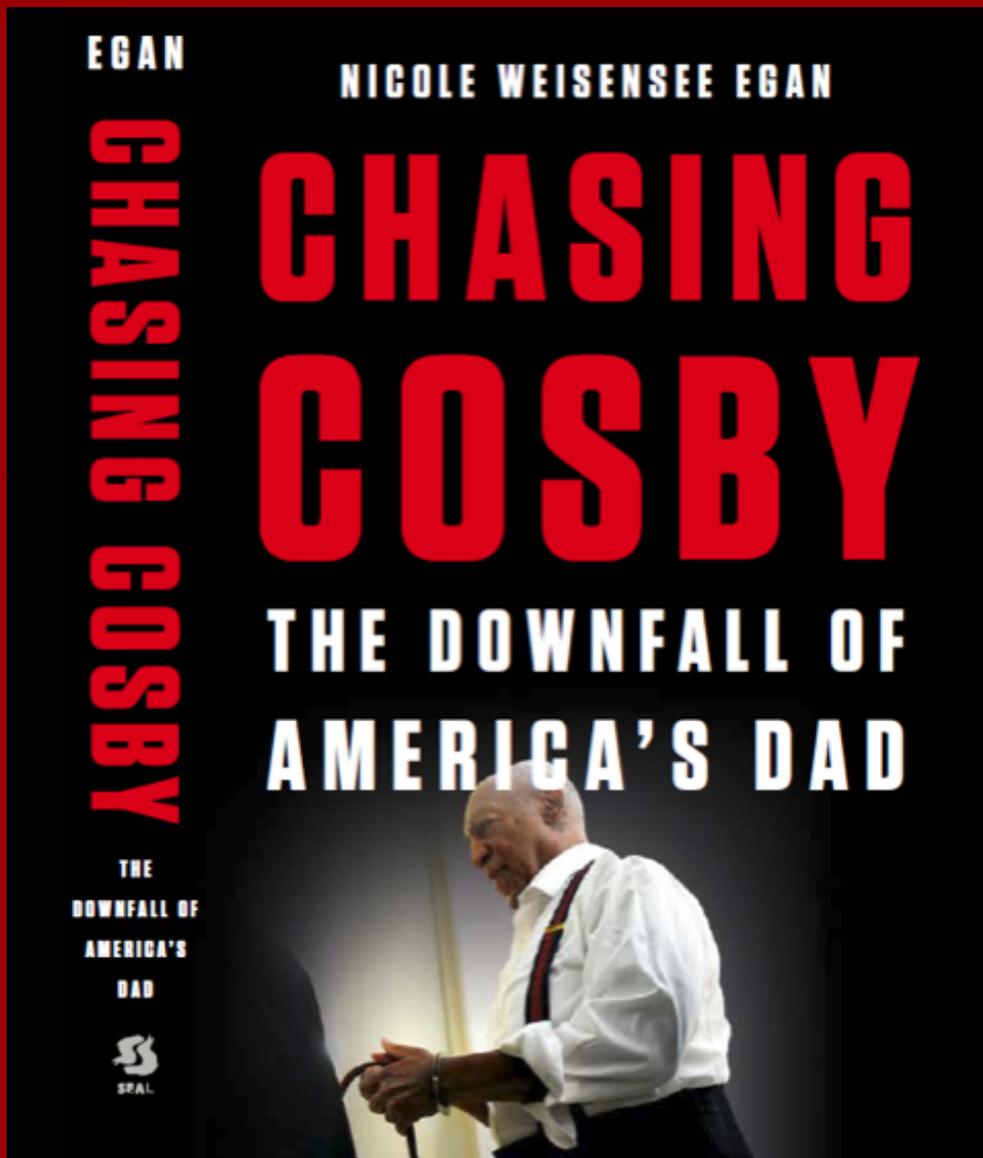
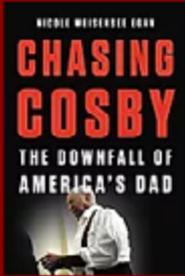


Nicole Weisensee Egan

Author of CHASING COSBY (Hachette/Seal Press, April 2019)

Host/Executive Producer CHASING COSBY the podcast

Coauthor of VICTIM F: THE STORY OF THE SO-CALLED REAL LIFE 'GONE GIRL' (Penguin Random House/Berkley, 2021)



Learn More about Nicole Weisensee Egan in this months issue!

SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

W/ NICOLE WEISENSEE EGAN



Envie! is proud to present Nicole Weisensee Egan as our June Spotlight Author! Nicki is the author of the book CHASING COSBY (Hachette/Seal Press, April 2019) and an award-winning journalist and former People magazine senior writer with a 28-plus year record of obtaining exclusive interviews on some of the nation's highest profile stories. Nicki's name has become synonymous with writing news-breaking stories that matter!

Thank you, Nicki, for taking the time out of your busy schedule to help us get to know you!

ENVIE - You hail from the great state of Pennsylvania, are you an urban dweller or suburban? Is this where you grew up? Has your location influenced/helped your writing/journalistic path?

N.W.E. - Suburban. I live in Montgomery County in a town about 35 miles west of Philly. I have lived in the Philly area since 1994 and both my parents are from PA (my dad from near Pittsburgh and my mom from northeastern Pa) but grew up moving around a lot for my father's job. We'd lived in Owego, New York, Johnstown, Pa.; Reisterstown, Maryland and Farmingdale, NJ by the time I was 13, which is when we moved to Laurinburg, N.C. I went to high school and college in NC. The main way my location influenced my journalis-

tic path is it set me on the path of Bill Cosby in 2005, when he was first accused of drugging and sexually assaulting Andrea Constand, while I was still at the Philly Daily News. My coverage of the case led me to PEOPLE and, after I left PEOPLE in 2017, to my book and podcast about the case.

ENVIE - Our subscribers would love a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Nicki Egan, when did you know you wanted to be a writer? Take us back to the beginning, what got you started on your career path?

N.W.E. - It all started for me at the end of my freshman year in high school. I went to Scotland High School and the school decided to merge the newspaper, literary magazine and yearbook under one umbrella and call it Scotland Publications.

My best friend at the time was applying and said I should too. So I did. I was named co-editor of The Bagpipe, the newspaper, my sophomore year, editor my junior year and managing editor of all three publications my senior year. So I was bitten by the journalism bug early and continued on with it when I went to the University of North Carolina, which has a great journalism school.

ENVIE: - Senior writer at People Magazine! Impressive! We need to know more about this. How you

started working there, going on to establishing an impressive record of reeling in exclusive articles and interviews on some of the nation's most high-profile crime, medical and human-interest stories! You're also an experienced radio and television commentator. Can you share a few of your favorite stories? Any advice to writers/journalists who might want to break into these fields?

People came to me to start freelancing for them around May 2005 after seeing all of the exclusive stories I was breaking on the Bill Cosby drugging and sexual assault case for the Philadelphia Daily News. At the time, there were 14 women accusing Cosby and they were thinking of doing a cover story on it and wanted my help with that. That led to more freelancing for them and then in August they asked me to take a leave from my job to freelance for them full time for a few weeks to fill in for someone who was going to be out.

My bosses agreed. It went so well PEOPLE asked me to extend my leave. My boss said she'd love to hire me, but I'd have to move to New York City and I told her I did not want to move to New York City. Around that time, the Philadelphia Daily News and Philadelphia Inquirer announced buyouts and my paper was going to lose 25 positions.

I didn't want to leave but I was already juggling a lot of different stories at one time while doing investigative reporting and I had no idea what my job would look like after we lost 25 more people. And it was a really generous buyout - 62 weeks' pay.

So I took it, also knowing I'd have regular freelance work at PEOPLE and I could work from home! No more 60 to 90-minute commute each way. Several months later, things were going so well with PEOPLE they offered me a staff position, based in Royersford, Pa., where I lived. I didn't have to move! So I accepted it.

I worked on some truly incredible stories during my 12 years there but I'd say my favorite was interviewing Hero pilot Sully Sulenberger and his family and his crew for our cover story on Flight 1549, the so-called Miracle on the Hudson. A year later I did a follow-up story with some of the passengers who'd made dramatic changes in their lives as a result of surviving that flight -and that was one of my favorites as well.

I always liked landing the big interviews no one else could get - though I hated getting beat on those same stories. The lesson I learned early on was start getting sourced with that particular person or their rep immediately and stick with it, even if it doesn't

pan out immediately. It's taken me years to bring in some of these stories but I didn't give up because I knew eventually might want to talk and I wanted to be the person to tell their story.

As far as advice goes to those trying to break into the field-be ready to work long hours, nights and weekends with the threat of being laid off always looming over your head. I was told something fairly similar - long hours, low pay - when I was in J-school and it didn't discourage me. I ended up making a really good salary in the business but that's changed now with all of the furloughs, pay cuts and non-union hiring in the business.

ENVIE: - Let's get to **CHASING COSBY!** You were the first reporter in the country to investigate the Bill Cosby drugging and sexual assault scandal deeply in 2005 when others shied away (Reporting for the Philadelphia Daily News). What can you share with us on writing this novel and about this novel?

N.W.E. - I first thought about writing a book about the Cosby case back in 2005, which is another reason I took the buyout from the PDN. But it quickly became apparent to me it would never be published. Even my own agent and his wife were conflicted about it because his wife didn't want to dispel the Huxtable myth.

Nine years later, when the story broke wide open again after Hannibal Buress' video went viral, they came to me and wanted me to do a book. They were very persistent, say-

ing they had a publisher who was interested, but I ended up turning it down. I just couldn't pursue it and do my job and we'd been through layoff after layoff and had a much smaller staff so there were no book leaves anymore.

Plus, I was truly skeptical this book would ever get published. Cosby has deep ties in the publishing industry due to his own bestselling books and also has a reputation for being litigious, which scares other publishers off. I realized I may have blown my chance to write a book on the case but I could live with that.

A year later when Cosby was arrested I was even more glad I'd turned down the book opportunity because it would have been obsolete by the time it came out. After I got laid off from PEOPLE in June 2017, right after Cosby's first trial, my agent ran the idea of doing a book on the case by some publishers but by then they weren't interested at all and felt the story had already been told in the news media.

That's why when I did write a book proposal after the second trial got pushed back and the #metoo movement exploded, I pitched it as writing it from my perspective since I was truly the only reporter out there who'd been breaking stories on this since the very beginning.

I didn't want to make myself part of the story but it was truly the only way to get a book published on the case. To this day it's the only book out there on the case, which is astonishing when you think of how many Harvey Wein-

stein and Jeffrey Epstein books have been published or are in the works.

But I think mine is a harder sell because there are still so many Cosby fans who refuse to believe Cosby isn't who they thought he was. Most people had never heard of Weinstein or Epstein before those scandals broke but Cosby was a household name for certain generations and I think a lot of people simply refuse to believe it without even trying to get accurate information about the case. I wanted people to have one place they could go to to find out the truth about what happened because there is so much misinformation out there.

ENVIE - What was the most challenging aspect of investigating this case from a journalistic perspective?

N.W.E. - Everything. I was not sourced at all and had to get sourced very quickly. Cosby's team put constant pressure on my newspaper and me to back off the story, threatening to sue. They put pressure on the TV shows that were having me on to talk about my exclusives to not have me on. The media jumped all over me as well and the Philly Weekly ran a negative story about me and my coverage, quoting journalism experts criticizing the coverage.

The DA at the time was telling reporters he could have me arrested for my stories. It was and still is the toughest story of my career. I expected Cosby's people to attack me. I did not expect him to have such sway with the media (except for the Philly DN). To this day I say there is no other media organization that would have let

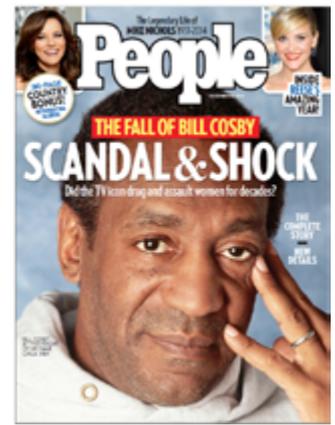


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me cover this story in 2005 the way the Philly DN did.

ENVIE - How did it feel when Seal Press picked up the book for publishing? Did you ever anticipate that something you wrote would become so successful or was it more a blindside?

N.W.E - It was an amazing feeling but, like everything about this case, stressful and anxiety inducing. I had to write the book in two months in order to even get a deal and I worried Cosby would try to stop its publication by threatening to sue (which is why we didn't announce it for a few months). Or even suing afterward. I didn't think he would prevail but that's how he operates-he files lawsuits to bully people, even if there's no legal basis. But I was committed to doing it. I wanted the truth out there.

ENVIE - When did you decide to make CHASING COSBY into a podcast? (Congratulations on being nominated for a Webby Award for it!) Tell us more about this podcast and what went into making it.

N.W.E. - Thank you! Alexandra Zaslow (@alexandrazaslow), one of my former colleagues at PEOPLE, saw my Facebook post about my book deal on Cosby and approached me about doing a podcast. I was intrigued because I loved Serial and thought a podcast would be interesting. It was but it was a ton of work. I lined up all 33 interviews, then interviewed everyone over 11 days in LA and Philly.

Herzog & Company and the LA Times, which part-

nered with me on the project, treated the survivors wonderfully, flying them in and putting them up in hotels for two days, taking care of all of their travel expenses etc., which I truly appreciated. It still takes a toll on them to talk about what he did to them, so I was glad they didn't have to fly in and out on the same day while squeezing the interview in.

ENVIE - Aside from the Cosby assault case, what are some other memorable interviews/stories that you've covered and were there any unique challenges you had to overcome to get them?

N.W.E. - I loved the investigative stories I did at the Philly DN - from the Pennsylvania State Police knowingly using a radar gun that would clock a rock at 75 mph and refusing to fix it; to the PA governor telling his drivers to drive in excess of 100 mph on the PA turnpike between Philly and Harrisburg; to rampant sexual misconduct among the ranks of the state cops, to a guy whose license had been suspended for 20 years but was still driving, struck and killed two little old ladies on New Year's Eve and faced no charges.

After I did a cover story and then we followed up and caught him still driving, the DA finally decided to prosecute him and a legislator introduced a bill that became law making it illegal to leave the scene of an accident where a fatality occurred, punishable by one year in jail. I also did a series of stories about wrongfully accused men and got them freed and the cases dismissed.

I'm really proud of those stories in particular.

ENVIE - For those of us who hang out here in the Twitterverse, your bio lists your Facebook as your 'alter ego'. We need to know more about this alter ego and how to find you there!

N.W.E - Haha. No! My alter ego is my other Twitter account (@nweisenseegagan), not the book and podcast's name. Sorry for the confusion! I wasn't sure I had the time to maintain two Twitter accounts, so I was hesitant to use the CHASING COSBY one but finally decided to activate it after the podcast came out and I wanted to make sure people knew about my other one. And I link it to my Facebook CHASING COSBY page, not my personal Facebook page.

ENVIE - Is there anything that we missed that we should know about? We certainly need all the places we can find you and CHASING COSBY, both the book and the podcast. Are there any other projects you're working on that you can share with us? How about books?

N.W.E - You can find a selection of all my work on my website, [HERE](#), which also includes info about my next book, [HERE](#), which I coauthored with the subjects of the book and should be out sometime in 2021 (the pandemic has a lot of things in flux right now). It's a truly extraordinary story.

Thank you so much for taking the time to sit with us Nicole! We wish you nothing but the best for your forthcoming book and your podcast!

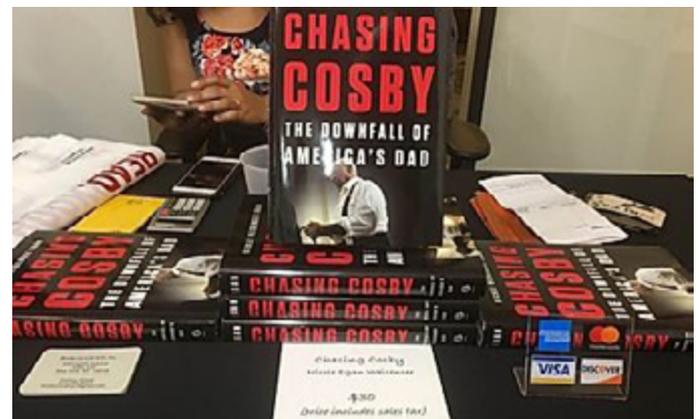
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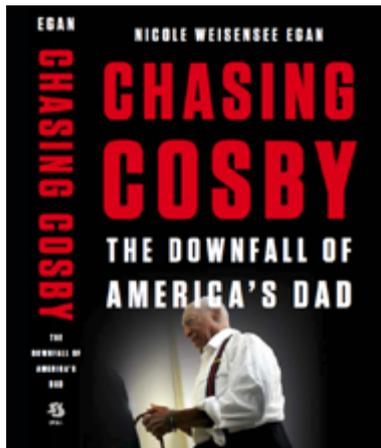
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THE WEBBY AWARDS

CHASING COSBY the podcast wins a Webby Award for best crime & justice podcast
May 19, 2020



Spotlight Author Book Reviews



Chasing Cosby by Nicole Weisensee Egan is a powerful novel on the courage and work it took to bring to justice a sexual predator, who groomed, drugged, raped then bought off well over sixty women, all the while hiding behind the genial, benign persona of America's favorite 'dad', Dr. Cliff Huxtable.

Bill Cosby had me fooled — probably along with most of America. It's easier to believe what we're led to believe by TV and the carefully cultivated image he maintained. Add the 'friends in high places' who enabled that perception and helped him find new victims, Cosby was almost untouchable as he had worked out how to commit the perfect crimes.

That is until 2005, when one brave woman spoke out (Andrea Costand) and Nicole Egan, the first reporter (Philadelphia Daily News) in the country to look into this drugging and sexual assault scandal deeply, when others shied away. This novel is a well-researched journey, it encompasses the beginning in 2005 until Cosby's conviction in 2018.

Chasing Cosby is hard hitting, if you had hoped to keep your blinders attached at Cosby's atrocities, Egan rectifies that. Her driven journalistic persistence (and resistance to the pressure to 'kill the story') to seek the truth not only brings us the backstory but she methodically provides the details necessary to understand the crimes Cosby is in prison for — for the rest of his life. The entirety of this detail makes for a spell-binding novel. I highly recommend reading Chasing Cosby as well as listening to Egan's podcast on same.



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