

Alice James Mead

The Kosovo kids were in and out of my house for years- and this drove my kids crazy. So the rule was- my kids didn't have to give up their bedrooms- but they would have to put up with this, because houses and homes are for sharing- you are lucky to have one- so shut up! In the long run, the payoff is huge. They are both globally oriented because of it.



Alice with sons Jeff and Mike

Activist, Author, and Artist,

Along with writing many critically acclaimed novels for Middle Graders, Alice James has fought for and won changes in legal and political positions concerning Kosovo and human rights, despite her increasingly-debilitating struggles with chronic illnesses including breast cancer.

"Kosovo and the death of Yugoslavia:"
Watch online Video by Alice Mead

- There was a sign up somewhere- a Bosnian refugee needed a translator who could speak French to help with paperwork. So I met this guy-an Albanian from Kosovo. He told me about the place. No UNICEF allowed. Expelled all their obstetricians. Untreated Ebola Virus. What was on Television at that time was Sarajevo. While this was going on Serbs were setting up this other situation behind them. Isolate them. Cut off their ears, their noses- They kept saying Sarajevo today- tomorrow you.
- I stayed in Kosovo for a week. Embedded myself in a group of 7th graders and took pictures for a week. They found us on the 3rd or 4th day and started shadowing us. When I got back- the State Department called and asked if I could bring my pictures because no one had seen Kosovo! A 100 people came from all over the place: Democracy Institute, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty , Foreign Affairs committee... I showed the pictures, described the conditions, and made this movie from the slides and video I found in a Box- of when Serbs came into Kosovo five years ago- this compilation of horror.
- The children were allowed elementary schools but not high schools. So they tried to invent high schools in homes- in one home they had 500 kids in two shifts of 250 a day. There were no materials- nothing. And then the Serbs began attacking the schools- tear gassing the kids. So then I started bringing kids, in 94.

Alice James Mead

Anything that interferes with empathy and imagination is for kids cutting off their sense of humanity and their ability to problem solve. I cut cable. No video games. My kids didn't have Nintendo. Stop Entertaining Yourself! Electronics is not human- must develop Empathy- its the missing link!

Alice has written about the war in Kosovo, famine and civil war in the Sudan, and the perils of reaching manhood in an inner-city housing project.

"I have always been interested in writing about children who--for some reason--live on the edge of the mainstream society. I feel that authors and artists should travel to these edges, to widen the circle of inclusion through empathy and art."- Quote from her Biography

- My book 'Soldier Mom' was about the 1st Iraq war- It is so eerie to the second one- same names keep popping up- with the National guard never expected to leave their homeland deployed in combat situation.
- So its about a young girl who was left behind- her parents were given a 36 hour notice- not now- there was a law passed after that- so terrible for kids who were left behind!
- I also got negative reviews- went from 5 star reviews to 1 star. They said- this book is anti-American. It should be banned. Its now come back to being an "Okay" book...
- But its even more critical that it be read today- parents are going on double triple combat duty- Horrible ! Both parents Oh! Thousands of them and then coming home maimed, mutilated, not being treated- its a huge issue.

Gail Duffey

One of the first Women VPs in a Fortune 500 in Corporate America

I found that a lot of people don't do well at their jobs because they are not willing to make a decision. You ask questions- you get the information and you make a decision. Lot of people don't want to do that. I just don't think they want to be held accountable.

In the 70s, UNUM became a very progressive company in terms of diversity- offering opportunities to women, and it also eventually became one of the 1st companies to offer benefits to same sex couples. At that time, If you worked hard and showed initiative, you could progress. I worked my way up until I became a Vice President. Today, they have developed profiles- like who's a successful salesperson for selling insurance- so now they select people based on this profile. I don't know if today someone could work their way up the way I did. Now I would have to fit the profile!

It was interesting when they merged with Providence Mutual though- a really Southern Good Old Boy- much farther behind than UNUM in terms of being progressive- Women's rights or any other diverse groups... Good grief! They were horrified to think that we had groups for homosexual couples! That just wasn't the Southern way!

I think I was good at organizing efficiently and motivating people. And I was willing to make decisions! It's funny- when I would go into a new position and people who had been in the department much longer than I and knew their job better than I did, would still come to me asking me to make decisions!

Becoming a manager was a funny thing on retrospect. For a long time women were not in management. And I can't believe it happened when I think about it- when they made a 'decision' that they were going to promote some women into management. They made this big deal and even the president of the company came and pinned a corsage on us! Must have been in the early 70s that they made this big deal about promoting women into management that they came around and pinned corsages on us! It was awful when I think about it now!

Gail Duffey

One of the things I have noticed when you read about these Athletes- especially Black athletes- they place a lot of value on their Mothers. Have you ever read those articles about these successful people and they always say- "I couldn't have done it without my Mother!" So apparently there are these very strong Black mothers and I wonder where they got their mothering skills? It must be in their community- church or something- because there are so many households just run by Mothers.

- One generation breeds another- so if you have a mother who stays at home- smokes and drinks and watches TV all day long and that's the only thing they ever teach their children- those children are going to think that this is the way life is. So in my humble opinion, we have to do more to aid the mothers and to teach the mothers mothering skills. If they never had a role model to teach them mothering skills how would they learn that?

- If we hadn't support of our relatives, we might have all ended up pregnant like my mother at 15- who knows! Family is very important to a marriage. Grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles- They are very important for the children.

I think marriages are more equal now than they were in my time. I definitely feel that a woman should have an equal voice in the household. People's likes and dislikes should be taken into consideration and you should get to a compromise- Marriage should not be a dictatorial thing!

I think a lot of people in society do not feel that they have any value- they have lost hope. And I think that because of politics and all, we just aren't doing the right thing for people.

These homeless people you should give them a job and let them earn their keep no matter how small the job, so people would feel that they have value. They weren't just being given charity.

Elizabeth Mitchell

First woman in America to serve as both President of the State Senate and Speaker of the House

It is tough to get comprehensive tax reform because everyone says don't tax me- tax that person behind the tree. People want tax reduction but no one wants to change the tax structure.



Earned J.D. and entered
Maine Bar at the age of 66.
Director of Maine Housing
Authority from 80-86.

I invite you to go and look at all the photographs on the wall outside the House Chamber. I remember taking a lot of school children around and there were no pictures of any women on the walls! What kind of role model is that? Now, if you look, I'm the only women's face that's up there. That's wrong too. I am very proud of being the first. But I don't want to be the last! And I think there is a very wonderful and talented young woman called Hannah Pingree who's serving as the House Majority Leader, who may be the next Speaker.

In the State budget, we are encouraging biotechnology, tax benefits and other incentives to encourage investment in Maine. State can only do so much. We can get out of the way, provide regulatory fairness and make sure there are no unnecessary barriers, but that does not mean that our environment can get polluted. A race to the bottom does not serve Maine people well. If we lose the environmental qualities that make people love Maine by saying you can pollute our rivers, then we have lost everything and gained nothing.

Elizabeth Mitchell

The problem is immense and it never ends. I have been working on some of these issues since 1971 and many of those problems are still there. But you don't give up because you can't solve it. Some are intractable but you keep trying.

Homelessness is an issue which we have been trying to deal with, but we haven't quite figured out how to deal with the mental health issues. Many of the people who are homeless have issues of mental health and we have not been able to provide enough services for them. No one is interested in institutionalizing these people but it's not enough to hand a voucher and expect them to manage without some help.

Then some people live from paycheck to paycheck. And there are unscrupulous people who get them into debt they could never hope to repay, as after a few months or few years they re-up the interest rates and they can't get out. We are looking for ways to protect them from unscrupulous lenders – people who are desperate for a home and get taken in.

Then many times tragedy happens, and medical bills often drive people from their homes.

There may in fact be enough funding in this budget to match private contributions for 'Florence House' which is housing being created for homeless women. [Since this interview, Florence House has opened]

- **Jobs** is the biggest issue for the state of Maine. Creating good jobs that pay decent wages- not the minimum wage jobs! Too many people are working two to three jobs with no benefits and no opportunity to get out. So good paying jobs while maintaining the quality of life and special-ness that's Maine.
- **Housing for the Elderly** We have done a good job building it with partnership with Housing and Urban Development, even though it's never enough. We built much housing in the 70s and 80s. And there is more being built today also for people who are crowded out of expensive real estate markets like policemen, teachers, firemen...
- **Alternate Energy:** The state is discussing bio-fuel, wind power, and we encourage green buildings . And there is incentive for people to invest in Solar Power. We are a poor state and there is a backlash in the State that we are spending too much money without considering that most of our money goes into education and healthcare- which crowd out all other issues.
- We can't wait for anybody. We have to keep working in our own little ways- with debates, with conversations, with writing to our Congressmen. I am not waiting!

Hannah Pingree

Former Maine House Majority Leader
Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives



Graduated from High School in a class of five students on North Haven, a small island in Maine. Finished studies at Brown University. Worked in New York City as the political director and "Election 2000" producer for iVillage.com, the largest political web site for women.

- In general I tend to be still more idealistic. I haven't become jaded. You do become more realistic though. There are things we have to change and if you don't keep trying to change them, they are not going to change. But, there are times when I think politics is tough. That there are issues that are tough to fix. We have to invest in education, research and development, and industries we have, and attract industries from out of state.
- I've always felt that public service is important. If you live in a small town people have to step up and figure out how to get things done. That's been important for me in my life. To know the people around me- the community. Its had a huge impact on me even the way I look at politics. I think its important even in politics that you have a sense of different people's lives- relate with different kinds of people. Some of my friends had never experienced that. They didn't have that same sense of belonging.

Hannah Pingree

Some level of funding educational institutions and helping people understand that Democracy is a good thing makes sense. I don't think imposing Democracy on people makes sense.

We are only one of 3 states that have Clean Elections. That makes a difference. When I recruit people for office I can tell them you don't have to raise too much money, don't have to know rich people- you just have to go meet people and knock on doors.

We get paid about \$10,000 a year and get another \$7000 dollars in like stipends and get full health care benefits. That's what a Citizen Legislator is. Its tough. You really need another job to have money. I believe it should be paid more- not ridiculously more- but I am a young woman with no kids- but there are people here who have a tough time and they are making a real sacrifice.

I got elected at 25. I am a House Majority leader now. I am 30. I am the 2nd youngest woman in the house. I had an advantage at 25 because I had helped my mom in politics. Knew how to run a campaign. So all that helped me be comfortable when I got here. But I had to prove myself, and people had to trust me. They didn't elect me because I was a young woman. They elected me because they thought I would do a good job as a Majority Leader.

- "I find the war very frustrating. The first year we in Maine passed a resolution: 'Don't go to war!' We are just so far from where we should be as a country! We have totally divided the Middle East ... Totally demonized groups of people ... US should really be a diverse exciting center of intelligence and democracy – but we are becoming a most ridiculous fear driven angry society. Its really disappointing as a politician and where we are headed is really disturbing to me. I feel strongly that we should get out but we can't give up on the entire region. We have some responsibility for the mess we have created." – 2007
- I don't think we understand what some of the poor parts of the world are like or what it is to live in them with a war going on around you. We are comfortable, but I think we are less comfortable than we were ten years ago.
- Compared to Washington DC, Republicans and Democrats in Maine make a lot of effort to get along and do things together. It takes a conscious effort that I won't say things in the paper about you or we would sit down and compromise on things so we can actually get things done.

Elizabeth Szatkowski

Vice President, Youth Alternatives Ingraham

Director for healthy families partnership and young parent programs- 2007

Social Work Degree from University of Pennsylvania.

Their mission: Social change and elimination of Racism.



Elizabeth with daughters Isabelle and Sophie

One of the reasons people were getting their mail at the Preble Street Shelter was because they wanted to share their mail with us. Maybe once or twice a year they would get a card from their daughter- they would like to share it with somebody- they wanted to show that somebody thought of me- look what she picked out- look what she wrote- I matter! If they got mail at their little apartment by themselves- no one would know! You know sharing- it's life and death with a group of people- who maybe don't have another place to do that!

We worked about 100 students in rural areas of W. Virginia a year, helping them go to college and stay through. And then they were expected to at least help one other person go to college. We also set up an internship program with the Governor's office, so college students would come back to W. Virginia and get a paid internship during summer and meet other educated people in their own state. Many of those students got advanced degrees from Harvard, Princeton, Bates, Bowdoin... and did come back to W. Virginia.

Maine has used Federal funds in a much more liberal way than other states. It has made training and education available to families in ways that other states didn't- in especially healthcare. The services do catch a lot of people- but there really isn't a safety net. There really isn't a bottom line- that says- no matter what - you'll have a place to live and food to eat and education- there isn't!

I didn't see my job as changing people. I saw it as being a tool to help somebody do what they wanted to do. It was also my job to reflect back to them the positive-ness I saw in them. And so I really felt that, at Preble Street Shelter, most of the time, people really showed their best selves. You know people there- who were constantly being picked up by the police- but yet- we liked them.

Elizabeth Szatkowski

I had always heard about 3rd world poverty- you haven't seen what poverty is until you see 3rd world poverty- so I went to see what 3rd world poverty looks. I had experience with poverty and then in W. Virginia- I saw lots of poverty there too. And I said, I got to see this, because it's going to be different- so I ended up going to Kenya.

My thought had been – we are going to do a needs assessment, and see what kind of projects do they need and help them get started- but I quickly realized, they already know what they need, they already know what would work, and there is no suggestion that I could make that would help them, you know- so I just joined in.

It was a different sense of how to have community. You were a worth while person even if you were really poor. Your worth wasn't based on that. They really valued singing- ability to tell jokes, knew many languages- You know, these people didn't have a school, yet could speak in English- at least some English. They just valued things that weren't so materialistic. Not to say that they weren't materialistic at all- everybody would like a new scarf or something like that, but- that wasn't the bulk of their life as I see in the United states.

Poverty is relative. If you live in a place where the standard is that there's no running water, well, you don't go on wishing that you had running water. We don't have that many pockets in the United States where people could be living where they wanted to be living without being told- you're poor. You're poor! It made me see that people in United States have a much lower self esteem and it's harder to make things happen when you don't have hope. Well, in the village, people knew how to farm, had skills which could keep them alive- well, in United States people don't have the skills that could keep them alive in this culture.

We live in a class system in US and we just don't talk about it. We have this fake expectation that everybody can succeed in US, and we actually blame people when they don't succeed. We don't take into account people's background, their education, and the money that's passed on from generation to generation, and we also as a culture really try to hide the fact that this country is built on slavery, and we think that we have this great country, and everybody is equal and we have democracy- and we are the leaders in the world- and yet everything was built on forced, free labor. So, we perpetuate all these stereotypes...

Cindy Amato

Executive Director, Sexual Assault Response Services

I didn't identify it till many years later when I was in Boston and Time Magazine came out with a picture on the cover which said 'Date Rape.' It was the first time that anybody defined a sexual assault other than a stranger rape.

- In Plymouth I took this one summer class called the Psychology of love and sex. Something came up that prompted me to write my experience that I had had, in my journal - and the teacher never said anything to me! I think if a teacher had intruded it would have had an impact on me. if he had only put in the margin if you need someone to talk to call this number. I had written that I had had a personal experience and I described what had happened to me- I didn't call it rape- but I did write about the experience. And there was no reply to it- and I was looking for a reply. If there had been one it could have possibly put me a step forward to look at things differently.

- My experience happened 27 years ago but today the women who come to me- its not different. It isn't! What is different is that 27 years ago I didn't know that there is a Rape Crisis Center that I can call. It was outside of my realm to even think that there was a rape crisis center there. That's the difference now- that it is mainstream.

- This is not really a Social Service- there's a different feel about it. It is more a political issue about why women or the vulnerable are raped and looking at the equality between genders. I see it as gender equality that if men and women were equal then there would be no need to have power over me sexually. That's the way to hurt somebody, to humiliate and shame them- in order to gain power over them.

I was sexually assaulted as a freshman at Plymouth State College in NH. There was somebody going around at parties putting stuff in people's drinks- similar to drugs today. I would never know exactly what happened but there were large periods of time in the night that were totally blacked out. I have like little photographs of different parts of the night. It was a really awful scene. I remember somebody who was raping a woman. I said what's going on and the person with me said: Don't worry she does this at every party- she likes it! It was called "Training" where men would line up like a Train and everybody would take their turn! I was horrified! Everyone has a terror moment in their life. I think that was mine. He took me out quickly. But I know I was sexually assaulted that night because I was a virgin then. I never really told anybody. I never knew what to call it. I did a lot of self blame- which I know now after speaking to hundreds of women who have faced something similar was a very normal reaction.

Cyndi Amato

The responsibility for sexual assault still in this day and age- unlike any other crime- is that you somehow made it happen- the victim still has responsibility for it. If you left your door open and went for a walk and someone robbed your house- people would say your house was robbed- we need to find the person who did it. That doesn't happen with rape!

Someone could look at my situation and say that I put myself in that situation so its my fault- like in India where there is social stigma attached to it. Maybe not to the same degree as there, but it is here as well, unless you were the perfect victim. That is, you had fought and run and it was a stranger that had raped you- any of that- which doesn't happen very often. 80-90% of the time, it is people you know.

It happens because in a social context we allow it to happen and we all stand by and let it happen. We need to bring in men to be part of the solution. Even though they think and say it shouldn't happen they will stand by if it isn't happening in their lives. They need to talk to their friends. To intervene if they can. Joking about sex is not okay. Joking about getting someone drunk so you can go and have sex with them is not okay! It will all be powerful if men say it rather than if I say it to somebody.

There are some really good cops now who understand it differently. That's something that has happened over the past 8 or so years. There's been some very concerted effort to build relationships with law enforcement. In this agency I see a huge difference from the time I started as a volunteer to what our relationship is today with the police. Close to 35% of victims are now reporting to the police according to FBI estimates.

We have had a law passed in Maine that we can have somebody get their forensic evidence collected at the hospital for free anonymously and to have the sex crime kit held at the hospital for 90 days while they make their decision about whether or not they want to report.

In middle school we are starting to talk about sexual assault, but definitely in high schools we are talking about it, that it isn't really the scary person standing in the bushes, but its really looking at somebody you are getting to know, who is going to build a relationship with you- and someone who is going to know your vulnerabilities.

Cyndi Amato

As bad as it seems in this country it's so much better than it was. Its hopeful when you see so many people survive the trauma and thrive and do wonderful things in their lives because they had somebody there who believed the first time that they said it- because then their ability to do recover form the trauma is so much better than somebody who wasn't believed.

You look at young women today who are saying that sexual revolution is here and I can make decisions about my sexuality and I'm okay with it, but there's still a lot of shame around it. It is very confusing! You are still treated like an object and your sexuality is not respected. Your body is not respected. Who you are and what you think is not a consideration. So you feel ashamed of yourself. You don't want anybody to know! It is cultural. Because you are still supposed to be the good girl. You are supposed to be really sexy but you are supposed to be the good girl in society still. I think that's what's so contradictory about American culture- we think we are so liberated but there are some of these things that we fool ourselves about all the time.

- There's still that somewhat puritanical view that woman should be saving themselves for marriage, only have one partner, and should not be a sexual being. While men are supposed to be having sex with everybody! So there's a contradiction right there! Talk about a power struggle. So there's still a feeling of Shame.
- Some of the sexual exploits these women have in middle school and high school, it is worrisome- because they are being made fun of behind their back. They think they are so self possessed and have this sexual power and they don't! Same things are being said about them today as in the 1970s. Its just masked a bit better now. And its all being marketed to them.
- There are innuendoes about rape in all sorts of different cultural contexts in American culture. Listen to music, watch a sitcom, comedy - look at magazines and the power struggle- positions of men and women in the photographs - all those images that tell us who we are... What's acceptable!