Elaine Culbertson, Recognized By Influential Women, Carries Forward A Legacy Of Leadership And Holocaust Remembrance



PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, September 25, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- A Four-Decade Career In Education and Holocaust Education Reflects Her Commitment to Learning, Historical Memory, and Meaningful Human Connection

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – Elaine Culbertson has spent more than four decades dedicated to education, leadership, writing, and the preservation of historical memory. Based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Elaine has built a career that has taken her from the classroom to school administration and curriculum leadership, while also giving her a prominent role in Holocaust education and remembrance. As an independent writing and editing professional and longtime education leader, she continues to bring together her experiences as an educator, author, speaker, and advocate.

Her professional background includes serving as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, school principal, and curriculum director in both the Philadelphia School District and Wallingford-Swarthmore School District. Across these roles, Elaine has remained focused on curriculum development, literacy instruction, educational leadership, and improving teaching and learning within diverse school communities.

Her academic preparation includes a bachelor's degree and master's degree in English, as well as Principal's Certification and Curriculum Supervision Certification. These credentials supported a career in which she could contribute not only directly to students, but also to the teachers, administrators, and educational systems responsible for supporting them.

One of the most significant chapters of Elaine's career has been her longstanding leadership as Executive Director of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, a nationwide organization founded and led by Holocaust survivors. Through this work, she has helped advance educational initiatives designed to ensure that the history and experiences of Holocaust survivors continue to be studied, remembered, and shared with future generations.

As part of this work, Elaine oversaw the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers Program, which brought more than 1,100 educators to Europe and Israel to study Holocaust history firsthand. The program provided educators with opportunities to engage directly with historical places and sources, strengthening their ability to bring meaningful Holocaust education into their classrooms.

Elaine has also contributed to curriculum development and teacher training through partnerships with organizations including the Anti-Defamation League. Her work supporting the implementation of the "Echoes and Reflections" Holocaust education program in schools across the United States reflects her belief that education is most powerful when it encourages students to understand history while also developing empathy, ethical awareness, and a sense of responsibility.

Her commitment to Holocaust education is also deeply personal. As the daughter of Holocaust survivors and a first-generation American, Elaine has carried her family's history into her professional and creative work. Her memoir, Mamaleh, explores that experience and provides another avenue through which she shares her perspective on family, identity, memory, and the legacy passed from one generation to the next.

Elaine's belief in the importance of learning from previous generations is captured in her philosophy: "Value what those who came before you have experienced by asking them to share wisdom. People want to feel valued and aware of their contributions." That principle is reflected throughout her work with survivors, educators, students, colleagues, and community members.

Her involvement in Holocaust education continues through her role as head of the Consortium of Holocaust Educators in the Philadelphia area. She is also a member of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and the Consortium of Holocaust Educators, while maintaining involvement with organizations and institutions including the Jewish Film Festival Philadelphia Board, Together Women Rise, and the Philadelphia Art Museum.

For Elaine, the foundation of her success can be traced to her upbringing and, particularly, to the example set by her father, Bernard Freilich. She recalls having a father who never believed there were limits to what a person could achieve. He approached everything with his full mind and full energy, providing an example that stayed with Elaine throughout her life.

At the same time, her father created a strong sense of love and security within the family. Elaine believes that combination gave her the confidence to pursue her work with full commitment. Coming from an immigrant family, she understood that the generation born in America represented hope and possibility. Her father's belief in her helped establish a foundation from which she could pursue her own dreams and ideas.

That sense of possibility has remained important throughout Elaine's career. She also attributes professional growth to relationships and the willingness to recognize the value of other people. One of the most important pieces of career advice she has received is to network and learn who one's colleagues are, while never underestimating the people with whom one works.

Elaine believes opportunities can come from unexpected places. Someone who may not initially appear to hold significant influence may know exactly what another person is capable of accomplishing and may become an advocate or open a door to a new opportunity. She also believes that friendships can provide a meaningful boost in a career, sometimes in ways that traditional business relationships cannot.

For Elaine, the lesson is straightforward: treat everyone well. Respect should be given to everyone, regardless of their position, because a colleague, acquaintance, or friend may ultimately play an important role in someone's professional journey.

Her advice to young women entering education and other professional fields also reflects her belief in personal responsibility and leadership. Elaine encourages women to carry themselves with self-respect and to recognize that they are role models for the children and adults with whom they interact. She believes women are often "on" even when they do not realize it, making professionalism, confidence, and awareness important at every stage of a career.

Elaine has also experienced firsthand the challenges women have historically faced in professional environments. When she began teaching, she encountered assumptions that young women would only remain in their positions temporarily because they would eventually leave to raise children. She recalls situations in which women were passed over for opportunities because employers assumed their priorities would be different from those of men.

She believes these assumptions can affect women at multiple stages of their careers. Younger women may face questions about whether they will remain in the workforce, women raising children may be viewed as less available for advancement, and older women may encounter stereotypes suggesting that they are less willing or able to learn new things. Elaine views these barriers as issues of gender rather than ability.

She has also encountered paternalistic behavior that she felt was designed to diminish a woman's authority or remind her to remain in a prescribed role. While Elaine believes society has made progress as women have entered and advanced in fields including business, law, and medicine, she believes that some of these attitudes can persist.

Her response has been to continue bringing professionalism, determination, and integrity to her own work. Those qualities are central to the values she considers most important: honesty, integrity, and respect.

Elaine believes in putting her best foot forward in everything she does. For her, completing a task means more than simply finishing it. It means giving the work her own perspective and ensuring that the final result represents who she is and what she stands for.

She also places tremendous value on listening. Elaine encourages her children to listen simply to listen, rather than listening only to formulate a response. That distinction reflects a broader philosophy that has informed her relationships and professional work: meaningful communication begins with genuinely hearing other people.

Today, Elaine continues to combine education, writing, leadership, and advocacy in ways that keep learning and remembrance at the center of her work. Whether through her memoir, educational initiatives, curriculum work, public speaking, or Holocaust remembrance efforts, she remains committed to helping people understand the past and carry its lessons forward.

Her career demonstrates how education can extend far beyond the classroom. For Elaine, teaching is also about preserving stories, encouraging curiosity, recognizing the contributions of others, and creating opportunities for people to learn from one another. Through decades of professional service and personal dedication, she continues to use those principles to support educators, honor survivors, and encourage future generations to approach history and one another with greater understanding, empathy, and respect.

Learn More about Elaine Culbertson:

Through her Influential Women profile: https://influentialwomen.com/connect/elaine-culbertson

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