

IAWP Heritage Award Acceptance Speech—September 18, 2017

By Laura Goodman

Former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, once said, “It took me quite a long time to find my voice. Now that I have it, I am not going to be silent.” That’s how many women feel! So thank you for this great honor and for the opportunity to use my voice to share with you what I consider to be one of the challenges facing women in policing.

But first, I want to say...

In my life, especially in my career in law enforcement, I have been inspired by many women, some who were trailblazers (Women like New York Police Detective, Kathy Burke, who just gave me such a kind introduction, my BoT colleagues, President Shorter, Past President Jane Townsley, and so many others in this room—you know who you are!) women who have led by example... Then there’s my personal leadership board of directors—the people who support, challenge and hold me accountable in my leadership and who see me as my best self...including my husband, Michael Paymar, my dear friends and colleagues Special Agent, Julie Brunzell, Asst. Chief Kris Arneson, Inspector Chris Morris and Sgt. Linda Miller, my original mentor and constant guide, Asst. Commissioner Carolen Bailey, and finally my parents Val and Russ Goodman. If not for these people, whose shoulders I stand on... I would not be the person I am today. I learned and continue to learn from them.....

So now, as I enter the third phase of my life, the years culminating with this award have provided an opportunity for reflection.

Internationally, the IAWP has much to be proud of. There was a day, not so long ago, when women wouldn't even be considered for positions in this field. But since IAWP's inception in 1915, women have been breaking through the glass ceiling of this historically male dominated profession.

I couldn't be more proud of the diversity in this room along with the knowledge that women are not only serving in the ranks, but rising to leadership positions in departments throughout the world.

But after thirty-seven years in law enforcement, it is also painfully clear to me that we haven't come far enough! That glass ceiling has proven much stronger than I could have ever imagined all those years ago. Now.... while in some countries the number of women police officers are increasing....my own country, the United States, exemplifies stagnation and a retreat of the contributions that women make in law enforcement.

Most world leaders know that having more women police officers is an asset. I'm not talking about a few token women officers.....but, when our numbers reach a critical mass, research

shows that our involvement and leadership in law enforcement reduces violence against women.... has a stabilizing effect in post-conflict countries....builds trust in communities where tensions are high by deescalating violence.... enhances the collection of vital intelligence....reduces corruption.... prevents the radicalization of young people who might be attracted to terrorist groups....and improves the overall effectiveness in departments. In fact..., we know that a critical mass of women in any occupation improves the overall effectiveness of that organization.

Yet despite this compelling evidence, women police, on average remain at surprisingly low numbers. So why don't we have more women in policing?

In the United States.... but not only there.... we know that there continues to be widespread discrimination in the hiring and selection practices of police agencies. In contrast to what we see on social media and in the news, officers in the US used force in only about 1.4% of all civilian encounters. On most occasions, when officers *did* use force, they used relatively little: pushing, grabbing, and restraining are the most common types of police force. Yet, in many agencies, position descriptions still focus on the most extreme physical aspects of the job, generally followed by pre-hire physical agility testing that promotes brawn while minimizing the importance of community policing and engagement.

Believe me, I'm not recommending lowering the standards of becoming a police officer. I'm talking about making them more realistic. In 1979, when I was a young woman at the police academy, one of the physical requirements was jumping over a 6', smooth, wooden fence. Now.... in my entire career, I've never had the occasion to jump over a six foot wooden fence! But really....even my field training officers advised never to jump over anything when you didn't know what awaited you on the other side. So, the 6 foot fence was a ruse...a ruse that kept many women and smaller framed men out of policing.

Unfortunately, some of these antiquated fitness skills are still required. Many women get washed out during this process or don't even apply and we lose some really, really talented people who would be excellent community policing officers. Chiefs everywhere need to change this narrative by asking tough questions about the relevancy of pre-hire practices and rethink what skills are actually required to do the job. Then, they need the courage to make changes.

This is a call to action, to all government and police leaders to move from research to policy-making and to change the face of law enforcement so that it is more effective and reflective of the communities it serves.

Thank you for this special honor and for permitting me to find my voice to remind you of our unfinished business. One of my idols, Eleanor Roosevelt, said, "You must do the things you

think cannot do.” I believe that what makes the IAWP extraordinary... is that possibility.... That together.... women police from around the world.... and the men who support us.... can be the force.... that will change the world!

Thank you!