

TRIPLE THREAT: BLACK, FEMALE, WITH A BADGE



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ABSTRACT

My research paper will focus on the effects of discrimination by Law enforcement and their behavior towards race and gender. This research paper will examine the effects of race and gender in a white male dominated police department. It will explore social barriers that black female officers face in dealing with white female and black and white male police officers. The combination of race and gender presents unique problems and perspectives for black female police officers. The beginning history of African American in law enforcement and how they overcame discrimination and harassment to become great law enforcement officers. How women endure stereotypes to become successful law enforcement officers. How racism and sexism have a negative effect on black female officers within the police department and outside the police department. I will explore the social, economic, political and organizational factors that affect black female officers.

Introduction to Law Enforcement

My first contact with a police officers was when I was four years old. My aunt called the police because my father was beating my mother. The police was taking my daddy to jail. I pleaded with the police officer to give him another chance. He told me that everything will be okay and that we are just keeping your daddy overnight for safety. At that moment I had a different viewpoint about police officer because he was not the bad guy. My second encounter came when I was ten years old. I got caught stealing crates at a construction company in the East End neighborhood by the airport. My cousin Joe convinced me that it wasn't stealing but I found out otherwise. A police officer stopped me as my cousin ran away, and told to come over to his vehicle. He told me to put the crates down and told me that it was private property. He also told me I was trespassing and gave me dollar. This was my first run in with a police officer as suspect. My third encounter with a police officer was at my junior high school. It was "Meet a Cop Day". These three encounters influenced my decision to become a police officer.

I told my parents that I wanted to be a police officer, but they did not agree with my decision. They told me that they wanted me to go to college. I went to college and majored in Computer Science and Accounting. During my second year of college I realized that this is not what I wanted to do after meeting with a recruiter from the Dallas Police Department. After that meeting I knew that this is what I was suppose be a police officer. The very next day, against my parents' wishes, I went to University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Admissions and changed my major to Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. In 1989, I graduated with a degree in Criminal Justice. I was selected as a patrolman for Little Rock Police Department (LRPD) in 1990. This was a major accomplishment for a woman at this time. The LRPD Academy was the hardest eleven weeks of training I have ever experienced, however I graduated in July 1990. At that time, I did not understand that I would be paving the way for many black female law enforcement professionals. Although I have encountered many obstacles, I have overcome them and twenty-seven years later I am able to continue my dream career as a police officer! However, I too have experienced the repercussions of what I perceived as a Triple Threat (A black female with a badge. I will explore the obstacles we as black female officers have faced and are still facing. Also the difficulties of being minority: black, female and a cop.

History of African American and Law Enforcement

Historically in the mid-late 1860's, The Fifteenth Amendment bought the guarantee of the right to vote for black Americans, who were appointed to police department as early as 1867. Some of the earliest known cities where departments hired black police officers include:

- 1867: Selma, Alabama
- 1868: Jacksonville, Florida
- 1870: Houston and Galveston, Texas

- 1870: By this year, New Orleans, Louisiana, had 177 black officers and three of five police board members were black.
- 1871: Jackson, Mississippi
- 1872: Chicago, Illinois
- 1873: Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina
- 1874: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

There were several black men who played a significant role in law enforcement throughout history. The first black police officer to die in the line of duty was William Johnson with the Jacksonville, FL Sheriff's Office in 1870. In 1878, Horatio Julius Homer was Boston's first known African-American police officer. In 1891, Wiley G. Overton was sworn in as the first known black New York City police in Brooklyn, New York. In 1898, Samuel Jesse Battle was first black policeman to serve New York City after the incorporation of the boroughs. He later went on to become New York City's first black sergeant in 1926, first black Lieutenant in 1935 and the first black parole commissioner in 1941. In 1941, William B. Lindsay was hired by the Illinois State Police to become the first black State Trooper. In 1966, Lucius Amerson is the first black sheriff elected in the South since Reconstruction of Macon County, Alabama due to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 1988, Willie L. Williams becomes the first African-American police commissioner of Philadelphia. He later went on to become the first black police commissioner of Los Angeles Police Department in 1992.

In 1875, Bass Reeves, a former slave was appointed the first deputy Marshall. He could speak several Native American languages that is why he was appointed deputy U.S. Marshall. He was known as the “Indomitable Marshall” because he arrested 3,000 felons and shot and kill 14 outlaws in self-defense. He brought in some of the most dangerous criminals of the time but was never wounded, despite having his hat and belt shot off on separated occasion. He even arrested his own son for murder. At age sixty-eight, he became a Muskogee police officers. After a thirty-two year career, he retired for health reason. Horatio Julius Homers who appointed as a Boston police officers severed forty years career in law enforcement. Decades after his appointment, the force hired over a half dozens of additional black officers, in large part due to his recommendation. Wiley G. Overton, the first Brooklyn police officer in 1891 was advised by an unknown police official, “It is the general opinion at headquarters, however, that this one policeman will not be happy. “Even if his fellow officers treat him as they should,” I fear the small boys and the ignorant and vicious among our citizen will make his life unbearable.

In spite of the discrimination and harassment they faced by their white counterparts, they still managed to be professional, great role models and trailblazers for African Americans in law enforcement. They served as a beacon of hope and embodied spirit of determination.

Women in Law Enforcement

Women have played an important role in law enforcement beginning in the late 1800's. Mary Owens was the first police woman in the United States, she joined the Chicago Police Department in 1891. In 1908, Lola Baldwin was sworn in by the Portland Police Department. Fanny Bixby was sworn in as a police officer by the Long Beach Police department. In 1910 Alice Stebbins Wells became the first American female in United States, hired by the Los Angeles Police Department. "If Wells was seeking gun and glory, she got none, even though her beat was livelier than that of the patron matrons". She was issued a first aid book and a badge and assigned to enforce laws on loitering at dance halls, skating rinks, penny arcades and pictures, said Cecilia Rasmussen. These women were assigned to clerical work, switchboard, women's jail wards and juvenile and sex cases—period.

The requirements to be a female police officer were as follows: you must be between 30 to 44 years of age, be married and preferably with children. Also, they were required to have a college education in teaching, nursing, or sociology; and pass a civil service examination. The requirements for women were much higher than those set for male police officer. The women were not issued any uniform instead they had to wear skirts and high heels. Male officers called them a "necessary evil." It would be almost sixty years later before women in blue were finally issued holsters for the guns they had been carrying in purses, and badges. They were called police officers instead of policewomen. These women largely consist of social service workers who had to meet higher standards for police employment, but received lower wages, were restricted to

special unit or bureau. The early history of women police consisted largely of social service in which women had to meet higher standards for police employment but received lower wages. When women demonstrated their general value to the organization, they were only permitted the opportunities to perform basic patrol duties (Price and Gavin 1982, Peyser 1985). Women could only be promoted within their own bureaus because, they were told by their male police superiors, that they had not filled the police experience of being on general street patrol. It was, of course, the same male police administration that had refused over the years to assign women to general street patrol and thus had blocked police women access to the required experience (Price and Gavin 1982).

According to Barbara Raffel Price (1996), in policing, gender integration and opportunity for women to participate in forming police policy has been strongly resisted. She has observed that women have transformed their original social worker role in policing only because of their own determination and struggle. She argues that women are changing their police role throughout history by drawing on outside social forces, and in recent times, by relying on the law to enable them to work as police officers. However, acceptance by their male peers has yet to occur. Women receive, at best, a cool reception from male officers and, at worst, a hostile reception. In spite of this, there has been steady growth in the number of women entering police work.

In 1970, women accounted for roughly two percent of sworn officers, with most of the women holding clerical positions. Still even progressive legislation aimed at obtaining gender equality in the United States, women today make up

only thirteen percent of the force. Despite these strides, women are still underrepresented in law enforcement within the United States. Very few women are ranked as sergeant or above. Women are under reported in law enforcement, they are faced with a glass ceiling effect and are unable to move up in ranks within their departments. Most of the women do not even try to reach higher positions because of fear of getting unfair treatment from male coworkers.

The National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) has guided women to overcome these obstacles. They have also guided women into attaining executive positions and help guide new female officers to reach up to achieve leadership roles. It has been a very difficult journey for women in law enforcement. It has been a known fact that some police agencies used to discriminate against women by not hiring them simply because of their gender. In the past seventy years police departments were allowed to discriminate against women wanting to go into law enforcement because they were women and are physically weaker. Women were only allowed to get jobs in the administrative field or traffic jobs rather than actually going out on the street. Today that has changed. There are more women who are getting jobs within tactical departments, such as SWAT. They are also doing undercover work in narcotics and organized crime. However, according to Johnson (2013) data out of 700,000 police officers in United States only 84,000 are women.

Police Departments have continued to hire fewer policewomen compared to policemen. We are often screened out of the hiring process early on because departments are looking for candidates with high upper body strength and previous military experience. The physical ability test is not fit to match the physical standards of women. Men also have higher muscle mass than women so they are able to perform better on physical activities than women. The female rate of passing a physical ability test is 80% lower than males. Statistics show that women score far better on the mental test than male police officers.

When women finally were given the opportunity, as result of Federal law mandating equal opportunity regardless of gender or race, to perform general police work and serve on patrol, they demonstrated their fitness for police work. Almost all of the past research on women police has focused on the capabilities of women to perform police work: virtually all conclude that women, indeed, do have such abilities. In 1925, five years after the nation's women got the right to vote, Police Chief R. Lee Heath decided it was time to expand the training for the city's policewomen. He wanted them to become "quick on the draw and to shoot straight." This was not an easy task when their department issued .45-caliber revolvers were tucked inside their purses, as order. Out on the shooting range, "**jail matrons**" whose duties had been confined to monitoring female suspects had to compete with policewomen from the **juvenile crime prevention** department. These were the only two police duties women were allowed to undertake. When the gun smoke cleared, Policewoman Stella Wallen had scored 75 out of 100, and the competition became an annual event. This was higher

than most of the male officers given that she had to pull her weapon out of her purse. In 1937, Police Officer Mable “Dee” Stevens wearing the white nurse-style uniform the department ordered for its 39 police women, won the competition. When her scores were compared to those of the top male contestants, Mable Stevens had outpointed them too and was declared an arms expert.

According to Jay Newton-Small women police are needed more due to Ferguson, riots in Baltimore and record high police shootings. Increasing the number of female cops would go a long way to solving many these problems. Women police officer almost never use excessive force, though they use the same amount of regular force. Studies show that women police officers draw their weapons less, tend to look for non-physical solutions and are much better at community outreach? “Women never think about wrestling a guy to the ground. She is more likely to control the situation with voice and presence than any kind of physical tool”, says former Houston Mayor Anise Parker. However, women officers tend to save their municipalities a substantial amount of money. Lawsuits alleging the use of excessive force by police cost taxpayers millions of dollars every year. According to a study conducted by the Feminist Majority Foundation and the National Center for Women and Policing, male officers cost between 2.5 and 5.5 times more to taxpayers because of payouts to settle lawsuits.

Despite women being in law enforcement for over hundred years, we are still facing discrimination and harassment. Female officers are stereotyped

as being gay. If you are heterosexual, it is assumed you will probably have sex with most of the male officers. There is a sense of constantly having to prove yourself over and over. Women cost the police department less money due to not getting into deadly force incidents. Police departments still refuse to hire more women as police officers. Women have proven that when given the chance they have the same capabilities as their male counterparts to become good police officers. We must get rid of the “good old boys” network in order to bring gender equality in law enforcement.

Intersectionality of African American Women in Law Enforcement

Georgia Ann Robinson became the first Africa-American female police officer in Los Angeles, California. She began her groundbreaking twelve year career with LAPD at age thirty-seven. Robinson’s desire to serve led her to become involved with different community organizations. While working with various organization she was approached and convinced by an LAPD recruiter to join the police force. On July 25, 1916, she became a volunteer for the LAPD. Three years later, Robinson was appointed full time police officer to serve as jail matron. Eventually, she became involved in juvenile and homicide cases investigated by the department. The only two positions that Mrs. Robinson could hold were jail matrons and juvenile crime prevention department. She received no formal training or pay. Officer Robinson was so committed to her

work that she frequently brought young girls who had no place to live to her home. She was considered more of a social worker than a policeman.

Mrs. Robinson retired in 1929 after twelve years of service at the age forty-nine due to an incident involving two women. She tried to break up an altercation between two drunken women in her jail. She suffered a severe head injury which left her permanently blind. Always a fighter to the end, Ebony magazine asked her about her injury and her police career in 1954, Mrs. Robinson said “I have no regrets. I didn’t need my eyes any longer, I had seen all there was to see”

The portrayal of black female law enforcement officers in television and films started off as Blaxploitation films such as Tamara Dobson’s as Cleopatra Jones and Get Christie Love!, She played a undercover black female police detective. Pam Grier’s as Coffy and Foxy Brown. They were portrayed as very sexy women with tight clothes and high heels. Tamara Dobson’s catchphrase as Christie Love; upon catching the criminal, “You’re under arrest, Sugah!” In Cleopatra Jones, Tamara Dobson played an undercover special agent but still remained loyal to her drug-ravaged community and her lover. These films inspired many of black female to become police officers because these women were strong, tough fighter and very intelligent. Black females could relate to them because they grew up in neighborhood with drugs and had a strong connection to their community. It showed Black Power and an alliance to the feminist movement. Cleopatra Jones was both feminine and fashionable but at the same time she was talented in combat and driving, even more so than the

men in the film. She is seen as an assertive, strong and combative woman who is able to both appeal to men and defeat them physically but was able to maintain a loving relationship with her boyfriend. Black women were stereotypes as “hot mamas”, “welfare queens,” and “mammies” in film and television where as white women as “pure”, “submissive”, and “domestic”. This portrayal of black women led to more suspicion and hostility in the workplace.

Women are now playing positive roles on television and film. Lieutenant Anita Van Buren on Law and Order portrays a commander of the Detective Squad. She is known for her toughness. She never focus on the mistakes of her detectives, she tries to salvage the investigation and the failures. Shelunda Cooper of Women of “Police Women of Broward County”, Virginia Awkward and Joy J. Jefferson of “Police Women of Memphis” portrays strong black women who don’t take no stuff. These women are real police officers who patrol the streets. They are able to balance the needs of their families with a career that is intensely demanding and often dangerous in a positive way. BET has launched a television show called Rebel which is based on a true story. The show depicts a black female police officer by the name of Rebecca “Rebel” Knight, who decides to quit the force when she has to shoot her partner in order to protect her brother. It is a hard-hitting, courageous, complex and morally debatable drama series, featuring many that effects black female officers. It deals with real tension between communities of color, particularly the black communities. They are smart and tough. They have a strong connection to their

family and their community. These shows now depict black female in a positive way.

The Acceptance of Black Women in Law Enforcement: Professionally and in the Community

Barbara Raffel Price (1996) completed a study investigating the women's situation in the urban police department. The issue of discrimination was covered in depth. Her study revealed that the presence of discrimination in the workplace is identified by virtually all black women officers 92% of the time and half of time by white women officer at 57%. Price studies shows:

- Black women feel they have to demand respect while white women are put on pedestals
- Black women report that their bosses do not send white women into crime areas (but, by inference, do send black women).
- Black women report they have no one to help them secure desired assignments, special training sessions or promotion: white women, they say, have “hooks” (connections)
- Black women reported verbal racial insults more frequently than white women
- Black women say they have more trouble with racial discrimination from their law enforcement colleagues than from the public.

- Black women claim that white women can get transferred inside to a warm job such as the switchboard on a cold night while they have to remain on the street.

White women officers believed that black women officers are at an advantage in the Department as “double minorities” at the time when the department is anxious to show that it is not a racist organization. Black women still think white women receive preferential treatment because they can get someone to make a call when black women do not have anyone. It was noted that there is a “divide and conquer” strategy in the department which starts during training where “they” (either individuals or the department) try to keep the females separate from each other. This effort operated also by race according to some reports. One explanation of the use of “divide and conquer” is male officer insecurity or fear of the competition which women seem to present. Black police women experience their work world differently than white women. They report greater degrees of discrimination than white women in the police department, and black women see themselves as discriminated against because of their race, gender, or combined race/gender. However, despite the discrimination that black women report in assignments and promotion as workers in the department, they do not believe that discrimination against them is any worse than in the larger society. On the contrary, the black women police officers in our study seem to feel that policing provided alternatives not available to them in the larger world where a narrower range of occupational options exist for them.

On the job, a black partner may be seen as “a brother in blue” but if blacks speak forcefully against what they perceive to be racist slurs, behaviors, and policies in the department, they are often accused of not being “blue enough”. Evidence of gender discrimination was also found in the absence of women in certain special units called the “forbidden units”. Forbidden units are either off limit assignments for women or assignments where women experience extra harassment to encourage them to transfer out. The mounted, harbor and highway units or (a specialized traffic unit) would tell women that there is not opening when, in fact, by women’s perception there are vacancies. If, as happens on occasion, a woman gets into one of the male-only units, respondent report, she meets with considerable hardship. The mounted unit has 4.4 % women, highway, 0.4% and harbor, 3.2% while the department overall is over 11% female. Of the ten women in these three units, only one is black while the department has 818 black women out of a total of 8,106 women. These figures taken alone, would tend to confirm the claim that there currently are “forbidden units” for women. Black women officers today express level of cynicism about policing as a career and considerable anger at the department and their job. They cite lack of opportunity for advancement, conflict between working hours and their personal life, and negative attitudes of men toward them as the main reasons for their disillusionment with police work, They believe that the department does not value women police and that they are, in general, and unappreciated group. The women believed that they are discriminated in work assignments, promotions, recommendations for promotion and the availability of

appropriate facilities. The women expressed their desire to have women hired, evaluated and promoted on their own merit and not as tokens to satisfy some statistical requirements of the government or some political needs. On the positive side, the women who were interviewed believe that women police bring special qualities and attributes to police work such compassion, communication skills, maturity.

Major findings by the National Institute of Justices are:

- Women are motivated to become police officers because of financial security (this is twice as true for black women) and as a result of family or friend's encouragement (this more true for white women than black women)
- Pre-employment exposure to police work played an important role in influencing black women to enter police work
- Problems in the previous assignment were more frequently noted as a precursor to requesting assignment to the police academy than was the desire for steady day shift
- Most women derive jobs satisfaction from their academy assignment
- Most women in the study were preparing for promotion examinations
- Almost all black women police in this study and over half of white women report that discrimination exists in the police department
- Male domination in policing creates professional obstacles to career advancement and satisfaction.

Notes: 93% of the women police officers or detectives: 5.7% are sergeants; 1% are lieutenants, captains or higher.

Black female officers have expressed the importance of being sensitive towards minority community members. They asserted that their status as black women made them more accessible to African-American community members and that they were more understanding of the multiple issues relating to the black communities. Interaction with members of these race-specific communities enabled them to improve community relationships in ways that could positively influence those neighborhoods. Black community members were more likely to trust black female police officers. On the other hand, African-American citizens had a very negative feeling towards female officers, including viewing them as traitors to the community, or lesbian.

Cleveland Police Officer Nakia Jones sounded off on Facebook cops who is says, lives with a “God complex,” after Alton Sterling was killed by Baton Rouge police officers. She talks about being torn between her oath to serve and protect and the fact that she is a part of the community police and that police are slaughtering innocent people. “If you’re that officer that know good and well you got a god complex, you’re afraid of people that don’t look like you, you have no business in that uniform,” she says. “Take it off.” Officer Jones talks about frustrating idea of being “good cops.” You feel yourself wanting to turn it off. “I’m looking at it and I became as furious and hurt because it bothers me when I hear people say, y’all police officers this, y’all police officers that”. “And they put us in this negative category when I’m saying to

myself, I'm not that type of police officer," says Jones. "I know officers like me that would give their life for other people. So I'm looking at it and it tore me up because I got to see what you all see. If I wasn't a police officer and I wasn't on the inside, I would be saying look at this racist stuff. "She goes on to say I am a mother of two African American sons, and I have African American nephews and I have brothers. I am also a person that wears the uniform with the blue". "I'm also the one that puts their lives in danger. I wear blue." "The reason I became a police officer is to make a difference in people lives". We as black female officers express the same feelings as Officer Jones.

On November 1, 2006, Buffalo New York police officer Cariol Horne responded to a domestic dispute with Officer Gregory Kwiatkowski involving Neal Mack and his girlfriend. When she went into the house she says Mack had been placed under arrest. He was handcuffed in the front and was sideways and unable to move when Officer Kwiatkowski punched him. She said approximately 10 other officers helped bring Mack outside, but Officer Kwiatkowski got right back to work on him, choking a handcuffed suspect. "Gregory Kwiatkowski turned Neal Mack around and started choking him. "So then I'm like, Greg"! "You're choking him"! I thought whatever happened in the house he (Kwiatkowski) was still upset about it so when he did not stop choking him I grabbed his arm from around Neal Mack's neck. Horne says that's when Kwiatkowski physically attacked her, "He come up and punched me in the face and I had to have the bridge of my nose replaced, "Horne explained. No charges were ever raised against Mack or Officer Kwiatkowski. Horne was,

however, charged with obstruction-13 counts in total, including obstruction for “jumping on officer Kwiatkowski’s back and/or striking him with her hands.” But documents from Officer Kwiatkowski’s testimony, including his sworn statements which state, “she never got on top of me.” She ended up filing numerous arbitration hearings to keep her job but she was ultimately found guilty of the charges. The mother of five was fired and has lost every appeal to date but continues to seek a pension for her 19 years of police service.

Officer Kwiatkowski later was forced into retirement following two separate incidents, one in which he punched another officer while off duty, another in which he choked a fellow officer while on the clock. He was also indicted, along with two other officers, on charges of federal civil rights violations toward black teen suspect. Due to these incidents, the City of Buffalo Common Council passed the case to the New York State retirement system to be reviewed. Officer Horne is now a truck still waiting on her pension. Officer Horne did the right thing but lost her pension, but Officer Kwiatkowski did the wrong thing but received his pension. Another example of the “The Good Old Boy” network that still working today. Officer Horne did the right thing but was severely punished more than Officer Kwiatkowski who did the wrong thing.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

In doing this research paper, it brought back memories of when I first started in law enforcement. I experience the mistrust from my white male officers. I had to do things that I was not comfortable with in order to prove that I was one of the guys. I know how it feels to be called a lesbian and a sell out to the black community. Also being isolated by your family and your friends for wanting be a police officer and for not overlooking them when they break the law. I was put in all black neighborhoods while my white female officers were put in predominately white neighborhoods. All of my FTO's or field training officers would give me the most difficult assignments to try to intimidate me.

Although black female police officers have come a long way since the 1900's, there is still plenty of work to be done to stamp out discriminatory actions. An environment which motivates others to be active while inciting cultural changes should be implemented. Diversity in the field of law enforcement should be encouraged and increased. More black females should be promoted to supervisors and leadership positions. We need to breakdown the negative stereotype of black female officers. We should encourage and empower future generations of black women in law enforcement. Even though there has been a significant increase in hiring and promoting of black female officers, we are still underrepresented due to racial and sexual barriers. Police departments need to be very active and aggressive in their recruiting process. Police departments needs to know and realize that diversity is an important component in today's society. The demographics, social, economic, and cultural has changed. These

changes need to be reflected throughout the police department. They need to get rid of the “good old boys” network.

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