

# Gender Diversity in Policing

## Voiceover

00:00

Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

## Jennifer Donelan

00:16

Hello everyone and thank you for joining us on *The Beat*. I'm your host, Jennifer Donelan. And today we have the honor of being joined by Dr. Elsie Scott. She is the founding director of the Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center at Howard University, in the nation's capital. And we are here at Howard University with Dr. Scott because they are hosting a forum, Engaging College Students in 21st Century Law Enforcement. Thank you so much for joining us.

## Dr. Elsie Scott

00:46

Thank you for having me.

## Jennifer

00:47

Talk about your interests and the background in-in your interest in diversity and law enforcement and-and women uh, gender diversity in-in law enforcement.

## Scott

00:55

I had an academic background in law enforcement. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the politics of the police. I'm a political scientist and as result of that, a lot of people came knocking on my door as an expert, somebody had conducted research on law enforcement in the black community especially. And it wasn't till I went to the New York Police Department as the Deputy Commissioner of Training that I really got involved in women's issues because there were so many issues that the women were facing in New York Police Department and they needed a champion. And because I had the position of Deputy Commissioner, I reported directly to the Police Commissioner, they knew that I had an opportunity to have the Police Commissioner's ear. And when Commissioner Bratton came there as Police Commissioner it was at a time when women were in the news and that was an opportunity to make a name for himself around women's issues so he appointed me, sorta be in charge of dealing with women's issues and he had me to create a work plan of what were the problems. He said "I'm tired of hearing all these problems. Come up with the problems and also bring me some solutions." And so

we're able to get a lot of changes for women as a result of putting together a cross department uh, taskforce on women.

## **Jennifer**

*02:08*

Why did you decide to go the law enforcement route to focus your studies on political science and law enforcement and then on from there?

## **Scott**

*02:16*

I chose law enforcement as a source of study because I was concerned about the problems between the police and the black community. So I came in from an advocate perspective and a researcher. Never looking to go inside of a police department. Some of my mentors who were police officers convinced me that I could have more impact if I came inside of a police department.

## **Jennifer**

*02:41*

Change from within.

## **Scott**

*02:42*

Yes.

## **Jennifer**

*02:44*

Let's fast forward to the Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center of which you are the director, here at Howard University. What is the conversation surrounding in terms of women in law enforcement?

## **Scott**

*02:58*

I think there's a lot of curiosity as we did focus groups, some students felt like women make better police officers because they had had fewer problems from women when they've had encounters with the police, they felt like women were more empathetic. And so we decided to "Let's pull this out and look a little bit deeper at some of the women's issues." So we have here at Howard students haven't seen except for Catherine Lenier, they have not seen women police chiefs, they haven't seen black women chiefs of police so we've been able to bring them to the campus and have them to have dialogue. But underneath that, we talked about particular problems that women face once they become police officers, in terms of discrimination and sexual harassment and some of those issues. But the

police officers have also been able to talk about what are the good things about the job, also you take the bitter with the sweet and decide what's best for you.

### **Jennifer**

*03:53*

How have you seen the challenges change? Have things gotten better? Have they stayed the same? Or have they just changed?

### **Scott**

*03:58*

They have definitely gotten better for women. For one thing, there are more women inside police departments so they have more of a force to fight whereas when there was only one or two, then she often had to just suffer and many of them left the department because they were not happy. But now you have more women, you have more women in leadership positions, to be in a position to uh, to mentor and to train and to make certain they get their appropriate experiences to move up through the ranks. So I think that's the good thing but we've also talked about some of the problems that still exist, especially women with children. And how law enforcement really is not flexible enough to really allow you to be good mothers often and so it takes a whole community. Many of the women in the session today have talked about their mother's moving in with them, their mother-in-law's moving in with them. Their husband's having a job where he has an opportunity to help. So there—there are still these struggles uh, for women who want to be police officers, who want to move up the ranks but we've seen some examples today of women who've been able to conquer that.

### **Jennifer**

*05:04*

What do you see as a way forward for increasing gender diversity in law enforcement?

### **Scott**

*05:10*

Well I think we will see more gender diversity because as women have roles throughout society that no longer is there this whole thing ... back in the 70s, they felt like a woman couldn't even drive a patrol car and they felt like women couldn't be police officers because of their weight or their height and they used to have to jump over wall and that was one of the things we looked at in New York. We teach officers not to go over walls because your head can get blown off so why is that a measure as to whether you can flunk the academy?

### **Jennifer**

*05:41*

Good point.

**Scott**

05:42

And that's where more women were flunking because they couldn't get over that wall. And so now that we've gotten rid of some of the impediments that kept women from succeeding, I think we'll have uh, more progress and as you get more women chiefs of police, who will be empathetic and who will provide the leadership and role models for the young people that are interested.

**Jennifer**

06:00

Well I definitely applaud the female police chiefs who've flown in from across the country to stand here and inspire the young people at Howard University and I applaud your efforts in engaging the young community and getting them to talk. And creating that dialogue and conversation between law enforcement and our young, it's so critical.

**Scott**

06:18

Right.

**Jennifer**

06:19

We won't get anything done without it.

**Scott**

06:21

Absolutely.

**Jennifer**

06:22

Are there any other resources that come to mind on this particular issue of gender diversity or the topics that you're currently addressing at the Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center?

**Scott**

6:32

Well, NOBLE, National Organization Black Law Enforcement Executives. Many of the women who spoke here today, the black women, talked about that's how they got the courage to go forth, how they learned about certain positions because they came to a NOBLE conference and they met women. And these women have become their-their support group and uh, and then they talk about IACP, the International Association of Chiefs of Police. They have a women's section, so I think a lot of it is getting to know people, going to professional conferences and networking.

## Jennifer

07:05

If people want to contact you to discuss more of this topic uh, how would you prefer to be contacted?

## Scott

07:11

Well I think one of the best ways is to contact me by email and that email address is elsie. E-L-S-I-E-dot-scott@howard-dot-E-D-U. And we have a webpage, the Ron Walters Center at Howard University, they can Google that and they can go on our website to learn more about what we're doing.

## Jennifer

07:30

All right, well Dr. Elsie Scott, we don't want to hold you any longer but we cannot thank you enough for the valuable time that you have spent with us. Thank you audience for joining us on *The Beat*.

## Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

7:39

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