

Arva Marie Johnson

On Being the First African-American Woman on the Force

Reflection on what it meant to be the first African-American woman on the Capitol Police Force.

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I think when I realized that was when they asked all of us to get together to take our picture, so they could have a picture of their first females on the Capitol Police Department, and that was when I first realized that I was the first African-American female, which didn't faze me at all because as time went by I didn't really think about it. And then as time would pass, and they started to hire more females, and then they said, 'You were the first African-American female.' And I said, 'Yeah, I was, I guess.' They said, 'Do you know what that means?' I said, 'No, what does it mean? I have a job.' {laughter} Which I thought was good; I have a job, and I like doing it, you know, so it didn't faze me at all. Even at the retirement party, it didn't faze me until everybody started talking. I told my kids, I said, 'I didn't know.' [My son] said, 'Yeah, Mom, you didn't realize that?' I said no, because to me, I'm just an ordinary person that, okay, I don't make a big deal out of anything. I try to always do my job and accept people for what they are and go with that.