

**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SUSAN B. CARBON, DIRECTOR OF
THE OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, AT THE CITY OF
JACKSONVILLE'S AWARDS CEREMONY FOR NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS'
RIGHTS WEEK**

JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Thank you, Catherine [Pierce], for your very kind introduction. And thank you Connie [Sponsler-Garcia], for your leadership, your commitment to survivors and for the tremendous amount of expertise you have brought to Jacksonville and to many of our grantees over the years.

I am thrilled that my first visit as Director of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) is to Jacksonville. The Battered Women's Justice Project's (BWJP) Military Initiative in Jacksonville is an example that what was once thought to be impossible – can be possible. And indeed, this is all possible because of all of you, the leaders and invested community members – through your unwavering commitment. It is a model for what partnerships can do for the safety of the community.

We are grateful to the Mayor's Victim Assistance Advisory Council for putting on this inspiring program and to Captain John Scorby, the Commanding Officer of (NAS) Naval Air Station Jacksonville, for organizing this morning's seminar and of course for his support of this base's commitment to victim's rights. I want to especially thank Amy Johnston of Fleet and Family Support Center for working so diligently with my staff in coordinating our visit here today.

In the audience today are members of the military who have played a special role in our efforts to combat violence against women. These groups include military members who have been victims of crime, the staff from the Fleet and Family Support Center, as well as the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Advocates, compassionate representatives who have been assigned to help victims of sexual assault within their commands.

We also recognize with gratitude the individual augmentees. These are service members who have been taken out of their command and sent to Iraq and Afghanistan to supplement billets for the Army and Marines. These service members deploy heroically for long periods of time without their commands – they deploy alone – in order to fill vacant positions for the Army and Marines.

I am honored to join all of you for this commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Just last week, the Department of Justice honored extraordinary individuals and programs that provide services to victims of crime. The ceremony focused on fairness, dignity and respect as rights for all crime victims. Much like the honorees here today, these individuals are restoring hope to lives that have been shattered by violence. I am always moved by the valiant courage of survivors and advocates who are doing this work, who are promoting healing through action and leadership. And for your work and vision, I thank you.

Our honorees today represent a diversity of fields, and today we honor victim advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and survivors. Each individual is critical to a community's response to violent crimes, and particularly violence against women.

My visit today is part of the Justice Department's year-long commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act. This initiative seeks to raise public awareness on issues around violence against women, to build and renew coalitions among federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement and victim services communities, and to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking for men, women and children across the country.

Fifteen years ago, before the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, domestic violence was considered a "family matter." Spousal rape was not a crime. Many states did not have domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers or hotlines. Law enforcement and victim advocates rarely worked together.

But with legislation like the Violence Against Women Act and commitment from leaders at every level of government, communities developed systems to provide much-needed services to victims and forge effective partnerships among federal, state, local and tribal governments, and between the criminal justice system and victim advocates. OVW supports a victim-centered approach through the work of its grant programs. And most importantly, our programs strive to meet the myriad needs of a diverse range of victims.

What we have learned is that one agency cannot do this work alone. The Department of Justice cannot do it alone. We need to build and sustain meaningful partnerships that last well beyond the life of a grant award and effect real change. Fighting crime is a priority for this Administration and for the Department of Justice. Similarly, we must also promote a victim-centered approach and promote the rights of crime victims. Only then, we can improve the criminal justice system response to survivors and collaborate with community partners to prevent re-victimization.

Ten years ago, Congress mandated the creation of the Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence to review and evaluate current programs and policies associated with domestic violence in the military. Two original members of the task force are with us today. Both Connie and Catherine were two of the 12 civilian members, in addition to 12 members from the military community. One of the final recommendations from the task force was to establish links between military installations and civilian agencies responding to domestic violence – and create a civilian-military coordinated community response.

As one of the national demonstration sites, the Navy installations and their civilian partners here in Jacksonville received specific training, technical assistance and resources to establish the joint coordinated community response, including the involvement of an advisor from the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence, the very same Connie Sponsler-Garcia.

After this project was launched, the Jacksonville Naval Air Station was one of the highest-ranked in the nation for its military-civilian community collaboration. Based on the work that Jacksonville undertook as part of the military-civilian coordinated community response, the

community was able to clearly articulate its needs and successfully apply for and obtain a grant with the purpose of setting up a domestic violence court.

These projects worked and continue to work because we are talking to each other. All branches of the military are working to address these issues and increase collaboration, so that it is institutionalized in policy and practice. This morning's training – one of the few in the nation – is evidence of what is possible when we talk to each other and think differently.

There are a number of people to acknowledge and thank for the successes of this project. First, thank you to the Commanding Officer of the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Captain John Scorby, Jr, for your commitment to partner with us, the Battered Women's Justice Project, and the city of Jacksonville to create a model for the nation. I would also like to thank the Commander of the Southeast Navy Region, Commanding Officer of the Mayport Naval Station, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit, the City of Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the Circuit and County Courts in Duval County, Salvation Army Probation Services and Batterers Intervention and Hubbard House.

As a judge, I have seen how collaboration can vastly improve the experience of a survivor in the criminal justice system. I have seen how agencies can work together to be more effective at meeting the unique needs of individual victims.

Whether you work in this field or not, you have only to read a newspaper or turn on the television to realize that sexual and domestic violence pervades every part of society. It touches people of every age, race, class, gender and sexual orientation. Whether it is used as a weapon of war against an entire people, or cynically employed to break one individual's spirit, its impact is profound. It reaches entire communities – from the workplace to high school and college campuses to our military communities.

Promoting community collaboration, whether between civilian and military communities, or agencies in a big city or rural jurisdiction, continues to be a priority for the Office on Violence Against Women. We can work together to bring further innovation to prevention, intervention and treatment, to honor the work of advocates, and to support survivors through their paths of recovery. While the road ahead of us may seem daunting, I am enthusiastic about the journey. We have a historic opportunity to bring to fruition the dream that inspired the Violence Against Women Act. I am humbled by what we have heard today – right here, in Jacksonville, and the incredible stories from members of your community. I am confident that your efforts will serve as an effective model for communities around the nation to replicate the success you have seen here.

Thank you for being here today to lend your support to this critical mission.