

WFWP USA: HerStory Awardees Share Transformative Wisdom for Women

Katarina Connery
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In anticipation of National Women's History month (March) on February 26, 2022, WFWP USA launched a monthly national HerStory Award ceremony series, to acknowledge five women leaders, one from each region of the United States, for their courage, compassion, and commitment to using their gifts and talents to uplift others, despite often overwhelming challenges. 75 participants gathered to hear "the story behind their story" as to how they accomplished extraordinary things.

After a brief introduction by Mrs. Katarina Connery, who facilitated this special occasion, WFWP USA President Angelika Selle explained the deeper significance and honor of this award. Each awardee was called up one by one to receive the award, and then share three to five practical points or lessons learned as to how she overcame trials and tribulations. Each story moved the audience deeply, and sometimes the presenter also couldn't hold back her tears.

The chatbox overflowed with comments, congratulations and gratitude from participants, including friends and family of the awardees.

There are many more HerStories to be told, and we already look forward to next month's celebration of women heroines!

Please enjoy some excerpts of each of these women's stories below. Each of their full story can be viewed at www.wfwp.us/herstory



Northeast: Joan Myers, gospel singer, songwriter, and businesswoman

The gift of family is one of the greatest reasons that propels me to fuel a selfless lifestyle lived out of a deep sense of love for others. I have a reason for having a focused sense of purpose in my life because there has been a call in my life. I have also realized that self-reliance always falls short and the world-denying solutions provide no answer in the end.

First, I understood the call. Since I was a child, the selfless act of serving others was introduced to my siblings and I by our now deceased parents who served others diligently. This legacy is the heart of my story. Let me encourage you to give until there's no more to give, love until there's no more to love.

Secondly, I responded to the call. This call has compelled me to respond practically and compassionately to human needs. I have felt pain in my calling in serving others but it is in those moments that I realize that love is demanding and it requires a death to my self-constructed ego. I am honored to be called to serve where He places me. Some of those places are extremely uncomfortable and deeply painful, but I stood and served.

Finally, I embrace the call. In a recent devotional reflection on my job, there was a picture presented to me of a tow truck pulling another tow truck. This reminded me regardless of how strong I am in life, I do have breaking points and it means I need people and people need me. As a Jamaican, I hold firm to the words of our national anthem which says, "Teach us to respect for all, stir response to do this call."



Southeast: Dr. Charlene Jenkins, CEO and Founder of LadyJ Media

I take no credit for anything, I give all glory to God for all that He's allowed me to do. I have suffered three strokes and a heart attack. I was in a mentally abusive relationship for a very very long time which affected my brain and my mental capacity. Years later the pain and everything that I was holding in caused me to have three strokes. The first point I wanted to make is God is amazing. Everything we go through, there is a purpose and there is a reason. My second point is that things are not always as they seem.

As I went through the strokes and heart attack, I had to learn how to walk, talk, use my phone, all the things we take for granted, I had to learn how to do all of those things over three times. I never ever gave up because I knew that there was a reason I just didn't know at the time. God will allow us to go through journeys and go through things in our life because he's trying to take us somewhere. Sometimes we don't know where but we have to go through the journey.

Number three, you can't run from your calling. I ran and I ran because I did not want to be anywhere in the ministry because my dad is a pastor and I didn't want to be anywhere near it. Coming full circle, that's where I am today. You cannot run from your calling no matter how you try. God will pull you back and place you where you're supposed to be.



Midwest: Pastor Janet D. Reid, Founder of Blood Covenant Sisters International, Ministries INC.

The difficulties in ministry come from you as a person accepting the call of God in your life. The most difficult moments that I've ever had were when I wanted to say, "God, you got the wrong girl," or when He called you wanting to hang up the phone and say, "Wrong number." Saying yes is the key and once God has a grip on your heart you are just willing at that time to take on whatever comes. Because he never promised us that the road will be easy. He never said that it was going to be a bed of roses. He just said come, come and follow me. What I say to every woman is know that God is the one who called you.

Ministry is always going to be about others. When we deal with other people of course you know that all of us have our ups we have our downs. But when you're with God, you're able to receive what anyone has going on in their life.

When I read [the Bible] I find people like you and me in those stories. They have some difficulty but they made it through the trenches because they put all their trust in God. Noah to Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Moses were challenged and they just decided you know what, I said yes, and I'm going all the way.



Southwest: Nishia Slater, Owner of Star Life Wellness, LLC

My mother is such an inspiration. She didn't show us how to be strong physically, she showed us how to be strong mentally. When we think about strength, we think about, "Can I pick this up?" It's not even about that. Can you pick yourself up? Over the years I have learned how to pick myself up throughout my journey. Being born in poverty in the 80s, 3 of 7, I honestly look back and I don't know and understand how my mother did it. She inspired me so, so much. I was able to use all that trauma and those obstacles that I went through as stepping stones.

Being molested and having my voice taken away from me, that changed my life tremendously. It changed how I view myself. It changed how I treated myself, even as a child. I am a teen mom and that is okay. I am a high school dropout and that's okay too. When the weapons are being thrown, keep throwing them, I'm going to continue to rise above them. I continued to live my life for my children and I learned - it took a long time, 30-something years - if I continue to live for them, I'm only living through them. I'm not living for myself. I had to learn to love myself, through all that trauma.

I went from feeling, "why me?" to thinking, "why not me?" The way my mother inspired me, I want to inspire other women. But I had to learn how to use my voice. All that fear, trauma, anger, hurt, and of course, confusion, led me to believe there was no hope. Throughout the years, I was able to create my own lens to see that the pain, anger, and hurt that I was holding on to, wasn't doing anything but causing me to live the life that I did not want. I had to go within, I had to heal the inner child that was screaming out for help. I took that trauma and those obstacles one step at a time. And I started building up. That self-love that I didn't have, I have it. The confidence, I have it. To be empowered, I have it. It all starts in the mindset.



West: Heidi Lieb-Williams, Chair of Alaska's Governor's Council for Disabilities and Special Education and GCDSE Executive committee

God deserves the glory for what He has done in my life, lighting the way for others to see a testimony of what He can do. He establishes the pathways of opportunity for me to walk through to make a difference. His plan is bigger than any dreams or goals I could have ever imagined.

No one overcomes a quest without a challenge. Growing up I struggled to fit in, trying to be like others, comparing myself, and feeling rejected because I was different. I always had difficulty keeping a job and was told they knew I was doing my best but my best would never amount to being good enough. Discovering my children and some immediate family members were on the autism spectrum helped me to learn more about my diagnoses. Some people assumed I couldn't be taught or do certain things because of being functionally deaf hard-of-hearing along with multiple other disabilities.

I had to change my thinking. I had to learn to embrace autism. God created me like this, to be born to stand out, to make a difference, and not be ashamed of who I am. I love being able to share my fixations on special interests. I was told I talk too much but it turned out I actually share knowledge. I struggle with failure but strive to overcome it. I've learned to advocate for support and understand it's okay to reach out and ask for help. We all need each other in this world.

With assistance and incredible mentors, I started my own business called Puzzled with Purpose - Autistically Inspired Creations in order for me to help others discover their passions, talents, and build confidence. It is a gift to see them filled with hope, learn to face hurdles, and persevere no matter how long it takes and witness their success. Reality is: it is okay to not be okay sometimes. Through it all, I've learned that doing my best doesn't mean pushing myself until I break, but that being kind to myself allows me to give the best version of me to others. Despite my flaws, I am determined even through heartbreaking moments to shine through and true. Because of the amazing people who have left handprints on my life, I pray I can leave a thumbprint legacy of God's love. When someone tells you you can't or it's impossible, don't underestimate the power of adding the word "yet."





HerStory Award

Throughout history we have heard much about 'his story,' which means there is still so much of 'her story' yet to be told. To unearth these incredible stories, WFWP USA recognizes and honors women not only for their outstanding accomplishments in various fields of endeavor, in the form of a HerStory Award, but especially for the story "behind it."

Each HerStory recipient has been selected for her courage, compassion, and commitment to using her gifts and talents to uplift others, despite often overwhelming challenges. Upon receiving this award, we ask the recipient to share a few practical points of lessons learned as they overcame trials and tribulations, in order to encourage other women, and also to share those nuggets of wisdom with the next generation.

This award encourages all women to know that by investing into people and relationships, you have influence and thus already are a leader regardless of title or position, and thus have the ability to accomplish extraordinary things for the sake of the greater good!

This is a tribute to all the women around the world who are not just leaders, but *peace leaders* that are "Living by the Logic of Love."

[Click Here to Nominate Someone for the HerStory Award](#)





Pastor Janet D. Reid

Pastor Janet D. Reid, Founder of Blood Covenant Sisters International, Ministries INC. since 2012, upholds her mission to enhance, encourage, equip and empower those who are downtrodden, unloved and feel they are forgotten or have lost their way.

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Heidi Lieb-Williams

Heidi Lieb-Williams is currently the Chair of Alaska's Governor's Council for Disabilities and Special Education and GCDSE Executive committee. She serves as a member of the Intellectual/Developmental Disability & Mental Health (IDD-MH) Advisory Council, and the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP).

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Nishia Slater

Overcoming unimaginable obstacles and using her life lessons to help many more women become empowered through her work, Nishia Slater is known for her role as the owner of Star Life Wellness Group LLC.

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Dr. Charlene Jenkins

Dr. Charlene Jenkins, also known as LadyJ, is a native Baltimorean. She is a Motivational Speaker, Radio Talk Show/TV Host, Certified Life/Spiritual Coach, and professional vocalist. Dr. Jenkins received her Doctorate of Divinity in June 2021, and just recently completed Chaplaincy school. She is now a Licensed and Ordained Chaplain/Pastor.

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Joan Myers

Joan Amelia Myers is a multi-talented individual, a gospel singer, songwriter and a dynamic performer. She is also a successful businesswoman with Brooklyn's Leading Information Technology Center – B & C Cyberspace Inc. as CEO. However, at the center of Joan's heart and her life, is her love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Mrs. Carolyn Robinson

Mrs. Carolyn Robinson founded and has been the CEO of Empowering You Now, a non-profit organization that offers affordable education and life coaching services in the San Francisco Bay Area through targeted and interactive workshops that help both individuals and couples recognize self-defeating beliefs and gain strategies to overcome them.

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Hon. Gale A. Brewer



Mrs. Deborah Levine



Dr. Canzada Twyman

Hon. Gale A. Brewer is the 27th Manhattan Borough President, responsible for advising the Mayor and City Council on borough concerns, commenting on all land-use matters in the borough, advocating for the borough in the municipal budget process, and appointing members of Manhattan's 12 Community Boards.

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Mary J. Park

Mary J. Park and her husband Jerry co-founded Little Friends for Peace (LFFP) in 1981 out of their shared commitment to peace and their experience with their six children.

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Judi Moreo

is an accomplished author with eleven books to her credit including her bestselling, *You Are More Than Enough: Every Woman's Guide to Purpose, Passion, and Power* and its companion, *Achievement Journal*.

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Mrs. Deborah Levine has a passion for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion inherited from her father, a World War II US military intelligence officer assigned to interrogate Nazi prisoners of war. She has more than 33 years experience consulting on cultural diversity and keynoting for corporations, universities, and professional associations.

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Rev. Gwendolyn Appleberry

is a licensed and ordained minister of metaphysical science. She took it upon herself to see the need in the community, protecting young people, providing safe havens, and nourishing with a hug and love.

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Dr. Ayele Amavigan Labante

is the founder and CEO of Hidden Talent Foundation, an international non-profit organization whose mission is to assist the world's under-served children and young adults to discover their hidden educational talents by providing them with basic educational tools.

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One of the many gifts and talents God has blessed Dr. Canzada Twyman is her role as a founding Executive Director of the Divine Exchange Ministry, Inc.

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Commander Crystal King Smith

has 28 years of service and is currently in charge of the Force Review Unit.

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Hon. Joy I. Garratt

Her 25 years of working with teachers, students and families motivated her to run for office so that she could address and find solutions to the issues facing working families in her state.

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Dr. Cherilyn Lee

Founder of Nu Wellness Healthcare Inc, Author, Certified Seminary Leader and Speaker, Certified Strategic Life Coach, and Host-Producer of her own Radio Show.

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Rachanee Jackson

teaches urban youth about growing their own food, sustainable living and the environment.

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Faye Carol Yarbrough

was awarded a special HerStory Veteran’s award for her service in the United States Army as a Non-Commissioned Officer obtaining the rank of Sergeant in the Corps of Engineers.

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Maral Kabranian Kaprielian

has been serving her Armenian community in quiet ways for many years, including housing homeless families during the Lebanese Civil War.

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Astrid Fidelia

works to bring sustainable solutions to a weak health care system by providing health, wellness, and illness prevention information to the vulnerable citizens of disadvantaged communities.

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Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages

As the first woman of Haitian descent to serve in the New York State Legislature, she determined to never let the word “no” stop her from her mission to help others.

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Joyce Raynor

Her life was completely altered when her son was killed by a gang member. She left her job and set up a non-profit organization to help crime survivors and to reach at-risk youth and to help those dealing with abuse at home.

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Anna Beth Gorman

God directed her life to be become a public servant to help women and girls, and serves as Executive Director of the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas.

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Linda Rowe Thomas

is a burn survivor from a house fire when she was a child. Through the love and support her mother showed her, she was inspired to found Designing Fashions Foundation.

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4 Women Awarded at WFWP 25th Anniversary

For the 25th anniversary of the founding of Women's Federation for World Peace celebrated in Arizona, four women were given the HerStory Award.

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Patricia Ann Lofton

Ms. Lofton builds a strong alliance with the parents in the community to encourage them to raise their children with good character and with love for God and other people.

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10 Women Honored in Arizona

The WFWP Arizona Chapter held a Bridge of Peace ceremony and honored ten outstanding women through the HerStory Award.

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Valencia Mohammed

After losing two of her sons to gun violence, she turned her pain into activism by founding a non-profit organization, Mothers of Unsolved Murders.

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Remise Walker

At the age of 25, she has made major inroads in ending homelessness and assisting youth to dream big.

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Dr. Aziza Baccouche

As a blind woman and an accomplished physicist, Dr. Aziza Baccouche's mission is to bring education to the blind population that has a 70% rate of unemployment.

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