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***WOMEN IN BLUE* TO PREMIERE ON PBS AND THE PBS VIDEO
APP ON FEBRUARY 8, 2021**

*Documentary Follows Female Officers in Minneapolis Police Department and
Their Fight for Gender Equity and Police Reform in a City Demanding
Accountability*



(San Francisco, CA), Jan 12, 2021—With the national conversation around police reform still resonating loudly across the country, *Women in Blue* shines a spotlight on the police women within the Minneapolis Police Department working to reform it from the inside. Filmed from 2017 to 2020, the documentary focuses on MPD's first female police chief, Janeé Harteau, and three of the women in her department as they each try to redefine what it means to protect and serve.

Directed by Deirdre Fishel, *Women in Blue* will make its broadcast premiere on *Independent Lens* on February 8, 2021 at 10 p.m. ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS and will also be available to stream on the PBS Video App.

After a conversation with a female police officer friend in 2014, Fishel was spurred to investigate whether women tend to approach policing differently than men, and how such differences might impact public safety.

Women in Blue follows Minneapolis Police

Chief Janeé Harteau—MPD's first female and openly gay police chief—and her uphill battle to reform her department, which, long before an MPD officer kills George Floyd in May of 2020, grapples with a troubled history of police misconduct and racism. Her efforts involve fighting the union to rid the force of corrupt police officers, re-training the rest, diversifying the ranks, and, crucially: recruiting more women and promoting them into leadership at every level.

The film also follows three of these women from different ranks, each committed to reimagining their profession: Commander Melissa Chiodo, who is tapped by Harteau to serve as the head of Special Crimes, handling domestic violence and sexual offenses; Sergeant Alice White, one of the few Black female officers within the MPD, who leads procedural justice trainings; and rookie

Officer Erin Grabosky, who joins the force at 22 and is quickly confronted with the reality of community distrust in the police.

After a high-profile, officer-involved shooting of an unarmed woman, Chief Harteau is forced into making a heartbreaking decision that threatens the gains of women represented on the force under her leadership.

“When I first discovered the statistics showing that female police officers are better at de-escalating conflict and use excessive force in substantially lower numbers than male officers, I felt compelled to investigate the question: ‘Could women help both change the culture of policing and create reform?’” said Fishel. “In 2020 it was made evident yet again that the questions I tried to raise with this film go well beyond just the city of Minneapolis, and I’m hopeful that this broadcast on *Independent Lens* will help to continue the sorely needed conversation and push for change that we’ve witnessed taking place on a national level in the past year when it comes to policing in this country.”

“The intersection between gender, race and violence in American policing is a topic *Independent Lens* has explored many times, and I was especially interested in looking at it in Minneapolis, where I’d lived for 10 years,” said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* Executive Producer. “Although studies confirm that women officers are less authoritarian, rely less on physical force, possess more effective communication skills, and are better at defusing potentially violent confrontations before they turn deadly, Deirdre’s documentary shows how rarely women are allowed to lead in law enforcement. *Women in Blue* asks us to consider how female officers can help transform police departments to put service, care and communication first.”

Women in Blue received co-production support from ITVS through its Open Call funding initiative, which supports projects through completion for broadcast on public television.

Visit the [Women in Blue](#) page on *Independent Lens* for more information about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Deirdre Fishel

Fishel is an independent filmmaker of both documentaries and dramas. Her films have premiered in competition at Sundance and SXSW and been broadcast in 35 countries worldwide. Her documentary *Still Doing It: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65* was also expanded into a book co-written with producer Diana Holtzberg. Recent projects include a web documentary *Suicide On Campus*, produced in conjunction with *The New York Times Magazine*, and a transmedia project, *The Boy Game*. Deirdre was a directing fellow at the American Film Institute and has an MFA from Hunter College. She is an Associate Professor of Media & Communication Arts at The City College of New York.

Beth Levison

Levison is an Emmy and Peabody-winning independent producer in New York City. Most recently she produced, *Women in Blue*, about gender, race and violence in America through the eyes of female police officers with the Minneapolis Police Department, which was shown as a “Work in Progress” at AFI DOCS 2020. *Made in Boise*, premiered at AFI DOCS 2019, was the series opener for *Independent Lens*’s 2019/2020 season, and is currently available internationally. Previously produced projects include the Emmy-nominated *Personal Statement* (PBS 2018) and *32 Pills: My Sister’s Suicide* (HBO 2017). Levison is a co-founder of the Documentary Producers Alliance, faculty with SVA’s MFA program in Social Documentary Film, and a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

CREDITS

Director	Deirdre Fishel
Producers	Deirdre Fishel Beth Levison Aideen Kane
Executive Producers	Sally Jo Fifer Gini Reticker Lois Vossen
Editors	Sunita Prasad Christopher White

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as Executive Producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Acton Family Giving, Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: facebook.com/independentlens and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens)

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