



IN THE DANGER ZONE

Forging successful careers in industries that have been traditionally considered male-dominated, these inspirational women risk everything in pursuit of the jobs they love...

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Alicia Hartman Policewoman

If South African Police Service employees have one of the most dangerous jobs in the country, it's arguably doubly so for female police officers, to whom the public, criminals, and perhaps even colleagues, are less likely to attribute authority. This doesn't bother officer Alicia Hartman though.

"I've always had the inner strength to not fear anything. I walk with God on my side so the danger factor doesn't affect me. Being in a male-dominated field, you have to prove yourself a little more than your male co-worker, but I'm up to prove I'm just as good."

Alicia joined the service in 2013, inspired by her brother and cousins, also police officers. "As a child, I would polish my brother's boots until I could see my reflection in them, and when he got dressed in that blue uniform, I looked up to him. I've also felt that if I can make someone feel

safe, they can do that for the next person."

She recounts an instance in which she was able to influence someone's life for the better: "There was this young man who was on drugs. I would often see him on his way to get his next fix, and I would ask him if this is really what he wanted for himself? It went on for months, me drilling this question into his head. Then one day I realised I hadn't seen him for a while. I asked around but no one had seen him. A year later, he contacted me to tell me he'd gone to rehab and is in college. My heart was filled with joy."

Her advice to any young women drawn to the field is to be aware of the dangers, to do the research, and to make sure that they know in their heart that this is the job for them. For Alicia, the pros far outweigh the cons. "I get a chance to help those who want it, who want to better their future in the community." For her, this is a gift without price.

Marianka George Marine anti-poaching operative

Marianka George spends her days protecting our marine environment from unscrupulous behaviour, whatever it takes. Her position as the only woman on the marine enforcement team has led her into some dangerous situations over the last three years, but she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Last year during an operation we seized an abalone shipment that was stashed in the bushes of a very remote area. While carrying it to hand over to the police we were ambushed by 60 plus poachers who stormed

down on us and attempted to steal it back. In such situations we have to keep our composure and always put our safety first. We were totally outnumbered, but our training pulled us through a very dangerous situation."

Marianka admits that being a female enforcer, poachers don't always take her seriously, assuming she is soft. "I may order them out of their vehicle for a search and they refuse because I'm a woman, but when a male officer tells them the same thing they jump right out. That's where I have to command my presence and ensure they adhere to my instructions."

While the number of noteworthy things

Marianka does daily is huge, it's thanks from the general public for doing a great job is what makes her proudest. That and the fact that she is protecting our marine life for her six-year-old daughter's generation.

"At her parent's career day she started off by saying, 'my mom works for Cape Nature and she is trying to save the sea and it's animals,' and her teacher said, 'so your mom is a superhero?' and she replied, 'no, she's my mom...' At that moment I realised that my daughter being aware that we are trying to save marine living resources for future generations is my proudest achievement."

"If you have a passion and heart you can do anything and everything you put your mind to."



Joy Cloete
Prison warden

For Joy Cloete, who has been working for the Department of Correctional Services for 20 years, the purpose of her role is not what you'd expect. Working among violent offenders, Joy chooses to view her position as one of facilitating rehabilitation rather than punishment.

The dangerous nature of her job has not in any way lessened this outlook, she says, but has rather solidified it into becoming her life's calling. "I went into the Department of Correctional Services because I wanted to be an agent of change," she says. "For me it's about ensuring rehabilitation and restoration among some

of life's most downtrodden." It's an exceptional attitude for someone who, over the past two decades, has interacted with some of our country's most violent offenders, but Joy isn't as concerned about the possible risks, she rather focuses on an end goal.

"The most rewarding aspect for me is that I often get to see

offenders go on and give back to the community." Joy has proven her worth time and again in this male-dominated environment and is the proud winner of a Batho Pele Excellence Award, a recognition given to selfless public servants and a Masibambisane Award, which was given out at the National Corrections Excellence Awards (NCEA) in 2012.

"Receiving these awards is among my proudest moments," she says. Joy certainly deserves the recognition – humbly working among those often considered the most reviled members of society. It's not glamorous or high-profile and there are always risks involved, but she's choosing to be an instrument of change where it really matters.



Jacki Condon
Professional bodyguard

For Jacki Condon, there are significant pros to being a female operative. As a close protection professional, she is able to blend into situations where a male operative might stand out, plus she has found that female clients, especially those with children, will more often choose a woman over a man. "Having a female bodyguard makes these clients feel more comfortable. Then with male clients I'm able to portray the role of personal assistant or colleague, drawing little attention to the protection aspect of the project," she says.

Jacqui became intrigued with personal protection work at the age of 20, when she met her husband who runs a company that specialises in criminal investigations. "I would run surveillances for him, as a woman I was less conspicuous, and I found the work excited and intrigued me."

She trained in close personal protection (more commonly known as bodyguarding) and found it fulfilled her desire for, "firearms, fast cars and unpredictable scenarios."

Jacqui went on to turn the industry upside-down by becoming the first female owner of a close protection company in South Africa and developed an elite training school that caters for women looking to pursue a career as a bodyguard. "Professionally those are the achievements I am proudest of. However, my proudest achievement by far is being a mom." Balancing long stints on assignment with family life has its challenges, but Jacqui says that they are able to embrace the intense dedication required and adapt their home life accordingly. "Even if that includes a braai at the shooting range, teaching our daughter the skills of self-preservation required in today's world."



“I am now able to show my daughter that although we are led to believe it is a man’s world, women can create their own path and dominate in an environment few choose to tread in...”