



**WESTERN STATES HOSTAGE NEGOTIATORS' ASSOCIATION**

**President's Message  
By Troy King**

March 23, 2022

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of us are looking forward to things getting back to normal in terms of training this year. Some of you have not been able to train the way you normally do, and we want you to know that WSHNA is here to help you get back on track. Remember that we offer training support and scholarship opportunities to our members.

Even more important than training, we must remember to take care of ourselves and one another. Reflecting on some of the tragic events over the past year that have impacted some of our members and those within their agencies, we should be reminded of the value in voicing our appreciation and support for one another. It may seem like a crazy experiment, but you may want to consider intentionally reaching out to your tactical team counterparts and telling them that you appreciate them and what they do. Look for opportunities to tell them face to face or send them an email or text message. You can do the same for your fellow negotiators. Words of kindness are never a mistake.

As you train in the coming year, I encourage you to do so with a heart toward providing the best foundation for decision making and safe execution of duties for your tactical team. They put themselves in harm's way as part of our joint response to crisis events, and it is important we honor that by putting their safety first in our duties as negotiators.

There seems to be an emboldened attitude of violence towards police among some. This could easily cause us to deepen an "us versus them" attitude when it comes to the subjects of our call outs. I caution us all to guard against this. Even when responding to those who would act violently against us, we must find a place within ourselves to respond with empathy. Empathy is a critical component of what makes us effective.

Let each of us to put a high priority on our own self-care. Many are working long hours under difficult conditions. Many feel unappreciated. Take time off when you can. Give yourself permission to do nothing and rest. Force yourself also to get out and enjoy the world around you, even when you may not feel like it. I invite you to read an article I wrote a couple of years ago,

reflecting on my 30-year journey in law enforcement, and I hope you find some encouragement there. It is also on the WSHNA website, Titled “*The Naïve Officer.*”

Lastly, remember that you are part a large family of crisis responders from around the world, around the country, and most specifically within the WSHNA region. You belong to a cause that is noble, important, unique within law enforcement. You possess a level of emotional courage which makes you excellent at what you do. And that, among many other qualities, is something you should be proud of.

Troy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Troy O. King". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

360-702-6773

**The Naïve Officer**  
**By Troy King**

So, there you were: Young and naïve (or maybe not so young). You thought you would save the world, or at least you would make a difference. You were so proud on that day. You raised your hand, you swore an oath, and they handed you your badge. Your loved ones cried, when no one was looking, so did you. So full of hope, it was a beautiful sight.

Before you knew it, you were handling your first call, and then your first hundred, and then your first thousand. Among those many calls for service you had some very rewarding experiences, some soul-sucking encounters, and some heartbreaking moments. Little kids waved at you, your friends begged you for work stories, and your family told everyone about your profession. Sure, there were tough times and hard calls: You saw suffering you could not relieve, broken families you could not fix, and the worst side of human behavior. Still, you had moments when you knew you made a difference. Remember those acts of kindness or mercy that to this day no one knows about? Those happened. That was you. Remember how you felt? That was the confirmation you were exactly where you were supposed to be. You never asked to be recognized or thanked. You signed up for this to make a difference and from what you could tell, you were making a difference. Your profession became part of who you were, part of why you existed.

Somewhere between then and now, things began to change. Maybe it was the community, maybe it was you, maybe both. The dark painful images began to replay in your head, and it began to be harder for you to stuff them back into the boxes where you'd packed them. It seemed the news had nothing nice to say about your profession. You went on your fifth call to the same house where the same guy was abusing the same family. One more arrest, and maybe this time the system will get the family help, or at least protection. You knew better. One more trip to the hospital for the lady wanting to die. She walked out of the emergency room doors before you even finished writing your report. Your faith in the system began to be shaken. Your family didn't brag as much about you anymore. Actually, they hoped people wouldn't ask what you did for a profession, and so did you. At social gatherings, you cringed when someone asked for your “professional advice” about a recent encounter they or their child had with police. Yet through all of that, you kept a part of yourself protected. That naïve officer was still in there somewhere.

That public servant who wanted to save the world. You believed in the ever-elusive “silent majority” who were counting on you to keep the faith, to believe that even if the system was broken in part, you could be the best part of that system. And so onward you went. You matured and found ways to cope, ways to process what you saw, what you heard, what you felt. You gave up big parts of yourself, but it was worth it, you were making a difference.

Now here you sit. What has happened to the world? You saw it coming, but you never imagined it would look like this. You feel unappreciated, unwanted, hated, rejected. How could this be? Don't they know you? Surely your friends have seen your selfless service. They will get it. They won't buy into the lies. Yet some have. That little safe area in your life, that place that you always felt you could retreat to when no one else understood even that place has been violated. You feel alone. It would be easy to lose hope. It is certainly your right. You have never been one to quit, but what do you hold on to? You feel like what you have done over the years really didn't make a difference. Things are worse now than they ever were. It was all pointless. It would be great if the silent majority would make themselves heard, if they would stop being afraid of being called racist or not “woke” or out of touch. Maybe they will, maybe they never will. But let me remind you: You only heard of the silent majority AFTER you chose this profession, or should I say, after it chose you. Remember, you didn't sign up to please them or seek their approval. You signed up because something inside of you drew you to a life of service. You did not change the world, which is true. But you changed someone's world. Maybe in big ways, maybe in little, but for one life, probably many more, you made a difference. Look back: Remember those acts of kindness, of mercy? In your heart you know that some of those planted seeds of positive change. If you are lucky, you can recall people you helped.

Sure, that rapist you caught got paroled way too soon, but while he was in prison, the community was a bit safer. That family with the flat tire that you changed, their daughter now wants to be a public servant, partly from that interaction. You will never know that, but it is nonetheless happening outside of what you are seeing. That box of food you delivered; it didn't really matter. But the kindness in your eyes when you dropped it off, that dissolved one layer of distrust of police for a little boy with no father.

My friend behind the badge, do not lose heart. Search your memory and cling to the moments when you got a glimpse of the lives you have touched and know these are but a fraction of the reasons you should be proud to be a police officer.

And, by the way, the silent majority is real. I have spoken with them; I am from among them, and you matter to us. We realize you matter more than we could ever know. We are grateful for you.

Thank you for swearing that oath, for being the best part of an imperfect system, for your kindness and mercy, and for your willingness to use force when necessary. Be proud and hold your head high. You will never know our many names, and we will never know yours, but we see your courage and sacrifice, and it is a beautiful thing.

Whether you have ten more years of service left, or ten days, or have been retired for years, you are a part of the fabric of this community. Please be safe. Protect yourself, but also protect your

mind and heart. Unpack those boxes and listen to that naïve officer inside of yourself. He was right after all.