

# New Agents, the Holocaust, and Core Values

Douglas B. Merel  
Supervisory Special Agent  
Leadership Development Unit  
Training Division

Joseph M. McDonagh  
Management and Program Analyst  
Community Relations Unit  
Office of Public Affairs

**I**n 1999, the chief of the Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department, Charles H. Ramsey, took a tour of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Chief Ramsey immediately saw the importance of incorporating an understanding of the Holocaust into new police officers' training, and asked ADL and the USHMM to design a program for his recruits. At first, some of the recruits resented going to the Museum; they did not understand how the tour would relate to their career. But after taking the tour and discussing what they had seen, the recruits were transformed and instead of objecting, they told Museum officials that they wished they could spend more time considering what took place in citizens expected to uphold the law. One trainee described the day as "a truly numbing experience."

## Law Enforcement and Society Program

Director Louis J. Freeh heard about this new program, Law Enforcement and Society (LEAS): Lessons of the Holocaust, and mandated that new FBI agents also have this experience incorporated into their training. Initially the new agents balked, especially because this training takes place on a Saturday. But they too came to realize the importance of the lessons that were being imparted. The Bureau, Holocaust Museum, and the Anti-Defamation League have cooperated for almost eight years in this new agent training, and more than 7000 agents have gone through the program.



The Tower of Faces displays photos taken between 1890 and 1941 in Eishishok, a small town in what is now Lithuania. In 1941, an SS mobile killing squad entered the village and within two days massacred almost all of the Jewish population.

*This image is courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

**"FBI agents in training go to the Museum knowing that police power is awesome, even in a democracy where these powers are constrained and limited and overseen. They understand that the powers of police officers, even in a democratic state, are awesome because they impact directly on human rights, civil rights, and our precious liberties as Americans. We wanted to sensitize our agents to this power, and we also wanted to show them how easily that power can be corrupted, how easily tyrants can usurp the authority of the police and turn those who should protect the people against the people."**

***Director Freeh addressing the  
2001 National Leadership Conference***



Before Jews were gassed at killing centers, the SS seized all of their possessions. These shoes were confiscated from prisoners in Majdanek.

*This image is courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry between 1933 and 1945. Six million Jews were the primary victims of this atrocity; however, gypsies, Poles, homosexuals, the disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political dissidents also suffered unmentionable oppression and death under Nazi tyranny. Ultimately, 12 million people were murdered.

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Founded in 1913, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) is one of the nation's oldest civil rights and human relations organizations committed to combating hatred and bigotry in all forms. ADL is recognized as an important resource for federal, state, and local law enforcement on issues such as extremism, hate groups, and hate crimes.

Law Enforcement and Society is a program for police and judicial officials that teaches the history of the Holocaust, examines the role of the police in Nazi Europe, and explores the challenges of balancing the rights of people with the protection of society as a whole. The program is comprised of three components.

#### ■ Museum Tour

A guide leads the new agents through the museum and describes the role of the German police during the Nazi ascent to power. The special agents learned that civil rights were gradually removed from pockets of German society and that initially the police were neutral onlookers but became overt executioners of the ugly "final solution" when 12 million people were killed. Guides also spotlight the faces and stories of police officers who had the courage and conviction to defy orders and save lives.

#### ■ Abuse of Power Discussions

After the tour, the new special agents and museum representatives discuss law enforcement's abuse of power under the Nazi regime and the dangers and horrors that can occur when officers fail to protect and serve all members of society with compassion and fairness.


#### ■ Ethical Issues and Core Value Scenarios

Anti-Defamation League representatives and the new agents participate in scenarios designed to deepen commitments to continually question difficult ethical and moral issues in law enforcement. The questions that the special agents face and the questions and discussions that evolve can be wrenching. At a recent class, David Friedman from the Anti-Defamation League facilitated the agents' discussion of the central role of core values for American law enforcement. He asked the agents, "What makes you different from police under the Nazis? What prevents you from abusing your power as they did?" The exercise demonstrates that while it is your *personal* values that led you to choose law enforcement, it is your shared *professional* values—derived from the Constitution—that define your role as protectors of the American people.

## Results

A visit to the Museum fosters a deepened commitment to serve and protect all people, despite racial, ethnic, or national differences. Law enforcement's role in society must always prevent and detect crime, while ensuring never-ending vigilance to the rule of law and the protection of everyone's human dignity and civil rights.

A new agent wrote that this training enabled him to understand that, "Although law enforcement officers often see the 4th and 5th Constitutional Amendments as impediments to their goals, the history of the Holocaust should remind us all of their critical nature in a civilized society."

Another new agent took encouragement from the stories of those who struggled against the tide of repression. "I was impressed by the stories of people who assisted the victims to safe havens. They took great risks for the benefit of other human beings. This is significant to law enforcement officials because many enter and stay in the profession to help people and make society a better place." 

*Information was provided by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Anti-Defamation League.*



Railroad cars, such as this one, transported Jews from camps and ghettos to six killing centers in occupied Poland. As many as 100 people were packed into a single car without sanitation, food, or water; many did not survive the trip.

*This image is courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.*



Douglas Merel (left) and Joseph McDonagh are pictured in front of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and located adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, DC, the Museum is America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history and serves as this country's memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.

*David M. Vereen, Photographer*

**"The training and education you provide for the FBI and for law enforcement have never been more relevant. This especially includes the classes at the Holocaust Museum. At a time when law enforcement must be aggressive in stopping terror, these classes provide powerful lessons on why we must always protect civil rights and uphold the rule of law."**

***Director Mueller speaking at the Anti-Defamation League's National Commission Meeting in 2005***