

Police Training Videos on Diverse Religions

Following September 11, 2001, many Asian communities in the city of **Chicago, Illinois** (2,896,000), experienced an increase in hate crimes. As the police department addressed these incidents, it found that many police officers knew very little about the cultural and religious traditions of these communities. To help the police work with different Asian communities in the city, the department and the communities worked together to produce a series of training videos on different religious faiths.

Leadership/staffing

The videos were produced by a local vendor in close collaboration with members of the relevant communities. The videos featured community members explaining and demonstrating some of their traditions.

Timeline

The videos are the result of a series of meetings between the police and several Asian communities in the aftermath of 9/11. The videos were produced in 2003 and 2004.

Budget/funding

Video production was financed with U.S. Department of Justice grants.

Program description

The city has now produced videos on several religions:

- Sikhism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Buddhism
- Hinduism.

Each video is approximately 7–10 minutes long and contains scenes shot inside homes and houses of worship. The videos include interviews with religious and

community leaders who explain different aspects of their faiths. A police narrator provides police officers with tips on respecting the traditions of different communities. For example, the narrator explains that a male Sikh should not be asked to remove his turban in public and that officers should remove their shoes before entering a mosque. All of the city's 14,000 police officers and new recruits are required to watch all five videos, which are available for viewing at any time on the city's computer network. Officers can also watch the videos any number of times if they want to. If a police officer is assigned to a new district with a large population of Hindus, for example, that officer may choose to watch the video on Hinduism before meeting with community members for the first time.

Results

The videos have strengthened ties between the police departments and the communities addressed in each of the videos. Many other communities have requested copies of the videos to use with their own departments. Other departments in the city of Chicago have also viewed the videos. The programs have increased police officers' awareness that each culture and religion requires a special approach. The city is now working on videos to address several Latin American cultures.

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