

Teaching the Holocaust to Future Generations

The Role of Holocaust Museums in Education

A Workshop Conducted for Members of the South African Police Service

Marlene Silbert

South Africa

STRUCTURE

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| • Introduction | 5 mins |
| • Programme Objectives | 5 mins |
| • Stereotyping (Plenary discussion) | 10 mins |
| • Prejudice (Group discussion) | 15 mins |
| • Outcomes and Conclusion | 10 mins |

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

(5 minutes)

Slide 1:

- To teach lessons from the Holocaust that are of particular significance for members of the South African Police Service.
- To confront the beliefs, attitudes and functioning of the police in Nazi Germany, the role of the police in the subjugation and persecution of marginalized communities, and their role in the systematic murder of six million Jews.
- To identify the effects of such policing on marginalized, as well as mainstream communities.
- To reflect on the similarities and differences between Nazism and apartheid in order to make relevant connections and learn from mistakes made in the past.

- To emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance between law and order, safeguarding individual freedom, and creating an environment in which the population at large will feel safe.
- To assist learners to develop an understanding of the consequences of prejudice, racism, antisemitism, stereotyping, intolerance and exclusion.

Slide 2:

- To reflect on the role and responsibility of individuals in combating prejudice, racism and human rights violations – including the right to dignity and respect.
- To provide a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic and indifferent when people are treated unjustly.
- To encourage learners to respond effectively and appropriately towards individuals who are culturally different from themselves.
- To reflect on the use and abuse of power.
- To remind learners that every choice has a consequence and before making choices they should always consider the consequences.
- To reflect on our own beliefs and attitudes and how they affect our interactions with our colleagues and our relationship with the community we serve.
- To think about the consequences of the choices we make.
- To reflect on what happens when institutions, created to protect and help vulnerable people, turn on them instead.
- To consider the kind of police service we choose to create.

INTRODUCTION TO GROUP DISCUSSION

- Hitler did not begin with killing – he ended with killing. It began with the negative beliefs and attitudes people held about those whom they perceived to be different. It began with prejudice and stereotyping, with ‘isms’ and ‘phobias’ (racism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism etc.) These were the factors that ultimately led to the Holocaust – and they were preventable.
- Such negative beliefs and attitudes are still embedded in contemporary society. We need to be reminded that beliefs and attitudes always have consequences because they inevitably translate into actions - but they are preventable.
- During the Nazi era people made choices that divided them into three categories: they chose to be perpetrators, they chose to be bystanders or they chose to be ‘resisters’.

(Participants will be divided into small groups to discuss the issues of stereotyping and prejudice. Each group to appoint a recorder and a reporter)

STEREOTYPING

(10 minutes)

Slide 3: (General Discussion)

- How were the marginalized groups stereotyped during the Nazi era?
- How are members of particular groups stereotyped in our society?
- How are the members of the South African Police Service stereotyped in our society?
- What are the consequences of stereotyping?
- What can be done to eradicate stereotypes?

PREJUDICE

(15 minutes)

Identify the prejudices that exist in our society

(eg. ‘isms’ and ‘phobias’ to be listed on newsprint)

Slide 4 : (Group discussion)

Identify specific examples of prejudice or racist incidents that you have experienced or witnessed and the responses to the incidents of the victim(s) or witness(es)

Focus on incidents within your workplace or community.

Hand-out - (Addendum A)

How can we make a difference in our workplace and in our society? Consider the incidents that have been identified in the handout.

What could have been done/said to voice disapproval and support the victim?

(spokespeople to report back to plenary)

CONCLUDING WORKSHOP

(10 min)

(Group Discussion)

As a member of the police service, record your mission. In what way, if any, did this programme encourage you to strive towards the accomplishment of your mission?

Share your responses with the participants.

Slide 5 : Evaluation

- To strive towards the creation of an effective and respected police service.
- To endeavour to treat everyone with respect, no matter whom they are, what religion they follow, what language they speak, or where they live.
- To strive towards the creation of a society in which prejudice, racism and antisemitism will not be tolerated, and where diversity will be valued.

CONCLUSION

From a police perspective, you appreciate hard, physical evidence: things one can identify, touch, and smell. And being at the Holocaust Centre is like looking at physical evidence of a crime that is cataclysmic in scale. You looked at what happened when the police in Nazi Germany were motivated, not by ethical duty, but by the need for power and acceptance, by false notions and assumptions. As members of the South African Police Service, you have to ask yourself, 'When I get into difficult or unpleasant situations, will I do what's right?' Always remember, you may be the last bastion of what's right when things go wrong.

You cannot change the world until you have changed yourself
Nelson Mandela

Addendum A – To be distributed to participants

HAND-OUT FOR GROUP DISCUSSION ON PREJUDICE AND RACISM

Examples of prejudice and racism frequently raised by members of the South African Police Service during the workshop session.

RACISM

- Colleagues frequently use racial slurs and belittle, mock and joke about people who are of a different skin colour or culture.
- Meetings are generally held in the language of the dominant group but often there are members who do not understand the language being used.
- Police members of a lower rank are frequently reprimanded in public by senior officers.
- Many rape victims are viewed as people of low morals and they are treated unsympathetically and disrespectfully.
- 'I went to book a firearm but was told there was a shortage. Immediately thereafter a white colleague went to get a firearm and was given one'.

CLASSISM

- Poor people are often badly treated in contrast to well-dressed, educated people and their complaints are not taken seriously.

RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE

- Religious minorities are not considered when social functions are organized. eg. Food is not Halaal or Kosher, and sometimes functions are held on religious holidays.
- 'Before we begin our shift we start with a Christian prayer. I think there are a few Muslims on our shift'.

SEXISM

- Female members are assumed to be incapable of handling violent crimes and are encouraged to work in the stations.

HOMOPHOBIA

- Homosexuals are mocked, mimicked, humiliated and discriminated against.

XENOPHOBIA

- Nigerians are labeled as criminals and drug dealers and they are invariably the first to be arrested because they are assumed to be guilty.

