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Jews' 'Funny Hats,' Anti-Catholic, Gay Remarks By Beverly Hills Top Cop: \$1 Million Jury Award

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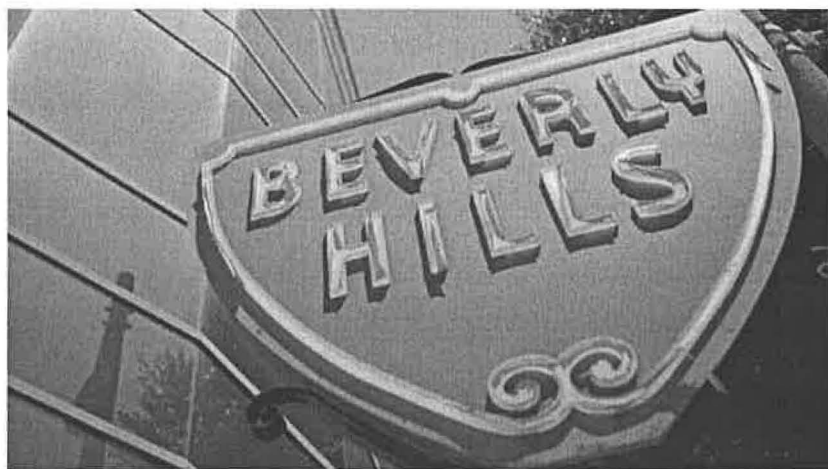


Photo by John Schreiber.

Four Beverly Hills Police Department employees who sued the city, contending they were subjected to harassing and retaliatory treatment by Chief Sandra Spagnoli, were collectively awarded more than \$1 million in damages Tuesday by a downtown Los Angeles jury.

Attorneys for the employees — three lieutenants and a civilian employee — said during the trial that Spagnoli made disparaging comments about Catholics, Jews and Latinos.

The Los Angeles Superior Court jury awarded Lt. Renato Moreno \$350,000 in damages, while Lts. Shan Davis and Michael Foxen and civilian employee Dona Norris, the BHPD's public safety communications and evidence manager, were each awarded \$250,000.

All of the damages were to compensate the plaintiffs' for their past pain and

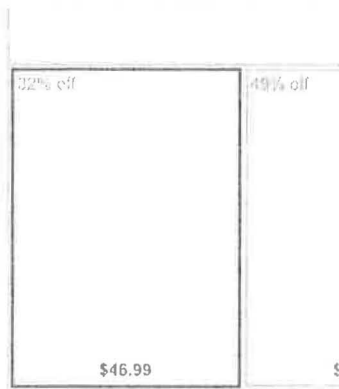
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suffering. The panel, which deliberated for about 2 1/2 days, awarded no damages for past and future lost wages.

The jury found that Davis, Foxen and Moreno were all subjected to retaliation and harassment, and Norris to harassment only. The plaintiffs' discrimination claims were rejected by the jury.

Plaintiffs' attorney Bradley Gage said during the trial that Spagnoli made inappropriate comments about age, ethnicity and religion that included calling Catholicism a "cult" and describing the common headwear of Jewish men as "funny hats."

Gage said outside the courtroom after the verdicts that although he would have liked to have seen larger amounts awarded to his clients, he hopes the verdicts send a message to the city that the alleged comments by Spagnoli were not acceptable.

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"Enough is enough," Gage said. "I hope that in the 90210 they make some real changes."

Defense attorney Geoffrey Sheldon declined to comment on the verdict. But lawyer Brian Walter, on behalf of the city, said during his final argument that Spagnoli apologized and was reprimanded by the city for tasteless statements she did make, but that she was also blamed for having made remarks she actually never uttered.

Walter said Spagnoli — the department's first female chief — upset some members of the department who were more accustomed to the previous regime of longtime Chief Dave Snowden, who held the job for 12 years.

In a separate lawsuit against the city, former Capt. Mark Rosen settled for \$2.3 million before trial. Rosen, who is Jewish, said he also was subjected to inappropriate comments by Spagnoli.



FORECAST FOR LOS ANGELES

67°
sunny

feels like: 67°
wind: 2mph ssw
humidity: 52%
pressure: 30.07 in
uv index: 4

wed	thu	fri
71/52°F	78/54°F	73/53°F

Weather forecast Los Angeles, California

Gage said the disparity between the Rosen settlement and the amounts won by the four plaintiffs can be explained in part by the fact Rosen is no longer working. The four plaintiffs in the current case all have six-figure incomes, he said.

Gage said there may be as many as 15 to 20 others BHPD plaintiffs with similar cases against the city and Spagnoli.

A male juror told attorneys after the verdict that he believed Spagnoli made some of the comments attributed to her by the plaintiffs, but not all of them. For example, he said, there was no corroboration of Davis' claim that Spagnoli made disparaging remarks about Norris because she is gay.

The juror also said he did not believe the claims by Moreno, Davis and Foxen that Spagnoli wrongfully denied them promotions to a captain position. The juror said he believed the other candidates who were given the promotions were more deserving.

Moreno maintained he endured "pervasive" anti-Latino and anti-Catholic discrimination under Spagnoli and that matters came to a head when he provided deposition testimony on behalf of Rosen.

Foxen said he suffered a backlash when he notified management that Officer Lisa Weller, who is gay, was paid less than a heterosexual male officer with the same experience.

Davis was Norris' supervisor and alleges Spagnoli directed him to lower Norris' performance evaluation because she is gay. The chief never gave an explanation to justify lowering Norris' evaluation, according to Davis.

Spagnoli, who testified that she was raised as a Jehovah's Witness and is now a practicing Catholic, said she was reprimanded by city management for her remarks and ordered to undergo sensitivity training. She denied she was racist, homophobic or prejudiced against anyone because of their religion.

Spagnoli, 51, previously was the police chief for Benicia and San Leandro in Northern California, where she grew up.

Jews' 'FUNNY HATS,' ANTI-CATHOLIC, GAY REMARKS BY BEVERLY HILLS TOP COP: \$1 MILLION JURY AWARD was last modified: July 9th, 2019 by Contributing Editor

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