

1492 Diogo Mendes, Francisco Mendes · House of Nasi

# HALAPID



THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES

1510 Dona Gracia Nasi "La Seneca" · Beatrice de Luna · Philanthropist, patron

From Spain to Portugal to Antwerp to Venice to Istanbul

1943 Aristedes de Sousa Mendes, Portuguese Foreign Minister

VOL. XXIX/XXX

AUTUMN/WINTER 2014/5775

ISSUES 9 & 10





AUTUMN/WINTER 2014/5775

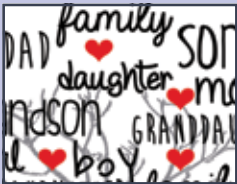


Meet Our New Board Members  
Page 6

Schelly Talalay Dardashti  
receives writing award.  
Page 7



Genie Milgrom participates in  
**Passover in Portugal.**  
Page 8



**Connecting Dots**  
Personal Narrative  
by Alex González  
Page 12



Opening of **The Sephardic  
Anusim Cultural Heritage and  
Resource Center in El Paso,  
Texas.**  
Page 14



Shabbat luncheon **recipes** served  
at the 11th Annual Anusim  
Conference in El Paso.  
Page 16



It's never too late. Rabbi Barbara  
Aiello presides over a long-  
awaited anusim Bar Mitzvah in  
**Vincenzo's Victory.**  
Page 17



**Poetry Feature**  
**Authentic Conversos Conference**  
by Isabelle Medina Sandoval  
**Valle Grande, Nuevo Reyno  
de León,** by M. Miriam Herrera  
Pages 19, 23

**About the cover:** "Ode to Sousa Mendes" (doorway of the  
Sousa-Mendes home, in disrepair, in Cabanas de Viriato,  
Portugal). Photo-montage, ©2001 by Marilyn Lande.



### Four Book Reviews

- *Sephardic Legacy: Stories and Songs from Jewish Spain.*
- *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers*
- *Anousim Awake*
- *A Nation by the River*

Page 20



**An Interview with  
Artist Marilyn Lande**  
Sephardic collages and  
miniature rooms.  
Page 24



**Honoring Memories**  
Personal Narrative  
by Antonio Chevez  
Page 28



**In Memoriam**  
Dr. Kate Regan remembered.  
Page 31



**SCJS Outreach**  
"...To be sure, wherever there are  
Latinos, one finds a chance of crypto-  
Judaic heritage."  
Page 32



**Hilos Culturales 2014**  
by Lorenzo Trujillo  
Page 34



**SCJS 2014 Conference Summary**  
Page 36

**Conference Calendar**  
Page 39



# New president leads from a place of discovery

*Nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.*

**HALAPID** is the biannual publication of The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs.  
[www.cryptojews.com](http://www.cryptojews.com)

#### Editor

Corinne Joy Brown • [corinnejb@aol.com](mailto:corinnejb@aol.com)

#### Copy Editor

Schelly Talalay Dardashti

#### Poetry Editor

M. Miriam Herrera

#### Contributing Writers

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, Corinne J. Brown,  
Antonio Chevez, Chana Cohen,  
Daniel Díaz–Huerta, Alex González,  
M. Miriam Herrera, Linda Katchen,  
Genie Milgrom, Isabelle Medina Sandoval,  
Lorenzo Trujillo, Matthew Warshawsky

#### Photo Credits

Rabbi Barbara Aiello, Corinne J. Brown,  
Antonio Chevez, Alex González, Deb Isard,  
R. Kennedy, Michael Milgrom, Don Reiser,  
Isabelle Medina Sandoval, Donald Scharf,  
Janice Yu

#### Graphic Designer

Jacqueline Hirsch • [jrh@hirmon.com](mailto:jrh@hirmon.com)  
HirMon & Associates, Inc.

#### Printer

Update Printing • [updateprinting.com](http://updateprinting.com)  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

*Hi, everyone —*

**I**t feels wonderful to be writing from the helm of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. Just a few months ago we were in the midst of a whirlwind at the 24th annual conference in Dallas and before I could even turn around, I had emerged from the event as the new President!

I am very proud to be a part of the illustrious Board of Directors of this organization.

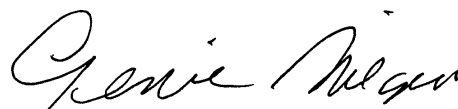
The conference in Dallas surprised all of us with the depth and breadth of the work that was presented, as well as the musical and artistic talent that we enjoyed. The city of Dallas warmly embraced us. Not only did our regulars attend, but we attracted many locals with interest in crypto-Jewish lineage.

To acquaint you with my own background, I was born into a Roman Catholic family in Havana, Cuba and embraced Judaism on my own at a young age. Years afterward, I suspected that I might have descended from a crypto-Jewish lineage and started a journey that spanned several continents. I have since been able to prove an unbroken maternal line going back 22 generations to pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal. I not only understand the study of the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism, I also live and breathe it in my own life. I understand the difficulties and I understand the triumphs that we face as a group.

Crypto-Judaism is not new, as proven by the fact that our Society is 24 years old. Yet in the last 10 years or so, there seems to be a global awakening to the fact that the descendants of the crypto-Jews are still here to tell the tales of their ancestors. It is this very fact that excites me the most as I take over the leadership of this organization.

We will continue to study and listen to the wise words of scholars and descendants as we move toward the future.

I look forward to hosting our 25th anniversary conference in my own home town of Miami next year in July! You can always reach me at [scjspres@aol.com](mailto:scjspres@aol.com) and visit at my website [www.geniemilgrom.com](http://www.geniemilgrom.com)! Keep in touch and I am looking forward to connecting with all of you!



**Genie Milgrom**

President, Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies



**Genie Milgrom, SCJS President**

FROM YOUR SCJS PRESIDENT



# "It's up to us"

## FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends and Members of SCJS,

**W**ith each passing month, I see SCJS growing and changing. I meet fascinating new members, hear from older ones, and gather data for upcoming issues. I am thrilled to confirm we have expanded our editorial forces and will be an even better publication in the future.

As we continue with our full-color format, we urge you to send in photos and articles for upcoming issues. This is your publication and we want to hear your stories, your thoughts and ideas. Inside this issue you'll find a delightful conference review, news of our members, an introduction to a remarkable artist and new member from Denver, fascinating personal narratives, book reviews and more. Look for a reminder about our 2015 conference too—save the date and make your travel plans early.

Although I missed the conference in Dallas due to family health issues, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the

Sephardic Anusim Cultural Resource Center in El Paso, Texas in August—what an experience! (More about that in the following pages; a historic event to be sure.)

We are slowly building our regular features and adding new departments. We welcome two poets this time, hopefully a regular feature. We urge you to support our select advertisers since they help bring this journal to life. Without them, our budget wouldn't stretch this far.

We look forward to creating the Spring 2015 issue celebrating 25 years of our Society, one that promises to be a historic edition. We welcome your memories, anecdotes and contributions. **The deadline for submissions to this collector's issue is March 15, 2015.** Meanwhile, enjoy this edition and share it with your friends. Even better, urge them to join so they can receive their own copies.

As this edition goes to press, I confess I am starting to see traces of the crypto-Jewish

past in the American Southwest where ever I look; in language, food and folk art such as the basket shown below. Can it be? The phenomenon deserves closer examination.

I also believe that this journal grows to serve an ever more important purpose—keeping us informed, entertained and together. It's a light in the darkness and we're all carrying the torch.

Keep spreading the news about SCJS. After all, our work refreshes a history remembered, researched and thankfully, re-told. Remember—*it's up to us*.



Corinne J. Brown, Editor

Corinne J. Brown  
Editor, *HaLapid*

Below, Southwest woven basket suggests many cultures





**Schelly Talalay  
Dardashti  
Copy Editor**

## Schelly Talalay Dardashti, Copy Editor

**S**chelly brings years of experience and a copy of the *AP Stylebook* (in her head) to every issue of *HaLapid*.

Her eagle eyes never miss a mark of punctuation or a misspelled word. So, if there's an error, blame the editor!

For more about Schelly, refer to page 9.



**M. Miriam Herrera  
Poetry Editor**

## M. Miriam Herrera, Poetry Editor

**M**. Miriam Herrera graduated from the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago with an M.A. in Creative Writing where she was awarded an Abraham Lincoln Graduate Fellowship. Since graduating

from the Program, she has taught at the University of Illinois in Chicago; the University of New Mexico, Los Alamos; South Bay College in Hawthorne, California; and Russell Sage College in Troy, New York.

See page 23 for one of Miriam's works and more about this talented poet.



**Jacqueline Hirsch  
Graphic Designer**

## Jacqueline Hirsch, Graphic Designer

**Y**ou've seen her work at our conferences and in the Spring issue of *HaLapid*; now meet the talented graphic designer who is helping us grow. Jacqueline Hirsch of Lakewood, Colorado shares a web and graphic design

business with her husband, Chuck Montgomery. Together they help individuals and businesses streamline their message to the world and look great doing it. She's been my resource for everything from book covers to business cards, bookmarks, rack cards, ads, flyers and more. Naturally, we turned to her when we decided to make *HaLapid* into a magazine. After joint discussions, she understood exactly the image we were after: colorful, sophisticated and easy to read. With over 35 years in the graphics and printing industries, Jacqueline is imaginative — and easy to work with. We welcome her into our midst.

And she'd be delighted to help you too. Contact her at [jrh@hirmon.com](mailto:jrh@hirmon.com).

—CJB

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## WE'RE LISTENING...

**T**hank you for the Spring/Summer 2014/5775 edition of *HaLapid*. It had a couple of very interesting articles in it that I really enjoyed.

"The Return of One Soul" was very fascinating. Yliana Miller Garza's description of the black letters on white space resonated with me for some reason. I have always loved Hebrew letters and have known the *alefbet* for years, but in 2013, for some odd reason, I began learning how to read and write it in both block form and in script form. It wasn't something that I was seeking to know, it just seemed to show up in my life. I have a whole lifetime background in Spanish which seems much more logical to me to be able to read, write, and understand, but it has never been something which has grown in my life like the Hebrew now is. Also, the calligraphy sphere on page 10 struck me because, in my own Bible, I have two circular disks with the Hebrew letters in a circle which I printed on cardstock and keep for some reason.

I was especially grateful for the article on page 28, "Mourning the Loss of Spanish Jews." I think it is very important and eye-opening information. It was especially significant for me personally because I was thinking of going back to something in my life, but this article reminds me that when you see ominous signs, beware, don't go back—so thank you to Annette Chana Pascal-Cohen for writing it in all honesty. It reminds me of Jesus's words, "Remember Lot's wife."

I have no idea if I have any Jewish background or not; I am just very fascinated about the whole concept because so many strange things have been happening in my life which are out of the ordinary and because of some of the dreams that I have had, and also because when I try to explain these things to others, they don't understand or I tend to scare them a bit. (Maybe I'm not explaining things right.) Thank you for great information...

**SCARLET OCHOA**

TIJERAS, NEW MEXICO

JUNE 19, 2014

### Editorial Policy of *HaLapid*

Contributions from writers all over the world are edited for grammar, spelling and typographical errors. Content embedded in family memories may or may not be historically accurate; we reserve the right to edit material and correct obvious misstatements or historical errors. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of SCJS or *HaLapid*. Articles from *HaLapid* may not be reprinted without permission.





# Welcome to our 2014–2015 Board!

## OFFICERS

### **President: GENIE MILGROM**

President of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Miami as well as President of Tarbut Sefarad Fermoselle. Genie is a researcher of crypto-Jewry in Spain and Portugal in the areas surrounding the Douro River and is author of *My 15 Grandmothers* as well as *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers*. Her own extensive research which led her to find an unbroken maternal lineage of 22 generations of grandmothers is an unparalleled work of genealogy. [geniemilgrom.com](http://geniemilgrom.com)

### **First Vice President: Open**

### **Vice President of Communications and Editor of HaLapid: CORINNE JOY BROWN**

Corinne is the author of four books and a staff writer on three magazines focusing on the American West. A member of Western Writers of America, past-president of the Denver Woman's Press Club, and a charter member of Women Writing the West, she was Board Chair of the Mizel Museum of Judaica in Denver from 1990–2000. She created Writing the West, an accredited literary conference, now a part of Western State College's Humanities Program. She is editor of *HaLapid*. A partner with her husband in a home furnishings business since 1976, Corinne lives in Englewood, Colorado. [corinnejoybrown.com](http://corinnejoybrown.com)

### **Vice President of Programs: MATTHEW WARSHAWSKY, PH.D.**

Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of Portland. Academic degrees: Ph.D., Spanish Literature and Culture, Ohio State University; M.A., Spanish Literature and Culture, Ohio State University; B.A., Latin,

Swarthmore College. He has lectured at conferences of SCJS and contributed articles to *HaLapid* and many other publications. His teaching and research interests include Jewish history, literature, and culture of the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America; Sephardic studies; and Spanish literature and the culture of the Renaissance and Baroque eras.

### **Vice President of Membership: SCHELLY TALALAY DARDASHTI**

A genealogist, journalist, international speaker and instructor, Schelly has traced her Sephardic, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi family across Spain, Iran, Belarus, Lithuania and elsewhere for more than 25 years. She is the U.S. Genealogy Advisor for MyHeritage.com. A pioneer award-winning genealogy blogger since 2006, she also moderates "Tracing the Tribe – Jewish Genealogy" on Facebook, with some 5,700 members, and administrates/co-administrates several DNA projects at FamilyTreeDNA.com, including the Iberian–Ashkenaz DNA Project. The former genealogy columnist for the *Jerusalem Post* (1999–2006), she has been published in many news outlets, such as *JTA*, *The Forward*, *Family Tree Magazine* and more. She has served as president of several Jewish genealogical societies in the U.S. and Israel. [facebook.com/groups/tracingthetribel](https://facebook.com/groups/tracingthetribel)

### **Treasurer: ARTHUR BENVENISTE**

A member of SCJS since 1993, traveling with society members to Belmonte when the SCJS conference was held there in 1994, Art has served the society as president and *HaLapid* editor. A retired history teacher, he is active as a speaker on Sephardic and crypto-Jews. [home.earthlink.net/~benven](http://home.earthlink.net/~benven)

### **Secretary: FRANCES SALAS**

Frances holds a Bachelor's of Science in Business Management with a concentration in Management Information Systems and International Business. She has a Master's Degree in Education with a concentration in Youth

at Risk. She teaches SmartLab at Carlos F. Vigil Middle School in Espanola, New Mexico. SmartLab is a computerized learning center with 25 subjects, such as robotics, physics, digital animation, and other related fields. Frances also owns and manages a farm in Presidio, Texas, where she manufactures anti-aging cream and soap. Frances is a descendent of the original crypto-Jews who came from Spain and Portugal. Her ancestors are the Torres, Romero, Salas, and Ortiz families.

### **Immediate Past President: ROGER L. MARTINEZ-DAVILA, PH.D.**

Assistant Professor, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. [rogerlouismartinez.com](http://rogerlouismartinez.com)



## BOARD MEMBERS

### **Grants and Arts Administrator: DOLORES (DOLLY) SLOAN**

Dolores is author of the nonfiction history *The Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal*, and editor of the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews*. A Society member since 1998, she is Research Fellow for Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, developing curriculum for the program with which SCJS is affiliated. She is also Grants Administrator for the Society.



Dolores is a former arts and health administrator for the state of New Mexico and a speaker in the U.S. and Europe on crypto-Judaism.  
[doloressloan.com](http://doloressloan.com)

**Member-at-Large and Editor of La Granada: DEBBIE WOHL ISARD**

Originally from Philadelphia, Debbie earned her B.A. in Psychology from New College of Hofstra University, followed by an M.S.W. from Hunter College in New York. A social worker, program director, event planner, litigation paralegal, and business owner, she has also served as a management consultant for funeral homes and an assistant teacher in elementary education. She is the editor of *La Granada*, our on-line news connection. A student of Jewish pioneers of the Southwest, and the history of Christopher Columbus, she has been connected to SCJS since 2008. Brought up with Ashkenazic traditions, Debbie now seeks out Sephardic connections. A mother of two adult children, she loves yoga, gardening and playing the piano. She resides in Phoenix, AZ.

**Member-at-Large: GLORIA TRUJILLO**

A member of SCJS since 1991, Gloria has served the Society as President, Immediate Past President and Conference Chair and has served on numerous Society committees. She is a founding member of the Genealogical Society of Hispanic America and is active in several other genealogical organizations.

**Member-at-Large and Regional Director: CHANA COHEN** (see page 32)

**Membership Committee and Regional Outreach: ISABELLE SANDOVAL MEDINA**

(see page 19) **and RACHEL BORTNICK**  
Rachel is a Sephardic Jew born and raised in Izmir, Turkey. She has a B.A. in Chemistry from Lindenwood University in Missouri. Now retired after teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages for 35 years, she resides in Dallas. In the Bay Area she founded and was president of *Los Amigos Sefaradis*, and was featured in the 1988 film, "Trees Cry for Rain: a Sephardic Journey," produced by Bonnie Burt. She has served as president of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society, and secretary of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.

In 1999 she founded the Internet group *Ladinokomunita* which presently has over 1,400 members from 43 countries.

**Member-at-Large: M. MIRIAM HERRERA** (page 23)

**Parliamentarian and Counsel:**

**HARRY EZRATTY** An attorney, historian, writer, lecturer and Sephardic Jew who, for more than 30 years, researched the history of the Sephardim in the Caribbean. He is the author of *500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean: The Spanish & Portuguese Jews in the West Indies*, *Jews of the New World* and *They Led the Way: the Creators of Jewish America*. He is currently preparing Vol.III, *The Builders: Jews Who Shaped Modern America*.

**Member-at-Large and Editor in Chief of the Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews:**

**ABRAHAM (ABE) LAVENDER, PH.D.**

Abe received his Ph.D. in 1972 from the University of Maryland with a dissertation on generational changes in Jewish identity. He is Professor of Sociology at Florida International University in Miami. One area of his specialization is World Jewish Communities, with an emphasis on Sephardim. He has been an active member of the Society since 1996, and was president from 2003 to 2007. He is the author/editor of seven academic books, six articles in *HaLapid*, about 50 other academic articles, and over 80 encyclopedia articles or academic book reviews, many on Judaica. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Crypto-Jews*.  
[gss.fiu.edu](http://gss.fiu.edu)

**Member-at-Large: SETH WARD, PH.D.**

Assoc. Acad. Prof. Lecturer in Islam and Judaism, Dept. of Religious Studies at the University of Wyoming. He has done extensive studies of crypto-Jews and has given papers at SCJS conferences and contributed to *HaLapid*.

**Member-at-Large: ARNOLD TRUJILLO**

Arnold lives in California where he serves as an elder and vice president of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Originally from La Jara, Colorado, Arnold acquired a B.A. degree in Religion and History, and a minor in Spanish from Pacific Union College in 1965, followed by

a Master's degree in Educational Administration in 1970. He has researched deep roots in New Mexico's crypto-Judaic history. He is married to Deloris Kinsey Trujillo; they have two grown children, Timothy and Laura.

**Senior Adviser to the Board: STANLEY HORDES, PH.D.**

A founding member, Stan received his Ph.D. in Colonial Mexican History from Tulane University, with his doctoral dissertation on the crypto-Jewish community of Mexico in the 17th century. He is the author of *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico* (Columbia University Press).

**Advisory Council:**


ABRAHAM GROSS PH.D.

STANLEY HORDES, PH.D.

SETH KUNIN PH.D.

ABE LAVENDER PH.D.

DOLORES SLOAN

MATTHEW WARSHAWSKY PH.D. 

## Dardashti receives writing award

In August 2014, Schelly Talalay Dardashti received first place in the article category from the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors (ISFHWE) Excellence-in-Writing competition for "The Other Side of Jewish Genealogy: Learn How to Get Started Exploring Your Sephardic Roots" (Family Tree Magazine, May/June 2013).

Dardashti previously received ISFHWE awards in 2008 for "Planting the Family Tree" (Jerusalem Post) and in 2009 for "When Oral History Meets Genetics" (Jerusalem Post, 28 March 2008). In 2010, she received the National Genealogical Society's Award for Excellence in Genealogical Methods and Sources for "Ties That Bind: Jewish Research Strategies" (Family Tree Magazine, September 2009).

A native New Yorker, Schelly has lived in Iran and Israel and now calls New Mexico home.

AMONG OURSELVES





# Passover

## in Portugal

### from the Past to the Present

BY GENIE MILGROM • PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MILGROM

**H**aving discovered my lineage from pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal, I felt compelled to travel back in time and confront my history head on.

I had found my 22 grandmothers in an unbroken maternal lineage, yet my first 15 were from Spain and grandmothers 16–22 were from Portugal in an area known as Trás-os-Montes, a historical province in the Northeastern corridor of the country that literally means *beyond the mountains*.

My family hailed from many small villages in this area including Braganza, Miranda, Mogadouro and Maceido de Cavaleiros, and in that region they were a relatively large family of merchants, shoemakers, tanners and furriers that only married among themselves. They were the well-known crypto-Jewish family of Ramirez-Rodriguez-Fernandes and part of the Mogadouro and Marques families. They were caught again and again by the Inquisition Tribunal of Coimbra in Portugal and many perished in those cells or in the large *auto da fé* held in the town square.

With my own history in the back of my mind, I contacted Rabbi Elisha Salas, the Chief Rabbi of Belmonte, and together we planned to hold a Shabbaton in Belmonte which would include the telling of my story on Shabbat at the Synagogue and the making of matzah openly on *erev Pesach* in this region of Portugal; something not done since Inquisition times. My husband Michael and I would then travel to Trancoso, a village in the middle of the country, and make the Seders for

his students, the *b'nai anusim* of the area. It was important for me to reach out to the *b'nai anusim* who are struggling to regain their identities and show them, by example, how it was entirely possible to crack the Catholic identity and emerge as a Jew on the other side.

My husband and I headed to Portugal where we began our journey a week before Passover and with the help of a guide from the Oporto Synagogue – *A Sinagoga De Porto* – we went by foot to the Jewish sites. He was surprised that we had no interest in Catholic history and as we walked by church after church in search of the elusive Jewish sites, I understood clearly that we had to scratch below the surface of what appeared to be a totally Catholic city.

Ironically, this is what our crypto-Jewish families did all along as they pretended to be Catholic, yet were Jewish underground. We started at a large plaza where we learned the public spectacle of the *auto da fé* had taken place. It was during these “celebrations” that the Jews who had been caught practicing Judaism would be humiliated and then burned at the stake for the amusement of the Christians. I also learned that for four years, Porto had been the second seat of the Inquisition Tribunals until it was moved to Coimbra.

We went from there to the new Jewish quarter that had been assigned as a ghetto. Behind its walls and narrow cobblestones we walked street by street, yet there was no outward sign of anything Jewish with the exception of a plaque on the side of a monastery making reference to the Inquisition and preserving the memory. From there, our guide took us to see from afar the expanse of what had been the old Jewish Quarter that had thrived above ground before 1496, the start of the Portuguese Inquisition. We saw the place where the large synagogue had stood; then he took us to a Catholic old-age home where we were able to see a centuries-old stone *aron kodesh* (ark) that





had been found behind the walls after recent remodeling.

On we went to the *Sinagoga* and marveled at this large and magnificent edifice which is active still today, proudly celebrating its 75th anniversary in the middle of a very Catholic country. We saw the *mikveh*, as well as a small but comprehensive library and museum commemorating the work done by Captain Barros Bastos, the champion of crypto-Jews. Porto has a rich Jewish history and we were happy to see the traces of the many Jewish lives that had passed through, as well as the ones who practice freely still today.

Our next stop was Coimbra – the seat of the Inquisition Tribunals that governed the North of Portugal and where most of my family had been judged. I had not been looking forward to that part of the journey as I knew it would put me face-to-face with the actual Inquisition prison that remains there.

Coimbra is a hauntingly beautiful city, yet I felt that its dark past clung overhead. We were shown the Jewish sites by the government representatives and archeologists. They took us through

the old *Juderia* of Coimbra, and we saw the location where the synagogue was known to have stood. We saw the walls of the Jewish Quarter and its small entrance, just steps away from the magnificent entrance to what was the home of the Grand Inquisitor. We walked around the large plaza where the many *auto da fé* had taken place and where the Jews had been killed for simply being Jews. I found myself shivering in the heat as I stood there, surrounded by large churches and Catholic monuments. I was unable to find the usual evidence of crypto-Jewish crosses scratched into the walls and doorways, and any evidence in the *Juderia* streets was long gone.

a crystalline turquoise pool. It was cold, dank and musty. Very few people have had the privilege to be inside and I knew that we had walked into a piece of history that was as real as the waters below us. The holding tank and all the other elements of a *mikveh* with a fresco over the water was barely visible. There was a space above with two balconies and the whole thing was utterly breathtaking. Right now it seems there is dispute over ownership so no one is able to work on restoration.

Finally, as we neared the Inquisition prison, my hands became cold and clammy and I could barely breathe as we were led into the actual cells—small and cramped—that had each once

“I understood clearly that we had to scratch below the surface of what appeared to be a totally Catholic city.”

The highlight of the tour was a visit to a suspected *mikveh* discovered barely six months earlier. It was very difficult to get an appointment to see it as it is privately owned and sits in the middle of the busiest shopping area of the town. As we walked down the stairs into a cavernous opening, we clearly saw the usual seven steps leading into

held countless numbers of Jews. We learned the walls had always been painted black to add to the misery and confusion of the torture chambers. An original ring from the torture device is still visible on one of the ceilings. I was told there was an inscription found on a stone that said “It is 1627 and I am still here.” There was no signature or starting date. This simple phrase tells of the desperation the prisoners felt in those black and cramped cells. We saw the cobblestones that led them out to the courtyard to be made into public spectacles. It was sad, yet this is our history and to get through it, we need to face it. I was happy to move on to other parts of Portugal, yet I felt my own identity as a Jew had been solidified the minute I set foot in that cell.

We made our way to Belmonte for the Sabbath and were pleasantly surprised to find an incredibly vibrant Jewish community complete with shops selling kosher products, local kosher wines and cheeses, as well as the usual jewelry, books and candlesticks. I realized that Belmonte had come a long way, at least on the surface, since



Left, The small entrance to the Jewish Quarter in Coimbra lies just steps away from the magnificent doorway to the home of the Grand Inquisitor

Below, the Inquisition Prison in Coimbra



the discovery of the crypto-Jews who had survived the Inquisition in this tiny hamlet nestled in the mountains. I wondered if what we were seeing was the reality of the old population of crypto-Jews, or just a way to make money in this relatively poor area of Portugal.

The history of Belmonte is well-known as the Jews who were found in 1925 or so, were said to have been from the same original families that had hidden themselves away, and for centuries thought they were the last Jews on earth. As a matriarchal society, they memorized all the prayers and kept the religion alive in this way for centuries. I had also read they had an innate mistrust of strangers, so I was having a hard time understanding the scenario facing me.

We found the *Beit Anusim*, a house that Rabbi Salas has equipped with a kitchen, beds and sufficient amenities for overnight Shabbat guests and students. The kitchen was bustling with women cooking for the Sabbath which was just a couple of hours away and the house was filled with the fragrances of the approaching meal. The tables were set for a group of 20 or so and the scene was vibrant, happy and chaotic.

Shabbat at *Beit Anusim* was a very special event with all meals prepared on site with local products. Rabbi Salas is also the *shochet* and had slaughtered the animals for this occasion the week before. All his students gathered around as he taught them by example and with short talks about the *parsha* (weekly lesson) as well as *Pesach* which was the next day. The old Jewish community of Belmonte keeps to itself and does not blend with these students that come to Rabbi Salas, as descendants of crypto-Jews themselves, to learn their ancestral religion all over again. You could see

"[The elder]  
then taught me  
the prayer to light  
the candles that had  
been said by them for  
generations—  
never written down,  
only memorized.  
It was a very special  
moment..."

the dedication and intensity in their faces as they sat around the table.

The next morning at dawn, a group of men who had joined us from Israel and Spain went to the local bakery to kosher and prepare everything to be ready to openly make matzah in this small and rugged community. The wood stove was stoked carefully and all the rolling pins and implements we had brought with us were brought out and the matzah-making began, adhering to the strict laws of 18 minutes per batch and a full clean-up in between. The women and the men worked together amidst much gladness and song while pounding the dough in quick and efficient movements. We made three beautiful batches of matzah that would be used the next day at the Seders. This was the very first time in 500 years that matzah had been made in the open in Belmonte. As we left, we felt that we had given the students and the community a bond with their past, something tangible

that they could take from their ancestors and into their future. The dough of the matzah had worked its magic as it did in generations before.

As I was leaving Belmonte, two of the older community members asked me and Ana, a young descendant of crypto-Jews and a student, to join them in their home. They do not usually allow others in. They seemed mysterious as we walked alongside them down a long well-worn path of cobblestones. Once inside, the elder gave me two antique metal containers and taught me how to braid a natural linen ball into seven strands, join them, and light them from pure olive oil. She then taught me the prayer to light the candles that had been said by them for generations — never written down, only memorized. It was a very special moment in time for me as I personally connected with the ancestors. My family is not from Belmonte,



Upper right: Sign with crypto-Jewish cross

Right, the Seder table set for 40 in Trancoso



Below left, the Pesach matzah kitchen and right, Shabbat meal preparation in full swing!







*The women of Belmonte*



*From left, Rebbetzin Salas, Genie and Michael, and Rabbi Elisha Salas of Belmonte*



but I felt a bond and force that pulled me into their "secret club." I was honored and will be lighting

candles again with those ancestral containers in my own home.

Our next stop was the small town of Caria, where the government representative met us and proudly showed us through their town. It was full of the crypto-Jewish crosses on the outside walls of what was known as the Jewish Quarter, as evidence of the crypto-Jews that had lived there. The government organization has placed dozens of plaques all through the town showing the exact shapes of the drawings. It is very interesting to note that these "crosses" that are part of the architecture of crypto-Jews, are so common in Portugal and all up and down the Trás-os-Montes area of my family, and yet so little has been written about them.

The highlight was the viewing of a beautiful temple menorah painted

in one corner of the ceiling of the large church. It seemed to me that Caria is only starting to see the evidence of its Jewish past and we will hear much good news from this village in the future.

Finally, we reached the destination of Trancoso where we would host the Seders for 40 people, including the students of Rabbi Salas, three families from Israel that wanted to

give the experience to their children, and some descendants from Porto, Lisbon, and Spain. We met up for the first time at the Hotel Trancoso, a lovely 4-star hotel whose owners had graciously allowed us to fully take over one kitchen and supplied us with cooks, waiters and other staff.

We arrived at noon *erev Pesach* and descended on the kitchen as we all koshered, boiled and rekoshered everything until we felt satisfied. As a group, we spoke Hebrew, Spanish, French, Portuguese and English, yet we managed to chop and dice and prepare a beautiful Seder for 40 in just a matter of hours. We had our eggs, our handmade matzah, our *karpas* (greens), and all the trimmings necessary. The Rabbi had *schechted* sheep and chickens and beef and one by one, we cracked

open all the eggs and made sure that every single element was not just kosher, but followed the strictest of kosher for Passover requirements. Some guests could eat *kitniyot* and others not; yet by the time the Seder began, the whole scene flowed together in a most melodious fashion.

It was a beautiful celebration with the text being read in Hebrew and translated to Portuguese with commentaries in Spanish. It worked to bring us all together and with the help of the families from Israel, the singing and dancing and merrymaking was exuberant. The men danced around the table and the emotion on the faces of the students revealed their joy. Not only was this their first Seder, but they felt their connection to their ancestors and their past, and for the most part, everyone cried from happiness at some point in the night.

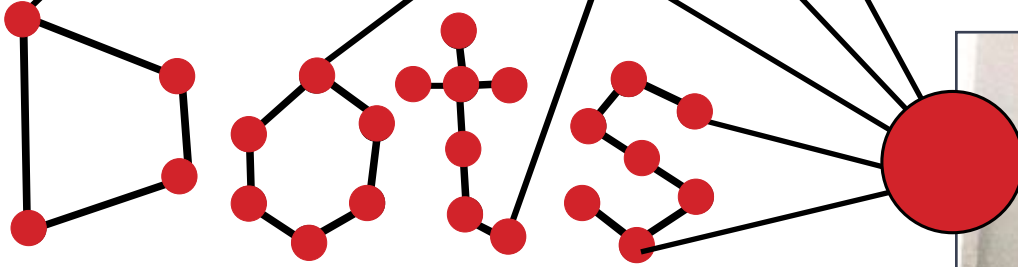
For me, the highlight was when an elderly gentleman from Israel came up to me, took my hands in his, and told me he was a Holocaust survivor. He thanked me from the bottom of his heart with tears in his eyes for the work that we are doing to help ease all these *b'nai anusim* back to the Jewish people. He asked permission to sing *Had Gadya* at the end of the night with a tune that was sung in the camps during the Passover season. There was not a dry eye in the house. The bonds that came from those special days spent in Portugal will be with us forever.

I can proudly say I was able to physically witness the flames glowing brighter inside each and every *b'nai anusim* who was present. They will no longer have to be merely historical Jews as evidenced on the walls of the small villages. They can be part of our people today in 2014 and beyond. 🔥

*"Not only was this their first Seder, but they felt their connection to their ancestors and their past..."*

*First printed in The Jerusalem Post, April 2014.  
Edited version reprinted here by permission.*

# Connecting



## Genetic testing provides answers to childhood memories

Some years ago, I realized I did not know much about my family history or origins on either side, maternal or paternal. I knew we had strong ties with Spain and I knew we were a bit “weird” amongst Dominican families because

of our moral behavior and because of traditions we practice that I thought were Roman Catholic.

But I could not find these in any other “Christian” families in my surroundings; practices such as lighting candles on Fridays near a window at the rear of the house; sweeping the floor towards the inside of the house; burning finger nails after cutting them; a dislike of pork; married women covering their hair with a *mantilla* (veil); and using strange Spanish-sounding words that I thought indicated a lack of education.

Suddenly I felt the need to recall my childhood memories and do some research including the people I’ve met in my family, the visits to our relatives in the countryside of the Dominican Republic, and the various given names and surnames.

I started by recalling my memories of my grandmother. When I was a kid, I was very attached to my maternal grandmother; we spent hours and hours together every day. I remember sitting with her on our porch every evening to read the Bible and sing the song of *el Pentateuco*, the Pentateuch. One of those evenings she told me: *Alejandrino, recuerda hacer siempre lo justo por más que te cueste. Nosotros no somos de aquí.* (“Alejandrino, remember you have to do what is righteous no matter the price you have to pay. We are not from this land.”) I must have been 13 or 14 and, teenager that I was, I did not pay much attention to her words.

Later in my life, recalling my grandma’s words, at first I thought she meant them in a “spiritual way.” “We belong to the heavens” is what I thought she meant. But then I also remember hearing tales about my great-grandmother’s Batista family, practicing the same odd traditions, and about my great-grandfather’s Ferrera family being from Germany.

And so I started researching about my grandmother’s father’s family and found registries in the National Archives of a Dutch-German woman who immigrated to the Dominican Republic from the Netherlands with



BY ALEX GONZÁLEZ

*“...the more dots I connected, the more the most likely answer to the riddle was our Jewishness.”*

her children, married to a man with the same last name as my great-grandfather.

My grandfather—my mother’s father—must have been related to the Jews of Curacao because his last name—Lindo-Méndez Pérez—is a very specific last name associated with Curacao, according to several books of reference including *Once Jews: Stories of Caribbean Sephardim*, and is also associated with Sephardim from Mexico. Those facts made me notice a pattern; the more dots I connected, the more the most likely answer to the riddle was our Jewishness.





Not until some two years ago—when I submitted my DNA for genetic testing done by both 23&Me and Family Tree DNA—did I receive scientific confirmation of my relationship with the Jewish people, in general. I found it interesting that many people around the Jewish world claim to be descendants of Aaron.

The autosomal DNA results were, as expected, a combination of Jews with other populations, especially African, Spanish and Russian. The greatest surprise was that I had inherited a Y-DNA (paternal) haplotype specific to male Jews – J2b2. Therefore, I concluded, I must be of Jewish descent on my paternal and maternal lines.

I needed a second opinion from a professional genetic researcher, so I sent the results to be analyzed by Dr. J. Douglas McDonald of the University of Illinois. His analysis revealed that almost every possible combination of populations include a very high percentage of Jewish DNA, which confirms that the genetic admixture could not have happened far in the past, but in the recent past.

My dad’s family is a different story. Even though I inherited a very distinctive Jewish haplotype, my dad’s family still remains a bit of a mystery. I have heard that his ancestors were teachers and shoemakers from Toledo, Spain. They left southern Spain to go to Mexico in search of a New Jerusalem where being Jews would not bear the stigma of Marranos. But I guess their happiness did not last long as they had to leave Mexico when the Inquisition opened for business there. They then immigrated to New Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

I have been trying to find the missing link to my dad’s family,

yet the only registry I could find of a person who matches my great-grandfather’s information was born in Puerto Rico when it was still a Spanish colony. Even more intriguing is that I share genetic markers with many males who self-identify as *Levi’im* and *Kohanim* and have a continuous Jewish tradition throughout many generations, according to researchers of the Cohen Modal Haplotype.

I recently found an article about a man called Carl Montoya and his research for his roots. He could trace his family to a man named Diego Blandin Gonzales, a Portuguese who enlisted as a soldier to sail to the New World. Carl also carries the J2 genetic haplogroup and has roots in Mexico and New Mexico; that made me wonder if we could be related through that soldier and my last name, González.

I have managed to research some of my family’s history. Now I know that my mother descends from Jews of Spain and the Netherlands on my



grandmother’s side and from Sephardic merchants of Curacao and Cuba on my grandfather’s side. My father descends from a Levite family that did not pass along much information to my dad’s generation, but I still need help trying to find my roots.

I have not done much, but nonetheless, finally understanding this part of my family history is transforming the way I see, understand and interpret life. I feel more whole, I feel like I have finally found home, or home found me, and invited me to bring the names of my family back to where they belong. Now I can understand that not knowing the past was not about detachment from our people, but about surviving and about protecting this gift that runs through our veins so that future generations, like me, could follow the traces our mothers and fathers left — so that we could remember why we were chosen.

Embracing with passion my stolen identity is making me feeling joyous and happier by the second. I am now in the process of an Orthodox return, trying to learn and internalize the faith of my forefathers at a very intensive pace and trying to keep researching my ancestry by reading about other people who have gone through similar processes, while mingling with the Jewish community. I look forward to sharing more of this experience with you. 🕯



**Alex Ezra González Lindo-Méndez** is the Spanish Coordinator of the International Engineering Program at the University of Rhode Island. Contact Alex at alexis\_gonzalez@mail.uri.edu

*Miracles do happen. Just ask the more than 100 guests, honorees and locals gathered under the hot summer sun on Sunday, August 10, 2014 for the dedication of the first Sephardic Anusim Cultural Heritage and Resource Center in El Paso, Texas.*

# The Sephardic Anusim

BY CORINNE J. BROWN

## REPAIRING THE WORLD

Celebrants for this pivotal event came from as far away as California and Oregon, and as close as Juarez; others from throughout Texas, Colorado and New Mexico. A few sought shelter in the shadow of the building while others basked in the sun's warm glow. Either way—young and old, Christian and Jew—all were there to applaud the culmination of a home for returning anusim.

The Anusim Center building was formerly the Holocaust museum adjacent to the El Paso Jewish Community Center. It offers meeting spaces, a food preparation area, and a beautifully landscaped garden dedicated to the

righteous of World War II. In short—a perfect home for a museum and study center to be used by the descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition.

A plaque inside reads “Judaism—In Memory and Spirit: 500 Years After the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition, What Remnants of Judaism Remain?”

The Sunday morning ribbon-cutting followed a bagel-and-lox breakfast and a presentation by Latin American Rabbi Danny Mehlman of Los Angeles.

“People are looking for a spiritual home,” he said. “We are not as interested in who your grand-parents were, but who your grandchildren will be. We serve as eye-witnesses to an extraordinary journey.”

The building dedication was the final event in a weekend Shabbaton held in honor of the 11th annual Sephardic Anusim Conference, hosted by Congregation B’nai Zion and Rabbi Stephen Leon. The weekend began with Friday night Shabbat services led by the rabbi. A delicious brisket dinner served close to 60 attendees, followed by keynote speaker Dr. David Gitlitz of Rhode Island (author of the definitive work, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the*

*Crypto-Jews*, among other titles) who spoke about religious customs of *conversos*.

On Shabbat morning, a full house packed the chapel for traditional Conservative services, followed by a Sephardic *kiddush* lunch. Delightful 15th century Sephardic recipes, collected by Dr. Gitlitz and his wife Dr. Linda Kay Davidson, in their historical cookbook, *A Drizzle of Honey: The Life and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*, tempted the hungry. The main course consisted of a hearty bean stew with garbanzos, sweet potatoes and other savories, alongside small meat patties. A radish salad began the meal and a golden corn meal cake drizzled with rosemary-infused honey and candied lemon peel made a fragrant dessert. Gitlitz delivered a second presentation after the meal and author Gabe Galambos presented a review of his new fiction book, *The Nation by the River*.

Corinne Brown spoke Saturday evening at the *seudah shlishit*



*The Sephardic Anusim Cultural Heritage and Resource Center, El Paso, Texas. Marquee created by Don Scharf*

**Donald Scharf** is a psychotherapist and photographer working in EL Paso, Texas. As a Jewish person, he is deeply dedicated and involved in his faith. His web site, [bondphotoandpublishing.com](http://bondphotoandpublishing.com), shows his work as a landscape artist. He dedicates his photography work to his father, Oliver Scharf.

“I am only the apprentice, my father was the sorcerer,” says Scharf. “I learned photography in the 1950s when we mixed chemicals (dectol) and used black and white film (Tri-x). It is a different world now, but if you can see the magic... nothing really has changed in photography.”

*This photo was taken during a hike at sunset in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Don's fiancé Sandy noticed the ladder, prompting a talk about Jacob's Ladder in the Torah, where the Angels climbed up and down; a metaphor for getting spiritually closer to Hashem. When Don showed the image to Rabbi Leon he noted its spirituality. Now it serves as the logo for the Anusim Center inspiring direction.”*





# Cultural Heritage and Resource Center

OPENS IN EL PASO



**Sephardic Anusim Cultural Heritage and Resource Center**  
401 Wallenberg Drive • El Paso, TX 79912 • 915-493-9894

(Photo above courtesy Janice Yu; KTSM El Paso)

(third Shabbat meal) addressing the question: “Crypto-Judaism: Why It Matters to the Rest of Us.” *Havdalah* services, led by Rabbi Mehlman, were followed by a concert of guitar music and song.

Credit goes to Rabbi Leon, Anusim Center president Bill Carvajal, and congregation president Cesar Carrasco, as well as a host of volunteers from their congregation and elsewhere, all of whom helped bring about this historic event. Said Leon, “We must teach the world to never forget the horrors of the Inquisition. We bring hope to humanity via a center of study, research and the teaching of tolerance. Together we will bring knowledge, justice and unity to the world.”

Greetings and salutations were read from Israeli Ambassador Yoram Ettinger of Jerusalem and Professor Abraham Gross, head of the International Anusim Study Center at Netanya College, Netanya, Israel. Next, El Paso native, celebrated film actress and humanitarian Yvette Yates introduced dignitaries, including Enrique Serrano Escobar, Presidente Municipal de Ciudad de Juarez; Rebecca Rodriguez, executive vice president of the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Chamber staff member Shoshana Aranda. Other honorees included Cynthia Cano of Congressman Beto O’Rourke’s office; Janie Sinclair, executive director of El Pasoans Fighting Hunger Food Bank; Emily Steussy of Jewish Family and Children’s



Clockwise from below: Adrian Esparza (left) and Bill Radcliffe perform Saturday evening; ribbon cutting ceremony; dedication attendees; Rabbi Stephen Leon, founder.



Services; Los Angeles film producer Shaun Redick; El Paso philanthropists Louis and Miriam Rosenbaum, and Elliot Berg, president of the board of directors of the El Paso Jewish Academy.

Daniel Chejfec, executive director of the El Paso Jewish Federation added, “The Center can serve as a lighthouse to those who seek to reclaim the past and to those of us who are inspired by the journey. Those who choose to convert are doubly blessed because they had a chance to choose.”

Rabbi Larry Bach of Temple Mt. Sinai in El Paso spoke, as well as Rabbi Larry Karol from Las Cruces and Temple Beth El who addressed the beautiful sign mounted on the building’s entrance wall. “Like Jacob’s vision of a ladder to heaven, recognizing a divine presence by his side, the Center will provide a key to self knowledge. The ladder is directed to the future and the past in an ongoing path of discovery with the presence of God guiding the journey.”

In closing, El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser read a resolution, a tree was planted, and the hanging of the *mezuzah*, along with a benediction, completed the ceremonies. 🕯



# Sabbath Stew, Toledo Style

A TASTE OF ANCIENT SEPHARDIM

- 1/2 cup dry white beans
- 1/2 cup dry chickpeas
- 2 medium onions
- 1 1/2 lbs. meat (beef or lamb)  
cut into one-inch cubes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon saffron threads
- 1/2-1 cup water

## Spice Mixture

- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2-3 tablespoon olive oil

1. Cover beans and chickpeas with cold water and soak 4 hours, drain.
2. Quarter one onion. Put the meat, garlic, quartered onion, and just enough water to cover in a medium to large stewpot. Simmer covered one hour.
3. Add the beans, chickpeas, saffron and water (only enough to reach the top of the mixture). Continue to simmer 3 hours.
4. In a small bowl, combine spices.
5. Thickly slice the other onion. Heat oil in a fry pan over medium heat. Lightly heat the spice mixture for 2 minutes. Add the sliced onion and saute until translucent, about 4 minutes more.
6. Add the fried spices and onion to the stewing meat and legumes and stir to combine. Continue to simmer gently covered 1 1/2-8 hours more, stirring occasionally to ensure that the stew does not stick to the bottom of the pan. The meat will shred apart and the stew will be golden brown. Salt to taste.

**Note:** This dish may be simmered overnight in the oven at the lowest setting.

**Editor's Note:** This version of the Sabbath Stew, Toledo Style, was inspired by the chef in El Paso who included sweet potatoes or yams. I also chose to brown the meat (beef) first and used ground ginger instead of fresh. It tastes as good as it looks. Savory and delicious! —CJB

# Radish Salad

- 1-2 ounces watercress
- 1 head green lettuce
- 2 cups other torn greens like raddichio,  
romaine, endive or Jennel
- 1 teaspoon fresh mint
- 3-4 radishes sliced
- 1-2 ounces grated hard cheese,  
like Manchego or Romano
- 1-2 teaspoon coarsely ground sea salt

## Dressing

- 1-2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Remove stems from watercress and chop into bite size pieces. Tear lettuce into leaves. Toss all greens together in bowl. Top with radishes and cheese. Salt to taste. To make dressing, pour vinegar into a cruet or jar, add olive oil. Cover and shake vigorously. Pour dressing over salad and toss well or pass cruet at the table.

From *A Drizzle of Honey: The Life and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* ©1999 by David Gitlitz & Linda Kay Davidson. Reprinted by permission of St. Martin's Press. All rights reserved.



## David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson

Linda Davidson and David Gitlitz are a husband and wife scholarly team based at the University of Rhode Island. They met in the mid-1970s in Spain on the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela and have been collaborating on topics having to do with Hispano-Jewish history, pilgrimage, and Spanish literature ever since.

Davidson received her Ph.D. in Spanish from Indiana University and has had a distinguished career as Academic Advisor and instructor of Spanish at several universities. Gitlitz, a graduate of Oberlin College and Harvard University, has taught at Indiana University, the University of Nebraska, SUNY-Binghamton (where he also served as Dean of Arts and Sciences) and the University of Rhode Island (where he also served as Provost).

David Gitlitz has written extensively about Jewish-Catholic relations in Iberia around the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*, published in 1996 is an overview of the religious customs of Jews who converted to Catholicism and were persecuted by the Inquisition. In *The Lost Minyan*, published in 2010, actual historical families, five from Spain and five from Mexico, tell in their own words the story of their lives and encounters with the Inquisition.

After years of editing each other's work, Gitlitz and Davidson discovered how much fun it is to write together. The first result of this joint effort was *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999), a cookbook of Iberian-Jewish cuisine from the period of the expulsions. A July 1999 review in *Savuer* called it a "penetrating work that may be the best historical Jewish cookbook yet written." It won both a National Jewish Book Award and the International Association of Culinary Professionals' prize for distinguished scholarship.

For more information, contact David Gitlitz or Linda Davidson  
401.862.3909 / 401.864.2180

dgitlitz@gmail.com / GitlitzDavidson.com





# Vincenzo's Victory

## An Anusim Bar Mitzvah in Palermo, Sicily

BY RABBI BARBARA AIELLO • AS PUBLISHED IN THE TIMES OF ISRAEL • TIMESOFISRAEL.COM

Rabbi Barbara Aiello is the first woman and first non-orthodox rabbi in Italy. She opened the first active synagogue in Calabria since Inquisition times and is the founder of the b'nai anusim movement in Calabria and Sicily that helps Italians discover and embrace their Jewish roots.

The surnames of Vincenzo's ancestors appear on ancient Inquisition documents that describe the arrest, torture and murder of Sicilian Jews. Many of these were families that were forced to accept Christian baptism but refused to abandon their Jewish practices. When these secret Jews were found to be Judaizing, they were thrown into jail, tortured and often burned alive in public spectacles called *auto da fé*.

Reclaiming their Judaism has been difficult for many secret Jews, called *b'nai anusim*, or "children of the forced ones," so it was with great joy and pride that Vincenzo Uziel Li Calzi, a Sicilian *ben anusim* made Jewish history by becoming the third Jew to have a public *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony on the island of Sicily in 500 years since Inquisition times.

"*Sono molto commosso*," (that's Italian for "I'm so verklempt!"), said Vincenzo as he made his way to the reading table where an antique Torah scroll (inscribed in 1783) lay open and ready for his historic reading. As tears streamed down his cheeks, Vincenzo's overwhelming



Rabbi Barbara Aiello

emotion at being called to the Torah touched us all, in large part because for decades Vincenzo, who is now nearly 70 years old, tried his best to convince Italy's Jewish bureaucracy that his family's ancient Jewish practices qualified him as a Jew. But the Christian conversions that were forced upon Sicilian Jews often meant that Jewish traditions were hidden. Jewish rituals were practiced in secret, so for Jews like

Vincenzo, no formal documentation exists that confirm a family's Jewish heritage. The result was that many *b'nai anusim* aroused suspicion among Italy's established Jewish organizations and, like Vincenzo, most were never welcomed into traditional Jewish communities.

It wasn't until 2004, the year that modern liberal Judaism came to Sicily, that Vincenzo and other *b'nai anusim* were given the recognition they deserved. And when Vincenzo learned that pluralistic Judaism was an option for *anusim* (returnees), he did all he could to make this vital Jewish connection.

"I wanted to be recognized as a Jew," Vincenzo says, "so I phoned up 'Rabbina Barbara.'"

It was that phone call that led me to my relationship with this very special man. The first step was a meeting between me and my potential student, which meant a trip from Milan to Palermo to find out more about Vincenzo's Jewish heritage and how, as a rabbi and a *bat anusim* myself, I could help him connect with the faith of his ancestors. What I found amazed me. Although his physical strength had been compromised to the extent that he needed crutches to walk and help to steady his shaking hands, Vincenzo's spiritual energy was remarkable. Self-taught in the basic Shabbat blessings, this slight, elderly gentleman, challenged by disabilities that would overwhelm most of us, was a tower of strength when it came to the study and practice of Judaism. >>>



Palermo's Monreale Cathedral apses



Immediately I suggested that Vincenzo join our distance learning program designed especially for *b'nai anusim* who live in remote towns and tiny villages throughout Sicily, Calabria, and the Aeolian Islands. Following a year's study, Vincenzo was ready for his *Bet Din* and yet another challenge. Because his health concerns prohibited travel, how could Vincenzo meet with the three rabbis who had come to Milan to examine our students?

When I suggested a telephone meeting, the rabbis enthusiastically agreed and that's how it happened that Vincenzo Li Calzi, *ben anusim*, sat before his telephone in Palermo and, formally dressed in a suit and tie, answered the questions posed to him by the London rabbis. Shortly afterward, at a Sicilian beach on a radiant sunny morning, I organized Vincenzo's *mikveh* immersion and presented him with his certificate as a proud MOT, or Member of the Tribe!

Vincenzo's Jewish journey was just beginning as he and others in Palermo formed the first active congregation in Sicily since the evils of the Inquisition's forced conversions nearly wiped out Sicily's Jewish population. Our new congregation, Ner Tamid Palermo (the Eternal Light of Palermo) represented the flame that could not be extinguished, thanks to the efforts of "new Jews" like Vincenzo.

In the intervening years, Vincenzo and others organized Chanukah celebrations and Passover Seders, and Vincenzo and his wife Amalia continue to open their home to men and women throughout Sicily who come to tell the stories of their hidden Jewish heritage and how they hope to reclaim their Jewish identity.

"You can't miss your *Bar Mitzvah*," Vincenzo said one day during our weekly telephone meetings. As leader of Palermo's *chavurah*, Vincenzo added, "I know that when he reaches 13 years, the boy is a *Bar Mitzvah*, but one can have the ceremony at any age, so Rabbina, now it is time for my *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony."

After six months of study, again via the telephone, during which time Vincenzo learned not only how to read his Torah verses, but to chant them in ancient Italian trope, he was ready. Thanks to the generosity of the Palermo Valdesian Church (a Christian denomination whose history also includes suffering and persecution), Congregation Ner Tamid Palermo was able to create sacred Jewish space in the church's meeting room in order to celebrate this historic Jewish event.

On Shabbat morning, May 17, 2014, Vincenzo realized his dream. Family and friends gathered for the *Shacharit* service and enjoyed Vincenzo's beautiful chanting of the prayers and blessings including the *Shabbat Kedusha*. For the *Hakafah*, or Torah procession, I carried the Torah in Vincenzo's honor as his wife took his arm and guided him through the congregation. When it was time to read from the scroll, the entire room burst into the chant that calls a Jew to the Torah: *Ya'amod a Sefer Torah, Uziel ben Avraham v' Sarah, Ha Bar Mitzvah!*



Vincenzo Li Calzi reads his Haftorah



Sharing the joy!

Leaning on his crutches, Vincenzo stood, *yad* in hand, and read from the ancient Hebrew scroll. Then, amid *HaZaks* and *Mazel Tovs*, the enthusiastic crowd tossed wrapped candies in Vincenzo's direction, symbolically showering him with blessing upon blessing.


At the *oneg* that followed, a number of guests wanted to know more about the modern pluralistic movement that extends the hand of Jewish welcome to Jews of all backgrounds, including *b'nai anusim*.

"Is it true," a young woman asked, "that Ner Tamid Palermo is open to everyone including interfaith families, traditional Jews, and gay and lesbian couples and their children?" Another asked, "Can women read from the Torah and participate equally with men?"

A smiling Vincenzo was happy to affirm that as part of the Jewish Pluralistic movement, "We do not separate men and women and we are

open to all. Creating a pluralistic Jewish congregation has been a challenge," Vincenzo said, referring to a large Israeli based organization, Orthodox in practice that recently arrived in the city, purporting to have "discovered" the secret Jews of Palermo—a situation that has created divisiveness and confusion. "Goliaths may come," said Vincenzo, "but we pluralistic Jews are the little Davids and our faith makes us strong."

For Vincenzo, his *Bar Mitzvah* celebration was a personal victory, not only for him, but for all of Sicily's *b'nai anusim* who, after 500 years, want so much to be recognized as the Jews they once were. Vincenzo's *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony represents so much, for not only was a life-long dream realized, but Sicilian Jews were able to celebrate their 10-year anniversary of pluralism, perseverance and faith. Vincenzo's victory is a victory for us all.

For more information, visit [RabbiBarbara.com](http://RabbiBarbara.com) 



I stand in line  
in 2014 computerized time  
attending a crypto-Jewish forum

Registration

Hmm Dulcinea This is me  
\$80 without meals this is my discount fee  
One day's wages hope I find out more about my family tree

Cousin David, fancy meeting you here  
I want to hear what *Tio* Daniel told these professors  
about our hidden traditions as our family confessor

Hey, look at the program itinerary  
professor, rabbi, wannabe writer—all Jewish experts of the ages  
Ladino King, historian, observer—more erudite Jewish educated sages  
reducing my identity to a mere obscure museum artifact  
categorized by scholars as an archaic quaint knickknack

Meanwhile in my thirsty Sinai Desert *neshama*  
I continue my crypto-Jewish La Mancha drama

Exiled by Iberian nations  
I fled to lands of a new creation

Displaced by Iberian and Mexican Inquisitions  
I hid in the Chihuahuan Desert  
Displaced by Spanish and Mexican government ambitions  
I hid in the New Mexico desert



**Dr. Isabelle Medina Sandoval** is an educator by profession and resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her passion is expressing ideas through poetry and words. In researching family history, she was able to document family members residing in Spain with links to the Spanish, Portuguese, and Mexican Inquisitions. She has written numerous genealogy articles and her poetry has been published in *Sephardic House*, *Herencia*, *Another Desert*, and other publications. Gaon Books published *Guardians of Hidden Traditions* and *Hidden Shabbat*—a multi-generational story of her family hiding from the Inquisition and settling in 1598 colonial New Mexico.

## Authentic Converso Conference

Displaced by the United States Territory  
I hid in the yucca desert  
Again displaced by New Mexico State authority  
I hid in the life-giving desert

I hid myself in my *Manito* traditions  
girded with my secret DNA rendition

Oh DNA and family secrets  
How long will you live  
How much more can you give

Echoing Santa Cruz words my *abuelo* wrote:  
*No temas Inquisición*

Today Grandfather I process your thought:  
Do not fear the Inquisition  
Follow the light with inspiration

Epigenetics asserts that  
the fear of the Inquisition  
has altered my genetic disposition

Despite the expert knowledge at the conference  
intuitive wisdom shines in ancestral consensus

Rooted in the *sangre* stain of La Mancha  
Soy *mas vieja que Sara*

Awakened by evidence of *La Limpieza de Sangre*  
DNA plus inspiration equals survival of *conversos* in the *Cristo de Sangre*

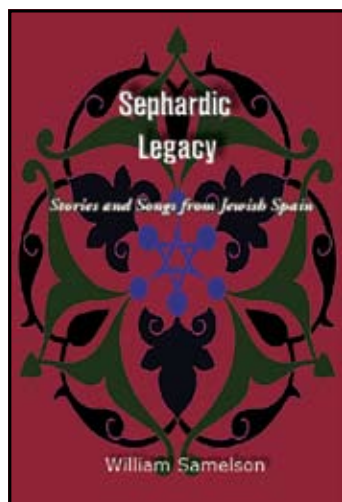
My New Mexico *converso* being reveals  
my soul is older than Sara of Sepharad and Israel  
*Hallel, hallel, hallel*

© Isabelle Medina Sandoval

# Sephardic Legacy: Stories and Songs from Jewish Spain

BY WILLIAM SAMELSON  
2014, GAON BOOKS  
SANTA FE NM

## BOOK REVIEWS



**S**ephardic Legacy: Stories and Songs from Jewish Spain is for the most part, a collection of selected romances (octosyllabic lines of verse or poetry) taken from Sephardic anthologies of the pre-Expulsion period in Spanish history, as well as romances of Turkish origin produced after the Edict of Expulsion. Samelson relies on the linguistic phenomenon of “accidence” not only as

a link to examine the literature of the above mentioned periods but also as an “identifier” of Djudeo-Espanyol or Ladino, the literary and liturgical dialect of the Sephardim.

He presents a concise cultural and hegemonic timeline of the Iberian Peninsula commencing around 300 BCE with the Pre-Christian Period through the Moorish and Christian Periods of history. In addition, Samelson credits the Sephardic *romance* (folk tale) with maintaining the high moral convictions, ethnic identity and national *esprit de corps* of the Sephardim

“throughout their perilous journeys and persecutions.”

The Judeo-Spanish dialect spoken by the Sephardim is predominately of Castilian tradition but contains many Andalusian, Portuguese and French features. Samelson’s emphasis on the appearance of the linguistic fricative phoneme /š/ within the selected Ladino poetry of this tome could in fact be a “borrowing” from the Hebrew language, as he states, “The Sephardim have been able to maintain the ancient Spanish sound of “she” due to the pronunciation of the Hebrew letter *shin* (שׁ), and the Sephardi scribes made good use of this Hebrew letter to emphasize the above mentioned inflections (78).”

Furthermore, he illustrates this possibility with the following lines of *ROMANCE DE LA MALCASADA*, *por aquí vos escapash (escapáis) /y con otro vos casash (casáis)* (104).” Nonetheless, this argument is inconclusive or insufficient because it does not allow for the possible influence of the affricative phoneme /č/ of the French and Portuguese languages upon the Castilian Spanish of the medieval period. An alternative reason for the appearance of the “she” sound in certain Ladino words could be the phonological weakening of the affricate /č/ resulting in the fricative /š/ as exemplified by the French word *chapeau* and the Portuguese equivalent, *chapéu*.

“Samelson credits the Sephardic romance (folk tale) with maintaining... the national esprit de corps of the Sephardim.”

Lexical, grammatical and phonological archaisms are among the distinguishing characteristics of Ladino *vís-à-vís* the other varieties of Modern Castilian spoken on the Iberian Peninsula. Samelson’s efforts to illustrate such linguistic traits should be commended. The poem *ACODRÁNDOME* clearly exemplifies the lexical borrowing from the Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish lexeme, which in turn, leave no doubt as to the Sephardic or Jewish roots of the poem: *Me alevanto y vengo/a casa de Dio me represent/aver su Shejiná y su Templo/me estremezco y me retemblo/por alar en mi osho/y non de tener enosho* (174). The introduction of the Hebrew word *Shejiná* (Presence) and the Judeo-Spanish lexeme *Dio* (God) – not common to Castilian Spanish – gives the poem a unique Sephardic flavor.

In closing, the linguistic subject matter in this book begs for a deeper foundation regarding the lexical, grammatical, phonological aspects of Ladino and its correlation to the Sephardic literary as well as liturgical output known as the *romance*. Nevertheless, the author fulfills his stated goal, “...this study should satisfy the *casual reader* [italics mine] longing to hear the tales of a precious heritage handed down through generations in a language still cherished by many (276).”

About the author: *Sephardic Legacy* gives a broad history of Sephardic Jews in Spain and Turkey. The author, Dr. Samelson has collected songs and stories from the Turkish Jewish side of his family and others.

### William Samelson, Ph.D.

is a Professor Emeritus, Holocaust & Genocide Studies from the University of Texas. He was born in Poland and lived there until age 11 when he was interred in various Nazi labor and concentration camps throughout Poland and Germany. He was a member of the partisans at age 13. Captured by the Nazis, he was taken to Buchenwald Concentration Camp where he spent three and a half years. He was liberated





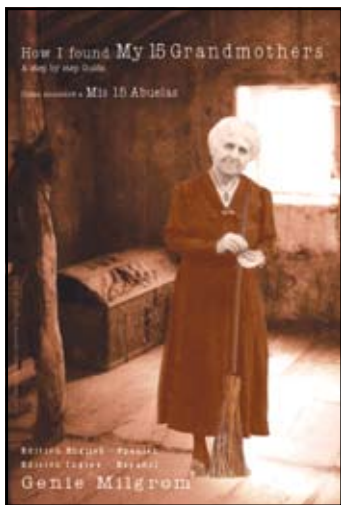
by the U.S. Army in April 1945, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1948.

Dr. Samelson holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Texas at Austin, and has taught at Kent State University, the University of Illinois at Urbana and the University of Texas at Austin. He is Visiting Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Texas in San Antonio and Trinity University. Dr. Samelson has written extensively on the Holocaust and lectured widely on a variety of topics relating to it.

—Daniel Díaz-Huerta

## How I Found My 15 Grandmothers: A Step by Step Guide English-Spanish Edition

BY GENIE MILGROM  
2013, CREATE SPACE  
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA



The idea of time travel is the stuff of fiction and fantasy, unless you're talking about Genie Milgrom and her tenacious journey to find her Jewish past. Last year, I had the pleasure of reviewing her pivotal memoir: *My 15 Grandmothers*, tracing her many years of research in proving her true identity as a descendant of pre-Inquisition era Jews of medieval Spain. A stirring and uplifting book that reads like a novel, I was not

*“Milgrom paves the way like Indiana Jones... with adventurous commitment!”*

prepared for the inspiring and brilliant hand-book that followed; the guide to how she did it. (*How I Found My 15 Grandmothers*). It's just as interesting.

Milgrom paves the way for amateur genealogists in the same way Indiana Jones paved the way for seekers of the Holy Grail in “The Last Crusade”—with adventurous commitment! Her tenacity defies question; her creativity in the search—untouchable. In fact, her ability to track, translate and make relevant her findings inspires respect.

For the beginner or the expert, this book tells you how to begin the search generation-by-generation, how to inventory what you find (in threes), where to find the experts along the way, how to read medieval Spanish, and how to keep moving forward, as well as backward, in time.

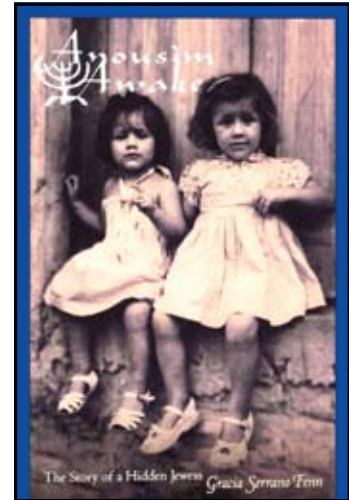
Best of all, this two-part guide has also been translated into Spanish thereby serving searchers in Latin-American countries and Spain.

Genie has made research into an art and a science, guided by her personal drive to know her past. Infused with her love for the Jewish people, her wisdom and her sense of humor, this book fascinates as well as educates. If it doesn't light a fire inside anyone hoping to begin to trace the past, nothing will.

—Corinne J. Brown, Editor

## Anousim Awake: The Story of a Hidden Jewess

BY GRACIA SERRANO FENN  
2012, ROBERTSON PUBLISHING  
LOS GATOS, CA



For some on the path into a family's past, the discovery of crypto-Jewish roots can be a step-by-step genealogical journey; a tracing of people and places. For others, it seems to be a spiritual one, a reconnection with the very God of Abraham and all His children. Such is surely the case for Gracia Serrano Fenn, currently a San Francisco resident who has successfully mapped her patriarchal and matriarchal descent from post Inquisition-era Spain (1800s) into Zacatecas, then Jalisco, and finally Guadalajara Mexico, then into Brownsville, Texas and the family's eventual American citizenship.

The poignant details about her parents' lives, as well as her own, serve to draw more than a personal journey; the work can easily help others who seek answers to the essential questions of Sephardic Jewish identity.

Fenn writes with a kind of joyful confidence, a celebration of re-identification, one where reaffirming a family's hidden Jewish past is a confirmation of her own very Jewish present. Numerous trips to Israel,



Spain, and Mexico have helped her piece together a vivid story, punctuated by credible records. Her personal mission is nothing less than *tikkun olam*, helping to repair the world by aiding those engaged in finding the lost children of Israel.

Gracia (né Graciela), is one of four siblings, all with Old Testament names, who grew up in a family that kept Jewish customs in the midst of Spanish/Catholic neighborhoods, shunning holidays and church worship. Throughout her book, Fenn refers often to Old Testament scripture as the definitive guide to the return, not only of *anusim*, but of the Jewish people to their homeland, and supports both with fervor.

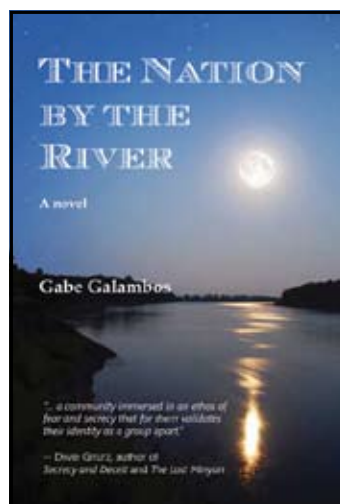
Her marriage to a man of Scots/Irish descent and subsequent move to Connecticut where they lived for eight years did not diminish her pride in her heritage, a legacy which she passed on to their two children. She has devoted much of her research defining the various *Sefardita* customs shared by diverse members of her family of origin and honoring their return through words and song. Her biography identifies numerous instances of her family's use of archaic Spanish (Ladino), *dichos* or sayings, as well as food preparation and observance of Jewish traditions.

Fenn summarizes the long history of crypto-Jewish flight in concise and accurate terms, from Iberia to Mexico and Texas and the greater Southwest, as well as other places around the world, making this book a remarkable starting place for the student of crypto-Judaism. At every level, her story connects the reader to the heart of the Jewish people.

—Editor, HaLapid

## The Nation by the River

BY GABE GALAMBOS  
2014, GARNET STAR PUBLISHING COMPANY  
BROOKLINE, MA



In the novel, *The Nation by the River*, Gabe Galambos introduces us to two young men, Michael Costa and L.T. Haymaker, who spend the summer before high school on a search to find treasure that may have been left by Portuguese explorer Miguel Cortereal more than 500 years earlier. Cortereal left his marks on Dighton Rock, then settled on the Taunton River rather than return to his home.

The boys explore near their home in Best Harbor, Massachusetts and dig holes in an attempt to locate the treasure. The mystery begins when they return to the previous day's dig and find the hole has been filled. L.T. and Michael expand their search and enlist others to watch the holes at night to see who is undoing their work.

As the summer progresses, they start to ask questions about their community. Why are there two groups, the Besterners and the Spitters? What makes them different and what keeps them separate? As Michael, the narrator, seeks to find answers to these questions, he finds that it may be even

more important that he learn to ask himself these questions.

In *Best Harbor*, some know the answers to those questions: Why do the Spitters continue to keep their crypto-Jewish identity secret—even from others who are members of the group? Some Besterners, such as Father Sousa, are aware of the Spitters and work to keep relations between the two groups functional and dynamic. Others, like

*“...a compelling story of conversos... and the effects of secrets on future generations.”*

parish council head Mr. Alves, actively try to stop Michael and the Spitters. L.T.'s anthropologist mother, and her Harvard professor boyfriend, are involved in something not their issue and learn what they can about the “People of the Nacai.”

Michael suspects everyone as he tries to find the answers. He explores a secret society's origins, and learns about an historic event that has made him who he is.

**Gabe Galambos** has led an unusual life himself. Born in Hungary to Holocaust-survivor parents, the family eventually moved to Brookline, Massachusetts. Gabe made *aliyah* to Israel after graduating Brandeis University, and joined the Israel Defense Force. While working in the Sudan, he was arrested, spent time in a Sudanese prison and was eventually released. He traveled to the Azore islands to meet historians and academics and researched the Inquisition and crypto-Jews in the New World. He creates a compelling story of *conversos*, crypto-Jews, secrets that people keep and the effects of those secrets on future generations.

—Linda Katchen





# Valle Grande, Nueva Reyna de León

© M. Miriam Herrera

The call of white-tipped doves  
is like the coo of a bottle as  
wind blows over its top.  
Such duets in the thorn forest  
spark the mesquite to ooze honey  
and the chachalacas  
to quit  
their nagging. Roseate spoonbills  
give up scooping for mollusks  
then take to the sky  
in pink celebration.  
Huisache—short and plain—  
distills blossom into eau de parfum.

The tyrant flycatcher learns to  
catch bees with honey  
and the scissor-tail is lauded  
for potent feathers  
no longer dragging in flight.  
The great-tailed grackle, maligned for  
black coat and yellow eyes,  
catches a ray of light, reveals a secret  
sheen of indigo. Even  
the red-eared slider, her good years  
behind, senses a softer shell,  
dives into the resaca—  
as liquid memory fills her  
crevices.

The moon sighs  
because she's still miles away, can't wait  
to shine on lush feathers,  
on slickstream  
love.

At roosting time  
the blooming anaqua lets go her spice,  
as Inca doves swoop down  
like a blanket, weeping  
for home.

**M. Miriam Herrera's** poetry has been published in *Southwestern American Literature*, *New Millennium Writings*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Albatross*, *ArtLife*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *Nimrod: International Journal of Prose and Poetry*, and other journals. Her first collection of poetry, *Kaddish for Columbus*, was a finalist in the New Women's Voices Chapbook competition and was published in 2009 by Finishing Line Press. Miriam is a member of numerous literary guilds and poetry societies, as well as the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.

Miriam's enigmatic ancestry compels her writing. As evidenced by her family's uniquely hybrid practices and traditions, it is likely they descend from crypto-Jews or *conversos* from the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. She writes about the paradoxical

nature of identity and the many-layered process one must face to reconcile the splintered parts of one's self. Her personal concept of identity is that it is fluid and changing—that immersion in one culture at a time—and in the very midst of its homeland, is very important to the process. Miriam states, "My poetic topics are not just about race and culture, but ultimately about the oneness of all and how this unity crosses all boundaries of race, religion, culture and gender identity."

At present, Miriam teaches creative writing and literature at the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas.



## Artist Marilyn Lande



Marilyn Lande

BY CORINNE J. BROWN

AMONG OURSELVES

New members to the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies often come into our midst without introduction or follow-up. (Hopefully, future member profiles in our journal will close that gap.) The recent enrollment of Denver artist and community leader Marilyn Lande provides an opportunity to highlight a remarkable artist whose fascination with Jewish—and especially Sephardic—history, offers a body of work worth noting.

**Corinne Brown:** *What drew you to Sephardic Jewish history? Are you a descendant?*

**Marilyn Lande:** When I was in third grade I had only one hour of Jewish studies... my father intended to enroll me in a synagogue. I had the opportunity to sit in on a Jewish history class and although this was my only Jewish studies

experience as a child, the book with the map of Canaan remains vivid in my mind today. Interest in Jewish studies was enhanced when I met my future brother-in-law Michael, a survivor of Auschwitz, originally from Czechoslovakia. His story of survival, having been taken as child of 12, left me awe-struck and full of questions.

As a student at Northwestern University, I majored in history emphasizing Jewish topics when I could. I studied and created presentations on the culture, art and Jewish history when we helped create the first Denver Reconstructionist *Havurah*. When we traveled, and I first discovered the *Alhambra* and *Granada*, I was awakened to the romance of our history; to all the possibilities.





**CB: What is your training as an artist? Photographer?**

**ML:** Growing up, I attended the Chicago Art Institute almost weekly. Later on, I took painting classes at the University of Denver. Photography was self-taught and inspired the videos I created of Jewish women and their stories for Denver Community Television. A collection of my videos taken over 10 years can be found in the Penrose special collections and is called the Marilyn Lande Jewish Women's Archives. I developed a photography technique that combined video and 35 mm photography which led to an invitation to exhibit in Pueblo, Colorado (through CSU).

I smile when I look back and "see" my first "sculpture" I made as a girl—a first baseman's baseball glove that actually worked. My father displayed it prominently in the office window of his three-pump gas station in Chicago.

**CB: When did you begin the visual records of your travels to Iberia?**

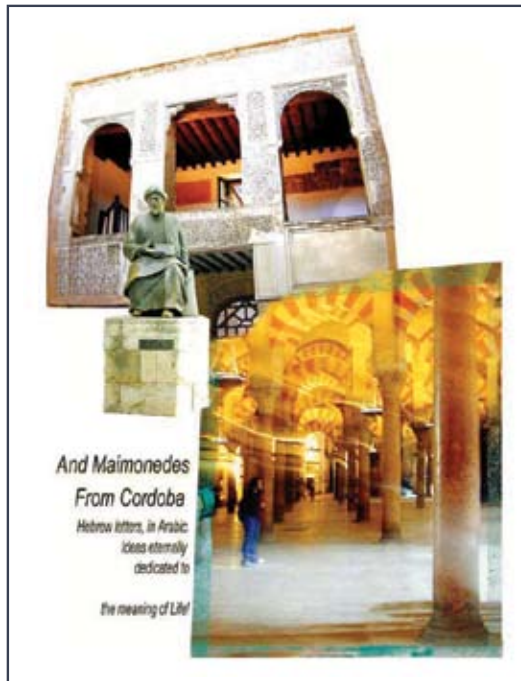
**ML:** They really began when we traveled to Israel (Tiberius) in the 1970s, then to Curacao, and on to a Caribbean cruise of the islands—Barbados and St. Thomas.

*"An Iberian Haggadah, or story" — the collages are from a 2002 rendition... I am using the term "Haggadah" here as the word story...*

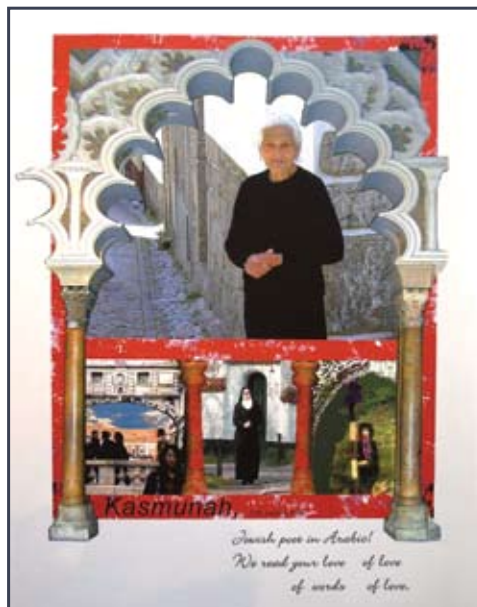
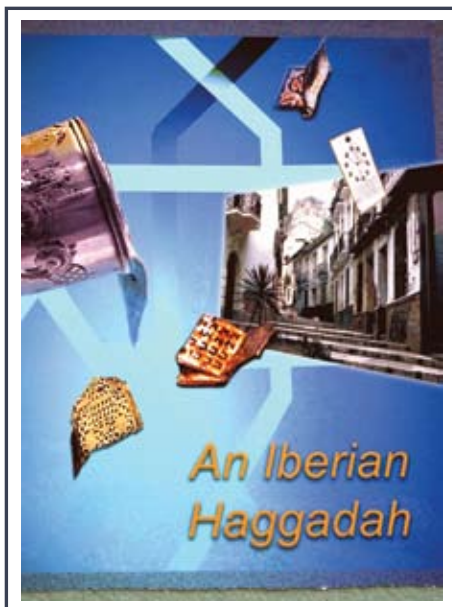
Everywhere we went from then on, we centered our activities on discovering our past Jewish life, whether it was Kaifeng (China), St. Petersburg or Prague. One major trip was the three-week Jewish Elderhostel trip to Iberia which offered incredible lectures, as well as behind-the-scenes visits to Jewish historic places, such as a 14th century mikveh outside Barcelona, or the new Jewish community of Belmonte, Portugal.

**CB: Talk about your vast reference library.**

**ML:** I have owned and cherished Jewish books, and books in general, for most of my life. When my mother would go to the public library each week, we would check out books to read. The impact of that time prompted this essay. (Excerpted here from "Those Letters in Black and White.")



"The library holds nine shelves, crammed with many hardback books, spaced by artworks I have created or collected. Today, I ride my ladder across my loft library shelves, touch a book here;; dust another there, and reach to the end of the 14-foot ceiling as I rearrange books by topics. I have used my art and history collection for research on Jewish women artists. The cultural and sociological aspects of my presentations are the result of information gleaned from my books. I feel an intimacy connecting the past to the present and myself to others.



"Around me are books for my soul: I often ponder Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and remember sobbing as I read Cynthia Ozicks's *The Shawl* or Elie Weisel's *Ani Ma'Amin*. I am energized by the lives of Rachel, the actress, or the heroic Hannah Senesh. Could I name all my books; remember all their content? Not exactly. But like a Tibetan monk spinning a prayer wheel, I feel the thrill of touching my books; it inspires me. Books that can be attributed to most of the knowledge I have gained in this life; if I have had a love affair, I would say that it has been with books." >>>

**CB:** *What about the miniature rooms?*

**ML:** When I studied at the Chicago Art Institute, I would wait for my mother to pick up my sister and me. We would wait in the basement where the Thorne Rooms were displayed; magnificent miniature recreations of differing interiors of many historic eras. We studied them as we waited. In retrospect I have no doubt this influenced my interest in history, architecture and art as well. Many years later I felt the necessity to express what I had read about individuals, or certain times in Jewish eras, to different groups of people and created my own folk art miniatures. Also the slide presentations I create help tell the sociological and cultural aspects of the Jewish people.

**CB:** *What do you want people to take away from seeing your art?*

**ML:** I would like people to think about the good and wonderful experiences Jewish people have had in past eras. My goal is to help others get interested in past Jewish historic heroes and heroines; to inspire them to discover the joy of simply living as a Jewish person, not necessarily emphasizing the religious aspects, but encompassing Jewish culture. Whether it's lessons of Jewish lives or poems by children who endured life in a concentration camp, "without ever seeing another butterfly," I always feel moved to rededicate myself to the quest I hear over and over: "Don't forget me – I lived. Here are my handprints for you."

**CB:** *What renews you most?*

**ML:** I love retreating into my library as if into a cocoon; my writing and much of my artistic inspiration emerge from



## About the Miniature Rooms: Marilyn Lande's "Soul Companions"

**T**he Jewish past comes alive in miniature rooms recreated from historic sources. Legendary characters inspire these detailed environments where real figures lived or worked. From plexi-

framed boxes to bird cages, each rendition is a reflection of a time and place, every object anchored in the real, or symbolic in some way. While thinking of a title for the exhibit on display at Denver University's new library, September 8 – December 10, 2014, Lande realized her soulmates are the very people she has researched in Jewish history. Thus, the title of the exhibit, "My Soul's Companions."

"All the miniature historical rooms,"

said Lande, "are based on the lives of real people, connected by more than a Hebrew timeline. I delve into the past of these individuals as if I were them and they were me. Some of those researched are the Sephardic poetess Kasmunah; the inspiring Doña Gracia Nasi; 18th century silversmith Myer Meyers—people I admired. At times I have felt their life experiences have been mine. Traumatic or triumphant, I believe I was there.







Left, *Doña Gracia Nasi*, circa 1540, Venice, Italy. "Not based on any detailed information," said Lande, "but my imagination of what her life might have looked like as a hidden Jew."  
(10" deep x 18" wide x 22.5" high)

Above, a *Portuguese-Holland Passover*, circa 1720, based on a compilation of 17th century woodcuts of Jewish life by engraver Bernard Picart.  
(14" deep x 15" wide x 11" high)

Right, *Marc Chagall, Studio in Venice*, France, circa 1960  
(10" deep x 17.75" wide x 13" high)



what I find there. What prevails in my innermost thoughts is always to honor and remember the Jewish people by doing and being. Searching for the deeper meanings to living life as a Jew, my search has expanded my soul; my art, my trips, my research, my life—all to find my individual path. Fifty-five years later and looking back, I see that young, 16-year-old girl who fell in love with learning; who became knowledgeable about her past, and grew to be comfortable with being different—with being Jewish. 🔥

"Kasmunah was only 17 when she wrote of love in Arabic, living in Andalucia, Spain, during the time of the *Convivencia* (ca. 1100s to 1200s CE). Then Arab, Christian and Jew lived in cooperative peace, not under forced conversion, mayhem and murder. What was it like? I dream.

"I was also there with Beatrice de Luna in 1540 CE when she was jailed in the Bridge of Sighs prison in Venice for being a hidden Jew. I was

fearful, yet I knew she would escape. At 40, she introduced herself as Doña Gracia Nasi, a Jew. I followed her in all her adventures; the establishment of Tiberius as a land grant from the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the 500-year-old Jewish community in Turkey, as well. I stood by her as she sought to buy freedom for Jewish slaves and applauded her support of Jewish communities, synagogues and ritual

objects. I saw how she spurned Queen Elizabeth's marriage offers to save England's treasury—to instead save her own people.

"Today I carry these souls of history with me; in my art and in my books, and I can see them all. I feel a kind of love for them; these individuals are a part of me—they are my soul's companions." 🔥



# Honoring

BY L. ANTONIO CHEVEZ

Many Sephardic families who were expelled from Spain over 500 years ago had to learn to live double lives, ensuring they were openly upholding the religion and social mores dictated by the societies wherever they went and, at the same time, secretly observing ancient practices from their Sephardic heritage.

These expelled families went in search of refuge to many places in the world. Often they went to places like El Salvador where they could blend in and be safe among other colonial settlers. Wherever they went, they adapted and contributed to their local communities. After all, they could not go back home; there was no home to go back to.

José Benjamin Fuentes was one of the descendants of Sephardic families who kept many oral narratives passed down to him by his ancestors. These stories tell of the great displacement and long journey taken by expelled families in search of peace and stability. In his family, the narratives tell that they left Sefarad and came to the New World. Benjamin was a *custodio* of the oral narratives accumulated by the Fuentes and Sorto families throughout hundreds of years.

The word *custodio* means “one who keeps custody” and refers to a role that emerged among Sephardic families who were unable have a rabbi and wanted to practice freely and publicly their Jewish faith and rituals. Instead, they groomed one member of the family to be the story keeper, the one who recounted the sayings, poems, songs, riddles, and so many other oral treasures carried by oratory among Sephardim.



Leonel Antonio Chevez

Unlike many Sephardic Jews who went to big colonies in the New World, the Fuentes, along with the Sorto, Larios, Garcia, Romero and few other pioneering settlers, ended up in a remote region in eastern El Salvador. They were not in search of gold, fame and glory; they were in search of peace.

According to the stories held by Benjamin, his ancestors left Sefarad due to the Expulsion. In the Fuentes lineage, one group went to the New World and the other went to Istanbul. Those who came to the New World attempted to settle in Peru and Nicaragua. They then moved, due to the Inquisition that established courts to judge and punish these new Christians, suspecting them to be plotting against Spain and colluding

with Holland. There is much written about the “grand conspiracy” and the Inquisition in Lima and how many Sephardim had to leave once again.

This dangerous state of affairs compelled Benjamin’s family to secure passage for them and another six families who together, in 1637, left Lima and arrived at an old, minor port on the Pacific Coast of today’s El Salvador. This humble port was called Amapala, known today as Puerto Viejo in the Fonseca Gulf.

On arrival, these families noted that the region was almost depopulated and, as Benjamin said, “Apparently, this gulf was managed by mostly Indian people of the local Lenca. Most Castilians lived in San Miguel and bigger cities inland, closer to San Salvador.”

Benjamin tells that his grandparents used to share the stories, teaching them to respect the Indians because in their mind, these “naturals” were one people with them. “They risked their lives to save us,” he said.





# Memories

“When our ancestors came to shore on Amapala, they knew no one in this land. The Indians, who were masters of canoes and sea traders on the gulf, surrounded our people and curiously asked them – *Casiyanos*? – They were asking if we were Castilians. We were told that our people told them, “No, we are *Galicianos*, fleeing *Casiyanos*.”

This wise distinction made by the head of the group of Sephardim saved their lives. The natives despised the Castilians and, as we see later in their history, they bonded with anybody who was an enemy of Spain. In coming centuries, their gulf became a hideaway for many pirates.

It is said that the Lenca Indians helped guide the new settlers to an inland valley where the natives had some settlements referred to as *rancherías*. The natives helped these new arrivals dodge the Church authorities from a monastery that was perched on the side of the hill beside the port. This was the Convent of our Lady of Las Nieves, which was later dismantled by pirates.

Finally, the new settlers reached their future home, there the Indians performed *Areyito*, a Lenca ritual that makes people one, as if the soil and the people accept their existence and also their bodies once they die. It is a tribal ritual of the times, only afforded to people who were considered brothers and sisters, children of the same *Aku* (creator). Here, the new settlers established what was to become the present district of Santa Rosa de Lima. The pioneering families were ambitious, proficient in leather work, carpentry, animal husbandry, metal works, bee-keeping and many other skills.

In 1754, a wealthy friend from Lima migrated and joined the settlers, boosting the village economy. These attracted more friends and in 1757, the President and Captain General of the Spanish territory Mariscal Don Alonso de Argos y Moreno, ordered the Marquis of Albornoz to officially grant the status of *pueblo* to the small settlement. Santa Rosa de Lima became a Pueblo on 12 December 1757 – the result of passion, commitment, energy and goodwill among two different peoples made prosperous and notable.

The males from the Sephardic families were allowed to marry the daughters of respectable chiefly Lenca indigenous families. Most Jewish males acknowledge their contemporary lineage from them. We thank and acknowledge José Benjamin Fuentes, his ancestors and descendants, who faithfully maintained the oral treasures of the great journey of the Sephardim who went to that remote place on earth.

## Survival and Identity

The children of the original seven families mentioned by Benjamin lived distant from churches, such as the Cathedral de San Miguel, La Union etc. However, at least once a year they would show up to the “patron saint of local holidays,” often to catch up with distant relatives who came to the event to buy and sell goods.

Most lived crypto-Jewish lives. I was lucky to grow up with the paternal side of my family who never asked us to go to church. My grandfather always said “that there is a difference between honoring a known Angel mentioned in the books, than worshipping a human who has been named a saint here on earth.” >>>



Mapa del Golfo de Amapala (Fonseca) de Basil Ringrose, 1682  
El Salvador

Having said that, Jewish practices were never promoted under that label. For example, in our families we all bled animals before cooking them; we did not eat certain seafood or creatures that are forbidden, such as snakes, etc. We never mixed milk with a series of foods. We did not have cows in the Americas, therefore, the rules about milk and its derivative products were absent. But because Lenca women who married Sephardic man embraced the traditions, they upheld the rules regarding this new food stuff, milk. We must remember that milk came with cows from the Old World; whoever brought this to us, brought the rules about it, too. In our families, the rules on what goes with milk and what doesn't are very old indeed. They are certainly of Jewish origin.

I thought because we had no cows until the 1500s, it couldn't be, but I know now, it is a learned rule. Initially I thought this was another Lenca indigenous taboo, however I learned later that it was both: people forbid eating certain things as well as the consumption of blood. The Lencas already had rules on food when the other people arrived.

So, we grew up doing many things, not because these things were a Jewish way of life, but because that is the "way things were done." That is what our elders would say if we asked the logic behind these practices.

When we were growing up, we were shown how life was lived and we never questioned it. With the War of Federation of the five countries (1820s) and other subsequent wars, our people became more careful about voicing Judaism. However, many of the ways we lived our lives were patterns from old times brought in by the Sephardim whom our grandparents called *los aquellos expulsados*, or the expelled grandparents.

During the 1980-1992 civil war, thousands of descendants in the eastern region, who had lived in isolated villages for many generations, were murdered, accused of being sympathizers with guerrillas. I was disgusted by the killings and was lucky to survive.



*My grandmother,  
Tiburcia Larios Garcia*

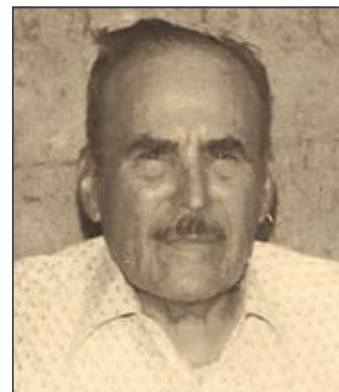
*"...I will  
continue  
my role as  
keeper of  
the oral  
histories."*

El Salvador has an increasing number of evangelical cults and many people still blame Jews for killing Jesus. I know that the first Jews arrived around 1637, however the contemporary Jewish history of my country does not mention them. Instead, they call Jews the *Ashkenaz*, after those who came two centuries later openly as Jews.

In eastern El Salvador, Santa Rosa de Lima is a small town with Sephardic descendants who unfortunately are not willing to look back and reconnect. I am glad to say that after 10 years of asking the local city hall to allow me to

place a plaque to commemorate those pioneering Sephardim, they finally accepted my latest offer.

I am preparing to send the plaque in coming months, to honor those who came to settle there. I will continue my role as keeper of the oral histories of that side of my family, hoping that their peacefulness, loving nature and strength is never lost.



*My grandfather,  
José Benjamin Fuentes*

As much as I can, I keep records of these stories and details of key individuals who lived there and were the descendants of the original people who came from Sefarad.

### **About the Author**

**B**orn in eastern El Salvador, Leonel Antonio Chevez Fuentes worked as a rural health worker during the civil conflict, assisting displaced victims. He is a cultural leader for the indigenous Lenca people of that region, and has been an advocate for their rights at national and international levels, including the U.N.

His role as a community leader attracted several assassinations attempts by the death squads. In 1995, he went to live in exile in Australia. He has been a major contributor to the written history of the Lenca indigenous people. He undertook the documentation of the oral history of the Sephardic families who arrived in the 1600s. He was able to document his grandfather's oral history before he died in 1993.

Currently an international consultant in the leadership and neuromarketing fields, he holds a Bachelor's of Applied Health Science, a Graduate Diploma of Counseling and a Master's in Neuromarketing. After his grandfather's death, he is now the Lenca Chief and *Custodio Sefardita* of the oral tradition of the families of Sephardic heritage of eastern El Salvador, a role he cherishes and respects deeply. His work has taken him to many countries in the Americas, Australasia, the Middle East and Europe. In his spare time he is an artist and an avid reader. He speaks on resilience, intercultural understanding and mythology. 🔥





# Dr. Kate Regan, Ph.D.

*University of Portland and SCJS mourn the loss of Professor Kate Regan. A longtime friend of SCJS, Kate was a speaker at the 2013 Conference in Colorado Springs. She brought knowledge and spirit to every endeavor.*

Kate (Kathleen) was born in Chicago in 1959 and died on July 23, 2014. She was the youngest of six children of Frances (Kimball) Regan and Lewis B. Regan. During a life of enormous activity and accomplishment she brought joy and abundant energy to everything she undertook; whether it was making friends, learning, teaching or film making, Kate did it all with passion and commitment.

Kate grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and moved with her parents to Mexico in 1968. She attended Incarnate Word High School in San Antonio, Texas, where she excelled in Spanish and making super-8 films with her friends.

She began her extraordinary scholarly career at the University of Illinois, where she earned her B.A. in 1981 and her M.A. in 1983. She continued her work at the University of Chicago where she earned her Ph.D. in 1995. Her first professional assignment was as a lecturer in Spanish at Southwest Missouri State University (1983-1987); she later served as an assistant professional specialist at the University of Notre Dame (1991-1995).

Kate joined the University of Portland in 1995 and during the next 19 years became one of the most popular and respected professors on campus. Her scholarly accomplishments are legendary. She served as program director for the Spanish section from 1995 to 2007 and revitalized and developed the UP Spanish language program. By 2013-2014, 119 students were majoring in Spanish. She created programs in Grenada, Spain, and Morelia, Mexico, so her students could study abroad and immerse themselves in Spanish culture. She was a prolific author, and over 12 years presented more than 35 papers at conferences



**Dr. Kate Regan**

throughout the United States and Europe, and had 11 articles published in scholarly journals.

Kate also wrote, directed and produced four films: "The Sephardic Legacy in Segovia, Spain: Pentimento of the Past," "Engaging Innovation: Ideas from Leading Entrepreneurs," "Fiestaremos," and "Trekking with Don Quixote," which were shown at three film festivals and which she presented more than 25 times at universities and conferences around the country.


Kate served as chair of the foreign languages department (now international languages and cultures) from 2007 to 2010, and from 2010 until her death she served as chair of the Collaborative in International Studies and Global Outreach (CISGO).

Kate was named national U.S. Professor of the Year for Master's and Comprehensive Universities in the United States by the Carnegie Foundation and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education in 2000; and received the Excellence in Post-Secondary Foreign Language

Teaching from the Pacific NW Conference of Foreign Languages in 2001. In 2006 the Spanish National Honor Society gave her its Professional Achievement Award for one of her films. And in 2013 she received the Dean's Award for Faculty Leadership at the University of Portland.

But her students remained paramount in her life and work. She mentored hundreds, was beloved by thousands. She once wrote that "sharing the excitement of exploring new worlds and facilitating students' learning is what I love about teaching." Her excitement was contagious. As University president Rev. Mark L. Poorman, C.S.C., said after her unexpected death: "We mourn the loss of a gifted scholar and teacher, a gracious and generous colleague, and a spirited and loving person."

Kate was preceded in death by her mother, Frances and her father, Lewis. She is survived by her partner, Mary Simon, siblings Janet Regan Klich, Edward Regan (Heidi), Julia Gaskill (Andy), Lucia Regan (Joyce Schwensen), Mike Regan (Jean), Angela Regan and Yvette Regan. Kate was a loving aunt to her nieces and nephews, John, Kevin, Dana, Chris, Alan, Lauren, Kelley, Patrick, Joe Klich, Joe Regan, Jeanette and Betty.

Donations can be made to the Professor Kate Regan Memorial Fund at the University of Portland. Please visit [onlinegiving.up.edu](http://onlinegiving.up.edu). 

**University of Portland**





## Northeast

**C**hana Cohen has single-handedly taken on the marketing of SCJS in her hometown of Philadelphia. She is currently board member-at-large and SCJS Northeast Outreach volunteer, and was previously the SCJS Membership Chair. Also a museum docent at the National Museum of American Jewish History, Cohen recently entertained our own *La Granada* newsletter editor, Debbie Isard, who was visiting Philadelphia with her mother.

“The three of us went to the NMAJH,” said Cohen, “where I gave Deb and her mother the first part of my usual tour which begins in the year 1492.”

When they returned home, they received a letter from Idelle Wood, president of The Museum’s Women’s League, in which she wrote how early Jewish colonialist Moses Seixas’ letter influenced the thinking of George Washington. Seixas’

historic letter included the iconic phrase — “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance” — which the new President Washington picked up and used in much of his correspondence. Although Washington is credited with coining this phrase, elemental to the values of the United States, it was really that of Seixas. The original letter is held at the Museum.



“The new England crypto-Jews had the benefit of being able to practice their faith openly,” Cohen added, “while those among the hundreds in the Onate expedition who eventually settled in the Southwest, had to keep their religious expression secret.”

Cohen suggests there might be a future article in all of this, concerning Sephardic Jews, descendants of crypto-Jews, migration patterns, Jewish influence, Jewish legacy continuing today and how this is represented at the Museum.

In further pursuit of contacts, Cohen also attended the large local Mexican Heritage Cultural Center’s annual festival, followed by the 52nd annual Puerto Rican Parade and the annual Brazilian Festival. The month of October, in fact, is Hispanic Heritage month in Philadelphia annually.



**Chana Cohen**

“Philadelphia has a large Latino demographic,” Cohen explained. “Currently some 150,000 people of Latin descent live here; the majority are Puerto Rican.”

*Marchers in costumes and a new generation of celebrants at El Carnivale de Pueblo in Philadelphia, an event that attracts thousands from the U.S. and Mexico. (Photo credit: R. Kennedy for Visit Philadelphia)*





# “...To be sure, wherever there are Latinos, one finds a chance of crypto-Judaic heritage.”

To be sure, wherever there are Latinos, one finds a chance of crypto-Judaic heritage.”

Future events of interest for outreach in Philly include the Portuguese Festival (June), the Hispanic Fiesta (July) and the Caribbean Festival (August) which is not Latino, although the Caribbean has a deep crypto-Jewish history.

Interesting past events include the visit of Rabbi Jonathan Cohen of London’s famed Bevis Marks Spanish Portuguese Synagogue who visited synagogue Mikve Israel in Philadelphia last September, one of the oldest Sephardic synagogues in the United States. He came to speak on the musical traditions of the Spanish/Portuguese Jews. In addition, the 1492 Society event this past October – with implications for SCJS – included a play, an Italian Market Festival and a Columbus Day parade. This particular event is a reminder of the crypto-Jews who are revealing themselves in Calabria and Sicily.

“Recently I interviewed a woman from El Salvador, a descendant of both crypto-Jews and Orthodox Jews,” added Cohen. “She lives in Camden, New Jersey. I suspect there are many Latinos there. It’s on my agenda to explore. She said she would let me record her history, but changed her mind because she doesn’t speak English well, and recommended her son instead. Given that SCJS recently had another person from El Salvador (Antonio Chevez, see “Honoring Memories,” page 28) speak at the Dallas conference, the meeting was timely. I sense a story around all this and intend to follow it.”

Hats-off to Chana for reaching out to her area!

## Southwest

Frances Salas in northern New Mexico writes of a small Messianic church in Pojoaque, New Mexico. They are familiar with the subject of crypto-Jewry and are very interested in learning more.

“I know there are several descendants of crypto-Jews there,” said Sala, “and asked the pastor if I could speak there sometime. He asked me to send him information on what I would speak about; it is a strong possibility. I am working on it.” Salas will pass out copies of *HaLapid* to share on this hoped for occasion.

## Southeast

Genie Milgrom and Abe Lavender will soon speak at the Jewish Museum of Florida-Jewish Studies Initiatives of the School of International and Public Affairs. On January 12, 2015, Abe will speak on “Descendants of the Secret Jews of Iberia,” and on February 2, 2015, Genie will address “How to Find and Prove Your Jewish Ancestry from Catholic and Inquisition Sources.”

Genie has been traveling non-stop, speaking at adult education programs, conducting workshops, headlining Shabbatons, and mesmerizing synagogues with her genealogy research and her own personal story, as well as other topics such as Jewish Portugal. Her appearances since last September and those scheduled well into 2015 are too many to list here, but deserve appreciation by SCJS. 🔥





# Hilos Culturales 2014 & The Crypto-Judaic Experience

BY LORENZO A. TRUJILLO

CRYPTO-JEWISH AWARENESS

“The hidden past and present of the crypto-Jewish population of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico is a past that some recognize and others are discovering.”

*Courtesy of  
Hilos Culturales:  
folk dancers and  
musicians revive  
Spanish Colonial  
style dance at the  
summer Institute*

A few years ago, Adams State University (ASU) received a Title V Grant from the United States Department of Education for Hispanic Serving Institutions. For the past four years, ASU has provided a summer Institute in collaboration with *Hilos Culturales*, an organization dedicated to preserving Spanish and Colonial regional traditions for future generations, including music and dance, both significant cultural elements of our nation's heritage.

Their mission hopes to preserve these cultural traditions and ensure their continued vitality by providing the finest models, teachers, mentors and instructional materials available.



Lorenzo A. Trujillo

The Hilos Summer Institutes were initiated in July 2011, and evolved into their current form in July 2012. They provide a week-long series of seminars to faculty and staff from Adams State University, offering active teaching and learning opportunities, high performance organization classes and cultural exchange.

The cultural seminars provide opportunities for participants to expand their knowledge of the unique history and traditions of the Indo/Hispano populations, especially from Southern

Colorado and Northern New Mexico. These serve to develop, improve and promote student engagement and success for historically under-served and under-represented Hispano students at ASU.

Participants gain deep understanding of the Indo/Hispano cultures to more directly serve these students, thereby promoting respect, validation and appreciation towards successful academic achievement and degree completion.

Topics have included a wide range of subjects, such as: Santero Art &





Pottery, *Remedios* (Herbal Remedies), *El Casorio*: Traditional Spanish Colonial Era Weddings and Dances of the Region, *Los Penitentes* Brotherhood, Weaving History and Traditions, Storytelling, Popular Music of the Colonial Period, *Los Genizaros-Los Comanches de La Serna*, among others.

Unique to this offering in 2014, the presenters accepted the challenge of acknowledging and incorporating aspects of the history and contributions of crypto-Jews of the Southwest in their presentations.

At first glance, one may question this incorporation. This is a monumental development in understanding our past as the early settlers of Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado. Furthermore, and even more monumental, is the openness and willingness to speak about and discover the crypto-Judaic roots that existed and still exist among the original families in this region of the United States. Crypto is the key term. The hidden past—and present—is one that some recognize and others are discovering. So much remains a mystery and those aspects or practices that are known are not openly shared or discussed—as they remain, in many ways, cryptic and hidden.

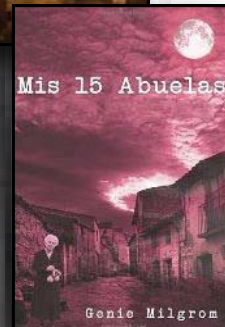
For these reasons, the open acknowledgement of the crypto-Judaic culture in the traditional Hispano experience of the original families is an important development in the teaching of the teachers. Ideally, this is an evolving aspect of the Institute as we move forward to future years of discovering our past and teaching to future generations of faculty, staff and students.

### Dr. Lorenzo A. Trujillo, Ed.D., J.D.

is the President of *Hilos Culturales* and is a practicing attorney in Colorado, as well as a traditional musician (violinist and vocalist). 🔥.



## An unbroken line 15 generations into the past...



### Journey with Genie Milgrom

as she uncovers  
15 generations  
of an unbroken  
maternal lineage to

Pre-Inquisition  
Spain and Portugal  
in her book ***My 15 Grandmothers / Mis 15 Abuelas.***

Separate volumes in English  
and Spanish.

Then follow her  
step-by-step  
guide in her  
second book  
***How I Found My 15 Grandmothers***

(English and Spanish in the  
same edition.)

### And hear her story in person. Genie is

also a popular  
and inspiring  
speaker for  
genealogical  
societies,  
organizations,  
universities  
and colleges  
worldwide.



For ordering & booking information go to  
**GenieMilgrom.com**

# 2014 SCJS CONFERENCE A TEXAS-SIZE SUCCESS!

BY MATTHEW WARSHAWSKY AND GENIE MILGROM

## SCJS CONFERENCE NEWS

Some 100 registrants gathered at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Texas, July 20-22 to attend more than 30 presentations at the 24th annual conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. The event showcased the research of academics studying the phenomena of crypto-Jewry, and also descendants of crypto-Jews of the Iberian Peninsula, Mexico, El Salvador and other countries who have investigated the heritage of their families in these places and elsewhere.

The conference was truly a trans-national and international gathering, as we welcomed participants from throughout the United States, Mexico, France, Israel and Australia. Notable throughout the diversity of topics of the seven panels and various plenary presentations was a commitment to the study of crypto-Judaism as a historical and lived reality that continues to evolve.

For the third year in a row, a genealogy workshop Sunday afternoon preceded the start of the conference. This year's workshop was presented by Schelly Talalay Dardashti, vice president of membership for SCJS; new SCJS president Genie Milgrom, whose term of leadership commenced at this conference; and Bennett Greenspan, president and CEO of Family Tree DNA. Each presenter approached the topic from his or her own area of expertise and in a complementary way. Not surprisingly, the panel was swamped with questions and as a result, a number of attendees decided to have their DNA tested so that they might learn more about their ancestry.

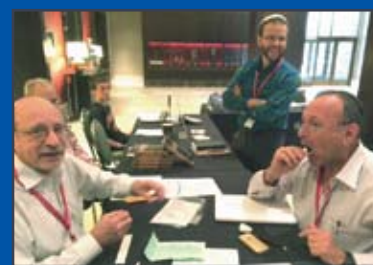
The invited speakers for the plenary sessions addressed crypto-Judaism from a literature-based perspective. Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, a professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and a prolific author of much renown in the field of Latin American Jewish Studies, presented the keynote address Sunday evening. Entitled "Crypto-Judaism: Memory, Tradition, and Transition," her talk opened a window into the permeable world that individuals of Jewish origin in the Iberian world have inhabited since at least medieval times. >>>



**Matthew Warshawsky**  
Conference Program  
Coordinator

*Old and new friends gather for  
a memorable experience.*

*Photos by Debbie Isard and Don Reiser*







## Record-breaking Attendance — Good Times Were Had by All

**M**any thanks to all presenters, keynotes Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, Ilan Stavans and Doreen Carvajal, and all volunteers including Genie Milgrom, event producer; Debbie Isard, Registration Coordinator; Matthew Warshawsky, Program Coordinator; Corinne Brown, Marketing; Art Benveniste, Registration; Schelly Talalay Dardashti, Administration; Dolores Sloane, Arts Grant Recipients; and a host of others.

### Special Thanks to Rachel Bortnick, Dallas Host

*Excerpted from a letter by Clint Risner, Dallas resident and Conference Attendee*



**Rachel Bortnick**

Dear Editor,

Rachel Amado de Bortnick demonstrated exemplary skills and outstanding leadership in making this event meaningful and successful. Many people were unaware of the Sephardic contributions to Judaism and the culture of the crypto-Jews...

She is truly a professional regarding her knowledge of the Sephardim and especially the history of crypto-Judaic studies. Because of Rachel, I learned that my mother's great-grandmother, Elisa Orenta Sultana Pruitt was a crypto-Jew. I attended all sessions and learned something new each day...

Rachel was responsible for the hotel arrangements and the local publicity of this event. She made arrangements at the Hilton Anatole Hotel which was an ideal place for this conference.

The location was easily accessible and the hotel rates were only \$105 nightly which Rachel successfully coordinated. She demonstrated great publicity skills in advertising this event in the Jewish community. For that reason, this event had many attendees that gave superlative comments afterwards.

In closing, many attendees discovered that they had Sephardic ancestry. What a successful, educational cultural event! Thanks and Gracias!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & THANKS

Citing authors from the Golden Age of Spanish literature and more recent scholars of Jewry and crypto-Jewry in an Iberian context, Muñiz-Huberman discussed the importance of flexibility to the evolution of Sephardim over the centuries, particularly in the case of the *conversos* (New Christians) among them, who were neither entirely Jewish nor Christian. Ilan Stavans, a professor of Latin American and Latino culture at Amherst College and an internationally known author, cultural critic and anthologist, presented the second Annual Martin Sosin Address to Advance Scholarship about the Crypto-Judaic Arts. His presentation, "The Crypto-Jew as Metaphor," was a thought-provoking and wide-ranging address that suggested that their efforts of identity preservation make crypto-Jews "the real Jews."

Doreen Carvajal, a Paris-based reporter for the New York Times and International Herald Tribune, spoke of her personal quest to discover the roots of her family in late medieval Spain, which led her to publish a memoir, *The Forgetting River: A Modern Tale of Survival, Identity, and the Inquisition*.

Featuring between two and four speakers, each panel focused on topics such as Sephardic identity and art; crypto-Jews from Texas, Latin America and Iberia in prior times and today; genealogical perspectives; personal narratives describing journeys of discovery of crypto-Jewish identity; and the issue of Spanish citizenship for descendants of Sephardim.

In addition to these presentations, the conference also showcased two documentarians and their films, as well as two concerts. After the screening of "Trees Cry for Rain" (*Arvoles Yoran por Luvias*) a question-and-answer session followed with Bonnie Burt who directed the film, and Dallas resident and SCJS member Rachel Amado Bortnick, whose life story it profiles. Nationally recognized director Hector Galán explained the origins of *conjunto tejano* music and showed several fragments of a film he made portraying the lifestyle and work of *conjunto* musicians in Texas today. He then introduced Los Morales Boyz, a group of young *conjunto* musicians who performed during the Judy Frankel Memorial Concert after the annual membership meeting. The audience also heard Stephanie Cohen sing a variety of liturgical and secular pieces of Sephardic music in an earlier lunchtime recital called "*Sembrando semillas* (Planting Seeds): How Do We Pray a New Song?"

Grants from the Martin Sosin-Stratton-Petit Foundation supported the participation of Doreen Carvajal, Hector Galán, Los Morales Boyz, and Stephanie Cohen.

At the Society's annual meeting on Monday night, elections were held and Genie Milgrom was confirmed as the new president. Many thanks to immediate past-president Roger Martinez for his service in this role, as well as the SCJS board members whose hard work made possible this year's conference, particularly Rachel Amado Bortnick. In the

absence of a vice president of conferences, Rachel attended to logistical details that guaranteed the high quality of the setting, meals and service at the Hilton Anatole. Additionally, Matthew and the rest of the board are especially grateful to Genie for taking on the presidency of the Society and for the energetic leadership she has already demonstrated.

Plans are in the works to begin preparation for the 25th annual SCJS conference to be held in July 2015 in Miami, Florida. In the meantime, we look forward to a year of growth and activity and welcome your participation and input. Stay tuned via [www.cryptojews.com](http://www.cryptojews.com) or our Facebook page. 🔥



## SAVE THE DATE!



## JULY 19-21, 2015



# Conference News — Past and Future

## October 13, 2014

**The Center for Crypto-Jewish Studies and Hispanic-Jewish Relations Symposium in the Rio Grande Valley**  
Information: [www.hispanicjews.com](http://www.hispanicjews.com)

This first-time event, *A Tapestry of the Crypto-Jewish Experience RGV*, united two peoples who share a common heritage by exploring the common historic, linguistic and cultural roots.

The mission of the CCJSHJR is to educate the Hispanic and Jewish Communities about their shared history and lineage in order to facilitate a better understanding of the past, build bridges in the present, and provide a better future for all who are part of this legacy.

The event was held on Columbus Day, Monday, October 13, 2014 at the Brownsville Event Center. Symposium speakers included **Rabbi Peter Tarlow, Ph.D.** and leaders from the Jewish, Catholic and Hispanic Business communities from the State of Texas. The event was sponsored by the Brownsville Convention & Visitors Bureau and LaVidaValle.com. Many of the symposium's goals were inspired by Pope Francis, the first Hispanic Pope to bring people from the Hispanic and Jewish Communities together. Visit [hispanicjews.com](http://hispanicjews.com).

## January 18–19, 2015

**Crypto-Jewish Conference**  
**Texas A&M Hillel, College Station, Texas**  
Information & Registration: [www.hispanicjews.com](http://www.hispanicjews.com)

The Abe and Annie Seibel Center for Crypto-Jewish Studies and Hispanic-Jewish Relations will host its first academic conference for 2015 on Sunday and Monday, January 19–20, 2015. The conference is free and open to everyone.

### Schedule

#### Sunday, January 18, 2015

7:30 to 8:45 p.m. — Concert of Sephardic Music performed by *Los Biblicos*

8:45–9:00 p.m. — Coffee and cake

#### Monday, January 19, 2015

9–9:30 a.m. — **Rabbi Peter Tarlow, Ph.D.** and **Dr. Maria Ferrier**: Welcome and Setting the Stage

9:30–10:30 a.m. — **Dr. Armando Alonso**: The Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Experience

10:30–11:30 a.m. — **Dr. Hilaire Kallendorf**: Losing the Self: Inquisitorial Scribal Mediation and the Paradox of Crypto-Jewish Autobiography

11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. — Lunch

1:00–2:00 p.m. — **Dolores Sloan**: Writing Fiction About Crypto-Jews: Identity, Appropriation and Agency

2:00–3:00 p.m. — **Dr. Ethan Katz**: North African Jews in Disguise During the Holocaust: How Far From *Al-Andalus*?

3:00–4:00 p.m. — **Dr. Marie-Theresa Hernandez**: Enigmas of Identity: Claiming Jewish Ancestry Five Centuries After the Inquisition

4:00–5:00 p.m. — **David ben Yosef**: Sabbateanism and the *Marrano* Experience

5:30 p.m. — Close

## February 8, 2015

**The Golden Age of Jewish Spain**  
**A Historical and Cultural Experience**  
**American Jewish University (AJU) Familian Campus**  
**Belair, California**  
Information: [www.coalitionforladinolegacy.org](http://www.coalitionforladinolegacy.org)

**Elisheva (Irma) Diaz, M.A.J.S.**  
D.D. Conference Chair

Includes abbreviated lectures, a kosher lunch, panel discussion and entertainment. Speakers include **Dolores Sloan** and **Art Benveniste**, and others.

9:30 a.m. — Registration

10:00 a.m. — Program begins

Students and Seniors 60+ yrs — \$20.00

Children under 8 yrs — FREE

All others — \$28.00

To purchase tickets by mail, send check payable to AYEKAH – (memo: Conference)  
216 South Citrus Avenue, #356 • West Covina, CA 91791

## March 23–24, 2015

**The Institute for Sefardic and Anusim Studies**  
**Netanya Academic College, Israel International Conference**  
**Mapping the Anusim Diaspora: Six Centuries of Pushing Borders**  
Information: [salomonb@netanya.ac.il](mailto:salomonb@netanya.ac.il)  
+972-(0)54-456-4555 (Shlomo)

Call for papers deadline November 15, 2014

“Mapping the Anusim Diaspora” will focus on mapping the geography of the *anusim* diaspora, both historical and contemporary, and shedding light on various perspectives of the recent phenomenon of the *Retornados*.

## Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

Nurturing a global organization for those researching the history of crypto-Jewish and Sephardic communities around the world.

For membership information  
visit [cryptojews.com](http://cryptojews.com)





University of Colorado  
Colorado Springs

Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish Studies Program  
Department of History, Columbine Hall 2048  
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE

PAID

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO  
PERMIT NO. 657

— HALAPID —

*Tudo se ilumina  
para aquele  
que busca  
a luz*



*All is  
illuminated  
for those  
who seek the light*

— Avram Ben Rosh —

## Discover Your True Jewish Heritage



Genealogists used to just rely on public records and word of mouth. That's no longer the case thanks to DNA testing! Now, you can use the world's largest Jewish DNA database **to discover new Jewish family members and confirm your Jewish heritage (including Cohanim descendants).**

FamilyTree DNA offers tests for paternal, maternal, and general ancestry starting as low as **\$59.**

**\$10 OFF**

Use coupon  
Code

•JSCJS2014•  
at checkout

Visit [FamilyTreeDNA.com](http://FamilyTreeDNA.com)  
or call us at **713-868-1438** to learn more.

