

David Sharif

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Mediterranean Politics

Prof. Hiram Irizarry

Spanish Jews Bringing Democracy

Documentary Authors for the video “1492: El otro camino,” are explaining how democracy was brought after the Jews from Spain experienced hardship due to different religion. At the end of the video, the documentary authors define democracy as “Creating a culture where all voices are valued as an instrument for change.” When the documentary authors listen to the explanation of “other path” from the Spanish Jews, they discover how the Spanish Jews brought democracy to the Eastern Mediterranean countries. According to the video documentary authors, both “democracy and the other path,” means bringing equal rights to all citizens and abolishing prejudice.

When Spanish was being brought to a different universe, more than 200,000 Spaniards were forced to migrate as a result of their religion. Many of them were Jews who had been a piece of the social orders in Spain for a large number of years. When Christopher Columbus cruised west to bring Spain’s current language, the Jewish groups of Spain were forced to leave in different directions. Some went to Portugal, The Netherlands, and numerous different places in Western Europe. A lot of the Spanish Jews sailed east on the Mediterranean Sea, and were welcomed by Muslims from the Ottoman Turkish Sultan Bayezid II, who governed a realm from Turkey up into the Balkans. In fact, more than 150,000 Jews settled in the grounds spreading out from Istanbul to Sarajevo, Bitola,

Dubrovnik, Sofia, Belgrade, and Thessaloniki. In 1492, these Jews lived among Muslims and Christians: both Catholic and Orthodox. The Spanish Jews would be everlastingly known as the Sephardim, which means the Jews of Spain in Hebrew. They kept their dialect and brought it with them from Spain. They also brought trades they had specialized in back from Spain. They were doctors, drug specialists, traders, retailers, tinsmiths and leatherworkers. For Mediterranean Jews, this means, even though they were expelled from Spain, their lives were saved until World War II began.

In 1992 when war came back again, Bosnian Serbs told the Spanish Jews of Sarajevo that people of different religions were not permitted to live together. The Spanish Jews denied the statement, because they remembered that their families were taken from their homeland in 1492, and experienced so much hatred when most of them were killed in 1941 and 1942. Reaching the 5th century of their migration from Spain, the Spanish Jews stated, "We travel on the other path. It is not the way of hate." They helped their city by creating a non-sectarian humanitarian aid agency, and they worked in the synagogues with Muslims and Serbian Orthodox and Catholic Croats. With that being said, they were defending their rights towards democracy for the nation. Democracy is about living together, helping and supporting each other, bringing equal rights, and always saying NO to prejudice. Going forward into the 1990's, it showed that Mediterranean Jews had the determination to bring democracy for the Eastern Mediterranean countries due to all of the shame and humiliation they have gone through during World War II.

After watching the video in class last week, it was very interesting to see how Jews have really succeeded for a better life after suffering through a lot of hatred. It also shows that Jews played an important role as intercultural mediators in European history. Having Judaism as my religion, it is important to study the history of Jews by watching videos or reading about their interactions with Christians & Muslims, and how they have brought equality to different nations after losing their loved ones during the second world war.