

**SESSION 1:  
A LIVING LANGUAGE**

**The Keys of Sepharad:  
A Jewish Postcolonial Discursive Analysis on Ladinokomunita**

Carlos Yebra López  
New York University

In this multimedia presentation I will analyze the nature and relevance of the Ladinokomunita Yahoo Group (Bortnick, 1999-) for the purpose of re-articulating the contemporary Sephardic identity of its Judeo-Spanish speakers. To that effect, I will draw upon a metaphorical interpretation of the received story according to the vast majority of the more than 100,000 Jews that left the Peninsula on the occasion of The Edict of La Alhambra (1492, echoed by a further decree issued by Manuel I of Portugal in 1496) are reported to have kept the keys of their ancestral homes as a form of diasporic promise, a metallic passport to Sepharad, a metonymy of belongingness. In the light of the recent news that the Spanish and Portuguese Parliaments have issued a law this year (2015) granting dual citizenship to anyone who can prove Sephardic ancestors in their genealogical tree, I will argue that the manifestation and re-articulation of Judeo--Spanish via the Ladinokomunita group can be said, in a sense, to have been the true keys of Sepharad, i.e., the symbolic safeguard that has fostered the kind of spatial cohesion and temporal continuity required by this sociopolitical process.

**In Pursuit of a Treasured Relationship:  
Cooperation and Collaboration between the Seattle Sephardic Community and the  
University of Washington Sephardic Studies Program**

Albert Maimon  
Sephardic Studies Committee Member, Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of  
Washington

In the past five years, a very special relationship has been developing between the University of Washington and the Seattle Sephardic community. This presentation describes our journey. In this discussion, I will provide a historical framework as well as our current programmatic activities and collaborative developments. I will also explore the differing notions of “community” in the Seattle Sephardic context.

**LadinoUSA:  
Reaching out to Spanish Departments and the Latino Community**

Shara Morris  
Public Radio Producer

Payton Phillips Quintanilla  
University of California, Los Angeles

This presentation will explore the unique position of Spanish departments, Spanish speakers, and Spanish-language learners to engage with Ladino and promote its increased use and presence on campus and beyond. It will also analyze the media's role in the formation and/or perpetuation of certain narratives about Ladino, and the ramifications of those narratives in both the Academy and in the Community. Beginning with UCLA and Los Angeles as a case study and ending with broader, national implications, we hope to stimulate a discussion around the development of alternative narratives that neither eulogize nor exoticize Sephardic voices, and which tackle the thorny issues of ownership, responsibility, and accessibility. Our jumping-off point will be LatinoUSA's recent radio-story, "Judeo-Spanish: Saving a Dying Language," which was part of a larger piece called "Ay Vey! Being Jewish and Latino."

**SESSION 2:  
LADINO AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S  
SHOAH FOUNDATION**

Special Panel Description: This panel suggests insights into ways of engaging undergraduate students in the study and research of Ladino. In the fall of 2015, Dr. Jessica Marglin taught a general education course on the Sephardic Jewish diaspora at the University of Southern California (USC), for which I (Andrew Soria) acted as the teaching assistant. That course included several units on Ladino linguistics, culture, and literature. As part of their culminating project using testimonies from USC's Shoah Foundation, several students expanded on these educational opportunities in Ladino to engage in original research on how World War II influenced the state of the language in southern and eastern Europe. In the first presentation, I will give an overview of how we incorporated Ladino into the course and reflect on the ways in which USC's Shoah Foundation may increase teacher effectiveness, including how to engage students from other majors who may lack a background in Jewish Studies in general, or Sephardic Studies in particular. Then, two students from that course – Dana Austin and Lara Sassounian – will present their research on World War II and Ladino as concrete examples of how this pedagogy can be actualized in student outcomes and how these video testimonies can support historical research.

**The Shoah Foundation and Ladino Pedagogy**

Andrew Soria  
University of Southern California

In this presentation, I will reflect on the pedagogical value of USC's Shoah Foundation for Ladino awareness, research, and, ultimately, preservation. To begin, I will summarize Dr. Jessica Marglin's recent general education class on the Sephardic diaspora at the University of Southern California for which I served as the teaching assistant, providing an overview of the course structure and its incorporation of content related to the Ladino

language. Then, I will describe briefly the course's culminating research project and its use of video testimonies from USC's Shoah Foundation. The use of these clips not only increases student awareness of Ladino as a living language spoken by real individuals, but it also provides opportunities for students across ethnic, religious, and academic boundaries to ask critical questions about Ladino as a language, as a vehicle of cultural expression, and as a marker of personal identity. For teachers of Ladino and Sephardic Studies more generally, the cultivation of these research skills through Shoah Foundation testimonies in and/or about Ladino both promotes further intellectual investigation in the field and encourages understanding of the value of the still-endangered language for a wide variety of students who would otherwise not be aware of its existence.

### **World War II and the Decline of the Ladino Language**

Dana Austin  
University of Southern California

World War II was a devastating time for the entire Jewish population, and Jewish languages were no exception to this widespread destruction. During WWII, the influx of anti-Semitic feelings and Jewish deaths acted as the final factors in the ultimate decline of the Ladino language; however, Ladino's decline actually began far before the onset of the war due to increasing nationalism, improved education, and pre-war anti-Semitism. Jewish schools established in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, provided Sephardic Jews with Western educations that emphasized languages such as French over traditional ones like Ladino. Additionally, a rising sense of nationalism and westernization throughout many Sephardim-inhabited countries further marginalized the importance of Ladino as national language and culture took precedence. These changes caused Ladino to become an outdated language among younger generations, used mainly for connection to heritage and communication with elders. With these factors in place before the onset of WWII, the explosion of anti-Semitism and Jewish deaths resulting from the war contributed to the rapid decline of an already dwindling language.

### **The Effect Genocides Have On Minority Languages**

Lara Sassounian  
University of Southern California

"I have come to the realization that so many Jews with my Sephardic background, were deported, never to return, and that hit me like a sledge hammer"(Harrison, 33:01). Luna Harrison, a survivor of the Holocaust, spoke this powerful statement during her interview with the USC Shoah Foundation. Harrison mourns the loss of not only her Sephardic brethren, but also the loss of her beloved Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish language. After watching several USC Shoah Foundation interviews, I discovered the grave impact the Holocaust had on the Ladino language and Sephardic culture. Approximately 6 million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. Along with their deaths, came another loss, the decline of the Ladino language. Sarajevo and Salonika were both cities once rich in

Sephardic culture and Ladino. However, these cities are no longer hubs of Sephardic language and culture. Similarly, following the Armenian Genocide, there was a decline of Western Armenian language. This talk seeks to explore the negative effects genocides have on minority languages, particularly the Ladino language following the Holocaust, while the loss of the Western Armenian language following the Armenian Genocide is used as a comparable case.

### **SESSION 3: LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND IDENTITY**

#### **Ladino Copular Variation: A Case Study of Seattle Ladino Heritage Speakers**

Ilana Mishkin  
Carleton College

This study investigates variation in the use of the Ladino copulas *ser* and *estar* by members of the Seattle Ladino meeting group nicknamed The Ladineros. Most members of The Ladineros heard Ladino as children but responded in English, and the majority rarely use Ladino outside of the weekly Ladineros meeting. For this study, seventeen informants were asked to verbally translate simple sentences from English to Ladino that contained the English verb 'to be' and either a locative predicate or predicate adjective. One informant used *ser* in all translations, while all others used *ser* in some contexts and *estar* in others. Informants exhibited innovative uses of *estar* to express the location of events and with predicate adjectives denoting permanent and intrinsic characteristics. Informants also exhibited an innovative use of *ser* with predicate adjectives denoting temporary characteristics. Mougeon et al.'s (2005) four-step process for assessing the source of linguistic variation indicates that the two innovative uses of *estar* are likely due to internally induced change, while the innovative use of *ser* is likely due to contact with English. Future research in this community will include speakers outside The Ladineros and will inquire about the linguistic variables that cause some speakers to exhibit more innovative copula use than others.

#### **The o's and the u's: Vowel Raising in the Rhodes Dialect of Seattle Ladino**

Molly FitzMorris  
University of Washington

Seattle, Washington, home to one of the most dynamic Sephardic communities in the world (Bejarano and Aizenberg 2012), welcomed its first Ladino speakers from Marmara and Rhodes in 1902 and 1904, and a division between the *turkinos* and the *rodeslies* has survived to some extent ever since. This talk will present the beginnings of a social network study that aims to examine that divide. One of the key differences between the Turkish dialect(s) and the Rhodesli dialect of Seattle Ladino appears to be the raising of unstressed mid-vowels seen in the Rhodesli dialect. In this talk, there will be discussion of the separation between the two dialects as well as the linguistic outcomes of this

separation. I will briefly discuss origin theories of vowel raising in Ladino, but will focus on illustrating the phenomenon using speech samples obtained in 2013 and 2014, and presenting preliminary findings. Community feedback regarding vowel raising in Los Angeles dialects of Ladino will be graciously welcomed during the question and answer session.

**SESSION 4:  
INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH MUSIC AND HUMOR**

**Music of the Crossroads:  
Sephardic Roots of Flamenco in Andalucía**

Sara Rosenthal  
Independent Scholar

In 1492, after Ferdinand and Isabella's decree forcing Spanish Jews to convert, flee, or be executed, many Jews fled to Andalucía, southern Spain. There, living in the mountains alongside Muslims and *gitano* gypsies, this unique blending of cultures gave birth to flamenco music. In examining this cross-section of cultures, a picture begins to emerge of the rich multicultural tapestry of Andalucía, where marginalized peoples came together to escape systemic persecution. The resultant music, a fusion of Sephardic, Arabic, and *gitano* traditions, among others, serves as a potent reminder of the beauty borne of shared suffering and the cross-cultural commonalities that are particularly relevant in today's world of cultural upheaval. This presentation highlights the Jewish roots of flamenco by comparing various traits of flamenco *cante* (song) with audio and video clips of Sephardic music from Turkey, Morocco, Thessaloniki, and other countries of the Sephardic diaspora. The notion of *duende*, the powerful spirit of flamenco that overcomes a singer during a deep performance, is also explored in relation to Sephardic music. Finally, this presentation will explore contemporary musical fusions that are revisiting traditional forms, including a modern-day musical troupe that melds Ladino and flamenco music.

***Aires de Sefarad:*  
Cultural Interchange in the Judeo-Spanish Romancero**

Nicolette van den Bogerd  
California State University, Long Beach

Judeo-Spanish music in Spain is an oral tradition that dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and much of it was lost after the inquisition of 1492. French poet Isaac Levy defied the abstruse nature of documenting an oral tradition when he compiled hundreds of original melodies of Ladino *romanceros* in *Chants judéo-espagnols*. Argentine-Jewish composer Jorge Liderman composed song cycle *Aires de Sefarad* after traveling to Andalusia in 2004. In *Aires de Sefarad*, Liderman used selections from Levy's work in a setting for violin and guitar. In this paper, the concept of the Judeo-Spanish *romancero* is explored

within the scope of Jorge Liderman's Argentine musical background. Also discussed are the musical parameters of the Argentine *romancero*, and how it relates to the Judeo-Spanish *romancero* in Spain. This research includes a consideration of the interchange of musical characteristics of both *romanceros* in *Aires de Sefarad*, and attempts to demonstrate innovation through musical examples. Also discussed are the influences of the Latin American *Cancións*, Flamenco music, and Arabic modes, and how it relates to the emerge of a multicultural Argentine Judeo-Spanish *romancero*.

**Fools and Folktales:  
A Brief Study in Comparative Yiddish and Ladino Humor**

Max Daniel  
University of California, Los Angeles

This presentation explores Jewish folktales and humor in Yiddish and Ladino. This comparison situates universal folkloric tropes against particular Jewish references, with further contrast grounded in Ashkenazi (Eastern European) and Sephardic (Ottoman/Mediterranean) cultural references. The figure of Joha/Hoja, the fool and simpleton in many folktales in Sephardic and Arab cultures, is compared with the Yiddish character tropes of the *schlemiel* and *schlimazel*. This discussion also examines the issues surrounding the differences and problems in comparing Yiddish and Ladino culture, especially with regard to the history of ethnography of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews before World War II. This conversation ends with some reflections on the value of comparative folklore and what it might say about Jews entering modernity across the geographic spectrum.