

Topic Development

When I began research for Departmental Honors for History, I planned to investigate socioeconomic barriers faced by Seattle Sephardic Jews during the interwar period. I believed my project to be necessary on a broad scale because Sephardic memory is almost always eclipsed by Ashkenazi memory in the field of Jewish studies. As a minority group within a minority group, Sephardic Jews and their stories are often forgotten or purposefully repressed. Societal and institutional racism play a role in the erasure of this history as Sephardim are often the target of both Antisemitism and Orientalism. Through my research, I sought to bring greater Sephardic representation to the field of Jewish studies by rejecting academic norms which have downplayed the validity and existence of a distinct Sephardic Jewish history.

When beginning preliminary research, I was struck by the way tensions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim were concealed in current literature. I noted that authors tended to deemphasize conflict between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, instead electing to emphasize the ways Sephardic Jews fit into the broader Seattle community. I believe authors made this rhetorical choice to demonstrate the assimilation potential of Sephardic Jews into the broader American nation. Fascinated by my discoveries, I decided to shift the focus of my project to the Seattle Sephardic origin narrative of the early twentieth century. My final argument is as follows: Both forced to assimilate into whiteness and cognizant that whiteness served as a pathway to privilege, Seattle Sephardim sought to conceal their Ottoman past and to proclaim their European roots to demonstrate their suitability for participation in white American society; in the process, they sanitized a complex and contradictory history of race and national belonging.

Research Strategies & Resources

My research would not have been possible without Professor Devin E. Naar, Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies, and Professor Moon-Ho Jung, Associate Professor of History. Before beginning the Honors in History Program, I took four of Professor Naar's courses: Holocaust: History and Memory, Jewish Cultural History, Sephardic Diaspora, and Honors Modern Historical Writing. I also completed an ad-hoc project with Professor Naar's guidance through the Interdisciplinary Honors Program. I spent many months studying related material before formally beginning my thesis. I believe this decision majorly assisted me in the research and writing process.

While completing my thesis for History Honors, Professor Naar helped me find primary and secondary resources specifically relevant to my project such as Albert Adatto's master's thesis "Sephardim and the Seattle Sephardic Community." Professor Jung assisted me in considering how my project fit into broader themes of race and identity in America, suggesting texts such as Ian Haney Lopez's *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. Their combined guidance and contrasting perspectives continuously pushed me to interrogate and strengthen my argument.

The assistance of Sephardic Studies Coordinator Ty Alhadeff was instrumental to my research. Mr. Alhadeff helped me navigate the Jewish Archives, especially the Digital Collections, where I accessed oral histories from the descendants of the first Sephardic Jews to migrate to Seattle. These narratives helped me to ascertain the disparity between the lived experiences of first Seattle Sephardic Jews and the way those experiences had been reimagined over time.

To better contextualize the articles and oral histories I was studying, I decided to organize personal interviews with researchers whose own work greatly inspired my own. An interview with Professor Emeritus Quintard Taylor helped me to understand the place of Jews in Seattle's Central district during the early twentieth century. A separate interview with Professor James Gregory assisted me in understanding racial restrictive covenants and navigating various websites organized by the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project.

History librarian Theresa Mudrock helped me to navigate Special Collections. Ms. Mudrock's presentation on Zotero and Coggle also assisted me in organizing my ideas. I continued to use these tools throughout the research and writing process.

I utilized many databases while completing my project, but the *America: History & Life* and the *Historical Jewish Press* proved most useful to my studies. I spent hours sifting through newspaper articles on these databases to understand the lived experiences of Sephardic Jews as they migrated to Seattle in the early twentieth century. Articles from the *Bnai Brith Messenger*, the *Jewish Transcript*, and *The Seattle Times* greatly influenced my work.

The aforementioned databases also helped me to discover *The Jewish Historical Quarterly*, the journal in which many Sephardic Jewish historical narratives have been published. Articles such as Marc Angel's "A Personal and Scholarly Account: Early Sephardim in Seattle" provided important Seattle-specific Jewish historical data around race and gender that shaped the trajectory of thesis.

From the beginning to end of my research, I endeavored to stay organized and keep track of every source that I referenced. After six months of research and writing, I ended up with a 68-page notes document complete with detailed commentary and citations. I utilized 52 distinct sources in the writing process specifically.

Finding Information

The greatest challenge to my research was finding nuanced sources around Sephardic-Ashkenazic relations. Many texts on Seattle Jewish relations are written from an Ashkenazic viewpoint, so it was sometimes difficult to find articles or interviews that acknowledged the Sephardic perspective. I discussed my predicament with Professor Naar who pointed me towards newspaper articles and authors who might be of interest. I also spent time on the Digital Collections of the Jewish Archives where I successfully found relevant oral histories. Finally, I broadened the scope of research, discovering that seemingly non-related sources (such as David Romey's thesis on Sephardic folklore) had introductions or appendices that provided insight into Sephardic-Ashkenazic relations in early Seattle.

Evaluating Information

Evaluating information occasionally proved difficult as many authors choose to downplay or omit challenges faced by early Sephardic migrants to demonstrate Sephardic belonging in the United States. To ensure I offered the most historically representative narrative possible, I cross-referenced sources and paid special attention to oral histories. I found that oral histories often complicated or dispelled claims made in written works.