

NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM

PALACE OF THE GOVERNORS

Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition, and New World Identities

An original exhibition opening May 22, 2016



Santa Fe—In the 10th and 11th centuries, Spain flowered into a golden age, as Muslim, Jewish and Catholic peoples achieved new heights in science, philosophy and the arts. Four centuries later, the vaunted triculturalism had deteriorated into dissent, segregation and riots.

By 1492, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella unified the nation under the Catholic crown, cultural chaos roared forth. A royal edict ordered all Muslims and Jews to either leave the country or convert to Catholicism within four months—or else. The Spanish Inquisition (and later, the Portuguese and Mexican Inquisitions) stood ready to persecute anyone who failed to abide. Violators would endure prisons, torture and death.

What would you do? Repudiate the language, religion and customs of your people in order to stay in your home and with your family? Or walk away from all you owned, all you knew, and embark upon treacherous journeys across land and sea toward a life you could barely imagine?

Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition, and New World Identities, opening May 22, 2016 (tentatively through December 31, 2016), stands on the brink of that chasm and leaps into a diaspora that dates to biblical times. For the first time, a major institution tells the comprehensive story of how Spain's Jewry found a tenuous foothold in North America. Despite continued persecution, its people persisted—sometimes as *conversos*, sometimes as secret “crypto-Jews”—to finally make a mark as successful merchants, artists and philanthropists in New Mexico. Emblems of that struggle for cultural identity appear even today: A Star of David

carved into a tombstone in a Catholic cemetery; oral histories of tangled roots; Hispanic villages where genetic clusters speak to Jewish lineage.

Working with institutions in Spain, Mexico City and New York, curators Josef Díaz and Roger Martinez have gathered physical evidence, including trial testimony, 15th-century tiles from El Transito Synagogue in Toledo, an 18th-century painting of a Mexico City auto-da-fé, family trees that appear to scrub out evidence of Jewish heritage, silver Purim groggers, and more. They bring to life people like Don Bernardo López de Mendizábal, a 17th-century governor of New Mexico, and his wife, Doña Teresa Aguilera y Roche. Hauled before the Inquisition in Mexico City, they were charged with—though never convicted of—being secret Jews.

Fractured Faiths reunites Spanish artifacts with their New World counterparts for the first time to reveal the history of the Spanish Sephardim—the stalwarts, the converts and the hidden Jews—and their long heritage within the Americas. A global story that played out on New Mexico soil, this monumental exhibit details one of history's most compelling chronicles of human tenacity and the power of cultural identity.

In concert with the exhibit, Fresco Fine Art Publications will produce a bilingual catalog of the exhibition's most important artifacts and documents. A programming series will deepen visitors' understanding of Jewish life in the Americas and the struggle to preserve identity against often tragic odds. Lending institutions to *Fractured Faiths* include Spain's Museo de Teruel, Biblioteca Nacional de España, and Museo Sefardí; Mexico City's Museo Franz Mayer and the Museo Nacional de Arte; and the Hispanic Society of America in New York City.

Image at top: Shackles from the Inquisition prison in Mexico City, 17th century. Private collection. Photo by Jorge Pérez de Lara. Download a high-res version of this and other exhibition images [by clicking here](#).

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For more information about the museum, log onto www.nmhistorymuseum.org.

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[The New Mexico History Museum](#), 113 Lincoln Avenue, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is part of a campus that includes the Palace of the Governors, a National Treasure and the oldest continuously occupied public building in the United States; the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library; the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives; the Press at the Palace of the Governors; and the Native American Artisans Program. A division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, its exhibitions and programs are supported by the Museum of New Mexico Foundation.

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