



FLAMES
OF
FREEDOM

©2024 LANCE TOLAND ENTERTAINMENT

FLAMES OF FREEDOM

Flames of Freedom is a new podcast detailing the untold history of the Jewish escape from Europe to Georgia in 1733. The podcast is broken into two elements: Season One's main 12-episode dramatic series and a series of bonus interviews *Flames of Freedom REVEALED* dispersed between dramatic episodes. The podcast launches on Monday, September 17, 2024, and will be available on all major podcasting platforms and YouTube.

THE DRAMATIC SHOW

For the past thousand years, Jews living in Europe experienced an ever-escalating onslaught of violence, massacres, torture and burnings at the stake, public humiliation, and confiscation of their belongings and wealth. Often, they had to choose between forced conversion to Catholicism, death by the sword, or exile from their countries. By the latter part of the 15th Century, the Inquisition was raging in Spain and Portugal, sparked by the Roman papacy. In Prussia, Poland, and Ukraine, deadly pogroms were a regular feature of Jewish life. In response, many fled to more tolerant and less antisemitic countries.

Flames of Freedom is a docudrama chronicling how forty-two courageous Jews risked their lives in 1733 to cross the Atlantic Ocean, hoping to settle in the American colony of Georgia. They were fleeing the Portuguese Inquisition, murderous pogroms of Eastern Europe, and antisemitism in England to build a future with religious freedom and economic opportunity. They gambled with their lives and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean on the slim chance they would be allowed to settle in the new American colony of Georgia to be founded by James Oglethorpe. Nothing about this journey from oppression to liberty was easy, nor was the desired outcome certain. Given the Georgia Trustees' blatant objections to Jews settling in the new colony, the possibility that Oglethorpe would reverse course and accept them seemed nearly impossible. But an unforeseen epidemic threatening to wipe out the budding colony would completely change that calculus.

In the first episode, we are introduced to Dr. Diogo Nunes Ribeiro and his wife Gracia, who had been arrested in 1703 by the Portuguese Inquisition for Judaizing—secretly practicing Judaism in the privacy of their homes. They were tortured until they admitted their failings and were left to rebuild their lives from the rubble of what was left of their home and reputations. In the subsequent two episodes, we follow their reemergence into Portuguese society as the doctor rebuilds his medical practice. By 1726, he had become the physician to the Inquisitor General and the King of Portugal, but the entire family was once again reported for aiding Conversos to escape to England (Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism in 1497). How Diogo engineers his family's release and subsequent escape from the clutches of the Inquisition to England becomes the topic of subsequent episodes.

FLAMES OF FREEDOM REVEALED – BONUS CONTENT

In these bonus episodes, the creators behind the *Flames of Freedom* dramatic series are joined by world-renowned scholars, authors, and historians for a fireside discussion about the Jewish quest for survival and religious freedom in the centuries leading up to the early 18th Century when our story begins.

In the first episodes, we speak with a world-renowned expert on Sephardic Jewry, Dr. Eliezer Papo, exploring the complicated history of the Inquisition, the world of Converso Jews as they attempt to keep the spark of Jewish practice alive in hiding, and the complicated journey back to Judaism if they were lucky enough to escape the clutches of the Inquisition. Many Conversos discovered that the practice of Judaism they had dreamt of for generations was not what they imagined. Their integration back into the Jewish community often proved arduous and fraught with conflict and broken dreams.

THE DETAILS

Website: Flamesoffreedom.net

Download/Subscribe: The show can be listened to directly from the website, as well as subscribed to and listened to on most podcast platforms such as iTunes, Spotify, and iHeart Radio. Episodes are also released on [YouTube](#).

Schedule: Season One Episodes will be released weekly, Tuesdays at 8 pm beginning on September 17, 2024.

Social Media:

Facebook facebook.com/groups/flamesoffreedom/

Twitter(X) [@flamesfreedom](https://twitter.com/flamesfreedom)

Instagram instagram.com/flamesoffreedom1733/

Tumblr tumblr.com/blog/flamesoffreedom

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@FlamesofFreedom1733>

OUR CREW

All episodes are written by Richard Stone and directed and produced by Mark Simon. Our Executive Producer is Lance Toland. Dave Wilson from Cue Tone Productions has produced all episodes. Dave has brought a long career in sound design in film and radio to assist us in developing a rich experience for the listener that stretches way beyond the script and far exceeds what listeners have grown to expect on streaming podcast platforms.

To learn more about our creative team, go to [www. https://flamesoffreedom.net/our-team](https://flamesoffreedom.net/our-team)

OUR CAST

Zipporah is played by Angelines Santana

Benjamin is played by Jamie Treselyan.

Diogo (Samuel) Nunes is played by Juan Pablo Gamboa

Gracia (Rebekah) Nunes is played by Gabriela Lopetegui

James Oglethorpe is played by Ian Russell.

Additional key roles are played by Brad Davidorf, Barry Stoltze, Francois Clemenceau, Jerry McDaniel, and Roxanne Rittman.

To learn more about our ensemble cast, go to: <https://flamesoffreedom.net/our-ensemble-cast>

OUR GUEST SCHOLARS

ELIEZER PAPO, PHD

Dr. Papo is a senior lecturer of Hebrew Literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. He serves as Chairman of the Moshe David Gaon Center for Ladino Culture and is the chief editor of El Prezente – Journal for Sephardic Studies. Dr. Papo's research centers on Hebrew/Jewish oral literatures, with specialization in the field of Sephardic literatures (oral and written, rabbinic and secular). His book *And Thou Shall Jest with Your Son: Judeo-Spanish Parodies on the Passover Haggadah*, received the prestigious Ben-Tzvi award. Dr. Papo has published over 50 articles, in 10 different languages, about different aspects of Sephardic culture and literature, as well as four works of fiction — one in Ladino and four in Serbian.

MICHAEL THURMOND

CEO Thurmond, a sharecropper's son, holds a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy and religion from Paine College and a Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina's School of Law. Michael has spent over twenty years exploring Georgia history, and was awarded by the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the research and preservation of African American Georgia history. In his most recent book, *James Oglethorpe, Father of Georgia—a Founder's Journey from Slave Trader to Abolitionist*, Thurmond explores the unique contributions that Oglethorpe made to the anti-slavery movement.

ARIEL HESSAYON, PHD

Dr. Ariel Hessayon is primarily an early modern historian, although he occasionally ranges outside that chronological boundary. He has written extensively on a variety of topics including antiscripturism, anti-Trinitarianism, anticlericalism, book burning, esotericism, extra-canonical texts, heresy, crypto-Jews, Judaizing, millenarianism, monstrous births, mysticism, prophecy, and religious radicalism. His work is based on extensive research and quite often utilizes sources unknown to other historians since it draws upon a great many archival discoveries. Consequently, Dr. Hessayon offers very detailed accounts coupled with original observations based on engagement with these recovered sources.

JESSICA VANCE ROITMAN, PHD

Dr. Jessica Vance Roitman is Professor of Jewish Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She is a historian of early modern and modern Jewish History, and her research focuses on Jews and Jewish communities in the (Dutch) Caribbean. She is interested in issues of race, ethnicity, minoritization, slavery, and colonialism, and has published extensively on Caribbean history, marronage, enslavement, and Jews and colonialism.

DIEGO LUCCI, PHD

Diego Lucci, is a professor at the American University in Bulgaria and has previously been a research fellow at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London and the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Hamburg. He is also a permanent fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He is the author of "Scripture and Deism," a widely cited classic on English deism, and his book on the Enlightenment debate on Jewish emancipation is an important contribution to the study of Jewish-Gentile relations in eighteenth-century Europe.

To learn more about our guest scholars, go to: www.flamesoffreedom.net/our-guest-scholars

WHAT THE CAST & CREW LOVE ABOUT FLAMES OF FREEDOM

ANGELES SANTANA

"I love the story and how it's written. It effectively transports the listener to the 1700s and gives us a different aspect of what the Jewish community had to face for them to find their place in Georgia, where they were free to practice their faith safely. It's a powerful story brought to life thanks to a truly talented team of professionals. I am very proud and happy to be a part of Flames of Freedom and to voice the courageous mother, wife, and community leader Zipporah Jacobs."

JUAN PABLO GAMBOA

"Like Moses before him, Don Diego is the true testament of Deliverance of a people who not only survived against all odds, but contributed enormously to the foundation of American society as we know it today. It is a privilege to have interpreted a character like Don Diego, of such resilience in a world bent on the extermination of a People; a man who transcends time to bring us his lessons of humility, perseverance, and survival."

BARRY STOLTZE

"I am honored to be a part of this great audio documentary highlighting the historical significance of the obscured event of Jews migrating to the American shore in 1733 in an attempt to truly find a freedom that never existed for them before. Sharing 25% Ashkenazi DNA with my ancestors, I feel more than simple empathy for their centuries of plight. I believe that Flames of Freedom tells that important story in a captivating and compelling way while capturing the essence of heritage pride and dignity maintained throughout the Jews' long perilous journey to a New World and a safe New Home. I hope that this podcast will prove to enlighten, educate, and inspire future generations so that this vicious circle of persecution shall finally be forever broken."

JAMIE TRESELYAN

"I loved working with the team on *Flames of Freedom*. As artists, we want to portray characters in stories that are important, impactful, and informative. This ticks all the boxes, and it's a great full production with a great cast. I had the pleasure of bringing many characters to life, and I can't wait for the world to hear what this incredible team put together."

BRAD DAVIDORF

"Before ever hearing about *Flames of Freedom*, my wife and I had a trip planned for Lisbon. We took our trip just after our first recording session, prompting me to see Lisbon with different eyes. I was fortunate to take a bike tour that crested the seven hills surrounding the city, from the Baixa to Belem to Afama. Each area has unmistakable remnants of Jewish history – a history I am honored to give voice to in *Flames of Freedom*."

FRANCOIS CLEMENCEAU

"Being a history lover and an ancestry enthusiast, I was drawn to the story of *Flames of Freedom* because of my own family narrative. I'm a descendent of a Sephardic line of Conversos who had to flee Europe and were tried by the Inquisition in Spain (Toledo, Almagro, and Ciudad Real), in Portugal (Lisbon), and even later in New Spain (Santa María de los Lagos, Jalisco). I even possess some of the keys of my Jewish ancestors' abandoned homes in Spain that were passed down through the generations."

IAN RUSSELL

"I can't speak highly enough of the team—sharp dialogue, crisp action, and a story needing to be told. To play a character like Oglethorpe is truly a gift. He is a strong-willed rule-breaker willing to take on adversity whilst retaining a humanity that allowed him to see the bigger picture. Plus, I met my wife in Savannah, so when I was asked to play Oglethorpe in a story about how Savannah was founded, it resonated very strongly. Without the brave souls represented in *Flames of Freedom*, Savannah might never have existed, and I might never have met my wife!"

GABRIELA LOPETEGUI

"I felt honored when told that I was chosen to be part of the cast for this beautiful project *Flames of Freedom*. Rebekah, Gracia, and Rachel are three different personalities, different ages, although the common denominator was to face all the challenges they encountered from the standpoint of their strong faith. As an actress, it was a delight to find different emotions and voices to give life to these brave women and tell their remarkable stories. I hope the audience will feel as moved by *Flames of Freedom* as we were recording it."

THE CREATOR

Flames of Freedom was conceived by Lance Toland. Lance's journey into the world of documentary and dramatic film and podcast making is a circuitous one. Nearly ten years ago, Lance bumped into, by accident, a hidden historical fact. Walking the streets of Savannah, Georgia, he came across a small monument in plain view at the corner of Oglethorpe and Bull Avenues. Most people crossing that intersection rarely pay any attention to it, much less walk around it to see what is revealed on its backside. There, emblazoned on a bronze plaque attached to a granite face, facing traffic busily navigating through this Savannah intersection, is the name of the founder of the City of Savannah and the Colony of Georgia—James Oglethorpe. Strangely, above his name is a Jewish menorah—a candelabra—etched for all to see. Few would recognize its Jewish association and probably conclude that this is a small monument to honor the city's father and nothing more. But if you were to circumnavigate this granite stone, you'd find a puzzling list of names on bronze plaques attached to the other side—hidden from view. The names of a few dozen Jews who are buried right under this intersection. A burial ground dating back to 1733.

This monument was a mystery to Lance, weaving together the fate of the first Jewish settlers with that of a man revered as the founder of the Georgia colony. Perplexed, he had to know more. Every turn of research revealed something further, both interesting and confounding. That was the beginning of a nearly ten-year quest to understand this story of the Jews fleeing from oppression and persecution who came here seeking a better life. **Flames of Freedom** is their story. And it is part of our collective story as Americans.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT FLAMES OF FREEDOM

"Flames of Freedom" is a podcast that tells the incredible story of a Jewish family's journey to Savannah, Georgia, to escape oppression in Europe. It's like listening to a movie, with each episode bringing their struggles and triumphs to life so vividly that one can't help but be moved. From Europe to Savannah, you'll feel like you're right there with them. "Flames of Freedom" is not just a podcast—it's a rollercoaster of emotions that'll have you eagerly awaiting each new episode, with hopes for a big-screen adaptation one day. – M.W., recent graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology

"This is a fantastic historical fiction that captivated my interest in the history it portrays, in its portrayal of how religion is at the root of so much conflict and persecution, and in its portrayal of diverse Immigration to the New World being so fundamental to the wellbeing and ongoing enhancement of life in the New World then and now." W.J., Canada

"Underneath the factual account describing the inquisition of Jews in Portugal is a captivating untold story of how devotion to faith, perseverance, and cunning behavior ultimately resulted in one of the most important elements of religious freedom in American history." P.B., Atlanta, GA

IMAGES

Link for the following artwork:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NNx-S3_mHJeK9s7EgbTlGFmO8d_UeMi?usp=sharing

- Cover art:
 - Plain square (2000 x 2000 pixels)
 - Bordered square (3000 x 3000 pixels)
 - Bordered with text (1400x1400 pixels)
- Lance Toland Entertainment logo (3846 x 2164 pixels)
- Banner image (2000 x 500 pixels)
- Poster image (4961 x 7016 pixels)
- Headshots of the producers
- Headshots of the creative team

All graphic design and art for Flames of Freedom was created by Vanessa Ionta Wright.

AUDIO

Link for the following files:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-WL7zGCPn86EsSWTQkbJi4Y7qhLTCZKy?usp=sharing>

- 30-second promo clip
- 4-minute promotional clip in mp3 format

VIDEO

Our non-time-stamped trailer in mp4 format can be downloaded here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-WL7zGCPn86EsSWTQkbJi4Y7qhLTCZKy?usp=sharing>

Our trailer can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/EZEoM99YQjM>

CONTACT

Lance Toland, Executive Producer toland@flamesoffreedom.net

Mark Simon, Director and Producer simon@flamesoffreedom.net

Richard Stone, Writer & Creative Director stone@flamesoffreedom.net

Kayla Barbee, Producer & Creative Coordinator barbee@flamesoffreedom.net