

CITIES OF LIGHT

THE RISE AND FALL OF ISLAMIC SPAIN



PBS PRESENTS CITIES OF LIGHT: THE RISE AND FALL OF ISLAMIC SPAIN

A Dramatic Portrayal of a Period in World History When a Multi-Cultural Society is Ultimately Ruined by the Rise of Religious Extremism

Over a thousand years ago, the sun-washed lands of Southern Spain were home to Muslims, Christians and Jews living together and flourishing. Their culture and beliefs intertwined and the knowledge of the ancients was gathered and reborn. But this world too quickly vanished. Greed, fear and intolerance swept it away.

On **Wednesday, August 22, 2007 (check local listings)**, PBS will present ***Cities of Light: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Spain***, a documentary that takes viewers on an epic journey back into one of the most fascinating and important periods of World History. The two-hour television event uses striking feature-film style re-enactments, vivid footage of great Islamic architecture, scenes of Spain's beautiful landscapes, and analysis by world class historians and scholars to tell a story of vital importance for our contemporary world about the triumphs and achievements of diverse cultures co-existing and thriving together and about the tragedy that ensues when religious extremism begins to rise.

The history of Islamic Spain as told in ***Cities of Light*** demonstrates that when religious diversity is accommodated within a social and political system, problems and tensions may still exist, but society is able to successfully manage them, generally to the benefit of all. But when governing powers and religious movements reject complexity and insist on a single cultural and religiously-centered point of view, then society is likely to come to grief, often terrible grief, with widespread loss for everyone.

"Islamic Spain shows the rise and fall of a very rich culture, a complex culture that struggled with many of the things that face us today -- diverse populations, nationalism, fundamentalism, power and war. When complexity and diversity were embraced, the

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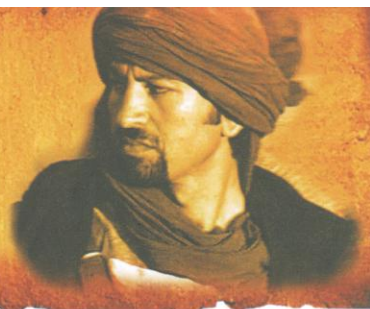
Unity Productions Foundation

A Non-Profit Tax-Exempt 501(c)3 Educational Foundation * EIN 770519274
Michael Wolfe and Alexander Kronemer, Executive Producers
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culture flourished. When fundamentalism and absolutism set in, the culture became toxic and failed," says director Rob Gardner.

Adds Executive Producer Alex Kronemer, "**Cities of Light** charts a relatively unknown history about the rise and fall of one of the lost civilizations of the world— Islamic Spain. Islamic Spain lasted longer than the Roman Empire. At its peak, it lit the Dark Ages of Europe with science and philosophy, poetry, art and architecture, and eventually helped spark the European Renaissance."

"Its strength was its religious and cultural diversity. For hundreds of years, it was the only place in Europe where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in relative peace. But eventually that peace was lost. The spirit of tolerance ultimately was staggered by war, bad leadership, and religious extremism."

"We have the great literature," Co-Executive Producer Michael Wolfe remarks, "we have the fabulous architecture, we have the philosophy, the poetry, and even the music of this centuries-long experiment in pluralism that Jews, Muslims and Christians staged together in the heart of Western Europe. What we lack today in our classrooms and our living rooms and our media is a dramatic understanding of what produced this blaze of civilization in a Dark Age and why it broke down in blood shed, condemnation and exile. **Cities of Light** addresses that gap in our understanding with visual power and scholarly accuracy. The story of Medieval Spain brings real understanding to the very difficult terrain we are negotiating globally right now."

Supported by a diverse group of scholars such as Lourdes Maria Alvarez, Director of the Center for Catalan Studies and a Professor of Spanish at Catholic University; Brian Catlos, Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz; Ahmad Dallal, Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Chair of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department at Georgetown University; and Raymond P. Scheindlin, Professor of Medieval Hebrew Literature at The Jewish Theological Seminary and Director of JTS's Shalom Spiegel Institute of Medieval Hebrew Poetry; **Cities of Light** is co-produced by Unity Productions Foundation, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to increasing cultural understanding through the media, and by the award-winning film director Rob Gardner (*Islam: Empire of Faith*; *Arab and Jew: Return to the Promised Land*; *The Barbarians*).

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About Unity Productions Foundation

Unity Productions Foundation (UPF) is a non-profit educational foundation working to promote peace and understanding through the media. Their mission is to create documentaries and feature films that can contribute to ending the clash of civilizations. UPF's first project was *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*, which aired nationally on PBS on December 18, 2002 and was recently awarded a 2004 Cine Award for Best Professional Documentary in its category.

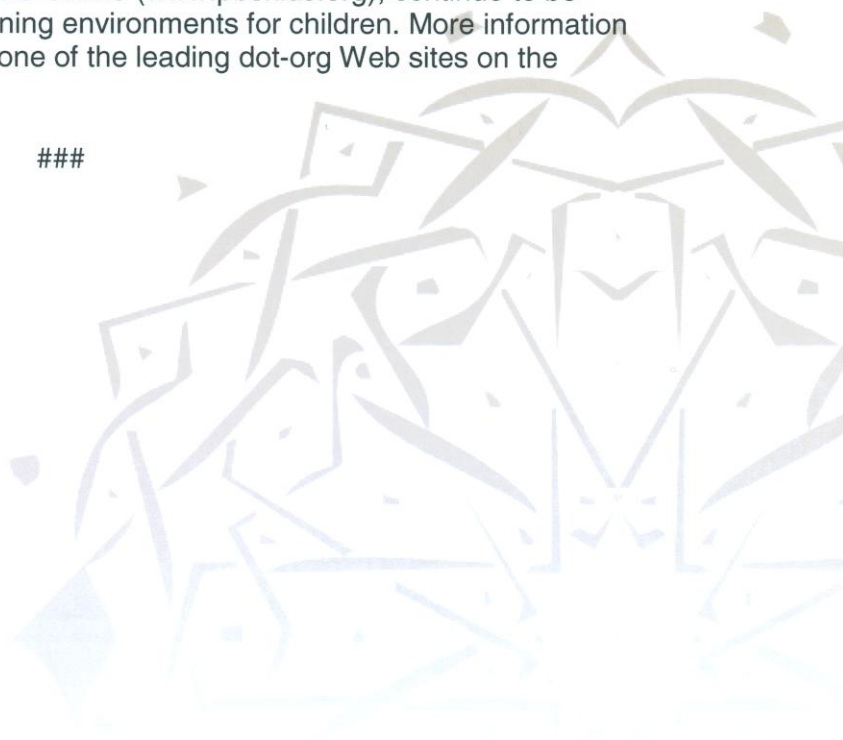
About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 355 public noncommercial television stations and reaches more than 75 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (www.pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

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