

Magen David Sephardic Congregation

with the support of the
Embassy of the Republic of Cape Verde,
the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco and
the Sally and Irving Korobkin Education Fund Presents

MOROCCAN JEWS OF CAPE VERDE

Performance by singer Gardenia Benros
Presentations by the Ambassador of Cape Verde,
His Excellency Carlos Wahnou Veiga
and Carol Castiel,
President of the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project



March 10, 2018

11215 Woodglen Drive, Rockville, MD 20852

Greetings: Rabbi Haim Ovadia, Magen David Sephardic Congregation

Welcome: Gail Shirazi, Administrator, Sally and Irving Korobkin Educational Fund

Introduction of Ambassador of the Republic of Cape Verde: Carol Castiel, President of the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project

Remarks by the Ambassador of the Republic of Cape Verde: His Excellency Carlos Wahnon Veiga

Musical Interlude I: Gardenia Benros

Presentation: “Moroccan Jews of Cape Verde” by Carol Castiel

Musical Interlude II: Gardenia Benros, Claude Dahan on drums

Question and answer session, followed by informal conversation and Moroccan desserts in the Sriqui-Haim Social Hall



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Special recognition to the Sisterhood chefs under the leadership of Naomi Elimelech: Doryss Amar, Ellie Dayanzadeh, Nikki Goodman, Liron Lasri, Orly Mechaly-Richardson, Nazzie Shirazi, Denise Suissa, Stella Ymar

Gardenia Benros

Gardenia Benros is an award winning singer songwriter of international renown who was born in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde. Her paternal forbears were Sephardic Jews who had settled in Tangier, Morocco. They immigrated to Cape Verde when it was a Portuguese colony in the mid-19th century.

Gardenia inherited her musical talent from her mother and maternal grandmother. After spending most of her childhood in Lisbon, Portugal, she traveled to the United States to study at the Berkley School of Music in Boston. She became the first Cape Verdean singer to record with the multi-national record company PolyGram and later became known as “A voz da alma Caboverdiana,” the soulful voice of Cape Verde, for her renditions of traditional Cape Verdean melodies, especially morna and coladeira. In addition to those musical genres, Gardenia sings funana, zouk, and funk. In 2013, Gardenia obtained a degree in music education from Hofstra University in New York.

In June 2015, the Minister of Moroccan Diaspora and Migration invited Carol Castiel, president of the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project (CVJHP), to assemble a delegation of about 12 descendants of the Jews of Cape Verde to visit Morocco, the land of their ancestors. Gardenia was among the participants and thanks to this extraordinary opportunity, she became acquainted firsthand with her Moroccan Jewish roots. In Tangier, she visited the cemeteries and synagogues of that iconic city. During the trip Gardenia serenaded (a cappella) her fellow delegates and Moroccan hosts with Cape Verdean melodies. On the final night, she jammed with Moroccan musicians in the famous Ziryab restaurant in the medina of Rabat. The trip to Morocco has inspired her to create a unique fusion combining traditional Cape Verdean and Moroccan rhythms.

To date, Gardenia has recorded more than 16 CDs and has performed at concerts around the world including in her native Cape Verde, Portugal, Spain, France, the United States, Canada, Brazil and Holland.