



## **Pt 1, Culture—the Vital Differences that Color Life**

It was still dark when Antonio sat bolt upright in his bed, eyes bulging like boiled eggs. “Did you hear that?” he asked.

On cue, the Muezzin’s second call to prayer filtered through the dusty slit in the wall, our room’s only window in the misnamed Hotel Palace. I made a groggy attempt at sarcasm, rolled over, and went back to sleep. Only weeks later did I realize that his fear—though irrational and tinged with xenophobia—would make the next day’s events practically inevitable.

We set out from Barcelona two days prior, in a borrowed Citroen sedan. Antonio was a convenient travel companion, an easy-going Spaniard without a job to get in the way. We made good time down Spain’s eastern coast, until a donkey cart slowed our descent into Granada. Across the valley, the setting sun shone red against the

Alhambra, a fourteenth-century Moorish fortress that fell to Christian forces in 1492, ending eight centuries of Berber rule in the Iberian Peninsula and almost as many years of war.

Raised in a country with only a brief history, it is difficult for me to comprehend the cultural impact of eight centuries of anything, much less a protracted war with religious undertones and the associated propaganda. Yet many Spaniards still see Moroccan travelers and immigrants through fifteenth-century glasses. From the time we boarded the ferry to Morocco, Antonio couldn't stop looking over his shoulder as though he wore a target on his back.

No Events