

I was thrilled to be able to visit this incredible Center and its warm and ingratiating people. The tour of the Center for Basque Studies was informative and sitting in on a class about the Basque language, culture and geography was a definite highlight. Interviews ensued with three Basques scholars and authors encapsulating a divine day with insight to an ancient people, my people!

<http://www.basque.unr.edu/>



Origins and Language

Basques in the U.S.

About the Center

Genealogy

Basque Culture

Frequently Asked Questions I The Basques, origins and language

Who are the Basques?

The Basques are a people who live in a small region (about the size of Rhode Island) that straddles the border of Spain and France from the sea in the west into the Pyrenees in the east. This area is called Euskal Herria (comprising seven provinces, historically: Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Navarra on the Spanish side; Laburdi, Zuberoa, and Behe-Nafarroa on the French side). Basques speak a language called euskara, but today only about 25% of the population is fluent in that tongue. Even so, the word for a Basque person, euskaldun, means "possessor of the Basque language." The Basque population is distinguished physically by a high incidence of Rh Negative factor in the blood.

Where do they come from?

No one knows exactly where the Basques came from. Some say they have lived in that area since Cro-Magnon man first roamed Europe. Estimates of how long they have lived there vary from 10,000 to 75,000 years. Some say they are descended from the original Iberians.

Where does the Basque language come from?

Just as no one is sure about the origins of the Basques themselves, linguists are not in agreement over the origins of Euskara, the Basque language, either. (In Basque, the word euskara is not capitalized, but when using it in English, it is customary to capitalize it, just as we capitalize the names of other languages.) Although there are theories (none of them proven beyond a doubt) that Basque is related to other languages (such as the Georgian family of languages in the Caucasus, or the Berber language family of Africa, or even the Quechua language of Latin America), so far the only thing most experts agree on is that Euskara is in a language family by itself. That is, it is not related to any other language in the world. It is, therefore, not an Indo-European language (the large group to which English, French, Spanish, and Russian belong).

How many Basque Speakers are there in the Basque Country?

There are less than 600,000 fluent speakers in the Autonomous Community of Euskadi (Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa) and about 400,000 more who have learned some Basque but are not considered fluent. Since most of the Basque speakers of the world live in that area, these numbers give us a close estimate of the number worldwide. There are perhaps 15,000 speakers in Iparralde (the three provinces on the French side of the border), and it is estimated that about 10% of the people in Navarre speak Basque. There are also pockets of Basque speakers in Latin America and in North America. Basque speakers are called Euskaldunak, possessors of Euskara, and those who learn the language later in life are called Euskaldun berriak, "new Basques."

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Basque Studies is an international study center dedicated to research into and publishing on Basque topics. In addition to our research mission, we provide basic Basque language instruction, give undergraduate and graduate classes on many Basque topics, host international scholars and conferences, promote research, offer a Ph.D. and an undergraduate minor, and publish a wide variety of books.

Center for Basque Studies, nazioarteko ikasketa gunea da non euskal gaiak ikertzen eta argitaratzen diren. Zehatzago esanda, bertan euskara oinarrizko mailan irakatsi, unibertsitate mailako euskal gaiak landu, nazioarteko hitzaldiak antolatu eta adituak biltzen ditu. Gainera, doktorego programa eta lizentzia mailako titulua ere eskaintzen ditu. Euskal gaiak ingeleraz plazaratzen duen argitaletxerik garrantzitsuena da, Center for Basque Studiesekoa.

My taped interviews while visiting the *Center for Basque Studies*, Reno on 1 September 2010 were with:

[Xabier Irujo](#), Associate Professor, Co-Director, History, Literature, Academia

[Sandra Ott](#), Associate Professor, Social Anthropologist

[Joseba Zulaika](#), Professor, Co-Director, Culture, Religion/Spirituality

[Kathleen Camino](#), Program Assistant, Office Manager, Basque Instructor

A thank you letter from 'Xabier' enclosed with a book and a copy of two of the Power Points he uses in class... "The organization of the Basque family or the Basque social structure, based on the concept of Trunk family (meaning the transfer of the cultural heritage from generation to generation) is quite unique. For instance, the vote at the open assemblies was not personal but familiar: one fire or one house, one vote at the parliament. The legal formula of the Basque family system was repeated when the goods transferred from parents to children: 'the trunk to the trunk shall return, and the root to the root' meaning "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return..."

The motto of the Basque democratic system was "Prolibertate patira gens libera state": for the state to be free, the people shall be free or 'free people in a free land.' It was carved on the bell of the Church of St. Mary at Naxera, in the 13th century."

A day forever lasting!!

My letter of gratitude and wonder...

Dear Ones, 8 September 2010/Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

Thank you! Mil Gracias! Merci Beaucoup! Danke Schon!!!

If it wouldn't have been for our need of quarters and the skipping forward of Dr. Joseba with the wonderful hair (!) to the rescue we would never have been able to answer Shannon's call and enthusiastic wave from across the campus as she brought us on up to the most beautiful of places/Center for Basque Studies! I felt immediately at home as the photo of the little man in white on the right in the entrance display exactly resembles my four great uncles!!

Sweet Shannon ~ you could not have been more accommodating, generous, friendly, helpful and so very knowledgeable of everything all around you and beyond! Your smile and willing way is ingratiating and memorable. Renee misses talking with you and thoroughly enjoyed her 'visit'/interview with you.

Lady Kate ~ we appreciate the vision and your desire for all good things for the Center. But with experience and the heart you possess for that sacred ground ...all will be well, as The Father will not be outdone in your fervent plea to tell the story. After all we are

able to trace our lineage back almost to the palm of His hand and His maternal grandparents, Sts. Anne and Joachim ~ the unbroken link...I loved holding your father's precious treasures; O, the spirit in them!

Lady Sandra ~ your eyes light up the room as you can stand and turn in any direction and find the *Circle of Mountains* in your own soul! Thank you for an interesting interview, like the poised pro you are, for belief and heart is key to a fascinating story. I cannot put down your book ...*Circle!* I curl in the hammock and read and imagine and think of a shepherd in the biblical sense calling his own home...*Hinds Feet in High Places* kind of thing!!

Sir Joseba ~ you are too cool! I loved listening to you speak of the understanding and love for your countries moving so very smoothly and willingly between the two...every other summer returning home! I thank The Father that the link is strong and true, that understanding and knowledge is gained through you as the students and colleagues research the antiquity of our roots that run strong and deep. The tension held between two worlds

Sir Xabier ~ absolutely loved the class and your overview of the Basque country! Also, learned of your work and love of writing while visiting with you in front of the map in your wonderful office with light! Your ancestors, I'm sure, are very proud of you as you speak of your town in the old country and the water well dug; you spoke of this event with such gratefulness to have been involved...we do sit by fires we did not light and drink from wells we did not dig except in this case!!

It was the most wonderful of times well spent and I pray the beginning of a grand relationship as we remain electronically faithful! Thank you, dear ones.

Lead, Kindly Light! Anna Bernadette Monlezun-Pontón of Southwest Louisiana

NOTATION:

Southwest Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Library

411 Pujos Street, Lake Charles, LA 337.721.7110 gen@calcasieu.lib.la.us

**Tuesday, May 6th, 2014 - 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Tidbits of History-
"Five Centuries of Basque History in America"**

Presenter: Michel-Antoine Goitia-Nicolas

He is a graduate of International Politics and Diplomacy UCLA, European History, Boston College and Theology Holy Trinity College. He is a former student at the University of Reno, Nevada, Department of Basque Studies; he is also fluent in nine languages. Michel-Antoine will present historical facts and the origins of the Cajuns of Acadia, the Creoles of Saint Domingue and the Spanish from a land that is neither French nor Spanish.

Also at the library 2014:

Thursday, June 19th - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - "Beginning Genealogy Workshop Part 1"

Thursday, July 17th -10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - "Beginning Genealogy Workshop Part 2 - Digitally Organizing and Preserving Your Documents and Photographs"

Thursday, August 21st -10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - "Beginning Genealogy Workshop Part 3 - Computer Resources in the Genealogical Library"

Tuesday, August 26st through Thursday, August 28th 10:00 a.m.. – 12 Noon
Three day program: "Beginning Genealogy", "Hands-on Computer Workshops"