



North American Basque Organizations, Inc.

# HIZKETA

hizketa eginez, elkar hobe ezagutzen dugu

Negua 2008 Winter

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER

Volume 19:1



## NABO President's Message

As we begin a new year it serves as an occasion to reflect on some of the past year's events and achievements as well as to contemplate how N.A.B.O. aims to improve what it can provide its membership in the coming year.

We were fortunate to have had a good year, marked by several accomplishments. One, for example, was the visit of Mari Luz Artetche, President of FEVA from Argentina, to our NABO meeting in San Francisco. She was invited to share what was working well for them among their numerous Basque clubs and also to improve our shared relationship that we hope will bear successful collaboration. At that same time we also had representatives from the Basque Government visiting, with Miren Askarate and Josu Legarreta. All in all in was a very productive and successful gathering.

Our next meeting at our annual Convention in Winnemucca, NABO grew by two more members with the inclusion of the Santa Rosa Club of Winnemucca and the Euskal Etxea of Washington D.C!

Last year was also the International Basque Congress, that counted twelve of our representatives where we presented NABO's Four Year Plan and Argitxu Camu Etxecopare presented the NABO edition of the Urazandi collection. Udaleku in San Francisco was a success, as was the launch of our next Gaztealde program for Basque young adults. Gardnerville was the sight of the annual Kantari Eguna. Meanwhile Bakersfield hosted our annual Pilota tournament and Mus was in San Francisco.

As the year was coming to a close, we meet for our Fall meeting in Ontario, Oregon in November which coincided with the Society of Basque Studies of America Hall of Fame, where our very own Treasurer, Grace Mainvil was inducted.

This year we have an ambitious goal to initiate a four year plan (2008-11) to better utilize the time, talents and treasure that we possess as a Basque people. Look for this in your local organization, as NABO will be looking to see what it can do to promote mutual cooperation in pursuit of the same goal.

*Mary Gaztambide*

NABO President

[www.naBASQUE.org](http://www.naBASQUE.org)



## "Klika in America" Tribute

Inspired by the tribute to the Wyoming Basque Shepherders at the NABO Convention in Rock Springs in 2005, this year's NABO Convention hosted by the Chino Basque Club (Aug.29-31) will include a special tribute to all those who have taken part in the Klika tradition. While each community has recognized its own, we have never come together as a larger Basque-American community to acknowledge the contribution of these performers. It's time. The objectives are threefold:

1. To honor the Basque-American Klika performers—both living and deceased—for their contribution in making the Klika tradition come alive here in America.

2. To look toward the future of Klika in America. This is a call to both young and old - to join/participate! Sustaining this unique tradition will require more young people to pick up the drums and bugles and march along.

3. To have a good time with the music. You will find more information at our website [www.nabasque.org](http://www.nabasque.org)



The Wall Street Journal labels proponents of learning Basque "Inquisitors"

## ESNATU GAITU!

**NABO's response to The Wall Street Journal article.**

In a rare instance, NABO sent a formal letter on the International Day of Euskara (Dec. 3, 2007) to the editor of the Wall Street Journal regarding their Nov. 6th front page article by Keith Johnson. Despite efforts such as this article--intentional or not--to denigrate, NABO re-affirms its commitment to maintain the Basque language and culture. Esnatu gaitu: this woke us up!

Every negative is a positive, and vice-versa. Keith Johnson's recent article "Basque Inquisition: How do you say shepherd in Basque?" in the Wall Street Journal is just such an example. It was not news that Basques are not perfect, or that not all are Basque fans, but we sometimes forget how much some peo-

ple want us to disappear!

Historically the effort to make Basque people go way has been approached in generally two ways. The easiest to make out is the use of force or coercion to get rid of Basqueness. The other route is oftentimes more subtle but nonetheless effective. This approach includes arguments of persuasion to convince Basques to set aside their ethnic heritage (e.g., the omnipresent Spanish phrase "Hablame en cristiano" or literally "Speak Christian" which meant that Euskara or the Basque language was uncouth and that one must dispose of this un-civilized language). It is a pity that Keith Johnson and *The Wall Street Journal* have--intentionally or not--joined this chorus.

Our NABO federation of 38 Basque clubs throughout North America was founded nearly four decades ago with the primary mission to perpetuate Basque culture and identity. At our last meeting, various delegates rose to address Johnson's article to communicate their astonishment at not only the amount of misinformation and errors littered throughout the article, but also at the tone of the article which made a mockery of the Basque language. To have said nothing was still to have said something (acquiesce), so the decision was made by delegates to respond in a formal way. This article is based on a response developed by a volunteer committee and a letter signed by NABO President Mary Gaztambide that was sent to the editor of the Wall Street Journal.

The article's opening allegation is that the extreme Basque separatists are now in charge of Euskadi. Words have a power, and some have a greater impact than others. So the use of strong and inflammatory language such as "Inquisition", "Fiat" and "front line" is not subtle. The allegation is quite clear: militant separatists are running the Basque Government generally, and its linguistic policies specifically, since we are told that they have taken to "wielding grammar instead of guns" to achieve their ends.

The suggested equivalence is preposterous. The Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country states that the Basque language is recognized as an official language of the Basque Autonomous Community (Euskadi) and that its citizens have the right to use it. The Basque Government is responsible for the educational system and the policies of the use of the Basque language in public institutions and this reflects the views and desires of their constituents who elected them and not of "Basque separatists."

Then for added measure, not only is it alleged that pro-Basque fans are-

>> Download this free web browser >>





bad people because they are coercing others, they are also archaic and out of step with modern times. The article cites a person declaring Basque "an ancient language little suited to contemporary life." Mr. Johnson seems taken by this as he goes on to try and make the case but it shows his lack of knowledge on the matter. He gives examples of words that have no roots in the Basque language such as "democracy" and "government" but that there are as many as ten words in Basque for the word "shepherd." Besides the fact that



**Euskararen Eguna / NABO Euskara Instructor's Workshop: Dec. 2007 Chino**

Once a year there is day set aside (officially Dec. 3rd though we rotate it) for the celebration of Euskara, the Basque language. This annual NABO event goes to our three part goal of making Euskara "visible, viable and vital." This year's event was hosted by the Chino Basque Club, and it consisted of several items including our regular Euskara instructor's workshop that assembles all those at work teaching Euskara in our Basque clubs with the dual hopes of providing them useful teaching material and a boost of enthusiasm to keep going. One highlight of the event were guest lecturers by Dr. Xabier Irujo of the Center for Basque Studies and noted Basque author Bernardo Atxaga!

**The choice of "Inquisition" for the article's title and "wielding grammar instead of guns" and "fiat" in Johnson's WSJ article clearly implies coercion on the part of Basques. Unstated is the reality of education in the Basque Country which gives students a choice of languages and many are opting to learn in Basque which requires more teachers who speak the Basque language. The main protagonist in the story is a teacher who is being given a year's paid leave of absence to learn Basque and thus potentially make a positive contribution to her students' education. Speaking of coercion, if we compare apples with apples, Basques were not the recipients of monetary compensation for learning Spanish or French. Frankly, the suppression of Euskara goes back a long way, long before the familiar measures of recent as these 19th century examples attest:**

- 1846: French authorities substitute French for Basque in schools**
- 1857: Spain mandates only Spanish for public education**
- 1862: Spain bars Basque from legal documents**
- 1867: Spanish theatre can only be in Castilian**
- 1879: France establishes French only for all public education**

An editorial piece of this kind is understandable (i.e., of course all have the right to express their opinion--but that doesn't mean that every opinion is right). This article, though, comes across as more of a propaganda piece disguised as journalism--on the front page no less.

Nevertheless, those who wish to live as Basques have long been accustomed to this type of treatment. For centuries--not just in recent history--Basques were told that they could not (France and Spain passing legislation to prohibit Basque) and should not (being told Euskara is outdated, un-civilized) speak Euskara or identify as Basque. But to have a leading publication like The Wall Street Journal join this negative chorus is really a shame. ESNATU GAITU: Thanks for the wake-up call!

**TALDEAK: NABO Focus (Advisory) Groups**  
Why create focus groups for NABO? At one end of the continuum is one person in NABO making decisions, and at the other is all the voting delegates. It's not advisable to go with either extreme; i.e., NABO has to be more than just one person but asking everyone to be engaged in everything isn't workable either because not everyone is interested in all things Basque. So instead, the aim is to get people together who are interested in the same item of Basqueness and get them talking to formulate and implement some mutually beneficial plans. At present there are six groups:

- > EUSKARA, KANTAK & MUS
- > DANTZA/MUSIKA
- > DIRUA: "Finances"
- > GAZTEAK: "Youth"
- > JAKINARAZI: "To make known"
- > KIROLAK: Sports

These are all volunteer-based consisting of NABO delegates and NABO associates (those non-delegates/voting members who nevertheless step up to serve). The task involves getting together a few times a year via GoToMeeting phone tele-

conferences. They have worked well so far, because "no one is as smart as everyone" and the groups have produced some good plans. Their work will be presented to NABO delegates at the 2008 Winter meeting, and together we can decide on our shared course of action.



**Basques in the Media: Creating a research database**

NABO is joining in the effort of the Autonomous Basque Government of Euskadi to develop a project to compile data on Basque immigration that was published since 1876. Under the direction of the Department of Relations with Basque Communities headed by Josu Legarreta (pictured), work has commenced to digitize and catalogue items that refer to Basques in the newspapers from throughout the Americas. To date this research has yielded 12 DVDs with 180,000 digital pages of Basque references in South American newspapers. This project now shifts to North America with an ongoing effort to digitize and/or photograph news that touches on the Basques over the last century in newspapers of areas where Basques are concentrated. The first phase is set for Idaho, with the assistance of the Basque Museum & Cultural Center and Basque Studies at Boise State, with the hope of expanding the scope soon to other states and regions. The project's objective is to promote investigations of Basque immigration by providing a useful database for future research and writing on the Basque experience here in the Americas.



**Hi Kantari: "You're a Basque Singer" NABO's mini-songbook**

This mini songbook is entitled *Hi Kantari* ("You're a Basque Singer") and it represents a three-fold promotion: it's about plugging EUSKARA (NABO's ongoing efforts to promote the Basque language and existing Basque language classes), SINGING (hopefully getting more people to join along in song) and MUS (the middle pages have the vocabulary of the game in Basque). The booklet contains the lyrics to sixty songs while audio clips to learn some these are at our website. Copies are being made available to all NABO member organizations: look for them soon and let's sing some more!

- EGUTEGIA: 2008 NABO Events**
- Mus:** May 31 | Chino, CA
- Udaleku:** June 15-27 | Buffalo, WY
- Gaztealde:** July 21-25 | Boise, ID
- Convention:** Aug. 29-31 | Chino, CA
- Pilota:** Sept. 13-14 | San Francisco, CA
- Kantari Eguna:** Oct. 11 | Rocklin, CA

**www.naBASQUE.org**



**Izan zirelako, gara, eta garalako izango dira: "Because they were we are, and because we are, they will be."**