

## **The Mysterious Basque People of the American West, Spain and France**

Presented by Professor Leonard Bloom

**Friday, March 26 at 2 p.m.**

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Isolated for the most part amid the lofty peaks and spacious valleys dotting the topography of the Pyrenees Mountains and in the small, quaint towns and villages of that corner of southwestern Europe, inhabit a unique ethnic group known as the Basques. For years, scholars including ethnologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists, and others have made countless attempts to determine valid or substantial information regarding their pre-Christian identity. Much of the data that has been collected has been theoretical and objective. It is interesting to note that Basques take particular pride in knowing that they have continued to maintain their unique individuality. It is their common language, styled “Euskara,” in which these people take extraordinary delight and pride.

Two fundamental reasons for the enigmatic nature of the Basques are unity and conformity. First, they have unified themselves in their seven provinces of Spain and France in a common bond of mutual interest. Centered around strict home life, laboring strenuously on the farm or in fishing for daily sustenance, Basques have adhered and conformed to the norms of their society, even though drastic changes have occurred since Franco’s death in 1975. No longer pursuing the basic occupations of their forbears, young Basques today are no longer resigned to life as tillers of the soil, as shepherds, or as ordinary sea-faring fishermen.

Many salient individuals of Basque lineage in the arts and sciences have succeeded in enhancing and strengthening their own culture and traditions. Such notable figures as Ignatius Loyola, Francisco de Xavier, the explorers Elcano and Legazpi, in addition to notable literati such as Unamuno, Maeztu, Baroja, for example have undoubtedly given an important name and position to the Basques to the outside world.

Lastly, a word or two will be added about Basque politics, their search for self-autonomy, and the radical organization known as E.T.A.