

Inauguración Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Washington (Estados Unidos), 28 de junio de 2016.

The basques are a grateful people. And the basque institutions, the Basque Government and the Provincial Councils of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, deeply appreciate the Smithsonian's invitation to participate in the Folklife Festival. It's an honor for all of us to be here. With all of you and our fellow the Basque Americans.

I'll tell you a little story of our common friend Michael Mason. We consider him as a Basque more. He is already Mikel Mason. Mikel is the basque translation for Michael. Michael went to Euskadi to the presentation of the Festival. And journalists asked why the Smithsonian had invited the Basque culture. His answer was: because the Basque culture is a tough culture. None of us would have better defined.

We are an ancient people. With very deep roots, unique traditions, and with its own language, Euskera. We are neither better nor worse, but we are different, we are basques, a working people, serious and involved people. People who, despite all the problems, has managed to maintain our culture and our language. And now we want to share this treasure with all people visiting the National Mall.

We are a people with a long past, it is true. But above all, with a great future. The Smithsoian Folklife Festival it's a really great opportunity for Basque Country, for our culture, for euskera and also for our economy.

We will take these days in Washington to let you know us better. To establish good relations for both countries. We warmly thank Smithsonian for giving us such a chance. Thanks to the Basque companies who have helped us in this project. Thanks to Ormazabal-Velatia, Artech Group, Iberdrola, Repsol-Petronor, Aernnova, Gamesa, Telefónica, Marqués de Riscal and the Port of Bilbao, together with Bergé, Mademsa, Toro & Betolaza, Lointek, SLP and Sparber. I can't forget the volunteers and participants. Thank you very much. We both Smithsonian and the basque institutions have built a great team. We have worked hard to have the best possible festival.

We have two magical weeks ahead. Two really important weeks for all of us. I just hope these days to be unforgettable. And that the Festival unites even more to Basques from here and there. That strengthen ties between the United States and the Basque Country. Enjoy the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Enjoy the Basque culture. And enjoy the Basque Country.