

THE BASQUE REFUGEE CHILDREN IN THE UK

(How passing down family memories through the generations impacts current generations and their lives)

Memory as Transgenerational Caring (Transmisión Transgeneracional de la Memoria) is an interdisciplinary project funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Birmingham, UK), based on research undertaken by Professor Mónica Jato in the field of memory studies.

The **working team** is formed of the following members:

- Asier Astigarraga: project collaborator (Basque Country)
- *Basque Children of the UK/Euskadi*: project partners (United Kingdom and Euskadi)
- Alicia García Bergua: poet and writer (Mexico)
- Claire Hignett: artist (United Kingdom)
- Intxorta 1937 Kultur Elkartea: project partner
- Mónica Jato, University of Birmingham: PI (principal investigator) (United Kingdom)
- Judith Martínez Estrada: artist and designer (Australia)
- Mia Parkes, University of Birmingham: research assistant (United Kingdom)
- Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, University of Warwick: co-applicant and project collaborator (United Kingdom)
- Marta Simó-Comas, University of Reading: co-applicant and project collaborator (United Kingdom)
- Jules Whicker, University of Birmingham: project collaborator (United Kingdom)

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The **general objective** of the project is to see how the passing down of family memories of exile during the Spanish Civil War impacts current generations and their lives. To do this we focus on the lives and experiences of the Basque children and accompanying adults, who were evacuated to different parts of the United Kingdom, and on how their experiences now live on in their descendants.

We also want to include descendants of British or Spanish people who were not themselves exiled, but were involved in the care of the Basque children, and whose descendants have been impacted by these events.

This objective will culminate in an artistic exhibition at the Cervantes Institute in Manchester in June of 2024.

The **particular objectives** that will lead to this general goal are as follows:

- To deepen the understanding of **transgenerational transmission** of the exile experience from a **personal perspective**. To explore this intergenerational connection, we are organising a series of meetings and workshops in the Basque Country (Mondragón and Guernica) and in England (Manchester and Southampton) with members of the second and third generations of Basque children evacuated to the UK and those involved in their exile.
- To link the experience of Spanish civil war exile with the experiences of **other political refugees in the present day**. As part of this objective, we will organise a UK workshop with refugees
- To encourage and to make visible **artistic representations** of exile. To do this, we are collaborating with a poet and two artists who will be involved in our workshops and related activities (such as archival work and interviews) and who will create material for our exhibition.

Our work so far...

- Travel arrangements for artist Judith Martínez Estrada from Australia have been finalised. She will replicate the children's journey from the Basque Country to Southampton which will serve as the basis for her work.

We have arranged two in person workshops in the Basque country:

- Mondragon, 11 September 2023 (supported by Intxorta): this is a workshop with surviving children and their descendants.
- Gernika-Lumo, 16 September 2023 with memory activists.

And one in the UK

- Southampton: workshops with descendants of children, teachers, auxiliaries and others involved with the Basque children; together with memory activists: 21 September, 2023.

Workshops in May:

A second set of workshops will take place in May in Manchester (venue tbc) after the launching of the exhibition:

- three practical workshops facilitated by Claire Hignett and a final one with audiences attending the exhibition. The first of Hignett's workshop will involve family groups descended from the Basque Children; the second will invite refugees and supporters; and the third will include people from the arts community in Manchester.
- The aim of the last workshop is to gather feedback from the audience to shape the next iterations of the exhibition in other sites in the UK, leading to the 90th Anniversary of the arrival of the children to this country.

Further workshops could be run in zoom format, to make it easier for all who want to be part of the project to participate.

General workshop goals:

- To create a space for reflection and interaction, in order to encourage communication between all participants.
- To collect content and materials that will serve as the foundation for the design of the exhibition and its associated publications (exhibit catalogue and academic articles).
- To provide the participating artists with first-hand experience, which will allow them to incorporate the experiences and memories of participants into their artistic projects.
- To establish closer connections with local communities in the areas in which the workshops will take place, with a view to future collaborations.

PREDICTED INVENTORY FOR THE EXHIBITION

We hope to produce a multidisciplinary/multimedia exhibition which will at least contain the following

- 20-30 scanned **photographs** of Basque child refugees in the United Kingdom (provided by the BCA'37 UK and stored in archives and special collections at the University of Southampton).
- scans of **drawings** created by the Basque children during their exile (provided by the People's History Museum).
- **poems** created by Alicia and accompanied by an English translation.
- **artistic contributions** created by Judith and Claire.
- **Audio-visual** material taken from **interviews** carried out during the workshops in Mondragón with the descendants of the children of the war, and in Guernica with memory activists (and possibly in the UK). The **interviews** will be structured and we will determine the questions in advance.

This list is **open, but** we aim to:

- Use the exhibition and its artefacts to **create links between the past and present**, spanning from 1937 to the present.
- To create an **interdisciplinary space**, through the use of art, images, text, and audio-visual material.
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