

The Natalia Benjamin Prize award ceremony

27 January 2020 at the Hartley Library, University of Southampton

Report by Dr Edward Packard

Last December, BCA'37 UK: The Association for the UK Basque Children announced Joshua Burns as the winner of the inaugural Natalia Benjamin Prize for best undergraduate essay on any topic connected to the history of Basque refugee children. His dissertation – [‘The ‘Basques’ in Britain: An examination of refugee children’s agency and identity formation through self-produced journals *Amistad* and *Cambria House Journal*’](#) – received glowing praise from the panel of judges, which can be read [here](#).

On Monday 27 January Joshua received a certificate and £100 prize money at a ceremony kindly hosted by the Special Collections at the Hartley Library, University of Southampton. This was an appropriate venue for several reasons: first, Joshua made thorough use of the [Basque children archive](#) there while researching his dissertation. Second, he recently graduated with a History degree from Southampton. Third, the idea for the Natalia Benjamin Prize originated from an idea mooted by Dr Peter Anderson at [an event held at Southampton in 2018](#). Finally, Southampton was, of course, where the Basque children disembarked from the SS *Habana* upon their arrival in Britain in 1937.



Joshua attended the event with three generations of his family. BCA'37 UK was represented by Carmen Kilner, Willie Black, and Edward Packard. Adrian Bell, the author of *Only for three months* (the standard work on the Basque children in Britain) also attended. The University of Southampton was represented by Karen Robson, Sarah Maspero, and Lara Nelson from Special Collections; Anna O'Neill the University Librarian; Wendy White, the Associate Director for Research Engagement, and Professor Kendrick Oliver, the Head of History.

The event began with a fascinating mini-exhibition of items from the Basque children archive, followed by a presentation ceremony. Carmen Kilner from BCA'37 UK gave a speech outlining Natalia Benjamin's role in establishing the Association, and its evolution since. She also thanked Professor Tom Buchanan and his wife Julia for suggesting the prize's name and their generous donation in support of the prize.

Carmen read a message from Natalia Benjamin passing on her heartfelt congratulations to Joshua, not only for winning the inaugural prize, but also for the very high standard he has set for the future entrants. Joshua's dissertation supervisor, Professor Tony Kushner, also sent a message

expressing his pleasure at Joshua's success and his hopes that Joshua will do further work on this important subject.

To emphasise the quality of Joshua's work (and the strength of the field of entries for the prize) Carmen also read out the judges' comments.



Joshua followed the presentation with a short speech expressing his thanks to all involved with the prize and event, and expressing his wish to use the prize money to buy an etching by the artist [Maite Pinto](#) from the Association. This essentially means he is giving back to the Association, and we are all touched by this kind gesture. Thank you Joshua!



If you are an undergraduate student writing a dissertation in English or Spanish on any aspect of the history of the Basque children, please see the ['Prizes' section of our website](#).