



**ROMANI  
LESSON**

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**ROMANI LESSON IS  
A CAMPAIGN BY  
FUNDACIÓN SECRETARIADO  
GITANO TO OFFER  
A REAL INSIGHT INTO  
ROMA PEOPLE,  
AS PART OF THE FIGHT  
AGAINST REJECTION  
AND DISCRIMINATION.**

# **ROMANI LESSON**



# WHY DO WE NEED A ROMANI LESSON?

**"IGNORANCE ABOUT ROMA PEOPLE AND THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE IS THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE PREJUDICE THAT, SADLY, STILL RUNS THROUGH THE MENTALITY OF MANY".**

Manuel Rivas, author.  
*International Roma Day Manifesto, 2016.*

The campaign was created primarily to help to change social perceptions of Roma People, and to offer a more realistic and fair perspective that breaks down deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices.

*Romani Lesson* offers an insight into what is a history both of persecution and pain and also of resistance and positive contributions: the immeasurable cultural legacy that Roma have made to the shared social and cultural heritage.

It is part of the effort to build a more intercultural and diverse society that promotes equal rights for all and breaks down discrimination.

*Romani Lesson* is the chapter missing from our books: the silenced part of our shared history; the invisibilized names; the news that was never heard; the anecdotes that were never told. This is the lesson you were never taught.

Because knowledge is the first step towards building citizenship and a future without discrimination. Knowledge always makes us freer and more equal.

# THE ROMA PEOPLE

There are thought to be around 20 million Roma people living in the world. This is a mere approximation since there are no authoritative statistics.

In Europe, it is estimated that there are around 12 million Roma people. They are a minority with a shared place of origin, with their own traits and cultural values, yet are a diverse, heterogeneous people who vary greatly across the land they inhabit, with differing historical and cultural backstories.

They are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and have settled mainly in Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, France and Turkey. However, they can also be found in plenty of other countries around the world, such as the US, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and more.

It is estimated that there are more than 750,000 Roma in Spain, although the exact number is unknown. Around 40% are natives of Andalusia.

Roma people have a rich cultural heritage and

an identity, values and customs that each country must look after and protect. Their influence in culture and the arts has been, is and will continue to be prevalent, whether in music, painting, sculpture, literature, language or cinema. The Spanish Roma (Gitanos) legacy, above all through Flamenco, has been a contributing factor to the global spread of Spanish culture, and to making Spain well-known in all corners of the earth.

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## RACE, ETHNICITY...?

The scientific community has rejected the existence of races. There is only one race: the **human race**.

**Ethnicity** refers to a human community defined by social, linguistic and cultural affinity. A definition that suits the Roma people.



Photograph by Jesús Salinas



Photograph by Jesús Salinas

**HISTORY**

**HISTORY**



# THE ROMA DIASPORA FROM INDIA

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## WHAT WERE THE OLD TRAVELERS LIKE?

Around a thousand years ago, Roma people began to travel from India towards the west, according to the most accepted linguistic, historical and anthropological theories.

They took many routes through and around what is known today as Afghanistan, Iran, Armenia and Turkey. Their origins are steeped with legends and myths, due to the scarcity of written historical records.

They were depicted as a nomadic population with their own language, colourful clothing, customs, music and dancing, and were often accompanied by horses and greyhounds. They were beggars, clairvoyants, horse traders, metal craftsmen, healers, musicians and dancers.

## NOMADS BY CHOICE OR FORCE?

Initially, Roma migration was welcomed by their destination countries, but an attitude of rejection soon permeated.

Their arrival in Europe concentrated around the end of the 14th century. They entered Europe through what today is Romania. Initially, they were forced to work as peasant farmers and blacksmiths for landowners, as servants in monasteries or as reluctant soldiers



1552 engraving of A Roma family



# ARRIVAL ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA IN THE 15TH CENTURY

The first documents recovered fix the arrival of Roma on the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. The first document dates back to 12 January 1425, when Count Don Juan of Little Egypt was welcomed to Zaragoza by King Alfonso V of Aragon, who gave him free passage for him and his group of Roma to travel the kingdom for a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

Their condition of pilgrims and the image of wandering religious people, paved their way on their arrival on the Peninsula. However, the Catholic Kings' cultural and religious homogenization policy had grave consequences for ethnic groups. In fact, the first Anti-Roma Royal Pragmatic was issued in 1499.

**"EGYPTIANS AND FOREIGN METAL CRAFTSMEN, FOR SIXTY DAYS FOLLOWING PROCLAMATION, SETTLING IN PLACES AND SERVING THEIR MASTERS WHO GIVE THEM WHAT THEY DESERVE, DO NOT STRAY ACROSS THE KINGDOM OR, AT THE END OF SIXTY DAYS, LEAVE SPAIN, UPON PAIN OF 100 LASHINGS AND EXPULSION ON FIRST OFFENCE, AND THEIR EARS SHALL BE CUT OFF AND EXPELLED ON SECOND OFFENCE".**

# CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION AND, PERSECUTION

Between the 15th and 18th centuries, there was a current of cultural homogenization in the majority of states of the old continent. That created laws and measures that persecuted, marginalised and expelled everyone who did not share or wish to ascribe to the culture of each state, as was the case of Roma People. This was a people who always felt proud of their culture and history, and who, despite everything, never gave them up.



Image of the Royal Pragmatic of 1783

## HISTORY

In Spain, more than 200 anti-Roma provisions were put into place, relating to their dress, language, lifestyle or nomadic life. They were labelled as vagrants, denied recognition as a group, threatened with the death penalty, expulsion, given physical punishments or condemned to row in the galleys.

## PERSECUTION

The album by Juan Peña, "El Lebrijano", with lyrics by the poet Félix Grande, was a breakthrough work of art that was an icon in flamenco, and narrated the history of Roma in Spain.

**"REMOTOS, CON LA MIRADA REMOTE, WITH THE DROWSY GAZE ACROSS THE LULLABY HORIZON, DRESSED IN ARROGANT COLOURS AND ENVELOPED IN THE MUSIC OF THE ANTHEM, POOR AND INFINITE, MADE BY THE SCREECHING OF THEIR CARTS AND THE HOOVES OF THEIR HORSES, SOLITARY AND TOGETHER ENTER THOSE LANDS AT THE INCEPTION OF THE 15TH CENTURY".**



Front cover of the disc Persecution

## ATTEMPTED GENOCIDE OF LA GRAN REDADA OF 1749

Without doubt, one of the most shameful episodes in the history of Spain took place in the 18th century and entailed the groundless detention of around 10,000 Roma people. The Marquess of Ensenada executed a plan, authorised by Ferdinand VI, with painstaking instructions to detain and persecute all Roma men and women simultaneously in different cities. The families were separated, men were sent to forced labour camps in the naval arsenals to rearm the Spanish naval fleet, and women and children were sent to prisons and factories. Children stayed with their mothers until the age of 7 and then they were sent to the arsenals. This situation went on for 14 years. They were subsequently pardoned by Charles III, who nevertheless started an assimilation policy towards the Roma population.

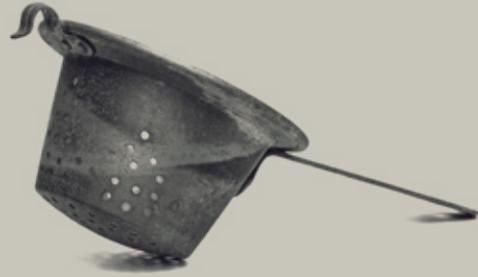




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### DID YOU KNOW THAT FOUR ROMA PEOPLE WENT ON COLUMBUS'S THIRD EXPEDITION?

On 30 May 1498, the third expedition led by Christopher Columbus to the New World set sail from the port of Sanlúcar de Barrameda. The crew included four people of Roma ethnicity, two men and two women: Antón, Catalina, Macías and María of Egypt.



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### THE TRADES OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE ROMA

Before the 20th century, many Roma families were renowned for their artisanal work. They were highly skilled in metalwork. But they worked in all kinds of trades. In fact, they were given many names, according to their crafts: Kalderasa: copper workers; Lovara: horse trading and livestock dealers; Curara: makers of colanders and sieves; Ursari: bear tamers, etc.



Image of Sofia Kovalévskaya

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### SOFIA, THE ROMA MATHEMATICIAN

Sofia Kovalévskaya (Moscow, 1850 - Stockholm, 1891) was a Russian mathematician of Roma descent. Sofia was the first woman appointed to a full professorship in Europe, in Sweden in 1881. Such was her contribution that a lunar crater and an asteroid have been named after her.



# THE HOLOCAUST: A ROMA TRAGEDY TOO

The history of the 19th and 20th centuries is marked by theories about racial purity that had a profound impact on European politics. Racist and supremacist laws were introduced against various social groups, including Roma people. Laws and actions that sought to control them, force them to settle and identify them.

In Nazi Germany, Roma, Jews and other minorities were treated as dangerous groups. They were sterilised, deported, persecuted, tortured and murdered in concentration and extermination camps. It is calculated that more than half a million Roma were killed in the Holocaust. This atrocity in history is known in the Roma language as *Samudaripen* and *Porrajmos*.

## AUSCHWITZ. ROMA IN THE GAS CHAMBERS

On 2 August 1944, the Roma Section of Auschwitz fell silent. A total of 2,897 women, children and men were led to the gas chambers that night. It is known as the "Night of the gypsies". Officially, in Europe it is the Roma Genocide Remembrance Day. Previously, on 16 May that year, Roma families had mobilised to avoid their execution, and fought guards with rocks and sticks—a sign of resistance that forced the Nazis to postpone their killing.



Brown badge used to identify Roma people in Nazi concentration camps



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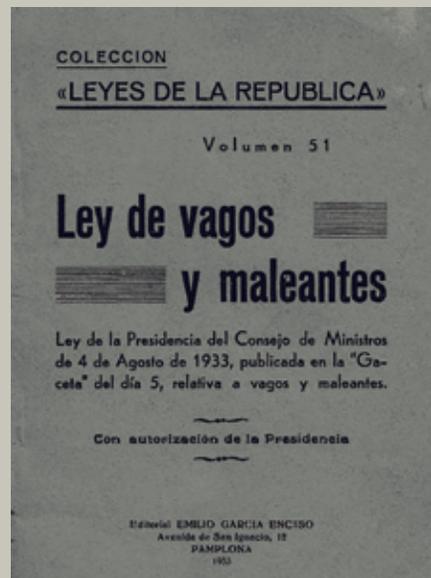
# RUKELI, THE ROMA BOXER WHO KNOCKED OUT THE NAZIS

Johann Wilhelm Trollmann, nicknamed Rukeli, was a young Roma boxer in Nazi Germany, who in 1933 won the national light heavyweight championship against the German Adolf Witt, in spite of the judges being against him. Six days later, he was stripped of his title and forced to fight without being able to use his famous and infallible dancing style, as punishment for deviating from the "Nazi boxing" style. That day, Rukeli pulled off one of the most heroic but least-known feats in the history of sport. He appeared at the fight with his hair dyed blond and his body covered in flour, in a provocative mocking feature of the image of the "Aryan warrior". He stood in the middle of the ring without moving for the whole fight, not swerving to avoid a single punch until, on the fifth round, he was knocked out, covered in blood.

Months later, he was taken to the Neuengamme concentration camp, where he was murdered. His story was told by Dario Fo in his novel *Razza di zingaro* (Roma race). In 2003, his family received the real championship belt.

# REPRESSION IN SPAIN

Spain was not removed from the context of prevailing supremacist theories. In 1933, the Vagrancy Act was passed, which expressly provided for the surveillance of Roma people. The Act was revised and maintained by the Francoist dictatorship and was continued in the Social Danger and Rehabilitation Act. In addition, the Civil Guard (Spanish law enforcement agency) regulations contained discriminatory articles against Roma people that were not removed until 1978.



Vagrancy Act



Photograph by Jesús Salinas

## **CHANGES TO WORKING LIFE IN 20TH CENTURY SPAIN: GOODBYE HORSE TRADING, TO THE FORGE AND OTHER TRADES**

In 20th century Spain, some Roma families set themselves up as livestock dealers, which gave them an economic and commercial standing in what was a miserable, impoverished Spain. They raised horses, and lived in a world of horse trading and livestock fairs, transformed into commercial and social encounters for Roma and non-Roma.

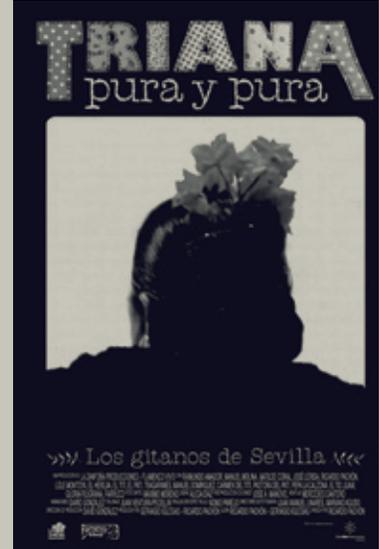
The progressive modernisation of the country brought an exodus from the countryside to the city, which affected the Roma population, who moved en masse to the outskirts of the large cities in order to survive. Many traditional trades died out: horse traders, shearers, basket makers, craftsmen, metal forgers and sellers. In the cities, they took jobs collecting scrap, paper and cardboard, as labourers or antique dealers. The majority of families turned to street trading to survive.

Singing and dancing was made into a living to feed the bellies of many Roma people around Spain.

# INTERNAL EXILE... LIFE IN THE SLUMS

During the 1950s and 60s, many Roma people lived in slum settlements, in self-made neighbourhoods or shanty neighbourhoods created in response to the lack of homes. This happened in nearly all the large Spanish cities—Madrid, Barcelona, Seville...

In the following decades, suburban areas began to be consolidated to allegedly eradicate the substandard housing. In reality, the slum shacks were replaced by cement huts and vertical slums began to take hold, creating true ghettos. In Barcelona, Roma families were pushed from Montjuïc out to La Mina (The Mine). In Seville, from Triana to 3,000 viviendas (The 3,000 homes), and so on across Spain.



Poster from the documentary  
*Triana pura y pura*  
(Triana pure and pure)

## EXPELLED FROM TRIANA

Another episode that no doubt contributed to stigmatising the Roma community was the eviction of more than 3,000 families from the Seville neighbourhood of Triana in the 50s. The neighbourhood, full of courtyards and corrals where Flamenco lived among families, changed radically because of real estate developments as part of a clear gentrification process, as described in the documentary *Triana Pura y Pura*. As a result, Roma families were relocated to outlying areas. This type of process was replicated in various forms in many cities

A forced exile



# THE ARRIVAL OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES, JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

In democracy, the 1978 Spanish Constitution recognised equality and full citizenship rights for all Spanish people.

## ARTICLE 14 SPANISH CONSTITUTION

**"SPANIARDS ARE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW AND MAY NOT IN ANY WAY BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST ON ACCOUNT OF BIRTH, RACE, SEX, RELIGION, OPINION OR ANY OTHER PERSONAL OR SOCIAL CONDITION OR CIRCUMSTANCE".**

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### THE CONSTITUTION WAS SIGNED BY A ROMA

Juan de Dios Ramírez-Heredia, politician, journalist, lawyer and president of Unión Romaní, was the first Roma member of Parliament with UCD (Union of the Democratic Centre) in 1977, and subsequently an MEP with the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party). He was the first Roma person to make a speech in Parliament in favour of the dignity of his people.

# EUROPE BEGINS TO PROTECT ETHNIC MINORITIES

As of the 1990s, and thanks to the impetus provided by the Council of Europe, there was increasing emphasis on protecting ethnic minorities. In 2000, with the adoption of the Racial Equality Directive, and above all, following the eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004, there was more awareness of the protection and the rights of Roma people in the political agendas, given the high levels of poverty and inequality compared with mainstream society.

# SOCIAL INCLUSION ON THE EUROPEAN POLITICAL AGENDA

In 2011, the European Union established for the first time a regulatory Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. This initiative purported to set minimum standards to improve living conditions of the Roma population, which each country must specify, respect and comply with.

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**DID YOU KNOW  
THAT A EUROPEAN  
ROMA INSTITUTE  
FOR ARTS AND  
CULTURE WAS  
ESTABLISHED IN  
2017?**

With headquarters in Berlin, the ERIAC aims to foster and safeguard the artistic legacy of the Romany people, their pride and to fight discrimination.

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### FEMALE LEADERS IN EUROPE

**Livia Járóka** was the first Roma woman to sit in the European Parliament. The Hungarian politician has been the Vice-President of the European Parliament since 2017, and has set a precedent for generations to come.

**Soraya Post**, the daughter of a German Jewish father and Roma mother, is a Swedish member of the European Parliament, and a high-profile women's rights activist. She is currently one of the most well-known faces of the feminist movement in Europe.



Soraya Post



Livia Járóka

## EXPULSIONS AND SEGREGATING POLICIES IN 21ST CENTURY EUROPE

In spite of progress in laws, directives and funds, living conditions for the vast majority of the Roma population in Europe are tremendously hard, to the extent that 80% of them are at risk of poverty.

If one side of the coin is represented by inclusion policies marked by the European institutions, the other depicts a wave of xenophobia and a surge in the far right; which, once again, turns Roma people into scapegoats, persecuted and stigmatised people, for the sole reason of belonging to a specific ethnicity. In the Italy of Berlusconi and Salvini or Sarkozy's France, xenophobic discourse and anti-Roma racist discourse intensifies, promoting expulsions of eastern nationals.

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### SWEDISH WHITE PAPER. 100 YEARS OF PERSECUTION

In 2014, Sweden presented a White Paper that recognised a hundred years of persecution of the Roma population. It depicts and details with precision how in the 20th century, practices were carried out such as the sterilisation of women, the removal of children or school segregation.



Photograph by Fundación  
Secretariado Gitano

# PROGRESS

# ROMA MEN AND WOMEN IN SPAIN TODAY 40 YEARS OF PROGRESS

## WELFARE STATE AND EQUALITY

There is no doubt that the development of the welfare state has contributed to the progress of the Spanish Roma population.

In the last 40 years, Spain has been transformed: new family models, more tolerance, changes in conduct, other roles, and Spanish Roma men and women too. Today they are more present than ever in employment, education, activism and social participation...

The Spanish Roma population is young (younger than average), urban and heterogeneous, and their day to day contradicts clichés propagated by the media or cinema.

They are part of a multicultural Spain in which they should be able to exercise their citizenship in equal conditions.



# PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE

To study in a context where few have done so, or the transition from a slum to dignified housing, shows a process of social change protagonised by a large part of the Roma community. This change is embodied by Sara and Bartolomé, and many more, who contradict the popular cliché “they don’t want to integrate”.



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**Sara Giménez** is a woman, Roma, lawyer, mother and activist for Roma rights. She was the first of a family of street sellers from Huesca to go to university. Today, she represents Spain in the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

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**Bartolomé Jiménez.** Born in Bilbao in a small wagon, he soon moved to Vitoria. He represents the trajectory of Roma people in the last 40 years like no other. He is proud that his children and grandchildren are university educated and work. He is a perennial activist for the rights of Roma people.





### FROM THE SLUMS TO A DIGNIFIED HOME

Slum living has been reduced by 87% in the last four decades. Access to dignified housing has also enabled access to many more rights.

The trend is unstoppable and is finally bringing us towards the point of “zero slums”, although 9,000 Roma families still live in homes that do not meet the minimum living standards and 2,000 families live in slums, according to 2015 data.

Yet there is still diversity: There are Roma families who live in affluent or middle-class neighbourhoods. Some live in outlying suburbs with poor services and overcrowding. Others live in humble homes, trying to overcome growing inequality.

### ROMA MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL PROFESSIONS

Street selling continues to be the main source of income. But occupations have become much more varied, and today Roma men and women can be found holding all kinds of jobs: doctors, lawyers, civil servants, social mediators, business owners, police officers...

40% of Roma people working in Spain are employees. They work from a very young age, starting earlier and working until older age. The majority hold more precarious, and mostly temporary, employment.

Roma women have to endure the glass ceiling like all women, exacerbated by the gender pay gap, unemployment or precarious work. But their presence in all kinds of professions is also now very visible. The Roma woman is a pioneer. When many other women were in the home, they left the home to work as sellers, temps, artists...

### STUDYING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The education system has been late to include Roma children. It was not until the 1990s, with the welfare state and universal education, that Roma pupils entered the classrooms on a large scale. Today, practically all Roma children complete primary school. The problem comes in secondary school: six of every 10 do not complete compulsory education, and only 2.2% reach higher education.

Yet the trend is positive and more and more young Roma are studying, in spite of school segregation, poor education trajectories in their immediate social settings and a system that has not dealt with and adapted to diversity.

A promising statistic is that one in four students who leaves education does return.



Photograph by Jesús Salinas

## THE MIGHT OF PIONEERING ROMA WOMEN

With the welfare state, also Roma families have improved their lives. The life of Roma women is more varied and complex than social imaginary would like to think. Their heterogeneous nature includes women in all professions, with diverse social situations and differing realities.

Besides, it is women who occupy the positions with the most social participation, in Spanish and European politics, in the Roma associative movement and in other participation spaces.

In spite of stereotypes, Roma women, like the rest of Spanish women, are steadily gaining more power and claiming equality both in the home and outside it.



Photograph by Fundación Secretariado Gitano

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## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Aarón Escudero is a YouTuber. He is one of a group of empowered young Roma people who use social media to give themselves a voice and to advocate a different role in society. These are bloggers, *YouTubers*, etc., who are making the most of digital opportunities to promote their own narrative.



Aarón Escudero, youTuber

# YET THERE IS STILL SO MUCH MORE TO DO

## CRACKS IN THE RIGHT TO EQUALITY

Even though the law officially provides for equality, anti-Gypsyism is still deeply entrenched in society. Everyday racism is sometimes expressed subtly, and sometimes more evidently, such as by preventing a Roma person from renting a home for the mere fact of being Roma; securing a job; quietly browsing in a shopping centre or entering a leisure establishment...

Social rejection persists. 52% of Spaniards (CIS, 2007) have little or no sympathy for Roma people and 40% would be somewhat or very inconvenienced by living next door to Roma people (CIS., 2005).

## PERSISTENT POVERTY

In recent decades, Roma families have improved their lives. The other side of the coin is the permanent inequity: the gap that widens when comparing how a Roma family lives with the Spanish average: less income, less education, poorer job quality, more poverty...

The life expectancy of Roma people is calculated to be between eight and nine years less than the general population. The Roma community is overrepresented in severely excluded groups (54%). Three out of four homes are affected by social exclusion processes.

## THE CONTROVERSIAL "SWINDLER" OF THE SPANISH DICTIONARY

The dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE) upholds the fifth entry of the word "gitano/a" as "swindler". Following pressure from charities and activists, RAE included a note to indicate that the definition is "offensive or discriminatory use". As the awareness campaign #IAmNotaSwindler said, a discriminatory definition generates discrimination.





## SYMBOLS OF IDENTITY AND INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

In the last two decades, institutional recognition has taken place, through the express reference of the Roma people in certain Statutes of Regional Autonomy, the creation of the State Council of the Roma (2005) and various regional Councils, and the Spanish Institute of Romani Culture (2007).

The Spanish Parliament, the Senate and the Government have officially recognised 8 April as "International Roma Day", and the flag and anthem for use in institutional acts.

## FLAG

The colours green and blue of the flag represent the fields and the sky. A red cartwheel in the centre symbolises the journey from India and also freedom. The flag and the anthem were established in the first World Romani Congress, held in London on 8 April 1971.



## ANTHEM: GELEM, GELEM

Gelem, Gelem (I walked, I walked) is the title of the international Roma anthem composed by Jarko Jovanovic, based on popular Eastern European music. The lyrics are inspired by persecutions and the itinerant lifestyle.

**"I HAVE TRAVELLED THROUGH LONG ROADS AND MET HAPPY ROMA. TELL ME WHERE DO YOU COME FROM, WITH TENTS THROUGH THESE ROADS OF DESTINY? OH ROMA, OH ROMANI YOUTHS. I ONCE HAD A GREAT FAMILY, BUT THE BLACK LEGION MURDERED THEM. COME WITH ME, ROMA FROM ALL THE WORLD, FOR THE ROMA ROADS HAVE OPENED NOW IS THE TIME, RISE UP ROMA NOW, WE WILL RISE HIGH IF WE ACT. OH ROMA, OH ROMANI YOUTHS".**

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## DID YOU KNOW THE ACTOR YUL BRYNNER TOOK PART IN THE FIRST ROMANI CONGRESS?

The US actor, of Russian origin, remembered for his role in *The Ten Commandments*, said that his mother was Roma. During his stay in Paris, he sang and played the guitar with a group of Roma in nightclubs and also worked in a Roma circus. He took part in the first World Romani Congress in London and was the honorary president of the International Romani Union.



# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ROMA TODAY?

**"ALL CULTURES CHANGE, AS DOES THE ROMA. CULTURE EVOLVES; IT LOOKS TO THE PAST, INVENTS NEW THINGS, COPIES, TAKES FROM SOME AND GIVES TO OTHERS. THIS IS A PERMANENT AND UNIVERSAL PROCESS"**

*Teresa San Román. First Encounters of Citizenship and Diversity of Fundación Secretariado Gitano*

The Roma Community has been enriched and transformed by the many cultural elements that historically has found on its journey. In turn, they have had an influence on society and universal culture. The back and forth cultural influences have at times been deliberate, and at others been driven by survival and

by social change.

Roma men and women have managed to preserve cultural traits and share values and identifying elements, as well as a strong sense of belonging that adds value to their citizenship.

## DIVERSITY

When we talk about the Spanish Roma community, we often talk as if its members were part of a single homogeneous group, forgetting that, as any other individuals, they have multiple identities, with their

own fears, dreams, ambitions...

The same diversity found in 21st century Spain and Europe is alive in Roma people—they are a true reflection of modern-day society.

# VALUES

## IDENTITY PRIDE

The immense majority share a strong sense of belonging. A pride to be and feel Roma. This is one of the great values of Roma culture.

## THE FAMILY AT THE HEART

The family is the core of the Roma community—an essential pillar.

The famous extended family: grandparents, fathers, mothers, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins... this is the space where social and personal relations grow. Strong bonds are formed that endure across time and distance. Moments of happiness are shared with the family. The most important celebrations are births and weddings.



Photograph by Jesús Salinas

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## 21ST CENTURY FAMILIES ARE HETEROGENEOUS

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The traditional pattern is changing. Marriages, although still happening young, are not so young anymore, and the number of children is dropping. Families have acted as a safety net in difficult times, showing a solidarity with the extended family that seems strange to the eyes of younger non-Roma. That solidarity is shown in hospitality, when a family member is unwell or at times of economic hardship, as has been seen in the recent financial crash, which shook our country to the core and affected vulnerable people the hardest.

## RESISTANCE: A WAY OF LIFE

Roma culture is above all a culture of resistance, forged through centuries of persecution, fight and also its ability to adapt. It is said that Roma culture is both fragile and robust. It is fragile because it lacks its own territory, religion, language—it exists but is gravely endangered—but strong thanks to its resistance to adverse situations and the feeling of belonging to the group.

## RESPECT FOR ELDERLY ROMA

Respect for the elderly is another cultural value. The figure of the respected “aunt or uncle” is still paramount in some families. This is a figure of reference rather than an authority; a figure of conciliation and not of conflict, offering experience and wisdom.

## ANCESTORS, ALWAYS IN OUR MEMORY

One of the deepest-rooted customs is the funeral rite, as a time to honour and remember family members and ancestors no longer with us



Photograph by Fundación Secretariado Gitano

## RELIGION IN THE ROMA COMMUNITY

Religion permeates important celebrations and traditions and must be included in the social portrait of the Spanish Roma community.

The Roma community is plural in terms of religion. Roma men and women mostly identify as religious, as Catholics or Evangelist Protestants. In recent decades, many Roma families have joined the Philadelphia Evangelical Church. Worship, with Roma preachers, is the main celebration.

The significant Catholic cultural tradition in the Roma community continues to live in pilgrimages (La Virgen de la Sierra, in Cabra, la Virgen de los Remedios, in Fregenal...) and especially in Holy Week in Andalusia. The first Roma to be beatified in the world was Ceferino Giménez Malla, “El Pelé”, in 1997; Emilia Fernández, La Canastera, was also beatified in 2017.



Photograph by Jesús Salinas.

# CULTURE

## FROM SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO GREAT CREATORS

Roma's rich culture has offered much to universal art, and has also benefited from major influences that have helped to transform it.

Roma aesthetic and art has been for centuries, and continues to be, a source of inspiration for creators in various disciplines. Although, as anthropologist Alain Reyniers said, "they reflected more the dreams of artists and society of the time than the Roma reality".

Romanticism in the 19th century idealised Spanish Roma, considering them to be mysterious beings with an affinity for nature. They were a source of inspiration. And not just in that era: the Hungarian Rhapsodies of Franz Liszt were inspired by Roma musicians and violinists, *El Amor Brujo* (The Bewitched love) by Falla, *The Romancero Gitano* (Gypsy Ballads) by Lorca, Bizet's *Carmen*.

Hundreds of Roma characters can be found in literature: Cervantes' *La Gitanilla* (The Little Gypsy Girl), Victor Hugo's *Esmeralda*, García Márquez's *Melquiades...*

Great paintings of Roma were created by artists such as Doré, Fortuny, Nonell, Romero de Torres...

In photography, among the many photographers stand out Jacques Leonard, "El payo Chac", who portrayed Catalan Roma, the Czech Jossef Koudelka or the Spaniard Cristina García Roderó.

## A "VIRTUALLY LOST" LANGUAGE

Romani is the international language of the Roma people. It is hugely important as a link to oral culture that has been passed on from generation to generation. It forms part of the Neo-Sanskrit linguistic family.

In Spain and other countries, it has been lost after having been prohibited and due to the imposition of the local language.

## CALÓ

Caló is the variant of the Romani language that arose from overlaps with Spanish. It is a dialect spoken by Spanish, Portuguese and southern French Roma. It preserves original Romani words, using the grammatical structure of Spanish.

## CALÓ WORDS IN SPANISH

Numerous words from Caló, etymologically proven, are now part of everyday Spanish, even though few people are aware. An enormous linguistic contribution to everyday language.

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**DID YOU KNOW THAT CAMELAR, CHACHI, MAJARETA, PINREL, CHAVAL AND JALAR ARE ALL OF ROMA ORIGIN?**

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## LESSON ONE OF ROMANI

**Lacho dives** Good morning  
**Devleça** Goodbye  
**Sar san?** How are you?  
**Katar san?** Where are you from?  
**Nais tuqe** (pron. "tuqué") Thank you  
**Naj sosqe** (pron. "sosqué") You're welcome  
**Sastipen thaj Mestipen** Health and freedom



# MUSIC, THE MOST INTERCULTURAL ART

There is nothing more intercultural than music. Roma people have picked up influences and left their imprint on music from east to west. From the metallic and vibrant sounds of eastern Roma with their wind and string instruments, to the flamenco of Spanish Roma or the gypsy jazz of French Roma, with a special mention for Django Reinhardt.

Roma have enriched all musical styles, and there are examples in classical music, as well as folk, rock, hip hop and rap... but the Roma mark has also been left on the genesis of various genres such as the Peret's Roma-Catalan rumba, Moncho's bolero, the gypsy rock of Las Grecas, the urban rumbas of Los Chichos or Los Chunguitos, the rock blues of Raimundo Amador, the flamenco jazz of Dorantes... Exporting a way to feel and live music.

## FLAMENCO—ROMA HERITAGE, WORLD HERITAGE

**"...the first great masters of flamenco were born in the same small region of Cadiz-Seville as the initial specimens of Roma Andalusian art. We can pinpoint three basic native nuclei: Jerez, Triana and Cadiz... All the singers from the end of the 18th century and most of the 19th century that form the founding base of flamenco are homegrown from any of those cities, without exception, and they are all, without exception, Roma".**

José Manuel Caballero Bonald,

*Luces y sombras del flamenco (Lights and shadows of flamenco), 1975.*

Designated World Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, flamenco is a universal art appreciated right across the world

Flamenco is singing, dance and guitar. It was born in the 18th century in southern Andalusia. Its genesis was in Andalusian Roma houses, who treasured it, passed it on from mouth to mouth and transformed it from generation to generation. As the living art that it is, it absorbs influences from other musical sounds.

The popular singers open the door to an art that is admired throughout the world. From the courtyards to cafés and theatres, they put on a spectacle that is admired everywhere on the planet. From the intimacy of Roma families to a profession of cantaores and bailaores, and now a tourist attraction, it surpasses time and fashions. It is a universal art and a Spanish hallmark.



Carmen Amaya

## ROMA ARTISTS, GREAT NAMES OF 21ST CENTURY FLAMENCO:

**Cantaores:** La Niña de los Peines, Antonio Mairena, Manolo Caracol, El Lebrijano... Are some of the great Roma names behind flamenco in the last century.

**Bailaores:** Carmen Amaya, Farruco, Mario Maya, Manuela Carrasco...

**Guitarists:** Ramón Montoya, Sabicas, Manuel Morao, Tomatito...

## THE NEW FLAMENCO: MIXED AND OPEN

Flamenco is fusion. With Lole and Manuel, among others, and primarily Camarón's *La Leyenda del tiempo* (The Legend of Time), a "new flamenco" was begun, which proudly mixes musical genres including rock, salsa, blues or jazz. The age of Lole and Manuel, Pata Negra and Ketama... names that breathed new life into the Roma heritage.

## CAMARÓN, THE GREAT ICON

José Monge Cruz (1950-1992) was one of the greatest flamenco legends to walk the earth. He was an icon to Roma people, who admired the lament of his voice, his gypsy art and his rebellious work. The album *La Leyenda del tiempo* revolutionised flamenco by including rock and jazz notes.



Camarón and Tomatito. Photo by Jesús Salinas

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**DID YOU KNOW  
THAT THE  
EUROPEAN  
ROMANI  
SYMPHONIC  
ORCHESTRA IS  
CONDUCTED BY A  
SPANISH ROMA?**

Since 2000, Paco Suárez Saavedra has led the orchestra, which plays everything from Roma-inspired classical music to symphonic flamenco.

### WRITERS WHO MUST BE READ

In the 20th and 21st centuries, Roma voices appeared in literature who wanted to dignify their people, such as José Heredia Maya (Granada, 1947-2010), poet, dramaturg and the Spain's first Roma university professor.

Modern-day Roma authors include names such as Joaquín Albaicín or Antonio Ortega.

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### ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH PAPUSZA?

Bronisława Wajs (1908-1987) was a Polish Roma poet and Holocaust survivor. Her life was film worthy. Papusza means doll, and her name is part of a long list of female voices that historically were not heard.

### THEATRE WITH A CAUSE. CAMELAMOS NAQUERAR

There are certain emblematic theatre shows representative of the Roma people, such as *Camelamos Naquerar* (We want to talk) by José Heredia and Mario Maya.

The flamenco theatre performance by José Heredia Maya (1947-2010) has a potent message, asserting the culture and dignity of the Roma people. It was staged in 1976, with choreography by Mario Maya. It was contemporary, and experimental for the time.

In the world of flamenco spectacle, there have been retellings of classics such as those of theatre director and actor José Maya and of Francisco Suárez Montaña, who was the director of the Mérida International Classical Theatre Festival.

### FILM... CLICHÉ AND DISPROPORTION

Roma in film is above all synonymous with cliché and disproportion.

During the Second Spanish Republic and the Franco regime, elements of the Roma culture were used to promote the most folkloric version of Spain.

For example, a show that tried to offer a more sensitive depiction of Roma life was *The Tarantos* (Francisco Rovira-Beleta, 1963), with the Roma dancer Carmen Amaya, which offered a window into life in the Somorrostro shantytown in Barcelona.

In the decades that followed, the big screen depicted Roma people as marginalised, associating them with drugs and violence. There were precious few exceptions, such as the films of Carlos Saura and his trilogy on flamenco.

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### TONY GATLIF

French-Algerian Roma cinematographer. He has made many Roma-themed films. Highlights include *Latcho Drom* (1993), a documentary on Roma people from their origins in India.



Tony Gatlif

## PODCAST WITH A CALÓ FLAVOUR

*Gitanos: Romani art and culture* on Spanish National Radio station, or *Camelamos Naquerar* (We want to talk) on Canal Sur radio station, are two examples of the little radio airtime given to Roma broadcasters that show the diversity of the Roma people in artistic, social and academic fields. These shows in public radio, highlight Roma's contributions to Spanish and European society and culture.

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## DID YOU KNOW THAT CHARLIE CHAPLIN HAD ROMA ORIGINS?

Charlie Chaplin, the great film star of the 20th century, was born in a caravan in a Roma settlement in London, UK, in 1889. His parents were music hall artists.



## THE SMALL SCREEN'S CRUELTY TO ROMA PEOPLE

Television has exploited a banal and stereotyped image of the Roma community in recent years, particular with reality TV formats. That is not to mention parodies, to be seen with a light-hearted approach, but which have also fallen back on the stereotype of the illiterate, lazy and roguish Roma. The few positive exceptions tend to be public television documentaries. The producer Pilar Távora was behind the series *Gitanos Andaluces* (Andalusian Roma) for Andalusian public television, which is one of the few television programmes made to dignify the image of Roma people. Among the younger television makers, the documentary and advertising work of Pablo Vega stands out.



Image of the campaign "Trash TV is not reality"

## VISUAL ARTS

Roma men and women have been represented in many visual arts, but they have also created a great deal. A clear example is the painter and guitarist Fabián de Castro (1868–1948), who lived in Paris and whose art was greatly coveted by society at the time, or the realist painter Antonio Maya Cortés (Jaén, 1950).

The poster artist Helios Gómez (1905–1956) was also a painter, poet and representative of the early 20th century artistic vanguard. His posters show republican and anarchist propaganda. He was a committed anti-Francoist fighter who experienced concentration camps. It was in the Modelo prison of Barcelona that he painted the famous La Capilla Gitana (The Romani Chapel).



Poster by Helios Gómez.

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**DID YOU KNOW  
THAT ONE OF  
TODAY'S MOST  
COVETED ARTISTS  
IN THE WORLD IS  
ROMA?**

Her name is Lita Cabellut (Huesca, 1961) and she has lived in The Hague for the past 19 years. She is a multidisciplinary artist who works with oils, sculpture and photography... In 2015, the art market index Artprice placed her among the 500 most coveted artists in the world. She is the only Spanish woman included, beaten only by Juan Muñoz and Miquel Barceló.

## OLYMPIC MEDALS

The rider Rafael Soto Andrade (Jerez, 1957) took part in the Olympic Games of Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004, and won a team silver medal in classical dressage.



Samuel Carmona Heredia (Las Palmas, 1996) is a Roma boxer who represented Spain in the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games of 2016, where he won an Olympic diploma. He is set to represent Spain in the 2020 Olympic Games.

## CHEFS WHO REINVENT GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE

Around the stew pot, always cooking for family and guests, the Roma table is made for sharing. But Roma gastronomy is also peppered with great names: prestigious chefs such as the Jerez native Manuel Valencia, who is a benchmark in haute cuisine and who has reinvented Roma flavours, or David Salazar, a young Extremaduran chef.



## BULLFIGHTING... THE ROMA CLOAK OF RAFAEL DE PAULA

Countless Roma bullfighters have left their mark on the sport, such as Joselito, Rafael El Gallo, Cagancho and Rafael Albaicín, to name but a few.

Among the most recent, and with a particular Roma flair, is Rafael de Paula, who was born into a humble family in the Santiago neighbourhood of Jerez de la Frontera. Critics have called him one of the all-time greats.

## FLAMENCO FASHION ON THE CATWALKS

Juana Martín Manzano (Córdoba, 1974) is a Roma designer who has left her mark on the fashion world, and is one of the most versatile designers of Spanish fashion. Specialising in flamenco, wedding gowns and pret-à-porter, she was the first Andalusian, Cordoban, Roma woman to exhibit at the Cibeles catwalk in Madrid Fashion Week.



Juana Martín

## CELEBRITIES WHO SPEAK UP

PUBLIC FIGURES, CELEBRITIES, PERSONALITIES, ARTISTS, WHO ARE ALL ROMA AND PROUD TO BE SO. THEIR VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION HELPS TO DIGNIFY THE IMAGE OF ROMA PEOPLE.



**ALBA FLORES**  
**ACTRESS**

"IN THE HOMES OF MY PEOPLE THERE WERE ALWAYS ENORMOUS TABLES SERVING STEW FOR 20 PEOPLE OF ALL KINDS OF CULTURES, GENDERS, SKILLS, RACES AND SEXUALITIES"

VANITY FAIR, 2018



**JOAQUÍN CORTÉS**  
**BAILAOR**

"I HAVE BEEN INDIRECTLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST FOR BEING ROMA AND IT INFURIATES ME"

LA SEXTA TV (TV STATION)



**NIÑA PASTORI  
SINGER**

"THERE IS NO MORE BEAUTIFUL WORD FOR ME THAN FREEDOM. IN MUSIC THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THAT WORD WAS LOOKED DOWN UPON. FOR MANY YEARS PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY SAID: LOOK AT THE GYPSIES, THEY WANT FREEDOM"

20 MINUTOS (NEWSPAPER), 2018

**TERE PEÑA  
JOURNALIST AND  
DEAN OF SPANISH  
FLAMENCO PRESS**

"AS A ROMA WOMAN I AM ACUTELY AWARE OF MY RESPONSIBILITY TO MY PEOPLE, THEIR IMAGE AND THEIR CULTURE"

SPANISH INSTITUTE OF ROMANI CULTURE AWARDS, 2015



**ANTONIO  
CARMONA  
SINGER**

"I AM PROUD TO BE ROMA, TO HAVE TAKEN MY CULTURE ALL OVER THE WORLD AND TO HAVE FUSED AND EXPRESSED MY MUSIC THROUGH FLAMENCO. A REJUVENATED FLAMENCO"

GENERACIÓN FÉNIX (MAGAZINE), 2017





**SILVIA HEREDIA  
MEMBER OF  
PARLIAMENT**

**"SOME TELEVISION PROGRAMMES ARE VERY DAMAGING TO ROMA PEOPLE: THEY TARNISH THE IMAGE OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY AND ROMA LIFE IS NOT TRUE TO WHAT THEY DEPICT"**

**POPULAR PARTY IN CONGRESS, 2017**



**LOLITA FLORES  
SINGER AND  
ACTRESS**

**"ROMA PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE THAN A GUITAR, A TAMBOURINE AND A POLKA DOT DRESS [...] MY FATHER TAUGHT ME TO LOVE THE ROMA RACE, TO LOVE MY RACE, WITH TREMENDOUS FREEDOM"**

**SPANISH INSTITUTE OF ROMANI CULTURE AWARDS, 2010/2016**



**PACO SUÁREZ  
ORCHESTRA  
CONDUCTOR**

**"WHEN WE MAKE MUSIC, ROMA PEOPLE GIVE OUT EMOTION. I ASSURE YOU IT IS OUR SPECIAL GIFT, BECAUSE IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE BEST WAY FOR US TO COMMUNICATE"**

**LA VOZ DIGITAL (NEWSPAPER), 2006**



## **PITINGO SINGER**

"ROMA PEOPLE NOW EARN A LIVING, GO TO UNIVERSITY, MARRY NON-ROMA, AND IT'S NO BIG DEAL. THAT CHANGE HAS TO BE REFLECTED IN MUSIC"

20 MINUTOS (NEWSPAPER), 2009

## **JOAN OLEAQUE DOCTOR OF JOURNALISM**

"FOR THE MOST PART, ROMA IS SHOEHORNED INTO A STEREOTYPE, BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED AS THE MOST NEWSWORTHY AND RECOGNISABLE. THE INTERNET HAS NOT MADE ANYTHING BETTER. SOME NATIONAL PRESS LET THINGS FESTER ON THEIR DIGITAL FORUMS THAT THEY WOULD NEVER DARE TO PUBLISH"

CUADERNOS GITANOS (ROMA JOURNALS MAGAZINE), 2007



## **ROSARIO FLORES SINGER**

"PROGRESS THROUGH CULTURE IS SO IMPORTANT, WE HAVE TO GET USED TO CHANGE IN SOCIETY. ACHIEVEMENTS ARE MADE EVERYWHERE: FOR WOMEN, IN THE LGBTI COMMUNITY. IT IS WONDERFUL TO BE FREE, TO BE WHAT WE WANT TO BE, SO LONG AS WE ARE LOVING"

EL PERIÓDICO (NEWSPAPER), 2018





**BEATRIZ CARRILLO  
ANTHROPOLOGIST  
AND DEPUTY VICE  
PRESIDENT OF THE  
SPANISH STATE  
COUNCIL OF THE  
ROMA**

**"ANTI-GYPSYISM IS HISTORICAL,  
BUT WE LIVE IN TURBULENT  
TIMES, WHERE FEAR OF ROMA  
PEOPLE HAS BEEN SOMETIMES  
JUSTIFIED BY THE FINANCIAL  
CRASH AND SWEEPED UNDER  
THE CARPET, BUT IT HAS RISEN  
VIOLENTLY, ABOVE ALL IN EUROPE"**

20 MINUTOS (NEWSPAPER), 2011



**DIEGO FERNÁNDEZ  
DOCTOR OF LAW  
AND DIRECTOR  
OF THE SPANISH  
ROMANI CULTURE  
INSTITUTE**

**"THE TIME FOR ROMA PEOPLE  
HAS COME [...] ROMA PEOPLE  
MUST TAKE THEIR PLACE IN CITY  
HALL, COUNCIL, PARLIAMENTS [...]  
AND WE WILL MAKE FILMS AND  
TELEVISION SERIES, AND WE WILL  
CLAIM BACK FLAMENCO, WHICH IS  
ROMA"**

SPANISH INSTITUTE OF ROMANI CULTURE  
AWARDS, 2018





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