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## Introduction and welcome

In June we celebrated Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM). GRTHM started in the London Borough of Brent in 2001, was endorsed by Parliament in 2007 and has been celebrated nationally since 2008.

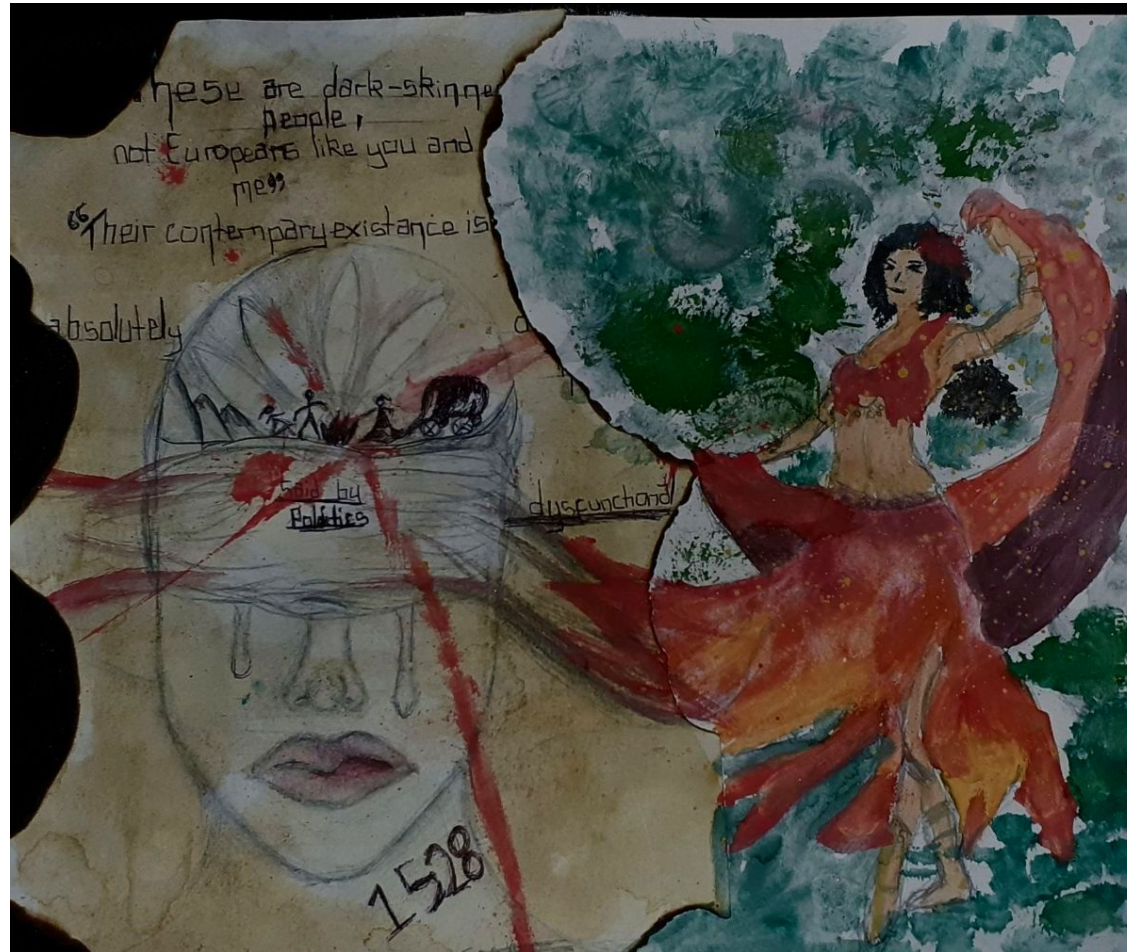
Much of this month's newsletter covers the content we produced for GRTHM, but there are also some pressing and deeply concerning issues for Roma in Brazil and the Czech Republic that we wish to draw your attention to first.

In the context of the present suffering that Roma are experiencing in different parts of the world, we remind you that 2 August marks Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, when we remember the 500,000 Roma and Sinti murdered during the Second World War.

At the end of June came the deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). There is concern that thousands of Roma people in the UK did not meet this deadline due to a range of barriers in applying. See this section below for an overview of this situation and information on next steps.

In total, this month's newsletter will focus on:

- Police brutality against Roma in Brazil.
- Justice for Stanislav.
- Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.
- The EU Settlement Scheme deadline.
- A new £1 million education programme for GRT children.
- The Greater London Authority's GRTHM event.
- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.
- Showcasing submissions from our GRTHM art competition.
- RSG's Roma anthem video.
- Our latest Roma news video on GRTHM.
- Dani Karavan 1930–2021.



## Police brutality against Roma in Brazil

Extremely disturbing [reports](#) coming out of Brazil describe military police launching a campaign of mass murder against Roma people in the municipality of Vitória da Conquista. An incident between a Roma family and two plainclothes police officers on 13 July ended with the deaths of the officers and two Roma men.

Military police took reprisals against the local Roma population, shooting dead at least 6 Roma people and wounding 15 others between the ages of 13 and 28 years old. Further acts of terror included setting the houses and cars of the local Roma population on fire.

These acts of racial violence are not being covered in the UK mainstream media or internationally. Romani organisations around the world fear further violence and the galvanisation of Brazilian far-right groups. They call for urgent action from the Brazilian government and the United Nations.

In Brazil today, as in many parts of the world, Roma communities face social exclusion, racial discrimination and criminal stereotyping. Persecution has increased since the election of president Jair Bolsonaro. To learn about the history of the 800,000-strong Roma population in Brazil, and the contemporary context leading to this massacre, please see this [Twitter thread](#).

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## Justice for Stanislav

On 19 June, Stanislav Thomáš, a Czech Roma man, was killed during detention by Czech Police through the use of excessive force. Just over a year after the murder of George Floyd, footage shows the detaining officers kneeling on the neck of Thomáš for several minutes.

The death of Thomáš has not led to the widespread international responses generated by the Black Lives Matter campaign last summer. Thomáš's family face a battle for justice as Czech authorities quickly moved to deny the involvement of the officers in his death, with no impartial investigation taking place, nor support for one in the Czech mainstream or

social media. The [Council of Europe](#) as well as Roma NGOs and human rights organisations across the continent have called for an [independent, thorough and objective investigation](#) into Thomáš's death.

Glasgow based Roma charity, Romano Lav, have set up a [donation](#) page to raise funds to support the family of Thomáš. Money raised so far has been sent to help pay for Thomáš's funeral. The page remains open until 4 August and all funds go to the family of Thomáš.

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## **Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, 2 August**

On Monday we will commemorate Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. This date corresponds to the last 4,300 Sinti and Roma murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau on the night of 2 August 1944. European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma are holding a virtual commemoration ceremony on Monday at 12:00 CET.

You can access the ceremony [here](#). Please also follow this link for a range of historical, educational and artistic resources on the Roma and Sinti Holocaust.

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## **EU Settlement Scheme deadline**

The deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme ended on Wednesday 30 June. EEA citizens that missed the deadline will have lost their legal right to live and work in the UK, putting them at risk of the hostile environment. There are concerns that thousands of people missed the deadline, many of them Roma.

In many circumstances, the EUSS will be accepting [late applications](#), but these will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If a person is applying late, the sooner they apply, the better. The later a person leaves their application, the tighter the restrictions on applying are likely to be. It is important for EEA parents applying to the EUSS to realise that their children also need to apply to the Scheme, unless they are eligible for British citizenship.

Employers and landlords should be aware that those who have status under the EUSS are fully entitled to live and work in the UK. The Mayor of London now hosts some simple and useful [guidance for employers](#) with EU staff to help them better understand the changes to right to work checks in place since 1 July. The information was written together with Work Rights Centre. Feel free to share it with the employers you know.

Even though the deadline for applications to the EUSS has passed, work with the EUSS has not ended but has moved to a next phase. Lots of useful information can be found on the [European Londoners Hub](#).

**Stay Settled in Newham**

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The gaps in EUSS coverage are shown clearly in one of RSG's recent projects. [Stay Settled in Newham](#) was set up in April after it became apparent that 30,000 EU citizens living in the borough had yet to apply. The project was funded by Newham Council and was made up of nine community partners, including RSG. The consortium identified the following barriers to applying that had caused people to slip through the net:

- lack of English skills and language barriers.
- limited digital skills.
- little, or no access to technology and/or the internet.
- homelessness (14,000 estimated non-applicants were homeless).
- lack of awareness of the Scheme.

The project included events, outreach and marketing to EU/EEA citizens, and informing local authority employees and decision-makers. The consortium held outreach events across the Borough, in particular at Stratford Library and Stratford Shopping Centre, and

partners held individual outreach events across various locations. In total, the consortium made over 360 referrals and helped 500 people to apply to the Scheme.

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## **£1 million education programme for GRT children**

On 22 July, a government [pilot programme](#) was announced focused on boosting educational attainment and reducing school exclusions amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. The aims of the programme include:

- Reducing drop-out rates by engaging families with preschool children and those transitioning from primary to secondary school.
- Targeting young people not in education, employment or training.
- Fostering better cooperation between councils, schools and families.
- Tutoring for catch-up lessons to support pupils whose education has been disrupted by the pandemic.

Pilot programmes will begin in Bradford, Central Bedfordshire, Essex, Hillingdon and Surrey. They aim to reach 150 schools and roughly 600 children and young people.

This pilot is an important step towards addressing some of the concerns outlined in RSG's [letter](#) to the Department for Education in March 2021.

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## **Great London Authority GRTHM event**





Held online for a second year running due to social distancing considerations, this year's event, taking place on 24 June, delivered a unified display of GRT strength and cultural vibrancy.

In the recording above, you can find political discussion, a diverse range of musical performances, GRT artistic and cultural expression, a Q+A session with the Deputy Mayor of London, and educational information on the history of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

### **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill**

One of the main focuses of the event was the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently undergoing its second reading in the House of Lords. This took the form of a

panel discussion involving Gypsy, Roma and Traveller representatives. Journalist Jake Bowers compared actions against GRT people across history to the tightening and loosening of a noose, and that this Bill is like the tightening of that noose once again.

If passed, the Bill will:

- eradicate nomadic life in Britain,
- give police the power to seize Gypsy and Traveller homes,
- fine Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people up to £2500, and
- imprison those needing to follow a nomadic way of life because of a lack of safe legal stopping places.

RSG's Policy and Campaigning Worker, Mihai Bica, raised the threat that the Bill poses to rough sleeping Roma in Britain. Roma sleeping rough in their cars due to a lack of other accommodation may fall victim to the proposed new trespass offence. Also, though Roma in the UK today do not lead nomadic lives, nomadism it is a key part of their historical identity and interconnected heritage with Gypsies and Travellers.

## **Drive 2 Survive**

In opposition to the Bill, [\*\*Drive 2 Survive\*\*](#) campaigners have organised a "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller [\*\*summer of discontent\*\*](#)." On 7 July, activists took part in a peaceful protest in Parliament Square. See a recording of the protest [\*\*here\*\*](#).

In August, the campaign heads to Appleby Horse Fair and in October will stage a mass mobilisation at the Conservative Party Conference. For information on how can you can get involved and for updates on the campaign, please follow Drive 2 Survive on [\*\*Twitter\*\*](#) and visit their [\*\*Facebook\*\*](#) page.

For more information about the impact of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, please see this [\*\*article\*\*](#) by Jake Bowers. Support the campaign by signing this [\*\*open\*\*](#)

letter and write to your MP using this template from Friends, Families and Travellers.

It is important to frame activism to defend the way of life of Gypsies and Travellers in its historical context. A good starting point is this documentary made for the 50th anniversary of the first World Romani Congress:



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**GRTHM art competition**

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RSG's art competition for GRTHM has once again yielded a brilliant range of entries which touch on themes in Roma history and culture and demonstrate a vast array of skill.

See the winning entries and the complete collection in the video below. Congratulations to our overall winner, Pavel, aged 12, whose evocative collage features at the beginning of this edition of our newsletter.



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## Roma anthem video

As part of our celebrations for GRTHM, RSG created a Roma anthem video with participants from our Roma Youth Club. This is a dance remix of 'Gelem, Gelem,' the song established as the anthem of Romani people at the First World Romani Congress in 1971.

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**Roma News GRTM video**



This edition of Roma News is GRTHM focused. It discusses some famous Roma people and their contributions to societies around the world and the similarities and differences between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Daniel also put a question to the newly re-elected Mayor of London:

- *'I want London to be a fun and friendly place for us kids, what are you planning to do to make that happen?'*

At the GLA GRTHM event, this question was answered by Deputy Mayor, Debbie Weekes-Bernard:

*'Daniel, we want you and other young people to feel you have power to shape the changes in the communities that you care about, including how we can make London a fun and*

*friendly place for children and for young people. We're committed to working with our partners to help build strong communities, to support London's recovery from COVID and we'll be supporting local community-led activities and initiatives that benefit those who have been most affected by the pandemic.'*

*'We will work together to support activities that improve understanding, build connections across communities, increase people's feelings of belonging to London and to amplify the voices of those who struggle to be heard.'*

*'One way that you can help to shape this work is by taking part in conversations about what you think a strong community looks like; what you think would make you feel safer and happier in the place in which you live. You can do this online or at an event hosted through our [Festival of Ideas](#) which will be starting up shortly. My Community Engagement team will let all of you know how you can be involved in all of the work that's happening to help London's recovery, to make it a better place for everyone.'*

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## **And finally...**

### **Dani Karavan 1930–2021**

In May, Israeli artist and sculptor [Dani Karavan](#) passed away aged 90. Karavan designed the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism in Berlin.

The memorial is formed by a circular pool of water, at the center of which is a triangular stone, referencing the badges worn by concentration camp prisoners. A fresh flower is placed on the stone daily. In bronze letters at the edge of the pool is the poem 'Auschwitz' by Roma poet Santino Spinelli:



Gaunt face  
dead eyes  
cold lips  
quiet  
a broken heart  
out of breath  
without words  
no tears

Now, less than ten years after its opening in 2012, the memorial is under threat due to plans to build a new underground line directly beneath it. Campaigners are working hard to ensure the memorial is protected.



**For more information about Roma Support Group, go to our website and look at the ["projects" pages](#).**

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