

Roma Holocaust Memorial Day 2023



Introduction & Welcome

We present this special release of our newsletter to mark the 2nd of August, Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.

On this date in 1944, the remaining thousands of Roma and Sinti at Auschwitz Birkenau's 'Gypsy Family Camp' were murdered by the Nazis.

An estimated 500,000 Roma and Sinti were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

In this newsletter we share some extracts from oral history interviews on the Roma Holocaust, and provide some important and useful resources to help you learn more about the experiences of Roma people under the Nazi and fascist regimes.

The Roma Holocaust had its roots in the state sanctioned persecution and discrimination of Roma across pre-war Europe, which has continued to this day. By remembering those murdered, and sharing the stories of those that survived we hope to challenge present day racism and persecution, and contribute to a future where the atrocities of the Holocaust can never happen again.

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Roma Stories



From 2017-2018 Roma Support Group's *Roma Stories* project collected oral histories from a diverse range of Roma people who live in London. The project recorded the stories and experiences of Roma from East Central Europe, with a particular focus on the Roma Holocaust.

To learn more about the oral history project, access learning resources, read more extracts from interviews, view our exhibition and watch a short film click [here](#).

Below we share with you two extracts of interviews from Roma people describing their family histories of the Roma Holocaust.

If you would like to read all 37 interviews in full, they can be accessed through the London Metropolitan Archive [catalogue](#).

Baronita A:

'They were lined up in a long queue, women, children, I don't know, hundreds of people. My mother, who was with one of her sisters and some others, moved away from the queue so they could hide, because they knew, you know what they said? Some of them said: "They are going to kill us", "Who knows how we can escape from here?", "They are going to abuse us." They saw that they started to touch them up, the women. If they saw a good looking one, they tried to touch her up, grabbed her and pulled her in the forest to abuse her.

My mother was a beautiful woman and her sister was as well. "Let's run! Let's run!", my mother said, "Let's run from here! If they grab us, they will take us somewhere and abuse us. Let's run somewhere and hide!", and as they ran, poor them, they found one of those large pipes. And they hid in the pipe, several of them. And they saw them coming, they saw these cars, transporting the prisoners, coming towards them. She was scared and afraid to go in the pipe. The pipe started moving and it rolled over her and cut her toes off and there was a lot of... they were hanging, like that, from the skin. And she stayed there bleeding, until this group of cars transporting prisoners went away. And they managed to move away somewhere else but at some point they caught her. They caught her and took her prisoner. And they took her to one of those concentration camps. And she said she saw this with her own eyes, she saw people dying in front of her, dying from thirst, hunger and they turned them...turned them into slaves.

A woman had to work for them. If she didn't work for them they abused her. Children were dying, elders were ill. Poor them, in that concentration camp. And others, whatever their luck was, some escaped. Some remained there until the War ended. And when the War ended each split and went their own way. Some by caravans, some walking, others were tortured, injured, poor them. And in cities, if people heard them speaking Romanes, they were captured and tortured. Many times women dressed like men and cut their hair so they could look like men. Many times they were asked to work as men, forced to work for others... And we were tortured, my darling. She said: "Only after we escaped and not even then...we survived for nothing, because when they heard Roma voices and when we spoke Romanes, we were captured, beaten and tortured."

Rozalia G:

'My great-grandmother was a dancer, dancing was her source of income. She sang and danced on a stage for the Germans, she was very well known for that. She told us how she saved her nephews but her sisters were taken to the concentration camp and killed there. She found out where her nephews were and decided to save them, she hoped that she would succeed. She sacrificed a lot because she went to save her nephews not knowing if she would come back to her family. She had an arrangement with her husband, he was supposed to meet her in a certain place at a certain time, I can't remember what time, it was somewhere in the forest. If she didn't come back on time, he was supposed to take their children and run away from that place.

She told us that when she went to the Germans she was asked why she came there. She was a very tall woman with blue eyes and fair skin, and she did not look like a Roma. She said that she was a German dancer, she was fluent in German. The Germans said: 'If you are a dancer, prove it.' They put a plank on the table and asked her to dance. She danced and sang the whole night. The Germans believed she was a real dancer. I cannot remember exactly how it was, but she saved those children.

She said that they were little. One of them was in her arms, she had a scarf on her back and the child was there. The rest of them walked with her. She managed to come to the place where she was supposed to meet her husband. She told us that she raised the children with her husband. Later, they all got married, had their own families. She told them about how she saved them, because they couldn't remember. She used to get very emotional when she told the story.'

More Roma Holocaust Resources

- The European Parliament has released a [briefing](#) to mark the Roma and Sinti Holocaust. The paper gives background information on antigypsyism and the Roma Holocaust, explores memories of the Holocaust and Roma Holocaust education across the EU, and discusses the European Parliament's response to the Roma Holocaust.
- Access the Wiener Library's exhibition "Forgotten Victims: The Nazi Genocide of the Roma and Sinti" on the United Nations' [website](#). The exhibition includes oral

testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and contextualises photographs of Roma and Sinti victims taken by Nazis photographers.

- The US Holocaust Memorial Trust has created an online [exhibition](#) charting the persecution of Roma communities before and during the the Second World War.
- The "[Sinti and Roma](#)" collection brings forward personal accounts of Roma victims of the Holocaust to shed light the different ways Roma were persecuted by the Nazi regime and their collaborators.

Remembrance

The impact of the Roma Holocaust, still in living memory for many Roma, continues to be felt by Roma communities who were denied recognition and compensation for the horrors of the Second World War. No Roma were called to testify in the Nuremberg trials, and the very small minority of Roma survivors who managed to receive reparations did so only through lengthy legal and political battles. Roma were first represented at the Holocaust Commemoration Day in Germany in 2011, and the historical fact of the Roma Holocaust was only officially recognised by the European Parliament in 2015.





The importance of remembering was highlighted in 2022 following the "joke" made by Jimmy Carr in his Netflix programme, that made a mockery of the Roma Holocaust and presented it as a positive. Despite attempting to seek a solution with Netflix our concerns were ignored. Our statement on Jimmy Carr can be read [here](#).

We encourage our readers to remember and learn more about the Roma Holocaust, and where possible to raise awareness of it through their work.

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

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