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Yvonne Slee

Background

I grew up in Germany and spent a lot of my childhood at my Sinti Romani grandmother's place and after hearing her stories about her family's suffering through two world wars and the treatment of Romanies in Europe, I resolved to do anything I could to get those stories read so people could see the racism Roma and Sinti endured. I am a writer with 4 published books, one of them a biography of my grandmother's life through 2 world wars.

Objectives

As a Sinti Romani writer and activist, my aim is to educate the public about the true Romani culture and dispell the myths and stereotypes that the media and entertainment industry have foistered upon society for the last 150 years. I moved to Australia in 2004 and would like to see the education department here teach some aspects of our history and culture in schools, for instance, the Holocaust and our Indian heritage. I have spoken on many radio stations in Australia about Romani history and culture and am always looking for ways to create public awareness of my culture.

Education

German High School - Certificate.
Advanced English and Business Studies – TAFE College Australia.
I speak and write both German and English fluently.
For the last 7 years I have studied Romani history and culture over the internet under Ronald Lee, lecturer on the Romani diaspora at the University of Toronto, Canada and Prof. Ian Hancock of the Romani Archive and Documentation Centre at the University of Austin, Texas. I attended a seminar on Romani History in June 2008 at the Greenwich University, London.

Achievements

Getting an anti-stereotyping Romani Exhibition into the North Queensland Museum in 2008 which was on display for 6 months. 4 published books, one of them a biography of my Romani grandmother's life through 2 world wars. Doing Romani Cultural presentations in schools. Organising a government funded Romani History, Culture and Traditions Exhibit in Perth in 2009. Running educational Romani websites and giving talks on Romani culture at a number of organisations. I have also written many support and appeal letters for the Romani Cause, edited a number of Romani newsletters and was recently interviewed by SBS TV Australia about Romani history and discrimination in Europe and life for Romanies in Australia. Getting Romani literature into many libraries across Australia. Co-presenting a Romani radio program in English in 2009. I also had a small collection of my poems published in the first ever book of Romani woman's poetry, "Like Water," published in India in 2009. In March 2011 I took part in the local Harmony Day festival with a Romani stand featuring exhibit boards on Romanies and a table selling Romani literature. Taking part in a Book Drive giving Romani books amongst other books to a school library that has to start again after a fire, and getting other kind, like-minded Romani writers involved.