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Prof. Adrian Marsh teaches Romani studies at the Greenwich University, London. **Hedina Sijercic**, Journalist, Educator, Writer and Translator.

Valery Novoselski, the Roma Virtual Network's administrator. **Yvonne Slee**, Writer and Activist, **Ronald Lee**,

Writer, Activist and Lecturer on the Romani Diaspora at the Toronto University, Canada. **Prof. Ian Hancock**, prominent linguist and lecturer on Romani Language and History at the Austin University, Texas.



The International Romani Union

in conjunction with the

International Roma Education Organisation

presents

Persecution and discrimination against the Roma commenced virtually from the time they entered Europe and has persisted until this day. They were taken as slaves, burned to death by the church, tortured, hunted and treated like wild animals. Roma children were taken/stolen by various governments from the 1700s right up until the 1970s! Romani communities have been run out of towns and Roma still have no rights in many of the countries they live in. Since the 1980s, Romani academics and activists have been working hard to have Romanies play a major role in Romani affairs. Europe now has a number of Romani organisations run by Roma that are working with governments to have basic human rights of the Roma people recognised, such as education, housing and health. But, what is really needed most is large scale re-education of the public's perception of the Roma and this can only be achieved when more Romanies have a greater say in the education system so that an accurate and true portrayal of Romani history and culture could be taught in schools. The Romanies pictured, plus many others, are striving to achieve this so that sometime in the future Romanies can openly and proudly declare their ethnicity without fear of discrimination and be treated as equals in society.

If you would like further information on Romanies visit these websites:

www.rromani.org

www.radoc.net

www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm

http://geocities.com/romani_life_society

www.sintiromancommunity.org

www.geocities.com/romanivonnie

'Torn Away Forever' and 'We are the Romani people' are available in all 6 City of Stirling libraries in Perth.

The International Roma Education Organisation is dedicated to introducing the public to Romani history and Romani culture. Yvonne Slee is a member of the IRU and the president of the Romani Life Society of Australia. She has worked on a number of projects and exhibits here in Australia and was a guest at the Romani History Seminar held at the Greenwich University, London in June 2008. Yvonne has also spoken about Romani issues on ABC radio and other numerous media outlets throughout Australia and the UK.

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A 15 minute slide presentation

narrated by

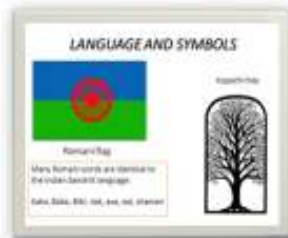
Yvonne Slee

Early in the 11th century, groups of Indians numbering in the thousands were taken out of India by Mahmud of Ghazni and incorporated as ethnic units, along with their camp followers, wives and families, to form contingents of Indian troops to serve in the Ghaznavid Emirate in Khurasan as ghazis and in the bodyguard of Mahmud and his successors. These people are the forefathers of the Romanies.



The Romani people are united under one flag. The blue represents the sky, the green is for the earth and red the Indian wheel.

The Romani are a great tree that has many branches and each branch has many clans." (This ancient tree has its roots in India with many branches or nations while each nation, Kaldersash, Lovara, Sinti, Romanichel, Kale, etc., has many clans or subdivisions. The individual Romani person is a leaf on the tree.)



Romanies first arrived in Australia in 1788. As Australia was opened up Romanies moved around the country in horse drawn vans looking for seasonal work such as fruit picking, farm work, cane cutting, mining, laboring, blacksmithing, horse handling, leather work, metal work, timber mill work and tree felling. The photo of the woman and her children was taken in Brisbane around the turn of the last century. They were from the Machwaya group. This group came to Australia from Serbia via Greece. Romanies also found work in butchers shops and livery stables.



Roma have made their home in almost all countries of Europe where it has been, and still is, the failure of all of the governments of those countries to provide protection for Roma against persecution and massive discrimination. Little ac-

tion is taken to prevent massive job discrimination in the workplace, housing and public sectors. The problem is not so much one of ethnic or national rights of Roma as minorities, where the present focus now lies, but of fundamental human rights as guaranteed under the United Nations Charter of Human Rights.



Romanies were the only other population besides the Jews who were targeted for extermination on racial grounds in the Final Solution. In January, 1940, the first mass genocidal action of the Holocaust took place when 250 Romani children were murdered

in Buchenwald, where they were used as guinea-pigs to test the efficacy of the Zyklon-B crystals later used in the gas chambers. In June the same year. Hitler ordered the liquidation of "all Jews, Gypsies and communist political functionaries in the entire Soviet Union."

On August 1st, 1944, four thousand Romanies were gassed and cremated in a single action at Auschwitz-Birkenau, in what is remembered as Zigeunernacht. By the end of WW2 more than 1 million Roma and Sinti had lost their lives.



Numerous books and articles about Romanies have been written, many of them inaccurate and practically every single one of them by an outsider. Now with the increased awareness of the Romani presence in Europe and the rest of the world, new and far more reliable publications have appeared, many of them written by Romani authors and academics.

Each year, thousands of Romanies from all over Europe gather in Camargue, France to celebrate the feast of their queen. The Romanies call her Kali-Sara and associate her with Kali of India, the mother-goddess of their homeland and consort to Shiva. When they are all assembled around the statue, the pilgrims carry their divinity into the sea together with hundreds of floating candles. Other aspects of Kali as a Shakti include the protector of the oppressed and persecuted which is why Roma and Sinti attend the celebration in France. Sara is also another aspect of Kali, through Kali/Durga/Sara, a Trinity mentioned a lot in Hindu scripture. Because of persecution in Europe and Western Asia many Roma were forced to adopt the Christian and Islam religions.



Yul Brynner Born in Vladivostok, 7/7/1915. His grandmother was a Russian Romani. Elected honorary president of the Roma in 1972, an office that he kept until his death in 1985.

Rita Hayworth Born New York, 1918, daughter of a Spanish Romani Flamenco dancer.

William Clinton former US president. Descended from the brother of Romani leader Charles Blythe, who was crowned 'King of the Scottish Gypsies' at Kirk Yetholm in 1847.

Bob Hoskins British film actor, born 1942. His mother's family is Sinti, from Germany. **Elvis Presley** Born in Mississippi in 1935. Ancestors were part of the Sinti group known as "Black Dutch." Died in Memphis in 1977.



In 1773, Maria Theresia, the Empress of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ordered that all Roma children would be taken away from their parents and handed over to a Hungarian families who would take charge of their Christian upbringing. Many Roma parents retrieved their children and fled to the mountains with them to hide, hence the slogan, 'Gypsies steal children'. 'Running away with the gypsies' voluntarily was also one fantasy which found its way into literature, being reinterpreted as 'stolen by gypsies'.

Romani academics and activists are now endeavoring to dispel the myths and stereotypes that have been fostered upon an ignorant public through the entertainment industry and the media for over 150 years, by presenting the Roma people in a true and accurate way with presentations such as this one and accurate literature on Roma history and culture.

