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TRAVELLERS TIMES

**THE MAGAZINE FOR GYPSIES,
ROMA & TRAVELLERS**



EYES SET ON THE STAGE SHANNON NOLAN

NEWS, GOOD TO ROKKER, WATSON HARROP, KIM MOLONEY MBE,
MURPHY VILLAGE, 'IT SMELLS LIKE FASCISM' AND CHRISSIE BROWNE



ROMA DENISA VIRGIL, HER FATHER BITU VIRGIL AND MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE GYPSY COUNCIL AND ROMA LONDON, AT THE UN ANTI-RACISM RALLY IN LONDON © MELISSA GUNASENA

STOP PRESS: GYPSY COUNCIL SPEAK AT UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL ANTI-RACISM RALLY IN LONDON

Gypsy Council members and supporters took to the streets of London for a rally to support the United Nation's International Day of Action against Racism on Saturday 16th March.

Bitu Virgil, Vice Chair of the Gypsy Council, took to the stage to join speakers condemning racism in all its forms.

His edited speech is published below:

"First of all I would like to express our grief and compassion for our Muslim brothers and sisters in New Zealand. What we have learned? The extremism, the fanaticism is damaging societies. I am always teaching my children that everything in life needs

I AM ALWAYS TEACHING MY CHILDREN THAT EVERYTHING IN LIFE NEEDS TO HAVE LIMITS EXCEPT LOVE AND WITH LOVE COME ONLY GOOD THINGS.

to have limits except LOVE and with love comes only good things.

We, Gypsies, Roma, and the other related ethnic groups, are a nation with a very rough fate. During the centuries we have been enslaved, victims of the Holocaust, of armed conflicts which were not ours, and even nowadays we are constantly victims of violent hate crimes.

Roma communities are the most affected by hate crime in countries like Hungary, Italy, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Romania where the far-right movements are on the rise and the fascism is winning day by day.

Media institutions feel entitled to associate ethnicity with crimes and anti-social behaviour; police abusing individuals knowing that nobody will stand up for them; local governments evicting people without looking for other housing alternatives, central governments not undertaking effective measurements and not involving us in the decision-making process in matters that concern us.

Despite the hard times in our history we prevailed and we still preserve our valuable culture and our national identity. We are not an extinct species! We are still here, we are many and we have voices to speak, we only need people to listen!

We are proud to see so many people listening to us today and prepared to stand by us tomorrow"

By Gypsy Council



NEWS

GOVERNMENT SAYS "CRACK DOWN" ON UNAUTHORISED TRAVELLER CAMPS IS IMMINENT

The Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, has released a statement promising a "crack down" on unauthorised Traveller camps amid press reports that the Government is set to pass laws that will criminalise trespass.

"The vast majority of Travellers were law-abiding citizens – but illegal sites often give an unfair, negative image of their community and cause distress and misery to those who live nearby," he said.

"The result of our initial consultation was clear – people want to see greater protection for local communities and for the police to be given greater power to crack down on trespassers."

Politicians and campaign charities condemned the announcement by the Government. A spokesperson from the Travellers' Times said that even the police chiefs did not want them and that more needed to be done to provide authorised stopping places.

There has been no mention yet of any provision of transit sites or other temporary stopping schemes – like negotiated stopping – to provide for mobile and homeless Travellers who have nowhere else to put their caravans," said Traveller Movement CEO Yvonne MacNamara.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (APPG) also condemned the Government's proposals to create new police powers in their bid to "crack down" on unauthorised Traveller camps.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CONDEMNS PROPOSED NEW LAWS ON GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

René Cassin, A Jewish organisation that campaigns for human rights, has written a letter to Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary, condemning the proposed new laws banning Traveller camps and condemning the Government's portrayal and treatment of Britain's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Mia Hasenson-Gross, René Cassin Director, said that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities together constitute Europe's largest ethnic minority and they share a history of persecution with Jewish people.

"The Jewish community stands in solidarity with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in eliminating prejudice and ensuring no one is denied the right to a home."

By Mike Doherty

ROMANY CAMPAIGNER BETTY BLUE WINS DORSET COMMUNITY SPIRIT AWARD

Mrs Betty Blue Smith Packman-Billington has won a Community Spirit Champion Award for her contributions to the Gypsy community.

The Bournemouth BRONZE Awards celebrate and credit women's histories, contributions and achievements that have had a profound community impact to inspire the next generation of the female in the community.

The organisers, Arts 4 Survival, said Mrs Smith Packman-Billington deserved to win because she works voluntarily with many organisations to help the Gypsies and Travellers who are dealing with prejudice and discrimination. **By Mike Doherty**



BETTY BLUE SMITH PACKMAN-BILLINGTON © COLLINS T PHOTOGRAPHY

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ABOVE LEFT: TARIQ OMAR | ABOVE RIGHT: STEVEN HORNE © HORNE
BELOW: NATHAN © SMITH FAMILY/CHARMAINE ABDUL KARIM

ROMANI PAY TRIBUTE TO CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUE VICTIMS

Romani campaigners from New Zealand, Canada and the UK have paid tribute to Tariq Omar and other Muslim victims, who were murdered by a terrorist shooter earlier this month at Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Tariq Omar, whose mother Rosemary Omar is Muslim, was one of the 50 killed at prayer when a gunman armed with automatic weapons targeted two mosques in a shooting spree on Friday 15th March. 38 victims were also wounded and 29 of them remain in hospital.

The gunman left a 'manifesto', or statement of intent, which has been described by experts as being fuelled by far-right ideology and Islamophobia. In a court appearance, the shooter made a gesture with his fist described as a "symbol of white supremacy".

Members of AoteaRomani Facebook Group, from New Zealand, USA, Canada and the UK, worked together drafting the statement and a floral tribute and message were left in remembrance.

A spokesperson from AoteaRomani was at Tariq's memorial which they described as "incredible".

"His three siblings did him so proud, speaking with such love for their brother, and the room was filled with hundreds of people," they said. "I passed on your thoughts and the card."

"Tariq had stayed in the mosque to help an injured child while others ran outside. What a hero."

Aotearomani / TT News

TRAVELLER ACADEMIC PUBLISHES NEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS WITH GYPSY AND TRAVELLER PUPILS

Steven Horne, a Traveller academic and education expert, has published a guide for teachers and other education staff who have Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

A little over 500 years ago the first people under the 'Gypsy' banner arrived on British shores. Centuries of persecution and misrepresentation, bolstered in recent years by sensationalist TV programmes and skewed media reports, have resulted in a warped and often one-sided perspective of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities, their beliefs and their history, says Steven Horne.

This book addresses that imbalance by offering an 'insider's' look into what is often an unknown and misunderstood culture.

To buy a copy, log on to Amazon and search for 'Steven Horne Gypsy', and it will come up.



ROMANY SCHOOLBOY WRITES TO PRIME MINISTER TO ASK FOR MORE SITES

Romany Gypsy schoolboy Nathan, 10, has written to the Prime Minister to highlight the difficulties Gypsies and Travellers face in developing their own private Traveller sites and to ask for equal rights.

Nathan told the Travellers' Times that he wrote his letter as part of an 'inspiring writing', school project for Woore primary school in Cheshire. Nathan's mum Charmaine said she was "very proud" of Nathan.

Every June Nathan's school celebrates Gypsy, Traveller and Roma History Month. **By Mike Doherty**



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A COBB SAFELY GRAZES AFTER PULLING A HORSE DRAWN WAGON © WILF STRANKS

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GYPSIES, ROMA AND TRAVELLERS A "BLASPHEMY" SAY CHURCH LEADERS

The Church of England has called on its leaders to combat racism "in all its forms" against Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities.

A motion was passed at the Church's General Synod which said it was "a blasphemy" against Christ to tolerate

racism and discrimination against the Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell spoke of the 'evil' of all forms of racism – and how racism and prejudice against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was still 'tragically' tolerated.

LANCASHIRE TRAVELLERS WORRIED ABOUT LOSING HOMES AS COUNCIL SET TO CONSULT ON SITE SELL-OFF

Travellers are worried that they will lose their homes after Lancashire County Council announced that it was proposing to sell the three Traveller sites that it owns.

Irish Traveller residents of the Mellishaw Traveller site, near Morecombe, said that they were "stressed" about the uncertainty of the situation.

"We don't want to be put off here and forced to move into housing, and that's if the council even offer us housing," said Krissie and Marie. "We would rather go back on the side of the road than move to a house, even though it was so hard for us. We feel



MELLISHAW TRAVELLER SITE RESIDENT NICOLE, 15, AND HER BABY SISTER MARY-DOLL – WORRIED ABOUT LOSING THEIR HOME

stressed and closed in, in a house. It's not our culture."

Gina Dowding, a local Green Party Lancashire County Councillor, said she had visited Mellishaw site and heard their concerns.

"The residents' concerns are primarily about losing their homes once the site is sold, and also the fear that there will be no long-term guarantee of a tenancy for those already living on the site," she said.

A Lancashire County Council spokesperson said that there would be a consultation with the residents before any decision was made.

ANTI-HORSE TETHERING CAMPAIGN STALLS IN PARLIAMENT – BUT CONCERNS REMAIN

A Traveller has contacted a campaign group that is trying to make horse-tethering for more than 24 hours illegal.

Katja, who lives in her horse-drawn wagon, contacted Horse World because she was worried that any new law would outlaw the lives of hundreds of Travellers who live horse-drawn.

A spokesperson for Horse World replied to Katja and told her that they wanted to "reassure" her that anyone who treats their horses well and lives with them would not be affected by their anti-tethering campaign called #Breakthechain.

On the friends of the 'Horsedrawn Campaign' Facebook Page, there was still concern over the proposed new anti-tethering laws.

One horse-drawn Traveller pointed out that the authorities might use the new law to harass Travellers and get them to move regardless of the welfare of the animal.

Another Traveller commented: "What if I want to stop for a few weeks for school or work or sickness?"

By Mike Doherty



ALMOST HALF OF DOCTORS' SURGERIES REFUSED TO REGISTER NO FIXED ABODE TRAVELLERS WITHOUT ID OR ADDRESS

An investigation by NGO Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) has revealed that almost half of doctors' surgeries refused to register a researcher posing as a Traveller without a fixed address or proof of identity, even though it is an NHS requirement to do so. Despite this, every GP practice was rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by a doctors' watchdog for working with vulnerable people.

National Health Service guidelines say: "When applying to become a patient there is no regulatory requirement to prove identity, address, immigration status or the provision of an NHS number in order to register." However, the experiences of people on the ground can often be very different.

The research found that of the 50 GP practices contacted, 24 would not register the mystery shopper either as a permanent patient or as a temporary patient. Of these, 17 GP practices said they would not register people without proof of identification, 12 GP practices said they would not register people without an address, one GP practice said they would only register people online and two GP practices never picked up the phone, despite multiple calls on different days.

Speaking about her experience of being refused healthcare, Kit, who lives on board a boat and travels the canals of England trading antique china, said she persisted because she knew she had cancer. "Despite the fact that I knew my rights, provided information on registering at a GP's address and articulated my case, I had to compromise my confidentiality on two occasions to access belated care for an aggressive, life threatening disease which could have been caught years earlier," said Kit.

This is not a problem unique to Gypsies and Travellers say FFT. Similar problems could occur among asylum seekers and refugees, homeless people, and people fleeing from domestic violence.

FFT called on the Government to set up a taskforce to lead the delivery of the recommendations outlined in the research report so that nobody is ever wrongfully denied access to healthcare again.

Sarah Sweeney, from Friends, Families and Travellers, said "long standing and stubborn issues" preventing Travellers from accessing healthcare needed to be addressed.

"The communities affected by this issue are caught in a Catch 22 where they are both at high risk of poor health and also find it much harder to access healthcare," said Sarah Sweeney. We want to work with the Department of Health and Social Care and with the Care Quality Commission to address long-standing and stubborn issues around access to primary care so that once and for all everyone can access the healthcare they need."

By FFT/TT News



(SCOTTISH TRAVELLERS IN BANFF (C) RON BEATY)

SCOTTISH COUNCILS PLEDGE 'LOCAL LEADERSHIP' ON GYPSY/ TRAVELLERS' RIGHTS

Scotland's Council Leaders have pledged action to improve the lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers and tackle discrimination towards the community.

All 32 Council Leaders unanimously approved work to develop a national action plan with the Scottish Government to drive progress and pledged to work with other public bodies to ensure that Gypsy/Travellers are receiving equal access to essential services.

Davie Donaldson, Scottish Traveller Activist and Campaigner, welcomed the announcement.

"This is an amazing pledge for real action from councils!" said Davie Donaldson. "The substantial effort from Traveller activists and campaigners to raise awareness of the issues we face has been worth it," he added.

IT'S GOOD TO ROKKER!

By Rich Matthews

Travellers' Times and Rural Media launch new mental health and education project

"School exclusions continue to plague young Gypsies and Travellers," says 'It's Good To Rokker' project co-ordinator, TT contributor and activist Lisa Smith. "Coupled with our history not being taught – or even being talked about – in schools and the hostile media reporting that continues despite the community's best efforts, young Gypsy and Travellers' mental health is suffering. It's all having a massive negative impact on wellbeing, sense of belonging, and the way we feel about ourselves and the world we all share."

Smith hopes that Rokker will bring the issues facing young Travellers into the public eye by giving them the chance to share their personal stories, experiences and problems through short online dramas. The ultimate aim of the project is to help healthcare professionals,

teachers and policy makers better understand the barriers young people – all young people, not only Gypsies and Travellers – experience in getting the help and respect they need to fulfil their potential. The young people involved will get to work with professional writers and filmmakers to create the films, which will be part of a national resource for teachers, schools and service providers to act as a springboard for discussions about health, wellbeing, diversity and acceptance.

"There are young people from our communities excelling in education," continues Smith, "but sadly there are just as many, maybe more, who are not faring so well. We hope these films will make a difference – and we'd love to hear from anyone who has a story they want to share."



To get in touch, call 01432 344039 or send an email to rokker@ruralmedia.co.uk



**NEW OPENING HOURS
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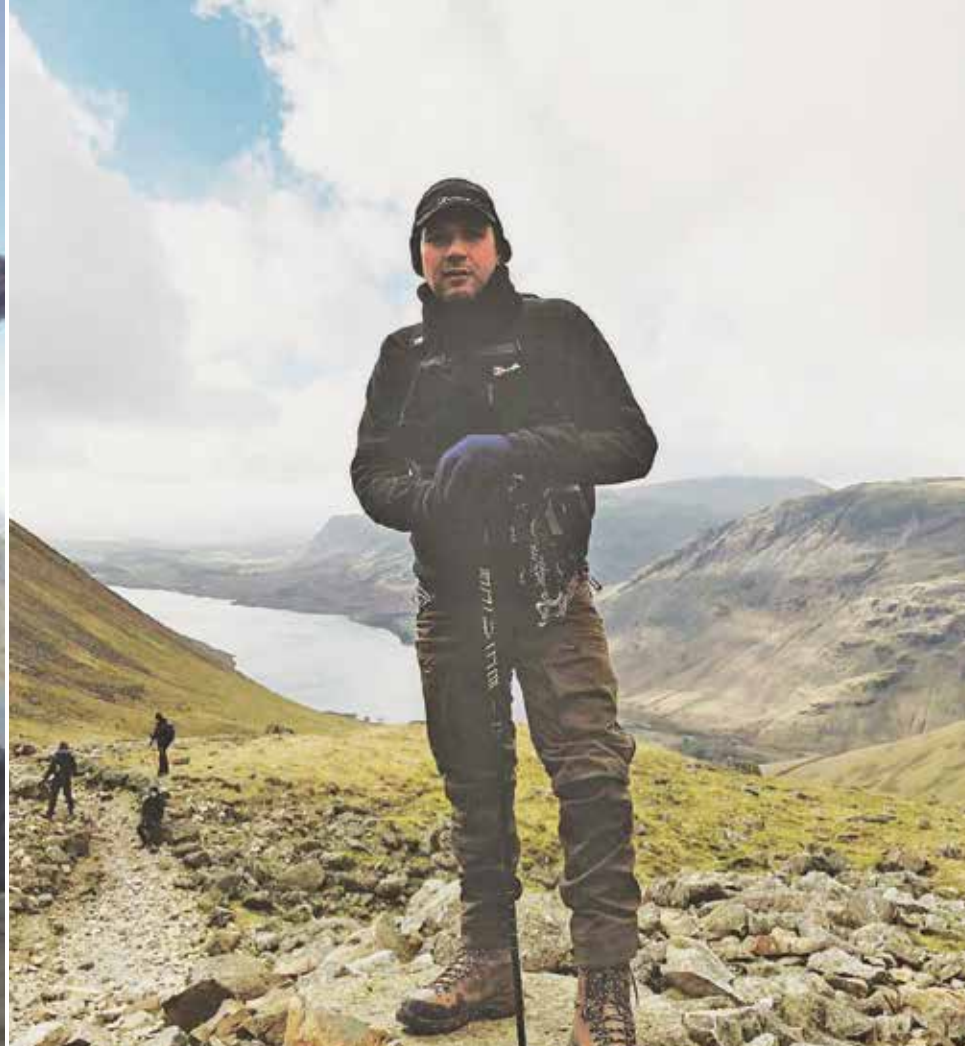
TRAVELLERS ADVICE TEAM NATIONAL TELEPHONE HELPLINE FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

The Travellers' Advice Team (TAT) at Community Law Partnership (CLP) provide advice and representation to Gypsies and Travellers throughout England and Wales in the following areas:-

- Evictions from unauthorised encampments
- Evictions from rented sites (local authority, housing association and private)
- Serious disrepair on rented sites
- Wide Injunctions
- High Court Planning Appeals
- Planning Injunctions
- Stop Notices and direct action
- Homelessness (including for those in houses who need a pitch)
- Allocation of pitches on local authority sites and increases in pitch fees
- Cases for boatdwellers especially concerning the Continuous Cruising Guidance
- Public Spaces Protection Orders



The Community Law Partnership, 4th Floor Ruskin Chambers, 191 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6RP E: office@communitylawpartnership.co.uk



WATSON HARROP IN TRAINING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT © CLIMB2CURE

PROFILE

Watson Harrop

Traveller man Watson Harrop, 30, of Bishops Auckland, County Durham, decided to take action after noticing families in his local area struggling.

While out shopping for his three-month-old daughter at his local Tesco in the run-up to last Christmas, he spontaneously decided to fill a trolley full of food to donate to the store's foodbank.

Taking his act of charity one step further, he videoed himself donating the food, posted the video on Facebook and nominated friends and family to take part in #FoodbankNomination challenge within 48 hours.

The video went viral and the #FoodbankNomination challenge started filling up across the UK.

"In my local town alone the Tesco has had over six tonnes of food donated in just one week – that's enough to make

8,000 meals," Watson Harrop told Travellers' Times, Lisa Smith.

"It's overwhelming how many people have helped and donated. It's caused an avalanche of different communities coming together and making a difference for people who are less fortunate than us over the Christmas period."

Not content with filling up the UK's food banks, Watson Harrop and 30 pals then climbed Ben Nevis, Scotland, to raise money in a bid to help save the lives of two children who desperately need medical help abroad.

Speaking to the Travellers' Times on his phone from a hotel at the foot of the mountain just before they set off on their epic climb, he said.

"We all put on a few pounds over the New Year and I thought I would start a

WhatsApp group and tag a few pals to see if there was any interest in climbing Ben Nevis to raise money."

Watson Harrop says the training for the climb has also opened his eyes to the joys of fell-walking.

"Reaching the top is a real achievement and when the weather is clear the views are amazing. It's exhilarating and a great way to keep fit."

"We want to thank everyone who has supported us so far, including from the harness racing community, and urge others to get behind us and give us their support."

To find Watson Harrop's online donation page for the Ben Nevis Climb, Google "GO FUND ME" and "CLIMB2CURE".

By Lisa Smith/Mike Doherty



PROFILE

Kim Moloney MBE



"A letter came through the letter box, but I can't read and write so I gave it to my son," says Kim Moloney, 48, an Irish Traveller mother of four, and a Traveller rights campaigner from Leeds. Kim's son opened the letter and said, "Mum, it's from the Prime Minister!" Shocked, Kim Moloney replied, "Go away you eejit! What would the Prime Minister be writing me a letter for?"

However, the letter really was from the Prime Minister, and it was asking if Kim Moloney was willing to accept a Member of the British Empire award from the Queen. Kim Moloney, who is Honorary President of Trustees for the charity Leeds Gypsy And Traveller Exchange (Leeds GATE), accepted and then went to Buckingham Palace in London to receive the award from Prince Charles, and is now Kim Moloney MBE!

Kim Moloney has lived in Leeds for most of her life after her mum and dad moved there when she was four or five. Kim currently lives in her trailer at Cottingley Springs Traveller site, a big public site run by Leeds City Council. Before her father's increasing illness led Kim to move to Cottingley Springs 17 years ago, the family was living roadside.

"I lived in trailers all my life," says Kim Moloney. "We lived down here in Cross Green (a mixed industrial/residential area of Leeds) for about five years roadside. But my dad started getting Alzheimer's and I said to mum, we have to settle down somewhere, because daddy is getting Alzheimer's. So I said 'Mum, we will have to settle down what can we do?'"

"So the Council offered me a council house, but a dog wouldn't live in it. I can't live in a place like that because I get closed up with claustrophobia. It's like I can't breathe" (Kim

mimes gasping for air like she is struggling to breathe and clutches at her throat). "We eventually got offered a slab on Cottingley Springs; one for mum and dad and one for me."

Because of her experience of Alzheimer's within her extended family, Kim Moloney has been key in Leeds GATE's work around health and particularly raising awareness about Alzheimer's in the Travelling community, among the community itself, and to health professionals involved in the treatment of the condition.

"Since GATE opened 20 years ago me and my aunt Eileen, God rest her soul, (Eileen Lowther, who died in 2017, was one of the founding members of Leeds GATE) used to help here and volunteer with Helen Jones (CEO of Leeds GATE) and all the women, so I just give Travellers what they need to know, I go out and tell Travellers all about GATE and I help Travellers a lot with Alzheimer's and go to meetings with health professionals."

Kim Moloney has strong views on the importance of travelling within Traveller culture. "One of my girls is travelling now, since she got married, but she was three or four when we first moved onto site. I never want my children to lose that travelling life."

"I would like to be in Parliament and tell them: 'would you give up your culture?' Travellers shouldn't go onto private property but the councils own land and they should let Travellers onto it. The Leeds roadside Travellers get skips and toilets from the council now." Kim Moloney says that before Leeds GATE started talking to Leeds City Council and working on 'negotiated stopping', Travellers could get evicted multiple times a day. "I understand that there are hundreds of Travellers travelling every day, but that's part of life. That's the way we live." **Interview by Mike Doherty**

FEATURE

MURPHY VILLAGE'S IRISH TRAVELLER COMMUNITY, SOUTH CAROLINA

MIKE CARROLL IS AN IRISH TRAVELLER FROM MURPHY VILLAGE, SOUTH CAROLINA, A COMMUNITY OF AROUND 2,000 TRAVELLERS OF IRISH DESCENT WHO SETTLED IN AIKEN COUNTY NEAR AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, IN THE EARLY 60S. CARROLL IS THE AUTHOR OF THE SELF-PUBLISHED BOOK *IRISH TRAVELLERS: AN UNDOCUMENTED JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY AND GIVES AN EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT OF THE EVERYDAY LIFE AND THE HISTORY OF HIS PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY.*

EB: Could you sum up in a few lines the history of your family, where they come from, how they arrived in the USA and in Murphy Village?

MC: My people were once a settled clan who lived in a quiet, peaceful community before becoming a nomadic subculture in Irish society. A chance encounter between a Protestant landowner and a young Traveller forever changed my forefathers' destiny and took them from their ancestral home to Holland and eventually America.

Murphy Village, in the beginning, was a wooded area adjacent a Roman Catholic church (Saint Edward the Confessor) located a short distance from the Aiken County border in Edgefield County, South Carolina. My family migrated to "The Camp" from Brays Hill, a geographic area located in Athens, Georgia. My family's migration to what was then called "The Camp" later called Murphy Village was encouraged by my grandfather, Barney B. Gorman.

EB: Can you tell us about your childhood and teenage years at Murphy Village?

MC: My parents feared the outside world and the malice that lurked just beyond the borders of our encampment. Most of the

faculty and students at my school made it very clear that I was unwelcome and saw my attendance as a waste of school resources. As a young child, I was always surrounded by family and played with cousins who lived only a few steps away from my front door.

Growing up as an Irish-American Traveller in the southeastern United States was difficult and presented many challenges. Our customs and traditions were very different from those of the local community, a community steeped in southern ideals.

EB: Can you describe Irish-American Traveller's traditions? Are they still important to the community?

MC: Irish-American Travellers cherish their traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. Forbidding sexual relations between a man and a woman before marriage. The importance of arranged marriages to guarantee the continuation of bloodlines. Arranged marriages have been a cornerstone of many cultures, African, Asian, Buddhism, Hinduism, India, Islam, Judaism, are among the numerous cultures that practise this tradition. This custom when practised by Irish Travellers is put under a microscope and tainted with racism.

Long-standing traditions remain important aspects of our community. These traditions serve to reinforce our beliefs in religion and way of life. An ethnic minority must never be forced to abandon their culture in exchange for acceptance.

EB: How do you feel about settling down?

MC: I believe Irish Travellers in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States must settle down, educate their children and demand their rightful place in society. But I do miss the travelling: travelling the open road, not knowing what's around the next corner, meeting new people, and seeing the natural wonders of the United States are all compelling and intoxicating.

EB: Do you think there will be more Irish Travellers going into higher education and marrying outside the community?

MC: My family has set an example of what is possible in our community in South Carolina. There has been a recent increase in high school graduates, but as a minority has a long way to go. Marriage to outsiders is not forbidden, but it is not encouraged.

EB: How do you see the future of your community?

MC: I see our community retaining their ethnicity and traditions, but eventually abandoning life on the road in favor of a settled way of life.

By Elisabeth Blanchet and Mike J Carroll

JACKIE O'HARA WITH HER GRANDSON TOMMY O'HARA. © BLANCHET



THE FUNERAL OF ROBKA CSORBA AND HIS FATHER ROBERT © EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

OPINION TEN YEARS AFTER THE ROMA KILLINGS IN HUNGARY

On Saturday evening, 23rd February, a crowd gathered in Budapest to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the murder of five-year-old Robika Csorba and his father Robert, victims of a murderous series of attacks on Roma settlements across Hungary in 2008 and 2009. Six Roma were slain and over 50 others wounded in the wave of far-right terror, which left the maimed and the bereaved severely traumatised.

After midnight on 23 February 2009, in the village of Tatárszentgyörgy, attackers first threw Molotov cocktails, setting the Csorba family home ablaze. On hearing the bangs, Robert grabbed his two eldest children, while his partner took the youngest child Maté. As Robert fled the burning house, holding Robika close to his chest and Bianka by his side, a waiting gunman opened fire hitting all three. Only Bianka would survive.

His grandmother said, "I was holding Robi's head in my lap, and he kept saying 'le, le, le' meaning he was shot but he couldn't get the whole word out. My little grandson was gasping with his eyes closed. With tears rolling down his face. Putting so many shots into such a small child barely 11 kilos. May their lungs dry up."

This appalling murder occurred against a backdrop of widespread anti-Roma sentiment, increasing intimidation fueled by prejudiced media reporting, and racist rallies by the far-right Jobbik party and its uniformed paramilitaries.

The police refused to see that this and other fatal attacks against Roma were linked and racially motivated. When they arrived at the scene of the Csorba double murder, they even denied a crime had taken place. The police had to be called back to the scene because the family found footprints and spent cartridges in the bloodstained snow.

Only after Viktória Mohácsi, a Romani Member of the European Parliament, arrived and called in the National Investigation Bureau, was this incident acknowledged as a double homicide.

An on-site fact-finding mission by human rights groups, including the European Roma Rights Centre, found the conduct of the police, paramedics and firefighters to have been criminally negligent.

The attacks against Roma continued, and in May 2009, Jen Kóka was gunned down as he left home for his nightshift in a local factory in Tiszalök. The far-right paramilitary Magyar Garda had staged mass meetings and marches in both Tiszalök and Tatárszentgyörgy prior to these fatal attacks. The speeches were full of anti-Roma racism and threats of violence. Finally, after Jen's assassination, the police conceded that the atrocities were likely linked and carried out by a four-man cell with military expertise.

However, they failed to apprehend the killers and to prevent the final assault in August 2009, when gunmen murdered Maria Balogh in her bed, and seriously wounded her 13-year-old daughter Ketrin.

Ten years after the killing of five-year-old Robika, it seems that anti-Roma racism has been 'mainstreamed', for it is no longer the preserve of nazi sociopaths. Today, government ministers in Sofia describe Roma as "brazen, feral, human-like creatures", and call for harsh policy measures because "Gypsies in Bulgaria have become exceptionally insolent". Italian interior minister Matteo Salvini's call for "a mass cleansing street by street, piazza by piazza, neighbourhood by neighbourhood", came with an expression of regret that he could not expel Italian Roma along with the "irregular foreign Roma".

This smells like fascism; official hate speech creates a toxic climate where racists feel entitled to engage in acts of violence against Roma. It's time for all who care about democracy, dignity and diversity to take a stand, for antigypsyism is not a 'Roma problem' – it is emphatically a gadje problem – and the responsibility to deal with it rests with the majority society.

By Bernard Rorke



#YTT PROFILE



NATHAN LINFOOT WITH BLACKROD HEAD COACH © EB SWARBRICK

SHANNON NOLAN © JESSICA MONSON

SHANNON NOLAN

“Stay driven and surround yourself with the right people”

#YTT CAUGHT UP WITH SHANNON NOLAN, THE STAR OF FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND TRAVELLER’S HIGHLY ACCLAIMED PLAY CRYSTAL’S VARDO. THE 19-YEAR-OLD ACTRESS HAS TRAINED WITH THE BRITISH THEATRE ACADEMY AND HAS AN EMPOWERING MESSAGE FOR OTHER YOUNG TRAVELLERS.

How did you first become involved in Crystal’s Vardo?

I went to watch the play and while I listened I felt connected to the lead character Crystal. She is a young Traveller girl who had been bullied and has a distrust in country people. After the play I met Suzanna King, the director and writer.

It had an impact on me through Crystal’s character because it took me back to when I was young, I used to be called names and was told to go back to my caravan and called p*key.

At college we created a poem about our experiences with a poet Joelle Taylor called The Ballad of Bird McCarthy, about a young Traveller girl who had been bullied, and had emotionally barricaded herself in with all of this hurt which eventually leads to her downfall and she commits suicide.

We tried to put a strong message across to raise awareness of what bullying can actually do to young people. We created and performed the poem in a West End theatre, it’s about standing up and making a difference and that’s what I want to do. I felt that Crystal related not only to me, but The Ballad of Bird McCarthy and to so many other young Travelling girls.

So what are your ambitions for the future? Was Crystal’s Vardo the first time you performed on stage?

No, I’ve worked alongside people like Ramin Karimloo and Preeya Kalidas in theatres but only as an ensemble. My ambitions have always been to pursue a career in acting; my biggest aim is to make a difference and change people’s points of view.

What’s the feeling for you when you are performing on stage?

The first thing people assume is that it must be scary standing in front of all these people on stage but that hasn’t been in my experience at all, there’s something special about it.

What advice would you give to other young people interested in acting?

On that note, I would say if you’re really interested in this career path you need to take action and remember that the world around us is evolving, people are changing, so don’t wait for anybody to tell you you can do it. Anything good is never easy and failing is learning. All you must do is stay driven and surround yourself with the right people.

By Lisa Smith

NATHAN LINFOOT WINS

REGIONAL BOXING TITLE TO REACH QUARTER FINALS OF NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Nathan Linfoot, 15, from Chorley, Lancs, has won the North West Champion 60kg after a hard bout in Manchester, on 24th February.

Speaking to the Travellers’ Times, Nathan’s Dad, Mike Linfoot, said the final was a “hard fight”, but that Griffin was “outboxed” by Linfoot.

Mike Linfoot coaches at Blackrod ABC alongside Head Coach, Richard Godding, Ian Prescott and Ben Watkinson.

“We are a good team,” says Mike Linfoot. “Four of us coach over 30 kids per night, three to four nights a week. It’s open to all boys and girls, and other Travelling kids also go to the gym. There is no discrimination, and all are treated equally, which is not always the case at other gyms. By Mike Doherty

#YTTPROFILE

CHRISSIE BROWNE

“There is a long way to go but we are on the right road”

I grew in the 1990s on sites in Norfolk and Essex. My dad is a Traveller, my mum a Gadje, so I split my time between living in houses and living on sites and stopping places. As the years have gone by most of my family are now living in houses but travelling and being a Traveller is still firmly in my blood, heart and head. I left school with pretty good grades but no interest in higher education, I didn’t feel it was ‘for me’. I had been working in pubs since I was 12 and just wanted to be out there earning money and doing something, being stuck behind a desk drove me crazy.

As I got older I realised I wanted to help people, especially those that were often forgotten or ignored, so I did an access course (a way for adults to get a qualification to go to University) and got a place at King’s College London to study Nutrition and Dietetics. When I began my course, I started doing some student ambassador work for the Widening Participation department to earn some money. They work to help even the playing field of education and increase diversity at university, including people from minority ethnic groups, poorer backgrounds, and those most unlikely to go on to university. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are amongst those least likely to go on to university. I’ve since become the ambassador for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students at King’s. My job is varied and ranges from promoting events and opportunities that the Widening Participation department offers in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

circles to working in a mentoring capacity with young Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students.

I’ve always been proud of who I am but over the years I started feeling worn down by explaining my heritage to people, and having to combat ignorance, racism and ingrained beliefs. I think the best way we can

make sure that we receive fundamental respect and human rights is to be present and be part of conversation happening, the slogan ‘Nothing about us without us’ rings so true with Travellers. There is a long way to go before racism ends but we are on the right road, and my hope is that one day no child should feel they need to hide who they are or where they come from.

If you are on social media follow me on Twitter @chriessie_rd2b and the WP team on @KCLWP to keep up to date with the latest news, and opportunities. I’m also on the executive committee for ACERT (Advisory Council for the Education of Romany Travellers) and involved with the GRT Women’s Empowerment Network.

By Chrissie Browne



CHRISSIE BROWNE © KIRSTY MCLAREN

#ROMBELONG
Filming Opportunity

The Project
People have a certain image of Travellers in their head, we want to show that we are so much more than the stereotype. Rural Media and King’s College London have teamed up to film current university students who are from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller backgrounds talk about their experiences in further and higher education.

What is involved
Being available for filming in London on 28th and 29th August.

Willing to talk about experiences of being a student at University (current student or recent graduate)

Coming from a Gypsy, Roma, Traveller background (including Bargees or Showmen)

For more information and to show your interest please fill in this form: <http://bit.ly/GRTFilming>

What is ‘Rom Belong’
Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are among the least likely to go to university, but the culture and heritage can offer so much.

Working closely with current Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students, the Widening Participation Department has developed the ‘Rom Belong’ programme to increase the positive representation and inclusion of people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds.

Why the name?
We believe that Rom, from the Romani word for The Travelling people, belong in any career they choose. We believe that Rom belong as doctors, lawyers, nurses, or historians.

We believe that Rom Belong at King’s College London

THE GYPSY CAMP AT AUSCHWITZ

By Raine Geoghegan

FEBRUARY 1943

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, a family Gypsy camp was set up in a wooden barracks.

AUGUST 2 1944

Over 4,000 Roma and Sinti men, women and children were murdered in the gas chambers.

JANUARY 27 1945 AT 3PM

Soviet soldiers reached the camp and found only one Rom among the survivors.

*The branches on the trees bend and sway
Leaves fall and settle on the ground
Sunlight seeps through mottled clouds
And all is quiet*

*A woman with long red hair
Picks a blade of grass
Holds it up to the light
Remembering her husband
The shape of his mouth
How he spoke her name, Narilla*

Men kek bisssa: we will not forget

*An old chal with silver hair
Takes his hat off, feels the warmth of the sun
On his head
His chavo was four years old when they were imprisoned
A year later he was taken and was never seen again
He had dark curls and hazel eyes*

*A chavali runs into the arms of her mother
Who remembers she once had twelve chavies
All had hair the colour of the darkest earth
And eyes like wolves*

Men kek bisssa: we will not forget

*Winter birds mourning on the branches
The earth remembering
How it has given refuge to the dead*

*No longer dead leaves trampled underfoot
They have become wild breathing flowers
Growing in the dust.*

"Except for a few survivors, a whole people unique in its life-style, language, culture and art, was wiped off the face of the earth. The death of the Gypsy Nation was more than physical; it was total oblivion." *Azriel Eisenberg, Witness to the Holocaust, 1981 (New York) taken from Danger, Educated Gypsy, selected essays by Ian Hancock.*

ROMANI JIB:
MEN KEK BISSA – WE WILL NOT FORGET;
CHAL – MAN; CHAVO – BOY;
CHAVALI – GIRL; CHAVIES – CHILDREN.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE OF ROMA, TAKEN SOMEWHERE IN THE BALKANS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN BY GERMAN SOLDIERS. OUTCOME AND EXACT DATES AND LOCATIONS UNKNOWN. © ROBERT DAWSON COLLECTION WWW.ROBERTDAWSONGALLERY.CO.UK

OBITUARIES



LEFT: HENRY CHAPMAN
© TRAVELLER MOVEMENT
RIGHT: ANN WILSON © BOURNE HALL

HENRY CHAPMAN

Shortly before his tragic death earlier this year, Henry Chapman sent the Travellers' Times an article. With the kind permission of Henry's sister, the Travellers' Times is publishing his last article (edited) as a tribute to Henry. For the full unedited article see the Travellers' Times Online.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities in Britain experience wide-ranging inequalities, writes Henry Chapman.

Despite the Equality Act 2010, GRT and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex (LGBTQI) groups continue to face high levels of racial and sexual discrimination, contributing to and exacerbating the inequalities they experience. It is saddening to hear that in a recent study GRT communities hide their ethnic identity in order to access employment and educational services and Travellers who identify as LGBTQI are running away from home or entering arranged marriages to avoid bringing shame on their family.

The rise in suicide and mental health issues within the GRT and LGBTQI community which are not represented by statistics. Members of the GRT community have an increased rate of suicide compared to non-travellers which can only be exacerbated by despair and isolation experienced by GRT who are LGBTQI.

In this day and age, the GRT LGBTQI community should not be fighting for acceptance but be free to live happy and fulfilled lives free from discrimination and prejudice.

By Henry Chapman

ANN WILSON

My friend Ann Wilson, who died aged 59 of cancer, spent her life campaigning for the rights of Gypsies and Travellers.

In 1996, with her friend Hilda Brazil, Ann founded the Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum, on which I also served. The forum grew until it was the recognised point of contact with all Traveller groups for social services.

Ann went on to teach Gypsy history and culture to staff in the NHS, fire service, police, council and charities throughout Surrey. She also visited parliament to advise ministers on Traveller affairs. She helped to promote Romany culture, organising Gypsies Got Talent contests at Bourne Hall community centre in Ewell and at the Derby in Epsom.

She supported adult literacy, assisted young people needing support with the driving test, made assessments of community numbers for local authorities, and set up health and wellbeing projects.

In 2014 she was appointed MBE for services to the Traveller community.

Ann was born in Dorking, Surrey, the daughter of Henry Smith, a member of an old Surrey Gypsy family, and his wife, Jean (nee Poulter). She grew up with her sisters, Carol and Mary, in Effingham and began her education at St Lawrence's primary school, but stopped going to school at the age of 11.

Ann grew up in a world where pubs had signs saying "No Gypsies served" and her people were regularly excluded. Ann was determined to improve opportunities for her community.

In 1975 she met Michael Wilson at the Derby and they married the following year.

In 1985 Ann became a born-again Christian after being moved by a service at the Coign Church in Woking.

Ann is survived by Michael, and by her daughters, Jean and Annie, and grandchildren, Shakiah, Cheyanne, TJ, Jacob-Henry and Jack.

By Jeremy Harte

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