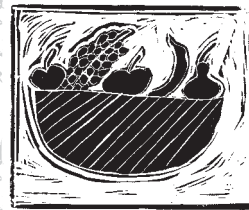


Canada  
Without Shadows  
***I am a Romani Woman***



red tree & chirikli collective  
*the witness project*

Kanada Bizo Uchalipe  
***Me Sem Romni***

*Testimonies, lives and dreams of five Hungarian Romani women in Toronto*



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# Canada Without Shadows/The Witness Project

*The Witness Project* was inspired by the need for Romani cultural agency and voice in an era of globalisation; by the need for Romani women to speak of their lives; and by the need to address contemporary Romani experience as a critical response to prevailing dominant cultures. Canada is often envisioned as a place 'without shadows' of racism and violence against Roma in Europe. What does Canada offer to Roma who seek refuge here? Where is the forum in which they can tell their stories?

In November 2009, Hedina and I responded to a call for artists for *Call the Witness – 2nd Roma Pavilion*, to take place in Venice 2011. The curatorial team sought Romani artists working in new media to "act in solidarity with the events and people that provoked (the artists') work."

Responding to the curators' call for testimonies, we brought *The Witness Project*, a component of *Canada Without Shadows*, to a group of five Romani women living in Toronto: Timea, Monika V., Gizella, Ilona, Monika B. They had left Hungary with their families to seek refuge here. Facilitated by community partners St. Christopher House and Roma Community Centre, Hedina and I held a series of workshops with the women. With Hedina, they wrote and recorded their stories.

In a way they are one story: the violence or terror that uprooted the women and their families; the joy of seeing their young children thrive in Toronto schools and neighbour-

hoods; their longing for a future in this country. In print-making workshops the women made the images for this book: flowers, fruit, trees; a family home left behind; a horse bearing the Romani wheel.

*Canada Without Shadows* became a four-part audio work installed at BAK (basis voor actuele kunst) Utrecht, Netherlands (May 21–July 24, 2011), and Roma Pavilion, Venice (June 1–October 9, 2011) in the *Call the Witness* exhibition.

To better appreciate the lives and experiences of the five writers and their families, and the society from which they fled, this book contextualises their testimonies with reports, texts, background information and the artists' own work. We also include information about very disturbing recent events in Hungary and Czech Republic. We believe it is crucial to convey that many Roma currently living in Toronto may return to a state of terror if their refugee claims are denied. The incidents are but two links in a long chain of systemic and brutal violations of human rights targeting Roma. The dates may change over the decades, but the atrocities have remained all too similar.

The stories and images of Timea, Monika V., Gizella, Ilona, and Monika B. declare courage, hope, strength and light. Let their voices speak for all Romani women whose own voices have been silenced and are waiting to be heard.

*Lynn Hutchinson Lee, artistic director*



## Through the eyes and hearts of women

Sharing your life story with others can conjure up deeply rooted emotions. To share the same fate, to verbalize something that has never been said before, is a cathartic experience. It can heal, make you strong, encourage and create a common bond. I witnessed all this during the creative process in the writing of women's testimonies, and the print-making workshops, for this book.

Seeing the stories of Roma women come to life was a unique experience. These were women whose tales had never had an appreciative audience, who never before spoke earnestly of desires, purpose or fear. They submitted to their families, as well as to others, without a voice of their own.

In this book we are able to read about past, present and expected future of a small number of Roma women. The book

offers us a small insight into an important part of Hungarian Roma history: that of immigrating to Canada.

History is usually the story of men. We rarely have the opportunity to see it through the eyes and hearts of women. Truly understanding an era, however, is only possible through the reflection of everyone's eyes. In this book, we have a chance to witness just that, by reading the stories and seeing the images through the eyes of Romani women.

I hope that this project will act as an inspiration to the Roma the world over. Their stories are too valuable to ignore.

*Livia Kenyeres  
Transitional Housing and Support Worker  
St. Christopher House, Toronto*

# INTRODUCTION

As a Canadian-born Romani, growing up in Toronto with no connection to my roots back in Hungary, I wasn't aware that other Roma lived here. I didn't know there were so many of us, for Roma are indistinguishable here in our city. Those who came from Europe usually chose not to self-identify, protecting themselves after discrimination in their countries of origin.

Most Roma in Europe, however, do not have this option: they live in highly heterogeneous societies that are fertile ground for radical nationalist movements. Darker skin tones of varying degrees, surnames, and segregated neighbourhoods and schools are markers of the 'others'.

European Roma have been targeted in a broad spectrum of human rights abuses under an apartheid system which excludes Roma from education, health care, social services, employment, and access to safety and justice. The nationalist, extreme right wing Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) has recently won 47 seats in the Hungarian Parliament. Jobbik has its own Neo-Nazi paramilitary organization, the now illegal Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard), which nevertheless continues to intimidate and attack Roma. In November 2010, Amnesty International called upon the Hungarian government to investigate the 48 violent attacks and 9 murders committed since 2008 as racially motivated crimes targeting Roma.

For me, there is no mystery behind the reasons that Roma flee to Canada when our government removes travel restrictions. The women whose stories you will read here knew one thing when making the decision to leave: their children needed a safe future. In Toronto, Roma children are welcomed and included in school. Unlike in Hungary or Czech Republic, they are not placed into schools for the mentally handicapped. Nor are they subjected to a segregated education system which forces them to sit at the back of the class, study in a separate part of the school, or perhaps not be allowed into school at all. In Canada, Romani parents are learning that their children are in safe hands. Verbal and physical abuse has been replaced by acceptance, patience, and understanding.

This past year I have had the great fortune to work as an educator and advocate for the approximately 350 Hungarian Roma students in Parkdale neighbourhood schools, and more recently with the Czech Roma students at Greenwood Secondary School. They have shared their very painful personal stories with me. Some have physical wounds; all have psychological wounds.

They told me about the 'skinheads' who stabbed and beat them on their way to or from school. Some injuries include

stab wounds, broken noses, and broken arms and legs. Other students are afraid to sleep at night because they still fear the Molotov cocktails that were tossed through their windows as they and their families slept. Still others told me about teachers' racist remarks or physical violence, targeting even the youngest children. Eva was only 6 when her teacher smashed a book into the back of her head, causing her face to smack off the desk where she was sitting. Many of us in Toronto find it difficult to understand that teachers could express such blatant hatred toward children. Other than missing families and friends left behind, the students tell me that they prefer not to remember their lives before coming to Canada. They want to forget the horrendous experiences they have endured.

Their futures are uncertain as they wait for their refugee applications to be processed. They tell me that they're sure that they'll be sent back, because everyone around them is being denied. Quite disturbingly, many of the young people have told me they feel that the Immigration Refugee Board and the Canadian and Hungarian governments are equally indifferent to their cries for help. It is hard for me to feel proud to be Canadian and to defend our immigration system when I know what they are saying holds some truth.

At other times, when I ask them what they will do if they go back to Hungary or the Czech Republic, they shake their heads furiously and exclaim, "No, I am not going back there! I will stay here in Canada." I want to protect them all from what we know will await them there – lives lived in the shadows of a hostile society. A Canada without shadows is where Roma children can develop and live up to their true potential, where they and their families can realise their dreams.

*Gina Csanyi*

*Community Co-ordinator –*

*The Witness Project, Canada Without Shadows*



Since the middle ages, the situation of Roma women – and all Roma – has been terrible. It does not change – we continue to suffer from childhood poverty and discrimination, starting with difficulties in going to school. I know what that is like – I remember the experiences of my childhood and youth.

*Hedina T. Sijercic, from "Roma women in Bosnia/Herzegovina and Bosnian Roma women in West Europe," a speech delivered to Romani Yag cultural festival, Montreal, 2007*

# Education is paramount

Both Roma and non-Roma must be taught the details of the historical experience. The external circumstances that have brought us to this deplorable condition today have to be understood, and our linguistic and cultural distinctiveness accommodated. We need our own teachers, lawyers, physicians and politicians, not to work separately from the larger society but to work with it and within it; we must be consulted directly about what it is we want and don't want, spoken to and not about: in the words of the Decade's action statement, "nothing about Roma without Roma."

*Dr. Ian Hancock,  
Director of the Romani Studies Program and the Romani Archives  
and Documentation Center at The University of Texas at Austin*

## Education in Romani for Roma

Today, Romani linguists in many countries are working towards the creation of a Romani literary language so that Romani children can be educated in Romani and taught their own history and culture. A growing body of literature in Romani is emerging in many countries and there are now Romani authors, poets and journalists among the growing Romani intelligentsia. It is important for young Romani students to be able to learn about their own history and culture. The learning tools they need can only be created by fellow Roma and preferably in the Romani language. This is being accomplished by the growing number of educated Roma.

*Ronald Lee, Romani author, activist, scholar;  
honorary chair, Roma Community Centre of Toronto  
– from 'Roma and Education', 2009, www.kopachi.com*

## Voices and art of Roma women

As an artist, educator and the child of immigrants, I view creative self-expression without fear as a luxury many of my Romani sisters will never enjoy.

Countless Romani women are in the midst of a daily struggle to provide stability and security for their families in the midst of horrific racist persecution. Although most of the world is unaware of this struggle, these stories allow for a deeper understanding of the current Roma reality as opposed to relying on non-existent, inaccurate or impersonal news reports. The lives of each of these Romani women are unique, and yet when their joy, beauty and sadness is shared openly, we begin to catch a glimpse of a communal experience that would otherwise never be witnessed.

We must continue to create collaborative art projects such as *Canada Without Shadows* to encourage dialogue between recent Romani arrivals and the public, restore a collective voice silenced by centuries of opposition, and help forge links between Roma and non-Roma educators, students and communities. These well-crafted stories and beautiful images are a legacy for current and future generations of Romani women. Together we can survive, heal and prosper.

*Monica Bodirsky, artist, educator and activist*

### **Systemic segregation of Romani children in education continues:**

The European Court of Human Rights reaffirmed that school segregation of Romani children (in schools for children with disabilities and in separate schools or classes in mainstream schools) constitutes illegal discrimination in its March 2010 judgment. Despite three unequivocal rulings by the Court since 2007, educational segregation of Romani children is systemic in many European countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are noteworthy, with credible reports of segregation in Macedonia, Northern Ireland (UK), Portugal and Spain.

### **Coercive sterilisation of Romani women continues:**

In Hungary the ERRC has documented sporadic cases, most recently from 2008. Czech cases have also been reported as recent as 2007. In 2009, the Czech Government expressed regret to the victims of this practice and the Hungarian Government compensated one victim, but no government has adopted a comprehensive plan to compensate all victims or reformed health care law regarding consent, as required in Hungary.

SOURCE: European Roma Rights Centre factsheet: "Roma Rights Record" (5 October 2010): [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org)



# I am a Romani woman

## Me sem Romni



We have felt our Romanipe (Romani culture, tradition, history, even traces of our mother tongue), our being woman, our wandering through life and countries.... we have felt each other.

Written word and communication were very important in this workshop; but our feelings, eye contact and voices – even without knowing each other’s language – were, if you believe me or not, enough to understand each other.

Our souls were one soul. Reading our own stories through tears, all life’s pictures and fragments came back to us again. Trembling voices, pain which breaks words, which scratches our throats, which steals our breath while reading, this decoration of voices: all were greater than any visual image.

I felt the women’s pain, power and desire to survive along with their wish to change everyday life.

I have felt the power of women: thank you, dear Monika V., Monika B., Gizella, Ilona, Timea, Lynn and Gina, for your trust and for the beautiful work we did together.

Thank you, Livia and Tünde, for your help with translation. Without this our communication would be incomplete and unspoken.

Dear all, keep writing: you have done it beautifully. Writing is the best healing medicine for those who look for what they have lost, and for those who wish to find a better future. This helped me and I hope it would help you too.

– Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić





**M**y name is Ilona. I was born on October 25, 1982. My mother is Matild, she was 14 years old when she brought me to this world. My father is Ferenc. We were a poor family, but my parents always raised us honourably, my two younger brothers and me. Considering the circumstances, I had a happy childhood.

Then at the age of 18, I got married and had two sons. But at home in Hungary, life was very hard and we were always faced with exclusion, racial discrimination. I was sad. We escaped.

Now I am here in Canada and I am very happy, because here I feel my life is fulfilled. This place is beautiful. Here I can finally see how nice life can be.

And what I would like? A happy future for my children and to be able to continue living here, because here one of my dreams came true: a nice, peaceful family life.

*Me sem Romni*



**A**nevem Ilona. 1982. 10. 25-én születtem. Édesanyám Matild 14 éves volt mikor engem világra hozott. Édesapám Ferenc. Szegény család voltunk de szüleim mindig becsületesen neveltek engem és két öcsémet. A körülményekhez képest boldog gyermekkorom volt.

Aztán 18 évesen férjhez mentem 2 fiunk született. De otthon Magyarországon nagyon nehéz volt a megélhetés és mindig szembesülnünk kellett a kirekesztéssel, fajgyűlölettel. Szomorú voltam. Elmenekültünk.

Most itt vagyok családommal Kanadába és boldog vagyok.

És hogy mit szeretnék? Boldog jövőt a gyermekeimnek, és hogy továbbra is itt élhessünk mert itt beteljesült egy álmom, a szép nyugodt családi élet.

*Me sem Romni*



# ILONA

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We were always faced with exclusion.

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We were a poor family, but my parents always raised us honourably, my two younger brothers and me.



And what I would like?  
A happy future for my children and to be able to continue living here.

# TIMEA

It is late afternoon, the time is around six or seven o'clock; it is so strange, seems like the air is still; the birds aren't even singing; the sun is about to go down...

Four Gárda in uniform, with flags of Árpádsár covering their faces, got out of the car and beat us.

My husband covered our child with his body.

My memories hurt. I dare not write openly about them, just yet. I will try to write down my last experience.

It is late afternoon, the time is around six or seven o'clock; it is so strange, seems like the air is still; the birds aren't even singing; the sun is about to go down...

My husband had been gone to the countryside for two days, at the scene of a murder, with the then Romani representative at the European Union, Viktoria Mohacsi. I was waiting for my husband with my seven-month-old little girl. I ran out to him, to the front of the house. He was there in minutes. He hugged our little girl; he didn't even have the chance to greet me, when a car hit our car. We weren't able to check what happened to our car, when four Gárda, in uniform with flags of "Árpádsár" covering their faces, got out of the car and beat us.

My husband covered our child with his body. I couldn't even imagine why this happened. When they got back into their cars, they told my husband: "Why do you protect your people, your family; will you be able to protect them next time, too?"

A few days later, we bought an airplane ticket for my husband. Then, in one day, my husband made the decision for me, he bought us all airplane tickets and we left our motherland.

On the plane, I thought about what happened to me and to my family. The shelter in Toronto was an escape, although we did not live at our usual standards. When we moved out to our new home in the hopes of a new and better future, we braced ourselves and started life here, the Canadian life. We were not obliged to go to school, but I go with pleasure. I go to the same group with my seven-year-old daughter. To be able to watch my daughter play freely, and this is my only job, is a great feeling.

In the future, I would like to know more about my Roma friends, who also had to leave their homes and go into debt to escape. Why?

I pray to God to help the Roma. Let us stand together, let us keep our traditions; all meaning is in our traditions.

"Meanings do not need to be created, rather they need to be discovered!"

"If God is with me, who is against me?"

*Me sem Romni*



**E**mlékeim fálynak. Még nem merek nyíltan írni róla. Még próbálok az utolsó eseményem leírni. Délután 6-7 óra , az idő olyan fura, mintha állna a levegő, nem énekel se madár, a nap is eltűnően már...

A férjem két napja oda volt vidéken, egy gyilkosság helyszínén. Ay európaunió akkori cigány képviselőjével, Mohácsi Viktóriával. Én a 7 hónapos kislánnyal vártam haza a férjem. Kiszaladtunk elé a ház elé. Perceken belül ott volt. Atölelte a kislányt nekem még nem is köszönt amikor egy autó a mienkbe ütközött. Még meg se nézük mi volt a baj a kocsival, mikor négy gárdista egyenruhás árpásáros zászlóval arcukat elfödő férfi kiszállt és megverték minket. A férjem a gyereket a testével védte.

Nem tudom elképzelni se miért történt. Mikor vissza ültek a kocsijukba a férjemnek azt mondták ... "Minkek véded a néped a családod vajon legközelebb is megtudod védeni?" Pár napon belül megvettük a repülő jegyét. Egy nap alatt meghozta helyettem a döntést a férjem, nekünk is jegyet vett és elhagytuk a szülőházánkat.

A repülőn gondoltam át mi is történt velem és családommal. A selter egy metsvár volt annak ellenére, hogy nem

a mi színvonalunkon kellett éljünk. Mikor kiköltözünk a laklásba az új és szebb élet reményében , erőt vettünk magunkba és belekezdünk az itteni, azaz a kanadai mókuserékbe. Iskolába nem kötelezték, de én szeretettel járok. Egy csoportba járok a két éves lányommal, túl sokat nem tudok figyelni de az, hogy a gyerekek felszabadultan játszik és én nézhetem, sőt csak az a dolgom. Nagyon jó érzés.

A jövőben minnél többet szeretnék tudni azokról a (felebarátaimról) roma testvéreimről akik szintén azért kellett, hogy elhagyják az otthonukat hiteleket felhalmazniuk azért mert menekülnek. Miért?

Imátkozok az Úrhoz, hogy segítse a romákat. Legyünk összetartóak, a szokásainkat tartsuk, minden érték a szokásainkban van.

"Ay értékeket nem megalapítani kell, hanem felfedezni!"

"Ha Isten velem ki ellenem?"

*Me sem Romni*



To be able to watch my daughter play freely is a great feeling.



Let us stand together, let us keep our traditions: all meaning is in our traditions.



# MONIKA V.

**I**am Monika. I was born May 7, 1976. I grew up in a Gipsy "area" and we had a very hard life with my parents and my seven siblings. We lived in very bad conditions. We did not have windows and our place was often flooded, so we placed pots to catch the water coming into the house.

But thank God, soon after we got a rental place and were able to move to the comfort and cleanliness, and our life changed. Sadly, I only finished grade eight. My mother and father worked hard for a living. With this I would like to say that my childhood was very very bitter. But we have to get over every bad experience. I turned 16 and had my first daughter. I had a bad and miserable life very early. But regretfully I was young and did not think. Then eight years later, I gave birth to my two little girls. Sadly one was born with a heart condition, which made life even harder.

As the years passed, the children went to school and the discrimination and gipsy slander started. We moved in with my husband's mother to Telsozsolc. There were many guardsmen and skin-head teachers. Many times we did not sleep, because they shot into the neighbouring houses and threw Molotov cocktails in through the windows. I was not able to bring home my children at night, because they broke in and spoke rudely with them and with me. It is true that they did not hurt us, but this was enough for us to escape from Hungary.

I thought to come to Canada, because here they don't discriminate.

We arrived in Canada with my two daughters and husband. We heard that here would be no discrimination, and my children can go to school in peace and without fear. It was very hard to fit in, because this is a new life that we started. But I can say that here in Canada my daughter got better. She had waited seven years for heart surgery back home, but here in Canada she had the operation very fast. The people are very nice. My children like to go to school, and they are not segregated from the other children. My husband is also learning English at school. I give thanks to God that he led us here and gave us a new life.

It is very good for my children and for me and my husband here in Canada. We would like to stay here and speak the language. We have been here for four years; my children really like being here and so do I. I would like to work. My husband would also like to fit in and work. But the one thing I know and I feel is that our life has changed since we have been here. There is no discrimination in school and I would like to live here in Canada, and my children to study and live in peace.

*I am a Romni  
Me sem Romni*

As the years passed, the children went to school and the discrimination and gipsy slander started.

Many times we did not sleep. They shot into the neighbouring houses and threw Molotov cocktails through the windows.



1976, 05, 07-én születtem.

Egy cigánytelepen nőttem fel és nagyon nehezen éltünk a szüleim és 7 testvéremmel. Nagyon nehéz körülmények között éltünk, nem volt ablakunk és sokszor be is áztunk és fazekakba folyt a víz. De hála Istennek nem sokára megkaptuk a bérházi lakást és el tudtunk költözni a kényelembe a tisztaságba és megváltozott az életünk. Én sajnos csak 8. Iskolát jártam. Édesapám és Édesanyám nagyon sokat dolgoztak a megélhetőségünkért. Ezzel azt szeretném elmondani, hogy a gyermekkorom nagyon nagyon keserves volt, de tul kell lépni minden nehéz élményen! Betöltöttem a 16 évemet megszülettem az első lányomat. Nagyon korán elkezdtem a rossz és a nyomorú életet, de sajnos fiatal voltam és nem gondolkoztam és aztán 8 évre megszülettem a két kislányom, de sajnos az egyik szóívbetegséggel született és az nagyon nehezebbé és nyomorúvá tette az életemet.

De ahogy multak az évek a gyermekek iskolába jártak és már ott elkezdődött a cigányozás és a megkülönböztetés és elköltöztünk a férjem Édesanyjához Felsőzsólcára. Ott nagyon sok gárdista és skinhed volt. Nagyon sokszor nem aludtunk, mert a szomszédba belövöldöztek és bedobáltak molotov-koktélokot és a gyermekeket nem tudtam este hazahozni mert leköptek és csúnyán beszéltek a gyermekekkel és velem. Az igaz, hogy nem bántottak, de az éppen elég volt arra, hogy elmeneküljünk mafyarországról és úgy gondoltam Kanadába, mert ott nem különböztetnek meg.

Kanadába érkezünk 2 lányommal és a férjemmel. Úgy gondoltuk, hogy itt nem lesz megkülönböztetés és gyermekeim nyugodtan és félelem nélkül járhatnak iskolába. Hát az az igazság, nagyon nehezen tudtunk felzárkózni, mert egy új élet kezdődött el. De tudom mondani, hogy itt Kanadában sikeresen megműtötték a kis lányomat aki otthol 7 évet várt a műtetre és itt Kanadában rogtön megműtötték. Nagyon rendesek az emberek és gyermekeim szeretnek iskolába járni és nem különítik el a többi



gyerektől és a férjem is tanulja a nyelvet az iskolában és köszönöm az Urnak, hogy ide vezetett minket és adott egy új életet.

Bagyon jó a gyermekeimnek és nekem, a férjemnek itt Kanadába. Szeretnék itt maradni és megtanulni a nyelvet. Már egy év itt vagyunk és a gyermekeim nagyon szeretnek itt lenni és én is. Szeretnék dolgozni a férjem is szeretne beilletekzni dolgozni. De azt az egyet tudom és érzem, hogy megváltozott az életünk amióta itt vagyunk. Az iskolába nincs kiközösítés. Szeretném ha itt élhetnék Kanadában és gyermekeimet tanítani és nyugodtan élni.

*I am a Romni  
Me sem Romni*



My children like to go to school, and they are not segregated from the other children.

# GIZELLA

One time when we went sledding in the snow, the skinheads attacked us. They hit me in the back with a baseball bat. We escaped through the woods, struggling to get home.

**M**y name is Gizella. I was born in Hungary, in the city of Miskolc, on May 19, 1978.

In my life, I have experienced much racial discrimination and I grew up in material need. My father is a wall painter and worked 12-hour days for 30 years and his salary was very low. In school, we did not have adequate clothing and our school supplies were deficient. For this we were often hurt at school: the teacher called me "gipsy" and hit my head with a ruler. But she had no reason to hurt us, because we were too afraid to do anything mischievous. Later, as I grew and attended higher grades at school, I experienced more racial discrimination. If we went on the street after eight at night, we were sure to get a beating.

When we went sledding in the snow one time, the skinheads attacked us – five girls and two boys. We were very scared, and as we were walking on the side of the road, they hit me in the back with a baseball bat from a car. We escaped through the woods, struggling to get home. I had a lot of pain and my back

was blue-green. This was a countryside amusement for them. Later we heard gunfire and yelling. This was a very bad experience.

Now, in Canada, specifically in Toronto, I have three children. Two were born here in Canada and I give thanks to God and of course to Canada that here we can live in peace with my children, and that in school the same things will not happen to them as did with me. I do not have to be scared to let them go to school, and they have the school supplies they need.

We live in a three-bedroom apartment. My children have everything that I never had. First of all, they do not know what the difference is between being a "Gipsy" and a "non-Gipsy". It is very good that in school my children are not looked down on. The teachers and people on the street and anywhere are not scared to hug them or touch them. This fills me with much happiness.

In the future, since here I am a person and not a dirty Gipsy, I would like to work at a hospital, because I am a sick-





nurse and baby-nurse. For this reason, I would like to work in healthcare and pay for my children's education, buy a nice large home and live calm and in peace, here in Canada.

*And, I am a Romani woman  
Me sem Romni*

**N**evem: Gizella. Magyarországon születtem, pontosan Miskolcon: 1978. 05. 19.

Az én életemben nagyon sok faji megkülömböztetésben volt részem és anyagi hátrányban nőttem fel. Édesapám szobafestő és 12 óra munkát dolgozott 30 éven keresztül és nagyon kevés volt fizetése. Persze az iskolában nem volt megfelelő ruházatunk és a tanszerek hiányosak voltak. Ezmiatt sokat bántottak az iskolában a tanárnő lecipá-

nyozott és a vonalzóval a fejemre ütött, de semmi oka nem volt, hogy bántson, mert nem mertünk semmi rosszat csinálni. Később ahogy növekedtem és felső iskolába jártam sokkal jobban ki voltam téve a faji megkülömböztetésnek. Az utcán ha 8 óra után kimentünk biztos, hogy megverték minket.

Volt mikor elmentünk szórakozni és a szkinhedek megtámadtak minket 5 lányt és fiut. Nagyon féltünk és ahogy mentünk az út szélén engem a kocsinál hátra vágtak egy bézból ütővel. Elkezdtünk menekülni az erdőn keresztül. Nagyon nehezen értünk haza és nagy fájdalom volt. Kék zöld lett a hátam. Ez egy vidéki szórakozó volt. Később hallottuk a puská durranását és a kiabálást, nagyon rossz emlék volt.

Most Kanadában, nagyon pontosan Torontóban, 3 gyermekem van. Kettő itt született és hálát adok az Istennek és persze Kanadának, hogy itt nyugodtan élhetek a gyermekeimmel és, hogy az iskolában velük nem történhet meg mi velem és nem kell félelemmel iskolába engednem, és persze az iskolában minden kellék és ami csak kell meg van.

Egy 3 szobás partmentbe élünk. A gyermekeimnek minden meg van ami nekem nem volt megadva. Mindenek előtt nem tudják, hogy mi a különbség a cigány és a nem cigányok között. Nagyon jó érzés, hogy az iskolában nem lenézően beszélnek a gyermekeimről a tanárok és az emberek az utcán vagy bárhol megmerik őket ölelni vagy simogatni, és ez nagy örömmel tölt el.

A jövőben amiket szeretnék, mivel itt ember vagyok és nem egy piszkos cigány, szeretnék dolgozni egy kórházba mert betegápoló és csecsemő ápoló vagyok ezért szeretnék az egészségügybe dolgozni és a gyermekeim iskolázását fizetni, egy szép nagy lakást venni és nyugodtan élni és békességben itt Kanadában.

*I am a Romani woman  
Me sem Romni*



Here we can live in peace with my children. I do not have to be scared to let them go to school.



I would like to work in healthcare and pay for my children's education.

# MONIKA B.

**M**y name is Monika. I was born in 1975, in Hungary. I grew up in a very nice family. First we lived in a small house and then we built and made a nice house. I had a very good childhood, except for one or two things, because, even at a young age, I learned what racism is: the way people look down on and harm people with my background. At school, for example, I got hurt very often, and was looked down upon and belittled. They did not make friends with me, although I wanted to be friends.

When I finished school, I got married and had two children, who are the meaning of my life. There were times when the Gárda attacked us because of the colour of our skin. I was very frightened, because they hurt my husband and son. We did not call the police, because we were afraid to have problems later for this.

We had to come to Canada, leave everything behind. I miss everything very much, my family in Hungary. But for the safety of my children I would like to stay here until the end of my life, because their safety is more important than anything.

Too many Roma were killed already because of their skin colour. Now we live in an apartment building. I feel very good, because here people are very nice. Here my skin colour does not matter; I am looked upon as a person, not like in Hungary. Now we go to school to learn the English language; and it would be very good if we learned quickly, because we would like to go to work. I hope we can stay in Canada, because I would really like it. I would not like to go back to the fear.

We have many plans. We would like to have a restaurant and a cozy family home, where we can live happily with my family. I would like to complete a culinary school program, because my husband is a chef and I would like to be one, too – because I really enjoy cooking. I would like my children to have the opportunity to go to university and learn a good profession.

## *Me sem Romni*

**E**ngem Mónika hívnak. 1975, Március 28. Születtem Magyarországon. Nagyon szép családba nőttem fel. Először egy kis házba laktunk és utána építkeztünk, csináltunk egy szép házat. Egy két dolgot leszámítva, mivel már gyermekként megismertem mi az hogy fajgyűlölet. Sajnos az embereket a syármayásaikért sokszor lenézik és bántalmazzák. Az iskolában például, nagyon sokszor bántalmaztak és lenéztek és csunya szavakkal rágalmaztak, nem barátokoztak velem, pedig én szerettem volna.

Mikor befejeztem az iskolát férjhezmentem és szultem 2 gyermeket, akik az életemnek az értelmei. Voltak

---

The Gárda attacked us because of the colour of our skin. We did not call the police, because we were afraid to have problems later.







ojan dolgok mikor meg is támadtak a borszinünk végett a gárdisták. Nagyon feltem mivel a férjemet és a fiamat bánították. Nem hívtunk rendőrt mivel féltünk, hogy utána bajunk volna emiatt.

Kanadába kellett jönnünk. Ott kellett mindent hagyni Magyarországon a családomat és mindent. Nagyon hiányzik a családom, de a gyermekeim biztonsága érdekében életem végéig itt szeretnék maradni, mivel a gyermekeim biztonsága mindennél fontosabb. Nagyon sok embert már megöltek a borszine miatt.

Most egy bildingben lakunk. Nagyon jól érzem magam mivel itt az emberek nagyon rendesek. Itt mindegy milyen színű vagy, akkor is emberszámba vesznek, nem úgy mink Magyarországon. Most iskolába járunk, angol nyelvet tanu-

lunk és jó lenne ha minnél hamarabb megtanulnánk mivel szeretnénk menni dolgozni. Remélem maradhatunk Kanadában, mert én nagyon szeretném. Nem szeretnék vissza menni a félelembe.

Nagyon sok terveink vannak. Szeretnénk ha lenne egy kis éttermünk meg egy szép kis házunk ahol boldogan élhetnénk a családommal. Szeretnék majd egy szakács tanfolyamot letenni mivel a férjem is az és szeretnék én is az lenni mert nagyon szeretek főzni. Szeretném, hogy majd gyermekeim egyetemre járhassanak és valami jó szakmát végezzenek.

*Me sem Romni*



I would like my children to have the opportunity to go to university and learn a good profession.



*My home in Hungary that I had to leave behind.*



I would like to complete a culinary school program. I really enjoy cooking.

# Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić

## CV I

I was born in Russia.

I went to school in Poland.

I worked as an apprentice in Romania.

I married in Serbia.

I got a job in Bosnia.

I had my first child in Croatia.

The second child in France, the third in Spain,  
the fourth in Germany,

The fifth in Belgium.

I returned to Serbia.

I had my sixth child in Serbia.

I had to escape to Italy, after the birth of my seventh child.

I had twins.

I endured the biggest tragedy: My child was found dead  
and they said he drowned in  
the sea. They drove me away, burned my roof, and they  
wanted to take my

fingerprints. And those of my children too.

I am scared. They did it once like that before, with the  
fingerprints, not so long ago. I am scared.

I escaped to Holland.

I had my tenth child.

I had the eleventh child in Sweden.

I am forty.

I speak Romani (my mother tongue), Russian, Slovakian,  
Romanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, Italian, French,  
Spanish, German, Dutch and a little bit of English.

What my family needs is literacy, and a fair chance to have  
a good education.

We speak mixed European languages. We speak European.

My house then is "Europe- in-miniature".

I am getting old.

If my house is "Europe- in- miniature" then Europe is  
"Europe- in-large".

The first difference between us: Europe- in- miniature  
is illiterate

Europe- in- large is literate.

The second difference between us: Europe- in- miniature  
has no money to exist but she keeps a communal spirit.  
Europe- in- large has more than enough money to exist  
but.....

The third difference.....

I told you I am getting old. I switched themes. I should  
follow my CV.

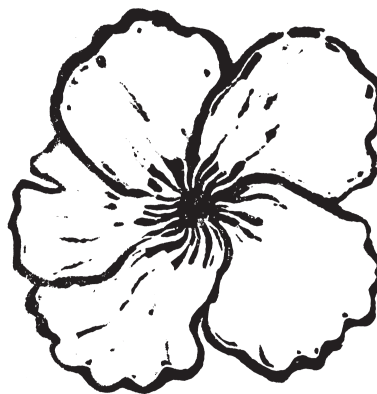
I had my sixth grandchild.

I proposed to "Europe- in- miniature" that we move to  
Canada.

I found out there we could go to school and study English,  
regardless of how old we were.

I promised my children and grandchildren a future.

Stay with God!





# CV I

Me bijandilem ande Rusija.

Me đelem ande škola ande Poljska.  
Me ćerdem bući sar sikadi ande Romania.  
Me đelem rromehte ande Serbija.

Me ćerdem bući ande Bosna.

Angluno ćhavo bijandem ande Krocija.  
Dujto ćhavo ande Francuska, trinto ande Španija,  
štarto ande Germanija,  
Thaj pandžto ande Belgija.

Me boldinajdem ande Serbija.  
Me bijandem šovto ćhavo ande Serbija.  
Musaj te našavav ande Italija, thaj kote bijandem mrno  
eftato ćhavo.  
Me bijandem kote dujorre ćhavore jekhethane.

Seha-man bari tragedija: Mo ćhavo mula thaj von  
phende sar vov tasavda  
ande pajeste. Von trade amen, von phabarde amen,  
thaj von mangel amare  
najendar vurma. Thaj e ćhavorendar.  
Me sem daravni. Von ćerde gova jekhvaratar ando  
nakhlo vakto. Daravni sem.

Me peklem našipe ande Holandija.  
Me bijandem dešto ćhavo.  
Me bijandem dešojekhtato ćhavo ande Švedska.  
Me sem saranda berš phuri.  
Me vaćarav Rromani (mrni dejaki ćhib), Ruski,  
Slovaćki, Rumunski, Srpski, Bosnaki, Hrvatski,  
Talijski, Francuski, Španski, Germanski,  
Holandski thaj cira Engleski.

Mrni familija mangel thaj trubuj šajipe pala laćhi  
edukacija.  
Amen phenas pe hamisardine Evropske ćhiba.  
Odolese, amen das vorba pe Evropski ćhib.  
Mo ćher si jekh "Ćikni Evropa".  
Phurilem.

Ako si mrno ćher "Ćikni Evropa" athoska si Evropa  
"Bari Evropa".

Angluno uladipe maškare amende: Ćikni Evropa si  
bilivarni  
Bari Evropa si livarni.  
Dujto uladipe maškare amende: Ćikni Evropa naj-la  
love pala džuvdipe, numaj von san jekhethane.  
Bari Evropa hi-la but love pala džuvdipe numaj...  
Trito uladipe...

Phendem kaj phurilem. Me paruvdem mrni vorba.  
E vorbasa musaj te džav ando mrno trajo.

Astardem šovto ćhavoresko ćhavo.  
Ćerdem jekh turvinjipe e "Ćiknese Evropese" te džas  
ande Kanada.  
Kote si šajipe pala amen pala škola thaj šaj te sikavas  
Engleski ćhib, savore, phure tu.  
Me dijem alav e ćhavorende pala avindipe.

Aćhen Devleha!



*– first published in The European Constitution in Verse,  
(Passaporta Brussels, Belgium, 2009), a long poem by more  
than 40 poets in which enthusiasm for Europe is tempered  
by a critical view, the grand gesture rubs up against poetic  
intimacy, and the necessary seriousness is counterbalanced  
by a satirical note.*



Lynn Hutchinson Lee

# FIVE SONGS FOR DADDY

## 1 England

Do you see the moon? Dik.  
There. Behind the clouds. No stars.  
The wind is shaking the vardo  
shaking the mirrors on every wall  
of the vardo  
the mirrors reflect the moon  
four walls  
four mirrors  
four moons  
four children

four moons in the vardo  
shining on the children

Lizzie Lee's vardo always on the road  
the wheels of the vardo turning  
Wheels that carry them across the  
north  
Tikno Daddy the little one  
playing the bosh, working the puppets  
Wheels of the vardo carry them across  
the north

Eight year old Daddy loses an eye  
Look. Dik.  
his new eye made of glass  
deep brown iris  
that looks everywhere  
sees nothing  
his eye a mirror  
reflecting the worlds  
The bright world of hedges, fire,  
the stream  
Shadow world of stones and fists

## 2 Leaving

The shore disappears  
they are pulled away by wind  
and currents  
no vardo no mirrors  
nobody throwing stones  
at Lizzie Lee and her children  
they cast off their skins  
in a new country  
on a new road  
Canada, without shadows

Beds in a shed  
a tobacco farm  
in Tillsonburg  
Lizzie Lee and her children bending  
to the leaves  
Every day  
picking  
travelling  
picking  
travelling  
every day

Twelve year old Daddy.  
Three puppets on the bench.  
Build the frame, stretch the leather,  
carve the wooden eyes wooden  
hands,  
attach the eyes to the mechanism,  
make them wink,  
make them open, flirt, flutter, see.

Sixteen year old Daddy  
picking tobacco travelling  
picking tobacco travelling  
Daddy's hand in the puppet.

Turning the head, opening the mouth.  
Speaking. Speaking the world.

Twenty year old Daddy goes away,  
leaves them behind  
Lizzie, Father, Willy, May, Lillie

## 3 Love/hate

Daddy loves  
fields and rivers

Daddy loves  
painting

loves  
making rings and necklaces

loves  
Karl Marx

loves  
trading, selling: cameras, cars,  
sewing machines, silver

Daddy loves  
lighting a fire  
driving past farms into the vesh

loves  
finding the right place for the vardo

Daddy hates  
remembering



## 4 Crying

He cried  
once  
on his knees in the dirt  
arms lifted to the sky  
his voice too big for his throat

I am twelve I think  
I don't know why he'd cry  
in the shadow of our trailer  
the shadow a dark slash  
that swallows my father

the sun is low in the sky  
people are watching  
his hat on the grass, fallen off  
lying there  
good eye clenched, glass eye staring  
tears pouring from both eyes  
the living and the dead  
dik  
dik

## 5 Story

The doctor says it was a stroke.  
Daddy is trying to talk. He says ah.ah.  
ah.  
His glass eye looks at the ceiling.  
Does the other eye close at night,  
turn inward to see what's left?  
Dik. Dik. Dik everything, dik nothing.

The story he was about to tell  
caught in his throat  
caught caught  
at the last minute  
in his throat  
breath  
breath rattling like leaves  
The story he was about to tell  
it will never be heard  
the thread  
winds into the past,  
into the past,  
ties together  
vardo, violin, mirrors

the language they swallowed  
when they got off the ship

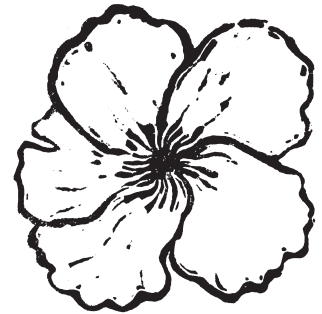
will never be heard

is pulled back  
into the cave of his body

his breath stops

What remains are two puppets  
sometimes we bring them down  
from the attic  
working their mouths, speaking  
for them  
in silly voices

but their truth is withheld  
swallowed by Daddy  
in his last breath



*A lament for the death of memory  
from Canada Without Shadows,  
Chirikli Collective's four-part  
audio installation, BAK, Utrecht,  
Netherlands, and Roma Pavilion  
at the 54th Venice Biennale.*



### GLOSSARY

vardo – caravan, trailer  
bosh – violin  
dik – look

# ROMA REFUGEES TO CANADA

The collapse of Eastern European communism by 1990 heralded a new migration of sedentary Roma from the settlements, village and urban ghettos, fleeing to western Europe and the Americas. With the advent of the so-called new democracies, Roma suddenly found themselves at the bottom of the new social pyramid.

At first, only a trickle of newcomers arrived in Canada, but in 1997, Vancouver and Toronto were hit by what the Toronto media referred to as “The Gypsy Invasion,” when an estimated 2,000 Roma from the Czech Republic arrived in Toronto in August, 1997.

In the fall of 1997, Canadian Immigration re-imposed the visa restriction for Czech Roma, followed by a mandatory criminal check. When the claims came before the Immigration and Refugee Board in 1998, a staggering 89% of all claims made were accepted since no criminality could be determined. This was the highest acceptance rate for any group at this time. They have now integrated successfully into Canadian society, their main communities being in the GTA and Hamilton.

The initial wave was soon followed by a second wave of Hungarian Roma. At first, the adjudicators of the IRB assigned to the Roma panel gave them the same reception as the earlier Czech Roma, but in the fall of 1998, a plan was devised in Ottawa to hold two test-case hearings to determine if there was sufficient persecution in Hungary to warrant Hungarian Roma seeking Convention-refugee status in Canada.

The Hungarian government offered to send three “experts” on the situation of the Roma and an “independent observer.” Witnesses for counsel were Orest Subtelny, professor of history and political science at York University in Toronto, and Dr. Ian Hancock, a Romani professor at the University of Texas. The two claimants in the test cases were not allowed to summon their own witnesses and the testimonies of Prof Subtelny and Hancock were disallowed because “neither of them had lived in Hungary.”

The result was a foregone conclusion. Both cases received negative decisions, and in January 1999 the claimants were ordered deported. The IRB in Ottawa then sent out what was called an “Issue Paper” stating that there was insufficient “discrimination” in Hungary to warrant Hungarian Roma making claims for political asylum in Canada. This was promptly appealed by lawyer Rocco Galati in a class action representing the two clients. Galati claimed that the test cases were illegal along with the Issue Paper because the mandate of the IRB is to judge each case on its own merit. The acceptance rate for Hungarian Roma then plummeted from 71% before the test-case decisions to 27%,

then to 9% nation-wide, and to 6% in Toronto where it has remained ever since.

In November 2001, a visa requirement was reinstated for Hungary after 9/11 to comply with a request from Washington. This effectively ended the flow and remained in force until Hungary entered the European Union.

After multiple delays and stalling on the part of Ottawa, the case was finally heard in the Federal Court of Appeal and declared illegal on March 27, 2006. This of course did not help the few thousand Hungarian Roma who had by now been sent back to Hungary after negative decisions based on the test cases and the Issue Paper.

When Hungary and the Czech Republic became EU members, a new migration of refugee claimants began to arrive and the Conservative government then re-imposed a visa restriction for Czech nationals to stem the flow. How this ongoing situation will be resolved remains to be seen. The current policy seems to reflect that in 1939 when shiploads of Jews fleeing fascism in Germany arrived in Canada requesting asylum and were sent back to die in the Holocaust – “None Is Too Many.”

With the rise of fascism in Europe, the *Magyar Garda* and the *Jobbik* Party in Hungary, the murders of Roma and the burning down of Romani homes in Central Europe, President Sarkozy’s decision to deport all Roma who are not French citizens, the building of walls around Roma ghettos in Slovakia, the sending of Romani children to schools for slow learners and the illegal sterilization of Romani women, along with the treatment of Romani refugees in Italy, it will become increasingly difficult for the present Canadian government to continue to deny that Roma are facing massive persecution and discrimination in Europe and a new Romani Holocaust may be in the making.

As far as the Roma are concerned, it is the European Union that has failed in its efforts to guarantee that member states follow the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. There is no Roma problem in Europe – there is a non-Roma problem, and has been since the Roma first arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century from the Balkans. It is not a matter of Roma rights but of Human Rights for Roma. Once this is applied to Roma, Roma rights will cease to be an issue.

*Ronald Lee; excerpted from “Roma Refugees to Canada, 1900 – 2011” presented at The Maturing of the Multicultural Experiment: European Challenges Coming to Canada, York University, Toronto, March 2011*



hungarianwatch.wordpress.com

A Romani neighbourhood in Gyöngyöspata, Hungary, is occupied by the ultra-right Civil Guard vigilante group on March 6, 2011; police look on.

## Hungary, 2011: *Gárda* vigilantes

In early March we received news from Hungary about the vigilante group Civil Guard (*Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület*), an offshoot of the dreaded Magyar Garda. On March 1st, uniformed members of the Civil Guard took control of a Romani neighbourhood in the village of Gyöngyöspata, where they set up two checkpoints at the entrance to the neighbourhood and formed a human chain around the houses of Romani residents.

On March 17, Amnesty International, European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Human Rights First wrote to Hungarian authorities, calling for Hungarian authorities to “fulfil their domestic and international human rights obligations in Gyöngyöspata.” ERRC writes that the Civil Guard patrols ‘reportedly prevent the Romani residents from sleeping by shouting during the night, threaten them with weapons and dogs, and follow them every time they leave their houses, unimpeded by local police. The desperate Roma residents are afraid to go to school, to work or even to buy food.... The Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület patrols have been supported by the far-right

political party Jobbik, which organised a march of thousands through the village in black military uniform on March 6th. Finally, the Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület indicated that, having successfully established their presence in Gyöngyöspata, they will also set up chapters in other towns to expand their “patrols”:

An ultra-nationalist website, [www.barikad.hu](http://www.barikad.hu), stated: “In Gyöngyöspata, on the day of the protest, the population had once again approached the ideal Hungarian ‘ethnic ratio’”.

### From an eyewitness account:

*We were there until around 3am, talking to people, who haven't slept for weeks.... Their kids are afraid to go to school and some haven't been for 2 weeks now....the teachers and the director at the school are also threatening the kids.... The gárda gets entry to the school and the kindergarden – which is when parents run there to take their kids. So most of them don't take them anymore. The kids can't sleep, many of them pee themselves; kids are*

*running home after the gárda was chasing them, crying, peeing their pants, refusing to leave the house again. The whole community is terrorized.*

*The school is segregated. 2/3 of the students are Roma and they have to study on a separate floor...The Roma kids are not allowed to go to the local pool and sports hall.*

*The Gárda follows the Roma wherever they go – to the store, the doctor, the school, everywhere.*

The Civil Guard appeared to have left Gyöngyöspata before March 20; but nevertheless, the 115 Romani families living there asked activists to come in case the guards returned. Fifteen Hungarian and foreign activists, including members of Amnesty International Hungary, arrived March 20th to provide support.

Gyongyosyata Solidarity reports that Hungary's Interior Minister, Sandor Pinter, has been instructed to halt the activities of the Civil Guard and other paramilitary organizations. Apparently Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Roma affairs state secretary Zoltán Balog, and Roma Authority president Flórián Farkas agreed that “job creation and education can primarily lead the way to improving the state of Roma.”

### SOURCES:

ERRC, [www.sosinet.hu](http://www.sosinet.hu); [www.idebate.org/roma/2011/03/16/urgent-roma-neighborhood-under-control-of-uniformed-vigilantes-in-hungary/](http://www.idebate.org/roma/2011/03/16/urgent-roma-neighborhood-under-control-of-uniformed-vigilantes-in-hungary/); Roma in Americas, Roma Virtual Network, Orsolya Fehér, RIS Network

Hírszerző: [http://hirszerzo.hu/belfold/20110307\\_gyongyosyata\\_roma\\_jobbik](http://hirszerzo.hu/belfold/20110307_gyongyosyata_roma_jobbik)

Hungarian media: [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20110316\\_gyongyosyata\\_video](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20110316_gyongyosyata_video).

Indymedia: <http://indymediacall.blogspot.com/2011/03/march-20-visit-to-gyongyosyata.html>

# Czech Republic, 2011: anti-Nazi demonstration

From a letter to Valerie Raymond, Canadian ambassador to Czech Republic, from the Roma Association Forum

*Prague, 18.3.2011*

*Esteemed Madame Ambassador,*

*We are calling on you with great urgency to appeal to your country's government to lift the visas for Czech citizens as soon as possible .....for many people this is the only hope of escaping.....institutional racism, racial discrimination and racial persecution to which we are exposed every single day in this country.*

*(Anti-Roma racism) in Czech society, at the local level and at the level of the authorities and institutions, is achieving a critical level. Currently these problems are evident in the town of Nový Bydžov.*

*On Saturday 12 March 2011, more than 500 neo-Nazis from the Workers' Social Justice Party, the Autonomous Nationalists and members of the banned National Resistance organization marched through the town with the assistance and support of the local municipality. During this event, 20 Czech neo-Nazis physically assaulted three Roma people. One of the victims was rendered unconscious and was then hospitalized. The Police of the Czech Republic did not manage to prevent this brutal attack by Czech racists.*

*.....There is now an effort underway for anti-Roma measures designed by local municipalities to be backed by national legislation. Dozens of mayors and municipal representatives have designed and signed an anti-Roma "Document", according to which towns and villages should have the right to deprive Roma people of permanent residency. The mayors of these towns and villages have entrusted Czech MP Ivana Řápková (Civic Democrats-ODS) with seeing through these legislative changes.*



A peaceful anti-Nazi demonstration in Nový Bydžov on March 13 in support of Roma was brutally crushed by police on horseback, using long nightsticks, tactical explosives and stun grenades. Source: ROMEA eyewitness report from the scene.

For full story and text of the letter, please go to ROMEA:  
[www.romea.cz/english/](http://www.romea.cz/english/)

## Roma in Europe

European Roma Rights Centre: [www.errc.org/](http://www.errc.org/)

European Roma Information Office: <http://erionet.org/site/>

Roma Rising: [www.romarising.com/](http://www.romarising.com/)

Idebates Roma Buzz Aggregator, an initiative sponsored by the Open Society Foundations in support of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, [www.idebate.org/roma/](http://www.idebate.org/roma/)

Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015  
[www.romadecade.org/](http://www.romadecade.org/)

Romani Virtual Network  
[www.valery-novoselsky.org/romavirtualnetwork.html](http://www.valery-novoselsky.org/romavirtualnetwork.html)

Roma in the Czech Republic  
<http://romove.radio.cz/en>  
ROME A: [www.romea.cz/english/](http://www.romea.cz/english/)

Amnesty International:  
[www.amnesty.org/en/region/hungary](http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/hungary)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/region/czech-republic](http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/czech-republic)



# Further resources

## BOOKS

### Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić:

- *Dukh-Pain*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2007 (poetry).
- *Rromane Paramicha (a Collection of Romani Folk Tales)*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2009.
- *Romani Prince Penga*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2009 (story).
- *An Unusual Family (a Romani Folk Tale)*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2009.
- *Rom Like Thunder*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2011 (novel).
- *Romani Dictionary: Gurbeti-English/English-Gurbeti*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2011.

### Ronald Lee:

- *Learn Romani/Das-duma Rromanes*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005.
- *The Living Fire (E Zhivindi Yag)*. 2010 Magoria Books (novel)
- *Romani Dictionary: Kalderash-English*. Toronto: Magoria Books, 2011.

### Ian Hancock:

- *We are the Romani People (Ame san e Rromane Dzene)*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002.

### Damien Le Bas Jr. and Thomas Acton, ed.:

- *All Change: Romani History through Romani eyes*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press

### Dileep Karanth, ed.:

- *Danger! Educated Gypsy. Selected Essays*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010.

### Red Tree:

- *Shukar Lulugi: process & transformation in a community arts project at sojourn house, Toronto*. Toronto: Red Tree, 2007.

## WEBSITES

- Red Tree: [www.redtreecollective.ca/](http://www.redtreecollective.ca/)
- Romano Kopachi (Ronald Lee): [www.kopachi.com/](http://www.kopachi.com/)
- Magoria Books: [www.MagoriaBooks.com](http://www.MagoriaBooks.com)
- Chirikli Collective: [www.chiriklicollective.com](http://www.chiriklicollective.com)
- Troupe Caravane, Arts et Spectacles: [www.troupecaravane.com/](http://www.troupecaravane.com/)
- Roma Community Centre: [www.rcctoronto.org/](http://www.rcctoronto.org/)
- Lolo Diklo: Romani Against Racism: <http://lolodiklo.blogspot.com/>



Canada has traditionally been a refuge for those seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

# Contributors



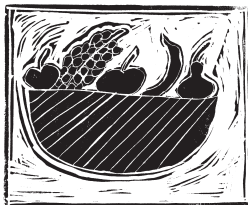
Ilona



Timea



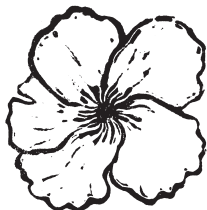
Monika V.



Gizella



Monika B.



Lynn

**Monica Bodirsky:** Romani artist, educator and activist; president, Roma Community Centre, Toronto

**Gina Csanyi:** educator, activist; Executive Director, Roma Community Centre, Toronto; Bachelor of Education (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education); past facilitator, human rights training, ERRC

**Dr. Ian Hancock:** Director of the Romani Studies Program and the Romani Archives and Documentation Center at The University of Texas at Austin

**Lynn Hutchinson Lee:** visual & multidisciplinary artist. Member, Red Tree, Roma Community Centre, Chirikli Collective

**Livia Kenyeres:** Transitional Housing and Support Worker, St. Christopher House, Toronto

**Ronald Lee:** Romani author, scholar, activist; Honorary Chair, Roma Community Centre, Toronto

**John Pinel Donoghue:** photographer, Toronto

**Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić:** poet, writer, educator; journalist. Member, Chirikli Collective.

**Red Tree:** artists' collective founded 1989, based in Toronto, carries out cross-cultural collaborative interdisciplinary arts projects, frequently with a community arts component.

**Chirikli Collective:** founded 2010 by Lynn Hutchinson Lee and Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić, based in Toronto, Canada and Aldekerk, Germany, to carry out interdisciplinary arts projects

## End notes

*Canada Without Shadows* is a four-part audio installation with sound poems by Hedina ("Suno 1", "Suno 2") and Lynn ("Five Songs for Daddy"), with testimony fragments by Ilona, Monika V., Timea, Gizella, and Monika B. Spoken word is surrounded by birdsong.

*The Witness Project* brings the full testimonies of the five women to the written page; with their strength and courage they have made a path through fear and darkness and show us the way.

We don't know if the five women and their families will be allowed to remain in Canada: the Immigration Minister's 2009 comments about 'bogus' refugee claims have been disastrous for Roma seeking safety on our shores. What we do know is that in Toronto the women can go to English classes, walk through their neighbourhood, sleep at night unafraid. In school their children learn and thrive without fear. They are part of a culturally diverse community. They long for and deserve a future in Canada.





**“We have felt our Romanipe (Romani culture, tradition, history, even traces of our mother tongue), our being woman, our wandering through life and countries.... we have felt each other.”**

*- Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić*

**“Let us stand together,  
let us keep our traditions:  
all meaning is in our traditions.”**

**“We were always faced with  
exclusion.”**

**“Here we can live in peace with my children.  
I do not have to be scared to let them go to school.”**

**“As the years passed, the children  
went to school and the discrimination  
and gipsy slander started.”**

**“I would like to complete a culinary school program.  
I really enjoy cooking.”**