



Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma

April 2013



International Roma Day ♦ April 8, 2013

To persecute groups like the Roma is to persecute our own secret selves. To criminalize an entire ethnic group is to vandalize our own secret identities. . . . In our hearts we know that we are all misunderstood. How easy then to turn against the weakest in our midst and blame them for all our ills. The Roma are in danger of becoming the scapegoats for our fears. The real crime is ours, the crime of turning their life into a waking nightmare.

—Salman Rushdie

Prayer

Embracing God, we thank you for all who courageously reach out to heal the rifts of exclusion, poverty and violence in your world. We give thanks for the patience, courage and life spirit of the Roma, as individuals and as a people in history. Help us to celebrate and give thanks for Roma people and welcome them to the table of kinship, so they need never again hide their identity or flee in fear.

We believe that your perfect love casts out fear. And yet, we come together as people with the all-too-human fears that diminish perfect love: What will we eat? What will we wear? What if we lose respectability? What if our neighbors take advantage of us? What if someone wants to hurt us? What if . . . ?

Help us to feel and extend God's boundless love. Help us to take on the courage of the One who walks beside us on our journey. Help us to preach the courage to care and bring that care into being in our homes, congregations, communities, nation and world. Make us instruments of your peace as we expand the circle of caring that helps heal what is broken in or world. May our prayers of thanksgiving for Roma and our prayers for access and inclusion for them continue throughout the year.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, whose courage to care is our example.

Amen.

April 8, 2013, is International Roma Day, a celebration of Romani culture, history and people. It's also an opportunity for those of us who know little about the Roma (often pejoratively called "gypsies") to learn about them, and to move past stereotypes and media depictions. Roma continue to face exclusion, stigmatization, illegal deportation, and denial of their basic rights to shelter, clean food and water, education and other services. They are citizens of the European Union, as well as other states in the world.

The European Roma Information Office notes that Roma face discrimination in many forms—"institutional discrimination such as forced evictions, school segregation and restricted access to adequate housing, health, education and employment opportunities. . . . [and] on a day-to-day basis in the form of violence, negative stereotypes, intolerances and prejudices" (press release, March 21, 2013; www.erionet.eu/doc-press-release-international-day-against-racism-2013).

Pray

Hold International Roma Day and Roma people in your daily prayers. Pray for peaceful and positive demonstrations. Pray that those who stigmatize or loathe the Roma will not be moved to hate speech or violence. Pray that



people of the majority culture all over Europe may come to see Roma as fellow children of God. Pray for tolerance and forgiveness on both sides.

Learn about Roma ♦ Share what you learn

Scripture

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

—1 Corinthians 12:24–26
The Message

Share

Encourage others to learn more about Roma and tell them about what you've learned.

Learn

Burkhard Paetzold, PC(USA) regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe, facilitates the PC(USA)'s work with the Roma in that region's countries. Learn more about Burkhard's work at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/paetzold-burkhard>.



Burkhard also coordinates the Roma Bridging Group on Mission Crossroads PC(USA), a social networking tool for building effective and faithful mission work. Join the Roma Bridging Group at <http://missioncrossroads.ning.com/group/romapeoplebridginggroup>.

Numerous groups and resources (listed on the following pages) can expand your knowledge of Roma. In addition to this resource, 10-day prayer cycles created by Presbyterian Women in 2011 and 2012, with information about Roma in specific countries (2011) and dealing with specific issues (2012), are available online. Visit www.presbyterianwomen.org/mission for links and more on advocacy and mission with Roma.





Roma woman in Debrecen, Hungary

Learn about the Roma

Organizations

Roma Organizations

Roma Community Centre

www.romatoronto.org

The Roma Community Centre (RCC) works to strengthen and unify Roma peoples across Canada as they strive for self-determination, social justice and human rights. The organization celebrates Roma cultural diversity, history and achievements.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “Reaching out to Roma”

www.pcusa.org/news/2012/10/16/reaching-out-roma

A profile of mission coworkers Ellen and Al Smith’s work in Russia to foster reconciliation for all people, particularly Roma

Letter from Nadia Ayoub in Ukraine

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/mission-connections/ayoub-nadia-2012-12

An update on mission coworker Nadia Ayoub’s efforts to help secure a location for the Roma Mission Center despite prejudices against Roma

Letter from Burkhard Paetzold in Germany

www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/mission-connections/paetzold-burkhard-201209

A reflection on the obstacles and opportunities mission coworker Burkhard Paetzold sees for the inclusion of Roma throughout Europe

“Summoning the Courage to Say ‘No!’”

Horizons, May/June 2012

An article by Liz Searles, PC(USA) mission coworker, on Roma and human trafficking

PC(USA) Partners

“Ministry among the Roma—Interview with Attila Landauer, Gypsy Studies Specialist”

www.reformatus.hu/mutat/7624

Coordinator of Roma ministry of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Attila Landauer reflects on the history of Roma culture, their connection to the Reformed church and the role of István Wáli Reformed Roma Collegium.

Scripture

“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

—Leviticus 19:34

Prayer

O God, we bring before you hearts and minds divided by fear. Move us to bind up those who are wounded, warm those who are chilled, feed those who are hungry and heal those with diseases of the body, mind and spirit.

Be with the Roma, oh God. Move the hearts of the communities who segregate and exclude the Roma. Infuse hearts and minds with your love, we pray. And move us to be faithful and to continue our prayers for Roma in the days ahead.

In the name of Jesus, healer, comforter and friend to the stranger. Amen.

Pray and learn about Roma ♦ Resources



Scripture

“Do not abuse any widow or orphan.”

—Exodus 22:22

Prayer

I praise you, Jesus. Lead us to those paths you want us to walk. I pray for Roma people, that they would bow before you. I pray for Roma, that they would stop playing gaming machines. Descend upon them, make them free of those machines. May they find their way to you. I pray for loan sharks. Nothing is impossible for you. Stop their tricks that they would stop preying on poor people. You said, “For everyone, who knocks, the door will be opened.” And I pray for the government—you see, o Lord, how they curtail our social benefits and how our living costs are sky-high. I put the government in your hands. I put our church into your hands, as well as our pastor and our praise. Thanks to you we know the truth and we are changed for the better. Bless them. Thank you. Amen.

—Sona Kandracová, Roma woman from Vsetín, Czech Republic

PC(USA) Partners, continued

“A New Reformed Collegium for Roma Students in Debrecen”

www.reformatus.hu/mutat/6986

An overview of István Wáli Reformed Roma Collegium in providing higher education and mentorship for 16 Roma students

Roma Resources

Websites and Email Groups

Roma Virtual Network

Send an email to Roma_Daily_News-subscribe@yahoo.com to receive news and information about Roma that you can share with others.

“Roma Inclusion in 2012: No Respite in Prejudice”

www.opendemocracy.net/bernard-rorke/roma-inclusion-in-2012-no-respite-in-prejudice-0

An article on the human rights violations faced by Roma across Europe, and a call for the European Union to do more to advance Roma inclusion

“‘Gypsies are Animals’—Racism on Hungary’s Right”

www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/gypsies_are_animals_racism_on_hungarys_right

Amnesty International UK website for Roma, Gypsy and Traveller rights

www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11645

An advocacy website with links to resources, including an activity pack for youth age 13 and up

Videos

Faces of Change

[http://mundiromani.com/videos/?video\[video\]\[item\]=30](http://mundiromani.com/videos/?video[video][item]=30)

A 30-minute video with interviews from 10 exceptional Roma who talk about how Roma are improving their lives and calling for an end to discrimination and marginalization

Mundi Romani: The World through Roma Eyes

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2kErKNOIEs

A three-minute video with clips of Roma people, housing and culture

Pray and learn about Roma ♦ Resources



Scripture

“People were bringing little children to [Jesus] in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

—Mark 10:13–14

Prayer

Today, our God, we lift up to you all children who suffer poverty and exclusion, especially Romani children. We pray for each child who has to earn money to feed his or her family, who has no boots where the way to school is muddy or snowy, who has not learned the national language since their old settlement was bulldozed and they were forcibly relocated, whose sister burned her schoolbooks to keep her babies warm, who has never seen anyone get up every day and go to work or heard anyone talk about work in a good way, who must trade pencils and backpacks for food.

Videos, continued

Trapped: The Forgotten Story of the Mitrovica Roma

[http://mundiromani.com/videos/?video\[video\]\[item\]=56](http://mundiromani.com/videos/?video[video][item]=56)

Mitrovica, on the border of Serbian and Albanian Kosovo, is home to hundreds of Roma who live in refugee camps, struggling with health effects of the toxic dump nearby, unable to move due to historic Serbian–Albanian tensions.

Guilty until Proven Innocent

[www.mundiromani.com/videos/?video\[video\]\[item\]=80](http://www.mundiromani.com/videos/?video[video][item]=80)

A 30-minute film highlighting the ways the French government criminalizes the Roma people and culture

The Plight of the Roma

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUIW7wZurIc

A 2012 roundtable discussion on Roma identity, treatment in Canada and Europe, and the future for Roma

Colorful but Colorblind: Roma beyond Stereotypes (2010)

http://roma.globalstories.org/?utm_source=TOL+mailing-list&utm_campaign=2d49beda5a-CbCpromo10_11_2010&utm_medium=email

Twenty-five short interviews with Roma from around the world, exploring contemporary Roma identities and culture, and obstacles that Roma communities face in achieving equality

Full-length Feature Films

Gypsy Caravan: When the Road Bends (2008)

A documentary that celebrates the rich, varied music of top international Roma performers and interweaves stirring real-life tales of their home life and social background

We Have No War Songs (1995)

A documentary examining the long history of the persecution of Roma people around the world

Mondo (1997)

Based on a novel about a 10-year-old Roma boy looking for a family to adopt him in Nice, France

The Man Who Cried (2000)

A young Russian Jewish woman (Christina Ricci) travels to France, where she falls in love with a Roma man (Johnny Depp). The beginnings of World War II test

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their relationship and show the violence and prejudice faced by Jews and Roma.

Pretty Dyana (2002)

A documentary on Kosovar Roma refugees surviving in Belgrade by reinventing old Dyana cars

The Time of the Gypsies (1989)

The story of Perhan, a young Romani man with magical powers who is tricked into engaging in petty crime

Previews

These films may become available on the internet or may be aired near you. Previews are available now.

Everyday Life of Roma Children in Block 71

<http://vimeo.com/23689723>

Roma children from a Serbian settlement discuss the limited work and other opportunities available to them.

Uprooted: Children's Perspectives on Western Europe's Repatriation Policies

http://archive.org/details/linktv_uprooted2012022421?start=236.5

A documentary profiling three Roma youth being deported with their families from Germany to Kosovo. The youth have lived their entire lives in Germany, yet, because the Kosovo conflict is over, the German government, swayed by anti-Roma sentiment, is deporting the families.



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