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The Plight of the Roma in Italy: Human Rights Injustices of a Feared Minority

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The Plight of the Roma in Italy:
Human Rights Injustices of a Feared Minority

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Review of the Literature.....	7
Methodology.....	36
Findings.....	40
Conclusion.....	57
Bibliography and Citation.....	60
Appendix I.....	62
Appendix II.....	68
Appendix III.....	87
Appendix IV.....	89

Abstract

Human rights is unique in that it has a universal affect on everyone world-wide no matter his or her nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or economic standing. In order to narrow this down, the intention of this thesis is to explore a specific topic in regards to the overlying issue of human rights. This thesis provides evidence of the mistreatment and blatant racism that is inflicted upon the Roma living in Italy and this paper makes the claim that this is the fault of the Italian government. The methodology used for the community engagement portion of the thesis is a combination of surveys and an interview. The findings reveal the opinions and sentiments towards the Roma, immigration, and the Italian government on a personal level. The conclusion sums up the general synopsis of the thesis and uses it in order to draw solutions to the initial problem of human rights injustices against the Roma minority living in Italy.

Introduction

Oftentimes oppressed groups go overlooked even after years of being subjected to human rights injustices. These injustices are not perceived as legitimate problems until they gain national and global recognition. For example, the Holocaust shed a new light on the discrimination of the Jewish people living throughout Europe when Hitler and his Nazi regime ordered millions of people of the Jewish faith to be exterminated. Memorials exist world-wide in recognition of this atrocity as a reminder of what extreme discrimination, oppression and hate can lead to; yet all of these negative qualities still exist today. Millions have perished in the Sudan because of the genocide occurring there. It took several years for the conflict in Darfur to be globally recognized as an atrocity against human rights. The same rings true for the human rights injustices that have been taking place and continue to occur against the Roma people of Europe.

The Roma have existed for several centuries, and have been treated unjustly for almost the entirety of their existence. Over time, people have developed negative stereotypes and given themselves reasons to discriminate against the Roma; however, much of this is attributed to the political systems in place. In the past, it has been due to oppressive and discriminating political systems that the Roma have experienced emotional and physical intolerance. Italy's present government echoes qualities seen in Mussolini's Fascist regime in which nationality has brought negative attention to the Roma minority living there. In addition, corruption, bigotry, and xenophobia have sparked animosity within Italian society. Anti-immigration initiatives by the government have brought global attention to Italy's political system. Human rights injustices, such as those involving the Roma people in Italy, are directly connected to the attitudes, and consequent decisions, that the government has towards this minority and immigrants as a whole.

It has already been acknowledged by activists, NGOs, and international journalists who confirm that there are indeed mistreatments of the Roma in Italy. However, the proceeding research will show that there are distinctive instances that have occurred in recent years that only strengthen the claim that Italian society as a whole is to blame for the oppression experienced by the majority of Roma inhabiting the country. The homogenous structure of Italian mainstream society and its adherence to its conservative traditions and values make it hard for Italians to accept the diverse cultures of those immigrant groups flooding into the country.

Currently, Italy is in an economic and political crisis due to the low birth rate of Italian citizens and the high influx of immigrants coming into the country each year. Because of the tensions that have been created between locals and migrant groups, the Roma have felt the negative side effects of this extreme frustration and animosity experienced by Italians.

Some of these frustrations were revealed within the surveys given to eight Italians interviewed as part of the community engagement process, which provided a personal account of what is truly going on in the minds of members of Italian society. It is impossible for Italians to even attempt to accept the differences of immigrants because of the strong nationalist sentiment that the government is feeding into. Politicians have been elected based on their promises to make the problems of immigration disappear. For these politicians, however, this means expelling mass amounts of illegal migrants.

The eight participants give an inside look at their feelings on the current Italian government and its leadership, the Roma living throughout the country, and the influence of the influx of immigrants found in Italy.

The thesis looks to find an optimistic future for the Roma throughout the negativity that lies within the xenophobia of the political and social spheres of Italy. Specific questions were

asked of community engagement participants in order to delve into the possibilities for a minority group that not only appears to be helpless, but also hopeless. The findings are meant to answer some of the questions that came about during the review of the literature, especially in looking at whether or not certain social programs are applicable and serve a purpose for the Roma community.

Review of the Literature

I. Human Rights

Before exploring the specific issue of the Roma in Italy, it is absolutely necessary to examine the basic concept of human rights. “Human rights” is such a loose term that is not easily definable because of all that it encompasses. Daniel Fischlin and Martha Nandorfy try to simplify the concept of human rights in their book, *The Concise Guide to Global Human Rights*. According to the authors, “Human rights are the right to be fully human, and we can be fully human only through our common humanity.”¹ Yet this leaves readers wondering, what does it mean to be fully human? Fischlin and Nandorfy provide four influential quotes to help better define “human rights.”

Mahatma Gandhi, a major political and spiritual leader in India as well as peace activist, said, “All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family, and each one of us is responsible for the misdeeds of all others. I cannot detach myself from the wickedest soul.” Martin Luther King, Jr., a civil rights activist of 1960s America said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”² Václav Havel was a human rights activist in the Czech Republic who stated, “I have often asked myself why human beings have any rights at all. I always come to the conclusion that human rights, human freedoms, and human dignity have their deepest roots somewhere outside the perceptible world. These values are as powerful as they are because, under certain circumstances, people accept them without compulsion and are willing to die for them.”³ Lastly, Arundhati Roy, a women’s right activist in India once said, “The assault on vulnerable, fragile sections of society is so complete, so cruel

¹ (Daniel Fischlin) p. iv

² Ibid

³ Ibid

and so clever that its sheer audacity has eroded our definition of justice. It has forced us to lower our sights, and curtail our expectations. Even among the well-intentioned, the magnificent concept of justice is gradually being substituted with the reduced, far more fragile discourse of ‘human rights.’”⁴

These quotes are applicable to any human rights issue on a large or small scale. Unlike citizenship rights or civil rights, which can vary from nation to nation and even city to city, human rights, as these four activists would argue, are rights that extend to every single citizen of the world no matter their gender, race, nationality, social status, sexual orientation, or belief system. Human rights is becoming more of a global issue because of the downsides of globalization in which the poor are excluded from receiving some of these natural human rights, and are denied livelihood, jobs, and security, and ultimately threatening their right to exist. The Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, argues that,

The very structure of the nation-state as a dominant form of organizing power relations is predicted on ‘birth.’ That is, the rights of the nation to an individual via citizenship immediately supersede a person’s own universal rights as soon as that person is born. The nation exercises its sovereignty over a person at birth by asserting state ownership through ‘nationality.’ This makes the individual simply an extension of the state’s own power relations. The individual’s rights are, in that sense, constituted from birth by the state, a relationship of power that is highly troubling if not outright fictional within the notion of universal human rights.⁵

Agamben presents a valid point in suggesting that a person’s universal rights granted to him or her by birth are negated when it comes to the hierarchical structure of modern society. Right-wing and leftist parties have been in constant battle with one another on the question of how much power a system of government or authority should be allowed to have. Agamben’s

⁴ Ibid

⁵ (Daniel Fischlin) p. 25

approach makes one wonder: to what degree should we be willing or even allow our basic human rights to be placed in the hands of the nation?

As a response to the atrocities that took place during World War II, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was implemented and signed on December 10, 1948. It is important to acknowledge this document because of its strict intention to protect and honor human rights, “as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.”⁶ The main reason why the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the UDHR was to publicize the text and “to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories.”⁷ However widely publicized it may be, the most crucial step that the UDHR has yet to fully take is strictly enforcing that which has been declared within the document.

Article 3 of the UDHR says, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”⁸ The UDHR in Article 13 states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state [and] everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”⁹ The UDHR states, in Article 15, that “Everyone has a right to a nationality [and] no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”¹⁰ The problem with these articles is that they do not always make clear an interpretation of the articles for nomadic groups, such as the Roma, whose nationality is not necessarily that apparent.

⁶ (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

Although the UDHR is a binding agreement that countries that have signed are required to follow, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms that exist in each nation-state that often makes some of the amendments of the agreement negligible. Reports provided by Amnesty International and other NGOs show that human rights violations occur all over the world. Key criticisms of the UDHR are, “its focus on individual rights, and its failure to deal with the complexities of human migration and globalization.”¹¹ Despite its potential shortcomings, the UDHR is still an important document to keep in mind in investigating the past and current treatment of the Roma in Europe, where the reception and treatment of this group is controversial and oftentimes inhumane.

II. Culture of the Roma and their identity as “Gypsies”

The Roma people, also known as Romani, are a trans-national minority and a nomadic people who first migrated from northern India around the 10th century, but were mistaken as Egyptians, hence the commonly used term “gypsy,” (a foreign term which is regarded by many minority members as discriminatory) to which they are most often referred. The terms “Roma” and “Sinti” are authentic proper names that mean “person.” Many Roma migrated to the mountains and forests of Eastern and Central Europe where they continued their nomadic lifestyle. Queen Elizabeth I was the first to expel the Roma from England. Many Roma were exterminated in 1721 under the rule of German Emperor Karl VI. They were enslaved in parts of the Balkans during the 19th century. Many do not realize that the Jewish Holocaust not only effected those persecuted because of their Jewish faith, but also killed 500,000 Roma in Nazis extermination camps, which is known in Gypsy folklore as the “Porrajmos” or “The

¹¹ (Reichert) p. 23

Devouring.”¹² During the Communist era, it is said that Roma life was better under the Communist rule because they had jobs and housing and they were relatively free from ethnic violence. Many Roma began to flee from the Balkans during the 1990s because of the terrible conditions proceeding the fall of Communism, and because of the ethnic cleansing that was taking place there.¹³ Forced sterilization of Roma women existed under Communist regimes, yet it still continues in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as recorded in several hundred cases which have been documented within recent years.¹⁴ Another influx of Roma came in 2007 when Romania was added as a part of the European Union.

For centuries the Roma were enslaved outright and today in Europe the Roma, as suggested by the author Michael D. Goldhaber, resemble that of blacks living in America prior to the civil rights movement. In 1999, researchers were sent to Ostrava, Czech Republic by the European Roma Rights Centre. Deborah Winterbourne, an English activist, was cursed and spat at while traveling with some of her Roma colleagues. She said, “I felt like a civil rights worker in the Deep South. In Ostrava I never met one person who wasn’t racist.”¹⁵

Today, the Roma are the largest dispersed minority in Europe, and after the fall of Communism, the unemployment rate has skyrocketed and bigotry has developed into a widespread problem in the countries the Roma occupy.¹⁶ Congressman Tom Lantons, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights said, “I think it can be stated without exaggeration that the plight of the Roma is the disgrace of Europe. But perhaps a bigger problem, in the new regimes preoccupied with economic crises, is

¹² (McDougall)

¹³ (Wilkinson)

¹⁴ (Rose)

¹⁵ (Goldhaber) p. 161

¹⁶ (Human Rights of the Roma (Gypsies): Hearing Before the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights)

the development of an atmosphere in which human rights violations of a despised minority has become acceptable.”¹⁷ Many reports suggest that the dire situation that the Roma face is approaching crisis proportions. After the fall of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe, many needed an easy scapegoat in order to put nationalist movements into action, and the Romani population was an easy target for this. According to reports in 2004, there were approximately 6 million Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and that there has been an increase of assaults and severe beatings inflicted on Roma. Romani-owned houses have been set on fire and many have been forced to move from towns they have been settled in for generations, for fear of being lynched.¹⁸

The bigotry of the CEE is apparent in its own leadership. In fact, on September 3, 1993, Slovakian Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar said the Roma constituted a “socially unadaptable population...[with a high birth rate of] children who are poorly adaptable socially, children with serious health disorders, children simply who are a great burden on this society.”¹⁹ A startling statistic reported that 80% of all Romani children drop out of school by the age of ten and many are sent to schools for the mentally retarded because of the language barrier they face only knowing the Romani language and not the language of the nation they currently reside in.

Géza Ötvös is the Romani director of the Romanian NGO Wassda who has created a diagram of the principal problems that the Roma face. According to Ötvös, the problems for the Roma are as follows: Romani culture and the Roma contribution to the arts, community education, the mass media, Romani politics, the education of Romani children, and combating

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 2

¹⁸ (Pogany)

¹⁹ (Human Rights of the Roma (Gypsies): Hearing Before the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights) p. 3

poverty and racism. The Roma do not have a strong sense of their own history, traditions, and customs, which is said to have a negative affect on their sense of self-worth. There is also a need for community education for Roma since oftentimes poorly educated Roma need basic knowledge of medicine, nutrition, family planning, and other subjects dealing with quality of life. The mass media could be an important tool for bringing about awareness of the issues involving the Roma; however, the mass media does not often portray the Roma in the best way and draws more negative attention than positive. Without a distinct cultural or ethnic identity, the Romani find it difficult to gain a prominent position within the political system and it is not easy for Romani politicians and activists to gain a platform, especially in the CEE. As previously stated, education within the population of Roma children is lacking and Ötvös suggests that this significant educational underperformance must be addressed immediately, as a matter of urgency. Combating poverty is one of the most important problems that needs to be addressed among the Roma. A recent World Bank report confirmed that the degree of severe poverty that Roma face poses a huge threat to the economic performance and social cohesion of several states of the CEE. And of course combating racism, bigotry, and stereotypes is a long-term project for the Roma.²⁰

Currently in the CEE, more than sixty percent of Romanian gypsies are said to live below the poverty line. In some villages of southern and eastern Slovakia, all of the Roma adults living there are considered to be destitute. In Britain, between ten and twenty per cent of “travelers,” as the Roma are referred to, live in absolute poverty. In some French cities, seventy to eighty percent of the Gypsy population is on welfare. The question posed by writer Alain Reyniers is, “Why, despite repeated attempts to assimilate or exclude the Gypsies over the past 600 years,

²⁰ (Pogany)

have they remained cut off from other peoples and are for the most part, pushed to the fringes of society?”²¹ Reyniers also points out that Hungarians, although they, too, were nomadic like the Roma, managed to establish a country of their own.

Historically, the Roma have always been talented in areas that allow them to participate in the economies they encounter while traveling from place to place. They had no ambitions, but presented themselves as craftspeople, artists, and traders. The Roma are traditionally independent workers who profit from making a living through odd, on-the-spot jobs and provide an array of skills that meet the needs of a dispersed clientele. Gypsies have always had a co-dependent relationship with farmers because as nomads, the gypsies provide tools, baskets, veterinary care, or temporary manpower for the farmers and in return the farmers provide them with food and other goods.

For a long time, governments and officials have gone to great lengths in order to poorly portray gypsies as anti-social immigrants who lack a culture of their own. Reyniers writes,

The contrived image of the Gypsies as an idle, roaming and dangerous people was one of the devices – along with violence, coercion and ideology – that was used to help forget the national identity of peoples belonging to specific territories with well-guarded borders. In the 19th century, when these peoples rose up against foreign rulers, the nationalist struggle was always on behalf of a single majority people.²²

Despite the services that gypsies may provide, acting as economic and cultural partners of European peoples for centuries, they are constantly subjected to strict rules under political systems in which they are not allowed to take part. As governments and societies continue to keep the Roma out of the system, the Roma grow more and more wary of the outside world and remain isolated from the rest of society. As markets continue to grow, changes in consumer

²¹ (Reyniers)

²² (Reyniers)

tastes occur, and production becomes more sophisticated, the Roma gypsies are driven deeper into poverty.

IV. Roma Presence in Italy

The Roma presence in Italy has caused a large rift in Italian society and the prejudices that surround the Roma minority of the region have gained both national and global recognition. A strong sense of xenophobia exists today in the Italian political system and in the minds of many Italians. Although it has been over half a century since Mussolini and his Fascist regime ruled over the nation, the same right-wing politicians are beginning to show a significant presence in Italian government.²³

In April 2008, Gianni Alemanno was elected as the new mayor of Rome, the first right-wing mayor since WWII. Recently, there has been a new shift towards the Italian political right which is full of “restyled former Fascists, anti-immigrant forces and traditional conservatives.”²⁴ One of the key players is newly elected Silvio Berlusconi, who is returning as Prime Minister. Berlusconi is considered to be the richest man in Italy. Not only is he rich, but he also owns three of Italy’s four private television networks, the largest advertising agency, a newspaper, an Internet company, and Italy’s largest publishing house.²⁵

Umberto Bossi, Italian government minister, hails from the Northern League party and was granted a seat in the new Cabinet. Bossi and the Northern League have blamed Roma and illegal immigrants for the recent crime rate. Bossi, who once suggested that boats carrying immigrants should be shot down, has a big hand in the government’s decision to have a forceful

²³ (Wilkinson)

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ (Krieger) p. 250

police crackdown on the Roma. Davide Boni, an official in the Lombardy regional government, has stated that all gypsies must go.

The Northern League, Berlusconi's People of Freedom party, and other right-wing parties currently in power are beginning to capitalize on the xenophobic sentiment that is prevalent in Italian society today. As the number of immigrants increase and the economy continues to plunge into recession, Italian fears and prejudices towards foreigners continues to amplify. Bossi stated, "People want this country to remain theirs."²⁶

Italy has always been a rather conservative society and the appeal to the value and sanctity of tradition usually helps politicians win the hearts of the masses. This was apparent in the amount of trust Italians put in Italian Fascist leader, Mussolini. Another major partner of Berlusconi is the National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*), which was the succeeding party to Mussolini's Fascists. The leader of the National Alliance, Gianfranco Fini, had a difficult time trying to distance himself from his neo-fascist past. Mayor Gianni Alemanno was also a member of the National Alliance who has also failed to shake his neo-fascist background. In fact, when Alemanno arrived at Rome's City Hall, supporters greeted him with the stiff-armed Fascist salutes. In order to try and clean up his reputation and demonstrate that he was not a racist or xenophobe, Alemanno visited Rome's main synagogue. Alemanno was elected mayor because he pledged to the people of Rome that he would expel 20,000 illegal immigrants.²⁷ Another Cabinet member is National League member, Roberto Calderoli who was best known for his memorable appearance on television wearing a T-shirt with a cartoon of the prophet Muhammad as well as his plan to parade pigs on sites where Muslims planned to build mosques. These

²⁶ (Wilkinson)

²⁷ (Fraser)

gestures were not only insulting to Muslims, but are blatant evidence of the kind of racist corruption that exists within the government.

Berlusconi's Cabinet met to establish a "security plan" that implements tough anti-immigration measures that would, "make entering Italy illegally punishable by up to four years in jail; confiscate property rented to illegal immigrants; make it easier to expel them; and quadruple the waiting period for a foreigner married to an Italian to become eligible for citizenship."²⁸ Although the Cabinet uses its national security as an excuse for its decisions made to have a crackdown on immigration, it is obvious that there is a lot of animosity towards the Roma. Although some Roma do make a living through petty theft, many have lived in Italy for a long time and are even educated. As a desperate means for a voice in the government, a Roma ran for a position in parliament in the last election. Maurizio Pagani of Opera Nomadi, a Roma advocacy group, said, "The sad thing is that racism toward Gypsies is not only found in people but it's also institutional."²⁹

As a reaction to Italy's crackdown on immigration, there has been some backlash seen by foreign powers, whether it is NGOs or other nations. According to Opera Nomadi, it is estimated that 160,000 Roma live in Italy, 70,000 of whom are Italian nationals. Leonard Orban, the Romanian Commissioner for Multilingualism, has recently placed blame on Italy's insufficient use of European-social funds to integrate the Roma. Orban argues that Italy has provided less funding with only €3.2 million going towards integrations projects in comparison to €4.4 million in the Czech Republic and €7.5 million in Poland. Although Spain faces the same criticisms as Italy does for its dealings with the Roma, Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega said, "The [Spanish] government rejects violence, racism

²⁸ (Wilkinson)

²⁹ Ibid

and xenophobia and does not support what is happening in Italy. Spain does not support the policy of expulsions without respect for the law and rights, or action which exalt violence racism and xenophobia.”³⁰

The effectiveness of the political system to invoke fear and ill-feelings towards foreigners and especially the Roma gypsies living in Italy, is evident in polls recently conducted. Sixty eight percent of Italians said that they wanted to see all of the country’s 160,000 Roma Gypsies expelled from Italy, despite the fact that many are Italian citizens. Tom Kington, reporter for *The Guardian* says the right-wing Italian government fuels these negative views of the Roma. A shockingly high percentage of 81% of Italians said that they found all gypsies, “barely likeable or not likeable at all.” In May 2008, 268 immigrants were rounded up in a nationwide crackdown on prostitution and drug dealing shortly after Berlusconi made the comparison of foreign criminals to “an army of evil.” The hostility against gypsies has reached a new level. EveryOne director, Matteo Pegoraro noted that, “Italian football stars on Milan teams assumed to have Gypsy heritage, such as Andrea Pirlo, are now also the threat of threatening chants.”³¹

V. Action being taken by the Italian Government

The Italian government, under Berlusconi, presented the idea of fingerprinting the Roma gypsies residing in Italy in the summer of 2008. The government has come up with the idea in order to take into account in the nation’s census the number of Roma living in Italy. Gypsies who are identified as legal in the census will be provided with a card granting them access to Italy’s social and health services. Interior Minister, Roberto Maroni, said that the idea behind this plan is to establish who is entitled to be in the country, and who is not. Maroni told Parliament that the census was being taken in order to “put an end to illegal camps and guarantee

³⁰ (Italian Roma crackdown causes rift in Parliament)

³¹ (Kington)

security to Italian citizens, but above all to the minors who live in these camps. In many cases, people are living in sub-human conditions, where children are forced to live with rats.”³² The Italian Red Cross is even lending a hand in the effort. Massimo Barra is the head of the organization and has claimed that the idea of fingerprinting is to help integrate the Roma people into Italian society. He also said that the Red Cross always respects human rights and that they are trying to “build bridges, not walls.”³³ However, although the Italian government has ensured that the census is meant to bring more good than harm, many are skeptical, in particular the Catholic Church.

In response to the fingerprinting proposal, a Catholic human rights organization warned that by fingerprinting and identifying the Roma by their ethnicity, it would set a dangerous precedent. Marco Impagliazzo, president of the Community of Sant’ Egidio, said, “We are very worried about discrimination according to race or religion. It evokes painful memories, like the Vichy regime.”³⁴ *Famiglia Cristiana* is the most widely read Catholic magazine in Italy. The publication took a strong stance on condemning the fingerprinting movement seeing it as both racist and indecent. Tito Brunelli is a Catholic activist who was dismissed from his previous job as a Verona councilor in charge of social policy and immigration for being “too tolerant” of the Roma and trying to bring them into contact with Italians. He said, “The only way to solve the Roma problem is to find them jobs, housing and education.” Brunelli also said that he thinks gypsies are beginning to be identified only “so they can be expelled. Some Gypsies rob – but so do some Italians.”³⁵

³² (Povoledo, Italy assailed over plan to fingerprint Gypsies)

³³ (Owen, Italy gypsies find echoes of Nazism in fingerprinting move)

³⁴ (Povoledo, Italy assailed over plan to fingerprint Gypsies)

³⁵ (Owen, Italy gypsies find echoes of Nazism in fingerprinting move)

In Italy, there are an estimated seven hundred gypsy camps that exist, many of which are nearby the major cities such as Milan, Naples and Rome. The government called for a “Roma emergency” in which it intends to shut down unauthorized camps by May 2009 and deport illegal immigrants. Mario Marazziti, a spokesman on the issue, claims, “There is no national emergency. What is an emergency is that in the 21st century the life expectancy of a gypsy living in Italy is under 60 years of age. Marazziti also suggested that, rather than take a census, the best way to improve the situation is for the government to come up with someone to improve the lives of the Roma.”³⁶

One Italian city that hasn’t gained much attention for its dealings with gypsies is Verona. Because Verona is most famously known for the birthplace of fictional characters Romeo and Juliet, it is a tourist hotspot. Verona, too, is home to many Roma and its government has found the need to examine the “problem” as well.

Flavio Tosi, the Mayor of Verona and also a member of the Northern League, said, “There are Gypsies who want to live a normal life, but those who live in Gypsy camps become habitual criminals and they force their children to become criminals too. Then when the children grow up they, in turn, force their children to enter a life of crime. It is a vicious circle which must be broken.”³⁷ Seven years earlier in 2001, Tosi proclaimed that the gypsies must be ordered out because there are more robberies with their arrival. The Court of Cassation, Italy’s highest appeal court, overturned the conviction for racial discrimination and showed that Tosi was prejudiced, but ultimately not guilty of stirring up racial hatred.

Vando Colombo, a Roma gypsy living just outside the Verona city walls in a camp, weighed in on the issue of fingerprinting. “This is like the Shoah, the Holocaust,” she said.

³⁶ (Povoledo, Italy assailed over plan to fingerprint Gypsies)

³⁷ Ibid

“The Nazis exterminated Gypsies as well as Jews, and this kind of discrimination is how it started. If they come here and try to fingerprint our children we will stop them.” Mrs. Colombo continued on saying, “Our children do not steal. The older ones go out to do honest work. We are Italian Gypsies, not foreigners. We are scapegoats.”³⁸ Her husband also commented on the problem saying that gypsies coming from the Balkans and Romania have given them a negative rep.³⁹

Those who oppose Berlusconi’s fingerprint “interrogation” proposal, see it as his way of trying to save himself from corruption charges rather than dealing with the causes of street crime. The opposition believes that Berlusconi is able to gain support for this because he is rushing through security laws and exploiting fear. Maria Rita Verardo, head of the Association of Juvenile Court Magistrates, says that Berlusconi’s plan is “an odious form of racial discrimination.”⁴⁰ UNICEF, the European Parliament and the Romanian Government have all agreed that the fingerprinting has anti-immigrant sentiments which have encouraged vigilante attacks. Many from both Jewish and Catholic groups in Italy have drawn comparisons between the Roma census and Nazi racial discrimination and persecution. Representatives from the centre-Left side of the Italian political system have said that the supposed “crackdown on crime” is all for show. Walter Veltroni, the opposition leader, has said that the Berlusconi Government “only acts tough with people who do not have the vote.”⁴¹ In Berlusconi’s defense, Roberto Maroni proclaimed to Parliament, “There is no breach of European rules, or of the charter for childhood rights, no violation of any regulation.”⁴² On September 4, 2008, Berlusconi was

³⁸ (Povoledo, Italy assailed over plan to fingerprint Gypsies)

³⁹ (Owen, Italy gypsies find echoes of Nazism in fingerprinting move)

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ (Owen, EU clears Berlusconi over Roma gypsies)

⁴² (Owen, Italy gypsies find echoes of Nazism in fingerprinting move)

cleared of ethnic discrimination charges after the European Commission decided the fingerprinting of Roma Gypsies in Italy was in line with EU law.

Prior to the European Commissions approval of Berlusconi's census proposal, demonstrators held the first national demonstration of Gypsies in Italy on June 8, 2008. "This demonstration," Stoyanovic Vojislav, a Serbian Roma, "will make Italians understand that the Roma are very different from how we are depicted in the media." Another organizer, Santino Spinelli, stated, "This is the first time in six centuries that we are demanding our rights. We are demanding to be integrated because we are citizens like any others."⁴³ Many of the demonstrators wore a black triangle, like those that the Nazis forced the Roma to wear in concentration camps. "Today is a great day for the Rom," said Gina, a Roma from Romania. "Remember that if you forget history, it can repeat itself."⁴⁴

The line between racism and blatant acts against humanity was crossed on July 17, 2008 when two Roma girls, thirteen year old Cristina and eleven year old Violetta Djeordsvic drowned in the shallow waters of a public beach on Italy's Amalfi Coast that "encapsulated the treat of racism on modern Europe." When the two sisters went to the beach to sell wooden trinkets to beachgoers, they grew restless as the day grew hotter and could not sell anything. The girls dared each other to jump from rocks into the sea, but after Violetta jumped and disappeared, Cristina jumped in, in hopes of trying to save her sister. Both drowned in the water clinging to one another. The girls were recovered from the water by a passer-by and declared dead by a lifeguard. The police arrived and covered the girls with two beach towels and took the girls' cousins, who were present that day, back to their relatives. However, the world was shocked

⁴³ (Povoledo, Gypsies in Italy protest prejudice)

⁴⁴ Ibid

when newspapers and TV stations displayed images of beachgoers nonchalantly eating a picnic while observing the scene and others throwing a frisbee nearby. For many this was the final straw. Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe of Naples told the media, “Crisitina and Violetta had faced nothing but prejudice in life and indifference in death; an unforgivable truth.”⁴⁵ The girls’ deaths came as poor timing for Berlusconi’s government who has been trying to convince the world that the charges for racial discrimination against the Roma immigrants on the government were false. Roberto Maroni’s response to the incident was, “That is what happens when Gypsies steal babies.”⁴⁶

Almost over night, signs have been posted across the walls of Naples. “Diritti per tutti” or “rights for all,” reads one poster. Another says, “White, black, yellow, red. Stop apartheid now,” which appear below crude images of fingerprints. Beneath these posters are remnants of all ones that call for the mass deportation of Naples’ Roma Gypsies and immigrants. Francesca Saudino, a campaigning Naples-based lawyer with Osservazione, a nationwide pressure group for Roma rights, stated,

Italy is divided on these girls, on the fate of the Roma. The conscience of the people has been pricked. You can see this on the walls of our city. The reaction to the death of these children goes beyond anything that has happened before. The incident has exposed a long-held social realism in our country: that many working-class people think the Roma no better than animals, and the government is using this xenophobia to win votes and popularity. People are ashamed. The deaths of these girls has come to represent something more, perhaps a battle for Italy’s soul.⁴⁷

Reporter Dan McDougall visited the girls’ mother who was obviously distraught over the death of her daughters; however she was most upset over the way in which beachgoers reacted.

Miriana Djeordsvic commented on the tragedy saying, “The real crime was what happened

⁴⁵ (McDougall)

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

around them. Those people by the water, they ignored the children, like they were dead dogs washed up in the Mediterranean. My daughters were not subhuman.” Shortly before the girls’ death, they were both fingerprinted as part of Berlusconi’s movement. Violetta was very upset and thought the police were coming to take her away and Cristina scrubbed off the ink from her thumb and was very angry about being treated like such a second class citizen. Saudino believes that “fingerprinting lies at the heart of the anguish and disenchantment felt by the Roma.”⁴⁸

Naples has become a battle ground for the Italy versus Roma “war” that is feverously taking place, especially given the events that have occurred within the past year. Much has changed in just a month and a half when peaceful protests in June turned into violent reactions in July. On the evening of July 23, 2008, Italian vigilant groups in the suburbs of Ponticelli near Naples chased Roma out of the two squatter camps and some even threw Molotov cocktails and set fire to the camps. This violence was sparked by the alleged attempt by a sixteen year old Roma girl to kidnap a six month old baby girl from an apartment. Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, the head of the Italian bishops’ conference, said that the people’s fear was understandable; however, it is never right for people to take the law into their own hands, as some Italian vigilante groups had done in this situation. Romanian Interior Minister Cristian David has proposed sending Romanian policemen and persecutors to help the Italians combat crime and keep the animosity between Italians and the Roma at bay.⁴⁹

To further explore the issue of the extreme racism that exists within the Italian government, the European Roma Rights Center published an article that looks at a disturbing publication that was released in 2001. To begin with, the document uses the derogatory term, “zingaro,” meaning “gypsy” in Italian. The document states, “Anthropologists emphasize

⁴⁸ (McDougall)

⁴⁹ (Fraser, Italy police to protect Gypsies)

that the Gypsies are not simply a disadvantaged part of our industrial society, but rather are an example of another type of society altogether: non-industrial society.” According to these anthropologists, the way in which gypsies make a living is comparable to primitive societies such as the Pygmies or Native Americans because they are all “gatherers.”

They go on to say that the Roma gypsies did not immigrate to Italy in order to seek gainful employment in the labor force, but that they fully intended to remain on the outside of society, making a living by gathering. For example, the male children go with their mother and sisters to search for food or for the money to buy food in the “natural” environment in which society lives. “They beg, but there are also those who steal; inasmuch as they are ‘gatherers’ they feel no guilt from having deprived some non-Gypsy of the ownership of some object: they believe that they have merely substituted themselves for the other person in possession of that object in order to perform the noble deed of feeding the rest of the family.”⁵⁰ Finally, the document says given this anthropological evidence, gypsies can be explained as inferior beings who can hardly express themselves and are considered to be primitive. “Roma may not all be nomads anymore, but rather savage exploiters...Roma are exploiters and thieves by nature.”⁵¹ The government uses this document to justify a lot of the decisions made in support of the negative government policies on Roma. “Segregating these dangerous nomads and hunter-gathering scavengers in camps, and keeping them as isolated from society as possible, becomes the only logical, safe choice for non-Roma – that or sending Roma back to their country of origin.”⁵² The content of the text echoes the writing of Adolf Hitler’s manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, which is notorious for representing pure hatred and racism. Hitler, too, draws outrageous

⁵⁰ (Colacicchi)

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

conclusions from the nature of “inferior races” such as the Jews in order to promote anti-Semitism among white supremacists and neo-Nazis. In the same way, the Italian government has used the 2001 publication to make blatantly outlandish and racist statements in regards to the anthropological origins and nature of the Roma.

V. Italy’s Immigration Problems

In the past year there has been an immense amount of media attention on the Italian government and its decisions made in regards to immigration. Although the focal point of this paper, the Roma are not the only major immigrant population inhabiting Italy. In recent years there has been a major influx of African immigrants as Italy has, over the past few decades, transformed from a nation of emigrants to a country for of mass immigration. As tensions have increased as the Italian government has dealt with its response to the problem, many human rights groups and other European nations and institutions have raised concerns and skepticism. Many African immigrants look for work picking citrus fruit in fields of Calabria in southern Italy. These workers represent a wandering, immigrant underclass in Italy. “Amid public alarm over an immigrant influx it has sent soldiers on to the streets, fingerprinted Roma (Gypsy) communities, and encouraged rapid expulsions and repatriations.”⁵³ It is estimated that the immigration population is about four million, which is almost 7% of the total population. In 2007 alone, there were 346,000 new immigrant arrivals. Sergio Carrera, a research fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies says, “Italy’s becoming a caricature. It’s becoming the example of a very extreme political discourse framing migration as a security issue, and

⁵³ (Italian migration policy draws fire)

justifying the implementation of very restrictive policies, having huge implications for human rights, fundamental rights, and social inclusion.”⁵⁴

In 2008, there was an estimated 36,000 immigrants who arrived by sea. Many of those arrive on the small Italian island south of Sicily, Lampedusa, which is also the location for Italy’s immigrant detention center. Lampedusa was also the site of recent revolts that took place in February 2009, when immigrant detainees broke out of the center in protest of new policies and overcrowding of the center. The center was built for 850 but was holding 1,800 at the time of the revolt, forcing several hundred to sleep outdoors. In the past, migrants who were seeking asylum were sent to Italy’s mainland, but this has since changed in order to speed up the repatriation of the illegal arrivals. Lampedusa’s detention center has been renamed the “Centre for Identification and Expulsion.”⁵⁵ Dino De Rubeis, the mayor of Lampedusa, comments, “This is the fault of the government...the immigrants are exasperated.”⁵⁶

Currently, Italy’s largest immigrant population is Romanian with a population of over 625,000. One of the major problems that surround the anti-immigrant backlash that the Roma community is experiencing is due in part to the fact that Italian citizens often confuse Romanians and Roma with one another. Although the Roma have a lot of affiliations and history grounded in Romania, they are a distinctly different group than Romanians. They are also distinctively different in size within Italy as can be seen below:

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ (Italy migrant revolt sparks blaze)

⁵⁶ Ibid

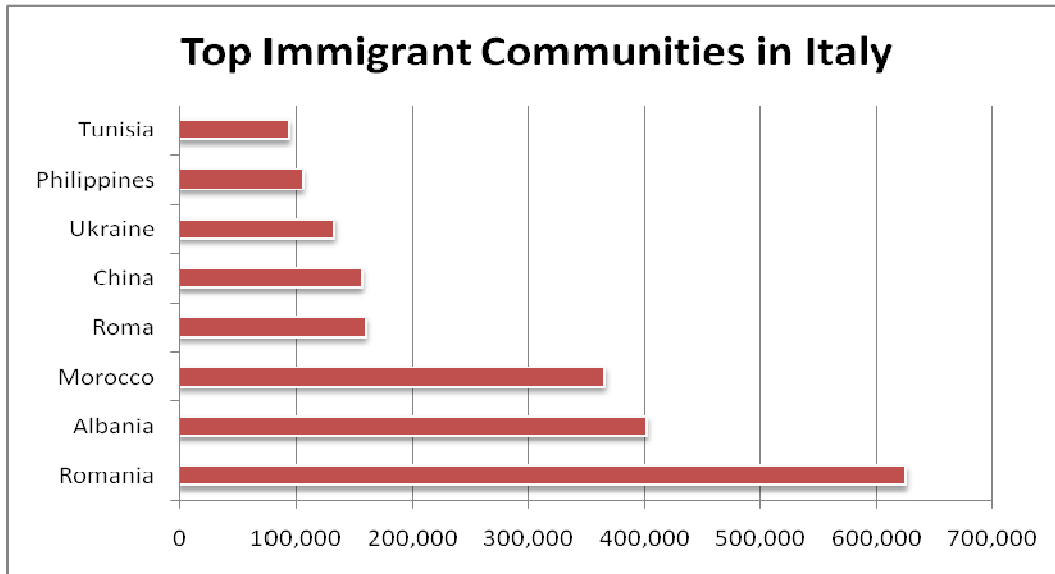


Figure 1 made from data found at <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/>

In early 2009, four Romanians were arrested in the town of Guidonia for allegedly gang-raping a young Italian woman. The day after the incident, a march took place by a small far-right party who took part in beating up separate groups of Albanians and Romanians. A townspeople expressed his opinion to a local radio station on the proposed relocation of some Roma camps in saying, “If they move Casilino 900 [a large Roma camp outside of Rome] here, we’ll start a war.”⁵⁷ A reporter for BBC News countered this by saying, “Political comment has once again lumped together Romanians – now Italy’s largest immigrant group at more than 600,000 strong – with the Roma, many of who are long-term residents in Italy and have origins in other Eastern European states.”⁵⁸

VI. Roma children

A growing concern of international human rights organizations is on the lives of Roma children living in Europe, in particular those living in Italy. Human rights organizations such as

⁵⁷ (Italy torn by racial strains)

⁵⁸ Ibid

the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) have brought attention to the poor conditions of the way in which Roma live in Italy. The majority of Roma live in camps that lie on the outskirts of many of Italy’s major cities, many of which lack basic necessities such as sanitation, running water, and electricity. The ERRC conducted a study in 2001 in order to investigate not only the precarious conditions of the camp, but also to collect data on how these conditions have an effect on the children living there, specifically those ages 0-5. The ERRC collected data from camps in Florence, Bergamo, Brescia, Venice and Bolzano. They conducted household surveys and their findings are as follows:

City	Florence	Bergamo	Brescia	Venice	Bolzano	Total
Dirtiness	31%	35%	27%	44%	21%	33%
Cold	32%	24%	0%	19%	48%	27%
Precarious home	4%	12%	33%	17%	17%	11%
Presence of rats	19%	3%	0%	4%	0%	10%
Unclean air	7%	12%	7%	6%	4%	7%
Over-crowding	4%	6%	13%	8%	9%	6%
Stagnant water	4%	9%	20%	2%	0%	5%

Table 1 made from data found at <http://www.errc.org/>

Along with problems in the home and in the camps in which they live, Roma children must combat the ill treatment they face on a daily basis when they go to school. In 2003, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child met to discuss the rights of children in Italy. The committee reported that, “Many children, especially those from different cultures or deprived backgrounds, experience schools as places where they are excluded and discriminated against. Indeed, schools can and do exacerbate rather than mitigate difference, and thereby contribute towards marginalization and social maladjustment.”⁵⁹ The Committee has addressed this, along with several other impending issues that the Italian government needs to tackle when it comes to

⁵⁹ (Violence Against Children in ITALY)

its system of education among children, with special attention to meeting the needs of children from multicultural or foreign backgrounds.

The Committee also addressed the practice of begging among Roma children, “which is acknowledged as one of the worst forms of exploitative child labor.” The Committee also said,

Some commentators argue that there is an adult network systematically organizing these children to make money for members of families during periods of unemployment, but opinions are divided on the issue. No detailed data are available on the numbers of child beggars and the borderline between begging and huckstering is poorly defined. The lifestyle of these children involves living in the streets from morning to evening, including in the winter, eating erratically and not attending school...In addition, tackling street labor by trying to re-direct such children’s activities has proved difficult for social workers, and the risk that the child may instead turn to criminal activities like drug dealing is high.⁶⁰

Along with this, the Committee reported on the high rate of school truancy among Roma children because they are forced to beg instead of go to school, and also because the schools have failed at effectively integrating them into the school system. School bullying is found amongst the “highest-risk” social and cultural groups which are often deeply rooted in the society’s cultural norms and heritage.

According to the report, there are around 30,000 Roma children and adolescents in the compulsory school age, 19,000 of which should be attending primary school and 11,000 who should be attending middle school or *scuola media*. In regards to Italian law, Roma children are considered to be Italian citizens and are granted access to free education. However, only about 5,100 of these children go to primary school and 1,700 attend the middle schools. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Public Education, “the rate of school truancy or non-attendance is very high, 73.2% for elementary schools and 84.6% for middle schools. The decision to introduce gypsy children into mainstream classes (implemented during the school

⁶⁰ Ibid

year 1965-66) has not resolved the problems, as has evidenced by their sporadic attendance rate and low school performance.”⁶¹

The Italian State Police or the Polizia di Stato has lent its opinion on the issue of begging, especially among Roma children in Italy. Most of those children begging in Italian streets are Roma. The Polizia di Stato reports that the profits made by those begging are substantial, beggars making on average €100 per day. However, this can lead to illegal activities which include minor thefts, drug pushing and sexual exploitation. The Polizia di Stato remarks that, “The counter-measures adopted against the exploiters are not always adequate: hosting children in communities, reception or juvenile centers is hindered by the lack of suitable facilities, the hostility of the families and the reluctance of the children themselves, hardly eager to lead a regular life, and always ready to escape.”⁶²

VII. International Aid

Several movements and actions have been taken in order to bring recognition and combat the human injustices that are being committed against the Roma people. Currently, Europe is supposedly in the middle of what they refer to as the, “Decade of Roma Inclusion.” The European Union, in 2005, launched a €30 Billion project with the countries that are home to the largest Roma populations: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. These countries have agreed to help close the gap in education, employment, health and housing that exists between the majority and the Roma minority. However, many Roma haven’t seen many effects on their lives and many are bitter and skeptical of society, which makes them hesitant to even want to be included, even if the system is trying to help them. However, in Italy’s case, both sides, government and society, and

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² (Begging)

then the Roma, all lack the trust to allow this gap to be filled. Satka Selimovic, a Roma gypsy, said, “People may say we are bitter and to blame for our own isolation, but we tell each new generation of Roma they will be included and accepted and each time it feels like betrayal.”⁶³

Various NGOs have been established to try and foster the Roma integration on both an economic and social level, and bring attention to the human rights violations that have occurred. One NGO that has brought increased public attention to the issue is the European Roma Rights Centre. The organization was established in 1996 and has become one of the leading advocates in implementing anti-discrimination law in Europe.⁶⁴ Another group is called EveryOne, which is an organization committed to fighting the discrimination and persecution of minority groups. This group looks at obtaining and applying laws, both international and national, which protect victimized minorities subjected to injustices.⁶⁵ Also, the World Health Organization has shown that inhabitants of the Roma camps suffer from life-threatening, heavy-metal poisoning that affect children and pregnant women in particular.⁶⁶ Camps often lack proper housing, sewage, electricity, running water and are overall an unhealthy and unsterile environment that is clearly in violation of Article 25.1 which reads, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”⁶⁷ Today, organizations are reaching more and more people

⁶³ (McDougall)

⁶⁴ (European Roma Rights Centre)

⁶⁵ (EveryOne)

⁶⁶ (Rose)

⁶⁷ (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

to bring about awareness of the human rights atrocities that occur against the Roma on an everyday basis.

VIII. Future for the Roma

Despite the tension and turbulence that has taken place recently surrounding the issue of immigration, there are also signs that the attitudes of Italians may be shifting. According to Giovanni Giulio Valtolina, an expert at the Milan-based migration research foundation, Ismu, “The number of people who say they are scared of immigrants has dropped gradually from a peak of more than 70% in 1993-94 – a period that saw massive arrivals of Albanian immigrants on Italy’s south-eastern coast – to a level close to the European average of about 35%. The immigrant that people are afraid of is the illegal immigrant. It’s not a generalized, undifferentiated fear like it was before.”⁶⁸ Valtolina says that nowadays few people have expressed open prejudice against immigrations and that many are accepting of them as long as they work and obey the laws.

There was a symbolic breakthrough for immigrants who rarely get the opportunity to work in a white-collar job when Jean-Leonard Touadi was elected as Italy’s first black member of parliament. Touadi said, “My impression is that this culture of rejection, exclusion, is beginning to embed itself.”⁶⁹ Touadi represents the main centre-left opposition party in Italy. He is an immigrant from the Congo who, “sees his success as a sign that Italy is slowly becoming ‘more open, pluralistic’ in line with other European countries.”⁷⁰ He also goes on to say that, “Extreme right groups are taking this opportunity to raise a racist culture. And they are

⁶⁸ (Italy torn by racial strains)

⁶⁹ (Italy torn by racial strains)

⁷⁰ (Migrants row strains Italy-Romania ties)

trying to organize themselves to try and find Romanians, and give the city a kind of ‘false revenge.’”⁷¹

IX. Conclusion

It is difficult to write on a topic involving human rights and then put a personal focus on the topic and still remain emotionally unattached to the subject at hand. Such was the case with the Roma human injustices previously discussed, because these injustices are not only blatantly obvious, I have seen them for myself first hand. My inspiration or motivation for this topic was my abroad experience during the fall of 2007 spent in Rome. As students we were advised to use caution when travelling around the city and elsewhere because of the petty crime that existed which many blamed on the “gypsies.” Even after spending four months there, I could feel the animosity and ill-feelings that Italians have for the Roma who are, in Italian opinion, “plaguing” the streets of Rome.

I began my journey of research by looking into basic human rights as well as analyzing and applying when appropriate which articles in the UDHR best matched the disposition of the Roma living in Italy. It was important for me to research and provide a historical and cultural background for the Roma in order for me to draw conclusions as to why the Roma have remained Europe’s scapegoat for so long.

I wasn’t aware of the level of corruption that existed within the Italian government until I researched the different members of Berlusconi’s Cabinet. The bigotry, sneakiness, corruption and their general lack of concern for human rights is both shocking and frightening. The possibility of a Fascist regime seems more and more real for a country whose government is comprised of several members closely connected with neo-fascism and whose reliance upon

⁷¹ Ibid

nationalism and national identity is what secures its strong position in the decision making processes that determine the fate of the Roma. If, indeed, Berlusconi's census and fingerprinting plan was being done in protection of *both* Italian citizens and the Roma, the rift between the two groups would not exist and violence, as seen in Naples, would not exist. It is hard to call attention to our own anti-immigrant sentiments that exist within the US and the longing to for national identity and security.

In my opinion, many laws have been breached whether on a national or international level, by the corruptive Berlusconi Italian government. Although many NGOs have stepped in to bring attention and help remedy the situation, I think the most effective place in which positive change can occur on behalf of the Roma lies within the voices of the Italian people in opposition to their government. The Roma deserve, at the very least, basic human rights which are guaranteed to them through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Methodology

For this thesis, it made the most sense to utilize the resources and connections I have made in the past and abroad as a means to gather information on the way in which the Roma are viewed from an Italian civilian perspective. In my thesis I have proposed that the human rights injustices that have and continue to occur against the Roma are at the fault of the Italian government. In my research, seen in my previous review of the literature, I have gained an understanding through international and domestic media sources that there is a strong xenophobic sentiment within Italian society against the Roma. Through my community engagement I attempted to gain an unbiased source of information in order to determine whether or not this was true.

In order to obtain a wide spectrum of answers and opinions on the subject of the Roma and immigration in Italy in general, I surveyed a group of people who were demographically diverse. The ages of my participants range from 22 to 74 years of age. All of my participants have lived in Italy for a significant amount of time, which ensured me that they would be able to answer my questions to the best of their ability based on their experiences. The amount of time my participants have spent living in Italy ranges from six years to their lifetime. All but three of my participants were born in Italy, which provided me with the perspective of someone who is either currently living or has lived in Italy that is foreign-born. I wanted to be sure to have at least one representative from this category because I wanted to gain an outside perspective on the Italian way of life. I also chose three people who have lived within the United States for a long period of time so that I would be able to provide an American perspective of the situation in Italy.

I was also adamant about getting perspectives of people living throughout Italy who represented the vastly different geographical locations within the country. Knowing how diverse the entirety of the country is, I knew that it was important to have representation from the northern and southern ends as well as the middle of the country because the people and cultures of each are drastically different. Also, opinions tend to become more conservative the further north you go, and opinions become more liberal as you travel further south. By surveying both northern and southern groups, I knew I would be able to get conservative and liberal political standpoints since the majority of the questions asked had to do with Italian politics.

I wanted to ensure that there was representation from various age groups among the participants because I was curious to see the generational differences and/or schisms, and whether or not the well-known xenophobia of older generations was prevalent among the younger generations as well. I figured if my results showed that xenophobia among Italians was slowly disappearing from generation to generation, then I would be able to conclude that there was an optimistic future for the Roma presently living in Italy. I have seen in the United States that the younger generation is generally more liberal than that of the conservative older generation which is evident in this year's Presidential election. Young Americans were able to have their voices heard and were able to determine the outcome of the election because more young people voted in the election than ever before. With this said, I think that if enough young Italians were able to do the same in the next major election in Italy, they may have the power to rebuild a new government that could create hope for the Roma and other immigrants alike.

In deciding what to do for my community engagement portion of my thesis, I contemplated working with local and international non-profit organizations who deal with issues of human rights and even the human rights of the Roma specifically. However, I was more

interested in learning the perspective of the Italian people, which was part of the information that I was missing from the research I had done for my literature review. I used surveys and interviews as my method of investigating the attitude of Italians on issues of immigration and minorities because I wanted to give my participants the opportunity to express their opinions and delve into details as to why they felt that way.

Technically, I wanted to keep my questions short and concise so as not to overwhelm my participants. Oftentimes when surveys are either too lengthy or time consuming, potential surveyors are deterred from filling them out. I know, speaking from personal experience, that when I am presented with an extensive survey with multi-sentenced questions it can be intimidating and unappealing enough not to complete it. Therefore, I wanted to present a survey that appeared to be simple and approachable, but still presented an opportunity for surveyors to give an extensive and detailed response if they so chose. I think my approach to this worked quite effectively considering my thorough results. To my surprise, all of the participants gave substantial answers on the majority of the questions asked and I believe this is due in part to the structure of the survey itself. I also faced the challenge of having to personally translate my survey into Italian as well as those responses in order to expand my participant pool and not limit my study to only English-speaking Italians. I thought that by providing an Italian version of my survey I could better authenticate my investigation of what Italians really think.

Ideally, I would have like to have interviewed all of my participants instead of just one because, as previously stated, sometimes the survey method can seem too formal and therefore prevent participants from giving detailed answers; but given the pool of people whom I surveyed, I felt they were all comfortable in answering honestly because I know all of them on a personal level. It also would have been ideal to have had a larger pool of participants in order to

gain an even more diverse demographic range as well as provide more information. Also, I wanted to be sure that because a small number of participants were surveyed that I did not make definite generalizations on what demographics thought based on just one representative from that category. However, I would like to note that I treated these surveys less like a poll and more like written interviews because I was more interested in gaining personal opinions and attitudes on the issues at hand rather than collect data in which I could draw analytic conclusions based on my results. The only analytic conclusions I drew or made note of were based upon the responses I got about certain questions which indicated the participants' attitude towards either the Italian government and its policies or on the Roma and immigration as a whole.

Findings

Through my community engagement I was able to delve into the lives of eight Italians in order to gain a better understanding of Italian society and its present-day views of the Roma and immigrants alike. I found a wide array of opinions and political views that presented themselves through the questions asked. I also found a common thread among all of the participants in which they all agreed. All of my interviewees had at least one doubt or disagreement about the policies and/or practices that are currently in place in Italy from which I was able to draw the conclusion that many Italian citizens are dissatisfied with their government and/or its leaders to some degree or another. This was apparent even during my time spent abroad in Rome when it seemed that every other day there was a specific rally or protest that took place in front of main government buildings. This signifies to me that the people recognize that they have a voice and that they have not given in to the fascist mentality that is so rampant within the current Italian leadership. Something that is unfamiliar to us as Americans is the fluidity and the prevalence of people going on strike in Europe, in particular Italy, in order to take a stand against the injustices that that group may be experiencing. This may be the perfect platform in which the Roma can finally, after centuries of remaining isolated and silent, voice their concerns and achieve what they want, which may or may not be social inclusion.

The first two questions I raised after collecting the demographic information of my participants, they were asked in order to gain a reactionary answer. I first asked, “What do you think of when you hear the word ‘gypsy?’” I followed this by asking, “What do you think of when you hear the word ‘Roma?’” I wanted to first see if my participants saw these as different from one another or if they were synonymous. I also wanted to get an idea of how informed they were on the history of the Roma. Lastly, I hoped to be able to pick up on any initial racial

stigmas that may come up among my Italian participants in answering these questions.

However, I was pleasantly surprised by the diplomatic and well-informed answers that they provided me with. Half of the responses included the word “nomadic” for at least one of these questions. Two of these participants even knew of the Roma’s origins in India which is not commonly known by most people.

As far as preliminary observances that were made in looking through all of the responses, I found that among the eight, three participants mentioned that Italians feared the Roma and three mentioned that Italians distrusted them. Also all of the interviewees, but one mentioned and/or made references to the Roma as thieves or referred to them as participants in criminal or violent activity, whether it was what they or others believed to be true. Federica Snider, a 28 year-old native-born Italian from Rome, said that when she hears the word “gypsy” she often thinks about the gypsy children. Antonella Merletto, a 47 year-old foreign born professor and tour guide from the UK who lives in Rome said that when she thought of the word, “gypsy” she responded with, “Regretfully not nice things, stealing and disrespect for my country (Italy).”⁷² Sophia Georgeo, a 22 year-old American who has spent every summer living in Italy referred to gypsies as a “marginalized people” who tend to have to “live in friction with the people of the outside community.”⁷³ For the most part, all eight were familiar with the Roma which suggests that they are present within their everyday lives.

Following these reactionary questions, I asked, “How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?” I wanted to open a window of opportunity for my participants to express how they felt about the current treatment of the Roma in Italy as well as to see if there were certain participants who might have turned a blind eye to the fact that Roma are often mistreated

⁷² Appendix II

⁷³ Ibid

as seen in the many instances mentioned in the review of the literature. Some surveyors felt as though the Roma were treated fairly and some used the question to explain that the Roma are treated poorly because they are mistrusted and feared by Italian society. Georgeo said, “They [the Roma] are seen as a threat to the community and the safety of the Italians. Most Italians feel animosity against immigrants, especially the gypsies whom they blame for social problems as well as economic downfalls.”⁷⁴ The same could be said for the Latino immigrant population living in the US, many of whom are subjected to the animosity and prejudices of Americans who see them as threats to their jobs and as scapegoats for the economic turmoil that the nation is facing today.

There was an overwhelming amount of dissatisfaction expressed by the participants throughout the survey, in particular in the responses I received for the question: “What do you think of the current Italian government?” Six out of the eight surveyed found the Italian government in some way objectionable. Twenty-five year-old Giuseppe Basile from Palermo, Sicily said, “I am totally opposed to the current Italian government. Currently, the government is impoverishing Italy always favoring those who have the most money and forgetting the poor.”⁷⁵ Snider responded by saying, “I do not like it, at all. I think it uses demagogic communication and cares only about the pleasure of a small part of the population. Furthermore, I do not like the laws they are working on.”⁷⁶ Focusing on leadership in particular, Merletto strongly commented saying, “Politicians in Italy just constantly recycle themselves so we never have any new blood and most of them have no idea of how to run a country!”⁷⁷ Giacomo Struili, a professor at

⁷⁴ Appendix II

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

Providence College who was born in Milan responded, “It [the Italian government] is somewhat out of touch with social concerns and problems. More reforms are needed.”⁷⁸

As a follow up question to investigating whether or not my participants were in favor of the Italian government, I was curious to see how they felt about the way in which they supposed “gypsy problem” in Italy has been handled politically. Only two felt as though the government had handled the situation in the correct way whereas four disagreed and two were unsure. As a representative of American perspective, I was curious by the somewhat harsh responses provided by Salvatore Salpietro, a 29 year-old New Jersey native who spent the past six years living in Rome. Salpietro was one of the two who agreed with the way in which the government has handled its “gypsy problem” along with 74 year-old Filippo Morabito who stated that the current government “is suitable for the requirements and the necessities of our country [Italy].”⁷⁹ Salpietro’s response was, “Any population that takes liberties in a negative way (stealing from, crimes against) from the home population (Italians in this case) should be made to follow rules and if they aren’t adhered to, told to leave or made to.”⁸⁰ I expected more of a right-winged answer from Morabito because, as previously stated, one usually expects older generations to be conservative. However, I was surprised by some of the conformist responses I received from Salpietro, forty-five years his junior. Salpietro, when asked to respond to the question, “What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?” replied with, “That they [the Roma] are a population that contributes nothing to society or local culture and only takes. Also, they feed an increase in crime.” I was confused as to whether or not this was Salpietro’s view or his frank response to the way in which he conceives Italian society to feel on the matter.

⁷⁸ Appendix II

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid

I was interested in whether or not the interviewees were aware of the underlying racist sentiment among the Italian government and Italian society that I had come across so frequently throughout my research shown in my literature review. I was aware of the fact that these sources could be biased in proposing that Italy was so xenophobic, (although I found the same information from an array of sources), so I was determined to see what my community engagement would show me by asking, “Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?” and “Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?” According to the data I gathered from these surveys, I found that five felt there was at least some degree of prejudice against the Roma that exists within the Italian government. Among these five, several pointed out that it wasn’t necessarily the entire government that felt this way, but more so the Northern League and other right-wing parties, previously mentioned in this paper, who were responsible for this suspicion. Basile stated that, “The majority of Italians see the gypsies with more racism and hatred, mostly in recent years. The television networks have concentrated on the offenses committed by the gypsies: violence and rapes. I think that the government is manipulating the information to justify future laws against the gypsies.” Snider also agreed with Basile that racism can arise within the government when gypsies commit crimes. She says, “Even though I think that gypsies are as “violent” as any other person or population, the fact that comes out when we talk about gypsies is that the population at times does not consider gypsies as part of the integrated Italian population, but just as a group of strangers living in this country.”⁸¹

⁸¹ Appendix II

For the few who felt that the government did not demonstrate racist sentiment towards the Roma, they came to the defense of the Italian leadership in their responses. For example, Morabito said, “I do not think that there is a racist sentiment, nor a lot of hatred, in the Italian government, but rather there is a concern to provide safety to the population which is afraid of aggressive behavior and violence.”⁸² Also representing the conservative side, Salpietro said, “Not racist. But rather a sentiment that says, ‘We who choose to live in Italy, also choose to live by its rhythm, pace, traditions and culture – with leniencies. Within limits.’”⁸³

As far as racism among Italian citizens, six felt as though this was true and one felt as though it was somewhat true and only one did not see any Italian animosity whatsoever. Again, Morabito stood strong as the representative for the more conventional side of the political spectrum in which he denied the existence of racism or even animosity among Italian citizens towards the Roma and instead blamed any sort of hostility felt by Italians on fear.

One of the most important pieces of data that I wanted to collect from my community engagement was on the very controversial government proposed fingerprinting that was introduced this past summer. Only two said that they were opposed to the idea of fingerprinting, however, the majority of the six who agreed that this process of identification was necessary and made it clear that it should only be permitted if everyone was fingerprinted so as to not discriminate against a single group. Snider agreed saying, “I think it is a bit discriminatory towards them, especially for the way the government proposed it, and that it does not solve the problem of the census of their population because it only strengthens their feeling of not being

⁸² Appendix II

⁸³ Ibid

liked.”⁸⁴ Struili also found it as an acceptable form of identification and says that it is something that is done in other countries like the US as long as this is something that everyone is subjected to. The liberal representation was held strongly by Basile who completely rejected the idea by saying, “Above all the fingerprinting does not guarantee a high level of safety. I think that the fingerprinting requested only of the Roma is a serious episode of racism of their differences. If we want a serene cohabitation with these people then we cannot treat them otherwise.”⁸⁵

I decided to include the Naples incident that occurred this summer when two Roma camps were set on fire by locals in retaliation to the attempted kidnapping of an infant by a young Roma girl. I was astounded that only half of those surveyed were familiar with this incident to begin with. It is surprising to me that this continuous tension would not be known by the majority of Italians considering there was a lot of chaos and destruction surrounding this event. As one of those that were familiar with the situation, Struili’s response to my question about how they felt about the riots that took place in Naples because of the confrontations between the Roma and the locals was: “Horrible, there is something in the Italian culture that has been there for many years that Italians believe that gypsies steal children, and commit crime. This doesn’t justify hatred and it opens a window on the darkness of humanity. It just shows how the mob mentality is very dangerous.”⁸⁶ The majority of the responses provided an anecdote to what their opinions were of Naples when they commented that Naples was a mess within itself and that the city faced larger problems than its tension between its locals and the Roma because of the rampant organized crime (Mafia) that exists there.

⁸⁴ Appendix II

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid

It was important for me to include a question on existing and/or future social programs for the Roma since I was interested in proposing ideas for what could be done to assist those Roma seeking help and facing oppression within Italian society as a part of the conclusions I am to present later. Four participants stated that they believed there were already programs of this nature in existence. Three were in favor of the idea of establishing a social program for the benefit of the Roma and only one objected to the idea. Again, Salpietro provided his conservative perspective by responding, “Not really...they all choose where to live, and choose to isolate themselves from society. Aid should be given for them to leave if they so desire, back to their country of birth-origin. That is the only aid I think should be given.”⁸⁷

Many who responded that there is already aid given to the Roma may not fully understand the extent of this support. Some said that the government already helps the Roma by allocating land in which they are allowed to live, which as we have seen this is reference to the legal Roma camps that have been set up on the outskirts of some of the major cities. However, we have also seen the poor conditions of both the 700 legal and illegal camps which often lack basic necessities such as running water, electricity and sanitation. The studies conducted by the European Roma Rights Center as profiled previously prove that these camps are far from “gifts of charity” from the government and are more like hell holes unsuitable for any human being to live in.

Basile, Snider, and Georgeo provided suggestions of what programs might look like for the Roma. Basile said it would be useful for a program to be established in which the Roma are taught the legalities as well as taught to respect Italian laws while Italians show the same respect for their culture. Snider said that there were initiatives that help send Roma children to school

⁸⁷ Appendix II

but she noted that, “Their [the programs] success really depends on the will of the cooperation of the gypsies themselves.”⁸⁸ From an American perspective, Georgeo writes, “The programs that should be put into place should be ones that help the assimilation of the Roma gypsies into Italian culture and society.” I will address Georgeo’s proposal later in my thesis because I am unsure of whether or not assimilating the Roma is the right answer to their future and success. I would have to agree with Snider that there is a cooperative effort that is needed on both ends, the Italian and the Roma, in order for any progress to be made in alleviating the oppression that the Roma experience on a daily basis.

I asked my participants if they thought the way in which Roma are treated today differs from the way in which they were treated in the past and as a result five replied yes and the rest felt that the Roma are actually treated worse today than before. I would argue that not much has changed for the Roma and I might agree with the two who replied that the situation has gotten worse over the years, in particular this past year in Italy. Aside from their poor living conditions and the prejudices and bigotry that they are often faced with daily, the Roma lack a occupational role in mainstream society and are ostracized because of it. Many of my participants mentioned the word “tolerance” in reference to how Roma are viewed in present-day Italy; but in my opinion, tolerance is not enough.

As my final question, I wanted to give my participants the opportunity to express their views on immigration in general in Italy because having done extensive research on the topic, I knew that the issue of immigration was at the forefront of Italian politics and news, something that is relevant to people living in the US. For the most part, this was the most lengthy of the responses I got throughout my entire survey. All but one of my participants made it clear that

⁸⁸ Appendix II

they thought immigration was a huge problem in Italy. Georgeo was the only one unable to make this determination because she said, “The immigration situation along with the type of people who immigrate into Italy are very different from that of the immigration situation and immigrants that come into the US. For this, it is unjust to try to judge the situation in Italy with American standards.”⁸⁹

Basile provided a diplomatic answer to the question when he said, “I think that immigration is the cause of a problem very big that needs to be treated in the richest countries. The poverty in the major part of the world is caused by an economic model that does not guarantee equal opportunity for all residents of the land, compelling those poor people to immigrate into richer countries. With this economic model, immigration is inevitable.”⁹⁰ Struili blamed the Italian government for lacking adequate laws for immigration. He also cited the fact that Italy has been used to being a land of emigrants rather than immigrants and in this case they need to come up with new ways to handle the influx of immigrants.

Filiberto Reina, a 47 year-old native of Paceco, Sicily had a lot to say on the issue of immigration:

The matter of immigration in Italy is such a serious problem and global problem that Italy alone is not in the position to resolve it...The population in Italy, had growth of almost zero, but reached for the first time in its history 60,000,000 thanks to the continuous flow of immigrants. Italy is in a world crisis right now, and it is not in the position to give support and guarantee a decorous amount of work to immigrants. So the country is trying, with the help of North African countries, to limit the daily landings of innumerable clandestine migrants...Personally I have a large respect for the immigrants that often have to leave their current country to guarantee themselves a better life.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Appendix II

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

In agreement with this, Merletto says, “We have huge problems due to geographical position and international and national politics. Sadly, I don’t think they shall be solved anytime in the near future.”⁹²

It is evident throughout these results and research done previously that all three course frameworks can be applied to the issue of the human rights injustices against the Roma and even other immigrant groups flooding into Italy. These frameworks are: systems thinking; power, privilege, and diversity; and social and cultural change. Systems thinking, according to Daniel Aronson, is unlike traditional analysis in that it “focuses on how the thing being studied interacts with the other constituents of the system – a set of elements that interact to produce behavior – of which it is a part.” Aronson also states that, “The character of systems thinking makes it extremely effective on the most difficult types of problems to solve: those involving complex issues, those that depend a great deal dependence on the past or on the actions of others, and those stemming from ineffective coordination among those involved.”⁹³ Mainstream society has been faced with the some tension and social problems that exist with the presence of the Roma people within their society. Systems thinking would be an appropriate method of looking at this issue because it is a reoccurring issue in which it would be useful to get the actors to see the “big picture.” These actors include the Italian government, Italian society and the Roma since all are either directly or indirectly interconnected and affected by one another. Each actor has their own solution to the problem may be it deportation, assimilation, or isolation of the Roma; however, none of which have taken into consideration how each is necessary in order for the system to work efficiently. Systems thinking is effective for a situation like the Roma in which the

⁹² Appendix II

⁹³ (Aronson)

solution has historically always been the same and now they are faced with a possibility to change that traditional way of thinking.

Walter Wink's, *Engaging the Powers*, is perfectly applicable to the "domination system" he introduces in his book. According to Wink, the "domination system" is programmed to assimilate diverse cultures into a single monoculture and this system functions best when power is concentrated into a small elite class. I can see the "domination system" at work within the hierarchical structure of Italian society and government. Silvio Berlusconi is the personification of this system because of his immense amount of wealth and power over the entire nation. The restyled fascist government that has arisen over the past years in Italy is trying to assimilate the diverse immigrants groups in order to promote Italian nationalism and encourage a single monoculture in which the government can easily exercise its power upon. The fingerprinting is verification for this since its just another way in which the government can practice its power and privilege in order to squash diversity.

Social and cultural change is something that I alluded to when I talked about generational differences and optimism surrounding the more liberal thinking of the younger generation. Jim Tull writes about the way in which *memes*, or "self-replicating cultural forces that, together with our genetic constitution, shape our behavior."⁹⁴ According to Tull memes could include any aspect of ones culture that in some way shape or form affects the behavior of the people of that culture. Memes can take the form of "ideas, mores, values, fashions, practices, customs and songs." With this in mind, could the negative social stigmas and prejudiced views in which Italian mainstream society looks upon the Roma and other immigrant groups be carried through the culture as a meme? I would argue yes, this could be the case. I remember even as a portion

⁹⁴ (Tull)

of our study abroad orientation in Rome, the director of our school warned us of our vulnerability as foreigners to the supposed criminal mischievousness of the “gypsies” who inhabit the city. Not realizing the possible racist undertone of what she said, we took her advice and as the rest of Italian society, we feared and avoided the gypsies at all costs. Therefore, this cultural meme has even gone so far as to carry over to tourists, only strengthening the negative cultural stigmas of the Roma.

Overall my community engagement method was conducive to my thesis as a whole because despite my small participant pool, I received a plethora of honest and extensive answers that gave me more than enough insight on the issues I had questioned. The data that I received through my surveys helped me to develop conclusions on the basic view of the Roma and immigrants in Italy by Italian citizens. Based on their responses I was able to draw conclusions on some of the predictions I had made in planning my methodology for my research. For example, I tended to see more of the younger participants give liberal views, at least more liberal than that of some of those older participants. Giuseppe Basile and Federica Snider, two of my youngest contributors, seemed to hold a humanitarian perspective given some of their answers in which they were quite empathetic towards the Roma. I was surprised that one of the participants whom I expected to hold a more moderate to liberal view on the issues given his age and that he was foreign-born, instead was oftentimes in agreement with the oldest interviewee. I felt as though the three northern Italian perspectives were less in tune with problems outside of their area since all three were unfamiliar with the confrontations that have taken place in Naples due to the tension between Roma and the locals. I also got the impression that these participants did not have as frequent interactions with the Roma as those living in the middle of the country and further south. It was the Romans and the Sicilians who were most vocal about the Roma and

immigration, which confirms to me that they not only come into contact with the Roma more often, since many immigrants migrate from the south.

It is evident that there is an overpowering racist sentiment that is consistent throughout Italian society. Based on my results, it is still debatable whether or not the Italian government is also xenophobic; however, based on my research as well as my time spent abroad, I do hold firmly to the fact that this is true and I am willing to state that Italian citizens are too afraid to admit it. I also think that some Italians are unaware of the repercussions of the fingerprinting movement. Despite the proposal's backing by many politicians and Italians as well as the Italian Red Cross, this does not necessarily make it a humane way in which to better safeguard the nation. In my opinion the fingerprinting concept is similar to the US' homeland security measures taken post 9/11 when the government proposed the infamous Patriot Act which was under much scrutiny for its invasion of privacy. Homeland security encouraged American citizens to embrace the act as a means of protection and safety for all Americans. Similarly, the Italian government has promoted fingerprinting of immigrants as a means of their own "homeland security" with only one exception: it is at the expense of the privacy of Italy's immigrants, not the Italian citizens.

Georgeo touched upon the idea of comparing immigration in Italy with immigration in the US. Immigrants in Italy often parallel many Latino immigrants who move to the US and make up a great deal of the labor force in America. The same is true in Italy because often immigrants will do the jobs that Italians either do not want to do or no longer have skills for. Johnny Dymond of BBC News says that there will not be a mass expulsion of immigrants from Italy despite what the Italian government has promised its people because these immigrants play such a huge economic role in Italy. Dymond writes, "Italy is at one extreme end of Europe's

demographic crisis; it has a catastrophically low birth rate. It needs to import workers for key sections of its economy to keep functioning. For Italy – and for much of Europe – the question is not if immigration should take place, but how it should proceed and if integration can be managed.”⁹⁵

In looking over the responses I began to wonder about the difference between inclusion and assimilation. Both of these terms were used interchangeably amongst the responses and I do not believe that they are synonymous terms. Inclusion, for me, suggests that a small minority previously ostracized from society will now be included with the mainstream. Assimilation, however, seems to have a more negative connotation in that an ostracized minority is forced to accept the cultural practices and traditions of mainstream society in order to “fit in” and at the same time, must abandon his or her own cultural practices and traditions in order to do so. One must then ask the question: is assimilation dangerous and detrimental for these communities, especially those like the Roma whom have existed as such since the 10th century? In order to understand why the Roma choose to isolate themselves from the rest of society it is appropriate to compare them to other nomadic and secluded groups such as the Amish and Native American tribes and even the polygamist Mormons who made headlines in the past few years. I would also say that the Jews, up until 1942, lived a similar lifestyle as the Roma because they, too, lacked a definitive homeland. Like the Roma, Jews lived a nomadic lifestyle and held special occupations within society and depended a great deal on their close-knit Jewish community as a means of survival being that they, too, were ostracized and persecuted for nearly their entire existence. The Jews also resisted assimilating into the societies by holding true to their strong cultural

⁹⁵ (Migrants row strains Italy-Romania ties)

practices and traditions. However, the Jews and the Roma experienced the epitome of racism when they were expelled to concentration camps under the Nazi regime.

Amish communities in rural Pennsylvania Dutch Country, Native Americans tribal land, and Mormon polygamist compounds are all areas within the US that are home for isolated communities that many believe, do not have a place in mainstream society. The Amish reject modern day societal practices and live a 16th century lifestyle. For an industrialized society such as the US, this seems backwards and makes people uncomfortable that a group would choose to live this way. The way in which the Amish live is something Americans might expect for people to live in a third world country, but never in a first world country such as the US. Despite any criticism that the Amish may receive for living the way they do, their way of life has become a tourist attraction for many members of mainstream society because of the curiosity surrounding their isolation.

Native Americans have experienced racism and bigotry since their initial contact with American pioneers who came from Europe. The cultural prejudices from their past still continue to haunt them to this day, despite laws that have been put into place to grant them basic human rights. Native Americans like the Amish and the Roma live isolated from the rest of the US on reservations, although some have chosen to assimilate and, in doing so, have surrendered some of their cultures and traditions.

The Mormon polygamists living on compounds throughout the US have faced a large amount of scrutiny in the past couple years because of their traditions and practices. They are similar to the Amish in that they live a pre-modern conservative lifestyle that seems backward to mainstream society. Many children were removed from their polygamist homes by the

government because of the laws of the US, which signified society's disapproval of something that seemed very "unnatural."

Groups such as these that choose to isolate themselves from the rest of society and refuse to accept the modern way of life by assimilating are considered to be taboo because of it. But we must ask the question: Can we hold them at fault if we cannot force them to assimilate? Also, for a group, such as the Roma, that lacks a homeland, how do you expel a people who have nowhere to go? A major part of their identity as Roma or their "Romaness" so to speak, is due in part to their nomadic lifestyle which they have practiced since the 10th century. Perhaps why this group is able to survive and not "die out" is because of their close-knit community. Groups such as the Roma, Amish, Native Americans or Mormon polygamists operate within a community partnership system opposed to the hierarchical domination system in which most Americans adhere to. A community partnership system is based on relationships among equals which give support to one another. The hierarchical domination system, however, is based on the competitive access to commodities. This system is able to succeed when it is able to break up the communities and force them into the structure where commodity is most important.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Appendix IV

Conclusion

No matter where the Roma settle, it is obvious that they continuously face the same problems. Racism and discrimination are a part of the Roma way of life and their unique behavior and practices isolate themselves from the rest of society. Their presence in Italy, especially over the last few years, has caused uproar in the global community. The Italian government has found itself in a vulnerable position between trying to appease its citizens while attempting to keep a “good face” as a high international player. Human rights activists and organizations have criticized the Italian leadership’s way of handling its “Roma problem” because of its discriminatory fingerprinting proposals and the promise of several Italian politicians to eradicate the Roma living there. However, images of dead Roma girls on the beach of Naples while onlookers continue their day have shocked the world and opened the doors for an investigation in the way in which immigrants are treated in Italy.

Given that the Italian government has taken the brunt of the skepticism and scrutiny surrounding the issue of human rights injustices against the Italian Roma, through my findings I proved that the government reflects the way in which much of Italian society thinks as well. I found that Italians are tired from the massive influx of immigrants and because of this animosity, they are taking it out on minority groups, such as the Roma, despite the fact that many of Roma groups have lived in Italy for many years. Italians also mistrust and fear the Roma because of they are often misunderstood and hold a certain mysticism about them. My research and findings both show that Italians generalize the Roma as beggars and thieves who contribute little to nothing to society.

Along with this misunderstanding, many Italians often mistake the Roma for Romanians, two distinctly different groups. The Romanian population is nearly three times the size of the

Roma minority, so it makes sense that Italians may be more familiar with the Romanians. However, because of this confusion between the two, the Roma are often blamed for crimes committed by members of the Romanian immigrant community. Recently, Italians have been outraged by the increase in serious crimes, such as rape, that have been committed by the Romanians. However, this has only further fueled Italian's xenophobic feelings toward the Roma and other immigrants alike. This also goes to show that generalizations can never be made about a group no matter its size.

After establishing that racism is fully present within the political and social structure of Italy, my findings present an optimistic outlook on a seemingly dim situation. The majority of my participants showed a dislike for the current Italian government, and all, but one, thought that immigration was a huge problem. Given the dissatisfaction with some of the leaders and policies in place, I have hopes that the next political election will bring about some much needed changes that may present an opportunity for the Roma to have a voice after nearly twelve centuries of staying silent. This past summer is evidence of the Roma's urge to uphold a position within the Italian political sphere, when they rallied for the first time. A couple of my younger participants expressed empathetic views of the Roma and were also in favor of programs which might give the Roma some of the basic necessities in which they lack.

Many participants suggested that social inclusion programs could be an efficient means for helping the Roma feel less like "outsiders" and more like Italians. However, these programs are not always a simple solution to a very complex problem. Inclusion can quickly lead to assimilation, which could mean the eradication of cultures.

In the beginning of my research process I applauded the efforts of NGOs and other human rights organizations that brought attention to the human rights injustices committed

against the Roma. I was convinced that the Roma needed an outside source to help them obtain basic necessities. However, I am beginning to see that the Roma have chosen to isolate themselves in which their needs and wants must begin with they themselves. Any state-wide social programs developed by the Italian government could pose as a potential threat to the Roma's way of life. Only a bottom-up approach and/or grassroots organization could effectively be made useful for the Roma.

I began my journey thinking that the Roma needed to be "saved" from their oppressive government and society. However, now, I realize that I could be of no help to them if they did not want it. If the Roma have maintained their way of life since the 10th century and survived expulsion, persecution and slaughter; maybe it is not us that have something to teach them, but rather, maybe they have something to teach us? What I have learned is that the Roma are survivors and that they, despite odds, have managed to stay true to their cultural traditions and practices.

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Appendix I

THE ROMA (GYPSIES) IN ITALY: SURVEY

Please answer the following questions with as much detail as possible.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your year of birth?
3. Where were you born?
4. Where do you live now?
5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?
6. What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?

7. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?

8. What do you think of the current Italian government?

9. Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?

10. What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?

11. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?

12. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?

13. What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?

14. How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies) and the locals?

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma (gypsies)?

Thank you for taking the time to answer the above questions!

IL ROM (GLI ZINGARI) in ITALIA: INDAGINE

Risponda alle domande seguenti con come molto dettaglio come possibile, per favore.

1. Come si chiama?

2. Quando sei nato?

3. Dove sei nato?

4. Dove abita?

5. Come pensa quando sente la parola lo "zingaro"?

6. Come pensa quando sente la parola il "Rom"?

7. Come pensa il Rom (gli zingari) sono trattato in Italia?

8. Come pensa del governo italiano presente?

9. Pensa che il governo italiano maneggia il "problema di zingaro" nel modo giusto?

10. Pensa che il sentimento generale del Rom (gli zingari) è alla Italia?

11. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) nel governo italiano?

12. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) fra i cittadini italiani?

13. Che pensa il "fingerprinting" proposto del Rom?

14. Come sente delle rivolte che ha avuto a Napoli nell'anno passato perché dei confronti tra il Rom (gli zingari) ed il locale?

15. Pensa ci dovrebbe essere i programmi che dà l'aiuto al Rom (gli zingari)?

16. Come pensa il Roma (gli zingari) è stato trattato nel passato paragonato a ora?

17. Che pensa delle questioni di immigrazione nell' Italia?

18. Ha altri pensieri o commenti sulle questioni di immigrazione, il governo italiano, o il Rom (gli zingari)?

MOLTO GRAZIE!!!

Appendix II

IL ROM (GLI ZINGARI) in ITALIA: INDAGINE

Risponda alle domande seguenti con come molto dettaglio come possibile, per favore.

1. Come si chiama?

Il mio nome è Giuseppe Basile
(*My name is Giuseppe Basile*)

2. Quando sei nato?

Sono nato il 23/05/1984
(*I was born May 23, 1984*)

3. Dove sei nato?

Sono nato a Palermo
(*I was born in Palermo*)

4. Dove abita?

Attualmente vivo a Palermo
(*Currently I live in Palermo*)

5. Cosa pensa quando sente la parola "zingaro"?

Penso a un popolo che vive seguendo la cultura nomade.
(*I think of a people that live following a nomadic culture.*)

6. Cosa pensa quando sente la parola il "Rom"?

I Rom sono un particolare gruppo di zingari provenienti dall'India.
(*The Rom are a particular group of gypsies from providences of India.*)

7. Come pensa che i Rom (gli zingari) sono trattati in Italia?

La maggior parte degli italiani ha paura dei Rom e i primi pensieri sono rivolti ai furti, alle loro ricchezze, e la loro vita che rinnega il lavoro. La cultura dei Rom è totalmente diversa da quella nostra, e spesso gli Italiani preferirebbero non avere a che fare con i Rom. Penso che la gente li eviti il più possibile.
(*Most Italians are afraid of the Roma and their first thoughts are that they are thieves, to their wealth, and that they live a life that renounces work. The culture of the Rome is totally different from ours, and often Italians would prefer to have nothing to do with the Roma. I think that people avoid them as much as possible.*)

8. Cosa pensa del governo italiano presente?

Sono totalmente contrario all'attuale governo Italiano.
L'attuale governo sta impoverendo l'Italia favorendo sempre chi ha più soldi e dimenticando la gente più povera. Le ultime leggi approvate sono state tutte ad-personam per garantire privilegi al presidente del consiglio Berlusconi. L'informazione viene opportunamente controllata dal governo e non esiste praticamente più libertà di informazione, (Berlusconi controlla direttamente e non tutti i canali televisivi

nazionali e molti giornali).

(I am totally opposed to the current Italian government. Currently, the government is impoverishing Italy always favoring those who have the most money and forgetting the poor people. The last laws were approved by the all of the persons of the state for guaranteeing privileges to the Prime Minister Berlusconi.[Berlusconi directly controls most of the national television networks and many newspapers.])

9. Pensa che il governo italiano tratti il "problema degli zingari" nel modo giusto?

Non penso che le manovre proposte dal governo siano efficaci per la corretta integrazione di una cultura così diversa nel nostro paese.
(I do not think that the maneuvering proposals of the government should be effective for the correct integration of a culture so diverse from our country.)

10. Quale pensi che sia l'atteggiamento degli zingari rumeni in Italia?

Penso che ci sia una parte di loro che veda l'Italia come un'opportunità per poter vivere in maniera tranquilla, e una parte che, purtroppo, vede l'Italia come un popolo da sfruttare attraverso i furti e l'elemosina. E' difficile dare un giudizio obiettivo perchè le nostre culture sono estremamente differenti.
(I think we feel that there is a part of us that sees Italy as an opportunity to be able to live in a calm manner, and part of us that, unfortunately, sees Italy people to exploit as thieves and beggars. It is difficult to give a just opinion because our culture is extremely different.)

11. Pensa che c'è un sentimento razzista o di odio contro i Rom (gli zingari) nel governo italiano?

Penso che c'è una grande componente del governo, composta soprattutto da AN (ora PDL) e Lega Nord che non vorrebbe zingari in Italia.
(I think that there is a big component of the government, composed completely of AN (now PDL) and the Northern League that does not want the gypsies in Italy.)

12. Pensa che c'è un sentimento razzista o di odio contro i Rom (gli zingari) fra i cittadini italiani?

La maggior parte degli italiani vede agli zingari con un pò di razzismo e di odio, soprattutto nell'ultimo periodo. I telegiornali si sono concentrati infatti su tutti i reati commessi da zingari : violenze e rapine. Penso che il governo stia manipolando le informazioni per giustificare future leggi contro gli zingari.
(The majority of Italians see the gypsies with more racism and hatred, mostly in the last period. The television networks have concentrated on the offenses committed by the gypsies: violence and rapes. I think that the government is manipulating the information to justify future laws against the gypsies.)

13. Che ne pensa delle impronte digitali proposte ai Rom?

Innanzitutto le impronte digitali non garantiscono un elevato livello di sicurezza. Penso che le impronte digitali richieste soltanto ai Rom siano un grave episodio di razzismo nei loro confronti. Se vogliamo una serena convivenza con queste popolazioni non possiamo trattarle diversamente.

(Above all the finger printing does not guarantee a high level of safety. I think that the finger printing requested only of the Rom is a serious episode of racism of their differences. If we want a serene cohabitation with these people than we cannot treat them otherwise.)

14. Cosa ne pensa delle rivolte avvenute a Napoli l'anno scorso a causa dell'episodio avvenuto tra i Rom (zingari) e il padrone del locale?

E' un punto difficile da trattare. Sicuramente i Napoletani che hanno partecipato a queste rivolte odiavano profondamente gli zingari ancora prima dell'episodio, e che questo abbia fatto scattare la loro ira.

(This is a difficult point of treatment. Surely the Neapolitans that participated in these rebellions deeply hated the gypsies before this incident, and this made them fly off the handle.)

15. Pensa che ci dovrebbero essere programmi che diano aiuto ai Rom (gli zingari)?

Un programma utile potrebbe essere quello di istruire gli zingari alla legalità e al rispetto delle leggi italiane, in pieno rispetto della loro cultura.

(A useful program would be to teach the gypsies the legalities and teach them to respect the Italians laws, in line with respect of their culture.)

16. Come pensa che i Rom (gli zingari) siano stati trattati in passato paragonato ad ora?

Penso che la situazione non sia cambiata particolarmente.

(I think that the situation hasn't not changed in particular.)

17. Cosa pensa della questione "immigrazione" in Italia?

Penso che l'immigrazione sia innanzitutto la causa di un problema più grande che dovrebbe essere trattato dai paesi più ricchi. La povertà nella maggior parte del mondo è causata da un modello economico che non garantisce pari opportunità per tutti gli abitanti della terra, costringendo quelli più poveri ad emigrare in paesi più ricchi. Con questo modello economico è inevitabile l'immigrazione.

(I think that immigration is the cause of a problem very big that needs to be treated in the richest countries. The poverty in the major part of the world is caused by an economic model that does not guarantee equal opportunity for all residents of the land, compelling those poor peoples to emigrate into richer countries. With this economic model, immigration is inevitable.)

18. Ha altri pensieri o commenti su immigrazione, il governo italiano, o il Rom (gli zingari)?
no ;)

1. What is your name?

Salvatore Salpietro

2. What is your year of birth?

1980

3. Where were you born?

NJ, USA

4. Where do you live now?

London, UK

5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?

A nomadic way of life, or person that lives in a nomadic way

6. What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?

My home for 6 years

7. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?

More or less how they themselves expect to be treated, and how they choose to be treated.

8. What do you think of the current Italian government?

Rather shit. But then again it has been since the Renaissance.

9. Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?

Yeah, I do. Any population that takes liberties in a negative way (stealing from, crimes against) from the home population (Italians in this case) should be made to follow rules and if they aren't adhered to, told to leave or made to.

10. What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?

That they are a population that contributes nothing to society or local culture and only takes. Also, they feed an increase in crime.

11. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?

Not racist. But rather a sentiment that says "We who choose to live in Italy, also choose to live by its rhythm, pace, traditions and culture - with leniencies. Within limits."

12. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?

Sure, especially when there are violent crime and thefts.

13. What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?

Fine. If an increasing number of crimes are committed by ANY group, measures should be taken to reduce this and identify future crimes.

14. How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies) and the locals?

Not too familiar with them but violence on either side is incorrect. Everyone's rights need to be protected, and not infringed on by the other colliding culture.

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

Not really... they all choose where to live, and choose to isolate themselves from society. Aid should be given for them to leave if they so desire, back to their country of birth-origin. That is the only aid I think should be given.

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

Behaviour has degraded from all sides.

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

They are a mess.

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma (gypsies)?

There are a million cans of worms that could be opened here... no time!

1. What is your name?

Federica Snider

2. What is your year of birth?

1981

3. Where were you born?

Rome, Italy

4. Where do you live now?

Rome, Italy

5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?

Most of the times about kids

6. **What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?**

Beauty

7. **How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?**

I think pretty well, at least for what I see

8. **What do you think of the current Italian government?**

I do not like it, at all. I think it uses demagogic communication and cares only about the pleasure of a small part of the population. Furthermore, I do not like the laws they are working on.

9. **Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?**

It seems to me like they are not handling the situation in a "national" way, but leaving the issue to the local governments

10. **What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?**

There are many different feelings on gypsies among the Italian population: sympathy, frustration, rage... It especially depends, on my opinion, on how the gypsies (and whether) are integrated in the local population. I think you cannot make a precise statement on that.

11. **Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?**

I do not think so

12. **Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?**

Sometimes, especially when it happens that gypsies are involved in some crimes. In this case the frustration of the population, and some fear of being involved in their violence, pop out among their feelings. (Even though I think that gypsies are as "violent" as any other person or population, the fact that comes out when we talk about gypsies is that the population at times does not consider gypsies as part of the integrated Italian population, but just as a group of strangers living in this country)

13. **What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?**

I think it is a bit discriminatory towards them, especially for the way the government proposed it, and that it does not solve the problem of the census of their population because it only strengthen their feeling of not being liked

14. **How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies) and the locals?**

I think this is a special case, involving not only the integration issue, but also and mostly their taking part on the organized crime's life. Here we have more than one issue to consider

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

There are already some. It is true that sometimes they do not accept the local governments' help, but in most cases they do. They have campus where they can live, and are given by the governments; there are special programs to send children to school (something that not always happens). Their success really depends on the will of cooperation of the gypsies themselves

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

I think there has always been a great feeling of tolerance and will of integration in Rome towards gypsies, that is still present and I think will be even in the future

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

This is a delicate issue, which must be handled with absolute care, taking into consideration all the aspects of the immigration (especially the illegal one) and its reasons. I think there should be more understanding about it. I see most of the times a feeling of intolerance among immigrants, accused of stealing Italian people's jobs, being only violent and acting against our population, culture and government. I think this is absolutely false, and that the government should work on this, trying to make the population more sensitive about the issue, and understanding about an alternative possible solution: the pacific cohabitation. Immigrants can help Italians, and vice versa

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma (gypsies)?

See above.

1. What is your name?

ANTONELLA MERLETTO

2. What is your year of birth?

1962

3. Where were you born?

IN GREAT BRITAIN

4. Where do you live now?

IN ROME

5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?
REGRETFULLY NOT NICE THINGS, STEALING AND DISRESPECT FOR MY COUNTRY(ITALY)

6. What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?

WELL, IT MEANS PEOPLE WITH GREAT TRADITIONS THAT HAVE MOVED TO THE CAPITALIST WORLD TO APPLY THEM WRONGLY

7. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?
THEY HAVE MADE US VERY DISTRUSTFUL OF THEM SO WE KEEP THEM AT A DISTANCE

8. What do you think of the current Italian government?
I WOULD USE VERY BAD WORDS WHICH WOULDN'T BE APPROPRIATE FOR A SURVEY!!!!!!!!!!!! HATE IT...BUT THE OPPOSITION WOULD NOT BE ANY BETTER...POLITICIANS IN ITALY JUST CONSTANTLY RECYCLE THEMSELVES SO WE NEVER HAVE ANY NEW BLOOD AND MOST OF THEM HAVE NO IDEA OF HOW TO RUN A COUNTRY

9. Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?

THEY ARE NOT HANDLING IT AT ALL. THEY ARE NOW FOCUSING ON OTHER PROBLEMS AND LETTING THE GYPSIES LIVE THEIR LIFE. THE GYPSIES ARE SCARED BECAUSE WE ARE HAVING PROBLEMS WITH SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE EMIGRATED HERE (RAPES, KILLINGS AND OTHER ILLEGALITIES) AND THE MAJORITY OF ITALIANS WITH NO CULTURAL BACKGROUND THINK THAT ROMA GYPSIES AND RUMANIAN PEOPLE ARE THE SAME THING-WHICH THEY ARE NOT. SO THE GYPSIES ARE KEEPING QUITE A LOW PROFILE AT THE MOMENT.

10. What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?

I THINK I ANSWERED THIS AT THE LAST QUESTION

11. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?

OFFICIALLY NO BUT UNOFFICIALLY YES.

12. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?

DEFINITELY

13. What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?

THAT WAS HANDLED BADLY BY THE PRESS.I THINK IT IS FAIR TO HAVE SOME DOCUMENTATION ON EVERYBODY WHO CHOOSES TO LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHICH IS NOT THEIR OWN. THE ROMA HAVE NO DOCUMENTS AND WON'T HAVE ANY SO THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW HOW MANY THERE ARE AND WHERE THEY ARE IS TO HAVE THEM FINGERPRINTED. POLITICS IN ITALY IS NOT FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY

BUT -LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN, OR PEOPLE WITH VERY SMALL BRAINS, A CONSTANT BATTLE OF ONE PARTY AGAINST THE OTHER. SO THE OPPOSITION IMMEDIATELY SAW THE ACTION OF THE GOVERNEMENT AS A CAUSE TO EMBRACE AS THEIR OWN AS NEGATIVE AND ACCUSE AS FASCIST. AND THAT IS HOW THEY PUT IT TO THE MEDIA. BUT THEN- AS ALWAYS IN ITALY, THEY DIDN'T COME FORWARD WITH ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION.

14. How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies) and the locals?

IN NAPLES PROBLEMS GO A LOT DEEPER AND INVOLVE THE LOCAL MAFIA

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

THEY HAVE AID: THE ITALIAN LAW STATES THAT ROMAS HAVE TO HAVE LIVING AREAS OUTSIDE EVERY TOWN WITH WATER, ELECTRICITY, ETC. THEY ARE COVERED BY NATIONAL HEALTH....(LIKE ANY ONE WHO NEEDS IT)

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

WELL... THEY ARE NOT GASSED IN STERMINATION CAMPS ANYMORE LIKE IN THE WAR TIMES OF THE XX CENTURY, THEY HAVE HELP SO I THINK THEY ARE TREATED A LOT BETTER TODAY THAN IN THE PAST.

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

WE HAVE HUGE PROBLEMS DUE TO GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS. SADLY, I DON'T THINK THEY SHALL BE SOLVED ANYTIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma(gypsies)?

NO I THINK I HAVE EXPRESSED ALL MY THOUGHTS IN THE ANSWERS ABOVE

1. Come si chiama?

Mi chiamo Filiberto.

(My name is Filiberto.)

2. Quando sei nato?

1962

3. Dove sei nato?

Sono nato a Paceco.

(I was born in Paceco, Sicily)

4. Dove abita?

Abito a Paceco.

(I live in Paceco.)

5. Come pensa quando sente la parola lo "zingaro"?

Gli zingari, popolazione nomade, di origine Indiana, sono un popolo che nel nostro paese non sono ben visti, in quanto vivono di elemosina, non hanno un lavoro e soprattutto per vivere vanno spesso a rubare.
(The gypsies, a nomadic population, of Indian origin, are a people that our country doesn't have a good view of, they live as beggars, they do not have jobs and above all they often steal.)

6. Come pensa quando sente la parola il "Rom"?

Invece i Rom, popolazione di origine Romana, sono la comunità estera più presente in Italia con circa 600.000 presenze, vengono utilizzati nella maggior parte dei casi per i lavori più umili, come il lavoro dei campi, badare il gregge, accudire il gli anziani con una retribuzione di circa €600,00 all mese, che nel loro paese gli permette di vivere e comprare molte cose.
(The Roma, a population that originated in Romania, are a foreign community that is very present in Italy with 600,000 people, who come for the most cases for the most intensive work, like farm work, herding sheep, attending to the elderly with a payment of about €600 a month, that in their country allows them to live and buy many things.)

7. Come pensa il Rom (gli zingari) sono trattati in Italia?

In Italia la loro presenza si sta caratterizzando per i continui stupri che mettono in atto quotidianamente e pertanto per il comportamento di alcuni, tutto la loro comunità non è ben vista dagli Italiani che spesso ne chiedono l'espulsione dal paese.
(In Italy their presence is characterizing for the continuous rapes that they put into daily action and is the behavior of some, all of their community is not seen well from the Italians that often wonder if they should be expelled from the country.)

8. Come pensa del governo italiano presente?

Il Governo Italiano attuale si regge sulla leadership di Silvio Berlusconi, che in questo momento è l'unico che riesce a dare un Governo stabile e continuo al paese, in quanto l'opposizione si è spaccata in tanti piccoli partiti che l'elettorato ha bocciato.
(The current Italian government presents itself under the leadership of Silvio Berlusconi, in this moment he is the only one that succeeds to give a stable government to the country, as the opposition has split into very small parties that failed the electorate.)

9. Pensa che il governo italiano maneggia il "problema di zingaro" nel modo giusto?

Il Governo Italiano sul problema degli zingari è diviso in quanto una parte del Governo ne chiede, per chi non ha un lavoro, l'immediata espulsione.

(The Italian government on the problem of the gypsies is divided as a part of the government is for it, for those who do not have a job, immediate expulsion.)

10. Pensa che il sentimento generale del Rom (gli zingari) è alla Italia?

L'atteggiamento degli zingari rumeni in Italia è a mio modo di vedere sbagliato, in quanto approfittando delle norme non proprio rigide del nostro paese, secondo loro gli è permesso di poter fare tutto, soprattutto di illegale, pagando il tutto con una semplice cauzione che gli permette di tornare cittadini liberi.

(The attitude of the Romanian gypsies in Italy is wrong in my point of view, as profiting off of the rules that aren't rigid in our country, second they are allowed to be able to do everything, above all illegal, they pay everything with a simple security that permits them to return as free citizens.)

11. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) nel governo italiano?

Per una parte del Governo (Lega Nord di Umberto Bossi) c'è un sentimento razzista e di odio contro i Rom.

(For the part of the government [Umberto Bossi's Northern League] there is a racist sentiment and feeling of hatred against the Roma.)

12. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) fra i cittadini italiani?

Per i cittadini Italiani i Rom vengono guardati con molto diffidenza in quanto i fatti negativi di cui si rendono protagonisti ogni giorno, rischiano di creare una sorta di persecuzione e linciaggio nei loro confronti.

(For the Italian citizens they look at the Roma coming with a lot of distrust as the negative facts of whom they give back to protagonists every day, they risk to create a sort of persecution and lynching in comparison.)

13. Che pensa il "fingerprinting" proposto del Rom?

Il Governo Italiano per prendere in considerazione le impronte digitali ai Rom lo giustificano come un monitoraggio sulla loro presenza e nello stesso tempo per salvaguardare coloro che si comportano in maniera civile.

(The Italian government takes into consideration fingerprinting of the Rom to justify it as a way to monitor their presence and in the same time to safeguard those who live in a calm manner.)

14. Come sente delle rivolte che ha avuto a Napoli nell'anno passato perché dei confronti tra il Rom (gli zingari) ed il locale?

Ho l'impressione che le rivolte avvenute a Napoli si giustificano che i Rom stavano occupando degli spazi che per quel territorio sono sacri.

(I have an impression that the rebellion that happened in Naples justified to themselves that the Roma were occupying spaces that were scared territory.)

15. Pensa ci dovrebbe essere i programmi che dà l'aiuto al Rom (gli zingari)?

Credo che già ci sia qualcosa che aiutino i Rom soprattutto quelli che tengono un comportamento consono ad un paese civile.

(I believe that already there is something that helps the Roma and above all this is held consistent with a civil country.)

16. Come pensa il Roma (gli zingari) è stato trattato nel passato paragonato a ora?

In passato rispetto ad ora sono stati trattati in maniera discriminatoria, adesso c'è più tolleranza.

(In the past with respect to the now they have treated in the discriminatory manner, now there is more tolerance.)

17. Che pensa delle questioni di immigrazione nell' Italia?

La questione immigrazione in Italia è un problema così serio e globale che l'Italia da sola non è in grado di risolvere. Infatti per la sua posizione geografica e strategica e per la sua civiltà e rispetto dei popoli, viene presa d'assalto sia via mare che via terra. La popolazione in Italia, pur con una crescita quasi allo zero, ha raggiunto per la prima volta nella storia 60.000.000 milioni di abitanti grazie al flusso continuo di immigrati. L'Italia, in questo momento di crisi mondiale, non è in grado di sostenere e garantire agli immigrati un lavoro dignitoso. Pertanto si sta tentando con l'aiuto dei paesi Nordafricani di limitare lo sbarco giornaliero di innumerevoli clandestini che spesso si rendono partecipi di atti inconsulti. Personalmente ho grande rispetto per gli immigrati che spesso per la disperazione lasciano il proprio paese per garantirsi una vita migliore. La regola però per loro deve essere l'integrazione tra i popoli dimostrando educazione, rispetto per le diverse etnie e le varie religioni e il lavoro inteso come mezzo di sostentamento proprio e familiare acquisito in maniera legale. Solo operando in questa maniera avranno l'apprezzamento e il riconoscimento dell'intera Nazione.

(The matter of immigration in Italy is such a serious problem and global problem that Italy alone is not in the position to resolve. In fact, for its geographic position and strategy and for their civility and respect of the people, have come to take the assault by sea than via the land. The population in Italy, simply with a growth almost at zero, reached for the first time in its history 60,000,000 people thanks to the continuous flow of immigrants. Italy is in a world crisis right now, it is not in the position to give support and to guarantee to the immigrants a decorous amount of work. So it is trying with the help of the north African countries to limit the daily landings of innumerable clandestine that often give back to themselves participating in rash actions. Personally I have large respect for the

immigrants that often for the despair leave the actually country to guarantee themselves a better life. The law however for them to have to be integrated with people by showing training, I respect them for the different ethnicities and the varied religions and their agreement to work as means of actual and familiar maintenance acquired in legal manner. Only the operand in this manner will have the esteem and the recognition of the whole nation.)

18. Ha altri pensieri o commenti sulle questioni di immigrazione, il governo italiano, o il Rom (gli zingari)?

1. Come si chiama?

Filippo Morabito

2. Quando sei nato?

06 Gennaio 1935

3. Dove sei nato?

Palermo -Italia

4. Dove abita?

Brescia, Italy

5. Come pensa quando sente la parola lo "zingaro"?

Identificazione di gente nomade, senza Patria, che vive in gruppi e con proprie regole di convivenza.

(The nomadic identification of people, without a Homeland, that lives in groups and with actual rules of cohabitation.)

6. Come pensa quando sente la parola il "Rom"?

Persone che difficilmente accettano le Leggi e la morale, o etica, della società civile in cui vivono, e che sopravvive con furti e accattonaggio.

(People have difficulty accepting the law and the morals, or ethics, of the civil society in which they live, and that survives with the thefts and the begging.)

7. Come pensa il Rom (gli zingari) sono trattato in Italia?

Gli Italiani tendono ad isolarli, fintanto che non si inseriscano nel mondo del lavoro.

(The Italians stretch out to isolate themselves, that it is not introduced in the world of work.)

8. Come pensa del governo italiano presente?

L'attuale è un Governo adatto alle esigenze ed alle necessità del nostro Paese.

(Currently the government is suitable for the requirements and the necessities of the country.)

9. Pensa che il governo italiano maneggia il "problema di zingaro" nel modo giusto?

SI'

(Yes)

10. Pensa che il sentimento generale del Rom (gli zingari) è alla Italia?

I ROM (gli zingari) rumeni non hanno intenzione, e non dimostrano, nella maggioranza, di rispettare le norme che regolano la vita civile della Società.

(The majority of Romanian Roma [gypsies] have no intention and do not show respect for the rules that regulate the civil life of society.)

11. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) nel governo italiano?

Non pensiamo che esista un sentimento razzista, nè tanto meno di odio, nel Governo Italiano, ma piuttosto la preoccupazione di dare sicurezza alla popolazione, la quale teme aggressioni e violenze.

(We do not think that there is a racist sentiment, nor a lot of hatred, in the Italian government, but rather there is a concern to provide safety to the population which is afraid of aggressive behavior and violence.)

12. Pensa c'è un sentimento di razzista o l'animosità contro il Rom (gli zingari) fra i cittadini italiani?

Nei cittadini Italiani non sono presenti sentimenti di odio e/o di razzismo: hanno semplicemente paura di loro ed auspicano un loro civile inserimento in questa Comunità.

(Within the Italian citizens there is not a present feeling of hatred and/or racism: they simply fear them and wish for them to be civilly inserted into the community.)

13. Che pensa il "fingerprinting" proposto del Rom?

E' una cosa giusta in quanto dovrebbe permettere di conoscere la vera identità di ogni persona. Ciò andrebbe esteso a tutti coloro che entrano in Italia a qualsiasi titolo.

(It is the right thing for everyone to be allowed to know the identity of everyone. This should extend to everyone who enters Italy with any title.)

14. Come sente delle rivolte che ha avuto a Napoli nell'anno passato perché dei confronti tra il Rom (gli zingari) ed il locale?

Non ricordiamo esattamente il fatto, per cui non possiamo esprimere nessun parere in merito.

(I do not remember precisely this occurrence, for that we cannot express an opinion in merit.)

15. Pensa ci dovrebbe essere i programmi che dà l'aiuto al Rom (gli zingari)?

SI', ci sono programmi di aiuto concordati con i loro Rappresentanti nazionali

(Yes, there are programs of help agreed upon with their national representatives.)

16. Come pensa il Roma (gli zingari) è stato trattato nel passato paragonato a ora?

In passato i ROM (gli Zingari) avevano pochi rapporti con le popolazioni locali; essi stavano lontani dai centri abitati e vagavano in continuazione, come chiunque era senza fissa dimora. Ora esistono rapporti più facili, anche perchè vengono spesso usati mediatori culturali. Si aggiunge che oggi i Comuni, per un periodo di tempo limitato, mettono a disposizione dei ROM (Zingari) degli spazi attrezzati per il loro soggiorno.

(In the past the Roma (the gypsies) had little relations with the local populations; they were distant from the inhabited centers and they wander around continuously, like someone without a fixed address. Now they exist within closer proximity, and because of this there is use for cultural mediators. Also today are the camps, for a limited period of time, that were made available for the Roma which were spaces supplied for their stay.)

17. Che pensa delle questioni di immigrazione nell' Italia?

L'immigrazione dovrebbe essere regolamentata come negli altri Paesi civili del mondo.

(Immigration should be regulated like in any other civil country of the world.)

18. Ha altri pensieri o commenti sulle questioni di immigrazione, il governo italiano, o il Rom (gli zingari)?

NO

1. What is your name?

Sophia Georgeo

2. What is your year of birth?

1987

3. Where were you born?

Virginia USA

4. Where do you live now?

Providence RI

5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?

From my experience, gypsies are the marginalized people in society who

live in shanty town or marginalized areas of a towns. they tend to have very different cultural traditions form the people of the town and also tend to have to live in friction with the people of the outside community

6. What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?

Roma is the capital of my country of childhood and also one of the most historically famous cities of the world

7. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?

I know for a fact that the Roma gypsie, as well as gypsies all over the country, are treated very harshly and despise. They are seen as a threat to the community and the safety of the italians. Most italians feel animosity against immigrant, especially the gypsies whom they blame for social problem as well as economic downfalls.

8. What do you think of the current Italian government?

The government is very inconsistent and too conservative

9. Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?

I think that the immigration situation in Italy and overall europe is very different from that present in the United States therefore it is impossible to judge the way that they treat the immigrant and the gypsies by the American standards. I think that the italian government is treating the gypsies in a manner that they find successfull and that makes the italian people happy

10. What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?

I am sure that they may feel attacked or ostracized.

11. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?

Without a doubt

12. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?

Once again, absolutely

13. What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?

I believe that a system of classification and identification is necessary in a country where immigration is rapidly growing. What i find unjust is that this law pertains only to the Roma. I think that fingerprinting, is necessary by law, should be done by all immigrants in order to not be racist against one group in particular

14. How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies)

and the locals?

I think Naples is a mess anyway

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

The programs that should be put into place should be ones that help the assimilation of the Roma gypsies into Italian culture and society.

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

I don't think that in the past 10 years the situation has really changed much. If anything it might have gotten worse

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

As i mentioned before the immigration situation along with the type of people who immigrate into italy are very different from that of the immigration situation and immigrant that come into the U.S. For this, it is unjust to try to judge the situation in italy with American standards

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma (gypsies)?

1. What is your name?

Giacamo Struilli

2. What is your year of birth?

N/A

3. Where were you born?

Milan, Italy

4. Where do you live now?

USA

5. What do you think of when you hear the word "gypsy"?

music, flamenco, Catalans, and thieves

6. What do you think of when you hear the word "Roma"?

Romania

7. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) are treated in Italy?

The Roma are treated with suspicion, fear and hostility.

8. What do you think of the current Italian government?

It is somewhat out of touch with social concerns and problems. More reforms are needed.

9. Do you think the Italian government is handling the "gypsy problem" in the right way?

Probably not. They are doing a lot for the gypsies and have made an attempt to include them, especially gypsy children in the education system, but police aren't educated or trained to deal with and help the adults.

10. What do you think the general feeling of the Roma (gypsies) is in Italy?

People feel that they are a social threat, they are dangerous, disruptive, and they steal children.

11. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) in the Italian government?

Yes, certain parties definitely view Roma with racism.

12. Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity against the Roma (gypsies) among Italian citizens?

Yes. Hopefully the politicians should be representative of the people. If racism is found in politics, this is reflective of the general feeling in Italy.

13. What do you think of the government's proposed fingerprinting of the Roma?

It is ok only if it is applied to all Italian citizens. It is done in the US so why not in Italy? I don't see anything wrong with it because it's a form of identification, not a form of discrimination unless only a certain group is chosen to be fingerprinted.

14. How do you feel about the riots that have taken place in Naples in the past year because of the confrontations between the Roma (gypsies) and the locals?

Horrible, there is something in the Italian culture that has been there for many years that Italians believe that gypsies steal children, and commit crime. This doesn't justify hatred and it opens a window on the darkness of humanity. It just shows how the mob mentality is very dangerous.

15. Do you think there should be programs put in place that give aid to the Roma (gypsies)?

If they are considered Italian citizens and pay taxes then yes.

16. How do you think the Roma (gypsies) have been treated in the past compared to now?

They are treated better now than before.

17. What do you think about immigration issues in Italy?

There are not adequate laws because Italy has been a land of emigrants rather than immigrants. They need to come up with new ways to support the influx of immigration.

18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments on the issues of immigration, the Italian government, or the Roma (gypsies)?

No.

Appendix III

DATA COLLECTED FROM SURVEYS	
Mentioned that the word "nomadic"	4 of 8
Mentioned that Italians "fear" the Roma	3 of 8
Mentioned that Italians "distrust" the Roma	3 of 8
Mentioned the word "thief" or refer to the Roma as participants in criminal or violent activity	7 of 8
Show dislike for the current Italian government	6 of 8
Think the current government is acceptable/doing its job	2 of 8
Mentioned the mafia or organized crime	2 of 8
Knew that the Roma were of Indian origin	2 of 8
Familiar with the incidents in Naples	4 of 8

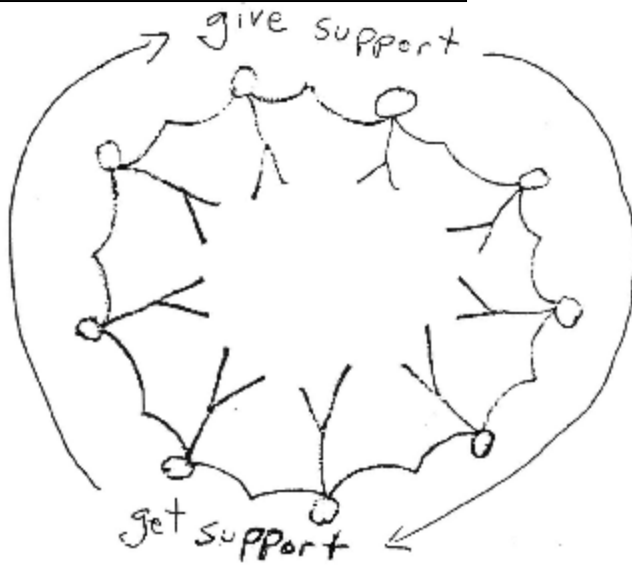
	Yes	No	Somewhat	Total
Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity towards the Roma within the Italian government?	5	3	0	8
Do you think there is a racist sentiment or animosity towards the Roma among Italian citizens?	6	1	1	8

	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Do you think the government is handling the "gypsy problem" well?	2	4	2	8
Do you think the Roma are treated better today than in the past?	6	2	0	8
Do you think that immigration is a huge problem in Italy?	7	0	1	8

	In favor of programs	Not in favor of programs	Think there are programs already in place	Total
Social Programs for the Roma	3	1	4	8

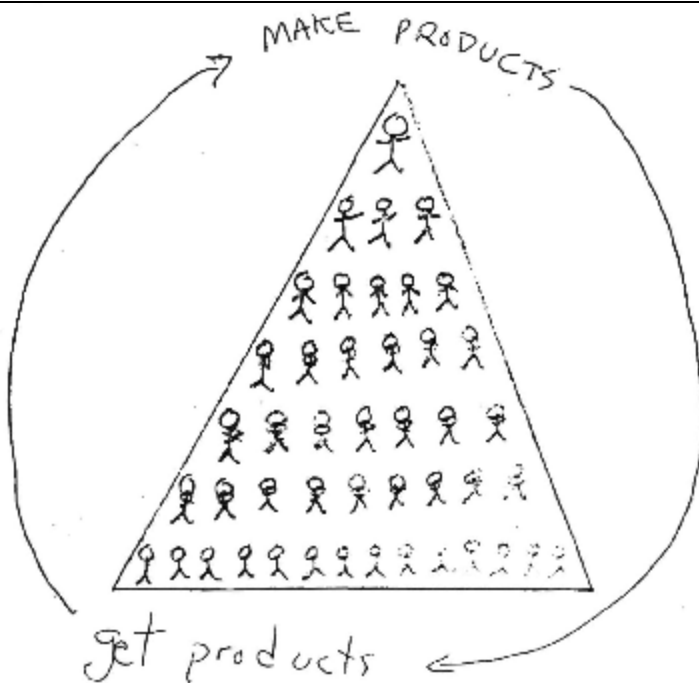
Appendix IV

Community Partnership System:



based on
relationships
among equals

Hierarchical Domination System



based on
competitive access
to commodities