

# Циганська етнічна меншина у документальному фільмі «Віра та полум'я»

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Темою мого нарису є життя циган в сучасному румунському суспільстві. Цигани є великою етнічною меншиною в Румунії. Відповідно до перепису населення 2002 року, в країні було 535140 циган, що становить близько 2,4 % населення Румунії.

Цигани займають позицію соціально найуразливішої групи в країні. Незважаючи на зусилля багатьох чисельних державних установ та громадських організацій, цигани протистоять інтеграції в румунське суспільство. Вони часто живуть в ізольованих громадах та не знаходять спільну мову з не циганами.

Хоча й спостерігається достатньо скрутна загальна ситуація з багатьма циганами, окремі дуже успішні особистості можна також спостерігати в Румунії. Цим людям вдається вести активне життя поза циганською громадою та інтегруватись в суспільство, отримуючи освіту.

Мій нарис розповідає історію одного з небагатьох успішних циган Румунії. Адріан Фуртуна, двадцятип'ятирічний чоловік, який живе та працює в Будапешті. Колись він був волонтером в громадській організації, допомагаючи циганам протягом трьох років. Зараз Адріан керує організацією, яку він самостійно заснував. Він працює, аби допомогти покращити ситуацію з циганами в Румунії.

У фільмі, Адріан розповідає історію свого життя. Він розповідає про складне дитинство та роль сім'ї в його житті. Для того, щоб досягнути того, що він має сьогодні, Адріану доводилось долати багато перешкод. Як і багато циганських дітей, він був народжений у дуже бідній родині та не мав гарних перспектив на майбутнє. Однак, йому пощастило, що його мати була мудрою та сильною жінкою. Вона заробляла мало грошей, продаючи полотно та одяг, але вона завжди мала великі амбіції на щодо свого сина та була рішучо налаштована допомогти йому. Її зусилля зробили можливим виїзд та здобуття освіти Адріанові. Він навчався в університеті Іазі та став найкращим учнем в його групі за спеціалізацією «Соціологія».

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# Roma minority through “Faith and Flame” documentary film

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*Everything that Adrian did in his life was inspired by his mother. She had a tremendous amount of faith in him. That is why the word ‘faith’ has been used in the title of the documentary.*

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Even though Adrian lives a modern lifestyle, he still adheres to some Roma traditions in his household. They have been instilled in him by his grandfather when he was young. Being the oldest man in the family, his grandfather got a lot of respect from everyone around. This respect for elders is characteristic of Roma families and it makes Adrian preserve his Roma identity. He shows that it is possible to retain that identity while living a modern lifestyle. This what the word ‘flame’ in the title of my documentary refers to. It could be said that Adrian carries the flame of his ancestors’ traditions into the future.

I this movie I have carried on three main aspects: 1. Roma history and Holocaust; 2. Roma people attendance to school like a minority; 3. Roma culture and identity.

Faith and Flame is a documentary against racism and pro equal opportunities.

## I. Introduction

Looking back at the process of making the documentary, there are some things that could have been done differently. The purpose of this section is to provide a critical reflection on my work, explaining the challenges I faced and discussing possibilities for improvement and further work.

One of the biggest challenges while making the documentary was to fit everything I wanted into the time limit. During the filming stage, 6 miniDV tapes of material have been filled. Therefore strict selection was necessary during editing, resulting in many good shots being rejected. Most of the rejected material was of good quality. It would have made it into the movie had the time limit been longer.

As a consequence of the time limit, there is not enough background information about Roma in the movie. It is assumed that the viewer has some knowledge about the issue. This potentially reduces the target audience of the documentary to people who are interested in the subject or people in Romania, who mostly have a basic awareness. If the movie was longer, this information would be included at the beginning as an introduction.

With respect to the content of the film, some changes could also be introduced. Perhaps the movie would be more engaging if the long interview sections were

modified. Most of the content with my main character was filmed in the same location. Only towards the end of the movie he was shown at work or in his family home. Initially the plan was to film my character and his family in the village he comes from. However, he did not want to involve his family or show his childhood home and did not allow any filming there. Including interview with his family would have greatly enhanced the movie but instead only photos could be used. I feel the movie would be greatly enhanced by more scenes following Adrian as he goes about his daily duties.

With regards to the technical side of the movie there is certainly scope for improvement. More time could be spent on editing to make the film look more professional. Particularly the transition between various scenes could be made smoother. Due to my short experience in editing, in some places the movie does not flow as smoothly as it could. Sometimes the pace is too quick and the effect is somewhat choppy. However, I am confident that this will be improved if I make another film.

In the process of making the movie some areas for further work have been identified. First of all, I came across more examples of inspiring Roma individuals. Adding stories of other people would add another point of view and certainly enhance the movie. My intention was to include the stories of some of the Roma children that Adrian was helping. However, it was not feasible due to the time limit. This could be done in a longer version or a separate documentary.

In addition, during the course of my research I came across many important subjects pertaining to the issue of Roma. An attempt has been made to talk about some of them in the documentary. Some information about the Roma language, Roma Holocaust and the history of the minority has been included. However, every one of those subjects is extensive and should be treated in a separate documentary.

Despite some issues, I am satisfied with the completed documentary. There are areas where it could be improved, however it was my first attempt at such a serious film. The process of making the movie required me to pull together all the knowledge and skills gained during the course. It was a great feeling to use them in practice to an actual problem. It allowed me to really consolidate and internalize everything that I learned.

The process of making the documentary was very challenging. It required patience and determination to resolve the numerous issues that I encountered. Sometimes things did not go as planned but it was necessary to carry on to see the project through. Despite being frustrated at times, I can say that I mostly enjoyed the process. Above all, I learned how difficult it really is to make a good movie. Despite my inexperience, the documentary managed to achieve the goals that were set out before starting.

The movie has been shown to some people and received positive feedback. The most encouraging comments came from the manager of TVR Cultural channel which is a part of the National Romanian Television. The channel mainly broadcasts news and

documentaries about culture. After seeing the movie, the manager expressed interest in showing it on TV. It fits the agenda of the channel and is of sufficiently high standard to be broadcast. Following this success, the movie has been entered into the EU Commission Journalism Competition and will also appear on some international film festival and academic conferences in: Roma- Italy, Reading – U.K., Bucharest – Romania, Luxembourg – Luxembourg, Bruxelles – Belgium, etc.

## II. Historical context in the World

My documentary is a 26 minute film on the subject of Roma people. It has been entitled "Faith and Flame", which will be explained below. Before going into the details of the film itself, a brief background on the history of the Roma people is provided to place the work in context. Ideally, this information would be found in the film. It is essential that the viewer has basic knowledge of Roma people, their origins and issues associated with them. Without it, the message that the movie carries and the story of the person it portrays cannot be fully appreciated.

First of all, it is important to understand the origins of the Roma people. There are numerous conflicting theories as to where Roma people come from. (Aparna Rao, 1975: 144). The most common one says that the Roma come from small villages deep in the heart of India. They used to earn their living as craftsmen around the year 400 (David MacRitchie, 1886). However, there was not enough work there to support them all, so they were forced to adopt a nomadic lifestyle. They traveled in groups from village to village, working during the day and entertaining local people at night. Their numbers grew rapidly and soon they became famous for their nomadic lifestyle. However, the Indian King Shangul did not approve of them (idem). Around 440 – 443, the Persian King Shah Bahram Gur persuaded the Indian king to send him "10 000 Luri musicians so that they [could] run around Persia entertaining the hard-working people" (ibidem). (Note: Before the 10th Century, Roma were known as Luri (entertainers), Zott (craftsman), Jat, Nuri, Dom, Sinti, Domarai and Athengani). After the Luri settled in Persia, others followed in their footsteps. Until the year 820 a large number of Zott settled along the banks of the Tigris river. They enjoyed a peaceful life there until the Byzantines attacked Syria in 855. Many Zotts were taken prisoner at that time (Gheorghe Sarău, 2009).

Between 1001 – 1026, King Mahmud from Ghazni (today part of Afghanistan) invaded India with his Turkish – Persian army and captured half a million Indian/Roma/Gypsy slaves (David MacRitchie, 1886). Those prisoners were then scattered across the region which today comprises Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq (Gypsy Lore, [www.gypsyadvice.com](http://www.gypsyadvice.com)). They were forced to convert to Islam on pain of death, which led many to escape to Armenia or Greece. After 1453, when the Ottoman Empire (Turkish Empire) conquered Constantinople and Eastern Europe, a significant number of Indian/Roma enclaves (Luri, Juri, Sinti, etc.) were

established on what is currently Romanian and Bulgarian territory (Gerald Posner and John Ware, 1986). They worked the land as slaves until 1855, when they were finally freed. Over many years, Roma people have developed their own language.

According to Gheorghe Sarău (Rromii. Incursiune in istoria si limba lor/Rroma.Their language and history, 2009), the Romani language shares basic words, including numbers, action, family relationships etc. with the Eastern Indian languages. Therefore it has been established that the Roma language stems from Sanskrit, a historical Indo-European language.

The “official” language of the Roma - Romani - has many dialects and it has been for a long time a spoken-only language. Although the dialects have significant differences between them, they share many of the core words. Therefore, the Roma today can be classified according to the dialect that they speak. Three main groups have been identified: the Domari of the Middle East and Eastern Europe (the Dom), the Lomarvren of Central Europe (the Lom) and the Romani of Western Europe (the Rom).

The Roma speak their own language among themselves. Otherwise they speak the language of the country in which they are living. They often borrow words from the local language and incorporate them into their dialects.

### III. The European context

‘Roma people are condemned to vagrancy’ (Turine, 2004). This section will focus on the Roma who travel from Eastern Europe, especially Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, to go to Western Europe. According to Ron Stauber in ‘The Roma: a minority in Europe’ (2007), the Roma see the West as an economic El-Dorado, offering a better life with greater freedom and integration. They are therefore the biggest transnational minority in Europe (LeMonde.fr, 2010). They face integration problems in Western Europe, and segregation problems in Eastern Europe. In Europe, there are 12 million Roma; 5 million of them are travelling across borders (Henriette Asseo, 2010) as they are considered to be stateless people.

Some of them continue to live their nomadic lifestyle, but many of them have adopted a more settled approach for economic reasons. Moreover, in Eastern Europe they often live in marginalized communities with high levels of unemployment. In 2008, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs declared: ‘I want to buy a part of the desert to put every Roma in it’. Their level of integration is varied, for example the Romanian government only recognized the existence of 500 000 Roma, even though there are 2.5 million in the country. In fact, every country in Eastern Europe admits that they have problems related to the integration of Roma people even if efforts are being made politically to resolve them. Hungarian society, including the liberal left, must recognize that it has a problem with the integration of the Roma minority. This is evidenced by the rise of the Jobbik (far-right party), which rejects Roma integration and proposed that a special Anti-Roma police unit be established.

250, 000 people from across the world arrive illegally in France each year of which 15 000 are Roma. There are now 500 000 Roma in France, living in camps (Minister of Immigration, 2010). According to the magazine ‘Courrier International’ (number 997) ‘No path helps to leave ghetto-village’, effectively, right words were used. When they arrived in the Country of the Human Rights, they gathered in improvised villages in the suburbs, for example in ‘Seine-Saint-Denis’ near the ‘Stade de France’. In fact 85-90% of Roma who live in France are not nomadic because those who left Eastern Europe have been living in houses for generations (Minister of Immigration, 2010). An imbalance was created between French people and them. The result is that they cannot afford to work legally, forcing them to look for illegal employment, involving the whole family. The women and children beg, the young girls and boys work as prostitutes for example in front of the ‘Gare du Nord’ in Paris) traffic and thefts for everyone are their jobs. To make money, they developed a very well-organized business-like structure. Obviously, such practices are not popular in France, thus encouraging racism and segregation. Furthermore, it is difficult for friendships to form when neighbors do not speak the same language and live in such ways different ways.

### IV. Legislation in Europe on Roma people

Since the end of World War II, anti-Roma laws emerged in each country in Europe, apart from Spain, and legal discrimination emerged. The vagueness of the term ‘Roma’ is because it is not legally defined by French or EU legislation. Talking about legal racism with inequalities where Roma are the victims. There are widespread stereotypes, for example 77% of respondents in the 27 EU Member States considered that belonging to the Roma minority was a disadvantage in society (INSEE poll, September 2010). It is not difficult for this attitude to turn into discrimination, including from State authorities. Even though the Roma live in many European countries, they tend to have the nationality of just one Member State (Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Slovakia...). This allows them access to citizenship thanks to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, and obviously the right to move and reside freely in every country of the EU; the right to employment, healthcare, education, and eligibility. But we should admit that Roma are the victims of political discrimination. Since the adoption in 1997 of Article 13th of the Treaty of Amsterdam, Member States are obliged to take measures against racial discrimination. When they do not, they are answerable to the European Court of Human Rights. Thus, the European Parliament is trying to resolve the ‘Roma Issue’, but the EU’s efforts seem inadequate and insufficient to remedy the Roma people’s weak legal position. (‘L’express’ C.Barbier, September 2010).

For example, in France, there are some transitional measures against Roma people, that is to say Bulgarians and Romanians are not able to work legally. When a Roma person comes to France, they have three months to

find a job, to pretend to the 'Sécurité sociale', the French healthcare system. Basically, European Roma are excluded from the French labour market. Romanians and Bulgarians cannot currently work because there are a number of measures which discourage employers of goodwill who want to hire them legally. This includes the so-called '150 jobs open to Europeans'. (Collectif des Droits de L'Homme Romeurope, December 2008) For instance, either a fee of 900 euros must be paid to the ANAEM (National Agency of Foreigners and Migrations) or a long and difficult form must be completed, even though there is no guarantee of employment. Most of the Roma migrants in France are coming from Romania.

## V. Roma minority in Romania

The main topic of 'Faith and Flame' documentary is the life of Roma people in modern Romanian society. The Roma are a large minority group in Romania. According to the 2002 census there were 535,140 Roma in the country, which amounts to about 2.4% of the population.

Roma people are amongst the most socially disadvantaged groups in the country. Despite the constant efforts of many governmental and non-governmental organizations they struggle to integrate with the rest of society. They often live in isolated communities and do not get on well with non-Roma people.

Despite the overall bad situation experienced by many Roma, some examples of very successful individuals can be found. Those people manage to lead their lives outside Roma communities and to integrate with the rest of society through education and employment.

My documentary tells the story of one of the few successful Roma. Adrian Furtuna is a 25 year-old man who lives and works in Bucharest. He volunteered in a non-governmental organization helping Roma people for three years. Now he coordinates an organization which he founded himself. He works to help improve the situation of Roma people in Romania.

In the film, Adrian tells the story of his life. He talks about his difficult childhood and the role of family in his life. In order to achieve what he has today, Adrian had to overcome many challenges. Like many Roma children, he was born into a simple family and did not have good life prospects. However, he was fortunate that his mother was a wise and strong woman. She earned little money by selling canvas and clothes, but she had great ambitions for her son and was determined to help him. Her efforts enabled him to leave his village and to get an education. He attended the University of Iasi and became one of the best students in his Sociology class.

As Adrian explains in the film, women always used to walk behind their husbands in Roma tradition. This was a symbol of male superiority in the Roma family. For this reason, Roma women are never educated and have no possibility of pursuing a career. However, Adrian's mother was very ambitious. Though she could not succeed herself, she did everything that she could to help her son. Therefore, in a way, Adrian's success is a fulfillment of his mother's dream. This shows that, even though the woman is neglected in the Roma family, she

has great influence. In this case, it enabled her son to succeed. Everything that Adrian did in his life was inspired by his mother. She had a tremendous amount of faith in him. That is why the word 'faith' has been used in the title of the documentary.

Even though Adrian lives a modern lifestyle, he still adheres to some Roma traditions at home. They were instilled in him by his grandfather when he was young. Being the oldest man in the family, his grandfather was greatly respected by all. This respect for elders is characteristic of Roma families and is an example of how Adrian preserves his Roma identity. He shows that it is possible to retain that identity while living a modern lifestyle. This explains the use of the word 'flame' in the title of my documentary. It could be said that Adrian carries the flame of his ancestors' traditions into the future.

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