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**A Cycle of Persecution:
Romani Culture¹ and the *Baro Porajmos*²**

“The winter will ask what we did in the summer.”
– a Welsh Roma proverb

In March of 2011, the European Court of Human Rights listened to the case of a Roma woman who claimed her doctors had coerced her into sterilization during childbirth.³ In that same year, a mob in Turin burned down a Romani camp.⁴ In 2004 and 2005, academics published journal articles alleging the coerced sterilization of more than 150 women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, calling the actions a “quiet genocide” against Roma

- 1 I am grateful to Dr. Małgorzata Kołaczek (Jagiellonian University) for her suggestions and footnotes to this text. I am also thankful to Dr. Teresa Wontor-Cichy for all her help.
- 2 Baro Porajmos (also written Baro Porrajmos, O Baro Porrajmos, Porajmos, and Porraimos) is a Romani phrase used in reference to the genocide of Romani peoples. It translates to “the great devouring” of human life and also “gaping” (in horror) and “rape” (Hancock p. 34; see footnote 12 for full reference). It should be noted that Baro Porajmos shows more specificity in referencing the genocide of the Roma and Sinti people that occurred during the time of the Holocaust as, in theory, Porajmos can refer to other genocides (Ó hAodha p. 54; see footnote 24 for full reference). Additionally, there is still an ongoing debate within Roma communities over an appropriate, specific term for the Roma and Sinti genocide as the term Porajmos holds connotations that are considered taboo in Romani culture and the term is not as well recognized as Holocaust or Holocausto (Fonseca p. 253; see footnote 7 for full reference).
- 3 “Court Hears Claim of Forced Roma Sterilization,” *The Washington Post*, 22 March 2011, web, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/22/AR2011032202551.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.
- 4 Yaron Matras, *I Met Lucky People: The Story of the Romani Gypsies*, Great Britain: Penguin Group, 2014, p. 201.

populations.⁵ In 2000, 400 Italian police officers used excessive force to remove a group of several hundred Romani immigrants from the outskirts of Rome in an act that sent a message regarding the brutal manner in which Roma could be treated by law enforcement officers. In 1997, Romani asylum seekers from the Czech and Slovak Republics were denied entry into Britain on the basis of the ethnicity listed on their passports.⁶ In 1995, four Romani men were killed in Austria when they attempted to remove a sign that read “Gypsies Go Back to India” and triggered a bomb that had been planted.⁷

These are just a few examples of the racially motivated acts of violence and persecution that have plagued the Roma peoples from as early as the middle of the 15th century where the Romani way of life was seen as a threat to the framework of feudal life.⁸ Anti-Roma acts, some even threatening death, were passed in almost all European countries, including Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands, England and Sweden.⁹ Laws such as these as well as instances of Roma being put to death or murdered with no consequences continued well into the eighteenth-century where artists and intellectuals alike perpetuated racist stereotypes of the Roma as vagrants and criminals on the margins of society.¹⁰ The rise of the modern nation-state at this time created a push for assimilation, and laws prohibiting nomadic lifestyles like that of the Roma were enforced, with some going as far as forcibly removing Roma

5 Dan Brame, “Slovakia Sterilization Practices Criticized,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 27(4), 2003, web, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/slovakia-sterilization-practices-criticized>, accessed 6 June 2016.

Ed Holt, “Roma Women Reveal That Forced Sterilization Remains,” *The Lancet*, 2005, 365(9463), pp. 927-928.

6 Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 198.

7 Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey*, New York: Vintage, 1995, p. 222.

8 Marek Isztok and Michał Kaczkowski, *Romowie – stan duszy czy kultura równoległa – Katalog do wystawy – Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce, Oświęcim: Kolory 24*, 2008, p. 9.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 11; Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 139.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 139-154.

children from their homes for the assimilation or enslavement of Roma peoples.¹¹ In the nineteenth century, the Roma, like Jews, were labeled as inferior beings by scholars as prominent as Darwin, and the early 20th century brought with it a multitude of publications citing euthanasia and “ruthless punishment” as solutions for the eradication of the Roma.¹²

The genocide of the Roma peoples during World War II, however, was the most widespread and devastating of these racially motivated persecutions. In 1941, after Robert Ritter deemed those of Romani descent “racially alien, inferior, and asocial”, a view reinforced by centuries of discrimination, the Nazis slated the Roma for destruction. On August 2, 1943, nearly 3,000 Roma men, women, and children were gassed in the chambers at Birkenau, the last of the 23,000 who were imprisoned in the camp.¹³ Other Roma were slaughtered in massacres across German Nazi occupied territory and still more died from disease, overwork and starvation in concentration camps.¹⁴ During World War II, German Nazi doctors sterilized peoples of Roma descent against their will in an act of calculated policy drawn up on the basis of ethnicity.¹⁵ Collectively, these facts beg the question, “Why, just 70 years after the most devastating genocide in Romani history (with historians setting the death toll at 500,000),¹⁶ have

11 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

12 Ian Hancock, *We Are the Romani People: Ame Sam E Rromane Dzene*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, 2002, pp. 35-36.

13 Teresa Wontor-Cichy, “The Roma in Auschwitz Concentration Camp,” *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*, web, <http://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-roma-in-auschwitz-new-on-line-lesson,1109.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.

14 Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, Bristol: University of Hertfordshire, 2009.

15 Toby Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows: A Gypsy Family Remembers the Holocaust*, Bristol: University of Hertfordshire, 2002, p. 198.

16 [ED] Figures given by historians on the number of Roma victims vary considerably: Michael Zimmermann estimates the number of victims as about one hundred thousand („Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung in Ost- und Südeuropa - ein Überblick“, in: Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal u.a., *Der nationalsozialistische Genozid an den Roma Osteuropas. Geschichte und künstlerische Verarbeitung*, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna: Böhlau, 2008, pp. 23-24, while Ian Hancock’s estimate is a million and a half

present day injustices gone largely unnoticed, not just by the media, but by the general public as well?”¹⁷ With the genocide of the Romani peoples labeled as one of the “forgotten Holocausts”, Romani communities are still targeted and ostracized.

The cycle of persecution is based in part on the lack of general public acknowledgement of the Roma genocide during World War II through to present-day persecution of the Romani peoples. A question posed by Yaron Matras bears particular relevance to the question of commemoration within Romani communities: “Who speaks for the Roms?”¹⁸ In his essay, Kapralski discusses the idea, commonly shared by those he interviewed for the “Violence and Memory” study, that proper education and remembrance of the genocide of Roma peoples could facilitate the struggle for equal rights currently being waged by Romani activists in Europe. One interviewee mentions this in detail saying, “The memory of the war could . . . play a very practical role in contributing to understanding and counteracting the marginalization of the Roma . . . This would require . . . governments to acknowledge that the Roma were persecuted during the Second World War . . . to ensure at least equal, if not privileged treatment of the Roma”.¹⁹

Starting from this interviewee’s statement, investigation of this cycle of persecution will link commemoration to the present by first looking at how the language surrounding the Roma genocide and the lack of proper terminology undermines and contributes to negative stereotypes of Roma culture. These negative representations of Roma culture lead to a dismissal of requests for remembrance. This dismissal, based primarily on primitive stereotypes, creates an atmosphere of mistrust and tension

(“Uniqueness, Gypsies, Jews,” in Yehuda Bauer et al., eds., *Remembering for the Future: Working Papers and Addenda, Vol. II: The Impact of the Holocaust on the Contemporary World*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989, pp. 2020-2024.

17 Sławomir Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” *Voices of Memory* 7, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011, p. 33.

18 Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 217.

19 Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 50.

between Roma and non-Roma. Finally, the self-chosen isolation of Romani communities due to mistrust of outsiders contributes to a lack of acknowledgement of the Roma and Sinti genocide and the continued perpetration of racially motivated crimes against Roma peoples.

When discussing the lack of commemoration of the genocide of Romani peoples, it is of the utmost importance to use the correct terminology for the group and the event, particularly since incorrect terminology can further convolute these issues. While the Roma comprised one of the largest groups sent to Auschwitz, the majority of the world’s present-day population is unaware of the existence of Roma peoples in concentration camps. In fact, many people outside of specific research groups have little to no understanding of what the name “Roma” refers to. The word “Roma”, often mistakenly linked to the image of Romanians, actually means “men” or “person from humankind” in Romani, the language of the Roma peoples.²⁰ The more widely known name for the group is “Gypsies”; however, this term is incorrect as it comes from the belief that those of Romani descent originated from Egypt. Matras recognizes two reasons for this mistaken association. First, that those in the area historically called Byzantium associated all non-Europeans with the most famous non-European civilization at the time, Egypt, and second, that traveling Roma in the fifteenth-century carried safe-conduct letters characterizing their origin as an unknown location designated “Little Egypt”.²¹ Additionally, the image raised by the use of the word “Gypsies” is an unflattering one as the term carries with it a derogatory and fictitious image created by the non-Roma.²²

As such, this essay will not employ the word “Gypsy” or “Gypsies”, except in instances of direct quotations from other authors. Rather, the

20 Małgorzata Kołaczek, “The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities,” *Witnessing Auschwitz* seminar, lecture for the University of British Columbia, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 20 May 2016.

21 Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, pp. 16-17.

22 Hancock, *We Are the Romani People*, p. xviii.

terms Roma (an ethnic group) and Romani (a descriptive adjective) will be used as these terms were selected by the First World Romani Congress in 1971 for use in political activities in order to erase the use of “Gypsy”. It is of particular importance to also note that there are many different groups of Romani peoples (e.g. Roma, Sinti, Kale, Manouche), and these groups view each other as different due to unique cultural and linguistic characteristics; nevertheless, they have collectively been viewed as one and the same under such pejorative terms as “gypsies” and Zigeuner.²³

Along with defining the term “Roma”, it’s important to discuss the terms used to refer to the genocide of Roma peoples during World War II. Currently, there is a discussion of whether the term “Holocaust” should be used to refer to the racially motivated extermination of the Roma. While the Council of Europe does refer to the mass killings of Roma peoples as part of the Holocaust, many Romani groups prefer to use either the term Porajmos (mentioned in more detail elsewhere in this essay) or Samudaripen,²⁴ as they feel they should have their own word to refer to the specific genocide of Roma, similar to the use of “Shoah” in reference to the Jewish genocide. It is commonly held that as the Roma were targeted

for extermination on racial grounds, so like the Jewish population, it is beneficial to have a term that defines “their” Holocaust.²⁵ While both the Holocaust and the Porajmos are still used, the specificity of the term Porajmos makes it appropriate when focusing on the commemoration of the Roma genocide.

One of the larger issues in commemorating the Porajmos is that the extermination of Roma by the German Nazis was not officially acknowledged in Germany until 1982 (by Helmut Schmidt), and the first commemoration of the Porajmos in Poland was in 1991 when Professor Waław Długoborski organized a conference on the Roma in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. Even at present, the UN does not officially qualify the Porajmos as a genocide.²⁶ Moreover, negative stereotypes of

23 Like the term “Gypsy”, the etymology of the German word Zigeuner is multifaceted and colored by historical connotations. Originating from the Greek atsingani, the name of a heretical sect mistakenly associated with the Roma due to their palmistry and aptitude with herbs, Zigeuner is both a general designation of lawless vagabonds and a derogatory racial label for those of Roma heritage (Kenrick p. 3, see footnote 46 for full reference; Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 19; Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 228). The term Zigeuner was used during the Porajmos by German Nazis to identify the Roma and Sinti for deportation and extermination and was represented in the Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoner tattoos with a “Z” at the beginning of a camp number. Kołaczek, “The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities,”; Maria Martyniak, “The Deportation of Roma to Auschwitz before the Founding of the Zigeunerlager in the Light of the Extant Documents,” *Voices of Memory* 7, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011, pp. 7-8.

24 The term Samudaripen was created by a linguist and does not follow the rules of Romani morphology. It translates to “all + murder”. Mícheál Ó hAodha and T. A. Acton, *Travellers, Gypsies, Roma: The Demonisation of Difference*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007/2009, p. 54.

25 Kołaczek, “The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities,” lecture for the University of British Columbia; Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, pp. 274-275; István Pogány, *The Roma Café: Human Rights and the Plight of the Romani People*, Sterling: Pluto, 2004, p. 45; Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, “The Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz,” *Voices of Memory* 7, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011, p. 28. [ED]: It seems natural that Roma would have a right and a need to coin their own term, but one more thing needs to be taken into consideration: that the knowledge about Roma and Sinti Holocaust is still scarce, so that using new term right now could be confusing, especially when we think about European Parliament’s resolution in April, 2015, regarding anti-gypsyism and Roma and Sinti Holocaust as an official term; see: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P8-TA-2015-0095><http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P8-TA-2015-0095>.

26 Several controversies surround the label of genocide as it applies to the Porajmos. While researchers like Pogány argue that the actions taken against the Roma and Sinti such as forced sterilization and widespread massacres of adults and children satisfy definitions of genocide, like the one in the Genocide Convention in 1948, a lack of clear documentation makes formal recognition difficult, particularly in regards to the UN’s guidelines (Pogány, *The Roma Café*, p. 45, Kołaczek, “The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities”). Additionally, a lack of Roma representation has further impeded the recognition process. For example, no Roma witnesses were called at the Nuremberg Trials and only one Nazi, Ernst-August König, received a sentence specifically for crimes against the Roma (Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies under the Swastika*, p. 155; Fonseca, “Bury Me Standing,” p. 274). This is partially

the Romani culture shift responsibility for the lack of commemoration to the Roma themselves. One of the stereotypes is that the oral culture of the Roma has led to an inability to pass down stories of survivors accurately from generation to generation. While oral tradition has affected remembrance of the Roma genocide, what is far more important is how memory is integrated into the community, for above all, this emphasizes that there is no lack of memory. Ficowski states, “Gypsies do not in general retain any memory of collective matters”,²⁷ but Kapralski notes that while Roma might not access a collective memory, they do have “their own sort of memory” which “is encoded in a certain sense in social relations”.²⁸ Additionally, the assumption that oral history discourages remembrance perpetuates a mistrust among non-Roma of Romani culture and traditions. In her book, *Bury Me Standing*, a Rom leader says to Isabel Fonseca, “Never before has a group been so persecuted and so unlovable”, echoing the cycle of persecution that has plagued the Roma people for centuries.²⁹ From this line also follows the observation that commemoration and remembrance occur within parts of the Roma community that are not shown to outsiders for fear of these memories reminding gadje of how to persecute the Roma in the first place.³⁰

Traditionally, the Roma people separate themselves from the gadje, non-Roma peoples, as they are deemed ritually polluted, while Roma are ritually clean.³¹ This traditional culture has evolved into an “us versus

due to the fact that the push for recognition of the Porajmos by the Roma community began much later than the efforts of the Jewish community, further complicating the ability to label the Porajmos.

27 Ficowski, *Demony cudzego strachu* [Demons of others' fear], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Nisza, 1986, p.24.

28 Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 37.

29 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 273.

30 Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 42.

31 Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows*, p. 32. [ED]: There are many different opinions regarding purity and non-Roma; according to many, the pollution and purity pertain only to the Romani world and the rules apply only to this world.

them” mentality within many Roma communities.³² However, it is important not to blame the isolation of Romani families on their own culture. As Kapralski notes, “being a ‘Roma’ is to a large degree a defense mechanism to a hostile environment”.³³ As an attempt to protect their culture and peoples from the gadje, there is a reluctance among the Roma survivors to discuss their stories with outsiders. This idea is demonstrated twice in Kapralski’s essay, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity”. First, by a gadje, “outsider”, who states, “Roma don’t like it when you remind them about it [the war] . . . fear dominates their lives . . . They feel that if they were . . . persecuted five times . . . then the sixth can happen very easily” and second by a Croatian Roma, who states, “There is still a great fear in the Roma. Fear of suffering and death that won’t go away. It won’t be forgotten”.³⁴ This fear of persecution is so thoroughly gripping that many Roma hide their true ethnic identities, as shown by Matras in the first chapter of his book, *I Met Lucky People*, when he asks two Roma women what language they are speaking (knowing it is Romanes) and gets the answer that they are speaking Greek.³⁵ This fear

32 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 13.

33 Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 36. Despite this fear, in recent years, through identity projects, Roma have made efforts to bring forward “a vision of Roma history, which . . . is important from the point of view of who the Roma see themselves to be and how they perceive their present and future”, and to communicate this identity to outsiders to prevent further racially based persecution (Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 38). Hancock suggests that the particular value of this approach is in showing that “the shadow cast by the wartime extermination falls on postwar times so that present-day acts of discrimination against the Roma should be seen as the continuation of earlier persecution”. While understandable, the cultural isolation of the Roma continues to play a role in the remembrance of the Porajmos: it hinders a connection with outside cultures, despite the fact that increasing closeness with non-Roma has brought long-sought awareness to the issues of Roma persecution (Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 42).

34 *Ibid.*, p. 51 and p. 33.

35 Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 1.

keeps Roma survivors from speaking out about their experiences. Sonneman noted that, in searching for survivors, those who would speak to her were those who were already identified as “Gypsies” in Germany and, as such, would suffer no backlash from their communities for disclosing their ethnic identity.³⁶

The mistrust and fear of persecution prevalent in Romani communities is detrimental to the cause of remembrance, leads to a lack of testimonies and allows for the continuation of harmful stereotypes. Intentional or unintentional inaccuracies about the Roma genocide further perpetuate the cycle of discrimination and isolation the Romani people face. Misinformation about the Porajmos is caused in part by very limited documents about Roma deportation to concentration camps and to their extermination.³⁷ One of the common kinds of misinformation refers to factually inaccurate time-lines, particularly regarding the beginning of the Roma genocide, as well as the time at which the German Nazis began pursuing the extermination of Roma peoples on racial grounds. Fonseca shares with us an analysis of a statement by a historian Lucy Davidowicz who claims that “only in the last year of the war did Nazi ideologies begin to regard the Gypsies . . . as an undesirable racial element”.³⁸ In fact, though most agree that February, 1943, marks the time that mass deportations of Roma to Auschwitz began, racial categorization and discrimination against Roma began much earlier, in 1937. It was at this time that German Nazi doctors and scientists, including Robert Ritter, who worked for the Office for Research on Race Hygiene and Population Biology,³⁹ forced Romani peoples to undergo examinations. In December of the following year Himmler issued a decree that stated the “Gypsy problem” would be treated as a “matter of race”.⁴⁰ By June of 1941, the SS Einsatzgruppen

36 Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows*, p. 29.

37 Martyniak, “The Deportation of Roma to Auschwitz,” p. 7.

38 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 258.

39 Ibid., p. 258.

40 Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows*, p. 55; Kołaczek, “The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities.”

began mass shootings of Roma people in German Nazi Occupied Territories.⁴¹ In fact, Roma peoples were being deported to concentration camps such as Lackenbach⁴² as early as November of 1940.⁴³

Another set of misinformation surround the “Zigeunerlager”, the camp for Roma families established in section BIIe of Birkenau in early 1943.⁴⁴ Unlike prisoners in other sections of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Roma were not separated from their families, were not forced to wear prisoner uniforms and, at first, were not forced to shave their heads. These differences in treatment have led to the assumption that the conditions of the Zigeunerlager were more favorable than the rest of the camp and, as such, the plight of the Roma was not one of extermination.⁴⁵ However, disease and starvation, as well as the unhygienic conditions that plagued the entire camp, led to a high death toll in the Zigeunerlager, particularly in children and the elderly.⁴⁶ Like most of the German Nazi concentration camps, scarce documentation makes it difficult to calculate numbers as well as gain a clear picture of the Romani prisoners’ experience at Auschwitz-Birkenau, especially when only few prisoners of the Zigeunerlager survived. However, there is information about the treatment of Romani people in Auschwitz-Birkenau that strengthens the argument that the Roma were targeted for destruction because of their ethnicity. One of the more well-known topics is that of the medical experiments conducted by Mengele and his associates on prisoners of the Zigeunerlager.⁴⁷ In particular, the documentation of the Roma in Auschwitz by artist Dinah Gottliebova reveals Mengele’s obsession with

41 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 261.

42 “Zigeuner-Anhaltelager Lackenbach.”

43 Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows*, p. 55.

44 Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, “The Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz,” pp. 16-17.

45 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

46 Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, p. 133.

47 Wontor-Cichy, “The Roma in Auschwitz Concentration Camp,” web, <http://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-roma-in-auschwitz-new-on-line-lesson,1109.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.

the ethnic characteristics of the Romani prisoners. Dinah Gottliebova drew for Mengele detailed portraits of Roma prisoners from different regions of Europe and she offers testimony first to the poor conditions in the Zigeunerlager and second to Mengele's interest in the characteristics of Roma ethnicity. In an excerpt from her account of her experiences in the camp, Gottliebova recalled her encounter with a young Roma woman from France who was distraught over the loss of her two month old infant.⁴⁸ While this story might seem small, it speaks to the conditions of the Zigeunerlager and is a valuable glimpse into the concentration camp.

Further complications come from the intentionally distorted or false representations of events that were meant to lessen the value of the tragedies faced by Roma and to undermine Roma claims to reparation. One of these revolves around the deportations of Roma to Transnistria. The area of Transnistria originally belonged to the Ukraine (then a part of the Soviet Union) but was given to Romania by the Germany in 1941. Transnistria was governed by Gheorghe Alexianu, who directly answered to Marshal Ion Antonescu, and the area would become what Alexander Dallin called "the ethnic dumping ground of Romania".⁴⁹ Roma, both nomadic and settled, were deported from Romania to Transnistria where they suffered harsh conditions with no shelter or food, facing brutal retaliation from civil police if they attempted to escape or communicate with anyone outside of the barbed wire fences.⁵⁰ Typhus ran rampant in the camps of Transnistria and prisoners were subjected to inhuman conditions that eventually led to cannibalism.⁵¹ These conditions and the massacres carried out by Romanian soldiers, the SS and other indigenous Romanian, Ukrainian and German civilians led to 36,000 Roma and at least 217,000 Jews losing their lives.⁵²

Despite this staggering death toll and the fact that, besides Germany, Romania was the only country involved in massacres on such a wide scale during the Holocaust, when Fonseca visited Romani survivors of Transnistria in 1991, the Romanian Parliament was still honoring Ion Antonescu with a minute of silence on the anniversary of his execution.⁵³ Along with the minute of silence, the Romanian Parliament was also calling the deportations of Roma to Transnistria an effort by Marshal Ion Antonescu to "save the Gypsies from the death camps of Poland".⁵⁴ At his trial in 1946, Antonescu's justification played on the widespread stereotype of the Roma as "thieves and murderers", insisting that he was deporting the Roma to "protect the public".⁵⁵ Even after being found guilty of the murder of 270,000 Jews by the Romanian People's Tribunals for war criminals in 1946, Antonescu's justifications live on along with his memory.⁵⁶

Justifications that shift blame onto the Roma, such as the one Antonescu's offers, demonstrate that the majority of negative stereotypes about the Roma have in fact carried on from the wartime period itself. The German Nazis' classification of Roma prisoners as asocials, marking them with black triangles on their clothing in camps like Auschwitz, is a reminder of the stereotype that the Roma are criminals by nature.⁵⁷ Views like the ones presented above, combined with scarce documentation and inconsistent treatment of the Roma by German Nazis, have led to a dismissal of the crimes against the Roma people by various national and international courts, the most notable being the dismissal by the Allied military government in 1948 and the UN in present day.⁵⁸ Additionally,

48 Sławomir Kapralski, Maria Martyniak, and Joanna Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, "Roma in Auschwitz," *Voices of Memory* 7, Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011, pp. 94-95.

49 Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, Chicago: Iran R. Dee, 2000, p. 176.

50 Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, p. 117 and p. 120.

51 Ibid., p. 120; Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 218.

52 Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, p. 120; Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 176 and p. 193.

53 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 244; Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 177.

54 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 244.

55 Ibid.

56 Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, p. 287.

57 Wontor-Cichy, "The Roma in Auschwitz Concentration Camp," web, <http://www.auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/the-roma-in-auschwitz-new-on-line-lesson,1109.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.

58 Matras, *I Met Lucky People*, p. 185; Kołaczek, "The Nazi Persecution of the Roma, Holocaust Remembrance, and Contemporary Romani Identities."

it is these conflicts of memories that lead to behaviors and attitudes expressed by Roma communities in the present day.⁵⁹

Fonseca paints a vivid picture of the inequalities that the multitude of different Roma communities across Europe have faced since the war, ranging from deportations from various countries to discrimination by members of church and hospital staff. Perhaps the saddest statement is one by Bert Lloyd from the 1960s, when he says that the Roma he met “could not distinguish the war period” from the post-war period because Roma’s postwar experiences have been one form of persecution after another.⁶⁰ Even fifty years after the war the Roma were still denied the services of priests and doctors and many lived in impoverished conditions.⁶¹ In present day, public attitudes towards Roma peoples have still seen little change or progress, as exemplified by the consistent presence of racially motivated discrimination and violence. In 2008, the Italian government implemented a fingerprinting policy for Romani children which would “make it easier to identify child beggars”, reiterating the idea shared by the German Nazis that ethnic minorities like the Roma were responsible for and predisposed to committing criminal activities based on their race alone.⁶² In Hungary between 2008 and 2009, six Roma were brutally murdered by a group of ethnic Hungarians in attempts to incite violence between the Roma and Hungarians. In one of the attacks, a father and his five year old son were gunned down when they attempted to escape their burning home, a fate that mirrors the violence against Roma during the Porajmos, particularly the massacres of Roma that occurred outside the German Nazi concentration camps.⁶³ Finally, the Romani people’s six-year

struggle before courts would hear their complaints of coerced sterilization in 2011 further demonstrates a continued discriminatory attitude.⁶⁴

The dynamics caused by isolation and marginalization are part of a larger cycle of persecution of Roma peoples. Without proper commemoration of the persecution, the cycle continues to segregate the Roma, positioning them as easy targets for present-day persecution and discrimination. There are many different layers to this cycle. A quotation by Sonneman, partially borrowed from the authors of the *Declaration of Remembrance*, emphasizes the importance of commemoration: “Conscience is formed by memory, and these two strands must twist together into one. For memory is essential—but memory alone is not enough”.⁶⁵ With a waning number of survivors to provide testimonies, the job of remembrance and commemoration will begin to fall unto the next generation, just as the mechanisms of isolation and segregation will pass on. In order to break a cycle, one must first step outside of it and that is what many young Romani activists are attempting to do. However, as Sonneman mentions, two strands must come together: non-Roma and Roma must both play a role in facilitating the remembrance of the Porajmos, the Roma genocide, so that the future of Romani communities will no longer be in the shadow of the “forgotten” Holocaust.

59 Kapralski, “The Influence of Extermination on Contemporary Roma Identity,” p. 49.

60 Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, p. 252.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 252 and p. 200.

62 Tom Kington, “Unicef among Critics of Italian Plan to Fingerprint Roma Children,” *The Guardian*, 27 June 2008, web, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/27/race-italy>, accessed 2 November 2016.

63 Kenrick and Puxon, *Gypsies Under the Swastika*, p. 71; “Hungarian Gang Jailed for Racist Roma Killings,” *BBC News*, 6 August 2013, web, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23586440>, accessed 2 November 2016.

64 “Court Hears Claim of Forced Roma Sterilization,” *The Washington Post*, 22 March 2011, web, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/22/AR2011032202551.html>, accessed 6 June 2016.

65 Sonneman, *Shared Sorrows*, p. 256.