

Get Involved: Pray



EMBRACE Prayer Group November 2012

In October, after a very long delay and many disputes, the Roma - Europe's biggest ethnic minority received a memorial in Berlin commemorating their suffering in the extermination camps during the Nazi regime. Historical justice has finally been given to over 600 000 Roma people who lost their lives during the Holocaust.

The past has now been recognised, but today's reality is still harsh. The Roma community is subject to discrimination and marginalisation in societies across Europe and the wider world. Members of this community are often greeted with hostility and racism and our knowledge of the Roma is often clouded with stereotypes and myths.

The majority of Roma people who come to Belfast and other northern towns come from Romania. Many come here seeking to escape poverty. As Romanian citizens, they have the freedom to come here but don't have full access to jobs. They can get permits as skilled workers or work on a self-employed basis, but they cannot apply for posts in the normal job market. They are excluded from welfare entitlements and social housing.

I recently attended a workshop that gave me new insight and understanding into the Roma community in Belfast. Many Roma people are Christian and those who live in the Belfast area tend to be Pentecostal. They have their own pastors and meet as a group; there are also a number of families who worship in local churches. The Roma people strongly value family and community. Everyone has their own role to play. Children are encouraged to express their own opinion; elderly people are treated with respect. Their rich culture, beautiful music and impressive dance influenced popular music, dance and the fashion world; for example Flamenco is traditionally the dance of Spanish Gypsies.

Contributed by Aneta Dabek, EMBRACE Development Worker

This month, we give thanks for...

- Diversity of culture and traditions that are represented by different ethnic groups here
- Historical justice towards the Roma who lost their lives in the WW2 Holocaust
- Groups and individuals who are working to raise awareness, thus minimising racism and abuse, about the Roma community in Northern Ireland.

And we pray for...

- Continued better understanding of the Roma community
- People who feel trapped in a cycle of poverty and that they might be freed from it
- Churches and community groups who work to build links with the Roma community here

EMBRACE NI

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