



**STATEMENT FROM THE ROMA PARTICIPATION GROUP
OF FUNDACIÓN SECRETARIADO GITANO**

International Roma Day - 8 April 2021

“PRIDE, RESPECT AND GRATITUDE”

Today, 8 April, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the First World Romani Congress held in London in 1971, where a group of Roma from different countries opened the world's eyes to the Roma people in their quest to be recognised and the memory of the many Roma victims who have suffered throughout history.

On behalf of the **Roma Participation Group of Fundación Secretariado Gitano**, we want to recognise and highlight the selfless work of the people who came together to make their voices heard on that day. The event was a turning point in the institutional recognition of the Roma people, and we should take pride in the fact it has become the basis for many social movements in which the Roma participate, reflect and fight for their rights.

Today, fifty years after the London Congress, there are four main symbols recognised worldwide which give a unique character to this commemoration and with which the different Roma communities around the world identify: our language, our flag, our anthem and our day, 8 April, which is carved into the international calendar to acknowledge the Roma People and their contribution to culture and history around the world.

This year's commemoration will again be marked by the pandemic. The current situation means that the institutional events planned for today will have to be held differently from how we usually celebrate them.

However, the backdrop of 8 April will preserve its sense of vindication: today we continue to demand that the inequality and discrimination still suffered by the vast majority of Roma people be rectified by public authorities; today we continue to denounce the fact that, just for being Roma, we have our rights violated and, consequently, are denied full citizenship.

For the second year in a row, we will not be able to pay tribute to our ancestors at our traditional River Ceremony, where we light candles and cast flower petals in memory of those who left us. But the hallmarks of our identity cannot be washed away. We will once again observe, commemorate and celebrate International Roma Day to the fullest on behalf of those who left us and, above all, on behalf of those who are still here, for whom we must provide special care.



While COVID-19 has hit society as a whole, it has been especially hard on the Roma community. Not only has it been tough economically, leaving many in desperate financial need, but it has also taken many loved ones from us, sometimes without being able to say goodbye. The pandemic has forced us to modify how we manifest and express certain values, such as supporting others during mourning, and this has had a particularly strong impact on the Roma.

Once again, the capacity of the Roma to adapt to the circumstances has been exemplary, as we have come together with other families on the local level to distribute food and basic necessities, showing respect for our peers and solidarity with those who have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

Now more than ever we must care for our elders, not only by watching out for their health and protecting them from the virus, but also by showing them all the love and dedication they have given us for so many years.

Our elders are, have been and will continue to be our best guides in the construction of our identity as Roma, our Romipen. We must follow their example to overcome difficulties and adversity, as they did in their time, whereby they understood how to preserve the essence of our values and safeguard what it means to be Roma.

Our *Kako* and *Bibi* are the key to the development of future generations. They are role models rather than authority figures, leaders in reconciliation and not in conflict, who contribute experience and wisdom and to whom we must show our gratitude, whether they are Roma or and non-Roma.

The people who need a quick response to their most pressing needs receive the best attention and dedication from the **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**. Our firm conviction has always been to create a valuable entity that stands by the Roma people. Reducing the inequality gap is the main goal of our initiatives.

Today is a day—our day—to feel pride and show respect for our peers, without lowering our guard to COVID-19, as well as to take every opportunity to care for, value and give all our gratitude to our elders.

What we are and what we have achieved up to now is thanks in large part to them. We cannot lose the essence of our identity, because our future as Roma depends on it. Precisely for this reason, the image and slogan on our 8 April banner is a tribute to that generation: ***The essence of us. This year, more than ever, it's about our elderly people*** because together, just as on 8 April 1971, we will leave a legacy that future generations can look on with pride, respect and gratitude.

May every day be 8 April

Sastipen thaj mestipen - Health and Liberty

Opre Roma!

#8april #InternationalRomaDay

Roma Participation Group - Fundación Secretariado Gitano