



# CONSELL MUNICIPAL DEL POBLE GITANO

## ROMA PEOPLE ONE PEOPLE, A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD CULTURE

On 8 April we plan to celebrate International Roma Day once again. It's now 51 years since that historic first international congress held in London, where the symbols that represent an entire nation were agreed on. The national anthem is *Gelem Gelem*, and a flag composed of a blue upper half and a green lower half, with a red cartwheel in the middle.

*Gelem Gelem* tells of Roma suffering, particularly under the Nazis, but also of hope and the light that can be seen at the end of a long journey.

<i>Palem ka gav lungone dromençar</i>	I will travel the paths again
<i>Ta ka phirav baxtale Rromençar</i>	and I will walk with fortunate kalos.
<i>Opre Rroma isi vaxt akana</i>	Long live the Roma people! Now is the moment
<i>Ajde mançar sa lumáqe Rroma</i>	Come with me Roma people of the world

Three years earlier, on 3 April 1968, a day before he was assassinated, the Nobel peace laureate and civil rights activist Reverend Martin Luther King, with a hint of foreboding when recalling a chapter from the Book of Deuteronomy in the Bible, told his followers: "...I have seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, **as a people**, will get to the promised land!"

This promised land, in the case of the Roma people, does not allude to any territorial ambition, but in fact quite the opposite. At that first World Congress in London, our goals were set out of recognition as a non-territorial or trans-territorial nation, able to find paths towards expression of the Roma will, of self-management, of self-determination.

In that regard, Grattan Puxon, one of the organisers of the First World Roma Congress, elected secretary-general and holder of that post for a further three editions until 1981, said: "**Within the fulsome recognition lies hidden a subtle downgrading of what Congress intended: the intrinsic, assertive character of Roma Nation Day is often replaced by a tamer, subsidised International Roma Day**".

While certain symbols resulting from that Congress have steadily gained strength thanks to social media, the ideas, and worse, both ambitions and speeches have all too often been manipulated when not twisted to benefit a servile and client-like NGO compulsion.

Returning to the words of **Uncle Grattan**, in an updated Spanish translation by **Nicolás Jiménez**, entitled: *El Primer Congreso Mundial Romanó en la memoria de Grattan Puxon*



# CONSELL MUNICIPAL DEL POBLE GITANO

## ROMA PEOPLE ONE PEOPLE, A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD CULTURE

***“...People belonging to the Roma nation ask for a representation of our Nation, which does not seek to become a State. We ask to be recognised as a nation, for the good of Roma and non-Roma people who share the need to face up to the current challenges. We, a nation of whom over half a million were exterminated in a forgotten Holocaust, a nation made up of people who all too often are discriminated against, marginalised, victims of intolerance and persecution, we have a dream and we pledge to fulfil it. We are a nation, we share the same tradition, the same culture, the same origin, the same language. We are a nation...”***

These are difficult times, as they always have been for the Roma people, and yet it's time to regain, with strength and tenacity, the ideals held firm by the likes of Grattan Puxon, Vaida Voevod, Slobodan Berberski, Zharko Jovanovic, Mateo Maximoff, Dr. Jan Cibula, Vanko Rouda, Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia, and so on.

This year may be the year of light at the end of the path, of the path heading up the mountain to glimpse Luther King's promised land, the land of a change of status; the year of a start to the process of reclaiming our memory, repairing the damage; the year of an end to school segregation and misappropriation of flamenco; they year of maintaining our cultural symbols and identity, and undertaking the reforms deemed necessary, including an amendment to the Spanish Constitution, to give the Roma people visibility and a voice in social, economic and political institutions, in line with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, approved by the UN Assembly, in Resolution 47/135, of 18 December 1992, and Directive 2000/43/EC of the European Council, relating to the application of the principle of equal treatment of people, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin. In short, regaining our dignity as a people, whose greatest wealth is its thousand-year-old culture.

*Opre Rroma isi vaxt akana*

Long live the Roma people! Now is the time