

Dear Rebekah, dear Committee,

We would like to propose two interconnected events on Romani (“Gypsy”) Cultures of Eastern Europe for the DWLLC conference on **Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Culture: Advocating for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Academy**:

1. a screening of our new documentary film “Gypsy Vengerka” (ArbatFilm, 2022, estimated runtime 90 minutes) and
2. a panel discussion with the filmmakers and three members of the Romani-American community.

American Roma are probably the most invisible and under-supported minority in the American academy. Our film and our proposed panelists will bring this to the attention of conference participants.

Screening of “Gypsy Vengerka”

“Gypsy Vengerka” is based on a treasure trove of footage collected over two decades. It closely follows the lives and careers of several Russian-Romani musicians, most prominently among them Alexander and Vadim Kolpakov, an uncle-and-nephew duo who first appear in the film with a 2001 performance in Moscow that marked the beginning of their decades-long collaboration with one of the filmmakers. As Vadim emigrates to the US, they split up, but are reunited to join the 2009/10 World Tour of Madonna. In addition to that narrative, the film offers great music, but also interviews with several engaging American Romani activists and academics, who talk about the anti-Romani discrimination they all experience, and the almost complete invisibility of the Roma in the American academy. We also get a rare glimpse of a school for Romani children in Moscow in the 1990s, and hear Alexander’s autobiographical memories of nomadic Roma, and footage of a class on Romani cultures taught at the UI. Last but not least, the film offers original research by Oleg Timofeyev on the specificities of Romani music-making, the apprenticeship model characteristic of the Romani model of musical education (uncle trains nephew), and the special role played in it by a central musical piece: the “Gypsy Vengerka.” In its final form, the film will be ca. 90 min long.

Q&A and Panel Discussion with Romani Activists and Scholars

After the screening, we propose to hold a discussion on Romani rights with the filmmakers and three of the Romani participants in the film. All three are very engaging and articulate people, who can speak about their own experience, both personal and professional, as American Roma.

- **Petra Gelbart**, Czech-Romani ethnomusicologist (PhD Harvard University), Romani rights activist, based in NYC
- **Oksana Marafioti**, best-selling author of *American Gypsy*, who teaches courses in creative writing and in Romani Studies at the Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas. Oksana grew up in an artistic Armenian-Romani family and came to the US at age 15. In her book, she describes her arrival to the US, and her (ultimately failed) attempts to blend with mainstream America.
- **Michael Ciuraru**, a Romanian Rom born in NYC, real estate agent, activist for Romani rights, YouTuber on Romani History ("These Roma Guys"), and one of only three court translators in the entire US who translates from Kalderash and other Romanian-Romani dialects. He has

intimate and first-hand knowledge working with Romani refugees fleeing persecution in Europe.
("Sometimes the whole court is in tears.")

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sabine Gölz & Oleg Timofeyev