

The SIU Public Policy Institute thanks those who came together to help develop these recommendations. The working group included:

*"Their country is their traditions, their customs, their language," former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark said during his keynote address on September 22, 2002.*

*"They are the first citizens of the world. We could learn something from that."*



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# Addressing the Plight of the Romani People

Working group recommendations  
from a symposium held on  
September 22–23, 2002

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Paul Simon and Dr. Ian Hancock

*Saddled with the derogatory label of “gypsies,” the Romani people have been excluded from society and persecuted for hundreds of years. Approximately one million Romani died in the Holocaust, targeted for violence and extermination by the Nazis. The Romani have long been uncared for on any official rolls, geographically dispersed, and generally unwanted by society. They struggle with poverty, poor health, high infant mortality, high death rates, few educational opportunities, and low incomes.*

*The United States and indeed the world need to recognize the plight of these people and help alleviate their suffering. The following recommendations work towards those goals.*

## Recommendations

- ▶ 1. We urge the United Nations to form a team of both Romani and non-Romani experts to monitor camps for refugees or displaced persons and to verify that Romani and people of all ethnic populations receive equal treatment in such camps. (Nondiscrimination is the policy now, but too often in fact, is not implemented.)
- ▶ 2. We urge Congress and the Administration to make strong overtures to Kosovo officials to permit Romani children to speak their own language in school, while they also learn the official language of the government. The government should also make clear a policy of tolerance for movement and speaking for the Romani as well as all citizens.
- ▶ 3. We urge colleges and universities in the United States, Canada and the European Union to establish and implement clear policies of non-discrimination toward Romani citizens, and to make scholarships available for Romani. We encourage universities to establish courses in Romani studies. We also urge colleges and universities to provide greater in-depth study of the Romani, similar to the program at the University of Texas with Professor Ian Hancock, author of the recent book “We Are the Romani People.”
- ▶ 4. We urge the European Union to provide a voice for the Romani in their parliamentary body. We also urge the European Union and Council of Europe to accept the current proposal by Romani community leaders for the creation of a European Romani Forum.
- ▶ 5. We urge that an information packet, perhaps under the imprimatur of the University of Texas and Southern Illinois University, be drafted for distribution to the media, attorneys, INS, law enforcement, non-government organizations and other administrators, providing factual information about the Romani people. This should be made available on line at no charge. Particularly important is that this document (which should be brief) reach key administrators in the INS.
- ▶ 6. We recommend that a letter be sent to key members of Congress and the Administration urging the adoption of a resolution calling on the Civil Rights Commission to look at the problems the Romani face. Members of Congress should also urge the Department of Justice’s Violence Against Women Office to extend a special outreach to Romani women.
- ▶ 7. We urge the state boards of education to incorporate the study of Romani into their curriculum in the fields of history and social studies. We urge the Department of Education and the Department of Justice to incorporate the experience and problems of the Romani into their cultural sensitivity workshops.
- ▶ 8. We urge the United States Holocaust Museum Council to make the appointment of a Romani to the Council a priority, and to increase its commitment to providing education and scholarships for Romanis.
- ▶ 9. We encourage the recognition of a National Day of Romani to be held annually on April 8.
- ▶ 10. We ask the Save the Children Fund to do an updated report on Romani infant mortality.
- ▶ 11. We urge the Amnesty International, the European Commission on Human Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, human rights advocates in the religious community, and the Civil Rights Commission to give greater attention to the problems the Romani people face.
- ▶ 12. We urge the Library of Congress to designate a person on its staff to specialize in collecting the history and current data on the Romani people.