

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi  
Secretary of State for Education  
By email: [nadhim.zahawi.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:nadhim.zahawi.mp@parliament.uk)

9<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Mr Zahawi

We are writing to you following the comments by Jimmy Carr, in his show on Netflix, that the genocide of Roma and Gypsies in the Holocaust was a ‘positive’. These have been widely condemned, including by the Prime Minister and other Cabinet ministers.

Over 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were murdered, tortured, starved, subjected to forced labour and medical experimentation under the Nazi regime – it is utterly abhorrent to make this the substance of a ‘joke’. The fact that the comments were made, deemed suitable by Netflix to air and laughed at by the audience, has once again highlighted the deep-seated prejudice that exists against Gypsy and Roma communities.

Public condemnation of the comments is important, but measures need to be implemented to create meaningful change. This incident has highlighted the pressing need for teaching about the genocide of Roma in the Holocaust to be mandatory on the schools’ curriculum.

The urgent need for this was recognised by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers by adopting a [Recommendation](#) in 2020 that, for the first time ever, called on its 47 member states to include the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. The Recommendation emphasises the importance of teaching the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its allies, as well as other acts committed against Roma and Travellers across Europe.

The Recommendation calls on governments to integrate activities related to the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust into formal and non-formal education, in connection with the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2 August). This Recommendation has yet to be implemented by the British government.

[Research](#) from YouGov in 2019 found that 55% of surveyed British adults did not know that over 500,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Additionally, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission found in their National

Barometer of Prejudice and Discrimination that people in the UK held the highest level of prejudice towards Gypsies and Travellers, at 44% (the next highest levels being held towards Muslims at 22%). There is a clear and strong case for improving education to address this.

Including the history of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in school curricula would improve the understanding that the communities are an integral part of both national and European societies, and would act as an effective tool to combat hatred, discrimination and prejudice.

Additionally, the starkly negative historical periods should be complemented by teaching including positive narratives about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, reflecting both their national presence and historical context, and their common history as a people present in Europe for centuries. An important step would be for the Department for Education to support schools to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

This would take some desperately needed steps to help address the poor educational outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, contributing factors of which are lack of understanding and visibility of the culture and history, and the high levels of racist bullying and prejudicial views held within educational institutions. A survey carried out by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2019 asked Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people what the biggest challenge they faced in school was – 86% of pupils reported the biggest challenge at school to be bullying, followed by racism at 73%.

We call on Government to take action and implement the teaching of the Roma genocide as a mandatory part of Holocaust teaching in schools and to support schools to mark Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month. This needs to be part of a wider package of measures to improve the educational outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and to tackle deep-seated prejudice.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mann, Director, Friends, Families and Travellers

Sylvia Ingmire, Director, Roma Support Group

Alison Blackwood, Manager, Southwark Traveller Action Group



Anna Feuchtwang, Chief Executive Officer, National Children's Bureau

Ashok Viswanathan, Acting Director, Operation Black Vote

Betty Smith-Billington, Chair, Kushti Bok

Brian Dalton, Chief Executive Officer, Irish in Britain

Cad Taylor, Non Exec. Director & South Street Kids Facilitator, Ipswich Community Media

Chris Johnson, Partner, Community Law Partnership

Clive Dudbridge, Chief Executive Officer, Margaret Clitherow Trust

Crina Morteau, Manager, Luton Roma Trust

Debby Kennett, Chief Executive Officer, London Gypsies and Travellers

Diana Blaj, Chair/Founder, Idee Rom Association Nottingham

Diana Neslen, Vice Chair, Redbridge Equalities and Community Council

Eddie Gilmore, Chief Executive Officer, Irish Chaplaincy

Ewan Flack, Chief Executive Officer, Red Zebra Community Solutions

Fizza Qureshi, Chief Executive Officer, Migrants' Rights Network

Ged Grebby, Chief Executive, Show Racism the Red Card

Dr Halima Begum, Chief Executive Officer, Runnymede Trust

Helen Littlewood, Director, Clifton Learning Partnership

Dr Ian Manborde, Equalities and Diversity Officer, Equity group



Jabeer Butt OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Race Equality Foundation

Jack Ayres and Lalage Grundy, Joint Chairs, Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum

Jackie Duffy, Project Manager, Leicestershire GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Equalities)

Jackie Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, TGP Cymru

Jane Lees, Chief Executive Officer, Communityworks

Jeremy Browne, Chair, Buckinghamshire and West Hertfordshire Gypsy Advocacy

Reverend Jonathan Herbert, Chaplain to Gypsies and Travellers, Dorset and Wiltshire, Church of England Chaplaincy to Gypsies and Travellers

Josie O Driscoll, Chief Executive Officer, GATEherts

Karenza Passmore, Director, North East Religious Learning Resources

Marc Cave, Director, The National Holocaust Centre & Museum

Marek Balog, Project Lead & Employment Advisor, Community Renewal Trust/Rom Romeha

Margaret Chiwanza, Chief Executive, MECOPP

Marius Misin, Chair, Romanian Society

Maurice Malone, Chief Executive, Birmingham Irish Association

Narvenka Noyce, Joannie Peak and Colleen Roper, Showmen, Future 4 Fairgrounds

Nic Millington, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Media, publishers of Travellers Times

Rachel Cooper, Director, Leeds GATE

Sam Worrall, Digital Engagement Officer, Gypsies & Travellers Wales

[gypsy-traveller.org](http://gypsy-traveller.org)

Friends, Families & Travellers | Charity Number 1112326 | Company Number 03597515  
Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, East Sussex, England, BN1 3XG | T: 01273 234 777 | F: 01273 234 778 | E: [fft@gypsy-traveller.org](mailto:fft@gypsy-traveller.org)



Sheza Afzal, Partnership Manager, Equaliteach CIC

Dr Siobhan Spencer MBE, Coordinator, Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, Moving for Change

Tim Robertson, Chief Executive Officer, Anne Frank Trust

Toby Simpson, Director Wiener Holocaust Library

Tyler Hatwell, Executive Director, Traveller Pride

Violet Cannon, Director, York Travellers Trust

Yvonne MacNamara, Chief Executive Officer, Traveller Movement