

show racism
the red card

www.theredcard.ie



EDUCATIONAL
FACTSHEETS

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Welcome to the factsheets

The Show Racism the Red Card DVD Education pack is used to promote education against racism, harnessing the profile of sports stars to convey the anti-racism message. Here, we provide some factsheets on related themes. These fact sheets identify relevant themes which may feature in different subjects in the curriculum. Using the education pack and this website can be useful as part of the curriculum in subjects such as Developing Citizenship, Media studies and Myself and Wider World at primary level. It is relevant to modules within the CSPE curriculum at second level and is also relevant in other subjects such as history, geography and religion.

These factsheets should help identify related themes and provide the basis for some further work.



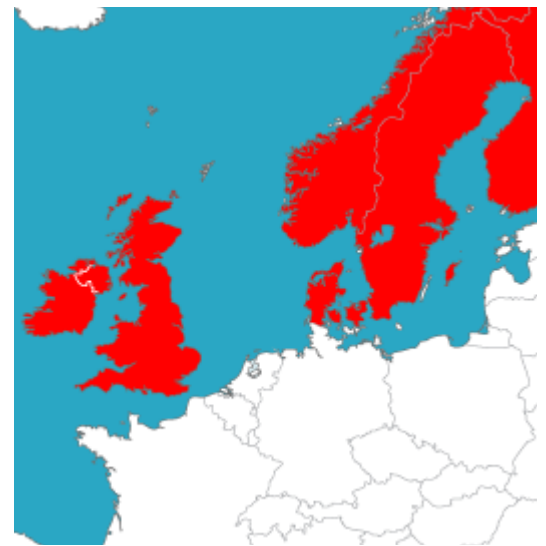
01 Sport & Racism

Show Racism the Red Card has been growing from 1995 when Shaka Hislop donated £50stg to a local anti-racism campaign in Newcastle upon Tyne. Show Racism the Red Card is now present in United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Ireland.

The campaigns in each country have education through sport as a common goal but draw on different local resources to get the message across. So in Ireland, the involvement of the Gaelic Players Association and Irish Rugby Union Players Association is of great importance to us.

While racism in sport has been a major problem in many countries it is not so manifest in Ireland and we want to keep it that way. Racism is a problem of society and it has been the case that in countries such as Italy, England and elsewhere racism found it's reflection in the football stadium. Racism has only declined in English football because of a series of very strong anti-racism campaigns within sport over the years, yet it still remains a problem for society.

The Show Racism the Red Card video reveals this as a problem where professionals such as Chris Hughton were subject to a torrent of abuse every match they played in the 1980s, while Shaka Hislop notes that it was an experience where he was perceived as **'just another black person'** that led to him being active in the Show Racism the Red Card campaign.



Countries of Europe involved with Show Racism the Red Card.

"I was putting petrol in my car at the garage and these kids started shouting racist abuse. Then after a bit one of them realised who I was and told his friends. Then they came over looking for autographs.
That really hurt"

Shaka Hislop, 1995,
Newcastle Upon Tyne.



Shelbourne Player Joseph Ndo has been victim to racist abuse. Seen here receiving player of the year award at the PFAI Player Awards 2006. Credit: David Maher.



Coca-Cola GAA Féile Peil na nÓg Finals 2010. Credit: Paul Mohan.

In the 1970s and 1980s players experienced it in the stadium while in the 1990s and today they experience it outside the ground. On the video many players reveal that they are subject to racism outside the game because of the work inside the game has had an impact, but revealingly showing that there is a lot of work to do in society.

Young people talk about the isolation they feel when they are suffering racism in the amateur leagues where there is not the protective surrounding a professional in the premier league.

We have had reports of racism in sport in Ireland over the last years. In July 2005, Shelbourne Player Joseph Ndo was subject to a torrent of racist abuse when he played at Steau Bucharest in the Champion League second round qualifier. Racism is becoming a big issue in Ireland so much so that a survey by the Irish government's anti-racism campaign Know Racism revealed that **one in five Irish people have witnessed racism.**

A previous event organised by Show Racism the Red Card, Irish Independent Journalist Karl Mc Ginty spoke to the young person next to him. Though immensely happy in school, she told of the sickening catalogue of abuse she endures daily from complete strangers and which, she confessed, **'makes life miserable for blacks.'**

Amnesty International revealed the issue of bullying by use of mobile phones: "The kids in school send me text messages on my mobile phone saying 'you black nigger bastard'. **I am afraid to look at my messages**".

36% of Irish people have no contact with Non-Irish Nationals in Ireland and this goes some way to explain the level of racism in Ireland.

Statistic from the Know Racism Report

Racism breeds through fear and ignorance and not knowing or understanding those from different backgrounds. Integration in society happens through school, work and college along with active involvement in extra- curricular activities.

The Know Racism report revealed that 36% of Irish people have no contact with non-Irish nationals in Ireland and this goes some way to explain the level of racism in Ireland. Through our partnership of those involved in education and sport **we hope to promote integration and stamp out racism.** We hope that our partnership of Gaelic games, Rugby and Soccer and those involved in education opens the way for more participation and integration of Irish and non-Irish.

Through playing together, working together and being educated together we can grow with enough understanding to **Show Racism the Red Card.**



To increase our knowledge, we ask that if you experience racism that you fill out our report form on the website. We will use this information to compile records and inform those we work with on appropriate responses.



02

Football : A Mans Game

In the Crowd

Despite what you might imagine, football isn't a game played and watched only by boys and men. It is also a game that **many girls and women have a passion for**, an interest that is not particularly new.

Women have always been present at football matches to a greater or lesser extent. Until the mid-1880s, women were admitted free to matches. However, this had to stop because too much money was being lost at the turnstiles. For example, Preston North End had to abandon their "Ladies free" concession in 1885 when 2000 female fans turned up.

Photographs of football crowds in the 1920s tend to suggest that women made up to about 20% of popular side support at some grounds. In fact, press reports from 1929 suggest that at least 50% of the trainloads of spectators who travelled to Wembley to watch Bolton Wanderers and Portsmouth were women.

Women's football really began to grow again in the 1970s and 1980s, proving to be particularly popular in countries like Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The first women's European Championships were won by Sweden in 1984.



Louth supporters Abbey Woods, age 8, and Hannah Mulligan, both from Dundalk, Co. Louth, before the start of the game. Leinster GAA Football Championship Finals, Croke Park, Dublin. Credit: David Maher.

On the Pitch

Women have also always played football, even when the women's game received very little support from the football authorities and it was **felt to be an "unlady-like" thing to do**. There was a very popular women's team who used to play in front of large crowds in the early 1920s. They were called **Dick Kerr's Ladies** and were formed in 1917, by a group of female munitions workers at Kerr's engineering works in Preston. They had started out playing on the waste ground outside their factory, but by 1920 at a match against St Helen's, they had a crowd of 53 000 spectators, with another 10-14000 locked out of the ground.

However, the Football Association was not very happy about women playing football. In December 1921 the FA's ruling council stated, "the game of football is quite unsuitable for

"The game of football is quite unsuitable for females and should not be encouraged."

—FA's ruling council statement,
December 1921



TG4's sponsorship of the Ladies Football All Ireland Championships 2010 and the tenth year of the Ladies Football finals being televised by the National Irish Language Broadcaster.
Credit: Stephen McCarthy



females and should not be encouraged." **Women's games were no longer allowed to be played on FA pitches, a decision that was not reversed until 1971.** Countries like Holland and Germany also imposed similar bans on women's football. In the English Premier League today, about 15% of supporters are women. The Women's Football Association of Ireland was founded in 1973.

Women's football is officially the fastest growing sport worldwide. The standard and attractiveness of the women's football is also improving markedly. An estimated 1 billion television viewers from 70 different countries watched the last FIFA Womens World Cup held in the USA in 1999. Over 650,000 people also attended the live games, and at the final, a record attendance of over 90,000 watched the USA beat China on penalties.

In Ireland, women's and girl's soccer is growing and the numbers have almost doubled in the past three years. There are over 350 clubs across Ireland playing football every week throughout their season - whether it's a summer or winter one. Whether you currently are a player or want to play competitive or just recreational football, it's a great way to keep fit and healthy, have fun and meet friends!

LEFT:Germany celebrate their 2007 Fifa Women's World Cup Win.



03

What can we do about racism?

Racism is not just about black versus white - it is much deeper than that;

- * It could be a group of white kids picking on the only black one.
- * It might be because someone is Asian, Chinese, Polish or Russian.
- * It might be because someone speaks a different language or has a different skin colour.
- * Sometimes it takes the form of bullying and attacks.
- * Sometimes it might involve ignoring someone or refusing to speak to them.

It's a sad fact of life that racism still exists in this country and the chances are that we have all either seen or experienced it at some point in time. Unfortunately racism is not going to go away quickly. However, that doesn't mean there's nothing you can do about it.

Peer Pressure

What we believe about people from different racial backgrounds is usually learnt from our parents. From a very early age, we hear their opinions and accept them without asking questions. However, as people get older they are exposed to other influences - like their friends. This is known as "peer pressure" and it can be good or bad.

Bad peer pressure is when you do something that you don't want to because your friends say you should. Peer pressure can sometimes lead people into making racist remarks, or even attacking someone, just to fit in with their friends. Often, if just one person in the group was prepared to speak out, things could be very different. If your friends try to get you to make racist remarks or bully people because of their colour, the most basic thing you can do is say: **"No! I don't want to do that. I don't agree with you."**

It takes a lot of will power to say "NO" to people that you know well, trust and respect, particularly when they keep on asking you. You need to be able to tell yourself that you have made your decision and know that it's the right thing for you to do. Stick at it, and you'll probably be surprised by the number of people that support you.

Peer group pressure can also be when you are a different colour, nationality or religion from your friends, and they tease you about it or make comments about people similar to you when you are with them, but you keep quiet because they are supposed to be your friends. You don't have to listen to them say things like that. **Tell them you don't think it's right, and if they really are your friends they should stop.**

Your Rights

If you think someone is being unfair to you or is bullying you because of your race or colour, you should tell somebody as soon as possible. Try talking to a parent or teacher if you can. That doesn't mean you're telling tales on someone - it means you are standing up for your rights. By telling someone, you are taking the first step towards sorting out the problem. You don't have to accept it, because it's not your fault and you haven't done anything to make people torment you in this way.

Think about how you would like it to stop - **What are you going to do, and Who is going to help you?** You could try keeping a note of what is happening - that way you can show other people what is happening to you and it might help you to prove it, if that's necessary.

"No-one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn hate, they can be taught love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

—Nelson Mandela, from his autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom"

Even though you might want to, you shouldn't rise to the problem. Answering back or getting into fights will only make things worse. Instead, try to get help and talk to someone about it. Be aware. You can't spend your life worrying about racists, but it is important to be careful. Try not to walk about on your own where you know other people who taunt you will be. It will be hard, but try not to let it bother you. Stay confident, keep talking about it and telling people who can help you.

Your Responsibilities

Just as you have the right to expect not to be bullied because of your race or colour, so **it is your responsibility never to treat anyone else badly because of their race or colour.**

You can do this by making sure you don't use offensive racist language, by not using racial stereotypes and by challenging people you hear making racist comments or jokes. Try to help anyone who is being treated unfairly or bullied. Let them know that they can talk to you and can count on you for support.

If there is a group of young people being targeted in school, perhaps you could help raise the issue, at the School Council or in a school magazine if you have one.



04

Racism Today

Racism can take many forms and affects thousands of people in Ireland today. There's the obvious everyday racism, where people are called names, abused and harassed. Then, there's the kind of racism that is more subtle. This is the kind of racism that makes it harder for people to get jobs or housing because of their colour or nationality.

All forms of racism involve making assumptions and generalisations or stereotypes about people who are a different colour. These stereotypes often view other people as inferior, and are used to justify the exclusion of people from opportunities, resources and power. Even today, the authorities, some politicians and sections of the media will promote racist ideas to justify their views on particular issues. These might include unemployment, housing shortages and crime.

Racial Harrassment

There is racially motivated abuse, which can be verbal or physical, and can include attacks on property as well as people. Racial abuse and threatening behaviour can happen in lots of different places, including work, school, in or near your home, on public transport or in the street. It can happen over a long period of time and can make life a misery for the victims.

In Ireland

According to the ESRI, in 2006 50% of black people say they have been racially abused or threatened in the last 12 months. The Teachers Union of Ireland found that 46% of teachers have witnessed racism in the classroom in the month prior to their conference. It also features on the internet. In 2010, Facebook closed down an Irish group entitled 'Why I hate Romanian gypsies', which had more than 3,000 fans.

Racist Attacks

'Racist attacks terrorise family', 'Race motive in murder attack', 'My experience of racism- Eamon Zayed', 'Race motive behind attack on athlete'. Just some of the headlines on the news section of www.theredcard.ie in the last year. Institutions can add to increasing racism. A well-known case is that of Stephen Lawrence, a black 17-year-old student from south east London. He was at a bus stop in Eltham, London, with his friend Duwayne Brooks in April 1993, when they were attacked by a gang of five white youths shouting racist abuse. Duwayne managed to escape, but Stephen was stabbed to death.

The police investigation failed to bring Stephen's killers to justice, but Stephen's parents, Doreen and Neville Lawrence, carried on fighting for justice for their son. Their campaign persuaded the then Home Secretary Jack Straw to call for a public inquiry in July 1997, the results of which were published on 24 February 1999. The conclusion of the McPherson report pointed to endemic Institutional Racism which blocked the development of the investigation.

What is Institutional Racism?

Institutional racism describes the way in which people suffer from racism, because it is there in the structure of society - structures like the police, the legal system, businesses and so on. Macpherson's report in the UK was issued to consider how the police had failed to apprehend the murder of Stephen Lawrence. The report brought to light the issue of institutional racism and describes institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

-- How the Macpherson report in the UK described Institutional Racism (1999)

The Macpherson Report has changed the way that police have to deal with incidents where racism might be a factor. Until the report, an incident was only treated as racist if the police thought it was.

Now, if the person suffering the incident thinks it was racist, then the police have to treat it as racially motivated.



05

Standards

The UEFA 10 point plan against racism

The UEFA 10 point plan against racism is a good starting point for developing policies towards promoting anti-racism and interculturalism in sport. Show Racism the Red Card encourages all sports to adopt such a plan.

1. Issue a statement saying the club will not tolerate racism, spelling out the action it will take against those engaged in racist chanting. The statement should be printed in all match programmes and displayed permanently and prominently around the ground.
2. Make public address announcements condemning racist chanting at matches.
3. Make it a condition for season-ticket holders that they do not take part in racist abuse.
4. Take action to prevent the sale of racist literature inside and around the ground.
5. Take disciplinary action against players who engage in racial abuse.
6. Contact other clubs to make sure they understand the club's policy on racism.
7. Encourage a common strategy between stewards and police for dealing with racist abuse.
8. Remove all racist graffiti from the ground as a matter of urgency.
9. Adopt an equal opportunities' policy in relation to employment and service provision.
10. Work with all other groups and agencies, such as the players union, supporters, schools, voluntary organisations, youth clubs, sponsors, local authorities, local businesses and police, to develop pro-active programmes and make progress to raise awareness of campaigning to eliminate racial abuse and discrimination.

A level playing field for all

- * There are a number of agencies responsible for dealing with racism and related issues.
- * If you feel you have been or know someone who has been discriminated against you can contact the legal section of the [Equality Authority](#) and pursue your case.
- * If you have been a victim of a race related crime you can report to the [Garda Intercultural Unit](#).
- * [Show Racism the Red Card](#) aims to raise awareness so we are interested in hearing from you via our **Incident Report Card**.



06 Racism : A Brief History

Roots of Racism

Whilst racism is partly a result of fear and ignorance, the origins of racism are to be found in history. Slavery was not an invention of the middle ages - it had existed for more than a thousand years - but it started to become a more organised trade towards the end of the fourteenth century, when the Europeans began to take people from Africa against their will.

The slave trade, originally developed because of the growing demand for sugar, which lasted in Britain for about 150 years. **Irish merchants were part of this trade.** By the early eighteenth century, Britain was one of the richest slave trading nations in the world, with large numbers of slaves being transported from African and Asian colonies to Europe and America.



Trading System known as the "triangular trade".

Triangular Trade

A trading system known as the “**triangular trade**” was created to obtain sugar and other goods. Ships left Bristol, Liverpool and London carrying textiles, gunpowder, silk and other goods. These were then traded in Africa for slaves. The slaves were taken to the Caribbean and America to work on plantations, where they were exchanged for sugar, cotton, spices and rum. These goods were then taken back to Britain and sold.

Over 30 million people were taken from West Africa and sold into slavery

They were transported in horrific conditions often beaten and mutilated, with one in five failing to survive the journey. Those that did survive could only expect to live another 2 to 4 years, so bad were the working conditions in the plantations. Many slaves tried to escape or rebel, and even suicides were a daily occurrence.

Many people were horrified by the brutality of the slave trade and wanted to stop it. This led the people who supported it to develop theories to justify what they were doing. They claimed that some slaves had caught a rapidly spreading disease, the symptoms of which made the slaves run away!

Blacks were naturally lazy, people were told, which is why they hated working on the plantation. Defenders of the slave trade also said that blacks were less intelligent than whites; they were “sub-human” and had tails. These ideas were backed by church leaders, writers and academics and soon **a large number of myths about black people were spread about Europe**. “The African slave in America was happier than in his own civilisation”-- slavery supporter quoted in CLR James “**The Black Jacobins**”.

Cromwells Conquest of Ireland

Ireland as a colonised country was subject to slavery also with over one hundred thousand transported to the West Indies in the aftermath of Cromwell’s conquest of Ireland. **This legacy continues to this day, in that Irish surnames are common in the islands of the Caribbean.**

In 1784, Limerick became the first Irish port to attempt to promote a slave-trade company. It is doubtful whether direct Irish involvement in the slave trade was ever very substantial. Much more significant was the involvement of Irish merchants in provisioning the West Indian plantations. In fact, provisioning the Caribbean slave plantations proved to be one of the chief factors in the development of some of Ireland’s major ports. In effect, Irish merchants came to be almost as dependent on slavery as their colleagues in England.



07

Racism & Fascism

“They came for the Communists, and I didn’t object for I wasn’t a Communist.....”

“They came for the Socialists, and I didn’t object for I wasn’t a Socialist.....”

“They came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t object - for I wasn’t a trade unionist.....”

“They came for the Jews, and I didn’t object for I wasn’t a Jew.....”

“Then they came for me - and there was **no one left to object.**”

- Martin Niemoller, German Protestant Pastor,
1892-1984

Racist chants on the terraces at football matches have been an issue in football for many years and football grounds have been a favourite place for fascist groups to recruit new members. Kevin Keegan remembers walking into a football ground once and being handed a leaflet with a picture of an ape on it, which said “Would you like these people to have your job?”.

This was a leaflet probably produced by a fascist group, like the National Front or the British National Party, who were targeting that ground and who were using racist ideas to promote their party. However, not everyone who is a racist is also a fascist. So what’s the difference?

What is Racism?

Racism is the belief that because people are a different colour, or from a different country that they are inferior. It can take many forms. For example, it is racist to deny a black or Asian person a job simply on the basis of the colour of their skin.

What is Fascism?

Fascism is a much wider set of ideas. Fascists want to get rid of democracy and replace it with a dictatorship that can crush any opposition. Fascists will use the prejudices that are widely held about particular groups of people to advance their ideas.

Support for fascist parties often increases during a recession, or when unemployment increases and when divisions in society widen. Fascism was particularly popular in the 1920s and 1930s, when fascist parties held power in Italy under Mussolini, between 1922 and 1943, and in Germany under Hitler, between 1933 and 1945. **Both used racist and nationalist ideas to increase their support.**

Racism is a very powerful force, which is why fascist groups make use of it to boost their support. In Ireland there are no fascist parties but in Europe neo-fascist parties include the British National Party, National Alliance in Italy, and the National Front amongst others. They target minority groups of members, the main groups they target are black and Asian people.

For example, fascists will try to make use of the fears of white people about not having a job or somewhere to live, by spreading scare stories about "floods" of black refugees and immigrants into Britain, rather than directing people's attention towards the government and people in power, and asking them for answers to the problems people worry about.

Did you know?

1. 60 Irish people died fighting fascism in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39.
2. The Ireland V England friendly game was called off in 1995 due to riots instigated by neo-fascist group Combat 18 (18 so called after Adolf Hitler's initials sequence of the alphabet).
3. When Hitler gained power, he dissolved parliament and sent those he blamed for Germany's economic collapse - the Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and Trade Unionists - to the concentration camps. As a result, millions died before and during World War 2.



08

American Civil Rights Movement

What are Civil Rights?

They are the personal rights of the individual citizen, upheld by law in most countries. The American civil rights movement is one of the most important movements in American history.

It was a movement against racism and injustice, which touched every black family in America in some way, and has had a lasting impact on later anti-racist movements.

The civil rights movement began in the 1950s when, despite the abolition of slavery, black people still lived in poverty, under a system of racial segregation, known as “**Jim Crow**”. Many southern states denied blacks the right to vote, organise or meet together. Transport, public toilets and schools were segregated, with the worst conditions reserved for black people.

Action in the civil rights movement began in Montgomery, Alabama, when a woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white person. Black people had to pay for their bus fare at the front of the bus, and then get on at the back. When all the “Whites Only” seats at the front were full whites had the right to demand that blacks in the next row give up their seat. When Rosa Parks refused to move, she was dragged off the bus, arrested and fined \$10. **This was the first time a black person had been charged with violating the city’s segregation laws.** The black community was outraged and decided; it was time to fight back.

A one-day boycott of the buses was organised, but it was so successful that it continued for a year. What started as a campaign for more sensitive treatment became a demand for the complete abolition of segregation on the buses. During the year of the campaign many blacks had to walk miles to work each day, and racist whites bombed eight black churches. However, when the State of Alabama finally agreed to desegregate the buses this was seen as the first major victory for the civil rights movement.



Rosa Parks with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the background, circa 1955.

The churches, which played an important role in the life of the black community, were used to organise the campaign. One of the ministers asked to lead the protest was Martin Luther King. He went on to become the most famous leader of the civil rights movement.



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), Most Famous Leader of American Civils Rights Movement.

School Segregation

Little Rock in Arkansas in 1957 was the scene of the first confrontation regarding the desegregation of schools. Segregation in schools had been abolished in the law courts, but when nine black teenagers tried to go to a school in Little Rock they were physically prevented by racist whites. It was necessary for the government to send in troops to ensure that the black students could enter the school safely. The government had to act on behalf of black people.

Young People & the Civil Rights Movement

Young people played an important part in the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. It all started when four black students went into a whites-only canteen and refused to leave until they were served. This was the start of the **“sit-in” movement**, when young people would enter lunch bars and demand to be served. When they were refused they would sit-in. The invasion meant that bar owners lost money. When police came to remove the protesters there were always more groups to take their place. Thousands of young people were arrested and many expelled from school, but the sit-ins continued.

The Legacy

The civil rights movement spanned over 25 years, with many anti-racist groups and organisations growing out of it. Not only was the movement about fighting racism, it was also about fighting the poverty that many black families were forced to live in. Even in America today, such movements against racism and poverty are just as important as ever.



09

Travellers & Racism

Irish Travellers

Travellers and Traveller culture have been marginalised and rejected over the centuries. There continues to be a prevailing climate affecting Travellers in Ireland today. **Accepting, resourcing and celebrating Traveller identity, language, culture and heritage is a central element in any strategy to counter this situation and improve the circumstances of Travellers.**

There are a number of theories about the origins of the Irish Travelling people. One theory is that they are descendants of people who lost their land during the Irish potato famine of 1847 ; but there is quite a lot of evidence to show that their language, culture and lifestyle predate the famine by several hundred years.

Laws had already been passed in England during the 13th and 15th Centuries designed to curtail the “wandering Irish”. The word “tinker”, which means tin craft, appeared in documents as early as the 12th century and referred to travelling craftspeople who played an important role in Irish society and the Irish economy.

For a long time there was a view that Ireland did not have a problem of racism because of the homogenised state of our nation. However travellers are a minority with a distinct history in Ireland going back hundreds of years who have maintained their identity through the industrial revolution and into modern times.

The levels of deprivation, poor health and life expectancy amongst travellers in Ireland is a reflection of the problematic relationship that they have had with the state and others in Irish society. This relationship has been characterised by prejudice and has long been adversarial leading to isolation and exclusion from society for many travellers.

For more information see: www.pavepoint.ie and the www.itmtrav.com

Racism at an individual level is evident when:

- * Settled people march on or attack Travellers' sites,
- * Travellers are harassed out of housing estates,
- * Travellers are refused service in shops or pubs,
- * Anti-Traveller literature is printed or distributed.

Racism at an institutional level is evident when:

- * The educational system makes little provision, in either content or structure, for the culture of Travellers or other minority ethnic groups,
- * The media often reinforces negative stereotypes,
- * The laws and practices of local authorities actively discourage nomadism.

Roma People

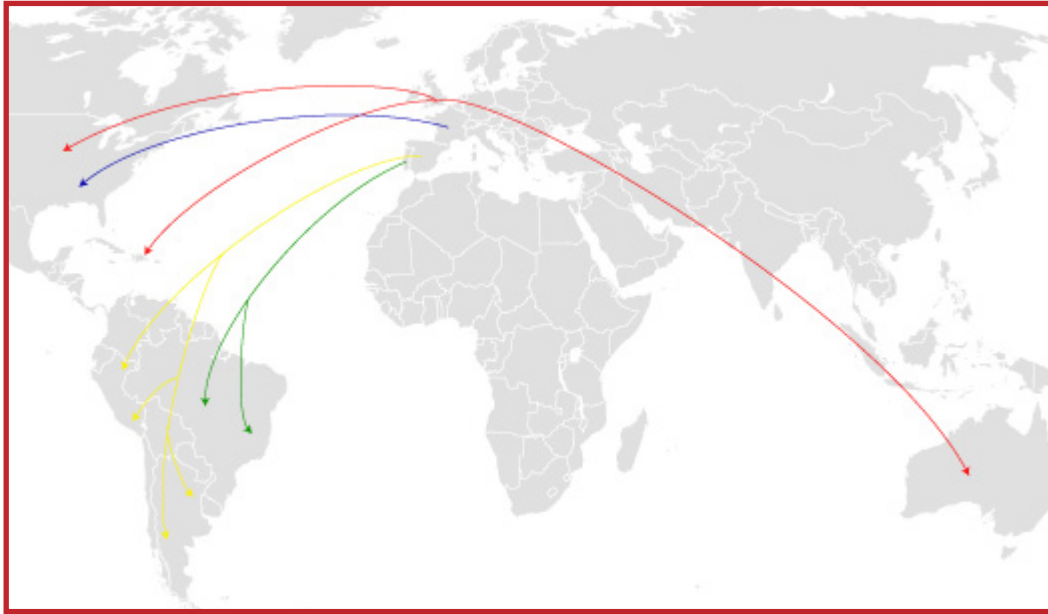
It is estimated that there is 3000 Roma living in Ireland. Many arrive here having suffered discrimination in central and eastern European countries.

For a long time the origins of the Roma people were shrouded in mystery, but through study of the spoken Romani language, which is very close to Sanskrit and to such living languages as Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali or Gujarati, we can trace the origins of the Roma to India. At the beginning of the 11th Century an army assembled from different ethnic groups within India, fought the invading forces of General Mahmud of Ghazni who wanted to push Islam eastwards into India. The army moved out of India and west in to Persia, battling Muslim forces on the way.

This was the beginnings of the Roma people, assembled from diverse groups who spoke different languages and dialects, who as they moved further and further from their land of origin, began to acquire their own ethnic identity and develop their own Romani language. The Roma arrived in the Byzantine Empire, (modern day Greece and Turkey) by c.1000 and crossed into southeast Europe in about the year 1300.

Early Persecution in Europe

Since the arrival of the Roma in Europe, there have been many large-scale state-sponsored persecutions against them. The earliest laws against Roma were passed in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1471. Enslavement of the Roma had already taken place by this point in parts of Europe. The first recorded transaction of Roma slaves, was in Romania in 1385. Other European countries also enslaved the Roma and sent them to work in their colonies, the English sent them to Barbados, Australia and North America. The French sent many of their Roma to Louisiana in the early 19th Century, the Portuguese sent many of their Roma to Brazil and Spain deported many to South America.



Colonies were enslaved Roma people where sent to work in the early 1800's.

Genocide of the Roma in the Holocaust :

Roma were the only other population besides the Jews who were targeted for extermination on racial grounds in the Final Solution. Up to one and a half million Romani lives were lost by 1945.

Determining the number of Roma who died in the Holocaust, is not easy. Many of the murders were not recorded, since they took place in forests and fields, where the Roma were apprehended. Nobody was called to testify on behalf of the Romani victims at the Nuremburg Trials and no war crimes reparations have ever been made to the Roma as a people.

Persecution of Roma People Today

The Roma people remain one of the main victims of racism in Europe today. Many Governments still legislate against sites for the Roma and as in parts of Europe in earlier times a policy of trying to get travellers to give up a mobile life and remain sedentary is still enforced by some countries. Roma are still targeted for racial violence throughout Europe as prejudice and stereotypes about the Roma, as a people are still prevalent. Today neo-Nazi activity in Europe makes the Roma its prime target of racial violence.

For more information see : www.romasupport.ie



10

Asylum Seekers & Refugees

In 1992, there were 50 people who applied for asylum in Ireland. In 2001 there were more than 12,000 asylum seekers and today there are just over 6,000. Either way the number of people applying for asylum has increased in the last fifteen years. There are many reasons why but the myths about asylum seekers stop many of us discovering the reasons why people come to Ireland to apply to be a refugee.

Myths

Have you heard the followings statements?

"I was at a bus stop and the bus driver asked if the Nigerian woman wanted to bring the buggy on but she said no because she would go and get another from the welfare officer."

"They get mobile phones from the welfare."

"The social welfare are buying cars for refugees. I swear it. I had a health board cheque given to me for a car."

Why people insist on mouthing such untruths will remain a mystery, but what is not a mystery is the difficult conditions people face when they arrive in Ireland to apply for asylum.

People seeking asylum live in what is called 'Direct Provision' Accommodation. These accommodation centres provide asylum-seekers with 3-meals a day and a small cash allowance of £19.10 per adult and £9.60 per child per week, plus child benefit (this has not changed since November 1999, even though other social welfare benefits have been increased since then). However in 2004, entitlements to child benefit was withdrawn.

Asylum seekers can also apply for exceptional needs payments but the payments are discretionary and in recent years, these have been drastically reduced or cut off.

Being confined to designated accommodation centres and dependent on hostel staff has a clear impact on the self-sufficiency of asylum seekers and their ability to regain their independence and autonomy.

The lack of personal space and privacy tends to become a source of friction and contribute to stress and frustration. Financially impeded from accessing suitable private accommodation many asylum seekers have no control over many fundamental aspects of their daily life.

According to the Reception and Integration Agency's monthly statistics update, as of 30 April 2004, over 50% have been in direct provision for periods ranging from 9-24 months, with 7% having been there for over 2 years.

Official figures published for the first time in this report show that, in 2003-2004, a total of 2,798 people were held in prison for immigration-related reasons. In 2004, some two thirds of those detained were held in prison for periods of longer than 51 days. The grounds used to detain asylum seekers in prison include; people refused permission to land, applicants for asylum and people due to be deported.



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