

**LEADER'S GUIDE:**

# The Roma *of* Europe

**BY DEE DEE AZHIKAKATH**



United  
Methodist  
Women

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

**Leader's Guide: *The Roma of Europe* by Dee Dee Azhikakath**

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Director of Mission Education and Enrichment  
United Methodist Women  
The United Methodist Church  
475 Riverside Drive, room 1504  
New York, NY 10115  
Phone: (212) 879-3745  
Fax: (212) 870-3695

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# Introduction

This Leader's Guide is a complementary resource to the book *The Roma of Europe*, and the purpose of this study is to engage participants with the history of the Roma, celebrate the Roma's contributions, educate them on the present condition of the Roma, and inspire participants to become advocates and partners with the Roma as they seek justice.

Some participants might have some knowledge about the Roma, others might enter this study with only typecasts that are presented to us through popular media, and yet others might come with no knowledge of the Roma or Romani culture. As the study leader, you are encouraged to help break down stereotypes and create an atmosphere of tolerance and open-mindedness to the Romani culture. You are encouraged to help educate the group about all aspects of the Romani culture, people, and their plight through meaningful dialogue and in-depth discussion based on the information presented in the corresponding reading. Finally, you are encouraged to spark the participants to action so that after the study they will go forth to share the Romani story and join the Roma in seeking justice for their people around the world.

Jesus Christ commanded us in the Golden Rule, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). It is with this in mind that we must enter this study. We are all God's people. We are all blessed with gifts from God. We are all loved by Christ and asked to love others accordingly.

## **Study Guide Planning and Options**

As we are reminded in the introduction to *The Roma of Europe*, not all Roma are alike. Likewise, not all participant groups are alike. You will need to plan for four 120-minute sessions, inclusive of opening and closing worship. This study guide gives you more activity options than time allotted. Anticipating your group, facility, and materials available will help you select which activities you would like to do during the 120-minute sessions. You may lengthen or shorten activities according to your group's needs. For example, the Opening Worship includes two songs and two scriptures. They can be paired down to five minutes by only using one of each. As the leader, trust your instincts to know if your group wants to continue longer in an activity if it is bringing about good dialogue and growth. Keep in mind, the minute annotations on the devotions and activities are only suggestions.

## Language

People are important, and it is just as important to address them respectfully. As suggested by the European Roma Rights Centre, we will use the term *Roma* as a proper noun, while *Romani* is an adjective, as in “The Roma are...” and “The Romani culture...”

## Worship

Wherever two or more are gathered, Christ is with them (Matthew 18:20). You may not have access to a chapel for worship, and the time required to move to and from the space might hinder you. To make your room feel more sacred, bring a small table and lay on it a cloth, candle, and cross. At the beginning of each session you may want to light the candle and have it burn through the end of closing worship. (Check with your facility to be sure open flames are allowed.) This simple altar symbolizes the invitation of the Holy Spirit in your space, not only in worship but also for your whole time together during the session. You may invite different people to light the candle each session.

The opening and closing worship sessions have hymns and songs. Most are from *The United Methodist Hymnal* and *The Faith We Sing*. If you are not able to access any accompaniment, you may try a few alternate options. For those who have Internet access at their facilities, HymnSite.com is a free site that allows you to type in the United Methodist hymn and play it in three or more musical instrument options. You may also purchase a musical accompaniment CD through Cokesbury. You can play it on your computer (with speakers to project the sound) or bring a CD player. (Be sure to have an electrical outlet handy if you use a CD player.) Another option is to download the songs onto your computer through a purchase site like iTunes. Or, finally, do not underestimate the power of a cappella singing. As you worship, remember John Wesley’s words: “Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature.”<sup>1</sup>

When reading the scriptures, it is assumed that the participants will have their own Bibles. Translations, however, may differ greatly. You may choose to print out the scriptures to pass out to everyone to enable a group reading of the passages. Websites such as bible.oremus.org and www.biblegateway.com offer many translations. Try to use common translations such as the New Revised Standard Version and New International Version.

## Space, Materials, and Equipment

Ideally, this study is best conducted in a space that has an area with table and chairs and an open space for activities. If your space is limited, request an area where the table and chairs can be moved to the side, stacked, or folded for some of the more interactive activities. Otherwise, see if a larger open space is available near to your “regular” space when more

movement is needed. Tables are not necessary, as most of the writing can be done on one's lap or the floor. Nevertheless, tables are more comfortable for the participants when taking notes or for some of the activities that require books.

The DVD *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith* will be used in every session. It is strongly suggested you have a projector or TV, DVD player, computer, speakers (or some kind of sound system), and electrical outlets available in your setting. An extension cord and power strip are also recommended for more flexibility when setting up. If you are unable to have a computer and/or projector to play the DVD, you may use a TV and DVD player.

If your group is small, you may be able to view the video from a computer screen. For optimal viewing, however, a projector is ideal.

Most of the activities only require the study book, slips of paper, newsprint, pens/markers, and Bibles. Participants should bring Bibles and copies of *The Roma of Europe* to each session. In addition to the one video offered in each lesson, there are other opportunities to use the Internet to look up documents, play music, watch dance instruction, and more. While a computer and Internet access is not a requirement for your space, it would greatly enhance the participants' experience and your activity options. There is a list of materials needed in each session and next to each activity. Once you select which activities you choose to do, you only need to gather those materials. Your access to materials might also help you determine which activities to implement.

### **Suggested Materials for All Sessions**

- CD player (optional)
- Computer with Internet access
- Copies of *The Faith We Sing*
- Copies of *The United Methodist Hymnal*
- DVD player
- Extension cord and power strip
- Extra Bibles or printouts of the session's scriptures
- Extra paper
- Pens and markers
- Projector with screen
- *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith* DVD

Enjoy your time to teach, know, and love the Roma.

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<sup>1</sup> "Directions for Singing," *The United Methodist Hymnal*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), vii.

# Session 1

## Beginnings

### Introduction

The first chapter of *The Roma of Europe* highlights historical information about the Romani people that may have been unknown to many readers. The chapter tells how the Romani gifts and culture influenced many of the countries where they live and have lived. While the reading provides general historical information, it also foreshadows the discrimination, stereotypes, and marginalization that the Roma face today. This session focuses on understanding Romani history. We will ask: Who are the Roma? How are they known? Where have they come from? How has that shaped who they are today?

### Materials

- Access to state and local laws (search for resources using an online search engine)
- Bibles or copies of this session's scriptures
- Blank sheets of paper, enough for at least two per participant
- Chapter 1 of *The Roma of Europe*
- Computer
- Copies of the Declaration of Independence (available online)
- Copies of *The Faith We Sing*
- Copies of *The United Methodist Hymnal*
- Copies of various local and state newspapers
- DVD player
- Internet access (optional)
- Markers and pens
- Paper bags, one per participant
- Projector and screen
- Small squares of paper, five per participant
- *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, "Who Are the Roma?"

### Opening Worship (10 minutes)

#### Call to Worship

Leader: Creator God, open our eyes,

**People: So we may see you and your people.**

Leader: Redeemer God, open our ears,

**People: So we may hear your teachings and truly listen to the stories of your people.**

Leader: Sanctifying God, open our hands,

**People: So we may embrace your people and love them as you love us.**

### **Song**

“God of Grace and God of Glory,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 577

### **Scripture**

Genesis 12:1–5

### **Song**

“They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love,” *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2223

### **Scripture**

Matthew 2:13–15

**Prayer** (leader or in unison)

With our eyes, our ears, and our hands, let us share and learn together. Guide us with open hearts to understand the Roma, their history, their plight, and our ministry with them as sisters and brothers in Christ. Amen.

## **Activities and Discussion:**

**Read and Report** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Ask the participants to sign up to be “reporters” of one chapter. Those who have already completed the reading in full might volunteer to be the reporters in the current session. In each session the reporters will summarize the chapter, noting at least five facts that may not be known to the group. It is expected and should be emphasized that the study book should be read to gain the full potential of Mission u.

Once everyone in the group has volunteered for their week, ask Session 1 reporters to share their summary and five facts for the first chapter.

**Family Tree** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Markers/pens and paper

So much of who we are develops from our family members and who they are or were. Have each person design a family tree. Invite them to add where they lived, jobs they have held, and talents or skills they might have passed down. Allow half of the time to develop the family

tree and half the time for the group to share their trees with one another. Participants should go back at least three generations. Following the exercise, highlight geographic moves and cultural characteristics of the Roma, as moving and trade were important parts of the Romani identity (see pages 9–14 of the text).

### **Migration and Devastation** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Paper bags, pens, small squares of paper

Give each person a paper bag, five squares of paper, and a pen. Ask each person to write his or her name on the bag. Then, invite participants to write down five things they cannot live without, one on each square. Ask each person to pass his or her bag clockwise. Upon receiving a bag, participants should pull out a piece of paper without looking and throw it in the center of the circle. Do this four times, until only one piece of paper remains in each bag. Return the bags to their original owners. Do not let the owners look inside the bag. Ask the following questions, allowing for discussion between each one.

1. How did you feel having someone throw out a cherished item?
2. What is your fear when you look in the bag at what is left?
3. Would it feel better if your cherished item was intentionally selected or if your opinion was considered in the process?
4. How do you think the Roma felt having to leave their homes and many of their possessions behind?
5. How do you think the Roma felt being taken prisoner, forced into the army or slavery, or assimilated into another culture by outsiders?

After the discussion, participants can look in their bags to see what precious item survived migration and devastation.

### **Utopia Discussion** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Read out loud the following quote from *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More: “For if you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them.”

Ask the group and discuss: How does this quote pertain to the Romani history and their identity as you reflect on the frequent displacement of the Roma and the ways in which they suffered?

### **Video: “Who Are the Roma?”** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, DVD player, projector, screen

Watch the video, “Who Are the Roma?” Discuss the following questions:

1. What information was new to you in the video?
2. How did putting the faces to the Romani story affect your understanding of the Roma?

3. In her interview, Rev. Laura Trent states that the Romani culture “has its own laws. It has its own rules. It has its own boundaries.” How do you think this statement will influence your approach to learning about the Roma?
4. In the interview with Nóra Balogné Lakates, she describes herself and the Roma as people who have their hearts open. What images surface with that illustration?

### **Notes of Pain and Promise** (25 minutes)

**Supplies:** Hymnals, Bibles, pens, paper

Chapter 1 of the text notes the poem *A Sad Star* (page 11) and a line from a Romani song sung during the Holocaust, “They brought us in by the gate. They had us out through the chimney” (page 13).

Across civilizations, music and poetry have been outlets to share pain and sorrow as well as joy and excitement. Divide participants into pairs. Assign half the group to look through Lamentations and the Psalms, and have the other half of the group look through the hymnal. Ask each pair look for a poem or song that could speak to the Romani plight. Then have the groups share what they found, specifically noting what words and phrases pertain to the Romani story.

As an alternative, invite the pairs to write their own poem or song (perhaps to a familiar tune) that would reflect the Romani journey and speak to the Roma. Have each pair share their song or poem with the group. You may also choose to do both activities and just divide up the time accordingly.

### **Institutionalized Racism** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** Copies of the Declaration of Independence, local and state newspapers, access to state and local laws

Many countries, including the United States, have had laws that specifically marginalize and oppress people in society. Hand out copies of the Declaration of Independence. You may obtain a copy of the Declaration of Independence by searching the title on a Web search engine. It is public domain and displayed many places. Discuss the following questions as a group:

1. How do some of the laws pointed out in Chapter 1 compare or contrast with our political history? (See pages 10 and 11 for some examples of these laws.)
2. How has this document liberated or oppressed different groups of people throughout American history?
3. Are there current state or local laws that are still in governance that target a select population of people, just as there are those that affect the Roma in other parts of the world?

**Leader’s Note:** If your group is unable to list examples, [www.dumblaws.com](http://www.dumblaws.com) offers several examples of obscure U.S. state laws. While these laws are not all discriminatory, they can

merit a discussion about what brought about their legalization. Who are they protecting? Who are they harming?

## **Closing Worship** (5 Minutes)

### **Response to God**

Leader: Joseph fled with his family to Egypt to escape persecution.

**People: They were sojourners.**

Leader: We all come from different places and might one day move again.

**People: We are sojourners.**

Leader: No matter the path,

**People: We are led by Christ.**

### **Prayer**

At this time, allow the members of your group to share the joys and concerns so you may pray for one another and get to know one another on a personal basis. Have one member of the group pray for the joys and concerns lifted up.

### **Closing Song**

“Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 386, verse 1

# Session 2

## Culture

### Introduction

There are many assumptions about the Roma—who they are, their intentions, their intelligence, and their abilities. Often these assumptions are from stereotypes that have been passed on and influence legislation that causes further discrimination against the Roma. Not only are negative stereotypes crippling to another, but they are also damaging to those who perpetuate them. As Christians, we find our identity first with God, our creator. Yet, as we live in society, our identity is shaped by outside influences and images, negative and positive. This session will explore our own experiences with identity as well as embrace and appreciate the culture of the Roma.

### Materials

- CD player and CD or iTunes and computer
- Chapter 2 of *The Roma of Europe*
- Copies of local and national newspapers
- Copies of local legislation (optional)
- DVD player
- Internet connection (optional)
- Markers or crayons
- Paper
- *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, “Roma Life”

### Opening Worship (10 minutes)

#### Call to Worship

Today’s Call to Worship is translated from a Romani dialect. Rev. Zoltan Kurdi, a Methodist pastor committed to the Roma Mission of the UMC in Hungary provided the translation. The original Romani text is included below.

Leader: We are created in your image, O God!

**People: Each one of us blessed with gifts and graces.**

Leader: Guide us so we may see the gifts in others!

*Kasaveske kerdan ame sosko Tu san, ó amaro Dell!  
Savorazhenen ishtyisaran davipesa thaj gracijasa.  
Trad amen, kaj ando kaveresko manusho dikhelasas tyiro davipesa!*

### **Song**

“We Gather Together,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 131

### **Scripture**

Deuteronomy 24:17–18

### **Song**

“Guide My Feet,” *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2208

### **Scripture**

Matthew 5:46–47

### **Prayer** (leader or in unison)

Guide us, Lord, to understand and appreciate the beauty of all your people. Every person possesses unique and wonderful gifts, and yet we do not always welcome them. Be with us in the newness of a stranger, the hard conversations that bring about understanding, and the call of our discipleship beyond these walls. Amen.

## **Activities and Discussion:**

### **Read and Report** (5 minutes)

**Supplies:** none

Have the group of reporters for Session 2 share their summary and five facts with the group.

### **Migrants in the News** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Local and national newspapers, copies of local legislation (optional)

Give group members a newspaper. Have each person look for articles that discuss immigration, refugees, or other migrant-related issues. You may also search for local laws in your area that address these issues (e.g., those in Arizona might want to discuss SB 1070, which was examined by the U.S. Supreme Court). Once everyone has had time to go through the newspaper or read the copies of legislation provided, have the group discuss the articles and laws in light of the two scripture passages from the opening devotion (Deuteronomy 24:17–18 and Matthew 5:46–47).

### **What Shapes Our Identity?** (20 minutes)

**Supplies:** Paper, markers/crayons

Ask each participant to draw what embodies her or his identity (identities might include Christian, mother, wife, daughter, doctor, lawyer, etc.). As a group, share the drawings to understand each other's identities. Continue the discussion by asking the following questions:

- Is there a shared identity or characteristics within the group?
- Is there a characteristic that is unique?
- How much of our identity is shaped from where we live or the people we live near?

**Video: “Roma Family Life”** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, DVD player, projector, screen

Watch the video “Roma Family Life.” Discuss the following questions:

1. How did the narrator’s statement, “In this culture, women have many children and few options,” affect you?
2. What does the church—both the building and community—mean for the Roma?
3. What statistics or images that were shared about the Roma troubled you?
4. How do the dreams of the young reflect positivity for the whole community?

**Sharing Stories** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Stories are important to the Roma, and satirical stories are also part of the culture as shared in the second chapter (see page 21 of the text). You may choose to read one of the stories in Chapter 2 to the participants to begin this activity. Encourage participants to tell one another a satirical story about something in your culture or identity. What does the story depict about you? This is a great time to share those United Methodist jokes and stories. However, do not get too carried away with just storytelling. Be sure to also spend time recognizing what is being depicted.

**Romani Music** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** CD player and CD or iTunes, computer, and Internet connection (optional)

Listen to some Romani music. Věra Bilá, The Gipsy Kings, Roby Lakatos, Dan Armeanca, and Nicolae Guță are some more popular Romani musicians. Check out a CD of their music from the library and share some Romani music. Or download some songs from iTunes and share them with the group to reflect the different types of music. If you have an Internet connection, you may also browse the iTunes store and sample thirty seconds of different songs. After listening to some songs, lead a discussion with the group about the style, feel, and sound of the music. How is this music a reflection of the Roma?

**Romani Dance** (20 minutes)

**Supplies:** DVD player and DVD, guest teacher, or computer with Internet access

Just as the Roma were influenced by cultures where they lived, they also influenced the people around them. Belly dancing and the flamenco both have their roots in Romani dance styles and music. Learn a few moves from either or both of these dances. You may check out

an instructional DVD from the library to demonstrate some of these dances. As an alternative, you may show and follow along to two videos on YouTube that demonstrate these dances: [http://youtu.be/i\\_B79GBuHAE](http://youtu.be/i_B79GBuHAE) and <http://youtu.be/E9tW7hmi7sQ>. As a third option, if you know someone who is proficient in either of these dances, invite them to come and teach your group a few steps.

### **Romani Women** (20 minutes)

**Supplies:** Chapter 2 of *The Roma of Europe*

Read and discuss the information under “Roma Are Family Oriented,” found on pages 25–26 of the study book using the following questions:

- How do the roles of Romani girls and women compare and contrast with our American culture? Discuss the “Joint Statement of European Roma women activists” (page 26). What are the challenges? What are the opportunities?
- Have you experienced similar changes in the role of women in your lifetime? How does your experience affect your feelings towards Romani women and their struggles?
- What is your local United Methodist Women group doing to address some of these issues in the United States and around the world?

### **Home Sweet Home** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Read the following statement to the group: The Roma are referred to as “Travellers” or “Nomads” in different countries. It is a stereotype from their early history when they would be forced to move from place to place. In Chapter 2, this myth is addressed (see pages 23–24). Conversely, the U.S. real estate market estimates that people move every seven to ten years, and in the past decade, every five to seven years. Discuss the following questions:

- Does your understanding of the term Nomad or Traveller still apply or change knowing the U.S. statistic?
- With the current downturn of the economy, do people in the United States move for the same reasons those Travellers in Europe do?
- In a global and technologically based business world, how does human migration affect culture?

### **Closing Worship** (5 Minutes)

#### **Response to God**

Leader: Creator, you formed us in your image.

**People: You know us all by name.**

Leader: Redeemer, you have showed us how to love.

**People: We seek no other and only follow your ways.**

Leader: Sustainer, you have promised to be with us always.

**People: Lead us, guide us, and show us the path ahead.**

## **Prayer**

At this time, allow the members of your group to share the joys and concerns so you may pray for one another and get to know one another on a personal basis. Have one member of the group pray for the joys and concerns lifted up.

## **Closing Song**

“Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 386, verse 2

## Session 3

# The Roma Today— Crisis and Opportunity

### Introduction

The previous two sessions have focused on Romani history, plight, and stereotypes. This session focuses on their current situation. Just as not all Americans are the same, neither are all Roma. We must keep an open mind on our understanding of the Roma and not be swayed by the stereotypes represented on television and in other media. The key objective of this session is to emphasize that the stereotypes, oppression, and persecution that the Roma face directly correlates to the current laws and political atmosphere where they live.

### Materials

- Bibles in at least two different translations
- Chapter 3 of *The Roma of Europe*
- Container (e.g., paper bag, coffee can)
- Copies of history articles on Spain in 1492 and *Brown v. Board of Education*:
  - Spain: [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/expulsion.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/expulsion.html)
  - Brown: [www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html](http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html)
- DVD Player
- Five pieces of paper
- Internet connection and computer (optional)
- Markers
- Newsprint
- Pens/pencils for participants
- Projector and screen
- *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, “A Modern Roma Woman”
- Twelve country action plans printed from [www.romadecade.org/decade\\_action\\_plans](http://www.romadecade.org/decade_action_plans)

### Opening Worship (10 minutes)

#### Call to Worship

Leader: We have been forgotten and we have forgotten others,

**People: And you welcomed us even as an outsider.**

Leader: We have been oppressed and we have oppressed others,

**People: And you loved us and told us how precious we are.**

Leader: We have been misunderstood and we have misunderstood others,

**People: And you listened to every word we said and told us about our importance.**

Leader: No matter what we might say or do or what might be done to us, God, we know that you are with us—always, everywhere.

**People: Thank you for all the ways we are loved, listened to, and valued.**

**All: Amen.**

## **Song**

“Abraham Journeyed to a New Country”

(Sing to BUNESSAN 5.5.5.4 D, “Morning Has Broken”)

Abraham journeyed to a new country;  
Sarah went with him, journeying too.  
Slaves down in Egypt fled Pharaoh’s army;  
Ruth left the home and people she knew.

Mary and Joseph feared Herod’s order;  
Soldiers were coming! They had to flee.  
Taking young Jesus, they crossed the border;  
So was our Lord a young refugee.

Some heard the promise—God’s hand would bless them!  
Some fled from hunger, famine, and pain.  
Some left a place where others oppressed them;  
All trusted God and started again.

Did they know hardship? Did they know danger?  
Who shared a home or gave them some bread?  
Who reached a hand to welcome the stranger?  
Who saw their fear and gave hope instead?

God, our own families came here from far lands;  
We have been strangers, “aliens” too.  
May we reach out and offer a welcome  
As we have all been welcomed by you.

“Abraham Journeyed to a New Country”

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Music: Traditional Gaelic melody

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E-mail: [begillette@comcast.net](mailto:begillette@comcast.net). See also <http://carolynshymns.com>

## Scripture

Genesis 12:10–20

## Song

“O God of Every Nation,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 435

or

“Saranam, Saranam,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 523

## Scripture

Matthew 9:9–11

## Prayer

 (leader or in unison)

As your children, we have not always lived up to what you desired of us. We have lost who you created us to be. We pretend to be different people to blend into the crowd. We are guilty of persecution. We have not stood up for the rights of another. Through this study, remove the barriers of stereotypes from our lives, and give us the strength to reveal to the world the children you created us to be. Amen.

## Activities and Discussion:

### Read and Report

 (5 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Have the Session 3 reporters share their summary and five facts with the group.

### Scriptural Study

 (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Bibles in at least two different translations

Reread Genesis 12:10–20, preferably in a different version than what was read during devotions. Ask the following questions and discuss in the group:

- What fear drove Abram and Sarai to tell the lie?
- Why was God so angry?
- Do “outsiders” who live near us feel they must lie to assimilate?
- What do you think God thinks of us when we welcome strangers?

Reread Matthew 9:9–11, preferably in a different version than what was read during devotions. Ask the following questions and discuss in the group:

- What was the reaction of the Pharisees when Jesus accepted Matthew, a despised tax collector?
- Who are the outsiders and the despised in society now?
- What are some of the ways we are and are not modeling Christ’s example?

### **Shattering Stereotypes** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Newsprint, markers

Stereotypes have harmed the Roma economically and socially. Give everyone a marker. Draw two circles on the newsprint that overlap each other by fifty percent. Label one circle “on me” and the other “from me.” Then draw a large heart detached from the circles. Ask each participant to write down common stereotypes that they have experienced in the “on me” circle, and then have participants write down stereotypes they have or have had regarding others in the “from me” circle.

After everyone has written in the two circles, ask participants to share the feelings they have experienced as a result of these stereotypes. As the leader, write words inside the heart to describe the stories being shared (e.g. hurt, shame, embarrassment, etc.). Once everyone who wants to has shared, ask the group the following questions:

- How can we shatter stereotypes?
- How can we stand up to negative stereotypes?

As each person shares, have her or him tear a piece of paper off the newsprint. Keep sharing and tearing until the stereotypes and hurt heart are “shattered.”

### **Examining Action Plans** (20 minutes)

**Supplies:** Twelve country action plans or Internet access for all participants

Print the twelve action plans for the thirteen countries that signed the Decade of Roma Inclusion from [www.romadecade.org/decade\\_action\\_plans](http://www.romadecade.org/decade_action_plans). If all the participants have access to a computer, they can look at the documents online. Assign each group member a different country. If there are more countries than people, you may choose to assign two countries to each person so that they are all distributed. If there are more people than countries, have participants pair up. Ask each person to take a few minutes to get to know the country and their action plan. Then have everyone share about the country’s plan. After everyone has shared, discuss the following questions:

- What are their similarities?
- What were their differences?
- What country stood out to you as having the most realistic plan?
- Which one stood out as most helpful? Why?

### **Promote a Program** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Optional Internet connection and computer

As illustrated in Chapter 3, forced migration can be devastating to all. We also know that this is especially true for Romani children who can face homelessness, malnourishment, and lack of educational resources. (See pages 35–42 for examples.) Those who have experienced natural disaster, war, and even economic challenges often face forced migration and the potential problems that follow.

Divide the participants into pairs. Ask each person to share a plan on how they can help homeless children or improve education in his or her area. Have the pair decide on which plan is better. Have each pair link up with another pair and share their better plan, then have them select the best plan (i.e., four people will be presenting two plans and picking the best of the two). Continue doing this until the whole group is joined again. Share the plan that was selected. Take some time to flesh out the plan and see if your group can actually put it into action. If time allows with the whole Mission U, present your idea and see if all the participants can join in to make a difference in the lives of children.

Or, if you have an Internet connection, browse some of the United Methodist Advance Projects at [www.givetomission.org](http://www.givetomission.org) and find a project that your group could commit to supporting. Be sure it uplifts the priorities of reaching out to the Roma or addressing some of the issues facing them.

**Leader's Note:** Advance #3020676 directly addresses the Roma, but there are others that also address some Romani issues.

### **Learning from History** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Copies of history articles on Spain in 1492 and *Brown v. Board of Education*

The story of the Roma in France in 2010 (pages 37–39) is similar to that of the Jews living in Spain under Ferdinand's leadership in 1492. The 2012 ruling to desegregate the schools in Slovakia (page 46) is comparable to the United States' ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Pass out one or both articles that summarize these historical rulings. Ask participants to read the articles and review pages 37–39 and 46 in the text to refresh their memories. Compare and contrast the situations and rulings. What lessons do we need to learn from the past so they will not be repeated in the future?

### **Video: "A Modern Roma Woman"** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, DVD player, projector, screen

Watch the video, "A Modern Roma Woman." Discuss the following questions:

1. How does the theological concept of Imago Dei (Image of God) play a role in the lives of Romani women?
2. In the video, Cristiana Grigore spoke of ethnicity and culture not being the same. Discuss the differences. What was Cristiana denying as a child? What does she want to change for the future of Romani women?
3. How does education play a role in a new identity?
4. Discuss Cristiana's statement: "It is important to understand the past...and at the same time open ourselves up to another life." What can United Methodist Women members do to help the Romani women create another life?

### **It's Debatable** (20 minutes)

**Supplies:** Five pieces of paper, pen/pencil, container (e.g., paper bag, coffee can)

Write the following topics on separate pieces of paper.

- Arranged marriage for young children/teens
- Children work to help support families
- Same-sex schooling
- Gender-specific roles/duties
- Living with violence in a marriage versus divorce

Fold the topics and place them in a container (e.g., paper bag, hat, or can). Divide the group in half. Designate one group as pro and the other as con. Alternating between sides, have one group member from one side pull a debate topic from the container. Once a topic is selected from the container, give each side about a minute to discuss the issue as a team and then allow each side two minutes to debate its designated support for or against the topic.

**Leader's Note:** The rationale for this activity is to let the participants experience that there is no easy answer and to acknowledge the important role that culture plays in informing our worldview and understanding of right and wrong.

### **Closing Worship** (5 minutes)

#### **Response to God**

Leader: It only takes one to bring about change.

**People: Let me change my ways.**

Leader: Information can conquer fear.

**People: Help me to learn more.**

Leader: If community makes our faith stronger,

**People: Then let us come together to bring about change in the world, crushing stereotypes and oppression, so we may build up the community of Christ on earth.**

#### **Prayer**

At this time, allow the members of your group to share the joys and concerns so you may pray for one another and get to know one another on a personal basis. Have one member of the group pray for the joys and concerns lifted up.

#### **Closing Song**

"Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown," *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 386, verse 3

## Session 4

# The Church in Ministry with the Roma

### Introduction

As James 2:20 states, “Faith without works is dead.” Where will our faith and works be after this study is over? Will we return to our daily routine unfazed? Or will we use this study to change our lives and help impact the Roma? This final lesson will discuss what The United Methodist Church is doing and inspire the group to action.

### Materials

- Bibles
- Chapter 4 of *The Roma of Europe*
- Computer and Internet connection (optional)
- Copies of *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*
- DVD Player
- Markers
- Newsprint
- Paper (enough for each participant)
- Pens
- Projector and screen
- *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, “Walking in Faith with the Roma”
- Watch or timer

### Opening Worship (10 minutes)

#### Call to Worship

Leader: God of Abraham, you chose us.

**People: God of Moses, you brought us into the promise land.**

Leader: God of Naomi and Ruth, you witnessed to us hospitality.

**People: God of Jeremiah, you heard our lamentations.**

Leader: God of Daniel, you have rescued us from the worst scenarios and circumstances.

**People: God of Lydia, you have changed our lives and shown us a better way to live.**

**All: God, our God, you are the beginning and end. You have been with us all and will always be.**

## **Song**

“Lift Every Voice and Sing,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 519

## **Scripture**

Matthew 5:14–16

## **Song**

“The Summons,” *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2130

## **Scripture**

Ephesians 4:11–17

## **Prayer** (leader or in unison)

O God, you have first loved us and taught us how to love through your son, Jesus Christ. From his example, we have the knowledge and ability to love others as we would love ourselves. The more we love through faith and works, the more we can end oppression, war, persecution, hunger, and senseless pain. Continue to teach us as you walk with us and we strive to reach Christian perfection. Amen.

## **Activities and Discussion:**

### **Read and Report** (5 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

Have the Session 4 reporters share their summary and five facts with the group.

### **Reflecting on God’s Word** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** Bibles, paper, pens

The scriptures from this lesson’s opening worship call us to action. What scriptures rest on your heart in regards to the Roma and this study? Give participants about three minutes to think about the question and look up scripture if needed. Pass out paper and pens to everyone present. If the group is composed of ten people or less, allow everyone in the group to share scripture and its personal meaning to them. If there are more than ten people in the session, divide the group so that each person will have an opportunity to share with a smaller group of people. Invite participants to use the paper and pens to jot down scriptures as they are shared, so they may reference them for a devotional after the study is complete.

### **Video: “Walking in Faith with the Roma”** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** *The Roma: History, Culture and Faith*, DVD Player, projector, screen

Watch the video, “Walking in Faith with the Roma.” Discuss the following questions:

1. What inspired you from the video?
2. How does the image of a plant describe the ministry with the Roma?

3. Thomas Rodemeyer talks of The United Methodist Church's partnership with the Roma needing to be a lifelong commitment. Share how this statement parallels our theology of Christian perfection and holiness.
4. Courage. Connection. What are some of the other words that illustrate The United Methodist Church's ministry with the Roma?

### **Missional Chairs** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Chairs, watch or timer

This activity is similar to musical chairs. If you are not in a circle already, move your chairs so the whole group can see one another. Similar to musical chairs, when a person is out, he or she will remove her chair from the circle. Instead of music, however, we will use ideas to move around the circle. Starting with the leader and moving clockwise, have each person answer the question within ten seconds. A person is out when he or she fails to answer the question in the time allowed. As a leader, you can determine if a person is out for repeating a similar idea or if the participant can continue for saying any idea at his or her turn. When a person is out, the next person begins the idea circle again and moves it clockwise.

The question that everyone will have to answer is: Without changing the Roma culture, how can we empower Romani women to help overcome some of the obstacles in their way?

We have all heard negative statements such as "it won't work" and "it is too cumbersome to help" that stop mission work from moving forward. The hope of Missional Chairs is that it will be a positive exercise in coming up with ideas that could help the Roma. Participants are encouraged to be creative and not let money limit their answers. After the game is complete, wrap up by saying the following or something similar: There are ample ideas out there to help and empower the Roma. By God's grace and our work, there will be a way to make one or all of them happen.

### **Talking about a Resolution** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Copies of *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*

Divide participants into twos and threes and distribute a copy of *The Book of Resolutions* to each group. Ask each group to find any resolution that would support the Roma and empower people to speak out against the Roma's tribulations. Give the subgroups about ten minutes to find resolutions. For the remaining five minutes, allow the groups to share what they found.

**Leader's Note:** Some indexing ideas can be health, housing, women's rights, and child marriages. They can also look within Plans such as #5034, "Mission Plan for Restorative Justice Ministries," which was mentioned in Chapter 4 of the text.

### **Going to God** (15 minutes)

**Supplies:** Paper, pens

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20).

In the midst of the doing and learning, let us not lose sight of the power of prayer. Pass out paper and pens to the participants. Invite them to be in a time of prayer for ten to fifteen minutes. They may go to a quiet place in the room or remain where they are. With their pens and paper, they can write a prayer to God, prayer walk, or pray silently for the Roma. If you choose, you may invite the group to reassemble after ten minutes to share their prayers and insights with one another.

### **Questions and Answers** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** Watch, newsprint, markers

Distribute markers to everyone and place the newsprint so all have access to write on it. Invite the group to write any unanswered questions about the study or the Roma in the next sixty seconds. After the minute is up and if participants are physically able, invite them to help answer questions listed while standing around the paper. As the leader, you may read out all the questions first and then revisit them one by one. Or you may pick a question at random and pose it to the group to see if someone might offer a thought, response, or answer to it. Not all questions will be able to be answered. The objective is to bring about more questions they may not have considered and invite them to seek the answers after this study.

### **Plan for Action** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

As a group, review the statements under the “Now What” section on pages 62–63 of the text. Begin by reading (at least the title) out loud. Is there one that your group can covenant to do together? Is there one that you will covenant to do on your own? Open it up for discussion and create a plan of action beyond the study.

### **Take-away** (10 minutes)

**Supplies:** None

In closure to the study, ask the group the following questions:

- What will you take away from this study?
- What was one stereotype about the Roma that was broken?
- What is one thing you might share with someone who was not part of the study?

### **Closing Worship** (5 minutes)

#### **Response to God**

“Gelem, Gelem” (the unofficial anthem of the Roma)

Leader:

I have travelled over long roads

I have met fortunate Roma

I have travelled far and wide

I have met lucky Roma

**People:**

**Oh, Romani adults, Oh, Romani youth**

**Oh, Romani adults, Oh, Romani youth**

Leader:

Oh, Roma, from wherever you have come

With your tents along lucky roads

I too once had a large family

But the black legion murdered them

Come with me, Roma of the world

To where the Romani roads have been opened

Now is the time—stand up, Roma,

We shall succeed where we make the effort.

**People:**

**Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth**

**Oh, Roma adults, Oh, Roma youth**

“Gelem, Gelem” (the unofficial anthem of the Roma)

Words: Zarko Jovanovic; translated by Ronald Lee

Translation by Ronald Lee used by permission

### **Prayer**

At this time, allow the members of your group to share the joys and concerns so you may pray for one another and get to know one another on a personal basis. Have one member of the group pray for the joys and concerns lifted up.

### **Closing Song**

“Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 386, verse 4

# About the Author

## **Dee Dee Azhikakath**

Dee Dee Azhikakath is an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church and an alumna of Princeton Theological Seminary and Southern Methodist University. She has served churches in England, Tucson, Arizona, and Princeton, New Jersey. Azhikakath is currently serving as the executive director of the University of Arizona Wesley Foundation. She has written for UMC.org, Upper Room, Cokesbury, and others.

## Appendix A

# Optional Video Activities

The following videos can be found online and can be used to augment your study of the Roma. A computer with an Internet connection or a downloaded copy of the video (see below for information), projector, and video screen will be needed for each video. The optional video activities are available for sessions 1, 2, and 4.

If you do not have Internet access where you are teaching, you may choose to download the video(s) ahead of time using free programs such as Freecorder: <http://vixy.net/t3/inc/lightbox.php?src=vixy.net>. This allows you to download the video to your computer and then show it when you desire. Please check permissions.

### Session 1

#### **Optional Video: “Speculative Roma History”** (20 minutes)

“Speculative Roma History” is available online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzVK4M\\_qB8o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzVK4M_qB8o). You can download it ahead of time or stream the video if you have Internet access. Stop the video at 10 minutes 50 seconds, as we are unable to endorse the foundation’s plea for money following this mark.

Ask the group the following questions, and allow time for discussion after watching the video.

1. What information in the video was new to you?
2. What surprised you about the video?
3. How did putting faces to the story affect your understanding of the Roma?
4. How did the video compare/contrast concepts from Chapter 1?

### Session 3

#### **Optional Video: “Roma Communities in Romania”** (10 minutes)

“Roma Communities in Romania” is available online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfcGYtNLG2o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfcGYtNLG2o). You can download it ahead of time when you have an Internet connection or play it directly from the website if an Internet connection is available.

Discuss the following questions as a group after you watch the video.

1. What is your first reaction to viewing the video?
2. What images affected you?

## Session 4

### **Optional Video: “Ministry with the Roma”** (15 minutes)

“Ministry with the Roma” is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/cq7tdx6>. You can download it ahead of time when you have an Internet connection or play it directly from the website if an Internet connection is available. Preface the video to the group by letting them know it was shown at General Conference 2012 as a ministry highlight.

Discuss the following questions after watching the video.

1. What struck you about the information in the video?
2. What problems troubled you?
3. What positive things inspired you?