

ROMA FEMINIST ACADEMY

A Decolonial
Space for Political
& Critical Reflection,
Movement Building,
and Solidarity.



ROMNJA
FEMINIST
LIBRARY

Feminist collective of
ROMANI GENDER EXPERTS



Calmona

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* *A Decolonial Space for Political & Critical
Reflection, Movement Building and Solidarity!*



ABOUT THE ROMA FEMINIST COLLECTIVE

The Roma Feminist Collective is a transnational Roma feminist network working at the intersection of racial and gender justice. We build collective power by strengthening the Roma feminist movement through cross-border mobilization and organizing shifting responsibility from individuals to the structures that sustain harm.

Our work documents the violence experienced by Roma women and girls as transgenerational, cross-border, and institutional, rooted in systems of harm and abandonment. We use this evidence to advocate for the abolition of gendered heteropatriarchal racism and state violence across Europe and beyond its borders.

We understand violence as encompassing physical, psychological, and epistemic harm, recognizing that systemic injustice is embedded in institutions and in economic, social, and political structures. This analysis reflects our Roma intersectional feminist and anti-racist perspective, shaped by lived experience, collective struggle, and resistance.

We believe that advancing the rights, and liberation of Roma women strengthens the safety, dignity, and self-determination of Roma communities as a whole, including men and gender-diverse people. Our struggle is inseparable from the collective struggles of racialized, colonized, and Global South communities. By naming violence, we create the conditions to challenge it and to build societies grounded in dignity, justice, and freedom.

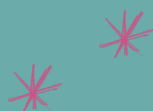


* ABOUT ROMNJA FEMINIST LIBRARY:

The Romnja Feminist Library is a transnational platform where Romani women and Romani queers reclaim narratives and fight for justice beyond borders and academia. We aim to respond to systems that have historically erased, extracted, and misrepresented the knowledge held by our communities by centering the knowledge of our communities in digital spaces and beyond; across activist, academic, and decision-making spaces.

We envision a just future where future generations of Roma do not have to navigate the same exclusion, erasure, and invisibility that shaped our experiences.

Our work is rooted in Roma feminism, decolonial thinking, collective care, solidarity, courage, transparency, anti-racism, and the belief that community led knowledge can become a foundation for building collective power.





INTRODUCTION TO THE ROMA FEMINIST ACADEMY

The Roma Feminist Academy is a space for political, critical reflection, collective learning, and solidarity building among Romani and racialised women, activists, human rights defenders, lawyers, researchers, and community organizers. It is established in response to a persistent and systematic exclusion: the marginalization of anti-Roma racism from global anti-racist and decolonial thought. For decades, mainstream academic, policy, and activist frameworks have treated Roma struggles as exceptional—a regional issue, a minority problem, or a social grievance rather than a structural condition rooted in centuries of racialised violence. As discussed during the *Decolonizing Knowledges* webinar, European institutions have consistently framed Roma issues through the lens of social integration and depoliticised vulnerability, effectively separating anti-Roma racism from the broader architectures of racial capitalism, coloniality, and state violence. This framing functions as a mechanism of epistemic erasure, making Roma experiences invisible within conversations that shape global understandings of racism, abolition, and liberation. The Roma Feminist Academy was therefore conceived as a deliberate intervention where Black liberation, Indigenous struggles, anti-caste movements in South Asia, land defence in Latin America are not separate fights from Roma rights. It is a decolonial knowledge space where Romani and racialized women and men reclaim the agency to name their own oppression, centre their lived realities as legitimate



epistemic claims, and build collective power on their own terms, while strengthening solidarity, critical consciousness, and collective strategies for social transformation.

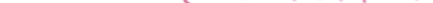
WHY THE ROMA FEMINIST ACADEMY MATTERS

The Academy emerged from an urgent need to dismantle the depoliticization of Roma struggles. For too long, European institutions have framed Roma issues as social problems requiring technical solutions—poverty alleviation, housing improvements, educational integration—rather than as the direct outcomes of structural anti-Roma racism. This depoliticization isolates Roma struggles from global conversations about racial capitalism, coloniality, and abolition, pushing them into the realm of charity rather than justice. Therefore, through the academy we aimed to re-centre the discussion of anti-Roma racism as exactly what it is: **structural racism**. Not individual and social prejudice. Not cultural misunderstanding. Not a failure of integration. A system of domination, dispossession, control and dehumanization that has operated for centuries and continues to adapt across political regimes—from feudalism to communism to liberal democracy.

During the webinar on racial capitalism, Margareta Matache put it plainly: anti-Roma racism must be connected to the history of Europe—not as an exception, but as central to how Europe was built. The five hundred years of racialised enslavement in Wallachia and Moldavia, and the monopoly of land, resources, and belonging that excluded Roma across the continent, are not side stories but the foundation. She argued that liberal policies have failed Roma communities because they were never meant to tear down the system only to manage its worst effects. What is needed, she said, are structural interventions that name the past, interrupt the present, and build alternatives for the future. Her framework of *oftisialo telchudipen*—structural anti-Roma racism—gives us the tools to do that. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, in the same conversation, made us understand that abolition is not a blueprint but a practice. It is what we discover by doing—by fighting against land-grabbing, time-grabbing, and life-grabbing. Her words gave us a language for what the Academy had already begun to do: *to interrupt*, to refuse, and *to build*.

HOW WE DID IT:

The Roma Feminist Academy is a mixed approach — public, high-visibility webinars alongside closed, community-based national training — was a deliberate political strategy. It was never designed to be only a webinar series. It was also never designed to be only a set of national trainings. The webinars served to **situate Roma struggles within global conversations** about racial capitalism, abolition, decoloniality, climate and digital justice. They were open to the public, and are archived in



This mixed approach is grounded in a decolonial understanding of knowledge production and power: it recognises that movements are built not only through visibility and public discourse, but through the sustained cultivation of situated knowledges, lived experience, and collective political analysis. In this sense, the Academy works at the intersection of epistemic justice and movement infrastructure, strengthening both the ability to speak into dominant spaces and the capacity to organise, sustain, and transform conditions on the ground.

THE WEBINAR SERIES ✱

Decolonizing Knowledge – Centering Racialized Voices as an Anti-Racist Praxis.

How do we move from being researched to being knowledge producers – and what happens when even our resistance is captured by institutional frameworks? Key concepts that were introduced: The depoliticisation of Roma struggles, the "inclusion trap", the separation of racialised struggles as a technology of colonial control, the difference between being invited to speak and shaping the terms of debate.

This opening session was a deliberate political intervention into a landscape where Roma struggles have been systematically excluded from global anti-racist and decolonial conversations. The speakers were Alba Hernández from the Roma Feminist Collective and from the Romnja Feminist Library, Aldessa Lincan in collaboration with Chaimaa Boukharsa from Afrocolectiva, an Afrofeminist, pan-Africanist collective, Sarah Chander from Equinox,



Initiative for Racial Justice, and Carmen Gheorghe from E-Romnja, a Roma feminist organisation based in Romania. The composition of the panel itself is a statement: that the struggles against anti-Roma racism, anti-migration, Islamophobia, and border violence are not separate fights. They are fronts in the same global war. In the dialog, speakers observed that European institutions consistently frame anti-Roma racism as social problems — poverty, housing, education — rather than as racial justice concerns. This depoliticization, alongside the broader depoliticization of anti-racism, follows a logic of fragmentation and differential recognition that is central to how institutional power operates. It separates anti-Roma racism from the wider grammar of structural racism and organises visibility through institutional terms of recognition. In doing so, it produces a hierarchy in which some forms of violence are made intelligible because they fit institutional frameworks, while others are pushed outside what can be recognised at all. The result is a weakening of solidarities across racialised communities and a displacement of political recognition away from collective self-definition toward institutional validation. This practice was also named the "inclusion trap": the way institutions invite racialised people to the table only to discipline them, extract their knowledge, or tokenise their presence without any meaningful shift in power.

At the same time, we cannot separate these dynamics from contemporary forms of imperial governance, including war-making and the increasing militarisation of European policy. The expansion of EU "security" frameworks, mass surveillance infrastructures, mass deportation, and border regimes is not unrelated to how racialised violence is organised and made governable. The discussion between the movement's

organizers revealed that the separation of Roma struggles from Black struggles, migrant struggles, and Muslim struggles is a technology of colonial control — a deliberate strategy to prevent the formation of cross-movement collective power. When communities are forced to compete for scarce resources and recognition, they turn against each other rather than against the system that dispossesses them all. The session ended with a collective recognition that no single community can dismantle the system alone. Working together across Roma, Black, migrant, and Muslim struggles is not just a gesture of solidarity or performative action but rather a strategic necessity. The question is not whether to build alliances, but whether we are willing to move beyond the competition for resources and recognition that institutions have designed for us, and toward the slow, difficult work of building collective power on our own terms.

Webinar: Weaving Our Legacy – A Living History of Racialized Women's Activism and Resistance.

Who gets to decide what counts as a legacy — and how do we achieve resistance without freezing it into a product? Key concepts that were discussed were: Legacy as political act, the violence of erasure, the limits of institutional memory, archiving as resistance, the difference between being remembered and being usable to living movements.

This session centred four activists and scholars: Angéla Kóczé, Cristina Roldão, Isidora Randjelović, and Anasuya Sengupta. Each of them works at the intersection of memory,



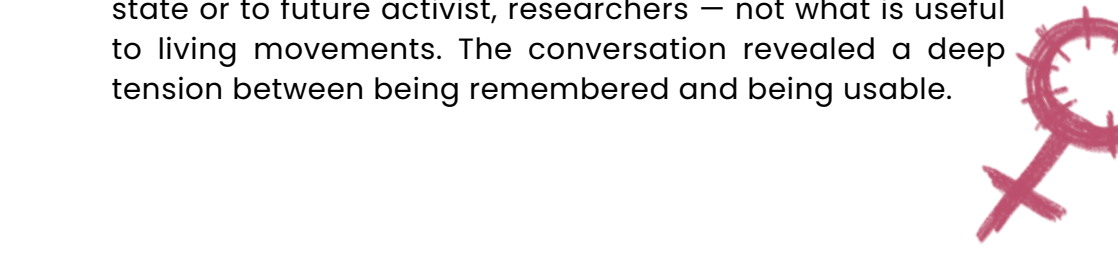
knowledge production, and movement building. The question that animated the conversation was deceptively simple: *who gets remembered?* But as the discussion unfolded, it became clear that this question is not about the past, it is about power in the present. Who has the resources to archive their history? Whose stories are preserved in universities, museums, and libraries? Whose struggles are taught in schools? And what happens to the communities whose histories are systematically erased? The stakes were made visible through specific examples. Roldão, a prominent scholar and activist from Portugal, described the struggle for ethno-racial data collection in Portugal — a battleground where the refusal to count Black and Roma populations functions as a mechanism of erasure. Without data, structural racism cannot be proven and Roldão explained that data collection can only be effective if it is controlled by the communities themselves, including decisions over how it is produced, interpreted, and used. Otherwise, it risks reproducing the very structures of surveillance and domination it seeks to challenge. The ethnic-racial data is not just to have a portrait of the inequality, but to enable communities to define the terms, purposes, and political use of that knowledge and data. Randjelović, director of RomaniPhen Archive, a feminist and anti-racist organisation in Berlin, counters epistemic erasure through feminist archiving, preserving stories of dignity and resistance rather than focusing only on perpetrators and trauma. She continues arguing that epistemologies of ignorance are deeply material, it has a very existential dimension where the attack of our knowledge and the attack on our lives have never been separate, they work together and feed each other.



Kóczé, a prominent scholar and chair of Romani Studies Program at Central European University in Budapest, framed Romani women's activism through the lenses of Romani womanism and motherism, arguing that care work and community survival have always been forms of political resistance – even when they are not recognised as such by mainstream movements. She continued arguing that the institutionalization of Roma politics has come with serious costs; donors' agenda, and Ngonization have often translated it racial political claims into technocratic projects.

On her side, Sengupta co-founder and co-director of Whose Knowledge? asked what happens when marginalised communities try to enter digital knowledge spaces like Wikipedia: too often, their knowledge is only recognised after significant trauma or death. She challenged the idea of technology as an inherently innovative or emancipatory force, arguing instead that many contemporary technological developments represent a continuation of colonial capitalism. Far from disrupting existing power structures, they often reinforce systems of extraction, surveillance, racialisation, and control, reproducing old hierarchies through new tools.

The discussion then turned to the politics of knowledge and memory. The speakers reflected on how power operates not only through surveillance and technological infrastructures, but also through decisions about what is documented, preserved, and passed on. Institutional archives, they noted, tend to preserve what is useful to the state or to future activist, researchers – not what is useful to living movements. The conversation revealed a deep tension between being remembered and being usable.



Archives that freeze resistance into a product — a document, a photograph, a museum exhibit — can inadvertently depoliticise the very struggles they claim to honor. The question, then, is not only how to preserve history but how to do so in ways that remain accountable to living communities and their ongoing fights. The session insisted that who gets remembered is a political act. But the question that lingered was: *how do we build archives that are accountable to living communities, not just to future researchers?* And what does it mean to weave a legacy that is not about individual heroes but about collective, often invisible forms of resistance?

The Gendered Mechanism of Racial Capitalism – Land, Labour, and Social Reproduction.

If racial capitalism is a global system, why have Roma struggles been systematically excluded from its analysis — and what does it mean to bring them back in? Key concepts introduced: *Oftisialo telchudipen* (structural anti-Roma racism), racialised enslavement as foundational to European capitalism, racial capitalism, organised abandonment, abolition as practice, the difference between being included and interrupting the system.

This session featured a conversation between Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Margareta Matache — two scholars and organizers. Matache has spent years arguing that anti-Roma racism has been excluded from global conversations about racial capitalism, colonialism, and slavery. Gilmore has spent decades developing a theory of abolition rooted



in Black struggles in the United States. The question that brought them together was whether Roma history could be brought into abolitionist thought without being treated as either exceptional or interchangeable with other forms of racialised violence. In the conversation Matache presented her framework of *oftisialo telchudipen* – structural anti-Roma racism – rooted in five hundred years of racialised enslavement in Wallachia and Moldavia. She showed how this system was built on two interconnected historical projects: the enslavement of Roma and the monopoly of land, resources, status, and belonging that excluded Roma across Europe. Her argument was a provocation: if racial capitalism is a global system, why have Roma struggles been treated as a regional exception rather than a central case?

Gilmore argued that abolitionist thinking requires specificity – every struggle has its own history, its own geography, its own grammar of violence. But specificity does not mean isolation. She defined racism as the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death. From this definition, she argued that the state organises life precisely through the management of such vulnerabilities. This is where the concept of organized abandonment becomes central. As Gilmore has theorized, **organized abandonment** is the process by which the state and capital deliberately leave behind communities through disinvestment, privatisation, and environmental degradation. It is not neglect – it is an active, systematic decision that some communities are not worth investing in, not worth caring for, not worth saving.

The conversation revealed that Roma communities across Europe experience this same logic. They are placed on toxic land, denied access to clean water and sanitation, excluded from pandemic relief, and left to fend for themselves when disasters strike. Then they are praised for their resilience — as if their survival were a testament to their character rather than an indictment of the state that abandoned them. Gilmore's framework helps us see that this is not a failure of the system. It is the system working as intended. Movements, then, are not requests for inclusion. They are an **interruption of racial capitalism**. They refuse the organised abandonment that the state has designed for racialised communities. The conversation revealed a shared understanding that liberal policies have historically failed Romani communities because they were never meant to tear down the system — only to manage its worst effects. What is needed, both speakers agreed, are structural interventions that name the past, interrupt the present, and build alternatives for the future.

Breathing While Brown – Climate Justice for Racialized Communities

Is climate justice possible without confronting environmental racism as a technology of racial control — and without centering the knowledge of those who survive it? Key concepts introduced: Environmental racism as slow violence, the racialised distribution of disaster vulnerability, the difference between data as evidence and data as surveillance, community knowledge as epistemic resistance.



This session featured presentations by Sergen Gül from Romani Godi and Madhuri Karak from Beyond Carbon. Gül presented his research on the vulnerabilities faced by Roma populations in Turkey, highlighting the lack of ethnic data collection, poor housing conditions, exclusion from pandemic relief, and inadequate disaster response during the 2023 earthquakes. He noted that seventy-one percent of Roma communities could not access humanitarian aid – not because of logistical failure, but because their lives had been systematically devalued before the disaster struck. Karak offered a different entry point. Her work with Beyond Carbon challenges extractive forest data infrastructure through multi-sensory approaches that incorporate community knowledge and counter-mapping. She argued that environmental racism is not only about who is exposed to pollution and who is not. It is also about who gets to produce knowledge about land, forests, and climate.

The conversation revealed that environmental racism operates on two levels simultaneously. The first is material – the placement of racialised communities on toxic land, near waste dumps, in flood zones, without clean water, without sanitation, without the right to breathe clean air. The second is epistemic – the systematic devaluation of community knowledge about land, water, and climate. Satellite data and remote sensing, Karak noted, are often trusted more than the embodied, intergenerational knowledge of Indigenous and racialised communities who have lived on that land for generations. Both organizers agreed that climate justice is not only about redistributing resources but about redistributing epistemic authority: who gets to define the problem, who gets to design the solutions, and whose knowledge counts as evidence.



Code Red – Digital Justice, Surveillance, and Resistance

When even our resistance is captured by algorithms – what does digital liberation actually look like? Key concepts introduced: The fracturing of the digital rights field, techno-solutionism, data sovereignty, European Gadjo Techno Supremacy, the Roma Cyber Captive Maternal, the difference between using platforms and being captured by them.

The final session focused on digital surveillance and racism. The question that animated the conversation was as timely as it was unsettling: who controls the digital spaces where racialised communities now live and organise? Salmana Ahmed from Weaving Liberation opened with a diagnosis: the digital rights field in Europe has been fractured by depoliticisation and techno-solutionism. Funding flows to technological fixes rather than to social justice organising. Digital surveillance and far-right authoritarianism, she argued, feed each other across Europe – with significant resources allocated to surveillance technologies at borders, while community-led alternatives remain underfunded. Benjamin Ignac, tech and anti-racist activist, presented research on how anti-Roma stereotypes become embedded in generative AI. He showed examples of AI-generated images that perpetuate harmful stereotypes and discussed data sovereignty as a solution for Roma communities to control their digital representation. His argument was not about rejecting technology but about reclaiming the power to decide how Roma are seen, categorised, and governed.



Jelena Savic, a technofeminist, through her work on "European Gadjö Techno Supremacy" examined how Roma women like Marica Mihajlović lose their Roma identity when using social media to testify about obstetric violence. She described how their stories are captured and recontextualised by algorithms, turning resistance into re-capture. The conversation revealed a painful tension: digital platforms are essential for organising, for testimony, for building visibility — but they are also surveillance infrastructures designed to extract value from racialised bodies. The question, then, is not whether to use them, but whether it is possible to use them without being used by them.

THE NATIONAL TRAININGS ✱

Boznia & HerZegovina, KaliSara NGO: Wounds That Bind: A Training on Trauma, Collective Healing and Gendered Violence

The training delivered by the expert Enisa Eminovska focused on gender-based violence, covering core concepts, survivor-centred approaches, case management, and safe referrals. Participants gained practical skills for handling disclosures of GBV incidents and navigating local referral pathways, while also emphasizing the importance of staff care and prevention of burnout.



Hungary, Roma/ercsitaz: Borders, Violence, Resistance: Roma Feminist Advocacy

The training delivered by the national expert Judith Ignacz created a space for connection, reflection, and imagining change together, centering storytelling as a tool for advocacy and collective power. Participants explored how Romani women have always been advocates for change, while naming the structural barriers that continue to exclude their voices from public debates, policy discussions, and decision-making spaces.

Romania, E - Romnja NGO: Roma Feminists Between Visibility and Exclusion, Racism, Patriarchy, and GBV: Building Collective Responses

The training delivered by the national experts Cerasela Bănică and Anca Nica focused on advocacy for Romani women against violence and discrimination, moving beyond introductory concepts to practical advocacy skills and national-level mechanisms. Participants explored how local realities affecting Roma women can be transformed into advocacy actions targeting institutions and decision-makers from a feminist perspective.



Serbia, Roma Feminist Collective: Care, Violence, and Survival: Roma Women's Postpartum Realities

The training in Serbia delivered by the member of the Roma Feminist Collective, Milena Reljic focused on care, violence, and survival, addressing Roma women's postpartum realities and the intersections of psychological trauma, gendered violence, and systemic neglect.

Spain, Amugue Ngo: The Price of Being a Roma: Training on Racial Capitalism and Structural Violence

The training delivered by the national expert Pastora Filigrana focused on racial capitalism and its specific impact on the Roma people, examining how anti-Roma racism functions as a criterion for economic exclusion and labour exploitation. Participants engaged with political anti-racism as a framework for challenging the indissoluble alliance between capitalism and racism.



THE NATIONAL TRAININGS: WHY THESE TOPICS, WHY THESE COUNTRIES

Alongside the webinar series, the Academy delivered five national trainings, part of our work on Roma feminist mobilization and movement building cross borders, for Romani women activists. These trainings were designed to build grassroots advocacy capacity, strengthen feminist organizing, and address the specific forms of institutional and state violence that Romani women face in their national contexts. In total, fifty-one Romani women were trained in these topics across the five countries.

The topics emerged directly from the priorities identified by Roma women activists and organisations themselves. Through consultations and exchanges with national advisors, community leaders, and Roma women-led organisations across the participating countries, we mapped the issues they were confronting in their daily work and the areas where further capacity-building and collective learning could strengthen their efforts. These discussions were complemented by the findings of the *Intersectional Violence and Systemic Failure report* (2025), which documented the lived realities of Romani and Traveller women across Europe through intensive national workshops. That report revealed a pan-European architecture of violence — a system where anti-Roma racism and patriarchal sexism intersect to produce specific, context-dependent forms of harm. The trainings were designed as a direct response to those findings: to equip Romani women with the knowledge, skills, and collective power to resist, to advocate, and to heal on their





own terms, ensuring that the training programme responded to both lived realities and broader structural patterns. What follows is an analysis of why each topic was chosen in each country, grounded in the political context of anti-Roma racism and the structural gaps identified by the report.

Bosnia & Herzegovina and Serbia: Wounds That Bind – Trauma, Collective Healing, and Gendered Violence

The priorities and the *Intersectional Violence and Systemic Failure* report documented that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romani women face a non-functional protection system where institutions routinely fail to intervene, delay responses, or discourage Romani women from reporting violence. One participant testified: "I knocked on every door when I tried to report domestic abuse, but no one offered support. The police took the perpetrator for one night and returned him home by morning. This went on for twenty years. The system failed us completely." As identified by the national expert Enisa Eminovska, the culturalization of violence — dismissing domestic abuse or early marriage as "Roma tradition" — functions as a justification for state inaction. Police may not respond at all, arrive late, refuse to collect statements, or weaponize poverty by threatening child removal or investigating informal survival economies. These are institutional responses shaped by anti-Roma racism. Obstetric violence is a concerning trend in the region. Roma women experience degrading treatment in healthcare — denial of pain relief, humiliating comments, insurance — all structural barriers that render Roma women invisible to protection systems.



At the same time, many of the Roma women activists supporting survivors and advocating against gender-based violence are themselves survivors of violence. Their work often requires them to engage daily with traumatic experiences, navigate institutional failures, and accompany women through complex and emotionally demanding situations. Without adequate support, this can lead to retraumatization, secondary trauma, burnout, and emotional exhaustion.

The training therefore sought not only to strengthen participants' knowledge of gender-based violence, survivor-centred approaches, case management, and referral pathways, but also to equip them with tools for self-protection, collective care, and sustainable activism. Participants explored strategies for recognising trauma, establishing boundaries, preventing burnout, and supporting survivors without compromising their own wellbeing, recognising that effective advocacy requires both technical expertise and practices of healing, resilience, and mutual support.

Moving to the training on care, violence, and survival, held in Serbia and led by collective member Milena Reljić, expanded these discussions by focusing on maternal mental health, postpartum wellbeing, and collective care. While the *Intersectional Violence and Systemic Failure* report documented widespread experiences of discrimination, segregation, and obstetric violence in maternity wards, the training created a space to explore the longer-term emotional consequences of these experiences and the ways they continue to shape women's lives. One of the most significant reflections



emerging from the training was the continuity of these experiences across generations. Many women spoke for the first time about the emotional distress they had experienced after childbirth, including feelings of fear, loneliness, anxiety, exhaustion, and isolation. Older participants described facing many of the same challenges as younger women today, revealing how little has changed over time and how these experiences remain largely invisible within healthcare and support systems.

The discussions highlighted that maternal wellbeing extends beyond physical recovery and that emotional health continues to be neglected, particularly for Roma women facing multiple forms of discrimination. The training also demonstrated the importance of creating spaces where women can openly share their experiences, reflect collectively, and find mutual support. For many participants, simply being listened to and hearing similar stories from other women became a powerful experience of recognition, solidarity, and healing.

In this context, the trainings on **trauma, collective healing, and gendered violence** were not a therapeutic exercise but a political intervention. When the state abandons Romani women — when police return perpetrators home, when shelters refuse entry, when social services re-traumatise rather than support — communities are left to fend for themselves. These training equipped participants with survivor-centred approaches, case management skills, and safe referral pathways. But more than that, it created a space for collective healing: the recognition that trauma is not individual failure but the predictable outcome of a



system designed to abandon. The emphasis on staff care and prevention of burnout was not incidental. It was a response to the report's finding that Romani women activists and professionals are themselves burning out, unsupported, while doing the work that the state refuses to do.

Advocacy as Collective Documentation: Transforming Individual Suffering into Structural Evidence in Romania and Hungary

The priorities from the consultations and the Intersectional Violence and Systemic Failure report documents what Romani women have always known: the institutions designed to protect them are, more often than not, sources of further harm. Across Europe, police stations, hospitals, social services, and courtrooms function as sequels to the violence that begins in the home. In Romania and Hungary, this institutional betrayal takes specific, context-dependent forms — but the underlying logic is the same: Romani women are systematically disbelieved, dismissed, and abandoned.

Across both countries, the report identifies a critical structural driver: the systematic erasure of Romani women from official policy and data. National strategies on gender equality and Roma inclusion routinely lack intersectional measures, specific budgets, or meaningful participation from Romani women's organisations. Macro-surveys on violence against women fail to include ethnicity as a variable. Official statistics on domestic violence, trafficking, and access to shelters are not disa-





gregated by ethnicity. As one participant stated: "If there is no data, the problem does not exist. So, there is no funding. Roma women are invisible." This data gap is not a passive oversight. It is an active form of institutional racism. Without data, governments cannot design effective policies or be held accountable for their failures. The system, as another participant noted, "talks about us, but not with us. That's why our real problems never appear in the reports." In this context, the advocacy component of the Academy was designed as a practical and political training in navigating and confronting these structural conditions. Participants worked on understanding how different institutional systems operate – including legal frameworks, referral mechanisms, gender-based violence services, and equality bodies – and how responsibility is distributed across actors such as police, social services, healthcare providers, and civil society organisations. A key part of the training focused on identifying entry points for advocacy, mapping institutional responsibilities, and recognising where systems fail, overlap, or deliberately shift accountability.

At the same time, participants developed concrete tools for documentation and advocacy practice: how to collect testimonies in safe and ethical ways, how to identify patterns across individual experiences, how to translate lived realities into structural claims, and how to engage with institutions without reproducing harm. This included strengthening skills in case documentation, narrative framing, and collective analysis, while reinforcing a survivor-centered and community-led approach. In this context, advocacy is not understood as individual empowerment within existing systems, but as a collective practice of making structural violence visible on Roma



women's own terms. When the state refuses to collect data, Romani women document their own realities. When institutions refuse to register complaints, they record testimonies and build shared evidence. When violence is dismissed as "cultural," they name it as structural racism and gendered violence.

Storytelling — central to Romani knowledge and political tradition — becomes a method of evidence-making. In the absence of official recognition, the accumulation of testimonies reveals patterns that institutions seek to fragment: this happened to me, and to her, and to her. This is not isolated. This is structural. Advocacy, in this sense, transforms individual suffering into collective documentation and political knowledge production.

Spain: Racial Capitalism Cannot Be Understood Without Anti-Roma Racism

The training in Spain, delivered by Pastora Filigrana García, focused on **racial capitalism** as the structural logic that underpins anti-Roma racism. This was a political intervention into a context where Spanish institutions have historically framed Roma issues as problems of social exclusion, poverty, or cultural difference — rather than as the direct outcome of a racialised economic system. Pastora, a lawyer and human rights activist specialising in labour and immigration law, brought a sharp, grounded analysis. She argued that racial capitalism is not a separate system from racism. It is the system. Racism is not just individual prejudice —



someone not wanting a Roma son-in-law or a Maghrebi neighbour. Racism is a criterion for the distribution of wealth, labour, and rights on a global scale. It establishes a hierarchy of human worth based on proximity to whiteness and Westernness, cheapening the lives of those who deviate from that ideal. The training traced the origins of this system to the colonising project of dispossession and domination. It showed how, today, capitalism continues to require the over-exploitation of racialised labour. Anti-Roma racism, the training argued, is not simply a matter of recognition or equal treatment. It is the result of the racial ordering of the socioeconomic system. Therefore, the fight against anti-Roma racism cannot be separated from the fight against racial capitalism itself.

Alongside this structural analysis, the training also focused on translating the concept of racial capitalism into concrete tools for advocacy and organising practice. Participants worked on identifying how racial capitalism operates in everyday institutional settings, including labour markets, welfare systems, education, and housing. This included mapping patterns of exclusion, recognising how economic and racial logics intersect in specific cases, and analysing how anti-Roma racism shapes access to resources, rights, and opportunities. The training also strengthened participants' capacity to connect individual experiences of discrimination to broader structural dynamics, supporting them in moving from isolated incidents to systemic analysis. This included developing skills in pattern recognition, critical reading of institutional practices, and framing advocacy narratives that link lived realities to the political economy of racial capitalism.

The Intersectional Violence and Systemic Failure report provides devastating evidence for this analysis. In Spain, Roma women face the most extreme deprivation: 92% of the Roma population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and Roma women's life expectancy is significantly lower than that of Roma men and non-Roma women. The report documents how Spanish courts have reduced sentences for sexual abuse of Roma girls by invoking racist stereotypes about "early marriage culture" in the Roma community. It documents how Roma women are profiled as thieves in supermarkets and shopping centres, with one study finding that in 80% of cases, Roma women suffered persecution, verbal accusations, or intimidating looks from security guards.

Pastora's training named these manifestations of gendered anti-Roma racism not as isolated incidents but as the predictable outcomes of a system that has always devalued Romani life. The training also offered a way forward: political anti-racism. Not the anti-racism that limits its demands to representation, identity recognition, or equal treatment without addressing structural racial order. But a revolutionary anti-racism that names the indissoluble alliance between capitalism and racism and proposes a project that challenges the entire model of ordering wealth, labour, and rights.

AN INVITATION TO THE READER

This report documents what we have done. But more importantly, it documents what we are learning – that the work of liberation cannot be contained in reports, webinars, or even trainings. It lives in the everyday decisions we make: whether to speak or stay silent, whether to collaborate or compete, whether to build or wait.

You have read this report. Now the question is: what will you do with it?

Will you share it with your networks as a living record – one that demands to be read, discussed and carried further?

Will you ask yourself what it means to stand with racialised women? What would it look like to move beyond solidarity as a gesture and toward solidarity as a practice: sharing power, resources, and risk?

Will you fund the organisations that made this work possible—sustainably, flexibly, and with trust in their expertise? Will you recognise that Romani women's organisations are not projects to be managed but movements to be resourced?

Will you sit with the questions that emerged across these webinars and trainings?



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- When you encounter the depoliticization of Roma struggles and antiracism—when poverty, housing, and education are framed as social problems rather than racial justice issues—will you name what you see? Will you refuse the language that erases structural racism and demand that institutions speak truthfully?
 - When you hear violence against Romani women dismissed as "cultural"—when courts reduce sentences for sexual abuse of Roma girls, when police say "Roma sort things out within the family"—will you interrupt? Will you name it for what it is: gendered anti-Roma racism, not tradition, not culture, not an exception?
 - When you see data gaps that render Romani women invisible—when official statistics fail to count us, when policies are designed without us—will you ask why?
 - When you encounter the digital surveillance of racialised communities—when algorithms produce racist stereotypes, when predictive policing targets Romani settlements, when welfare scoring punishes poverty—will you resist? Will you ask who controls the technologies that govern our lives, and who is excluded from designing them?
 - When you hear the word "resilience" used to excuse state abandonment—when communities are praised for surviving conditions that should never have existed—will you refuse? Will you name resilience for what it so often is: an apology for organised abandonment, a demand that the oppressed carry the weight of a system that refuses to change?

These are not rhetorical questions. This report is an invitation to build on it. The Roma Feminist Academy was never about creating a single document or delivering a single series of events. It is about building a space where Romani and racialised women could analyse the systems that shape our lives, and imagine alternatives together. It is about creating a community of practice that extends beyond any single webinar or training—a community that continues to ask difficult questions, to refuse easy answers, and to build power on our own terms.

We invite you to join that community. And when you do, know that you are not alone.

In Solidarity,

The Roma Feminist Collective & Romnja Feminist Library



Feminist collective of
ROMANI GENDER EXPERTS



**ROMNJA
FEMINIST
LIBRARY**

Roma Feminist Academy

Together Accross Borders From April 14th to May 27th, 2026!

