



ROMA

REG

ROMA EGER

**Paintings, recipes, and
essays from
Eszterházy Károly
University's
Egri Roma Szakkollégium**



Cover Image: *The Street* by Pető Martina Andrea

Cover Design by Roxanne Harris
Photography by Chandler Fritz



Our Supporters

Fulbright Hungary

Hungary joined the Fulbright Program in 1978, after improved relations followed the return of the Coronation Regalia to Hungary by the United States. The Fulbright Commission in Hungary was established in January 1992, after a bi-national agreement was signed between the governments of Hungary and the United States. The commission strives to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and build bridges between the US and Hungary

Egri Roma Szakkollégium Eszterházy Károly University

The Egri Roma Szakkollégium is a group of students at Eszterházy Károly University who do various activities while working for the same cause. Our goal is to reduce social opposition between Roma and Hungarian people.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Annamária Sas, Károly Jókay, and the entire Fulbright Hungary team for making this book possible. Much gratitude to my hosts at Eszterházy Károly University, especially Katalin Tayler-Tóth and Geoffrey Vaughan, and to all the wonderful folks in the Roma Szakkollégium, especially Zsófia Csáki, David Oláh, Lilla Lázár, and József Hadnagy. It was your gracious friendship that made it so hard to leave Hungary and that, one day, will make me so happy to return.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

Thinking, cooking, imagining. You and I do these things everyday—some days more, some days certainly less. In difficult times it can be a great comfort to find something new to think about, something new to cook for your family, or your friends, or yourself, and something new to look upon in wonder.

What you have before you is a collection of comforts that have been borne through difficult times. It is against *astounding* odds that the students you will meet in this book have established themselves as excelling scholars in their university. The Budapest Beacon reports that only 1 percent of Hungarian-Roma have received a university education, while the difficulties facing Roma in Hungarian primary and secondary schools have been well-known around the world. Each student featured here has invested their work with the sense of fortitude and grace that has lifted them above the challenges of growing up as a Roma in Hungary. You will find essays that wrestle with Roma identity, the importance of altruism, the subtle [and blatant] prejudice facing Roma, and the ways that, as a community, societal hurdles are overcome. You will find art that is strikingly direct and sublimely mysterious, capturing a sense of shared humanity without shedding the beautiful quilt of the artist's identity. You will even find a hearty recipe that evokes the spirit of Roma hospitality. I hope you'll make it on a quiet night at home, as I have, and again for those you love when we can all finally gather together.

I write this note far from the artists, scholars, cooks, and friends who have created this book. It is a testament to the dedication of our supporters and the spirit of this group that such a project prevailed despite the distance. It is, in fact, entirely due to the proven commitment and resilience of the Roma students I met in Eger that I was able to pick myself up from the pandemic and play my small role in their great cause. If you're anything like me, you could use a bit of that same inspiration these days. I'm proud to tell you, from the bottom of my heart, that you can find it in grand abundance in the work of these students.

Chandler Fritz

Edited by: Chandler Fritz
Translated by: Csáki Zsófia + Chandler Fritz

WHO WE ARE	8	ALL OF US
Voluntary Work	12	Gáspár Sándor + + + ESSAY
<i>The Street & Ice Breaker</i>	18	Pető Martina Andrea + + + ART
"Facts" and Figures	20	Rácz Dzenifer Anna + + + ESSAY
Bodág and Lecso	22	Rácz Dzenifer Anna + + + RECIPE
Speak Without Words	24	Lázár Lilla + + + ESSAY
Jenni & Bori	26	Kökényné Nemoda Enikő + + + ART
Why I Joined	28	Lólé Bianke + + + ESSAY
David	31	Kökényné Nemoda Enikő + + + ART

WHO

W

Csáki Zsófia

As a future high school teacher, I have always wanted to work with children. Here, in the Egri Roma Szakkollégium, I got a chance to work with children from socially disadvantaged and low-income families. I love that I can help them and tutor them if needed. I feel like I can truly make a difference working here. Besides, I am happy just to be part of this community. I learned a lot and made great friends here, whom I can always count on.

Lázár Lilla Bettina

I am a business student at the university. I decided to join this group because I can teach underprivileged children here and make a lot of programs for them. I like to do a lot of colorful programs for students, like the Roma Cooking Night where they can try our special and traditional food. We are like a big family. Our main goal is to change people's minds about gypsy lifestyle and culture. Everybody is a valued person in the world.

Váradi Margaréta

I have been studying in Eszterházy Károly University for 3 years. I will hopefully finish university next year and become an elementary school teacher. I would like to help underprivileged children because I think children are the most important part of our society. I am thankful for Roma Szakkollégium because they present the gypsy lifestyle to all different types of people.

Gyöngyösi István

I joined the group exactly six months ago. The group's purpose is to suppress stereotypes and prejudices, to build a new community, and to form a new circle of friends. It has been a big help for me because I receive a lot of support financially and spiritually as well. The profession which I am studying relates to the group's expectations, which is to help others. I have been in the group for only half a year, but I feel like I can be a really good member for a long time.

E ARE

Mádli Boglárka

As a graphic designer, being a member of the Roma College is a good opportunity for me to practice and test my skills. It is challenging to do everything for the group, because it's a lot of work, but it pays off. Seeing people come and enjoy our events, and being a part of it, is wonderful. I try to show everybody how great these people are and how important our cause is.

Kovács Norbert

I found my place. In this loving group I feel respected and, more importantly, cared for. I am happy and proud to be a part of it, and it was probably my best decision as a college student to be a member. I hope I can give back as much to the group as I got from them. I try to work as much as possible to do everything to help our cause.

Szabó Nikoletta

I joined the Egri Gypsy Special Dorm four years ago because my social background is harder than ordinary people and because it gave me the chance to help children who are growing up in similarly difficult situations. I work as a volunteer in a community center for children in need.

Kökényné Nemoda Enikő

I joined the Szakkollégium in 2017 mainly because of the free accommodation in the dorm. Back then I didn't really know much about the group. As time passed I started to take part in more and more events and activities. I wanted to be a productive and helpful member of the group. I work in the tutor sub-group because I love to work with children. I have always loved to dance and here I can teach traditional gypsy dances to the kids. I would like to inspire Roma and socially disadvantaged children with my own life story.

WHO

W

Oláh Dávid

I joined this group about two and half years ago. They helped me a lot, because I needed accommodation and financial support to start university. But these weren't the only reasons I joined the group. I like children and I like to help people. That is why I chose to work in the tutoring group. We usually go to an elementary school and play or talk with the students and help them to study during the summer holiday. I want more people to know about us because I think there are lots of students from poor social backgrounds for whom this community offers a new chance. For this reason, I represent the group during the freshman orientation week to raise university awareness of this opportunity.

Pető Martina Andrea

When I started university at 18 I was afraid of living an "adult" lifestyle. Joining the group helped me successfully overcome those fears and find my way in life. If the child who I once was asked me, "What will you do next?" I couldn't tell them for sure, but for now I am happy to study how to be an adult, how to be a woman in the 21st century, and how to live out my dreams. This group has taught me that one of the best things I can do for myself is to be active and not worry about what others might think of me.

Mozgó Fanni

When I first got into the group I was a little scared, but I was able to fit right in. In the past semester we had all kinds of interesting and colourful events that I was happy to participate in. I am very glad I get to be a part of this group with everyone.

Kökény Zsolt

As a Roma man myself, I would like to be an example to children so that they can reach their dreams. I would like to motivate them to study and to become trustworthy adults. It is an important goal in my life to teach Roma children more about our own culture, traditions and language. The Szakkollégium gives me the opportunity to help these children and achieve my goals. I love to be a member of this hard working group.

E ARE

Puporka Dániel

I joined the Roma College of Eger because I want to strengthen my Gypsy identity and get to know their traditions. They were very nice to me from the very first moment. I am pleased to be able to work with people who are important to the social inclusion of Roma youth.

Lólé Bianka

I am studying to be an elementary school teacher at the university's small campus in Jászberény. In my first year I was really surprised to see that there was only one Roma student beside me. I felt a little frustrated and weird. Then I heard about this group and decided to join. It was a great decision. This group gave me a lot of wonderful experiences and helped me to be more self-conscious.

Pásztor Viktória

I decided to join the Egri Roma Szakkollégium because I believe it is a group with humanity. It helps gypsy people make their dreams come true. I really do believe that we have a very good community and I am proud to work with my university professors and a lot of kind and hard working students. This group gives us the opportunity to see the problems of Hungarian society and give a helping hand for people who need it in their life. I love helping children and the group offers lots of opportunities in elementary teaching that will one day be valuable for finding a career in education.

Gáspár Sándor

I am one of the presidents of the Roma Szakkollégium and have been a member since 2018. I joined the institution because I believe the contraction of social clash between Roma people and the larger society is important. My aim is to create inspiration by giving motivational speeches and personal life stories to young Romas so that they know there is a way out.

Voluntary Work

Gáspár Sándor

Volunteering is important in all aspects of personal and professional development. It is a sign of both one's devotion to bettering humanity and one's willingness to act without selfish consideration. It can benefit both the person in need and the volunteer themselves, but only if the volunteer carries a motivation for doing their work that goes beyond material reward. Such a motivation prevents a volunteer's work from being just a one-off or occasional flare-up and instead helps create a lasting incentive for the person to act selflessly. I believe that only those volunteers who focus on the spiritual benefit of volunteering rather than its potential for materializing into personal reward can persist as change makers.

In my own volunteering I have been drawn to helping the Roma community, especially in my home village. Because of their identity, Roma people are markedly discriminated against in today's society. What could be the reason for this? How, in most cases, can this stereotype be definitively disproved? I think the reason for the discrimination is nothing more than the duality of the Roma





identity, which can be due to cultural background, housing, temperament, etc.

We often generalize without even thinking. We see the behavior, habits, and different attitudes of a particular member of an ethnic group and, with only that single sample, collectivize these observations into a stereotype. In this way, someone with divergent moral behavior can come to represent an entire group of people despite being, like the rest of us, the only one of his own kind.

This is how the negative stereotype developed for the Roma. Many times it is not a matter of self-interest, but purely that of prejudice, which continues to drive discriminatory judgment in society. The situation of Roma minorities is critical because many people call them ignorant and uneducated. Yes, there are those for whom these adjectives apply, but it is important to remember that we can find them in the Hungarian community just as well as the Roma. This is why we must not extrapolate the deficiencies of one individual to that of an entire ethnic group.

“Curiosity is in every human being and, rather than suppressing it, we must give everyone the opportunity to develop their own intellectual endeavors.”

What would refute all of this is tolerance and, more importantly, a sense of brotherhood. Regardless of skin color, we are all human. Curiosity is in every human being and, rather than suppressing it, we must give everyone the opportunity to develop their own intellectual endeavors. We have to show that the stereotypes that have emerged in general are false and do not justify limiting the individual or community rights or opportunities of the Roma people. Instead of arguing about differences, we should explore commonalities. To do this, we must find opportunities to learn about and help one another.

I believe my work in this community has followed this call to action by inspiring young Roma people to participate in higher education while also encouraging them to play an active role in society. Even those whose interests are leading them away from university can be positively affected through student volunteering. For example, offering them free career guidance on different areas of specialization can help them establish a strong alternative to university education. In view of the discrimination against the Roma community, it is important that volunteers help launch movements that raise the profile of the merits and virtues of the Roma within view of those who do not take the time to volunteer themselves. Breaking out of racial segregation requires volunteers who are able to educate and mentor not only people of Roma origin but people in their own community, which can

be achieved by promoting Roma culture through cultural gatherings, concerts, and other events. In this way, it would be possible for people from the Roma community to be able to develop the individual talents that are so often suppressed by discriminatory social conditions within Hungarian society.

It is important to always remember that this process of acceptance usually is not easy. Acceptance is not achieved through tense silence or avoided conflict, but through a community's complete peace of mind that there are groups of people who are different from the one in which they come from. It is true that humanity is whole if we have distinctive features, but in order for humanity to flourish it is essential to make sure that these features are recognized within a value system that contributes to a society that functions together. +

Ice Breaker
Pető Martina Andrea





The Street

Pető Martina Andrea

“Facts” and Figures

Rácz Dzsenifer Anna

As a Roma, I have long had to struggle against the pressures of prejudice and discrimination. I do not think I'd be able to tell you about a Roma person who could not say the same of their own life.

Gypsies are often put under one hat, making it difficult for them to create their own meaning. Being constantly told the stigmas that you carry with your Roma identity, such as the “fact” that Gypsies just steal and do not work, destroys both the community and self image of the Roma, thereby depriving them of their potential. This is also reflected in the fact that the word “Gypsy” is nowadays mostly used as a pejorative. The inconvenience caused for Roma people by this improper use of language also manifests itself in real life.

It is saddening to me that Gypsies always start with a disadvantage in life. I, too, have been told many times in my childhood that I should never forget that I will always have to do more, have to want to work longer and harder for success than my non-Roma counterparts. When I was young, I didn't understand why that was. Over the years, however, I have come to realize that Gypsies often do not

start with equal opportunities, no matter where we live. In most cases, we see the tragedy of systemic exclusion in kindergartens and primary schools. This is especially problematic if the young person gets into a community where they are the only Roma.

Stereotypes and problems of discrimination are also common among adults. Finding a job is a regular difficulty. The reason for this is that many employers reject Roma applicants because they, too, view them through stereotypical lenses. They subsequently do not give Roma people equal opportunities simply because of their origin.

Through the above-mentioned grievances and my personal experiences, I have come to the conclusion that I need to do something that can change, or at least reduce, the increasing levels of stereotypes and discrimination facing the Roma community. Through the Roma College of Eger I can follow through on this conviction by showing the world that there are many young Roma people in Hungary who have achieved and are capable of achieving outstanding accomplishments in their field. +



LECSÓ

&

BODAG

serves 4

INGREDIENTS

for the lecsó

1 and a half onion (sliced)
3 medium sized peppers (sliced)
5 tomatoes (sliced)
1 chili pepper (sliced)
3 – 4 tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp salt
pinch of ground pepper
1 tsp ground paprika
2 tsp Delikát

for 4 pieces of bodag

650 g flour
1 tsp salt
1 and a half tspn baking soda
approximately 2 dl water

DIRECTIONS

make the lecsó

Heat oil in a pan and cook onions until they are translucent.
Add sliced peppers, cook halfway and add tomatoes.
Add seasonings, stir, and cook until vegetables have softened.
Top with sliced chili pepper and serve.

make the bodag

Sprinkle flour in circle, add salt and baking soda.
Pour water in the middle of flour mixture, using fingers mix the water with the flour until everything is combined. (Bodag 3)
Knead the dough until smooth. (20 minutes)
Divide dough into 4 equal parts and roll into 1-2cm thick circles. Be sure to add some flour under dough to prevent sticking.
Bake until golden brown.
Can be served with butter, onions or lecsó.

Speak Without Words

Lázár Lilla

My throat tightens when I consider what I must do for the next 3 years. It is not easy to start building your future in a place where you will always be less than other people, where you are unintentionally differentiated, not because you have a different dress or hair color, but simply because of where you come from. The human race can be cannibalistic, prone to excluding and humiliating its own kind. I sometimes feel like a black lamb in a barren field where everyone has chewed up the grass and you have to manage what's left of it—you have to make the most of it.

My whole life I've never been entirely sure of what I'm doing, partly because I have always had to overcome outside pressures to do or be a certain thing. I know I have to accept myself, but secretly I struggle with opposing voices inside my head. One scolds me in a harsh tone, "You should not be at university," while the other shouts proudly, "There's a reason you are here, stay!"

"My whole life I've never been entirely sure of what I'm doing, partly because I have always had to overcome outside pressures to do or be a certain thing."

All people at some point follow the idolized statutes of success that our culture has set up for ourselves. Get a good education, make a lot of money, be the most respected, have a family, own a house, a car, go traveling, flaunt expensive luxury items. I was once obsessed with the notion that if I went to college and achieved some of these—became part of some kind of “elite society”—people would start talking to me differently. Now I know that this is not the case, nor should it be the goal. Now I just want to be a good person in what can be a nasty world. I want to help people to see the world I have seen, both the good and the bad, and henceforth start to see each other from a different angle. +





Jenni
Kökényné Enikő Nemoda



Bori
Kökényiné Enikő Nemoda

Why I Joined

Lólé Bianka

I have been a teaching student at the Jászberényi Campus of Eszterházy Károly University since 2016. It's a smaller campus than the one in Eger with much fewer students. What really stood out to me was that there were two Gypsy students on campus, including myself. It wasn't what I expected and it made me feel a little frustrated. As a Gypsy, I felt different because I found it was "interesting" according to non-Gypsy students (and some teachers) for a Gypsy woman to study at university.

In the fall of 2016, József Hadnagy and two students from the technical colleges visited our campus from the Roma College of Eger. It opened my eyes to the fact that there were more students out there like me. I became interested because I thought it was important for me to be part of such a community. I, too, wanted to go through all the experiences and learning processes that they told me about during their introduction. The college seemed to offer me, as a Gypsy intellectual, the opportunity to get to know myself without ever straying from my humble path.

I have spent my last year as a member of the Roma college. I look back with a mix of joy and heartache while

writing these lines. I have to ask myself: What did I get from the Roma College of Eger and Eszterházy Károly University as a female Gypsy student?

My answer is this: everything I could have ever wanted. They gave me a home with Roma roommates, who have become my dear friends, a mentor whom I can count on anytime, anywhere, and above all provided me with a sense of comfort that I'm not alone as a Gypsy in the world of higher education. Plus, there were many opportunities that provided me with experience and self-improvement, such as joint excursions, school openings, parties, talks, and internal activities. These experiences always compelled me to take one step forward, even if it's just a small one, so that my confidence and motivation gradually increased until I reached a level of self-assurance that hitherto had seemed unfathomable. Today I clearly see both my areas of value and the areas that still need improvement. This is the most important thing I learned during my college years, but the thing I will remember most are the beautiful shared memories eternally etched into our hearts.

As a Gypsy woman and as a Gypsy student, it is important that we take advantage of these opportunities to open up a world that is less possible within a traditional Gypsy family community and under the burden of segregation. We want to be more; we have goals, plans, and we want to reach them so that our future children no

longer have to cope with our same difficulties. We want to do all this without ever straying from who we are, without ever forgetting from where we left off. +

"We want to be more; we have goals, plans, and we want to reach them so that our future children no longer have to cope with our same difficulties."



David
Kökényné Enikő Némóda

Roma Eger © Hungarian-American Fulbright Commission, 2020
Supporting Institution: Egri Roma Szakkollégium
Edited and designed by Chandler Fritz
1st edition, 600 copies





R O M A
R E G E