Realizing Roma Rights
PENNSYLVANIA STUDIES IN HUMAN RIGHTS

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The Roma\textsuperscript{1} scholar Ian Hancock opens his classic book *The Pariah Syndrome* with a remarkable quotation from the work of Sam Beck, an American and fellow scholar about his fieldwork in Romania: “Romanians who are in administrative government and political positions of authority, explain the Tsigani [a racial slur for the Roma] situation by referring to America. ‘You know,’ they say, ‘The Tsigani are like your Negroes: foreign, lazy, shiftless, untrustworthy and black.’”\textsuperscript{2} Virulent and deep-seated racial hatred is only one of the commonalities linking these two large minorities in the world’s richest continents. A recent history of centuries-old slavery and the persistence of dramatic contemporary social and economic disadvantage and marginalization are others.

But alongside the commonalities, there are notable differences. The eminent U.S. civil rights advocate and constitutional law expert Jack Greenberg notes that “for much of their histories, the Roma in Eastern Europe and African Americans traversed similar paths. . . . During World War II . . . their paths forked.”\textsuperscript{3} He notes the contrast between the development of the civil rights movement and antisegregation legal victories in the United States on the one hand, and the lack of political visibility and concomitant social marginalization and educational segregation of East European Roma on the other. From the perspective of this book, which aims to bring Roma rights issues to the foreground for an international readership interested in contemporary human rights challenges, other differences are also striking and relevant.
A significant difference between the African American and the Roma communities, explored in this book, is the nature of civil society engagement with the communities’ respective issues. The American civil rights movement has a long and venerable history, encompassing a broad range of discrete political and social currents to be sure, but eventually generating highly visible and effective national leadership, coherent political and legal demands, and mass mobilization. A huge body of literature reflects this tradition and cumulative experience. By contrast, the Roma movement, in Europe and elsewhere in the world, has not yet established a visible presence as a mass movement. In spite of targeted demands and modest forms of organizing in a range of different countries during the twentieth century, it was only in 1971 that Roma leaders from around the world gathered outside London for the first International Romani Congress, to decide on the symbols of Roma unity and launch concerted legal and political claims.

Another contrast between African American and Roma movements relates to the modality of political organizing. The priorities and the methods advanced by Roma organizations, especially in post-Communist Eastern Europe, were often influenced by external stakeholders. Whereas grassroots activism on African American civil rights was a critical precondition and precursor of constitutional and policy transformations across the United States, advances in the rights and circumstances of the Roma have largely been the result of a different form of activism. Advocates have focused their efforts on legislative and policy reforms, strategic litigation, or access to education and health, with less attention paid to community empowerment and participation. This form of organizing has had some impact. Whereas the 1969 Council of Europe Recommendation on the situation of “Gypsies and Other Travelers in Europe” framed the issue in terms of Roma victimhood and vulnerability, more recent EU member state or commission documents, by contrast, stress the central importance of Roma leadership and active participation in processes of change. Roma activism has forced EU policy makers to engage with the Roma community on more equal terms.

In the United States these developments in the political positioning of the Roma community do not register. The vast majority of Americans, including otherwise well-informed people, know little if anything about the estimated 14 million Roma worldwide, despite a long-standing (if small) Roma presence within the United States. This lack of awareness persists, even with well-publicized recent government-sponsored attacks on Roma settlements in France and Italy, and the proliferation of anti-Roma hate speech, includ-
ing by representatives of mainstream political parties in Hungary, Romania, and Greece. These situations are discussed in detail in several of the chapters in this volume.

This American knowledge lacuna makes the publication of *Realizing Roma Rights* long overdue. We hope awareness and discussion prompted by the book will stimulate integration of Roma issues into broader social and political debates on ongoing discrimination, stigma, and segregation in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. Because its focus is cross-regional, and its contributors have diverse backgrounds—national government, the academy, civil society, and international organizations—the book provides insights into a wide range of themes related to Europe’s Roma community. Future research needs to target other under-studied Roma populations living all over the world, including Latin America, the United States, and the Middle East.

*Realizing Roma Rights* explores the dynamics of social exclusion and stigma, the challenges of European and national policy development and implementation, and the history of Roma political and social mobilization. We hope that increased familiarity with Roma rights challenges will stimulate activists and experts who have developed successful strategies for tackling social exclusion in other fields to contribute their insights to advancing the Roma situation.

Part I, “The Long Shadow of Anti-Roma Discrimination,” investigates the efficacy of targeted intervention, both from the perspective of impact litigation (Alexandra Oprea) and more broadly across the domains of education, housing, and social violence (Elena Rozzi). Part II, “International and Regional Perspectives,” presents the perspectives of government officials (Erika Schlager, David Meyer and Michael Uyehara) involved in Roma rights promotion. The contributors to Part III, “The Longue Durée: The History of Roma Policy as an Element in U.S. Foreign Policy” (Andrzej Mirga, Kálmán Mizsei, and Margareta Matache and Krista Oehlke), switch the focus to European and national institutions themselves and toward the obstacles to Roma inclusion that they have encountered or contributed to. Why is the current impact of vigorous interventions and well-funded innovations targeting Roma exclusion so limited? Exploration of the reasons for this disappointing result lies at the heart of the analysis advanced by the authors in this volume.

Part IV, “The Enduring Challenge of Tackling Anti-Roma Institutional Discrimination and Popular Racism in Contemporary Europe: A
Comparative Analysis,” features the work of James A. Goldston and of Will Guy. Part V of this volume is titled “Looking Forward: The Imperative of Roma Community Mobilization and Leadership” (Peter Vermeersch, Teresa Sordé Martí and Fernando Macías, and David Mark). The critical question of Roma political engagement, at the level of leadership within national and European institutions, but also at grassroots level in municipalities, regions, and national forums, resonates across the European Union. It is an urgent continental issue, whether the vantage point is France, Italy, and Spain or, further east, Romania, Czech Republic, and Hungary.

Experts have noted that much European Roma policy, within the European Commission for example, has been prompted not by grassroots demands for justice or inclusion but by pressure from EU member states concerned about Roma migration and its consequences.6 Related to this, with a few notable early exceptions,7 current Roma literature has tended to be specialist and technical, focused on particular social challenges or cultural issues but lacking an integrative perspective and, as a result, a broadly based audience interested in questions of human rights and social justice across domains, from gender-related harms to migrant rights, to questions of racial and sexual identity. Realizing Roma Rights draws on the recent welcome increase in data (generated by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the UN Development Programme, the World Bank, and others) to address the nexus of social exclusion theory and social policy efficacy so central to the human rights advocacy and broader social science fields.

The starting point for discussion of Roma-related issues is the widespread acknowledgment in government, academic, and civil society circles that the Roma population in Europe continues to face disproportionately low access to quality education, health care, and employment within the formal labor market. Examples proliferate: a considerable number of young Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Moldova, and (to a lesser extent) the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia have never been to school; in 2011 in Moldova, only 40 percent of Roma reported having medical insurance coverage compared to close to 80 percent of non-Roma; and in Romania, only one in two Roma of working age actually are working.8

Several chapters in this book address these issues in detail, highlighting the enduring impact of the long shadow of discrimination and exclusion on quality of life for many within the Roma community. In her chapter, Rozzi presents data showing a decline in the participation of Italian Roma children in schools within the past five years. Italian institutions often ascribe the
alarmingly irregular and low participation of Roma children in schools to their culture’s “inborn tendency” to dismiss education, a claim that Rozzi deconstructs in her powerful chapter. Probing Roma inclusion policies that have not worked, Matache and Oehlke argue in their chapter that slow and insignificant progress in educational attainment for Roma children is but one small part of a broader contemporary disinterest in implementing equal opportunity principles for Roma. They focus on programs targeting Roma education in Romania as an instance of implementation weakness in the field of education. By concentrating responsibility for Roma educational inclusion within the National Agency for Roma rather than within much more powerful mainstream ministries, they argue, the commitment to raise Roma educational performance has been ghettoized and its impact therefore circumscribed. Skill training and apprenticeship development as well as health care access and provision have suffered from similar weaknesses.

In her chapter, Oprea captures the exclusion and subordination of Roma women, focusing on two interrelated violations of Roma women’s reproductive rights. She reminds us that compulsory sterilization of Roma women was widely practiced in the former Czechoslovakia as well as in other countries. Child removal, a more recent phenomenon facing Roma families, became widely evident in 2013 with the high-profile removal of blond children from Roma parents. Oprea suggests these are “only the most visible manifestations of a systemic policy that views Roma mothers as irresponsible and unfit to be parents.”

The unsatisfactory Roma situation continues despite an extensive program of European Union programmatic intervention to promote and enhance Roma rights. The antecedents of European attention to the Roma situation are analyzed in chapters by Schlager and by Meyer and Uyehara, long-standing policy experts on minority rights issues. Schlager traces the history of international organization engagement in East European human rights and shows how the denial of citizenship to Roma citizens in the newly formed Czech Republic became an issue for those organizations. Meyer and Uyehara illustrate the process of international engagement with Roma issues through the lens of American engagement. Success in engineering a focus on Roma rights as an important priority for contemporary European policy of course was not tantamount to success in outcomes, they argue, and indeed they concur with the consensus view that the impact of efforts to improve Roma integration and empowerment in the European Union and beyond has been disappointing.
The reasons for the failure of EU Roma policy and the much celebrated Decade of Roma Inclusion that epitomized parts of the policy are the subject of insightful scrutiny in the contributions by Mirga and by Mizsei, two seasoned participants in European Roma policy development. As each demonstrates, the causes of limited impact are multiple and complex and warrant careful study, at both the national and regional level. Some implementation weaknesses are clearly the result of technical deficiencies related to program development, roll out, and evaluation.

Both Mirga and Mizsei provide trenchant analyses of European Roma policy development, its characteristics, and its limitations. Both note the importance of community mobilization as a means of steering and maximizing the impact of technocratic policy development. Mizsei sets himself the task of reconstructing and dissecting the unraveling of Roma integration in European post-Communist market states. He draws on Michael Mann’s concept of “the dark side of democracy” to probe a new state of affairs in Eastern Europe that generates mass unemployment and racial attacks against the Roma community. In Hungary, for example, he notes how, within the space of two decades from 1971 to 1993, Roma unemployment skyrocketed from 15 percent to a staggering 72 percent, a fivefold increase. He also observes the impact of newly celebrated “freedom of speech” on the escalation of anti-Roma hate speech. In this challenging context, he argues, European interventions, including the development approach incorporated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the establishment of the European Social Fund, fail to counter the post-Soviet dislocation and impoverishment of the Roma community.

Mirga’s chapter provides a masterful overview of the development of European Roma policy from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s. As an observer, analyst, and participant in the process, the contributor’s vantage point is perhaps unique and certainly compelling. He makes the case that the evolution of Roma policy, focused as it has been on initiatives to target the community’s minority status, has resulted in a series of political gains for the Roma community but corresponding losses in the social and economic sphere. Minority status recognition through multifaceted initiatives at the EU level has, he argues, failed to translate into comprehensive and constructive state policies at the domestic level, policies capable of generating social and economic inclusion and opportunity. He concludes pessimistically that greater political visibility and the development of structural funding allocations have so far failed to translate into the profound positive changes needed to turn the tide of exclusion and deprivation.
European policy failure to date is also a result of conceptual failures in targeting stigma and exclusion effectively and ensuring that allocated funds are appropriately distributed and managed. Guy demonstrates in his chapter how the disbursement of EU structural and cohesion funds has been characterized by weak planning and a poor understanding of the drivers of racial hatred. As a result, he argues, hate-filled attitudes and violent attacks have proliferated rather than declined, leading grassroots European Roma coalitions to conclude that most inclusion strategies had not made much difference. Rozzi discusses the situation in Italy, where Roma communities, despite European identity and in some cases long-standing residence, are still considered and treated as “other” or “enemies within,” denied cultural legitimacy or authenticity as citizens, and instead visibly excluded in “nomad camps” or illegal settlements, trapped in harsh lives on the margins of legality.

Poor leadership, ethical weaknesses including corruption, and failing national and local administrative structures compound the problem of European Roma policy implementation. For example, as Guy points out, member states receiving European Social Funds, 20 percent of which were meant to be used to support social inclusion initiatives, have not been obliged to declare how much of those funds have been spent. Large unspent resources are known to exist in several of the countries with the highest concentrations of Roma communities. This absence of transparency has continued to stymie efforts to kick-start social regeneration among Roma communities. And yet it has not attracted infringement proceedings by the European Commission (the formal procedures followed if a member state is in breach of EU law) or other measures to compel effective compliance. As a result much of the promise of structural regeneration and inclusion held out by the ambitious Decade programming has disappointed the Decade’s architects—including the World Bank and the Open Society Foundations—and others involved in trying to generate significant and enduring progress.

The current Roma situation in Europe offers another set of analytic puzzles and challenges relevant to the relative failure of impact litigation, a favorite tool of contemporary human rights advocates on both sides of the Atlantic. Milestone litigation before the European Court of Human Rights on the forced sterilization of Roma women (discussed by Oprea) and on the discriminatory segregation of Roma children in school (discussed by Goldston) has failed to end the institutional racism at the heart of the court cases or to turn the political and social tide toward effective Roma inclusion. The lack of real impact of the judgments of the European Court of Human
Rights, the world’s most robust and far-reaching human rights court, in tackling one of the leading human rights issues within its jurisdiction has perplexed many.

In 2003 a group of European Roma leaders approached Professor Jack Greenberg of Columbia Law School. Greenberg had been the head of the Legal Defense Fund for the NAACP and the lead advocate in the watershed Brown v. Board of Education case before the U.S. Supreme Court. This case has been credited with putting an end the “separate but equal” school policy that was in force across the United States, a policy that upheld the segregation of black schoolchildren in black-only public schools. Roma leaders were interested in learning from Greenberg what the Brown v. Board litigation might teach them so that a comparable outcome could be achieved for Roma schoolchildren. Across Europe, tens of thousands of these children are still segregated—as the chapters by Rozzi, Goldston, and Matache and Oehlke document—in different schools, or different classrooms within integrated schools, or different spaces within integrated classrooms, depending on the European country in question.

Greenberg replied that the Roma advocates should note two radical differences between the two sets of litigation and their broader social context. First, in the U.S. situation, Brown v. Board was the product of a long process of civil society engagement and activism against racially segregated schools, whereas no such enduring civil society movement was discernible in the case of Europe’s Roma community. Second, prior to Brown v. Board, school segregation was considered lawful and constitutional but the decision changed that, and as a result, policy and practice changes on the ground followed. In Europe by contrast, the European Convention on Human Rights had, since 1951, prohibited both direct and indirect discrimination. Yet, as Greenberg noted, by 2003, half a century after the convention was signed, “No European or national judicial or administrative organ has ordered the cessation of segregation in any school.” Unlike in the United States, European antidiscrimination litigation had not significantly changed the legal framework. It simply declared what was already known to be the law. It followed, argued Greenberg, that litigation alone would not deliver significant gains to the Roma community in the absence of mass mobilization and strong Roma political leadership.

Realizing Roma Rights explores this theme in some detail, analyzing the limitations of legal victories as enduring guarantees of social transformation. The powerful chapter by Goldston probes the similarities and differences
between American and European impact litigation, addressing educational segregation and the broader context in which it occurs. Goldston, himself an experienced advocate, notes interesting similarities in the strategic development of antidiscrimination arguments in the courtroom, before going on to probe the significant differences in legal tradition, structure, and impact. He observes how European judicial actors, like American justices before them, have related their antidiscrimination findings to the harsh and multifactorial realities of life for segregated—“discrete and insular”—minorities. This segregation, both sets of judges argue, constitutes a particular circumstance that prevents the community from benefitting from social structures that other communities can and do rely on. Because of this circumstance and others, judicial pronouncements and the legislative measures that sometimes follow have fallen on less fertile soil than other rights-advancing judgments and have not yielded substantial and enduring changes on the ground in either jurisdiction. On the other hand, Goldston shows how U.S. court-ordered remedies have been much more robust in terms of changes in institutional practice than those of their European counterparts. In part this divergence reflects the underlying differences in legal procedure between the two political entities (the European Court of Human Rights cannot change domestic law), and in part it is a consequence of the traditional financial modesty and limited public sphere impact of European human rights remedial awards (the judgment rather than the financial award is considered the main remedy).

Other troubling questions regarding policy failure vis-à-vis Roma rights in Europe arise. It is clear that freedom of movement within the EU, and the 2004 and 2007 eastern expansions of the union to include countries with large Roma populations such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and then Romania and Bulgaria, have not delivered the gains for the Roma population that they have for other economically disadvantaged European constituencies. Though EU accession played an important role as an engine of social reform in Eastern Europe in the pre-accession phase, it has failed to maintain that stance going forward. As a result, several recently acceded countries, including Romania, as Matache and Oehlke show, evidence retrenchment and complacency with respect to Roma rights, now that the accession process is behind them. Enlargement of course has had a significant impact on Roma mobility in the EU, but here again the result is complex, as Rozzi and Matache and Oehlke note in their chapters.

Mobility, among other factors, has generated political commitments supporting Roma inclusion, especially the EU Framework for National Roma
Integration Strategies up to 2020.\textsuperscript{16} The EU Framework and other commitments, such as the \textit{Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area} and the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015), an international political initiative involving twelve participating states and four observer countries, are also linked to unsuccessful state-led initiatives that have failed to deliver what was promised.\textsuperscript{17} In all EU member states, in the past years, with the exception of compulsory schooling, the discrepancies in education between Roma and non-Roma have become even larger.\textsuperscript{18} In 2007, for instance, the Romanian government made a commitment to put an end to segregation by adopting a desegregation order, as outlined by Matache and Oehlke. The order promised that starting with the 2007–2008 school year, there would be no separate Roma classes in first and fifth grades. An evaluation conducted after approval of the order showed that 63 percent out of 122 schools continued to form new first and fifth grade classes segregating Roma children.\textsuperscript{19}

European Union citizenship has emerged as a weak tool for tackling xenophobic and exclusionary Western European policies toward Roma mobility from Eastern Europe, revealing the fault lines within the concept from the preamble to the Treaty of Rome (the EU founding document) of the “ever closer [European] union” as Roma individuals are deported from one member state to another. A study of the circumstances of Roma migrants commissioned by the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that “there exists a massive gap between international and European law, standards and commitments to eliminate racial discrimination on the one hand, and national policies concerning Roma migration on the other.”\textsuperscript{20}

Paradoxically, mobility has accelerated some negative stereotypes, as both nondiscriminatory practices and xenophobia have been institutionalized across the European Union. Following the collapse of Communism in Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Roma populations formerly locked into East European states started exercising their newly found freedom of movement. But this has proved a mixed blessing. “Following 1989, old ideas about ‘Gypsies’ have been dramatically reawakened in Western Europe, in part as a result of the return of Roma migration from Central and Southeastern Europe.”\textsuperscript{21} The increased visibility of Roma beggars and destitute informal settlements in and around Western European capital cities stands in sharp contrast to the apparently seamless integration of other European migrants moving from south to north or from east to west.
Hostile stereotypes have devastating consequences, as recent European history illustrates again and again. In the case of the Roma, the most immediate is the pervasive experience of personal violence and physical violence. A 2008 seven-country survey conducted by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, an independent body funded by the European Union, found that approximately one in three Roma surveyed had been targets of violence within the previous year. Small wonder that, in the face of this relentless hostility, many Roma communities retreat into increasingly strong Rom/Gadje [non-Roma] demarcation in their conduct, preferring collective community support and engagement over interaction with majoritarian institutions, be they schools or workplaces. The extensive criminal activity involved in racial attacks does not seem to be matched by vigorous prosecutorial, protection, or prevention strategies, evidencing a concerning dereliction of duty by responsible municipal, regional, or federal bodies. As Guy and Vermeersch note, extreme right and anti-Roma mobilization creates a climate of impunity, exacerbated by economic recession and high unemployment.

Impunity for individual acts of criminal violence is only one fallout from pervasive anti-Roma hate speech. Racial stereotypes justify forms of structural violence, too, where the target community is denied basic and fundamental rights and then blamed for its own destitution. Several chapters in this book illustrate the process whereby Roma communities are denied real access to mainstream institutions and instead forced to carve out precarious living arrangements for themselves. Illiteracy, lack of health care including reproductive health, squalid accommodations, and isolation from the majority community follow. So do tough daily survival strategies that vitiate the ability to maximize opportunity, develop political leadership, or generate community solidarity and mobilization.

But structural violence is not inevitable. In their chapter, Martí and Macías describe an inventive counter-strategy developed in Spain, where racial stereotypes and structural violence are replaced with proactive community outreach, engagement, and participation. The result is a rare success story where mainstream markers of achievement and empowerment become visible over the ashes of exclusion and deprivation.

In general, however, as noted above, the policies adopted by governments, national, regional and local, over the past two decades have shown limited results at the grassroots level. Even well-implemented projects have had only limited impact because of an absence of strong institutional foundations and sustainable structures that outlive the life of creative pilot projects.
Ghettoization and residential segregation exacerbate this problem as institutional weaknesses are concentrated in the areas most populated by disadvantaged communities, including Roma.

A common theme in the Roma literature is the absence of effective Roma political coherence, mobilization, and leadership. A particularly harsh critic is Yaron Matras. He notes:

It is obvious that the Roma minority in Europe now has a voice, or perhaps many voices, in the processes that shape European policy, and to some extent also the policies of national governments, towards the Roms. But the issue of representation continues to pose some serious challenges... none of the Roma associations has a clearly defined constituency or a well-formulated and transparent political mandate. ... Many Roma non-governmental organizations tend to be... run by small circles of friends... they usually lack a formal election procedure for officers... There are different perspectives and viewpoints about the future.24

In a similar vein, Nicolae Gheorghe, one of the most respected Roma activists and scholars, argues, “Most Roma organizations still operate as ‘sects’ rather than ‘churches,’ since they are not part of a broader mass movement... there is a dramatically widening gulf between the ‘clubs’ of Roma political élites—both at national and transnational level—and the communities they are supposed to represent.”25

These themes resonate with chapters in this book. Both Mark and Vermeersch analyze aspects of Roma activism and political mobilization, noting the challenges raised by malfunctioning democratic processes designed to ensure minority representation and the critical but underutilized role of Roma youth. Mark, for instance, probes the legal frameworks that set the stage for inadequate political representation and participation for Roma communities. Looking at examples from Romania and Hungary, he argues that emerging legislative measures, designed to enhance the representation of minorities, have, paradoxically, compromised free and fair electoral competition for Roma. In Romania, for example, limitations imposed on Roma organizations wishing to register in electoral competitions for parliamentary elections, have eliminated a level playing field for competing organizations and the power of choice for Roma voters. Reflecting on the obstacles that hamper visible and effective participation and mobilization, Vermeersch
notes that at present Roma communities lack the necessary organizational capacity, financial means, and symbolic resources to affect change. Amid a new and still emerging institutional context for consultation at the European level, new research is needed that identifies how the Roma can amplify their presence in policy-making debates, voice their claims, and influence policy outcomes.

Despite malformed legislative measures, however, both Mark and Vermeersch contend that within the last decade calls to empower and mobilize Roma communities have emerged at the local level and at the EU level. These have included efforts to put Roma issues on the political agenda as well as vigorous opposition to negative and repressive policies. Vermeersch cites social mobility strategies for young Roma as a promising way forward, particularly through strengthened desegregation efforts and new forms of youth activism.

Martí and Macías by contrast describe the impact of a small-scale educational intervention in Albacete, Spain, directed by the joint leadership of Roma community activists and a socially committed team of university researchers. These contrasting perspectives concur in their vision of the need for well-informed, structured, and responsibly led community political mobilization, the common ground of success for other oppressed and marginalized constituencies—whether racial, sexual, or disabled. Martí and Macías consider how Roma adolescents and young adults can become stakeholders in Roma rights advancement. Part of their analysis involves attention to the challenge of enhancing and solidifying the access to quality education as a necessary instrument of social redistribution and political advancement.

The chapters in this volume probe different strategies for strengthening the rights of the Roma. After decades of violence, stigma, and exclusion, the Roma need targeted measures to discover the potential for positive gain from actions of the majority community. In their chapters, Uyehara and Meyer, as well as Schlager, describe the complex political processes and diplomatic negotiations promoting attention to Roma rights violations, especially in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe—Uyehara and Meyer from the perspective of the United States State Department and Schlager from the perspective of the OSCE. Schlager examines the importance of political will and deft diplomatic activity in raising the profile of rights violations of marginalized groups such as the Roma in international forums. She juxtaposes the condemnatory intervention of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (a stance that eventually led to the mention of the
Roma and their unique social exclusion in the 1990 Copenhagen Document) to the accommodation strategy of the Council of Europe in the early 1990s. Uyehara and Meyer elaborate further on the progression of U.S. “quiet diplomacy” directed at expressing concern about anti-Roma activism and persistent social and economic marginalization. They describe the State Department’s dual emphases on the importance of implementing nondiscrimination measures targeting the majority population but at the same time of strengthening the capacity of the minority through educational programs, including the USAID engagement with Roma youth educational programming.

Across a broad span of disciplines, countries, and subject foci, the book delivers an integrated final message. The key work of strengthening implementation capacity and the political clout to deliver it at the grassroots level is still incomplete. It is the responsibility of those engaged in Roma rights realization and in moving forward deliberately and thoroughly, case by case, neighborhood by neighborhood, country by country. We hope that our book contributes to that process, bringing new thinking and renewed political will to a most urgent human rights challenge in one of the richest parts of the world in our time.