

A Romani Gypsy Storyteller Uses His Gift with Words to Build Bridges of Understanding Between Cultures

by Richard O'Neill

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MANCHESTER, UK -- I am a Romani Gypsy. My father was raised in a horse-drawn Romani wagon (known as a vardo). I grew up living both in caravans and houses.

We are a speech-oriented people. We used speech to earn a living, hawking products or services, trying to get a few more days parked on a piece of ground. I grew up listening to stories, mostly men telling us about things that had happened to them when they were younger or things that had been passed down from their ancestors. Weddings, funerals, christenings always featured good stories; so did our homes.

When I went to school, I was amazed how little attention teachers commanded. I saw that storytellers break rules. They didn't worry if they used a Romani word or coined a new one. They focused on effect.

As things changed, the TV started to take over from the storyteller, **[SNIP – End of preview.]**