

PORRAIMOS

Europe's Gypsies in the Holocaust

a documentary by award-winning director/producer Alexandra Isles

Gypsies... the Most Persecuted Minority in Europe Today... the Forgotten Victims of Nazi Oppression

PORRAIMOS chronicles the Roma (Gypsy) Holocaust — “the devouring.” It is the first American documentary to expose how the pseudo-science of eugenics was used to persecute not only Jews, but also Gypsies. To the Nazis, Gypsies' dark skin and nomadic ways made them “lives not worthy of life.” Using personal testimonies, as well as photographs and film from the Reich Department of Racial Hygiene, this moving documentary remembers Gypsy victims of the Holocaust — victims whose persecution has been all but forgotten.

What is the way to cause this traveling people to disappear?

Dr. Robert Ritter, Head
Reich Department of Racial Hygiene & Population Biology
1939

Director/Producer/Writer Alexandra Isles has focused her career on human rights issues. Her film about blacklisted African-Americans — ***Scandalize My Name: Stories from the Blacklist*** — was the first documentary for BET Movies, introduced by Morgan Freeman and featuring Harry Belafonte. It was shown at the Chicago International Film Festival (Certificate of Merit), Human Rights and Hot Springs Documentary Film Festivals, as well as at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. ***The Power of Conscience: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews*** premiered at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and was shown as part of the Museum of Modern Art's *What's New* series. Broadcast on WNET/Channel 13, RTE (Ireland) and Danish Broadcasting Corporation, the film is part of the permanent collections of the Jewish Museum (New York) and Yad Vashem (Jerusalem).

Film Notes:

- Documentary feature
- Video/Color and black & white
- English with Czech and German subtitles
- 56:30 minutes

Chalice Well Productions · 212. 860.2225 · isles@mindspring.com
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PORRAIMOS

Europe's Gypsies in the Holocaust

Synopsis

The Gypsy question can only be solved when the main body of asocial and good-for-nothing Gypsy individuals of mixed blood is collected together in large labour camps and kept working there, and when further breeding of this population of mixed blood is stopped once and for all.

Dr. Robert Ritter, Head
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A Persecuted Minority with an Invisible History

There are between 6 and 8.5 million Roma (Gypsies) in Europe today. Throughout the continent, they are targets of persecution and racism — from Eastern Europe to Italy to the United Kingdom. Marginalized for a thousand years, with no access to higher education or the media, Europe's Gypsies have been unable to document their own history. Too often, they are defined through the prism of racial bias.

Forgotten Victims of Nazi Oppression

Roma survivors of the Holocaust have been denied reparations — their claims disregarded. Now the true story of their victimization is revealed on film.

PORRAIMOS, by award-winning filmmaker, Alexandra Isles, is the first American documentary to expose how the pseudo-science of eugenics was used to persecute the Gypsies. To the Nazis, Gypsies' dark skin and nomadic ways made them "lives not worthy of life."

PORRAIMOS, which means "the devouring," chronicles the Gypsy Holocaust through the stories of Austrian, Czech and German Gypsies, as well as the Jewish artist who was ordered by Joseph Mengele to paint portraits of Gypsy prisoners at Auschwitz.

PORRAIMOS uses photographs and film from the Reich Department of Racial Hygiene, as well as first person testimonies to document the oppression of the Gypsies — their registration and segregation, their sterilization, the medical experiments, their eventual murder. This moving documentary remembers Gypsy victims of the Holocaust — victims whose persecution has been all but forgotten.

PORRAIMOS sets the record straight.

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The Survivors

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Julia Backer

She was from a patriotic German Roma family. Three of her brothers were in the Army; her father hauled wood for the State. In 1943, her brothers were discharged. The whole family was sent to Auschwitz. Two brothers were subjected to freezing experiments.

Dina Gottliebova

A Jewish artist imprisoned at Auschwitz, who came to the SS's attention after painting a mural of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in a children's barracks. She was ordered by Josef Mengele to paint portraits of Gypsy prisoners.

Antonia Krokova

Part of a Czech circus family, her father was a Partisan — she and her siblings runners. The family was arrested and sent to Lety; then Auschwitz. Several years ago, her son was impaled by a group of skinheads. They were never brought to justice.

Bozena Ruzikova

This Czech Gypsy was pregnant when she was deported to Lety, where her baby died. She escaped, spending many months sick with typhus while hiding from the Czech police.

Karl Stojka

This Austrian Gypsy's family suffered race science experimentation before deportation to Auschwitz. A well-known artist, his work has been shown at the U.S. Holocaust Museum.

Rita Winterstein

Pregnant with twins, her mother was allowed to give birth provided that she turn them over for experimentation. Her twin sibling died; Rita suffered from blackouts throughout childhood. A mysterious scar behind her eye was discovered years later when she was x-rayed after a car accident.

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Credits, Advisors & Film Notes

Credits

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER:	ALEXANDRA ISLES
EDITOR:	DOUGLAS ROSSINI
CAMERA:	FRED GOLDEY
VIOLINIST:	ROBERT McDUFFIE
COMPOSER/ARRANGER:	LARRY ALAN SMITH
NARRATOR:	DEARBHLA MOLLOY
LIAISON/TRANSLATOR (CZECH INTERVIEWS)	LUBOMIR ZUBAK

Advisors

RAYE FARR	Director/Film & Video, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
SIR ANGUS FRASER	Author, <i>The Gypsies</i>
IAN HANCOCK, Ph.D.	Author, <i>The Pariah Syndrome</i> Member, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council (only Roma)
DONALD KENDRICK, Ph.D.	Author, <i>The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies</i>
JUD NEWBORN, Ph.D.	Historian, Museum of Jewish Heritage
DIANE TONG	Editor, <i>Gypsy Folk Tales</i>

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Director/Producer/Writer

Alexandra Isles is a New York-based documentary filmmaker, whose work reflects her deep commitment to human rights and dignity. ***Porraimos*** is her third film.

Isles has directed and written all of her documentaries; two of which she also produced. Her filmography deals with the effects of racial and political persecution. Two films focus with the Holocaust; the third with the blacklisting of African-American performers in the early days of McCarthyism.

Scandalize My Name: Stories from the Blacklist, the first documentary for BET Movies — introduced by Morgan Freeman and featuring Harry Belafonte — has been screened around the country at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival (New York), Chicago International Film Festival and Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (Hot Springs, Arkansas). It received the Certificate of Merit at the Chicago International Film Festival. In addition, it has been shown at Yale University and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Her first film, ***The Power of Conscience: The Danish Resistance and Rescue of the Jews*** premiered at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and was shown as part of the Museum of Modern Art's *What's New* series. It has been broadcast nationally and internationally — on WNET/Channel 13 (New York), RTE (Ireland) and Danish Broadcasting Corporation. The film is part of the permanent collections of the Jewish Museum (New York) and Yad Vashem (Jerusalem).

Isles' films have received grant support from the both public and private sectors. ***Porraimos*** is partially financed by a grant from the New York Council for the Humanities. ***Scandalize My Name: Stories from the Blacklist*** received funding from the National Endowment of for the Humanities, New York Council for the Humanities and Vincent Astor Foundation.

Her visual and performing arts background includes serving as the Assistant Curator/Television at the Museum of Radio & Television (New York) for drama, arts and children's programming. She also was Assistant Stage Manager for the New York Shakespeare Festival and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Isles was an interviewer for *Survivors of the Shoah*, Steven Spielberg's Holocaust visual history project. She also served as a panelist for the New York Council for the Humanities and the Louvre's first international biennial, *Classique en Image* (Paris).

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Crew & Contribution Bios

Douglas Rossini, Editor

Douglas Rossini has edited a wide range of documentaries including *First Person Singular: I.M. Pei*, *Carouso*, *Scandalize My Name: Stories from the Blacklist* and *Amistad Reborn*. Other editing credits include WNET's 2000 and 2001 Galas.

Fred Goldey, Camera

Fred Goldey is President of the American Video Group. He has produced films on subjects ranging from slam poetry to *Message for the New Millennium* by H.H. Dalai Lama.

Robert McDuffie, Violinist

Robert McDuffie has been a soloist for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Houston and Atlanta Symphonies and Cincinnati Pops. He performed a series of private recitals for the U.S. Supreme Court. McDuffie is also a Board member of the Harlem School of the Arts.

Larry Alan Smith, Composer/Arranger

Larry Alan Smith's works have been performed by the American Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo String Quartet and Hartford Symphony. For many years, he taught at Julliard, from which he has B.M., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees. He is former President, School of the American Ballet.

Dearbhla Molloy, Narrator

Dearbhla Molloy was nominated for a Tony for *Dancing at Lughnasa*. She has performed with Dublin's Gate and Abbey Theatres and Britain's National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company. Molloy has given many readings to benefit the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

Lubomir Zubak, Liaison & Translator (Czech Interviews)

Lubomir Zubak is a Czech Roma activist. He is currently an asylum seeker in Ireland.

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Contacts

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