

## Proud to be roma

By Anina Ciuciu

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The aim of the book is simple: to open our eyes about Roma minority through the eyes and hard experience of a Roma young woman. The book tells a real story: little Anina Ciuciu's arduous journey from a life of misery and discrimination in Romania to a LIFE of equality in France. The author tries to make the readers understand how tough is life for Roma minority because of discrimination and hate from the majority-Romanian population in Romania and also in France and I think she managed this very well.

I think that for Roma readers this book is very important because they can understand better than us Anina's struggle, but the lecture is vital for non-Roma people as well as they need to listen to Roma voices and learn more about their hard experiences.

Anina has lived in France since she was seven years old and until recently she suffered a lot for being part of an ethnic minority. She entered the Sorbonne University as the first Roma student admitted in this prestigious university. Now she is working at The European Court for Human Rights.

In the beginning of the book, she speaks about how life was for the Roma minority in 1990 in Romania, the year when she was born: the daily fight for food, the lack of utilities and solidarity between Roma and Romanian people. And then this: her father had to "look" like a Romanian in order not to lose his job! It is hard to believe that all this still happens today and there is more to it. Above all this, the existence of good things like the constant support inside the family, the caring and the love from her parents shows us that Anina and her sisters had the chance to a new life thanks to their parents.

Her memories concerning the struggle she and her family went through because they were Roma are vivid, present throughout the book: "my life and that of the people of my own kind is and it always will be a struggle against injustice and biases: I am Roma, Roma from Romania".

The long and dangerous journey from Craiova, Romania to France in a small van crammed full with 15 persons, 10 children and 5 adults, is presented in detail and at a slow pace so that the readers can imagine how it really feels to be in Anina's place.

The language used in the book is simple but real and strong. Anina is a real voice... a voice of many and for many Roma people. And her book is one that can open our eyes to see Roma people different: as they really are!

It is not easy at all to find the courage to write, but Anina did find it and I feel she wrote this for all Roma: to encourage them, to support them stand up and fight against

racism and to believe in their dreams. The book is written for us as well: to put our bias aside, to listen and not to judge without knowing, to find out and understand our privileges and to question our place in this fight: bystanders, pure racists or active fighters against racism.

Finally, I want to leave here a quote from Anina Ciuciu, because it represents a good piece of advice for all readers: "When you go through something like I did, you are determined to succeed. It's the only way you can give a response to life. Roma people are not just the ones who beg for money or food. They are a community who has a culture, a history and you have to get to know them. You don't have to be scared; you just have to try to understand us and to give us a chance".

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