

Romany Theatre Company

Atching Tan Project

Reminiscence Interview – Transcription of Edited Interview

Date of Interview		Interviewer	Interviewee	Age Range of Interviewee	Duration of Edited Recording
			Charlie B		09:13
Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview			
00:00	Charlie	My names Charlie, Charlie Benton I'm 23 years of age.			
	Sinead	So what was life like for you when you were growing up?			
00:11	Charlie	When I was growing up. I wouldn't say I was being brought up in a Travellers community, but when I was being brought up, I feel I was being brought up normal. But then I came to the age when I was about 13 and then me family introduced me to or told me that I've got Romany ancestry and Romany background to me. And then I took an interest in it because I thought it was all new to me. And then I realised that what I was being brought up like was no different to anybody else. Maybe I wasn't in a caravan, but was in a house and that's I thought was normal. I did tell a few people from the age of 13 'Oh I got Romany ancestry' and they's like 'No you haven't' and It's like 'well I have, I've been told and its in me family. Maybe me last names not Lee or Smith or Heron or Boswell'. And it looked at like a gorgias name and then I thought it was alright.			
	Sinead	So how did people react to you when you told them, did you experience any racism after that?			
01:18	Charlie	I didn't experience any racism but in a way I did think that people looked at me like 'if you are we don't look at you so much that we can respect you'. I think people thought if you are a Traveller, we can't trust you so much. I did get that a few looks. And then some people looked at you and thought well you've got a very nice background to you. Some people look at you and think that you come across as Pikey coz you say the word gypsy. If you say the word Romany it slightly throws them off. I think Romanys more of an English gentleman back in the old days, that lived in 'orse drawn caravan. If you say gypsy I think that people think that your like Pikey straight away. Maybe that you lived in a caravan. That you stole from people to keep yourself alive and earn a living and Romanies went to work, Romanies went to work and they were honest people and they were kind people and they wanted a healthy lifestyle. None of them wanted to become ill.			
	Sinead	So I guess umm.... As you you didn't really grow up on a site or anything like that you had a normal education?			
02:28	Charlie	Yeah, I suppose I did have a normal education. Went to School. Went from the age that mum and dad sent me to school. Brought up normal. Its nothing to do with my mum's side of the family. Its more to do with my dad's mum's. And I just wasn't told about it because I don't think they thought it was important to tell me. I didn't think they thought it was important to tell me, know what I mean? Just brought me up as best as they can. Honest education. Get a job. Get a house. I suppose that's how life's moving on these days.			
	Sinead	Do you think things Have things changed for Travellers over the years?			
03:07	Charlie	Things changing for Travellers over the years? Yeah, things have changed for travellers over the years because there's no stopping places anymore. Travellers are someone that			

		<p>travels. Travels about whether its 'orse drawn. You cant do that so much no more because the roads are moving quicker. The roads have changed and if you've got a trailer and that, and you pull up on the side of the road. You're pulling in land where you cant now because places are getting smaller to stop and there's less conveniences about and there's not many people out to help ya, ya know with ya trailer.</p>
03:52	Sinead	<p>What defines being a traveller? Is it what you do or what you are?</p>
	Charlie	<p>What defines being a traveller I think... is a very tricky question, because if you tell someone you're a traveller, I think they pull out the old paint brush and tarnish you with the same paint brush they dos' with the word Pikey, Gypsy or whatever. And then they ask what is a Traveller someone that travels or someone that did travel or someone that goes to work or someone that doesn't go to work. I think a Traveller is someone that is, maybe that is on a council travelling site. I think that's what a traveller may be because I see them as someone who is not permanently settled coz they could come off at any time or get moved on. While I think if you're in a brick and mortar and a bit of a house you're not a Traveller then because your not moving no more.</p>
	Sinead	<p>Do you think that its something that's in your blood though, even if you've grown up in a house, you know that you...?</p>
	Charlie	<p>I think saying that if you're a traveller and if it's in your blood, I think that if it's in your blood you should say 'Romany'. I think that sounds a lot clearer. Traveller you could be Irish Traveller, Scottish Traveller, travel all over the world. I think Traveller is the wrong word. I think Romany is the word Coz it's the Romany ancestry, the Romany road, the Romany background, the Romany gypsy caravan, the Romany wares and tares and produce, the Romany way of life. That's what it was. Its not the Traveller way of life. It's Romany, Romany Gypsy.</p>
	Sinead	<p>Are you proud of your Romany Heritage?</p>
	Charlie	<p>I'm proud of my Romany heritage to know that from as far as I'm aware they've done nothing wrong they were honest working people like meself. I go to work and I want to earn meself a decent living, get myself a nice house, nice family and have nice things in life. I bring me kids up to know what their history was like, family history is like whether it is mine or me wife's. Both the same, we have both Romany ancestry in the family which brings us closer together and we can relate to things in life</p>
	Sinead	<p>How do you see life changing for Travellers in the future?</p>
06:03	Charlie	<p>I can see life changing for Travellers changing in the future because councils are getting stricter. The police sometimes nailing you down, stopping you doing things. Horse fairs etc are getting smaller and smaller and very far in between, but there would be the few there remaining Appleby, Stow etc but people don't like to see hundreds of thousands of Travellers, Gypsies, Romanies coming together on one day because they're worried buildings will get damaged, cars will get damaged, people get hurt, people choring things; nicking things. And people won't be able to travel so much now. Travellers won't be able to go around the world, stopping in places. Its all going to come to a halt one day. As far as I'm aware there will still be that blood line there.</p>
	Sinead	<p>Is there a favourite memory or story that you could tell from how you see your life as a Traveller or Romany I mean?</p>
07:05	Charlie	<p>My favourite memories of a Romany or a Traveller. Meself, I don't know because my memories are my memories and I don't know if they're a favourite of mine. Its just how I've been brought up. But being brought up going for walks, I think, and that. Going round the fields, nature, gardening. Been gardening since the age I could walk really.</p>

		<p>That's being brought up knowing what plants what, what birds, what they do, where they live and I used to go to school and tell me kids, and I used to be the top person in the class for plants and just knowing about nature and geography around South East London, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, all over that way because that's where my family are all from. And they've travelled and where they've been and then they've seen all this nature and birds and things and most kids these days, which I think is a shame, stay in doors and don't get out. And they don't get out and they don't know what's out beyond 30 miles of their front door and don know what nature is and what plants are what and where they come from and what they smell like. I think that's a shame. I think that maybe that's part of the old Romany ways where they travelled around a lot they had to know what plants are good for them, what plants weren't good for them. These days some people, you tell a kid now what a dock is and he wouldn't know. He wouldn't know what it was for You use it on; a nettle. Some plants you can eat. I remember I used to walk to school one day with my mate. I said 'I just want to go in this field here' and I was eating out of the field. He was like 'What are you doing? You're going to kill yourself.' He didn't know a poison apple from a good apple. He didn't know that I was eating a nut of a tree, if it was a good nut or not. And some plants you can eat. He thought I was going to kill meself. But I suppose that's being out with nature, with my family and going for walks and being told the old ways. What you could use and what you couldn't use. I think that's where life's going wrong now.</p>
	Sinead	Well thanks Charlie.
	Charlie	That's alright.

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