ignorance of the Gypsies is partly enforced by the Gypsies themselves. As Rom Gypsy, Ronald Lee, described in his autobiography, *Goddam Gypsy*, "the greatest strength of the Gypsies is their invisibility. It is not without good reason that many people consider them to be extinct, for the Roms themselves do everything in their power to perpetuate the myth of their non-existence" (Lee, 1971, 9).

In order to separate themselves from the *gadje* ideals that they disagreed with, Gypsies failed to permanently settle in any one area for a prolonged period of time, and were thus consequently always perceived as outsiders. As Katie Trumpener described it, "when a national culture stops to celebrate and take stock in itself, it is only the 'Gypsies' who keep moving," thus perpetuating the belief in Gypsies as outsiders that fail to be recognized as notable citizens wherever they go (Trumpener, 1992, 846). However, while it becomes evident that Gypsies prefer to remain an independent group, surrounding cultures often deny them the opportunity.

Presumably as a direct result of their isolated lifestyles, these free-spirited, family-oriented people began to be stigmatized through ignorance. Having untraditional jobs, according to their host countries, they were repeatedly stereotyped as lazy, worthless, and inherent criminals. Known also as petty thieves, child-thieves, and liars, Gypsies, along with Jews, are the most insulted groups of people in all of Europe (Birnbaum, 1971, 259-264). Because of these irrational fears that so many people held for the Gypsies, they often faced unwarranted persecution in the past that continues to resonate today. It was not until the 1850s that the enslavement of Romanian Gypsies was officially abolished, but although the terminology has changed, there still exist policies against the Gypsy race today, including unofficial bans against the immigration of Gypsies to North America (Trumpener, 1992, 849 & 853).

However, perhaps the most devastating blow to their race came during the Third Reich, where laws implemented as early as 1929 intended to enforce discrimination of the Gypsy lifestyle by prohibiting large groups of Gypsies from traveling together (Trumpener, 1992, 853). By 1936 research was being conducted on Gypsies by Robert Ritter at the Racial Hygiene Research Center, in which he postulated that *Zigeunermischlinge*, or racially mixed Gypsies, were genetically prone to criminal behavior, and should therefore be separated from the common population and sterilized (Lewy, 1999, 203). In his opinion, Ritter believed that although Gypsies had come to Europe from India, therefore classifying them as Aryan, they had spent too many years procreating with non-Aryans, causing nearly 90 percent of Gypsies to be impure and asocial (Sonneman, 2000, 92-93). By 8 December 1938, the decree titled 'Combating the Gypsy Plague' was officially enacted, forcing all Gypsies to register themselves with the government (Lewy, 1999, 201). Shortly following the enactment of this decree, Dr. Johannes Behrendt, who worked for the Office of Racial Hygiene, published his strong support of the decree, in which he stated that Gypsies are "criminal and asocial and

impossible to educate, [and] should therefore be treated as hereditarily sick. The aim should therefore be elimination without hesitation of this characteristically defective element in the population. This should be done by locking them all up and sterilizing them" (Sonneman, 2000, 194). These beginning acts of persecution and ignorance toward the Gypsy race inevitably lead to the creation and active use of the *Zigeunerlager,* or specialized Nazi concentration camps destined for further experimentations on Gypsies. Mistreatment of Gypsies, however, went much further than concentration camps. Just like the fate of the Jews, Gypsies, too, were eventually sent off to death camps. Auschwitz-Birkenau, for example, dedicated a section of the camp entirely to Gypsies. However, due to the Gypsies' declining sanitation and health, on 2 August 1944, the decision came to exterminate the inhabitants of the Gypsy camp (Lagnado & Dekel, 1992, 81-83). A Jewish prisoner, Menashe Lorinczi, remembers hearing the screams that came from the death camp that night, when even the Gypsies knew that they were no longer beneficial to the regime:

> We heard a terrible cry. The Gypsies knew they were going to be put to death, and they cried all night. They had been at Auschwitz a long time. They had seen the Jews arriving at the ramps, had watched the selections where old people and children went to the gas chambers… And when the Gypsies cried, all the twins heard them. And even though I was a child, only nine or ten, I understood (Lagnado & Dekel, 1992, 83).

Usually for Gypsies, imprisonment in *Zigeunerlager* camps involved involuntary sterilization (Milton, 1991, 378). The procedures were always painful, and the doctors were generally careless. Gypsy Holocaust survivor, Stramsee Schönberger was only twelve years old when he was forcibly sterilized twice. At the time he was outraged with the animalistic procedures used, but after he learned of the effects years later, he was heartbroken – procreation is traditionally very important to the Gypsy way of life (Sonneman, 2002, 200). The Gypsies however, who were considered to be far more inferior than the Germans, were unwanted in Hitler's Aryan society due to these unworthy traits, which led to their subjugation under the "Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring," enacted on 14 July 1933. The common sterilization procedures, altered under this law, now allowed physicians to use force against unwilling victims who fit into the categories of "lives unworthy of life" (Bock, 1983, 408). Including only the victims of forced sterilization between 1933 and 1939, 53 percent of them were sterilized for being dubbed as feeble-minded (Bock, 1983, 414). The ostracized Gypsies fit into this category due to their deviation from the standard German lifestyle.

Gypsy sterilization has continued even after World War II. In the Czech Republic, sterilization of Roma Gypsy women had been taking place illegally since 1990, with the last known procedure occurring as recently as 2003. Rights