Month of Roma Women Activism Campaign represents an annual Women Space activity and it is done in cooperation with Roma women organizations and initiatives gathered in Roma Women Network of Serbia. This activity aims to draw attention to the Roma women position in our country and indicate the importance of Roma women activism. This campaign was fourth in a row and it was implemented over the course of 32 days – from March 8th, the International Women Day through April 8th, the International Roma Day. The beginning and end of the campaign represent two important dates for Roma women. Over this period the special place is given to March 21st, the International Day against Racism which was again commemorated separately. Campaign received support, aside from Roma women organizations and informal groups that took part within numerous activities, from women and Roma organizations, artist groups, individuals and the media.

2013 Campaign was opened on March 7th, prior to the Women Day in Progres gallery in Belgrade. After this activists of Roma Women Network took part in the street march organized by Women in Black Belgrade on March 8th. Activists of Roma Women Network organized meetings of Roma women and local authorities and institutions representatives as part of the Campaign actions. Meetings informally entitled “Coffee with...” took place in homes of women all over Serbia (Belgrade, Novi Bečej, Pirot, Vlasotince, Albunar, Lebane, Pančevo, Prokuplje, Leskovac, Novi Sad, Dimitrovgrad, Smederevska Palanka, Zrenjanin, Bela Palanka, Niš, Sombor, Bujanovac, Vranje, Deronje, Lazarevac, Kragujevac and Aleksinac). With these we intended to have social workers, medical professionals and municipalities’ representatives, as well as the media meet the women that want to speak with them and become acquainted with the richness of these women identities in their own homes and not the offices and municipal homes and try and find a common solution for problems Roma women face on daily basis. Women that opened the doors to their homes showed that they are students, mothers/single mothers, workers, unemployed, on social welfare, women returnees under the readmission agreement, those that fight for their rights every day but also for the survival of themselves and their families. Over the course of this month more than 300 individuals discussed informally, over coffee, very different topics: employment, health, social assistance, education, marriage, readmission and deportation, Roma women activism and
Roma Women Network actions regarding creation and implementation of Local Action Plans (LAPs) and possibilities of cooperation.

Street performance All That I Am was seen in three more municipalities this year: as to draw attention to the March 21st, the International Day against Racial Discrimination and in cooperation with Roma Association Novi Bečej in Novi Bečej and on April 8th as to commemorate the International Day of Roma women and men in Pirot and Prokuplje.

On April 4th, 2013 we received an opportunity for a third time to take part within the special session of the Board for human and minority rights and gender equality of the National Assembly of Serbia themed with the position of Roma women in Serbia. Roma Women Network activists met with the new board members and presented Roma Women Network and its work over the last year.

The most notable results over the course of previous years include that from the starting 0 positive reports on Roma women – during the Campaign period have had 1.3 (2010), 1.5 (2011) and almost 2 in 2012. The number of media report this year amounts to 1.7 per day which represents the fact that those media and programs opened to social topics were shut down, but we managed to hold some media attention.

**FEMINIST SUMMER SCHOOL**

Women Space organized its fifth Feminist Summer School at Divčibare from July 23rd through 28th. This event aims to empower young women and acquaint them with numerous subjects feminist movement works on.

So far, this school was the largest with over 60 participants, volunteers, facilitators and organizers and it enabled us to talk about: patriarchy in our lives and possible resistance, short history of the feminist movement, feminist approach to violence, personal feminist issues about discrimination against women, emotional literacy, neoliberal capitalism, identities policies and/or solidarity policies, practical feminism through workshops on empowering body and voice, creating stencils with politically motivated messages, cartoon representations of topics that we feel are important. This school also provided an opportunity to learn about women representations in art and one of the new topics was connection between veganism and feminism.

Two important subjects within the feminist movement in our country, the existence of women of different sexual orientation than heterosexual and the position of Roma women drew great attention of the participants. Especially interesting discussion related to the Ukrainian group Femen that was carefully prepared and implemented by Feminist Summer School volunteers.

This event usually provokes great interest and once again confirm that such activities are much needed and of invaluable importance for empowering individual women, but the very feminist movement in Serbia as well.
ANTIFASCIST PROGRAM

Great part of Women Space activities are represented in our antifascist program. Aside street actions where Women Space participates as part of the Antifascist Collective of Niš we also organize antifascist studies course within this program.

Antifascist Studies Course 2013

Alternative Antifascist studies course was continued during 2013 because we want to create opportunities to spread information and knowledge about the antifascist history, different views regarding the antifascist heritage in Serbia and dangers of current historical revisionism, issues of the Serbian Left, relation of the left and feminism, forms of anarchism, etc.

Events, lectures and film projections held within this year course include:

- **Women’s Work in Socialism – The position of workers today**, delivered by professor Gordana Stojaković
- **Chauvinism and racism within the established culture and politics**, professor Đokica Jovanović, Ph. D.
- **Present events in Turkey and can we expect similar events in Serbia too**, discussion facilitated by Matija Medenica, student and antifascist activist
- **Nazi Propaganda: Then and Now**, professor Đokica Jovanović Ph.D. And Aleksandar Kraus, initiator of Antifascist Serbian Front
- **Institution and Freedom**, facilitated by Lepa Mlađenović, women’s movement activist
- **Promotion of Gender and Left no. 2 publication, participants**: Lidija Vasiljević, Magda Janjić, Tanja Marković and Aleksandra Žikić, women’s movement activists
- **Culture of Remembrance and Historical Revisionism in Italy: Liberation Day and Remembrance Day on Italian Victims in Istria and Dalmatia**, delivered by Milovan Pisarri Ph. D., historian and activist

Antifascist Actions

This year we have organized a series of activities in order to commemorate internationally important dates relevant to the antifascist activities in the world and in our country. These were done either independently or together with the Antifascist Collective of Niš which is a group of activists from the...
following organizations: Human Rights Board, Local Democracy Center, Center for Civil Resources Development and Center for Girls.

- **March 21st, the International Day Against Racism** – Women Space, within our campaign Month of Roma Women Activism, organized a street performance entitled All That I Am in Novi Bečej. Another action was organized with other members of the Antifascist Collective when we distributed printed materials aiming to direct public attention to the importance of remembering this date.

- **April 8th, the International Day of Roma Women and Men**, street performance All That I Am in Pirot and Prokuplje

- **May 9th, Victory Day**, we organized and took part in the press conference with other members of the Antifascist Collective and putting up two street banners reminding citizens of Niš about this important day.

- **May 17th, the International Day Against homophobia, lesbophobia and transphobia**, we distributed promotional materials and organized an action of releasing rainbow colored balloons at the central city square.

- **June 27th, the International Pride Day of LGBT people**, when we organized a press conference where the police representative Bratislav Timotijević stated that LGBT individuals in our town have the same rights and receive the same treatment as any other citizen of Niš.

- **November 9th, the International Day Against Fascism**, when we held a public class entitled Women antifascist history of Niš.

**SCHOOL OF REMEMBRANCE – KNOWLEDGE ON GENOCIDE AGAINST ROMA WOMEN AND MEN AND COMBATING ANTICIGANISM**

Within the two year project that is being implemented together by Women Space, Forum for Applied History from Belgrade and Roma Center from Göttingen, we held a three day conference in Niš late September 2013 under the name School of Remembrance for media representatives, history teachers, pedagogical assistants and activists from the civil society and political parties. This activity aimed to gain new and distribute already existing data on the pogrom of Roma women and men in Serbia during WWII, but also the fact that continuity of persecution and discrimination after the war (both in Serbia and throughout Europe). Fifty participants attended the conference whereas the interest we received was much greater.

Lecturers included: historians Igor Mitić, Milovan Pisarri Ph.D and professor Đokica Jovanović Ph.D culture sociologist. They presented historical facts and gave us information about Roma people suffering. Moreover, the conference guests included Vesna Lučić and Sanja Ristić, historians and authors of teaching manual on Holocaust, Ivan Radenković, theorist and activist, and Kenan Emin, international Roma rights who talked about contemporary Roma suffering and discrimination. Systematic genocide documents were presented all regarding Roma people during WWII in Europe and the area of former Yugoslavia. Screenings
of two documentaries were also held of The Wrong Word – Compensation to Roma and Sinti in Germany and This Life Was Given to Me both dealing with personal stories of Roma women and men survivors of Holocaust.

Reminder about historical events were thought provoking regarding mechanisms present day authorities utilize in their relations to Roma women and men and also about deeply rooted stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma nation. Working groups' conclusions included the needs for planning future activities within the school plan and program reforms, indicate the need to strengthen the responsibility of the media and the role of political parties in sending out important educative information, the necessity to indicate systematic discrimination, and finally the need to network and create partnerships between the public sector, media and civil society organizations.

**SUPPORT OF LGBTTIQ ACTIVISM IN NIŠ AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION THAN HETEROSEXUAL**

**Organization of LGBTTIQ events in Niš**

Due to the lack of public gathering places for LGBTTIQ persons and respecting the right of free movement and expressing ourselves for all, the activists of the Women Space organized 5 events in 2013 organized 5 events, or parties, which were visited by about 300 people from the territory of southern Serbia, regardless of their sexual and gender identity. These activities were implemented by volunteers of the Women's Space with the support from the team and organization's resources. Keeping in mind the popularity and need for such events, volunteers will independently continue with the organization and implementation of LGBTTIQ activities in the upcoming year.

**Research: Roma Lesbians in Serbia**

This research was conducted on the territory of the Republic of Serbia within the call for research works on the topic of gender equality of the European Roma Centre for Human Rights, Budapest. Interviews with lesbian Roma women, LGBT activists, Roma and women's organizations, as well as Roma women and Roma LGBT organizations and initiatives in Belgrade, Novi Bečej and Niš, were published from November 2012 through April 2013. The intention of the text on Roma lesbians published in the publication entitled Džuvljare, was to strengthen the visibility of diversity in the Roma community and the LGBTTIQ people and to show the intertwining of discrimination based on gender, race, nation, class and sexual orientation.
Workshop on empowerment of Roma women of different sexual orientation than heterosexual

Workshop *Alone in Someone Else’s World* had a purpose to empower women who participated in the study of the existence of Roma lesbians, and was held in Niš on April 20-21 in 2013. Facilitators were Lepa Mlađenović and Vera Kurtić (the author of *Džuvljarke* publication).

Workshop on empowerment of women of different sexual orientation than heterosexual in Niš

*I hear, I trust Tenderly - How to talk to a lesbian partner or a friend who have survived sexual violence* is a workshop of experience, held in Niš on December 1, 2013 and is intended for women who have or had a partner or a friend in a situation of violence. Facilitator was Lepa Mlađenović, feminist consultant for women survivors of violence.

**ADVOCACY FOR SYSTEM SOLUTIONS OF PROBLEMS THAT ROMA WOMEN FACE IN SERBIA**

Through this program Women Space seeks to contribute to the introduction and implementation of system solutions for improving the situation of Roma women. In 2013 we had the opportunity to conduct a number of activities at the local, national and international levels:

**Strengthening the capacity of Roma women’s activism in the south of Serbia for improving the health of Roma women and their access to health care**

South of Serbia is faced with high unemployment and poverty, but in addition, Roma women in this area encounter issues when implementing the right to health care and obtaining health care due to multiple discrimination, prejudice and lack of information regarding the ways of delivering the health care. In some of the municipalities in southern Serbia there are no employed health mediators, and they have been recognized as very important when the health care of Roma women is concerned. Also, there are few active organizations and initiatives focused on improving the situation of Roma women in general and Roma women right to health care.

Intention of Women Space was to support new initiatives, and that these initiatives become part of the Roma Women Network, which operates throughout entire Serbia, and thus begin or improve their work of advocating improvement of health and health care of Roma women in the south of Serbia.

In addition to research conducted in 2013 regarding the problems that Roma women are facing in the field of health and health care, through interviews and focus groups with Roma women and decision makers, Women’s Space organized a seminar in Vrnjačka Banja in November 22-24, entitled *Strengthening the capacity to promote the health of Roma women and their access to health care*, for 12 activists from Bujanovac, Vranje, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Lebane, Prokuplje and Kuršumlija. The themes we covered gave the new insight into Roma women’s activism, and we paid special attention to the way of advocating for system solutions of problems that Roma women are facing, as well as solving problems in health care and the preservation of women’s health. Also, this was an opportunity to engage and talk about the care about the women themselves: the women we work with and us, the activists.

Although for some of the new activists this was the first time that they met with feminist working techniques, the conclusions of the seminar indicates the necessity of activist involvement of women themselves in order to achieve positive changes. In an atmosphere of trust, solidarity and sisterhood further cooperation was agreed and the necessary steps in the process of improving health and health care of Roma women in the south of Serbia.

The next step of the organization is publication of research results.
Organization Women Space participated in consultations at European Commission in Brussels

Through cooperation with the partner organization Kvinna till Kvinna from Sweden, representative of Women Space and Roma Women Network had an opportunity to meet with the representatives of the Department for Enlargement of the European Union and to discuss the report on Serbia’s progress towards membership in the European Union in the European Commission in Brussels. Women Space submitted written comments on the human rights of Roma women in 2012 and 2013 to the European Commission.

This year too, European Commission representatives were informed about the Serbia’s lack of implementing, monitoring and reporting on the adopted measures when standards for human rights are concerned but also about reporting of the European Commission on the status of women from especially disenfranchised groups.

A special focus in Women space comments this year was placed on sustainability issues of Roma women activism and autonomy of organizations and initiatives that are members of Roma Women Network. The problems in cooperation with institutions and international organizations, as well as the problem of exclusion of Roma and women’s organizations in achieving the possibilities to be supported by EU funds - were pointed out.

Participation in collecting material, writing and presenting the Alternative Report on the situation of Roma women in Serbia before the CEDAW Committee of the United Nations in Geneva

The Republic of Serbia in Geneva on July 18, 2013 presented the second and third periodic report on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention at the 55th session of the UN CEDAW Committee. On that occasion, the members of the Government of the Republic of Serbia delegation, reported on the legislative and institutional measures taken in Serbia in order to improve the position of women in the country.

In response to the state report, four shadow (alternative) reports were submitted to the Committee, drawn up by following NGOs: Autonomous Women’s Center, ASTRA, Women in Black, Labris - organization for lesbian human rights, Voice of Difference, Network ... OUT OF CIRCLE - Serbia, Praxis and the European Roma Rights Center from Budapest, as well as organizations and initiatives of Roma Women Network Serbia.

A total of nine organizations and initiatives of Roma Women Network in the past two years worked on the preparation of the Alternative Report on the situation of Roma women, and these were: Roma Women’s Center Bibija, Belgrade; Women Space, Niš; Association of Roma Women Osvit, Niš; Association of Roma Novi Bečej; Romnjako ilo, Zrenjanin; Roma Researchers, Žabalj; and Roma women initiatives in Vranje, Pirot and Bujanovac, together with an independent consultant Biljana Branković. This report, through the monitoring of policies and measures, as well as through case studies, analyzes areas relevant for Roma women (education, employment, health care, marriage and family life equality, protection from discrimination and violence, political participation, position of multiply marginalized women within Roma community, the adequacy of the existing system solutions, etc.). Problems in the implementation of measures by the Republic of Serbia which undertook to improve the situation of Roma women were presented to the members of Committee in oral testimony, as well as the problem of the frequent marginalization of Roma women's activism, focusing on the problems that the Roma women are facing every day in education, employment and protection from violence.
Strengthening the capacity of Roma women activism in the south of Serbia to advocate for the Roma women rights

In addition to the presentation of the report, this was an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of Roma women activists, and the two young members of the Women Space and Roma Women Network received the opportunity to learn about the practical process of advocacy at the highest international level. From global to local training, organized by International Women Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW) from 5 to 19 July 2013 and the 55th Session of the CEDAW Committee, was preceded by the two-part training for the collection of cases of violation of human rights of Roma women, held during 2011 and 2012.

The cases collected by a group of 15 young Roma activists of women organizations and initiatives, contributed to the writing of the Alternative Report on the situation of Roma women in 2013.

Initiation of LAPs for improving the position of Roma women in Serbia

Work on initiating of LAPs for improving the position of Roma women, continued during 2013 in cities and municipalities in southern Serbia. These activities have resulted in the establishment of cooperation with decision-makers in Bela Palanka and Lebane and the beginning of draft documents. This work continues in 2014.

Collecting cases of discrimination

During 2013 Women’s Space filed 4 complaints to Nevena Petrušić, Equality Commissioner, while there were 14 cases tested on discrimination in total. Most cases in which discrimination was estimated were related with the rights to employment, housing, assembly and movement.

Feminiš – FESTIVAL OF WOMEN’S ACTIVISM AND ART

In Niš, from September 20th through 22nd, the fourth FemiNiš festival was held, the festival that seeks deconstruction of patriarchal social reality, but also the decentralization of feminism. The history of feminism in this area is long and rich. Building on the continuity of women’s self-organizing we tried to point out the reality for women in our society and the rich feminist theory and the importance of women activism. As during previous years, to Niš’s scene, we brought the current feminist content from the country and the region, which were offered, not only to Niš inhabitants, but also to those who came to FemiNiš from other cities. Program consisted of workshops, feminist talks, book promotions, and film screenings. Also, additional content was prepared for relaxation: sports activities, party, concert, unforgettable socializing.

Festival of women activism and art – FemiNiš 2013 was organized by activist of Women Space and Centre for Girls. This was the last festival under this name because the time has come to expand the objectives of the festival and organize much more independent events throughout the year and in different spaces.
PARTICIPATION IN STUDY VISITS, TRAINING COURSES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND FESTIVALS

Through participation, Women Space activists supported many activities of partner, sister and related organizations in 2013, among which we would like to mention: the activities of Women in Black, a study trip to Berlin on the occasion of granting the Anna Klein award to Lepa Mlađenović, participation in P2P training organized in Brussels by TACSO, presentation of an alternative report “Roma Women speak Out” at the CEDAW Committee in Geneva, PitchWise festival in Sarajevo, VoxFeminae festival in Zagreb, forum AFŽ: heritage and borders of emancipation organized by BRID, Zagreb, etc.

PUBLISHED WORKS

Women History of Niš by Ana Jovanović, historian, presents a neglected part of our town history and gives us information that were gathered and published with an intention to preserve from oblivion and show the importance of women who made a difference here in a new light. This book strives to list basic data on 23 women who, for now, are known to be first in the professions that were not fully assumed as “female” and who through working and sole existence contributed to Niš development. Research gathers several participants of the people's liberation resistance during WWII and we can learn which important decision making places they held and the ways they beared the burden of a liberation struggle and country reconstruction together with the male comrades.

Džuvljarke by Vera Kurtić tackles the problem of invisibility that women who are both Roma and lesbians face through the negation of their personal identities and established relations and unions both within the Roma but also wider social communities. In giving us examples of Roma lesbian existence the author explains burden of gender, race, nationality, class and minority sexual existence but also their intersectionality through discrimination. The paper is written for the feminist movement, Roma and LGBT communities but also for all those striving for protection and implementation of human rights.

ANNOUNCED PUBLICATIONS

The monograph of the Women Space work represents the work of organization its 15 years of existence. This publication was prepared with the assistance of external experts: Sunčica Vučaj and Jelena Višnjić and the records of Women Space activists over the past 15 years.

School of Remembrance indicates suffering of Roma people in the Second World War and continuity of suffering and discrimination after the war, and is created in cooperation of the Forum for Applied History and Women Space. The collected historical material is complemented by memories and testimonies of Roma people. Publication is prepared by Milovan Pisarri, Veronika Mitro, Ana Jovanović, as well as the editors Rena Readle and Vera Kurtić.

The right to health care is an overview of situation on human rights of Roma women in southern Serbia, particularly in the implementation of health care and the causes of short life expectancy. This publication aims to raise visibility of the problems that Roma women are facing in southern Serbia, and has a set of recommendations that were collected and formed in the field, by women themselves, as well as by decision makers within the institutions we contacted.

Translation of the book The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory by Carol J. Adams, will be released after 2014 for the region speaking area. This important work is in accordance with the mission, objectives and policies of the Women Space work, and a well-known feminist magazine Ms. wrote about this book the following: “The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory”
provides an overview of the historical, gender, racial and class integration in a culture that consumes the meat and makes the connection between the practice of slaughtering and eating animals and maintenance of male domination.

**Women Space programs in 2013 were supported in solidarity by:**

- Kvinna till Kvinna, Sweden
- Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, South East Europe
- Open Society Institute, Budapest
- Open Society Foundation
- Women Fund - Reconstruction
- International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
- Commissioner for Protection of Equality
- Hartefakt Fund
- OSCE Mission to Serbia