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I was always privileged because I had light colored skin and I passed as *gagie* (not Romani) most of my childhood. To be honest until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade I had no idea what it means that we are *tigani* (*gypsy*) and the other Romanians. My mother on the other hand had darker skin. At 8 years old I moved to a school in the city center where rich people were studying. Here I had a very uptight teacher who later proved to be racist. On the first day of school, she put me in the last desk of the class with another boy who was considered the “black sheep”. Also because she saw that my mother was Romani she insisted on saying that she has the best group of students and she doesn’t want me to drag her class down. Most of the semester she ignored me until I stood out with my very good grades and I became her favourite student. I wasn’t Romani anymore for her, I wasn’t “dragging her class down”, schooling made me Romanian. Fast forward 10 years later, I was at Cosbuc high school. I was the only Romani girl in my class, all my class mates knew because I was not ashamed to assume who I was. Even though I was not discriminated directly there were always racist commentaries or remarks. In these situations I was always fighting back, I have big mouth to be honest. Somehow, they said that I am not like “all those gypsies that steal” because for them I was a *gagie*. For others my people were like some aliens that have exotic and unheard traditions. On the other hand, my teachers didn’t know and I think they didn’t care that I am a Roma girl. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade I was studying economy with a teacher of whom all my classmates were afraid. She liked me because I was studying very well but she didn’t know I was Romani. In that period I was involved in projects made for Roma people and I was appearing on some of them on Youtube. She saw them and during the class with all my colleagues listening she said: “I found out something shocking about you, let’s talk after this class. I can’t believe it!”. I was scared to death, I was wondering what did I do, what did she find out? After the class I went to talk to her and she told me: “Wow you are of Roma ethnicity, I had no idea. I can’t believe it, you don’t look like it at all. I hope that I didn’t bother you before with my remarks about your ethnicity.” I was about to cry of anger and frustration. She said it

like there were some patterns in which you had to fit in to be called Roma. For her, Roma girls were some children-making machines without studies and dark skin. Somehow when you are Roma you start from the presumption that you are guilty. You feel this pressure of representation, you are held responsible for everybody's behavior. Even though this really happens sometimes, many times it is only in your Romani mind: in situations like this you can only see it from an ethnic perspective. I felt so offended that I left without saying anything. Later at University I encountered racism also. I was so hurt by what happened that I even considered to move to another University. In my attempt of explaining to my colleagues why is inappropriate to tell jokes about *crows* I discovered that their mentality is so racist that they couldn't stand to hear what I was about to say. They labeled me as "stupid gypsy who brags about being gypsy", they refused to call me Romani saying that this is a word invented by us to steal Romania, they told me to go back in India because obviously there were all the Roma people born and I wasn't a Romanian citizen from legal point of view... and worst of all they said that I should shut up because it is shameful to be Romani. If I shut up nobody would realize that I am Romani because "I am smart and beautiful, not like all the others gypsies", they said. Meaning that Roma girls are stupid, ugly and they don't go to school or university... after this incident when I argued with most of my colleagues, I was expecting to never make friends again but I had a nice surprise that some of my colleagues stood up for me, they asked me how I felt and if I am ok. I can say that this conflict created a beautiful friendship among me and some people at University. I think that one thing that Roma girls/women should hear is that we should never be ashamed of who we are because no matter how much you try to hide it you can't run from yourself all life. Moreover, I think it's our moral duty to never remain viewers of racism, we have to take action and when you find yourself as a victim you should never bow your head in shame and let it go because we are not obliged to bear the ignorance of some people towards our culture.