Inclusion in the Face of Exclusion: A Parallel Study of Minority Integration in the European Union South and American South

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Many attempts have been made at integrating the Roma into the European societies in which they live, including the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), the R.E.A.C.T. (Responsibility, Empowerment, Activism, Citizenship, and Transparency) Program that ran from October 2010 to November 2011, The Roma Pilot Program (2008-2012), and The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015). All of these have brought about broad awareness of the great disparities between Roma and majority populations, ushering in sweeping changes legally for the rights of Roma in select European countries. Anti-racism European initiatives began as early as 1994 and have spread throughout European Union nations and aspiring EU nations as Roma rights, inclusion, and access became increasingly of concern to the European Union. As such, member nations, and aspiring member nations, have nearly universally adopted much more comprehensive policies regarding their minority populations in their drive to be recognized for their efforts in adhering to standards necessary for EU membership and/or compliance with EU law.

However, these initiatives are being promulgated at a challenging time for current and aspiring EU nations in Southeast Europe, as the economies of many of the nations are weak and unemployment is phenomenally high. These challenging social, economic, and political conditions are breeding grounds for protectionist measures, giving rise to nationalism, xenophobic rhetoric, and even violent action. As such, it can be argued, the timing of strong inclusion initiatives is particularly unfortunate. Legislatively the countries may be poised to advance necessary measures to adopt a European ideal, but is it irrelevant, since the people are uninterested in receiving or living under such laws? What could be the outcome of such dissonance?

Using the period of U.S. Civil Rights, I will compare and contrast the rise of hate speech and groups in the U.S. in the American South to the rise of parallel entities in the European South—namely, Southeastern Europe. In this piece I examine how the notion of a European Ideal is undermined by a strong climate of intolerance and how inclusion might nevertheless still be possible.

Biography

Sunnie Rucker-Chang’s primary interests lie in contemporary cultural movements and identity formation in the Balkans—specifically, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia. Her courses at Florida State University focus on Balkan cultures, cinemas and literatures, Islam in Eastern Europe, and Russian culture and media. Her research examines how literary and filmic works contribute to the cultural landscape and offer insight into nations and nationalities. Her other research interests include émigré and exile literature, the application of post-colonialism to post-socialist contexts, and Islam and minority communities in Eastern Europe.