



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Statement of Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Co-Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Statement of Co-Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell

"Human Rights of the Romani Minority"

June 8, 2000

Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this hearing which will examine the challenges facing Roma in the OSCE region today. It is quite appropriate that we meet here in the Committee on Indian Affairs, which I have the privilege of chairing, as a reminder that this nation's record of treatment of our own indigenous people is an embarrassment. I have devoted myself to breaking the cycle of poverty and helplessness that have traditionally characterized the life on most Indian reservations.

Many Roma similarly find themselves in societies where violence and other manifestations of racism run rampant and discrimination is something to be confronted daily. Such treatment - or more correctly, mistreatment - is easy as long as this segment of society remains a "silent minority." Increasingly, however, Roma have begun to raise their voices not in search of special treatment, but for an opportunity to freely exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination.

Today, we have a distinguished group of witnesses who will shed light on the social, economic, and political realities facing Roma in the OSCE region today. I look forward to hearing from these experts.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman.