

Responsibility



DUJ DŽSÉNE ONLINE

1. In the first role play, a Roma grandmother takes her teenaged granddaughter to the doctor. The granddaughter is pregnant. The doctor's assistant is a young Roma woman. The four participants of the scene face the dilemmas concerning the fate of the pregnancy and of the young mother-to-be.

2. The second role play takes place in the office administering the state-sponsored public works scheme. A middle-aged bilingual Roma woman from the Széles út segregate would like to find a solution to her difficult situation by asking for work. Her insistence holds up the queue and the Roma woman behind her, who is from a different segregate, intervenes.

Stepping into someone else's shoes

Lili Szabó

The group split into smaller units, and we were given a role-playing exercise. Our team worked through a scenario set in a doctor's surgery. The characters were a Hungarian GP, an educated Roma assistant, a 15-year-old pregnant Roma girl, and the pregnant girl's grandmother. I was assigned the

role of the pregnant teenager. We tried to address this topic as thoroughly as possible, with the Roma women in the group helping us explore what the possibilities are in such a situation. In the end, the story that emerged surprised me. The doctor mostly just listened, while the Roma assistant was the one who criticized and judged me for the early pregnancy and for not being as educated as she was. But I think she really should have understood the gravity of the situation and offered more support. The advice should not have been that I keep the baby, not necessarily, but just so I would not feel oppressed. And perhaps she could have offered to meet with me without my grandmother present. Both the doctor and the assistant recommended an abortion, and my grandmother was the only one who stood by me, trying to defend me and explain to them why I wanted to keep the baby—and that no matter what happened, she would help me, and that we would even raise the child together. It was the assistant, a Roma woman with a college degree, and my grandmother who did most of the talking, but in the end I felt I had to stand up for myself. So, I firmly told them that I wanted the child and stormed out.

At first, when we were rehearsing, I was really frustrated by the fact that I had to play this kind of role. I didn't even know what to do or what to say. But after we talked about it during rehearsal, and as I began to better understand the poor girl's situation, I just felt sorry for my character. After all, what can a 15-year-old really know about life? About motherhood? Just a few years ago, she was a child herself. Of course, in traditional cultures, whose traits Roma culture has preserved more fully, this was not so unusual, as I see it. They did not stop to think about whether young people are really ready for this and what it actually entails to have a child. What you would need to provide for the child to have a happy life, free from want, rather than just bringing into the world another unfortunate child who, just like her mother, will end up following the same pattern. This is also seen in the grandmother's role, as she supports this custom of early child bearing. Of course, family is the most important thing in life, but there are so many other good things that she would most likely miss out on if she becomes a mother at such a young age. At the same time, the other side of the story was also bugging me: the young girl was planning to finish school. She wan-

ted to have a decent job and she had a boyfriend or partner who supported her and stood by her, whether she kept the baby or not.

And that's when the question hit me: so, what is the right path here? Abortion or not? What can you do in a situation like this? I wondered what I would do if I were in her shoes. I honestly do not know the answer. Many people don't even understand why someone would consider having a child at the age of 15, but after this role-playing exercise, I found myself completely absorbed in the idea. Of course, if you look at it realistically, a 15-year-old girl is not ready for motherhood in my eyes—after all, she is practically a child herself. But if it were to happen to her by chance, what could the poor girl do? If she knew she had a strong enough support system to secure a happy and safe future for her child, and if her parents were behind her and would help with everything... what would then be the right path to take?