When I asked Michael Collins to tell me about his family, he drove me to his uncle’s house in northern Dublin. As we pulled into Avila Park, a modest tract of one-story houses, I asked which one was his. Collins gestured to the 56 homes in front of us, “All of them,” he said, “56 houses and all of them Collins’.”

Michael Collins is an Irish Traveller. He is just one of roughly 36,000 that make up Ireland’s last nomadic society. The Travellers are relatively unknown outside of Ireland, but face overwhelming levels of stigma and discrimination within their community. Their penchant for migrating in large groups and camping in public spaces, quickly earned them the label of ‘nuisance’ in Dublin and other metropolitan areas. For a people who once earned stable livings as craftsmen and traders, the spread of technology and globalization has come as a devastating blow.

To preserve their lifestyle and traditions, the Irish Travellers must prove to the government and fellow Dubliners that those are things worth saving.

Mackenzie Reiss is a freelance photographer from southern California. She studied photography at Syracuse University where she developed the skills and passion for capturing long-form photo essays. Her work is grounded in the belief that stories have the power to change people, even the smallest difference in perception or knowledge is what makes her quest for visual excellence worthwhile.

She has been fortunate enough to travel throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, China and South Africa. Her work has been published in esteemed publications including an invaluable resource for exploring new photographic territories, the history and culture of the people she admires. In the future, Mackenzie plans to specialize in conflict photography; a discipline that demands respect for the truth and the emotional complexity that defines the human condition. She does not shoot to find glory or material wealth, but rather to lead a life that is measured in richness of experience.

Her photographs have been recognized by the Hearst Foundation, College Photographer of the Year, National Press Photographers Association, and the Alexia Foundation for World Peace.