



MIGRANT AND REFUGEE JUSTICE IN TORONTO: ACTIVISM, ADVOCACY AND SOLIDARITY

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This paper outlines the successes and challenges that faced migrant justice activism and advocacy efforts during the Conservative Government and analyse how they have developed after the Liberal Party's electoral victory in 2015 and their launch of the Syrian Refugee Plan committing to sponsor 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada.

Anti-immigration policies and agendas have advanced on a global level over the last decade. In Canada, the Conservative Government passed policies that discriminated against immigrants and refugees and aimed at curtailing migrant justice activism and advocacy across Canada. By instituting a series of funding cuts to settlement and social service agencies, and restricting advocacy efforts by women and human rights organizations, the Conservative Government over its 9-year reign entrenched a conservative ideology on immigration and refugees in Canadian government and society. Advocacy and activist efforts continued despite the oppressive conditions under the Conservative rule to push for immigrant-friendly policies, and a response from the Canadian government to the Syrian refugee crisis that was starting to have global impact beginning in August 2015. Amidst rising international pressure, the 2015 Canadian Federal election was an opportune advocacy moment to push for a serious commitment from the incoming government to pro-immigration demands and a response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Upon winning the electoral race, the Liberal Party announced their Syrian Refugee Plan and its intention to retain 'true Canadian values' of multiculturalism and openness to immigrants and refugees. While advocates and activists approached this announcement with skepticism, it symbolized a shift in political direction for Canadians; it was a return back to what is considered true Canadian values and a history of being open and accepting to refugees.

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