



Patterns of Dispossession in Canada's Reception of Refugees

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This paper explores the experiences for diverse refugee youth populations under the social condition of exclusion, racialization and criminalization, which perpetuate their marginalization upon arrival in Canada. An analysis of the history of mass arrivals of refugees to Canada, including the current commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees, reveals patterns that caution potentially deleterious impacts for newly-arrived populations, including youth. Through this analysis, the paper shows how dominant racist and misogynist ideologies permeate and shape the experiences of refugee youth as they attempt to navigate their various immigration and settlement processes. This exploration reveals how the state and the social service sector interconnect at multiple points to shape a hostile climate of reception and equitable participation in Canadian society. In fact, the services, policies and practices by the settlement sector in many ways expand on and duplicate the harsh ideological conditions of immigration control. As such, refugee youth experience marginalization and exclusion as they search for housing, employment, education, health or mental health services.

Through a careful discussion of each of these areas the paper shows how deterrent borders are reconstructed at multiple necessary entrance points into Canadian society. These borders perpetuate the extensive 'othering' of migrant bodies, which manifests through moments of gross underhousing, inequitable education experiences, limited access to appropriate healthcare and exploitative experiences in the labour market. The exclusion and dispossession of refugee youth emerge through direct service delivery, funding structures as well as wider sector trends that commodify and hierarchize one group of refugees over the other. Thus, the various processes that youth are required to navigate are saturated with exclusionary, disengaging and predatory moments, contributing to the racialization, criminalization and radicalization of them. Although policy interventions are happening to respond to these disparities and promote a more equitable social and civic engagement of refugee youth, more needs to be done to invoke a more inclusive, feminist, and anti-racist praxis in the historical context of refugee reception. Despite emerging efforts to promote meaningful dialogue in the settlement sector, this paper illustrates how racism and anti-migrant sentiments continue to dominate the settlement and integration experiences of refugee youth. To provide a robust analysis throughout this paper, the discussion will be informed by a thorough literature review, and influenced by the author's own frontline

experience working at a community-based, grassroots organization in Toronto. Through this approach, we can better understand how we need to collectively acknowledge and address the manifold issues impacting refugee youth, and counter dominant ideology and negative rhetoric on refugees to ignite meaningful and positive change.

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