

## Legacy Refugee Claimants in Canada: Integration and Substantive Citizenship Within a Liminal Space

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In 2012, during a period of refugee policy reform in Canada, nearly 32 000 asylum claimants were pushed behind in the waitlist to finalize their claim. <sup>1</sup> The goal of the new policy was to make the refugee determination system (RDS) faster and more efficient. <sup>2</sup> This included cutting down backlogs in asylum claims through a new 60-day timeline for scheduling claim hearings. As incoming claims needed to abide by the new regulations, those that were made prior to the implemented changes were pushed to the back of the line. In effect, refugee claimants who had arrived immediately prior to enacted changes found themselves suspended within a state of undetermined status. This group, acquiring the title of 'legacy claimants'<sup>3</sup> was faced with establishing life in Canada inside a zone of 'liminality', that is, "between recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification."<sup>4</sup> This paper seeks to explore how the obstacles faced by legacy claimants due to undetermined status impact integration and substantive citizenship. The research goals will be met through a twofold approach. This includes narrative analysis of legacy claimant experiences as well as foregrounding the zone of 'liminality' occupied by legacy claimants as a "space between conventional legal categories" that affects newcomers' "long-term membership" in the host community and raises possibilities of new forms of citizenship. <sup>5</sup> I will employ a combination of primary and secondary research, invoking the work of Menjivar (2006), Ager and Strang (2010) and Eastmond (2007) among others. Research will be conducted in the form of interviews with persons who identify as legacy claimants and a review of the relevant literature on the experiences of newcomers who equally occupy a 'liminal' position in their host country.

<sup>1</sup> Refugee Board of Canada. (2019, April 30). The IRB's Legacy Task Force clears its backlog.

<sup>2</sup> Atak, I., Hudson, G., & Nakache, D. (2017). Making Canadas Refugee System Faster and Fairer: Reviewing the Stated Goals and Unintended Consequences of the 2012 Reform. SSRN Electronic Journal. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2977986

<sup>3</sup> Refugee Board of Canada. (2019, January 14). News - 2019. Retrieved from <https://irbcisr.gc.ca/en/news/2019/Pages/index.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> Menjívar, C. (2006). Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants Lives in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(4), 999–1037. doi: 10.1086/499509

<sup>5</sup> Menjívar, C. (2006). Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants Lives in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(4), 999–1037. doi: 10.1086/499509