

Queer Asylum in Illiberal times

David A.B. Murray, York University

Abstract

In the almost 10 years since my book, "Real Queer: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees in the Canadian Refugee Apparatus" (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016) was published, has anything changed for queer asylum seekers in Canada? Has the stark contrast between the Canadian settler-state's homonationalist self-proclamation as a 'liberation desti/nation' for queer refugees and the reality of its challenging and unpredictable bureaucratic apparatus for determining refugee status changed in any significant way? In this short presentation, I outline how the 'queer refugee' continues to occupy a troubled slot in the Canadian state's refugee-determination policies and practices, and why the increasingly illiberal state, with its heightened hostility towards migrants categorized as 'refugees' may be generating increased precarity and danger for the queer asylum seeker.

Biography

David A.B. Murray, drawing on theoretical interests in culture, nationalism, colonialism, representation, performance, and queer theory, has conducted fieldwork in Martinique, Barbados, New Zealand, and Canada, examining sexual and gender minorities and their relations to local, national, and transnational social, political, economic, and health inequities.

Professor Murray's monographs include "Opacity: Gender, Sexuality, Race and the Problem of Identity in Martinique" (Peter Lang, 2002), "Flaming Souls: Homosexuality, Homophobia and Social Change in Barbados" (University of Toronto Press, 2012), and "Real Queer? Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Refugees in the Canadian Refugee Apparatus" (Rowman and Littlefield, 2015). He has edited several volumes. His most recent publication is the introductory textbook "Queer Anthropology" (2025), part of the University of Toronto Press's Anthropological Insights Series.