



# The Most Vulnerable

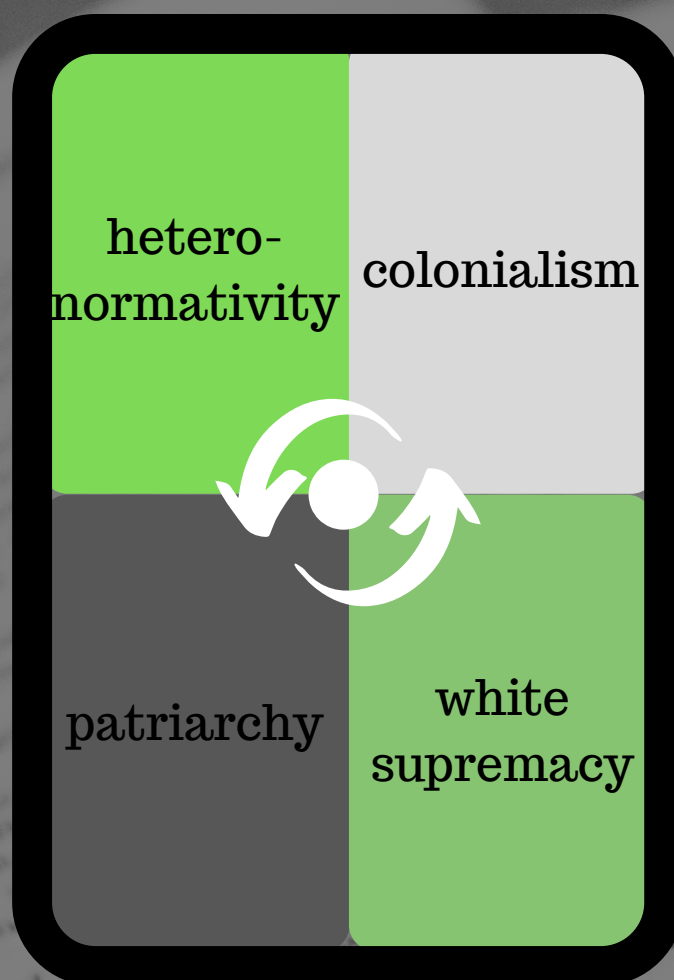
## Part 3: Faith-Based Advocacy

Taking an intersectional approach to refugee advocacy from progressive, Christian, faith-based perspectives.



Churches have played an important role in Canada's refugee resettlement process. They are frequently Sponsorship Agreement Holders who partake largely in the private sponsorship of refugees, and often provide an immediate community for newcomers. Christians are called to serve the world's most vulnerable by acting as the hands and feet of God on Earth. The vulnerable include the oppressed and persecuted, the poor and the weak, the widows and the orphans, the prisoners and the foreigners. To serve God means caring for others, this act demonstrates the love, compassion and mercy Jesus offered us, that we might follow this example in our relations with others.

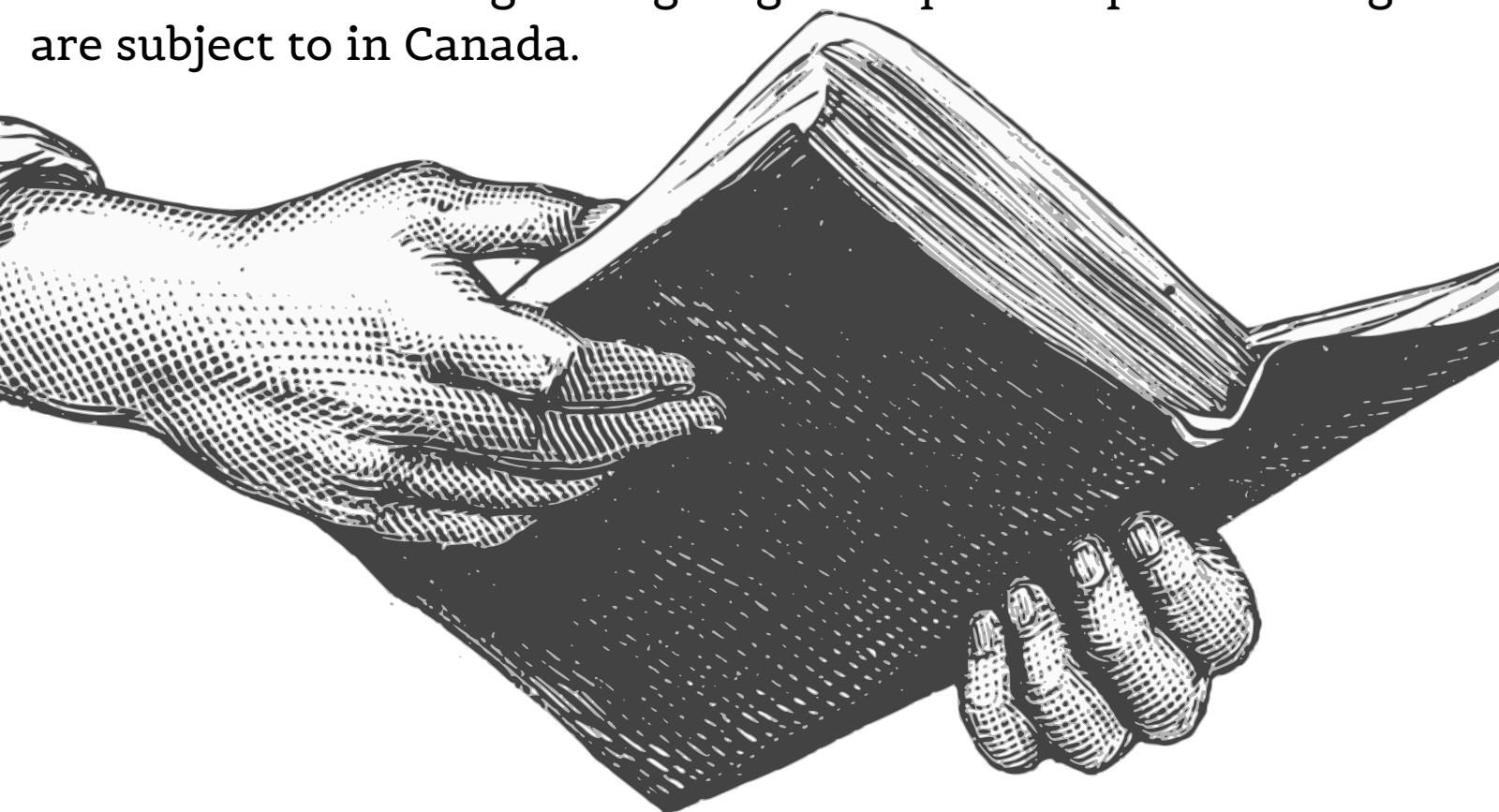
## Systems of Oppression



Christians ought to commit to extending our vision of servanthood to include care and solidarity while making public our efforts to stand up for the rights of refugees. In order to accurately advocate for the needs of others, we must recognize that vulnerability is created through systems of power that aim to oppress and marginalize.

The position of Christians in Canada is one of immense privilege and political legitimacy. It reflects a diverse range of theological perspectives and cultural practices. This privilege must be used as a catalyst for intersectional advocacy.

One effective way of doing so is through inter-faith advocacy and allyship. Christians need to actively stand up against Islamophobia. Within the refugee context this is especially imperative when this hateful public discourse of xenophobia is affecting people based on their faith, country of origin, and race. This targeting is increasingly directed at womxn\* who are deemed “visibly” Muslim based on their appearance. It is not only necessary to recognize that systemic inequities exist but also to combat the growing negative public opinion refugees are subject to in Canada.



\*Womxn = is an inclusive form of the term “women,” which allows for self-identification.

Christians need to consider the areas in which our faith has been (and continues to be) used to create, encourage, and uphold these violent agendas. In our advocacy work, we need to dismantle structures that seek to oppress and marginalize communities in the name of God.

In Canada, it is our duty to follow the lead of Indigenous Peoples in reconciliation. We must confront the history of sexual abuse, torture and genocide that Christians and the Church actively constructed and participated in through the Residential School system.

## LEARN MORE

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Calls to Action**

[https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

**MMIWG Report - "Reclaiming Power and Place"**

<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

By taking an intersectional approach to advocacy, we can better recognize our own privileges alongside both conscious and unconscious biases. We must commit to the difficult process of unlearning behavior and reconciling with the oppressive internalized emotions that affect many of us. Intersectionality offers us the opportunity to understand how these power dynamics affect specific individuals and groups.

For refugees, we need to examine how these societal systems interact with the added discrimination they can face because of their immigration status. For example, in the case of womxn and girls, there are multiple factors of discrimination at play.

Far more is needed for the Church to treat womxn with the same dignity demonstrated by Jesus.

We must also work towards unlearning when it comes to addressing the violence experienced by the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.



Refugees belonging to these communities flee their homes in search of safety. It is essential to ensure they do not face discrimination in our midst too.

Being a womxn identifying refugee who is also a person of colour comes with added marginalization, as does belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. More difficulties can arise if an individual has limited proficiency in English or French, and if they live with a disability. When combined, these aspects of identity illustrate how people can be disproportionately disadvantaged and reiterates the multiple forms of discrimination they experience that intersectionality aims to account for.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Expand the understanding of who the most vulnerable are. Learn, validate, and recognize how vulnerability has been shaped by a variety of lived experiences and multiple layers of discrimination.

2

Acknowledge the Church's resistance to accepting intersectionality. Mobilize advocacy that is rooted in a faith-based, intersectional approach while utilizing ecumenical resources developed by those doing frontline work.

Take meaningful action by using these recommendations to fuel constructive dialogue, discussions, sermons and bible studies.

Some relevant topics to begin exploring through an intersectional lens could be:

- White Supremacy in Christianity
- Valuing Womxn in the Church
- Relationships, Consent, and Human Sexuality
- Making Accessibility Mandatory
- Confronting White-Christian Privilege



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Read the full report "The Most Vulnerable"

Available at: [cpj.ca/most-vulnerable](http://cpj.ca/most-vulnerable)

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