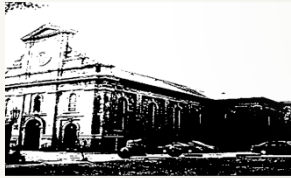


The Refugees and the Church in Quebec

The Refugees' Quest to seek Churches' protection in Quebec

Passing by a church in Montreal is a daily thing people do while walking to work, to their university, to their home. Have you ever notice that people were actually living in the basement of Notre Dame de Grace, or in the Eglise de l'Avent in Westmount?



Context

In the case of forced migration, churches have the right to offer charity to whom might be in the need of a shelter. According to Pie XII "le droit a l'immigration est un droit naturel" (the right to immigration is a human and natural right) –. In fact, a handful of churches helped refugees seek sanctuaries in order to escape getting sent back to their home country. In Quebec, many newspapers recall the history of these refugees, in order to get people interested by their stories and raising awareness towards refugee issues. Their headlines extend to the late 2010s, and even today. Many churches do still have their basement converted into living rooms to gather these refugees.

Why would refugees have the right to hide in churches while they are suppose to be expelled of the country? Where do their rights come from? How can they be helped? What does the government think? How long can they stay in the churches?

Issues

These questions have brought many possible answers, while creating problems.

- On the behalf of the government, people such as Judy Sgro (minister of immigration) raised a lot of issues when she declared that according to her, "hiding people should be considered as a violation of the law"
- Many private investigators or individuals contradict those rights and begin protestations showing how unfair it can be for the country itself
- It engages a conflict between the laws of the church and the government's laws
- Many followers make contributions and help them, for example the University of Concordia created a branch of an association to go and teach the children primary school lessons. However, until the government of Canada does not accept the refugees to get their permit, they cannot get out.

Le Devoir, 29 Juin 2004 – 31 Juillet 2003 – 27 Juillet 2004 – 28 Fevrier 2005

Etoile du Nord, 1 Avril 1914

L'Union des Cantons de L'Est, 18 Octobre 1917

L'Action Populaire, 20 Mars 1957

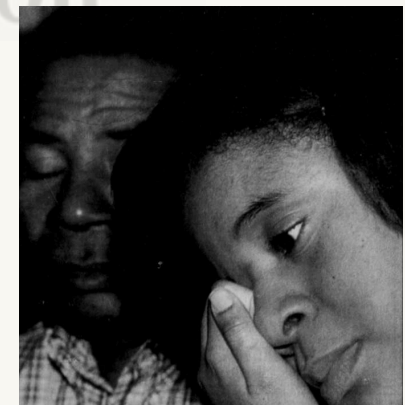
Courtesy of Laura Makoro, Assistant Professor
McGill University

Examples

Borja Family:
(Eglise North Hatley) Colombian refugees (German Borja and his daughter) fled from Colombia in order to escape the oppression of the paramilitary groups trying to get money out of their lands, they escape the region but the FARC followed them, escape to panama but FARC still behind them thus tried to get to Canada but their resquest to get the refugee status was not taken and had to seek for sanctuaries in order not to be deported back to Colombia (thus to the FARC)

Ayoub family:
(Notre Dame de grace Montreal) 391 days in the basement of the church, 70s ish family of three person (husband, wife and husband's brother) Palestinian and menaced from expulsion from Canada and after a year, got their freedom by canadian ministry of immigration

Mohamed Cherfi
eglise de Saint Pierre – was criticising the Algerian regime thus not secure for him to live there. His peculiar case can be marked down by the fact that he was working at the Quebecois Ministry of Integration before being expelled from the country. Indeed, while he was working there, the ministry started investigation on the cause of Algerian refugees, and he was one of them.



“Le droit a l'immigration est un droit naturel” Pie XII