

Session 4 Dehumanized Population

Presentation 3

The bordered life of the stateless little ones
-Asylum-Seeker Children in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper examines the bordered life of asylum-seeking and refugee children in post-colonial Hong Kong. Because of their marginal and uncertain status, stateless children seeking asylum are restricted in their access to social services and rights to attend school, thus reducing them to a meager existence on the edges of a prosperous society. As their parents are not permitted to work, they are discriminated against because they often cannot afford to pay tuition fees, or buy uniforms, stationery, or textbooks. Their marginal status means that they are living in constant fear and instability as they can be deported at any time should their mother's case be rejected by the Hong Kong immigration authorities. Drawing on a one-year ethnographic research study and interviews with 20 mothers, the paper argues that citizenship is used as a justification to constrain the marginalized, and how these children survive in Hong Kong from being the stateless little ones.