

**UNMASKING THE SPECTRE OF XENOPHOBIA: EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN  
NATIONALS LIVING IN THE 'ZONES OF NON-BEING': A CASE STUDY OF  
YEOVILLE**

by

Alois Baleni Sibanda

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in the subject

**DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR S.J.NDLOVU-GATSHENI**

**AUGUST 2014**



## ABSTRACT

This study deploys the decolonial epistemic perspective in an attempt to unmask the spectre of xenophobia. The decolonial epistemic thinking is in turn predicated on three important concepts, namely coloniality of power, coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge. The study is focused on understanding the dynamics of the violent May 2008 attacks that took place in Alexandra and Yeoville. It problematised the use of the term xenophobia. The term occludes rather than enlightening the complex phenomenon of violence. Such violence has consistently and systematically engulfed people living in poor predominantly black areas of residence such as Yeoville and Alexandra. The study also used empirical evidence collected from the field to support its central arguments. What has been understood as xenophobia is in actual fact, part of the manifestation and outcome of abject living conditions of the poor. This study argues that what manifests itself as xenophobia is an additional element to various forms of violence taking place in locales such as Alexandra and Yeoville, places that decolonial theorists term 'zones of non-being,' where violent death is a constitutive part of human existence.

**Key terms:** Coloniality of power, coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge, zone of non-being, citizenship, decolonial epistemic perspective, belonging, global designs of power, race and violence.

## **DEDICATION**

In memory of my mothers – Maureen Cabangile Tembe (1964 to 2013), Baboni Sibanda (1931-2008) and the Almighty God for making it possible under very difficult challenges in my life.

To my special wife Thobekile Sibanda for your unwavering support, courage and cherished love that propelled me to live to this great achievement in an attempt to dedicate this lifelong inspiration to our three sons: Brandon, Brandlyn and Bradley. I dedicate this academic milestone to my boys and hope they will draw inspiration from it and in turn inspire their own children. I dedicate this in a special way from the bottom of my heart and soul equally to you all my sons and my descendants to be.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My unreserved gratitude and humble appreciation goes to my role model, mentor and supervisor Professor Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni for your invaluable support, exceptional supervision style and guidance. You put everything aside including your family and also turned your residence into a training ground and library to facilitate completion of this thesis.

I am indebted to Professor Peter Dzvimbo, Executive Dean of Education at Unisa who identified and recommended a distinguished supervisor for me well ahead of my MA studies and also encouraged me to explore University student funding to support my postgraduate studies.

Mr Morgan Ndlovu, thank you for your valuable scholarly articles as well as your continued mentorship from the sidelines.

Dr Jethro Zuwarimwe, I sincerely appreciate your introductory academic insights and guidance that helped me to construct a researchable problem statement in the initial stages of my research.

I want to send my special thanks to my colleagues, friends, superiors and scholars at the University of Witwatersrand and elsewhere: Mr Kamal Bangwandas Jogibhai, Dr Hugo Canham, Mr Moses Mkhize, Dr Thabisani Ndlovu, Ms Maria Wanyane and Professors Yunus Ballim, Edwell Kaseke, Tawana Kupe as well as Professor Norman Duncan now at University of Pretoria, and Ms Nazeema Mohamed now at Ford Foundation, for your wisdom, help and consistent encouragement. I do not forget those of you who managed to get additional time to complete my research questionnaire, another special thank you.

To all my past and current superiors within the Registrar's Division at the University of the Witwatersrand, for allowing me time off to explore my studies over the last two years, I sincerely appreciate your immeasurable support in this regard.

I wish to extend my many thanks to all the research respondents for affording me time from your busy schedules to accommodate my interviews.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all those who contributed and supported me in special ways. Special thanks to Archbishop Silver Matthews Sibanda and family, Mr William Mpofo, Mr Mthokozisi Tshuma, members of the General Foundation Apostolic Church and my fellow brethren at Ebuhleni Be Full Gospel Apostolic Church.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

This chapter introduces this research's theoretical point of departure in response to what has become commonly termed "xenophobia." The chapter also presents a narrative of how the study was conducted and explains the factors that influenced the naming of violence as "xenophobia." A statement of the problem, research questions and objectives are provided. The chapter further provides the research approach and tools used to gather data. An account of who the research participants were is provided in this chapter followed by an explanation of how the field data was managed, as well as the challenges encountered. The chapter ends with a brief summary of how the research report is organised.

### Background

The term 'xenophobia' has been simplistically accepted as the correct name for those forms of violence that involve attacks on people considered to be foreigners in South Africa. This naming is popularised by the media without any attempt to deeply problematise the naming itself. Is xenophobia the correct name for the forms of violence taking place in those 'zones of non-being'<sup>1</sup> where the majority of poor South Africans find themselves coexisting with poor migrants from other parts of Africa? The deeper question which can be posed is: what really is xenophobia? An argument is made here that the violent attacks on those considered foreigners by the locals cannot simplistically be explained as xenophobia.

Using a case study of experiences of foreign nationals living in Yeoville, the study delves deeper into unmasking the core issues in what has come to be popularly designated as xenophobia. The study draws from existing literature on racism, nationalism, nation-building,

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<sup>1</sup>The term 'zone of non-being' is drawn from the decolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon (1963), Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), Lewis R. Gordon (2005; 2007), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012). These decolonial thinkers advance a broad academic argument that since the dawn of modernity, the modern world order has remained bifurcated into 'zone of being' (where colonialists and their descendants live) and the 'zone of non-being' where the colonized and their descendants have been confined by coloniality and its colonial matrices of power. Decolonization has not managed to destroy this Manichean structure in place since conquest. In South Africa, the two zones are practically symbolized by the contrasting towns of Sandton and Alexandra, where in the former there is opulence and in the latter there is devastating poverty and unemployment.

the post-colony, identity, belonging, citizenship and the challenges of poverty and unemployment in South Africa. This is the broader discursive terrain within which autochthonous and nativist discourses emerge as part of ideological resources used by the majority of poor black people as they compete over access to public services and entitlements to resource ownership. The poor black masses reside in townships where black on black violence is pronounced and poverty is the underlining social factor.

Those who benefited from coloniality try to exonerate themselves from being responsible for dispossession, exploitation and displacement of the poor by blaming black foreigners as responsible for the continuation of poverty amongst the majority of black South Africans. Media is identified as one of the formulators, agenda setters and articulators of xenophobia in South Africa. This explains the call by this study to go beyond media sensationalism. If one begins to think this way about the roots of what has come to be called xenophobia, the very naming of the phenomenon becomes debatable. One question becomes pertinent in this regard: does the term 'xenophobia' occlude rather than enable a deeper appreciation of the issues at play in the violence that involved South Africans and foreigners in May 2008?<sup>2</sup>

The core hypothesis of this study is that what is termed xenophobia takes place in those sites designated by decolonial theorists as 'zones of non-being' like Yeoville and informal settlements. Foreigners become caught up in the ongoing 'hellish' conditions and violence engendered by devastating poverty and unemployment. The study further posits that what has come to be popularly termed xenophobia, needs to be explained itself, as well as its manifestations that include anti-foreigner sentiments and targeting. Xenophobia is inadequate as a concept/theory to explain complex forms of violence taking place in 'zones of non-being'.

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<sup>2</sup> Riots that were eventually termed 'xenophobia' erupted mostly in poor predominantly black areas, resulting in deaths of 62 people and looting of homes and shops owned by non-South Africans. As a result, thousands of non-South Africans were displaced and homeless

### **Statement of the problem**

The term xenophobia does not adequately name the forms of violence taking place in the ‘zones of non-being’ in South Africa where poor locals and poor foreigners meet. There is need for deeper engagement with life in the ‘zones of non-being’ where violence has been the main expression of frustration among the poor. The ‘foreigner’ is just an additional element within a terrain where violence pitting the poor against the poor has been the order of life. It is therefore important to problematise the use of the term xenophobia to name the forms of violence that take place in the ‘zones of non-being’ like Yeoville and some informal settlements where black poor people live. It is vital to dig deeper into the question of poverty and depravity in these zones and to understand violence from a broader perspective.

The South African state emerged from a colonial past heavily marked by apartheid. The present continues to produce opulence and poverty within a single country. Hammett (2010) identifies the post-apartheid South African state as one which had aspired to be free from racial identities. The post-apartheid state seems to be failing to completely transcend apartheid legacy. This has been evident in its failure to establish a stable non-racial citizenry. Hammett (2010) states that the state had hoped, in its transition to democracy, that there would be a shift to non-racialism. What has characterised post-apartheid life in the black townships is civil protests, violent attacks on foreign owned businesses, damage to property and brutal deaths.

### **Research questions**

The general research question that the study seeks to address in line with the context of the problem statement is: what are the factors that best explain the May 2008 violent attacks on foreign nationals? Sub questions follow below:

1. What fundamentally is xenophobia?
2. Is xenophobia the correct name/description for recent forms of violence involving “locals” and “foreigners”?
3. Where and when does xenophobia take place?
4. Why is xenophobia taking place in particular areas and not others?
5. Who are the prime targets of xenophobia and why?
6. What do the experiences of foreign nationals living in Yeoville area reveal?

## **Research objectives**

The general research objective is to unmask what is hidden behind what has come to be popularly known as xenophobia and discuss its impact, expressions and manifestations. The specific objectives are to:

1. Problematise and unmask what lies behind the phenomenon of xenophobia.
2. Identify and map the locales within which xenophobia takes place.
3. Identify possible reasons the local citizens have against foreign immigrants which contributed to the May 2008 violent attacks.
4. Examine if xenophobia is a major cause of insecurity for foreign nationals.

## **Significance of the study**

The study uses the May 2008 violent attacks as a perfect period to introduce decolonial thinking as a useful epistemic perspective in unmasking the violent phenomena that have been termed xenophobia. Previous studies on the May 2008 violent attacks seem not to have fully problematised the phenomenon. The significance of this study is to contribute to knowledge on this subject differently, through the application of the decolonial epistemic framework as a social critical theory, to explain the violence. The aim is to come up with new explanations of violence predicated on careful analysis of people's voices and views. This phenomenological evidence creates an opportunity for further research on this subject.

The study builds on the works of such theorists as Fanon (1963), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, 2013) to mention a few. The study's findings will in this regard contribute significantly towards the advancement of knowledge in the broad field of communal violence. Decolonial epistemic framework enables a critical enquiry on 'xenophobia' and related contestations that are associated with this violent act.

The study also seeks to unmask the spectre of xenophobia to untangle this web of contestations that may be linked to a racist and colonial past. It further presents a scholarly view that links the May 2008 violence to the colonial past that has so much negatively impacted on the majority of the South African citizenry – their history, culture, democracy and nationalism. This is the fundamental basis of the study, to generate a theoretical understanding of the May 2008 violence in particular, and society's related behaviours in general. It is hoped that the study's findings will liberate both the locals and foreign nationals

from the misconstrued explanation of the causes and reasons of the May 2008 violence. Most previous studies have not revealed the possibility of linkages between the violence and the broader social and economic conditions that contribute to inequality.

The results of this study could contribute positively to the design of local policies intended to create egalitarianism through improved social integration. The findings will reveal the various geopolitical societal power relations in comparison to the nationalistic ideologies of government and present a checklist against post-apartheid democracy. The findings could also enable not only the study area but other key stakeholders to reflect on how poverty, inequality and the various manifestations of violence impact on the thematic areas of the National Development Plan (NDP). Thus, the findings will reflect on how inequality has influenced the exclusion of foreign nationals and some poor black locals from key development issues.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is qualitative and interpretive. The study deploys decolonial theory to unpack the term xenophobia. This decolonial thinking approach suggests a new explanation to the generally accepted one regarding violence such the xenophobia phenomenon. In line with the set research questions and objectives, the study adopted a qualitative approach to unveil the various forms of contestations that are hidden behind the complex phenomenon of xenophobia.

Nicholls (2009) laments the fact that on a general note, there has been confusion on the precise meaning of research methodology. Research methodology has been instead commonly used synonymously by many authors with data collection methods yet the two are different (Nicholls, 2009). At the centre of this particular research's methodology is a humanistic approach aimed at unmasking a debilitating form of violence that continues to frame issues of power. The study uses decolonial theory to explore how knowledge generation on this complex matter has been pursued. The study employs qualitative methodology and hence identifies research participants as key information sources that provide useful information that can significantly contribute to knowledge generation. Jackson Drummond and Camara (2007) further explain that research methodology is inclined towards processes that can enhance and justify the means and ways of addressing a problem. The

study has deployed the decolonial epistemic framework as its critical social theory to contribute to existing body of knowledge.

### **Research techniques**

Jackson et al (2007) mention that research methods are the tools, techniques or procedures used to generate data. The study followed this understanding to deploy research techniques that facilitated the generation of data that answered the research questions and fulfilled the research objectives. It used a case study as a suitable research technique so as to present empirical evidence to explain the meaning of the May 2008 violence. This is because not much scientific information has been provided from previous studies to problematise and explain the violence that has been commonly termed xenophobia. The study also utilized interviews to gather data from those who were affected by the May 2008 violence.

### **Research approach**

The starting point was to design a suitable questionnaire as a fieldwork tool to solicit data relating to the experiences of the respondents, with respect to the May 2008 violent attacks and their experiences at the 'zone of non-being', Yeoville in particular. Questions were drafted and some scholars at Wits University critiqued the draft questionnaire. The feedback and comments were used to refine and consolidate a semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire. The draft questionnaire was tested through two mock interview sessions. These two pilot interview sessions were conducted precisely to test the suitability and relevance of the research tool. The interview outcome of the two mock sessions was satisfactory and the objective of determining its suitability and relevance was fulfilled.

Jackson et al. (2007) describe interviewing as a set of research techniques that are flexible in their qualitative nature to generate data from individual or collective sources. Bilger and van Liempt (2009) identify trustful relationship between the researcher and the research participants as a prerequisite for any successful qualitative research study. This is imperative particularly when data should be collected for sensitive topics. The study used semi-structured and open ended questions to achieve the generation of data from research participants. Babbie (2011) points out that in-depth interview for qualitative studies are

greatly dependent on the use of open-ended question types to explore various topics to generate knowledge on certain human experiences. This was the basis of this study.

The study realised the fact that the ideal was to collate of human experiences through the use of the interview as a qualitative research method. Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2009) point out that one-to-one interviews are the most commonly used data collection tools. Nicholls (2009) comments that phenomenology is a methodological approach that insists on regarding each research participant's views based on the understanding that individuals are unique and bring different quality worldviews on a particular experience. The study was informed by these observations about interview techniques and phenomenology in its quest to contribute knowledge about xenophobia.

There are various techniques that can be used as data collection tools including standardized, semi-standardized and unstandardized interviews. Ryan et al. (2009) observe that semi-structured interviews have a flexible characteristic and naturally give room for unanticipated responses and issues through the use of open ended questions. This type of data collection strategy was deliberately used in this research so as to allow the necessary flexibility to handle the emergence of any new themes. Focus groups were deliberately avoided given their potential to have dominant and passive participants, resulting in false collective views on a subject. Furthermore, Babbie (2011) mentions that there is danger in relying on a single focus group to have conclusive or generalizable theories influenced by group views.

Ryan et al. (2009) also suggest that the discovery interview data collection strategy is suitable for a study such as this one because of its use of open ended questions to probe interviewees and allow them to take charge and control of the interview process. To this end, the use of probing questions enabled the researcher to seek further clarification on the phenomenon of xenophobia. Use of questions according to Ryan et al. (2009) such as *'Tell me what happened or how did you feel when...?'* is helpful when attempting to source relevant information relating to experiences. The interview sessions were very engaging and the researcher probed the participants and allowed them to conclude the session by speaking to the general aspects that could have otherwise been left out by a conservative questionnaire.

## **Study population**

Babbie (2004) views the study population as research objects that the researcher intends to draw conclusions from. The study was evidence based and its suitable study population was all foreign nationals who had one way or the other been affected by the May 2008 violent attacks. On the basis of the phenomenological nature of the study, its research participants were key informants regarding the violent May 2008 attacks. The participants in the study were of a fair geographical spread of foreign nationals from various African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo (Congo Brazzaville), Malawi and Zimbabwe. The study focused on the qualitative meaning derived from each individual's narrative of the May 2008 attacks on foreign nationals.

The study population had very interesting individual stories to tell post-May 2008 attacks. Ryan et al. (2009) observe that research participants understand the same phenomenon in varying subjective ways. As such, the study explored experiences from an individualistic perspective and responses were used as texts for analysis. The lowly qualified participant had an equivalent of a Matric certificate while some had technical and professional diplomas including an undergraduate university degree. This made it possible to find common ground in the use of English as the interview language and above half of the study population could speak at least one other local language.

The research participants who took part in this study resided in Yeoville. They were all adults with a wide range of backgrounds and from different African countries. They all had been in South Africa at the time of the violent May 2008 attacks and were therefore a relevant research population. The research participants were all employed or self-employed with an age range of between 26 and 45 years. A total of 17 respondents took part in this study. Seven of the research participants were female and 10 were males. They were all black Africans.

## **Sampling procedure**

Babbie (2011:180) defines snowball sampling as “a nonprobability-sampling method, often employed in field research, whereby each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing” and that “snowball” refers to the process of accumulation. This was the researcher's initial intention. However, it turned out differently during field work. Foreign nationals residing in Yeoville were willing to openly participate without any need for referrals. I used my personal judgment to pick participants for a broad and diverse

demographic spread following Babbie's (2004) idea that judgmental sampling procedure is a non-probability type of sampling in which the researcher uses his/her personal judgment to identify target participants that are most suitable or representative.

The study population provided very rich data which proved to be as reliable as possible for use in the exploration of xenophobia. The research participants were a fair sample of professionals and self-employed men and women. Yeoville was deliberately sampled as a research area due to its proximity to me as researcher as well as for the ease of locating foreign nationals from this area where I also reside.

### **Main sources of data**

The study was qualitative and relied on the use of relevant study population to gather data to be analysed through the decolonial epistemic framework. Research participants, through face to face interviews were the main sources of primary data. Interview data was complemented by secondary data from the works of various scholars who have written extensively on the subject of xenophobia and violence in the 'zones of non-being'. Journals, publications and dissertations relevant to the study were consulted

### **Data management**

Relevant thematic areas were used as a basis for the semi-structured interviews and the literature review processes. This enabled the researcher to guide the direction of the conversations. This approach explored the various individual experiences of 'xenophobia' following the thematic framework. Ryan et al. (2009) argue that the arrangement of themes enhances the guidance of the interview process. This in turn made it relatively easier to extract relevant information from each research participant's personal experiences. Subsequently, the collection of richer and more textured data from the individual research participants was enhanced. The study had to employ flexible and exploratory means of data collection to fulfil its set mandate.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It is a general ethical consideration that all researchers should have a responsibility to adhere to ethical research standards before, during and after conducting studies. Social scientists du Plooy (2000) points out, have responsibilities when conducting research and should conduct themselves within parameters of expected behavior. This study adhered to this ethical requirement. It particularly took into account the sensitive nature of the subject. Babbie

(2011) observes that when it comes especially to sensitive subjects, explanation of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts should be done to the subjects so that individuals make judgments based on the information provided, whether or not they are willing to participate.

Various ethical considerations were taken into account. Ryan et al. (2009) emphasize the fact that protection of subjects' rights, informed consent and anonymity are imperative ethical aspects of consideration. A full briefing on the nature and format of the interview was given to all participants. This was based on a full understanding of the fact that it is unethical to conduct research without consent. As such, consent forms were consensually signed by all research participants.

If the purpose of the research is clearly defined, du Plooy (2000) further points out, the moral principles on which it is grounded can reflect the type of ethics being pursued. Given this point, the researcher attempted to clearly articulate the motive behind this study. It was made clear that the study had no direct benefits except that it sought to contribute towards the scientific body of knowledge on what the participants experienced during and post- 2008 violent attacks. The researcher remained as objective as possible during the study to guard against any personal motives that could influence or become unrelated to the core purpose of this study. This entailed an approach that remained mindful of issues of human rights, physical discomfort, emotional stress or humiliation.

However, du Plooy (2000) concedes that personal motives become a very complex matter to handle and can be only accounted for through a review of perceptions, values and judgments by researchers, making it a point that such matters are open to public scrutiny. The researcher did not deviate from these standards and continued to respect the research participants' basic human and civil rights by remaining as honest as possible with the research participants. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of information from the research participants was emphasised as part of the ethical considerations. The decision whether or not to remain part of the study solely remained at the discretion of the respondents to ensure that participants enjoyed the right of participation or withdrawal.

Participants were also assured that the interview proceedings would not only remain confidential but would also be used solely for the purposes of the study. The consent form

spelt out clearly all the other parameters relating to participation, purpose of the study and the general rights of the participants. This was read and explained to all participants before signing of the consent form.

### **Field Work**

All ethical considerations and due procedures were observed including the explanation of the purpose of the interview. All respondents were requested to sign the consent form at the beginning of each interview session to participate in the study. All basic research ethical considerations were taken into account. Given that this was a phenomenological study to assist in the analysis of xenophobia, logically, the opening question posed to the respondents was “What do you think xenophobia is?” The relevance of this question was to solicit a general perspective relating to the topic so as to relate it to the impact that mainstream media has had in influencing societal perceptions regarding this phenomenon. The responses to this question were very interesting and illustrated the experiences of foreigners.

### **Scope and limitations of the study**

The study is phenomenological and interpretative by nature and took, as its conceptual framework, the decolonial epistemic perspective. It limited itself to the interview technique as its primary data collection tool from a well-defined target population of foreign nationals who had experienced the violent May 2008 attacks. The secondary source of data consisted of the works of various scholars and theorists who have substantially written in the areas relating to violence in the ‘zones of non-being’, coloniality of being, power and knowledge and the broader decolonial discourse. The field work was conducted in Yeoville, a fitting ‘zone of non-being’ and same area of residence as the researcher. In that regard, this arrangement was cost effective.

Jackson et al. (2007) identify qualitative research as significantly involved with the understanding and reflection on the experiences of human beings from a humanistic and interpretive approach. The study was conducted within this understanding and deliberately used research participants who had already been in the country by May 2008. This research approach generated relevant data from the field work and backed it by existing literature. The

decolonial epistemic framework as its conceptual scope of theory provided the basis to argue that xenophobia was an incorrect term of application to explain the May 2008 violence.

### **Challenges**

The technical organization of the study was a fascinating experience from a research point of view and language became a challenge with one of the research participants. The participant was French speaking with a modicum of English. The researcher had not planned for such an experience and this was overcome by requesting the services of an interpreter. With translation from English to French and vice versa, the interview session took longer than scheduled. The other challenge experienced was dealing with research inexperienced participants who did not know much about issues relating to the privacy of the interview information. Although not invited, some family members wanted to be part of ongoing sessions.

There was overwhelming interest to participate in the study, particularly from family members and friends of research participants. This was an unforeseen risk of creating particular networks and excluding some key participants. On a separate note, it was not an easy task on the part of the researcher due to health-related reasons.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study has six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and provides a brief background and articulates the statement of the problem. The chapter also gives an outline of how the study was generally conducted and who the key participants were. The second chapter discusses the literature and presents the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter three of the study is the conceptual mapping of the sites of violence. It seeks to explain why violence only takes place in certain sites and not others. Chapter four speaks to the different manifestations of violence popularly known as 'xenophobia' and the fifth chapter gives an account of real experiences of foreign nationals living in the 'zone of non-being'. Chapter six presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UNMASKING THE SPECTRE OF XENOPHOBIA

#### Introduction

This chapter begins with a clarification of terms and concepts before discussing the literature review and theoretical framework. It uses the decolonial epistemic framework as a social theory capable of enabling a new understanding of this manifestation of communal violence which has become known as ‘xenophobia.’ The chapter teases out this complex phenomenon of violence in the context of its occurrence the ‘zones-of-non-being’. Through the decolonial epistemic framework, an argument is made that this form of violence is a residual manifestation of apartheid. The decolonial epistemic framework is predicated on three important concepts namely coloniality of power, being, and of knowledge.

The conceptual and theoretical framework’s entry point is that the term xenophobia is generally used in a very simplistic and loose manner to occlude rather than shed light on the complex phenomenon of violence. What has been termed xenophobia has consistently and systematically engulfed people living in the poor predominantly black areas such as Yeoville and Alexandra<sup>3</sup>. The application of the decolonial epistemic framework seeks reveal xenophobia’s hidden dynamics generated by poverty and depravity.

#### CLARIFICATION OF THE TERMS

The terms used in this thesis are highly contested in general, in respect of the definitions provided, this is how they are being understood and being used in the context of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> The May 2008 attacks on “foreigners” started in Alexandra.

## **Colonialism**

This refers to the political and economic relation by which the sovereignty of a nation or that of people is controlled by another nation, where such a nation is made an empire (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

## **Coloniality**

Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains coloniality as variations of power over a long period of time resulting from colonialism from which culture, labour and intersubjective relations as well as knowledge production are defined beyond the limits of colonialism.

## **Nativism**

According to Kammer (2010), nativism is a level of patriotism combined with some elements of xenophobia and is generally a denotation of hostile exclusion of immigrants on the basis of protecting the cultural dominance of existing citizens.

## **Apartheid**

Scott and Marshall (2005) define apartheid as synonymous with segregation, a social process resulting in certain individuals or social groups being kept apart with little or no interaction between them and can escalate to separation of public toilet facilities for men and women as an example.

## **Ethnicity**

Scott and Marshall (2005:197) refer to ethnicity as “the self-identification of individuals or groups sharing common characteristics and developing their distinctive cultural identity that differentiates them from the other collectives in a society”.

## **Nationalism**

According to Scott and Marshall (2005:437), nationalism entails “certain assumptions about the will to self-determination and existence. It further constitutes the superiority of the sovereign state over all other forms of rule, and the centrality of national loyalty to political power as a basic form of legitimation”.

## **Nation**

Benedict Anderson (1991: 224) describes the nation as an “imagined political community”.

## **Citizenship**

This term refers to the rights and duties of the member of a nation-state or city. It can also refer to a status enjoyed by an individual who is a full member of a community or nation-state, and it can be viewed from a political, civil or social perspective. Civil rights are fundamental for individual freedoms and are institutionalized in law courts. Political citizenship is a guarantee to the right to participate in the exercise of political power in a given community and participation in the appropriate standard of living such as welfare and educational systems of modern society is social citizenship (Scott and Marshall 2005).

## **Racism**

Scott and Marshall (2005:544) define racism as “the deterministic belief-system which sustains racialism, which is the perpetual unequal treatment of distinct population group(s) purely because of its (their) characteristics socially defined as denoting a particular race group”.

## **Violence**

Violence, according to van Eeden, Borman and Wentzel (1998:5) is “an extreme form of aggression, which is a deliberate attempt to do serious physical injury, abuse another person, injure or kill another person or oneself, and to damage or destroy property”. Violence is also described as the capacity to impose, or act of imposing one’s will upon another, where the imposition is held to be illegitimate (Smit and Cilliers 1998).

## **Xenophobia**

While xenophobia is understood as an anti-foreign sentiment, the author’s view is that this understanding conceals rather than reveal socio-economic issues that provoke and create tensions. Attacking foreigners in my view is a desperate move by the poor as they struggle for life itself. Consequently the thesis does not deny the existence of xenophobia but makes it more ‘thinkable’ as a form of violence.

## **The Decolonial Approach**

Through the deployment of the decolonial epistemic perspective as the conceptual and theoretical framework, the core argument of this chapter is that violence has been wrongly termed xenophobia. In fact what has come termed xenophobia is in actual fact part of manifestations and outcomes of abject conditions under which the poor have lived for a long time. This dates back to the forced colonial urbanization of dispossessed black people of South Africa. What manifests as xenophobia is a mere additional element of various forms of violence taking place in those locales like Yeoville that decolonial theorists term 'zones of non-being'. In these zones, violent death is a constitutive part of human existence. This violence is symptomatic of the existence of various contestations.

Santos (2007) claims that such modern conflicts are mostly founded on the tensions between social regulation and social emancipation. The 'zones of non-being' are characterized by overt poverty. There are serious contestations within society which underpin the attempts to liberate oneself from wretched conditions and their diminishing resources and lost opportunities of multi-ethnic co-existence. The decolonial epistemic perspective understands xenophobia as a form of racism that was introduced by imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. South Africa is a country that experienced the longest administrative colonialism called apartheid. The politics of belonging and exclusion has become a norm.

The apartheid era in South Africa was tensely racialised and to date, the South African state has still not fully reconciled its various ethnic groups irrespective of its constitution that calls for non-racial egalitarianism under its 'rainbow nation' agenda. Apartheid was the most overtly racist form of colonialism that openly introduced the idea of separate development, culminating in the establishment of Bantustans. The establishment of Bantustans was informed by the rabid racist philosophy of even separating black people into irreconcilable tribes. Taken together, the policy of separate development (apartheid) and its Bantustan policy were meant to prevent coalescence of races into a singular identity at one level, and at another level, black people into national identity. Multi-ethnic identities have remained.

Ethnic groups such as the Zulu, Tswana, Sotho and Xhosa were deliberately reduced to contending tribes that could not co-exist in any peaceful manner because they were represented as radically different people. In short, imperialism and colonialism introduced ideas of 'radical difference'. Thus, the idea of race influenced further divisions in Africa where assimilation of people from different ethnic backgrounds was the norm as epitomized by African leaders like Moshweshwe, Mzilikazi, Shaka and others who built states and nations through assimilating different ethnicities. Xenophobia is emerging in South Africa as a residue of long-standing racialization and ethnicization of people. Ethnicity continues to be a problem alongside citizenship in the current day South Africa as a consequence of the imperialist and colonialist systems of the past.

While decolonial epistemic perspective could be seen by others as a heterodox social theory, it is very useful in understanding the logic of racialization and ethnicization of identities prior to the collapse of administrative apartheid, which is today breeding various forms of Afrophobia that include xenophobia, mainly affecting those people inhabiting 'zones of non-being'. These 'zones of non-being' continue to reflect a very divided modern black African society which is no longer informed by black Africanism but rather, 'radical difference'. Understanding 'zones of non-being' at face value alone does not assist us that much. We need to delve deeper so as to give an account of the two realms of social reality – the 'zone of being' as the other side of the abyssal line.

Using this framework as a point of departure brings to the fore how colonial force in its various forms such as slavery, violence and such other social injustices was used to constitute the way the colonialists related to the colonized (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). In effect, this power relation between the colonialist and the colonized was entrenched in the invisible imperial designs which operated within the colonial matrices of power, and has residually remained as a societal power relation in the modern society. The argument advanced here is that the subsequent remains of these invisible global imperial designs have manifested in various forms of societal relations in the modern society, part of which has mutated into what has become commonly known as "xenophobia". The colonialists planted seeds of coloniality that continue to germinate on the African society and give rise to different harvests, some

very poisonous to live on. One such poisonous seed that continues to germinate on the African soil has been in the form of racism, whose other part is xenophobia.

In effect, over the recent couple of years, the violent contestations particularly in the 'zones of non-being' have penetrated deeply into the social discourse and have left the image of the state affected in very important ways. This calls attention to questions of nationalism, citizenship, ethnicity and others as formulated by the State. Regulation of the immigration system has affected the black African immigrants. A democratic state should be seen to be flexible and accepting of the lawful immigration of foreign nationalities into its own borders. However, the current system is onerous for some Africans.

In the post-apartheid era, the state has found itself at crossroads regarding the application of citizenship and non-citizenship regulations. Its citizenry has developed its own systems of defining citizenship which has resulted in the labeling of all foreign born nationals as non-citizens. Klaaren (2010) bemoans that there has been no common understanding on what fundamentally is meant by the term citizenship in South Africa. He maintains that instead, there has been a historical contestation over the mobility of immigrant races dating back to the enactment of the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913 and before. As many scholars argue, there is not much difference when it comes to the articulation of citizenship, pre and post-apartheid South Africa. Exclusive citizenship remains as the core of the system.

The colonial era was largely a racial system and the native black people were relegated to lower class sub-human beings without equal rights. Global influences are shaping the new era of citizenship that insists on going beyond nativism. As such, native citizenship is eroded by the subsequent effects of globalisation which has seen the white race claiming global citizenship. Global consumer capitalism influences the price of basic commodities and services which in turn forces pricing to be very capitalistic, leaving poor people poorer. The subsequent effect in South Africa is a creation of a dependent indigenous population that continues to be threatened by the ever rising unregulated immigration of black Africans into the 'zones of non-being'. The result becomes an exclusionary societal environment constructed on power relations of belonging.

Black people, including South African locals, are affected by globally influenced cost of living which relegates them to poor black townships without services. From a South African perspective, the majority of the blacks have not fully graduated from subjection to citizenship (Nyamnjoh 2006). The uneasiness of citizens with immigrants breeds the xenophobic culture which eventually finds expression in violent contestations such as the May 2008 attacks on foreign nationals. The colonial system created Bantustans which lack in facilities and resources to support the ever growing populations. The government's inability to provide basic quality services such as water and sanitation, education and health facilities exacerbates the poor living conditions in townships.

Nationalisation of the South African immigration system had continuously attempted to regulate the mobility of the Asian race, European, Indian and African populations (Klaaren 2010). The enforcement of boundaries by states through the immigration and citizenship policies results in ethnic, racial and national identity manifestations (Park 2010). These manifestations subsequently create strong social and political groupings which continue to exist and define humankind in various forms of class and divisions. It is these forms of classification which continue to create a South African society dissected along lines of ethnicity, citizenship, nationality and others. Society by virtue of these formations is heterogeneous and as such contestations over belonging and identity are rife.

The South African state is admired for its constitution and a democratic legislative system. However, its system has been affected by the politics of the nationalisation agenda while its citizenry has continued to play "the blame game" or the "scapegoat thesis". There is loathing and blaming of foreign nationals mostly by the poor and unemployed South Africans for virtually all social ills including crime, unemployment and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Matsinhe 2011). The study identifies such stereotypes as possible social manifestations that invoke the violence that has been construed as xenophobia in the "zones of non-being". This violent or negative attitude towards foreign nationals is exercised through the use of various forms of physical identities such as skin colour to determine citizenship.

Matsinhe (2011) states that the South African Police Service for example use people's physical appearance in determining citizenship, nationality and illegality. Those perceived as too dark are thought to be non-South African. Violence against and victimisation of foreign nationals is based on such contestations of citizenship and identity politics. This marking and

coding system has become an acceptable way of identifying and labeling people and excluding them from society. This has had unintended bitter consequences such as the killing of the reggae star Lucky Dube who was mistaken for a Nigerian national. The state, society and the law enforcement agencies continue to be exclusionary. As such, black people fail to identify as an African family seeking to advance unity, solidarity and peace.

It would appear that the South African government and part of the general public have not completely demonstrated compassionate care and accommodation at all levels towards the immigration system. Albertyn (2008) speaks to the provisions of the constitution on issues of group solidarity which call for compassionate care and accommodation of all. State operations through legislation, remain exclusivist against the call of the constitution and the general 'rainbow nation' project aspirations. Deeper below a democratic state system operates civil society whose societal practices are influenced by the effects of poverty and deep inequality. This continues to reflect the model of a colonial system operative in a black democratic African state which is trying to write its own piece of history.

Several scholars, including Albertyn (2008), still see the various ways in which the state has remained exclusionary. It is such research-based pieces of empirical evidence that this study uses in its decolonial thinking arguments. One of such is that the violence of May 2008 could easily have been part of these deeper manifestations operative within a democratic state system. Democracy in Africa, it can be argued, only refers in simplest terms to a black regime not very different from the colonial governance system which did not grant equal rights and access to resources and opportunities to all. The current system still finds itself operating on the basis of ethnicity and citizenship as means of access and entitlements to opportunities and resources. The 'non-citizen' is not part of this system.

Albertyn (2008) clearly articulates that different rights as expressed in the Bill of Rights have the subject of the right as 'everyone,' an attempt to go beyond citizens. It is the distribution of resources and availability of opportunities that are not in alignment with the provisions of the constitution. Socio-economic rights such as access to water, social assistance, housing, education and health care should be provided to everyone inclusive of non-citizens (Albertyn 2008). However, from a decolonial perspective, this study argues that it is the manner in

which these services and rights are discharged that is exclusionary. The lack of housing opportunities results in contestations between the locals and foreign nationals. Those considered non-citizens still remain outsiders who do not equally enjoy such rights. Albertyn (2008) identifies the contestation by foreign teachers in the North West Province over preferential treatment granted to South African teachers as a case for argument and that it resulted in failure to obtain permanent job posts including losing them upon application for those jobs by citizen teacher candidates.

Tlostanova and Mignolo (2007:118) define coloniality as

the modes of control of social life, economic and political organisations that emerged in the European management of the colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean from about the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards that subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence.

The colonial system was exploitative by its nature and this was demonstrated through land appropriation, labour exploitation and non-regard for the social organization of the natives' way of life and their traditional governance systems (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007).

Loomba (2005) observes that through its machinations, colonialism reshaped existing structures and its subsequent impact was that every branch of learning in Africa was impeded. Knowledge production, particularly that of an indigenous nature was and continues to be eroded and replaced by the supreme Western science. Indigenous knowledge systems were practiced alongside the traditional and governance systems prior to crude colonial rule. Indigenous knowledge and traditional structures of governance were overridden by the patriarchal colonial system which only identified its own systems as legitimate and powerful. Thus, colonialism impacted negatively on the production of knowledge specifically that of colony states and subsequently structured and directed for its dissemination and reception (Loomba 2005).

In South Africa, the suppression of indigenous knowledge systems is evident, for example, in the manner English and Afrikaans languages were introduced and used in the education system and disseminated to the local natives as supreme languages at the expense of their

own local languages. Consequently, language has remained a challenge in many schools in the current education system. In a similar vein, Mignolo and Tlostanova (2007) are of the view that the package of the colonial matrix of power had knowledge control and subjectivity at the core of its ingredients through which the colonies were controlled. They identify establishments such as the British Harvard University in as many colonies as part of this ideology to control knowledge production within the schooling system and this practice dominated and dismantled local language use.

If according to Mignolo and Tlostanova (2007), this system denied the use of Nahuatl, Ayamara and Quechna languages, the same can be advanced for the denial of knowledge and subjectivity in the context of Xhosa at the expense of the Dutch Afrikaans in the Cape Provinces. Decolonization of knowledge is not meant to serve the monarch or any other but purely the colonial native whose language, religion, social organization and economic production has been denied and suppressed by the structures and practices of colonialism (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007).

The individual(s) whose language, religion, social organization and economic production was denied and suppressed during exclusionary and racial apartheid era continues to be exploited by the residual effects of the era. This poor black South African who toils for life in the impoverished conditions of the 'zones of non-being' which are characterized by devastating poverty and unemployment, is exposed to the fierce competition over access to public services and entitlements to resource ownership. When this fierce competition and contestation erupts into violence against non-natives, media coverage occludes the meaning of this phenomenon by simply terming it 'xenophobia'. It has become evident from the literature available that when locals are asked why they attack foreign nationalities, hatred is not the core cause.

The conceptual and theoretical framework of this thesis is informed by decolonial epistemic framework whose entry point laments that the term xenophobia is generally used in a very simplistic and loose manner. This obstructs rather than enlightening the complex phenomenon of violence that has consistently and systematically engulfed people living in the poor black dominated areas such as Yeoville and Alexandra. The manner media has

influenced the common understanding of violence is not reflective of the conceptual and scientific reflection of the matrices of power in the 'zones of non-being'. The core issues involved in invoking violence in the 'zones of non-being' in South Africa have a historical legacy which brings into account the resilience of apartheid coloniality. Violence in South Africa is not new.

These 'zones of non-being' are characterized by abjection, ongoing violence and drug abuse engendered by devastating poverty and unemployment, and foreigners are just an add-on that becomes caught up in these conditions. Through the decolonial lens, this thesis argues that the withdrawal of foreign nationals from these fierce 'zones of non-being' would not put to an end the on-going 'hellish' activities happening in those sites. There is a fundamental need for influencing the media disciples to have an academic eye, to be able to see a linkage beyond xenophobia, one that links the various forms of violence and contestations in the 'zones of non-being' to the impact of coloniality of being. Violence in those sites has a correlation with the historical past – the apartheid system.

Imperialism and colonialism's effects inflicted wounds and created physical and mental lines of division that have become permanent physical border lines that are policed between countries, the police services and civil society (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007:121). Mignolo and Tlostanova (2007) further argue that during the colonial era, racism was used beyond the classification of human beings according to the colour of their skins to being a device around which the colonial differences were built and the colonial wound inflicted. Racism has therefore remained a line of division based on identity and skin colour in South Africa dating back to the manner in which colonialism was structured in this country. The dignity of human beings was not observed and racism became a tool through which it was deprived. There was no room for human rights in this system. This racial colonial practice impacted negatively on the ordinary native person. It can be argued that its influences have subsequently forced the ordinary black person to take revenge on fellow foreign black people once given territorial advantage, hence the creation and perpetuation of the 'zone of non-being'. It is not necessarily the hate of foreign nationals that is central to the violence, but rather, an issue of contestations involving identity and belonging, and challenges of poverty.

The only power in the possession of locals staying in the ‘zones of non-being’ is that of a physical and violent nature because they have been deprived of all other socio-economic and political forms of power. This has left them with invalid reasons such as citizenship, as the justified reason to target those who are perceived as non-citizens. The purpose is to gain ontological advantage over the poor foreign nationals in order to desperately hold onto this little territory of the ‘zone of non-being’ as their only last resort and form of ownership they can claim as native citizens. Their violent conducts and attitudes should not be confused with xenophobia as they are justified on the basis of citizenship and nativism as supreme forms of belonging.

The sum of the above arguments is that the logic of coloniality is probably of a similar version as what we continue to witness in the South African context today. The typologies are the same – the racialization of people, languages, knowledge, religions, political regimes, systems of law and economies (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2007). What this means is that from a decolonial thinking, there is need for an honest view that no modern achievements from a South African perspective can be mentioned without re-opening colonial wounds such as those of the apartheid era. The counter argument that this thesis brings forth is that colonial knowledge and power require some dismantling for the new paradigm of thinking and world view of a native South African to be realised. The social, economic and political life of the people of South Africa during the colonial period was under the control of the European colonists who had no regard for human dignity or rights and were exploitative. Language, religion, culture and other indigenous systems did not survive the colonial system and the apartheid regime reduced all these native resources through conquest.

### **Coloniality of Being**

In line with the tenets of decolonial epistemic framework as also informed by the concept of coloniality of being, the argument advanced in this chapter is that foreign nationals are targeted as the ‘other’ when violence erupts in the ‘zones of non-being’. The notion is that non-citizens do not have equal rights or entitlements to services and opportunities hence violence is used to drive them away from these zones. Disregard for human rights during the apartheid era, as has been mentioned already, dehumanised natives. This colonial system of inequality has continued into the democratic state system. This has a link with the manner in

which the ideology of nationalist thinking has been advanced in post-apartheid South Africa. The post-colonial nationalisation agenda excluded those seen as not belonging to the nation.

Neocosmos (2006) argues that nation formation became a process that was led by the state. The consequence was the distinction between citizens and foreigners. Nationalist thought becomes a vital form of knowledge in that it informs the current discourse of xenophobia on the basis of its politics of exclusion and belonging. The state in its nationalist agenda became prescriptive and legislative on what constituted citizenship, which has become part of the violent contestations as well as a frame through which the “foreigner” is defined. This has given rise to the effects of coloniality in lived experiences. What is interesting is that the state’s legislation has consequently created an exclusionary society, one which has become violent.

The long-standing patterns of power that have emerged as a result of the nationalist thought in the South African state have remained operative and define the character and culture of the ‘zones of non-being’. This is what informs the current discourse of violent activities and the various forms of contestations, which have become popularly known as xenophobia. Contestations in the ‘zones of non-being’ are ontologically inspired and operate on baseless coded forms of physical identity which are tied to nationality and citizenship as notions of identifying foreign nationals. Nationalist thought resulted in the attempted intensification and confinement of the labour market to within the South African state. The state’s nationalistic agenda to consolidate its democracy has instead become exclusionary.

This permanent border line of exclusion which has been created through the nationalist approaches of the state is being used in various ways particularly in the ‘zones of non-being’, including violence against foreign nationals to retain a sense of entitlement to citizenship, belonging and nativism. Society has become exclusionary and the ‘othering’ of foreign nationals is embedded in the power struggle between locals and foreign nationals in the ‘zones of non-being’. Nation building is a core priority for African states’ democracies. However, what has become politically significant is the manner in which African states including South Africa, deploy their citizenship autonomy and political hegemony over foreign nationalities. Foreign nationals are continuously identified as ‘outsiders’ in the state.

Using the decolonial epistemic framework to identify apartheid as one of the most overtly racist forms of colonialism which resulted in the formation of Bantustans in South Africa, and whose legacy has continually maintained black South Africans as irreconcilable tribes, the argument remains that it will always be difficult for such ‘irreconcilable’ tribes to integrate with foreign nationals. The general notion is that foreign nationals do not belong to the territory of the ‘zone of non-being’. From a decolonial epistemic perspective, chances would be that even if foreign nationals could join the ‘zones of being’ the current ‘zones of non-being’ would remain locked into tribal contestations which had always been characteristic of the apartheid legacy of racialization and ethnicisation of people. This notion according to Walsh (2007) is anchored in the colonial past and continues to influence the assignation of coded differences amongst people, resulting in hierarchal ordering of beings on the basis of their physical identities.

What is apparent, therefore, is that post-colonial South African society continues to be racist. Racial discrimination by blacks is typified by Mbongeni Ngema’s 2002 song, ‘AmaNdiya’. This was a direct attack on South Africans of Indian descent as though white South Africans of any other descent had the right to South African, and indeed, global citizenship. Such a mentality has continued to exist through name calling of black Africans in the ‘zones of non-being’ as *Makwerekwere*<sup>4</sup>. There was a conviction amongst black South Africans that black foreign nationals were taking away employment opportunities, as though white foreign nationals are supreme and have the right to South African citizenship better than any other foreign race. Those perceived as too dark in their physical appearance, are not acceptable citizens. This has become an inconsistent and baseless code of identity (Nyamnjoh, 2006). Neocosmos (2010) argues that exclusion has become part and parcel of the nation building processes led by the post-apartheid state and formalized by legislation which has resulted in the organized distinction between citizens and foreigners. This state-nation building process has an element of exclusion where state legislation criminalises migration and the

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<sup>4</sup> Makwerekwere is a derogatory word referring to non-South Africans. It is believed that it is derived from the supposed gibberish that non-South Africans speak. On top of this is added the myths that makwerekwere are dark in complexion and have foul smells. All this is shorthand for makwerekwere are ‘uncivilised’ beings by virtue of their foreignness.

general state practices have remained unchanged from the apartheid period (Neocosmos 2010).

The post-apartheid democratic transition was largely based on nationalisation. Nationalisation of migrant labour became part of the economic agenda and according to Neocosmos (2010) in practical terms this meant doing away with recruiting regional migrant labour in favour of local urbanized labour. Foreign labour was subsequently replaced by South African labour. This set the tone of exclusion and defined the manner in which citizenship became the core of nationalisation. The state's legislative instruments provide its personnel with excessive authority and power over foreign nationals. The level of brutality on foreign nationals by the state security and law enforcement agents has increased (Nyamnjoh, 2006). This has reproduced a modified version of racism, currently termed xenophobia. Neocosmos (2010) suggests that different layers and degrees of citizenship in South Africa have created a category of low class citizens that are very close to being foreigners or rather 'rightless' and are generally politically weak and marginalized while the other category is of those who possess greater claims of being part of the nation than others.

This low class type of citizens generally becomes the most active group of locals against an even more vulnerable group of foreigners, making the violence 'xenophobic'. This has become a norm that only black Africans, and not whites from the West, are targeted during violent attacks. Neocosmos (2010) views this as inherited racism of the state apparatuses. He claims that even trade unions hardly have the ability to protect black foreign workers against any form of violence targeted at them. There is no known legally constituted union movement that advances the rights of foreign nationals. This failure by established trade unions to protect black foreign nationals against violence, confirms that nationality is a key form of identity, a determinant for freedom, and access to human rights.

The current form of violence is simply an escalated manifestation of the notion of exclusion which has always been the nature and manner in which nationalisation as part of the democratic transition has been crafted by the state. Violence has an element of physical force to remove the unwanted from a territory, which may result in damage to property or death as was typified by the violent Alexandra Township attacks in May 2008. It would be very

simplistic to argue that such was new and had never happened in the history of South Africa considering the decolonial epistemic argument; that such was only because of the extremes of exclusion that have always been built into the country's legislation and policy frameworks on citizenship, immigration and nationalisation.

The general notion amongst the poor black locals is that citizenship is only confined to being born within the country with a certain accent and skin colour and other physical features. Such perceptions create identities that are used to target certain black foreign nationals perceived as not similar to or matching the perpetrators' definition and descriptions of a bonafide citizen. Citizenship as defined by the state's constitution in South Africa is different from the one defined by the 'zones of non-being'. It is not all foreign nationals who are illegally in the country as generally viewed by locals, particularly in the 'zones of non-being,' nor are all non-natives non-citizens. People in the 'zones of non-being' have their own imagination and definition of citizenship by which they exclude one another.

The invisible global imperial designs as afore mentioned, operated within the colonial matrices of power and left behind a colonial notion that 'Being' is unequal'. Certain beings have been perceived as more superior to others with higher order human rights than the less developed. Foreign nationals are looked down upon as inferior. Name calling such as *Makwerekwere* confirms the existence of this colonial notion of inequality. This in a way means foreign nationals in the 'zones of non-being' are seen as those of unequal humanity and without equal human rights as well as being on the periphery nationalization. Skin colour has always been a marker of contestation and identity in the South African state. It is apparent that the violence discussed here was confined to blacks only. The colonial whites regarded blacks as non-beings, and blackness on its own becomes a starting point whenever coloniality of being is thought (Maldonado-Torres 2007).

Consequently, some South Africans misidentified as dark foreign nationals have on various occasions been affected by the inhuman tendencies such as violence, police arrests and verbal abuse. This continues to be so casually identified as xenophobia by media. It requires to be problematized in relation to the forces of global imperial designs. Various scholars argue that evidence of influx of foreign nationals into South Africa stirred fear in the South African

public. Mosselson (2010) also argues that the influx of foreign nationals was a contributing factor to the violent May 2008 Alexandra attacks. The essence of this argument is that in the 'zones of non-being', the presence of foreign nationals threatens locals, their access to opportunities and basic services such as jobs and health care.

In view of this violent attack and relations between black South Africans and black foreign nationals, Maldonado-Torres (2007) deploys a decolonial epistemic view which recommends radical dialogical ethics to facilitate conflict resolution processes between humans and those considered sub-humans, in this case, '*Makwerekwere*'. The ethics of dialogue are non-existent in view of the manner in which the colonialists structured issues of colonization and racialization as strategic conceptual ways upon which the *damne`* manifested as the model of being. The disregard of others according to Maldonado-Torres's (2007) advancement of decolonial thinking, is orchestrated from the imperial attitude. In Alexandra and Yeoville, lordship and supremacy outclassed generosity and social interactions in normal societal arrangements.

The abject conditions in 'zones of non-being' have cast society into an unequal matrix of being which divides humankind into 'us and them' – what is also called the 'othering' of beings. The coloniality of being mentality works in such a manner that if they are *not part of us, then they are Makwerekwere*; they are not equal to us; they should be driven away or die should they resist. This exclusionary practice by the state, South African Police Service (SAPS) and the civilian population results in vulnerability to abuse and exploitation of foreign nationals (Mosselson 2010). Inequality has survived apartheid and shall continue to exist within this postcolonial state. It should not be dismissed that natives on their own do not see themselves as equal citizens.

The above assertion provides a historical understanding of the prevalence of xenophobic practice and attitudes within the South African societies prior to May 2008, which has become the manner in which the notions of being are created under the mask of the discourse of xenophobia. Steenkamp (2009) explains that xenophobia in South Africa can be traced back to the early moments of post-apartheid era. There had been different views amongst the locals regarding coexistence with foreign nationals. Some had been supportive of a blanket

prohibition on foreigners in 1995. Some linked them to crime activities and accused them of taking away employment opportunities particularly in Alexandra in 1994 (Landau and Freemantle, 2010). This alone confirms the complexity of this matter. Hawker attacks in central Johannesburg in 1997, mob looting and robbing of Somali shopkeepers in 2006, operation crackdown by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in March 2000 and use of derogatory terms by senior cabinet ministers and politicians in 1994 are some of the incidences that illustrate how much 'xenophobia' had been rooted into social, political and economic spheres in South Africa (Steenkamp 2009).

All this shows the manner in which the South African state has been treating foreign nationals post-apartheid. The SAPS's crackdown operation was merciless, given that it had no sympathy to check and establish the legality of some of the foreign nationals who became the victims of this blanket operation. A crackdown refers to an organised operation against a certain grouping and cannot be expected to be selective in its conduct. The political elite showed no mercy either and reinforced the politics of belonging and 'othering' of foreign nationals and associating them with criminality. This conduct created and defined the new era of the post-apartheid South African state along with its pursuit for nation building which has been argued by many to be exclusionary, politicised and xenophobic by its nature. Against this xenophobic public culture, the majority of the black African immigrants in South Africa are desperate for economic freedom and are at risk of xenophobic tendencies and attacks by local citizens (Nyamnjoh 2006).

Given the magnitude of subsequent contestations particularly within the 'zones of non-being' in relation to seemingly diminishing economic opportunities, issues of belonging and citizenship, identity and resources, autochthony discourses, racism and Afrophobia, this thesis finds it intellectually misplaced to term all these forms of contestations, xenophobia. The May 2008 violence is no different. The violence is argued to have been an expression of dissatisfaction about the long wait for the government promised delivery of basic services and economic opportunities. On this basis, the cause for the violence is what should be traced than naming an expression of dissatisfaction as the cause for violence.

## **Coloniality of Knowledge**

This chapter uses the decolonial epistemic framework to argue that knowledge production in South Africa has long been subjected to colonial and imperial designs particularly during the apartheid era. The settler colonialists overlooked local knowledge and promoted the Western hegemony and used languages such as Afrikaans as a language of instruction in schools. This was met with resistance leading to the youth uprisings in 1976 which resulted in the Sharpeville blood bath. Western thought is viewed as scientific truths while other local thoughts are subalternized and made invisible (Walsh 2007). Local knowledge has been relegated to second class status by the white elite at the expense of the Western hegemony. Similarly, apartheid policies were designed in a manner which elevated the white race and suppressed the blacks. The indigenous blacks were converted to peasants and denounced as barbarians with absolutely nothing to contribute (Walsh 2007).

This means that local indigenous knowledge systems were dismissed and replaced by Eurocentric practices including the introduction of Western influenced Christian systems and theology as religious knowledge. The residual effects of apartheid have an influence on the current societal tendencies. There is no record of the white race being attacked at any one point during the 2008 violence. This has confirmed the racialised system which places one race above others. Foreign nationals in the 'zones of non-being' are not viewed as equal human beings with the same human rights as the locals. They are viewed as sub-human beings who should be driven away, as too dark skinned and inferior to be local citizens. This results in the racialised classification of human beings, with poor black foreigners the most unequal.

The legacy that was created during the Euro-American centric global influences was that blacks were an inferior race and the whites were superior. Blacks were regarded as incapable of thinking rationally. This brings us back to the first part of the Cartesian formulation of being as presented by Maldonado-Torres (2007) which states that 'I think, therefore I am'. This first part hides the fact that '*others are not thinkers*'. This was part of the colonial injustices that viewed blacks as not capable thinkers of their own destiny. The colonialists were of the view that black natives were incapable of managing their education, their religion, their culture hence later on, their own languages were deemed ineffective and had to

be replaced by 'superior' Dutch and English. Indigenous knowledge was viewed with skepticism or outrightly rejected.

### **Coloniality of Power**

Maldonado-Torres (2007:243) defines coloniality as “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations”. Coloniality has on its own, been a form of power derived from colonialism and this has continued to define the South African culture in general beyond the exclusionary apartheid colonial system. The colonial system's exclusionary patterns of power that were evident during the apartheid regime continue to define societal relations of the democratic state. The black elite continue to dominate the economic and political systems which define the broader societal relations that have remained vertical in structure and patriarchal. Within this patriarchal form of power lie ethnicity, tribalism, nativism, nationality and citizenship – forms of classification that are intersubjective by relation. This colonially inherited patriarchal power structure places local citizens above foreign nationals.

Black on black racism has disempowered foreign nationalities from active civil community development activities. Foreign nationals have become politically marginalised from the community governance structures and have resorted to the formation of their own nationally-based civil organizations. They have come to South Africa under the influence of globalisation, a global matrix of power. Ikeotuonye (2007) sees globalization as the beginning of a process that began with the constitution of America and the colonial Eurocentered capitalism as the new epicenters of global power. Globalisation as a model of power has influenced the social classification of the world's population into racial groupings whose relations are anchored on a colonial system of domination and marginalization of some races by others.

The arrival of colonial settlers in South Africa was an effect of the global movement of colonial power which placed the white settlers above the black African natives. Ikeotuonye (2007) opines that the usual colonial practice of population transfer is not only limited to the

reshuffle of people, land theft, displacement and exploitation but also includes the cultivation of epistemological, ontological and geo-historical hierarchy. This, Ikeotuonye claims, happens through the subalternisation of the local histories of the colonized, a story that clearly outlines the constitution of the South African state from conquest until democracy. Native knowledge and traditional systems suffered the dominant tendencies of the colonialists. Ikeotuonye (2007:206) writes that the notion of “inferior races” relies on the treatment of those inferior races as “objects” of study, “correction,” domination, exploitation and discrimination precisely because they are not “subjects” or “rational subjects.”

The notion of exclusion and discrimination is not a new one, but some form of coloniality of power whose only difference is that the previously dominated black natives have partly assumed the position of their colonial masters against fellow black foreign nationals. The state’s national policy systems are exclusionary to an extent, particularly its labour and immigration laws that have been influenced by its nationalisation agenda whose stringent requirements tend to exclude fellow black Africans from mainstream services. This state influenced exclusionary system operates within the globally influenced matrices of power that date back to colonialism. The May 2008 violence was constitutive of one of the sets of the four colonial matrices of power that Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) explains in detail.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) confirms colonial matrices of power as a set of technologies of subjectivation whose other types can control the economy, subjectivity and knowledge. He explains that these two types can manifest through dispossessions, land appropriations, exploitation of labour, control of African resources while controlling epistemological colonization and the re-articulation of African subjectivity as inferior (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). The May 2008 violence was a testimonial episode of one of the four types of colonial matrices of power as articulated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012). This is particularly with regards to the amount of dispossessions and displacements that were encountered as the violence unfolded. Black foreign nationals succumbed to severe torture, assault and brutal death.

The May 2008 violence was a colonial form of power that was exercised against foreign nationals by black locals in an attempt to control the limited economic factors of survival in the ‘zones of non-being’. With reference to the existence of types and forms of the colonial

matrices of power, social relations have been constructed under such influences. The May 2008 violence was associated with shortage of jobs, high crime rates and claims that foreign men were taking away women perceived as belonging to local South African men. The issue of women regarded as wives of the local black men speaks to the manner and nature in which patriarchy and subjectivity as forms of coloniality of power remain existent in the modern society in general and the townships in particular. Global imperial designs have continued to influence how the modern world system is characterized hence limiting the opportunities of freedom and decolonization in the third world countries (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012).

This global imperial design which operates through the matrices of power makes African societies vulnerable, hence contestations of citizenship as part of the power struggles between locals and foreign nationals. Native South Africans were not granted citizenship during the colonial era. Thus, they find it very difficult to share citizenship with foreign nationals. History has taught them that citizenship is reserved for the white imperialists and the natives. This coloniality mentality views citizenship as the qualification for ownership and entitlement and means for identity and exclusion. Citizenship has become the centre through which the poor black majority draws its power to defend their territories.

Walsh (2007) observes that while colonialism would logically come to an end with the rise of independence, coloniality is instead, a model of power that continues. In South Africa today even if democracy has been achieved and the local natives have enjoyed the new beginning of the rainbow nation, there is still an imperially designed form of power that still continues to rule. The colonial masters did not want to co-exist with black natives and they regarded them as unequal human beings. This separation and exclusion of human beings continues to exist. Some black locals and the poor foreign nationals are still exploited as cheap forms of labour particularly in the farms. There are very limited economic opportunities as well. The free market system of the current capitalistic economy has influenced a fierce competition for jobs with foreign nationals resulting in violence as model of power.

Power is thus a force used to conquer the weak, and hence the same concept has been applied by the locals to drive the weaker foreign nationals from the territorial state of South Africa, particularly in the 'zones of non-being' such as Alexandra. The use of power by the Euro-

American super powers has been a strategy meant to survive the world's capitalist financial crisis (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). This is more or less part of the same justification given by locals that foreigners are competing with them for the limited economic opportunities. Power is closely associated with economic dominance and entitlement. In this regard, access to economic opportunities is confined to citizenship, ethnicity and nativism. The general view in the 'zones of non-being' is that non-citizens do not have the same rights as South African citizens.

This thesis argues that it is this same power used as a means of survival that has struck the 'zone of non-being' in the form of violent attacks of May 2008 in Alexandra Township. Violent power was used to drive away foreign nationals to survive the crisis of limited opportunities. It generally became a power game that has come to be commonly known as xenophobia when in actual fact it is hidden behind the effects of the impact of asymmetrical global power relations designed by the imperialist to influence global power relations. The colonial system designated township areas for the poor native black masses that are today only entitled to such territories and defend them even through violent means. Poor locals in the designated 'zones of non-being' own nothing other than these territories.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter recognises the manner in which citizenship and ethnicity contributed to the manner in which fellow black Africans have related to one another particularly in the 'zones of non-being'. A wave of black racism prevailed and built a strong turbulence of contestations amongst black Africans, between native locals and foreigners. This chapter finds it fundamentally inadequate to accept media terminology and assertions at face value, despite its concerted efforts to term this turbulent violence unleashed on foreign nationals as xenophobia. What is evident is that this violence was symptomatic of hidden layers of contestations over access to economic and basic social services. This resulted in the mobilization of citizenship, ethnicity, nationality and such other factors as centers of power.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MAPPING THE SITES OF VIOLENCE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a theoretical view of where violence is likely to happen. The chapter does this through identifying a few areas across the country where violence has generally been experienced. It maps the sites of violence and from a historical perspective, argues that violence has continued to occur in certain areas of society and not others. The chapter explains sites of violence as going beyond physical space into operational and structural state systems. It also identifies black owned business ventures as potential targets which are looted during violent protest actions and those that experience violent contestations relating to entitlements. The chapter argues why violence continues to occur particularly in black townships as opposed to the simplistic explanation that it is a result of xenophobia. The research questions relating to where and when xenophobia takes place are addressed in this chapter with particular attention to the conditions that foment violence in an array of contestations.

This thesis advances the argument that xenophobia as it is understood from the South African perspective, as that which is associated with violent attacks directed at foreign nationals, does not occur everywhere. The violent attacks on foreign nationals seem to only happen in particular zones. The mapping of such sites of violence assists the study to respond to the research question, ‘why is xenophobia taking place in particular areas and not in others?’ This mapping identifies the type of sites where violence occurs and helps to theoretically argue why violence took place in poorer zones but not in Sandton City, for example. The study, following the decolonial epistemic framework disagrees with the media’s naming of the May 2008 violence as xenophobia.

#### **Sites of violence**

The study uses existing literature to do the mapping and goes beyond media’s surface commentary. One of the sources, the *Daily Sun*, Friday 21 June, had a main article titled ‘Foreigners under attack’ which featured two separate articles entitled ‘Service protest turns

into looting' and 'Shop owners flee amid death threats'. These two violent events occurred at Kraaifontein in Cape Town and in Hammanskraal area. Park (2010) identifies the inner Durban City where the working-class black South Africans were pitted against poor African immigrants to reclaim limited spaces in the inner city. In Cape Town violence is concentrated in the former black and coloured suburbs (van Eeden, Borman and Wentzel 1998)

Minnaar, Pretorius and Wentzel (1998:13) identify townships as sites of violence and conflict particularly prior to 1990, as some form of resistance to apartheid. There have been widespread political traces of violence particularly after the 1994 elections in Gauteng townships, involving regional government and local township-based structures (Minnaar et al., 1998). Violence continued to spread to various sites. Minnaar et al. (1998) single out the minibus taxi industry as a significant site of violence post 1994 elections. Violence in the various sites has been gruesome and fatal. The minibus taxi conflicts from 1990–1995, had Gauteng recording the highest deaths followed by KwaZulu Natal, Western Cape, the Northern Province and the Eastern Cape (Minnaar et al., 1998)

Minnaar et al. (1998) identify the 1994 tension between Xhosa fisherman and Ovambos from Namibia in Imizamo Yethu squatter camp at Hout Bay in Cape Town as an example of violence against foreign nationals. In a related incident, an armed group in Alexandra Township organised a terror campaign targeting foreign nationals particularly Zimbabweans, Shangaan speakers and any other residents perceived as 'dark complexioned' by throwing them and their possessions out of their homes and flats in December 1994 and January 1995 (Minnaar et al., 1998). Violence has been happening across the South African society particularly in areas where poverty and high unemployment rate are pronounced. The common reasons advanced by protesters to justify violent attacks should not be ignored.

Minnaar et al. (1998) further trace and locate violence in various sites including mines, for example such as the Xhosa-Shangaan clashes at Primrose Gold Mine, as well as prisons and schools during the Soweto riots of 1976.

Violence targeted at foreign nationals did not start with the May 2008 Alexandra attacks. It does not only occur in physical spaces but can reside in policy and operational systems of the state. Police are law enforcement agents and hence should operate within state legislative provisions. In their discharge of duty, police are at times found to be violent. This study's mapping exercise has found out that a site of violence is not limited to a physical space but can entail an operational or structurally oriented state system. Smit and Cilliers (1998) point out that of the 232 cases of police conviction, 157 had been for assault. Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act No. 51/1977) has provision for reasonable and permissible physical violence during an arrest but such an arrest must not be degrading to the suspect.

Media and the scholarly literature have assisted this study to come up with the mapping of the sites of violence. The two newspaper articles in respect of Kraaifontein in Cape Town and Hammanskraal service protests and violent attacks targeting shop owners reveal that these were contestations imbedded within the politics of exclusion. Government's failure to deliver adequate services to the poor black townships results in service protests. The foreign nationals are then targeted as they are perceived as the reason service delivery demands cannot be fulfilled by government and municipalities. Issues of service delivery are not contested by the masses in suburbs such Sandton City. Body Corporates run the affairs of estate compounds from levy fees paid by owners of private residences.

The mapping has also established that issues of space can be contested such as what was witnessed in inner-city Durban where poor African immigrants were forced out for the locals to reclaim limited spaces in the inner city. This was an issue of entitlement in which foreign nationals were said not to have equal rights as the natives and the former were consequently subjected to forced displacement. In Cape Town violence has been seen as more pronounced in the former black and coloured suburbs (van Eeden, Bornman and Wentzel 1998). Black townships are known to be faced with poor service delivery and very high unemployment rates hence contestations become prevalent and targeted at those identified as outsiders. A black foreign lawyer living under opulence in Sandton where he/she can afford all the luxurious services is safe from any contestations and targeting.

Another site of violence as identified through this mapping exercise is within the taxi industry. The main reason why this happens is that there are contestations relating to entitlements to routes due to limited business opportunities. Black people are mostly involved in the transport industry and minibus taxi ranks are flooded with operators, thereby resulting in diminishing returns. Minnaar et al. (1998) regret that the minibus taxi industry has been one of the significant sites of violence post- 1994 elections. The apartheid system, through its exclusionary administration, has been continued in the democratic state where the elite exclude the poor black majority. Black people thus live under the influences of class, power, entitlements, citizenship and ethnicity.

On the basis of this mapping, the study concurs with Santos' (2007) 'Abyssal Thinking' and many other scholars with similar views regarding the dividing of humankind into two realms of 'zones of being' and 'zones of non-being'. Whatever fuels violence in the many zones identified cannot be loosely termed xenophobia. Violence has manifested itself in the 'zones of non-being' to a level beyond any acceptable conception of existence, underlining the idea of exclusion and nonexistence. The colonial era established Bantustans as homes for the poor black masses without infrastructure in place, to cope with the pressure of population growth. The consequence of this unequal colonial development system has been contestations amongst the poor blacks.

Mosselson (2009) identifies Du Noon and Doornbach informal settlements of Cape Town as additional sites of violent attacks against foreigners in 2008. This mapping by Mosselson (2009) tells us that the characteristic of these sites, the 'zones of non-being', has violence as the core of their common feature. The service protests which resulted in looting of shops owned by foreigners should be critically examined. What we learn from this is that black dominated townships have a high concentration of black foreign nationals who put pressure on delivery of basic services. The major cause of violence in all these sites including Alexandra Township has not been associated or linked to mere hatred, but an array of contestations relating to poor service delivery and unemployment.

Mosselson (2009) further provides a vivid account of how the violent attacks on foreign nationals were orchestrated in Alexandra Township after a series of community meetings of May 11.

The manner in which these violent attacks occur in the above mentioned zones bears typologies of what Santos (2009) identifies as a factor of modern Western thinking, that is, abyssal thinking. Such thinking consists of visible and invisible distinctions upon which the latter is established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, that of “this side of the line” and that of “the other side of the line” (Santos 2009:45). What lies below the human line does not have full human rights enjoyed by those on the other side of the human line. The system has remained patriarchal by design as was introduced by the colonial masters. The white race remains the supreme one while blacks are locked in ontologically centered mentality that only reinforces that racialised system.

The locals in the ‘zones of non-being’ within the sampled sites of violence can no longer comprehend the reality of co-presence and coexistence with foreign nationals. This resonates with Santos’ (2009) arguments that whatever is viewed as nonexistent is radically excluded while by its nature, abyssal thinking cannot accept the possibility of the two sides of the line to exist as one. It is such modern Western thinking that has dehumanise humankind in a manner that we see citizenship as a visible line drawn to separate the coexistence of the locals and the foreign nationals, hence the violent split in these sites. Peberdy (2013) uses Census 2011 and the GCRO Quality of Life 2011 data both of which outline migration patterns of foreign nationals into Gauteng, to reveal that the latter is the preferred region of destination. Over three quarters of cross border migrants were from the Southern African region and half of those had moved to Gauteng from Zimbabwe, 22% from Mozambique and 13% from Malawi (Peberdy 2013). Mawadza (2008) had similar findings to those of Peberdy (2013), that although there are migrants from almost all corners of Africa into South Africa, Zimbabweans are regarded as the highest in number.

In view of the above statistical evidence, this thesis attempts to find out why particular foreign national groups were attacked in Alexandra Township while others may not have experienced the same. It is instructive to find out if density and distribution of particular

foreign groups influenced those attacks. If a certain nationality is fewer by population than the others and therefore not attacked during violence, its statistical absence must not influence conclusions. This omission from the data of victims may not scientifically suggest that they would have not been attacked if found in the sites of violence or justify the attack on others.

Yakushko (2009) argues that xenophobia seems to exist in the minds of humankind in the form of attitudinal and behavioral hostility toward non-native individuals. Santos (2007) similarly argues that whoever is viewed as nonexistent is radically excluded. Santos (2007) uses nativism in the context of drawing the abyssal line. Thus, the mind of a human being is a perfect site that produces the invisible distinction which is abyssal by character and influences the type of attitude and behavior towards non-natives by the natives. The hostility is then expressed through such attitude and behavior and culminates in ethnocentrism which views poor foreign nationals as inferior and local nationals as superior; it then becomes a practice of exclusion which can also influence national policy. Landau and Polzer (2007:4) identify former Minister of Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi's political sentiments that *"if we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens who are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme"* as one such example of national political attitude towards foreign nationals.

What is seen as xenophobia is a product of an invisible distinction that is produced in the mind of a human being and expressed in various ways which could be violent such as the 11 May 2008 attacks in Alexandra. The former Home Affairs Minister's sentiments significantly define the manner in which the post-apartheid South African nation has continued to be built on exclusionary practices that create the radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, "them" and "us" as an element of the contested politics of belonging between locals and foreign nationals. The colonial masters had in their mind an attitude that black natives were not equal to them, hence had better services and could not share public facilities with black colonies. Inequality has survived and requires decoloniality.

The research question, where and when does xenophobia take place seeks clarity on what this thesis argues in this chapter, happens generally in those sites identified as “zones of non-being” such as Yeoville. In this regard, when influential figures such as ministers or top ranking government officials show anti-foreigner attitudes, this becomes confirmation of how the masses at grassroots level should behave towards foreign nationals. When the state takes a position against foreign nationals, the masses are likely to put it into practice and may even overdo it, such as what was experienced in Alexandra on 11 May 2008. It became a blood bath which claimed as many as 62 deaths according to various sources and became a huge embarrassment on the government’s part for failing to deal with it.

The state can have policies that regulate and govern immigration processes, some of which may be condemned as racial in nature in view of the past colonial practices which continue to shape the manner in which black African regimes are governed. As national policy, the South African parliament promulgated a new Act 13, of 2002 with a clause that encouraged ordinary citizens to report foreign nationals they deemed could be breaking immigration laws. This sparked concern across the broader civic rights organizations. Such promulgation showed very little commitment from the post-apartheid government to shift from the past discriminatory and racial immigration policies to an inclusive and non-racial democratic state. Ironically, South Africa was among the states which opposed the 1995 Southern African Development Community (SADC) draft protocol on free movement of people which was advocating a visa free SADC region and removal of stringent cross border controls (Mawadza 2008).

The second part of the research question, ‘When does xenophobia take place?’ does not necessarily refer to time but rather the human environment which triggers the behavior to become a visible distinction. The violent phenomenon which has become commonly termed xenophobia is according to Yakushko (2009) multidimensional and discriminatory with ties to nationalism and ethnocentrism. It has a connection to a sense of threat on personal or group level. What becomes clear is the collective societal and cultural perception that foreign nationals are taking away job opportunities from the natives. This becomes a violent contestation based on the fact that the poor natives are also affected by the prevailing social and economic challenges in the “zones of non-being”.

This ethnocentric perception and many others such as foreigners take away beautiful women from native men or they bring the HIV and Aids epidemic manifest themselves beyond attitudes into fierce blood and death contestations of the magnitude of what happened in Alexandra Township on 11 May 2008. Interestingly, Gudkov (2006:64) argues that the xenophobic mood did not only prevail among the marginalized but also amongst “ordinary people” who may include professionals. The police, blue-collar workers and pensioners make up the most intolerant group while business people are the most tolerant group.

The stagnation of society particularly in the “zones of non-being” without hope for the future becomes a matter that is contested and the ontological density factor surfaces where the poorest amongst the natives try to overpower the desperate foreigner who has no survival alternatives. Foreign nationals become “non-beings”, human dust that can easily be ignored and dismissed and also live and work in dehumanizing conditions (Yakushko 2009). This creation of the side of the abyssal line which is hopeless and characterized by stagnation results in the continued blame on foreign nationals for virtually all the social and economic ills of society that trigger violent activities. This is characterized by the claim by locals that foreign nationals were taking away job opportunities belonging to them as citizens. This fits into the general complaints about immigrants globally. The latter are repeatedly associated with the declining economy, overpopulation, pollution, increased violence, depleted social resources, erosion of cultural values and terrorism (Yakushko 2009).

In an attempt to conceptualize the above statement, this thesis recognizes a very interesting linkage in support of its argument that violent attacks on foreign nationals cannot be identified as xenophobia on the basis that they have only been targeted at certain foreign nationals. It can be argued that from an invisible distinctions perspective, the local natives have through abyssal thinking divided foreign nationals into two groups and subsequently regard foreign nationals in the “zones of being” as rich immigrants repeatedly associated with the rising economy, planned population, clean environment, peace, rich families, and integration into cultural values. This would refer to those on the other side of the abyssal line such as in Sandton areas.

Premised on the invisible distinction of human thinking, one is bound to link this perpetration of violence to what happens currently as professional foreign immigrants in the “zones of being” have not experienced violent activities against them. Some of the local natives work for rich black immigrants and address them as “*Abelungu*” (whites). This explains that being wealthy is colonially associated with the white race and the black elite and wealthy people are therefore viewed as equal to whites. The fierce competition remains in the “zones of non-being”, *zones of no hope* and poor service delivery hence those foreign nationals living on the other side of abyssal line are not targeted while those in the “zones of non-being” are, and are generally regarded as unequal human beings. Violence which has become popularly known as xenophobia is a racial practice that targets black Africans.

Real xenophobia knows no category. It cannot determine a better foreigner than another. Why then would those in certain sites, particularly from the infamous “zones of non-being” be excluded from society while the other foreign nationals from the other side of the abyssal line, the “zone of being” are treated differently? The latter are accepted as part of the broader society. Such black foreign nationals, who fall into the group of the elite, can be provided with special skills quota permits by the government. This has become a standard conception by the locals regarding who meets the standard of global citizenship. White people of any descent have not been attacked in almost all the violent attacks on foreign nationals, and neither did some black foreign nationals living in certain areas that can be deemed ‘zones of being’.

Mignolo (2006) views the question of global citizenship as one which only applies to a very small percentage of the global population, that is, those very few belonging to the political and economic elite groupings. The white minority in South Africa dominate this type of group and by virtue of their standing on the demographic pyramid qualify for global citizenship and become immune to any orchestrated violent attacks. This becomes a power relation. The white race is the most economically powerful and elite that they become untouchable, so much that even the local security and law enforcement agents such as South African Police Service do not question their citizenship on the streets in a manner a poor black foreign national would be subjected to scrutiny. Whites in South Africa naturally assume the global citizenship tag and qualify to belong to South Africa. Black African

immigrants, whose colonial past continues to mark their identity and works against them, are disqualified. The xenophobic violence of May 2008 is symptomatic of the politics of belonging and contestation for citizenship that has taken root in post-apartheid South Africa (Mosselson 2010).

The above affirms the argument advanced in this thesis that the violence of May 2008 was a symptom of how the invisible distinctions of the global imperial design which operate through matrices of power, have continued to hail the Euro-American's hegemony and autonomy over the African societal and cultural systems. The post-apartheid era has become one form of post-coloniality contestations of citizenship and politics of belonging that have continued to exclude some poor black foreign nationals from integration into the multicultural domain of the South African society. Mignolo (2006) views citizenship as one of the key factors of the colonial matrix of power which enforced the formation of the communities of birth instead of communities of faith during the colonial era in Europe.

Citizenship has remained a central factor within communities of former Western colonies despite the claim of African renaissance and equal citizenship. It will appear that ideas of regional blocks as communities within a United States of Africa will not come cheaply given the continued influences of colonial matrices of power that have reduced African states to fierce boundary lines of communities of birth and citizenship. Black immigrants remain on the periphery in their host countries and are faced with the difficulty of enjoying any privileges of host citizens and the white race. They are continuously subjected to the politics of exclusion and belonging. It has proven difficult for poor black Africans to be accepted as citizens particularly in South Africa in comparison to other races.

Racism has divided the space between foreigner and citizen while religion, language, skin colour and such other factors that can be regarded as indicators of the colonial and imperial difference are used against the human race (Mignolo 2006). This becomes a permanent societal conception which becomes embodied in the social and political systems that are influenced by the surviving colonial matrices of power. With this division of the modern world into the two realms as a result of abyssal thinking, citizenship becomes an epistemic standard used in the classification of the South African society. Those who fall on the bitter

side of the abyssal line face exclusion through violent attacks and this is typically in the 'zones of non-being' where abject conditions prevail.

### **Conclusion**

It would appear that when coloniality and apartheid became replaced by democracy in South Africa, the logic of exclusions seems to have been continually rearticulated by the general poor black masses. The state's nationalisation agenda upon independence continued to be exclusionary and its national policy on immigration was a trademark of the global imperial designs which operate through colonial matrices of power resulting from the continued Euro-American's hegemony and autonomy over the African continent in general and South Africa in particular. Most black foreign nationals violate immigration laws and end up competing for resources and services against the poor locals in the 'zones of non-being'. These contestations point to the lack of service delivery and access to opportunities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXPRESSIONS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter builds on the previous chapter which discussed the conditions that allowed violence to turn into fierce contestations and expands on the expressions and manifestations of violence. The chapter presents the social and economic factors instrumental in the promotion of violent activities targeted at foreign nationals. A historical narrative that outlines social relations and circumstances that have always identified foreign nationals as outsiders is pursued to support the reasons that have already been proffered, for circumstances that led to the violent May 2008 attacks. The chapter also argues that the state and municipality bylaws have remained exclusionary. It presents some theoretical justification on what contributed to the violent attacks contrary to media's baseless arguments that hatred was the sole cause for the attacks on foreign nationals. The chapter also traces what motivated and influenced the naming of the May 2008 attacks as xenophobia.

#### **An account of violence, its manifestations and expressions**

What has become commonly known as xenophobia in South Africa is in actual fact part of the manifestation and outcome of hellish conditions in which the poor have lived under since the establishment of forced colonial urbanization of dispossessed black people of South Africa. In May 2008, it was expressed in the form of violence targeted at foreign nationals. It expressed itself as politics of exclusion, othering, ethnicity, nationality and race. This was an attack which only targeted certain black nationalities. This thesis holds the view that the violent attacks in question were racialised, prompting the questions whether or not the white race would have been targeted in the event that white immigrants had settled in the 'zone of non-being'.

The media played a leading role in the establishment of common acceptance that the violent attacks which were contestations over the lack of various socio-economic services, which exploded into fierce attacks targeting black foreign nationals was xenophobia. This is evident in the manner media covered the violent attacks on foreign nationals, particularly with

reference to the May 2008 attacks in Alexandra Township. This complex phenomenon of violence that has consistently and systematically engulfed people living in poor black dominated townships is a subsequent residual manifestation of the colonial past of apartheid. The democratic state has today characteristics that reflect the colonial past which was exclusionary and patriarchal.

Harber (2008) argues that media's coverage, particularly the *Daily Sun* as one of the country's biggest daily papers, played an influential role in naming the violence. This simplistic and blanket terming of violence as xenophobia is misleading and has become part of the public's culture to relate any form of contestation to xenophobia. This has become a casual manner through which any form of contestation has become concealed under the thick mask of xenophobia. Xenophobia has become part of common culture and loose language of interpretation relating to any form of contestation that may involve locals and foreign nationals. Contestations on socioeconomic factors such as housing and jobs are referred to as xenophobia, and such characterization can be attributed to the media's power of influence.

Naming of violence as xenophobia has largely emanated from the category of the society which has the power and influence to loosely term forms of contestations in the 'zones of non-being' such as the violent attacks of May 2008 as xenophobia. Mainstream media in South Africa has been at the forefront of speculating this post-apartheid residual incidence to be xenophobia and since then, a lot more including some scholars, have uncritically adopted this term. It has become an indiscriminate form of violence that media has developed a shorthand to label as xenophobia. This has had the potential to influence the manner in which society has come to define violence. Violence expressed as a form of contestation or protest action against poor service delivery has been easily hijacked by local and international media as expressions of xenophobia.

Western media has also joined local publishing houses to influence this power of naming any form of violence against foreign nationals as xenophobia. Such has been seen in the manner police brutality has been viewed by mainstream media as xenophobic tendencies of the state security agency. Mainstream media enjoys the power and influence to turn a simple service protest and even police brutality into a xenophobic outburst on foreign nationals. Scholars

have not had the same power or influence to be able to deploy an academic conceptualisation to explain the violence in South Africa. What has been clear is that violence has a trend of taking place at particular sites which the scholars have identified as 'zones of non-being' while media has a different power of influence.

**2** **DAILY SUN** Friday 21 June 2013

# FOREIGNERS UNDER ATTACK!



Residents run through the streets of Kraaifontein in Cape Town. Cops say a housing protest turned into a chance to loot and burn foreign shops (inset).  
*Photos by Mandla Mnyakama*

## Service protest turns into looting!

**By MANDLA MNYAKAMA and VINCENT LALI**  
SERVICE protests turned into full-on violence against foreigners as thugs cashed in...

The shops of Somalis, Chinese and Ethiopians were looted and burned in Cape Town's Wallacedene and Blokombos on Wednesday night. Rioters with spades and iron rods went on the rampage after "illegal" Thabazimont squatter camp shacks were demolished. They also burned some of the 20 KDF homes wrecked

Monday's riot against "outsiders". Locals and police said criminals hijacked the housing protest. "We protested to highlight our demands for houses, but we have nothing to do with shop looting," said Ntshabane to Moot (6), a squatter there for five years.

Spaza shopkeeper Mohamed Moor Gool said 199 of 256 local Somali-owned spazas were looted by yesterday. "We plan to negotiate with community leaders for resettlement. We have nowhere else to go," he said.

Witnesses claimed police watching in their vans as thugs helped themselves. "They let thugs to do as they wished," said one. "Cops sped past looting as if rushing to a more important event"

Dozens of shocked foreigners fled to Kraaifontein Police Station for safety.

Provincial commissioner Lieutenant General Arno Lamoor told local leaders and Somali representatives yesterday violence wouldn't be tolerated.



A cop takes advantage

## Cops fire teargas at kasi protesters

**By DELILE SOWAGA**  
A PROTEST march ended in chaos on Tuesday after the police fired teargas at protesters. Demonstrators from Kraaifontein in Koppies, Free State, were angry about the arrest of community members on Tuesday for public violence during a service delivery protest.

Their demonstration brought the town to a standstill. Cops had to block the road to the local magistrate's court and only ten people were allowed in the building.

When leaders came back with the news that the case had been postponed to Monday to allow the suspects to organise legal representation, residents refused to disperse.

Protester Joshua Gumede told

*Daily Sun*: "We want our people to be released now otherwise we must all be arrested."

Local leaders pleaded with community members to go home but they just kept on toyi-toyi. Police then threw teargas canisters into the crowd and all hell broke loose. Adults and children fell over each other to get away as cops started arresting people.

Kraaifontein Local Municipality spokesman Steve Naule had been saying all week that residents' demands were receiving attention but couldn't say why the mayor was unable to meet them.

Police spokesman Constable Peter Kwehl confirmed that nine people were arrested for public violence.

## Pandor slams violence

**By SIMONE HERADEN**  
HOME Affairs Minister Naledi Pandor yesterday came out firing against the attacks.

"Anti-immigrant violence is inseparable from the evil of racism," she said. She was speaking at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' World Refugee Celebrations at the Tlokweng City Hall.

Referring to the violence against African foreigners that swept Mamel in May 2008 and the latest flare-ups, Pandor said: "The use of force to resolve grievances, no matter how legitimate, is unacceptable."

Pandor said the violence was a threat to the achievement of democracy and freedom in Mzansi. "We need to teach our young people to recognise and combat intolerance and racism."

## Shop owners flee amid death threats

**By SIPHO KEMANA**  
"SHUT your shops and get out of town - or else!"

This was the message to foreigners in Hammanskraal, north of Tlokweng, yesterday.

Local shop owners accuse them of stealing their customers. Others claim they sell drugs to their children, perform illegal abortions and defraud people.

When the SunTeam arrived, foreigners were closing their shops and preparing to leave.

A Somali, who gave his name only as Abdul, said: "We are very, very frightened. We will engage with authorities, especially the cops, to try and address this."

Locals used the opportunity to loot foreign-owned stalls.

David Mathibane from the Hammanskraal Informal Traders Association said: "This is not a xenophobic attack. We have respectfully asked them to go away."

"They were given seven days' notice. We agreed not to be violent. Those who are out of control will have to face the law."

Lieutenant Sarah Lesaboe said: "People must stop taking the law into their own hands. The foreigners are our brothers and sisters. The hawkers must leave this to the government."

Article depicting the manifestation of violent protest in South Africa.

Source: *The Daily Sun*, 21 June 2013

The insert captures media reports with a headline "Foreigners under attack". Media uses such terminology and platforms to dispatch the message that suggests foreign nationals are being attacked on xenophobic grounds. The crux of the protest which has pitted locals against foreign nationalities is silent and the connotation of xenophobia becomes the privileged part of the media news. One of the articles in this insert has a quoted anti-immigrant statement which says "shut your shops and get out of our town". This is a clear message of entitlement and ownership, based on nativism, citizenship and nationality as a form of power to drive out

any foreign national who is trying to compete for economic opportunities such as operating a small business venture.

Media views a protest action in respect of the closure of foreign owned shops as xenophobia, while this study views it as a violent struggle for economic power. Media has not delved deeper to establish the causes of these violent protests which find expression in violent tendencies, including looting of shops belonging to foreign nationals. There is a remark in one of the inserts by a protester who argues that, ‘This is not a xenophobic attack. We have respectfully asked them to go away’ which requires examination. This is empirical evidence that this chapter uses to argue that most of the time, the violent protests are not xenophobic but are picked up by mainstream media which has the power and influence to depict them as xenophobic.

Civic and Human Rights organisations have also joined media in profiling any violence related activity against foreign nationals as xenophobia. These organisations together with religious agencies build on their cases by castigating the moral fibre of perpetrators of violence as xenophobic. Media, civic organisations and churches all combine to peddle the view that equates violence to xenophobia. There are so many reports that have been circulated to the public and the global society accusing the South African government of failing to manage xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals. This power and influence has resulted in this uncritical terming of the various manifestations of contestations in the ‘zones of non-being’ as xenophobia.

The influence of media, civic and religious organisations has literally resulted in mixed responses from the national government regarding the violence. Part of the government has responded in the same media condemning xenophobic attacks while the former State President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, during his presidency, denied knowledge of South Africans becoming xenophobic and called for social scientists to conduct responsive research to this problematic violence. Mbeki stressed the imbalances of the historic past, although not out rightly pointing to coloniality as a possibility. His sense was that such crude violence could not be simply termed xenophobia. Hatred of fellow black Africans would not have been orchestrated overnight and burst into such violence.

With mainstream media possessing the space and power to influence the naming of violence as xenophobia, it confirms Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) view that global influences have the power to create territorial nationalism. This he argues was against the ambitions of the forefathers of Africa such as Kwame Nkrumah who advocated for pan-Africanism which envisioned the formation of a United States of Africa. The divide and rule approach employed by the imperialists weakened the spirit of pan-Africanism and advanced imperialism which has continued to see a disjointed Africa which makes Africans view each other as unequal. The colonial past continues to shape the current postcolonial tendencies. Violence in the 'zones of non-being' is a consequence of the colonial past's divide and rule regime.

Many scholars have argued that globalisation has been responsible for the mass-migration of humankind across the globe. Akyeampong (2006) observes that Ghanaians for example, are spread across the world from Chicago, Toronto, Netherlands and Italy. Mosselson (2010) makes a similar point to Akyeampong's (2006), that South Africa has always been a migrant-receiving state. Media has been giving a range of estimates on the numbers of foreign nationals in the country from an alarming 12 million to a conservative 3 million (Mosselson 2010). This has resulted in the fear by the public of uncontrolled foreign invasion, which according to Mosselson (2010) was a contributing factor to the May 2008 Alexandra attacks. What then has been missing?

What has been missing is a perceptive view that links the rising demand for basic services with the rising population. The popular view has been propagated by media as formulators, agenda setters and articulators of xenophobia in South Africa. The failure by government to meet the rising demand for basic services has resulted in the blanket blame on foreign nationals for any social ills particularly in the 'zones of non-being'. Steenkamp (2009) admits that in the South African context almost all the social and economic challenges faced by the locals are blamed on the foreign nationals. This has remained covered under the thick mask of xenophobia without delving deeper into the context of contestations behind the mask. Violence in South Africa finds expression through operational and structural forces and victims have mostly been 'outsiders'.

The defining feature of the South African state post-apartheid has been its operational and structural exclusive nature of its policies. It seems that immigrants who are deemed illegal at face value particularly by the law enforcement agents such as the South African Police Service are targeted (Mosselson 2010). Many scholars are of the view that these functional and structural exclusionary forms of state policies have been contributing factors of violence in general and the May 2008 violent attacks specifically. This exclusionary practice by the state, SAPS and the civilian population results in vulnerability of foreign nationals (Mosselson 2010). This further results in operational brutality and abuse of foreign nationals by the police, structurally exclusionary state policies and violent civilians.

Steenkamp (2009) explains that xenophobia in South Africa can be traced to the beginning of the post-apartheid era. Some locals had been supportive of a blanket prohibition on foreign nationals way back in 1995, linked them to crime and accused them of taking away employment opportunities particularly in Alexandra, in 1994. Hawker attacks in central Johannesburg in 1997, mob looting and robbing of Somali shopkeepers in 2006, operation crackdown by the South African Police Service in March 2000 and use of derogatory terms by senior cabinet ministers and politicians in 1994 are some of the incidences that illustrate how much xenophobia had been rooted in social, political and economic spheres in South Africa (Steenkamp 2009). It has become part of the culture, and requires a critical explanation.

The narratives above provide a historical trajectory of the prevalence of violence and the general social relations between locals and foreign nationals. The state has created an environment that has remained exclusionary post-apartheid, which has influenced society's varied perceptions towards foreign national groupings. Society's view on blanket prohibition of all foreign nationals has been influenced by the state and its policies and politics with regard to foreign nationals. Legislation relating to immigration and labour related issues remains exclusionary while the political elite have also publicly castigated foreign nationals. This has perpetually led to contestations that identify foreign nationals as second class citizens upon whom violence has been meted out.

Hawkers fend for themselves by struggling to sell their wares from the streets and in the process are faced with stringent municipality bylaws that force them out of the informal economic system. Civil society also organises itself into hostile mob groups that loot and rob foreign informal businesses while the police crackdown on hawkers. Such is the expression and manifestation of the politics of exclusion and belonging. This has continued to illustrate how much contestations of nativism, citizenship and ethnicity have remained deeply rooted in the social and economic environment of the state.

By virtue of the complexity of the phenomenon, media has not attempted to problematise it and explain the occurrence of violence it has loosely termed xenophobia. The May 2008 contestations were an expression of the invisible imperial designs which operate within the colonial matrices of power, not necessarily xenophobia. These invisible imperial designs have subsequently remained a societal power relation in the modern society. 'Zones of non-being' are characterized by absolute poverty and unemployment; the means of survival are orchestrated by exclusionary forms of societal power relations. From a decolonial perspective, this thesis argues that the contestations relating to the scarcity of job opportunities and poor service delivery cannot be loosely seen as xenophobic undertakings.

'Zones of non-being' are generally characterized by joblessness and absolute poverty. This is partly due to colonial establishments of forced colonial urbanization of dispossessed black people of South Africa which resulted in high density townships becoming sites for poor black people. This has become a permanent definitive characteristic of poor black people in the modern society of South Africa, hence any additional settlers to the 'zone of non-being' particularly of foreign descent, become a threat to issues of native entitlements to resources and rights of access to economic opportunities. Given this colonial background, any violent attack such as that of May 2008 in Alexandra would dismiss any loose understanding that it was merely xenophobic, literally the hate and fear of foreigners.

It was more than ordinary hatred and fear of foreigners. It was an expression of insecurity over entitlements to economic opportunities and other services resulting from the lack of service delivery by government. This violent expression was a way of suppressing any possibility of a complete invasion of the 'zone of non-being' by foreign nationals given that

during the colonial past, white imperialists and colonialists invaded South Africa. The apartheid system becomes part of the imperial designs of power which determined the relations between the colonialist-whites and the colonized-black natives. To this end, this colonial past experience is still stuck in the mindsets of the natives whose resistance to any foreign settlers has been expressed through anti-foreign settler tendencies.

The violent May 2008 attacks bore resemblance to some strategies of resistance by black masses during the apartheid era. The colonial past has taught local natives that all foreign settlers irrespective of race have no invested interest in shared citizenship. The suspicion is that they would take over ownership of the dire resources belonging to the poor locals, in this regard the territory of the 'zone of non-being'. Given such a background, social and economic related challenges faced by the local citizens particularly those from the 'zones of non-being' are central to triggering fierce contestations that result in violence.

The above statement encapsulates notions and opinions commonly held by local citizens against immigrant nationals. This forms the basis of the deployment of the decolonial epistemic framework to better understand locals versus foreign nationals, violent relations. The xenophobia phenomenon has become so complex a matter and it requires the application of the decolonial thought as a conceptual means of analysis to understand its various dimensions. It runs deeper into the veins of the colonial past that still carry fresh memories of the nature and manner in which the politics of exclusion and belonging were practiced to divide and rule the colonial state of South Africa. Violence shall continually be deployed as a means of survival to get rid of any threatening foreign competitors.

The apartheid era was hierarchized according to race, with the white race at the apex. The manifestation of current relations in-between and between races in the modern South African society has a historical colonial connotation which views aspects of humanity such as ethnicity, citizenship and nationality as unequal. The violence in the 'zones of non-being' which was targeted at foreign nationals was a concerted effort by many locals. This confirmed the maintenance of racial inequalities of the colonial past that placed whites as higher order human beings while the blacks were a lower order race without or with lower than basic human rights.

Various scholars have identified job opportunities taken away by foreign nationals as one of the immediate causes of xenophobic related tendencies. This is commonly expressed through violent attacks and looting of shops and wares belonging to foreign nationals. Looting of shops for example as an act is not xenophobic. It is an expression of a form of contestation which should be traced to its root causes. If foreign nationals embark on any other forms of economic ventures such as taxi business, they would probably be barred from plying certain routes particularly within the 'zones of non-being'. This must not simply be viewed as a xenophobic undertaking, but rather an economic contestation on the basis that such economic ventures must be restricted to those only perceived as citizens.

The looting or burning down of shops owned by foreign nationals as afore mentioned must not be viewed as just hatred of foreign nationals but an economic power struggle. Foreign nationals pursuing such economic ventures are regarded as undeserving business competitors who should not prosper at the expense of local citizens. White operated ventures such as butcheries or retail shops in these areas have no history of being looted or bunt down, even when the white owners are foreign, as most whites have been always thought to be. The connotation of such black on black violence is a general acceptance amongst black people that the white race is supreme and is marked for global citizenship. This has been institutionalised to such an extent that state Police sees all whites as legal citizens.

This situation is informed by imperial designs through the matrices of power which in turn resemble a hierarchal power model, where the foreigner is kept on the periphery of society with no rights and deserving of being driven away from the 'zone of non-being'. This means xenophobic tendencies and incidences of violence targeting certain foreign populations are expressions of how black conquest was arranged, in a manner that ruled and divided humanity on racial and ethnic grounds. Foreign nationals are generally perceived as an inferior black class which should not be part of the black collective in the 'zone of non-being', but rather an inferior cast which belongs elsewhere hence violent force should be applied to drive them to the 'unknown zones'.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that xenophobia is a racial act that can be confused with violent contestations involving locals and foreign nationals. This violence is one of the core features of any 'zone of non-being' as poor black masses toil for a living and there is stiff competition for basic services and economic opportunities. Previous studies have indicated that foreign nationals particularly Zimbabweans, Malawians and Mozambicans are largely concentrated in townships (Mawadza 2008; Nyamnjoh 2006; Peberdy 2013). Media has not been able to explain the various contestations but have simply termed them xenophobia. Various scholarly studies in this field have revealed that locals fear that foreign nationals take away job opportunities, contribute to crime and HIV/AIDS prevalence. They are also against international marriages in a manner that suggests that this is not plain xenophobia.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN NATIONALS LIVING IN THE 'ZONES OF NON-BEING': A CASE STUDY OF YEOVILLE TOWNSHIP

#### **Introduction**

This chapter takes into account the existing empirical evidence discussed in the previous chapters that media has not properly articulated violence as manifestations of the colonial matrices of power. The chapter links findings from the previous chapters with the experiences of foreign nationals living in Yeoville. A brief historical account and a map of Yeoville are presented to give a clearer picture of the study area. The chapter goes on to present an account of general life experiences, some of which are captured in newspaper articles that confirm the difficult living conditions prevailing in the study area. Actual fieldwork findings are presented in this chapter in respect of research participants' perceptions, experiences and views on why violence took place in the study area and not areas such as Sandton City. The chapter links its findings with scholarly work to strengthen the argument that there are various factors other than hatred which caused the May 2008 violence. It also gives an account of what the May 2008 attacks phenomenologically meant to those who were the prime targets of the violence.

#### **Background to the study area: Yeoville**

Harrison (2002: 72) describes Yeoville thus:

Yeoville has always been a middle-low income neighbourhood that attracted a diverse set of residents. It was one of the initial 'grey' areas of Johannesburg in the 1980s and attracted heterogeneous set of residents for that reason. These included left wing academics, activists, a white middle class, a black middle class and a large Jewish community.

The Jewish Community left the place. Yeoville is now dominated by large populations of both black South Africans and diverse foreign nationals from across the continent. The streets are filled with a rich diverse African culture and languages particularly of Nigerians, Zimbabweans, Congolese and many other nationalities including local South Africans. It is interesting to note the change over time, from being a place previously dominated by the

Jewish community into its current African cosmopolitan state. The interest of this chapter is to present and discuss experiences of the current foreign nationals from the African continent resident in Yeoville, a 'zone of non-being' in the making.

Nyamnjoh (2006) confirms that the impact of globalization beyond the Southern African Development Corporation (SADC) region particularly by undocumented foreign nationals has resulted in the presence of many foreign national groupings in South Africa. Bradley (2007:96) comments further on globalisation and writes:

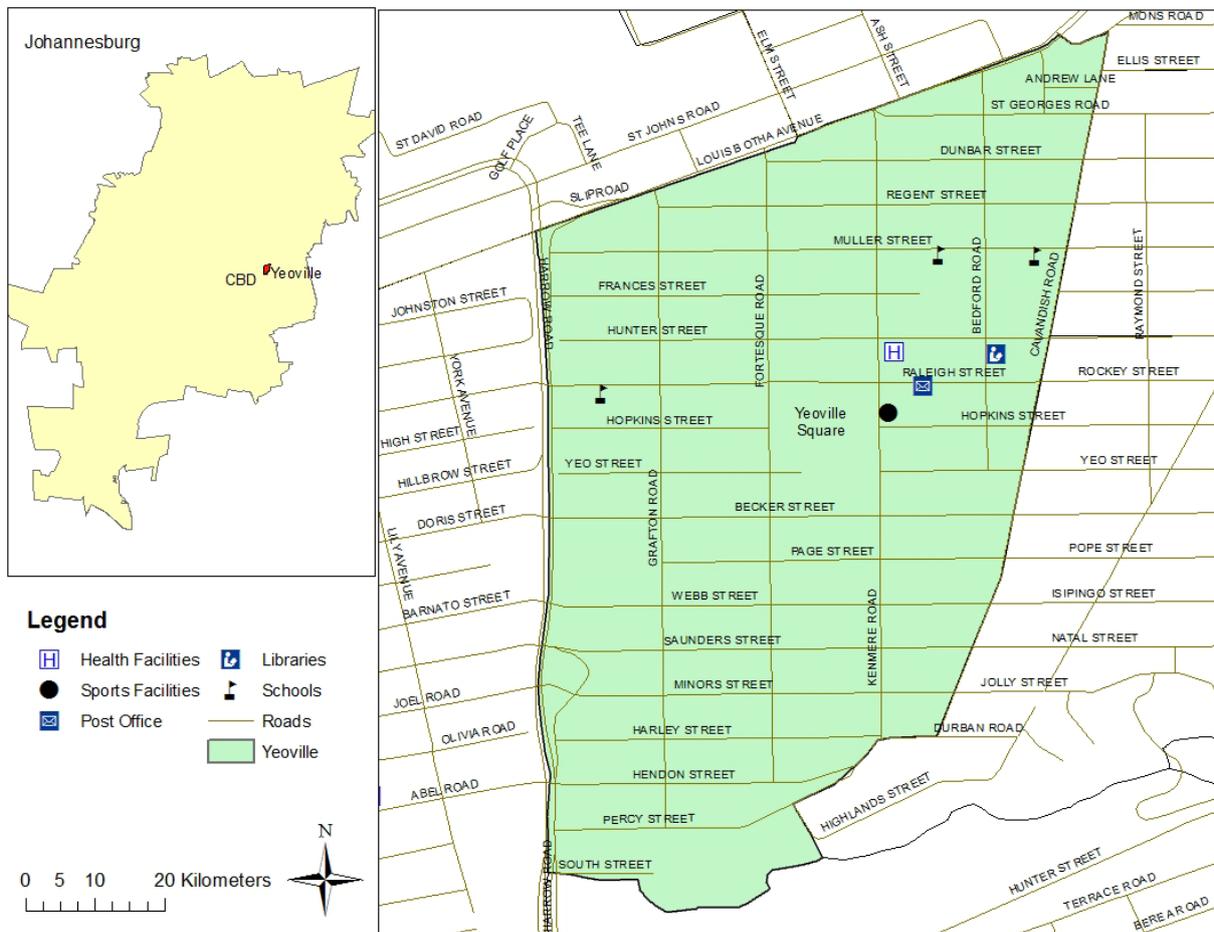
Globalisation has been hailed in the light of benefits from free trade with minimal barriers to access markets, liberal trade policies, free international movement of capital, goods and labour, the hegemony of neo-liberal economic policies, and minimal state involvement in the exchange of those goods and services, that is laissez-faire capitalism.

This study is conducted at a time when there is so much talk on the merits and demerits of globalisation. The above definition of globalisation is deliberately used within the context of the magnitude of foreign nationals migrating into South Africa. The established foreign nationals particularly in the 'zone of non-being' host their newly arrived countrymen in their shacks or apartments. 'Hellish' conditions prevail under these circumstances. Foreign nationals consist of skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled persons hailing from across the African continent and beyond, across the globe. Chikanda (2007) confirms that there is mass migration of skilled labour from developing to industrialised countries. Africa in particular is faced with this migration challenge due to poor economic conditions in most of the African states

Poor economies and political instability in most of the underdeveloped and developing countries in Africa are the main causes of this globally influenced mass migration. There are a number of African migrants, including Zimbabweans, in Yeoville. Maphosa (2007) singles Plumtree in the Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe as generally dry with erratic annual rainfalls. This he argues has affected ranching and also yielded poor harvests over the years while waged employment was no longer sustainable. Zimbabweans and other fellow migrants found in this 'zone of non-being' have been pushed by such socioeconomic factors. Foreign nationals coming from such poor backgrounds further become victims of hellish conditions in South Africa's 'zones of non-being'.

The presence of such diverse foreign migrant community groupings has had an impact on the South African citizens' public culture towards foreign nationals particularly in the 'zones of non-being'. This influx has caused high demand for housing and other services. I engaged one Zimbabwean vendor at the corner of Raleigh Street and Bedford Road. He indicated that City of Johannesburg Municipality Police are always chasing after them to leave the streets and look for formal employment. Earlier on, I had listened on radio to the inaugural speech of President Jacob Zuma for his second term in office on 24 May 2014. He confirmed that poverty and unemployment remained the major challenges of the twenty years of democracy. Yeoville is faced with this reality.

## Map of Yeoville



## Background to life in Yeoville

There are so many activities taking place in Yeoville during the day and at night, both legal and illegal. Part of this background information comes from my own personal experiences as a resident of Yeoville for the last eight years. The quality of life generally shows the predominance of the poor and just a sprinkling of middle class. There are many without accommodation, jobs and food. These people live on hand-outs from well-wishers. The cost of living is generally very high in Yeoville. Decent accommodation seems to have become a luxury as many families remain overcrowded in shanty housing facilities without proper sanitation. There seems to have been a great deal of transformation over time to the current day Yeoville.

Housing is regulated by private estate agents whose letting is supervised by building caretakers, who at times are also faced with the harsh conditions of living. Caretakers are subsequently bribed to bend the property agents' housing rules and allow legal tenants to sublet small accommodation spaces to many illegal tenants, resulting in overcrowding. The bulk of the foreign nationals resident in Yeoville are in search of better social and economic opportunities. The political and economic conditions in many African countries have resulted in many of their younger citizens seeking refuge in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, the population of Yeoville also comprises young children of pre-school, primary, secondary school and university going ages.

The majority of foreign nationals in Yeoville is said to be asylum seekers. Given that most of the African countries are still experiencing continuous political instability, this area has not been spared from hosting the majority of such foreign nationals. The general harsh economic conditions in most African countries have equally resulted in an influx of foreign nationals into South Africa in search of better economic opportunities. Most foreign nationals do not make it into the formal labour market for various reasons including their illegal status and lack of legal documentation. This global economic challenge is also evident amongst the experiences of foreigners in Yeoville.

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## Yeoville police recover illegal firearms, ammo

**APHIWE BOYCE**

[aphiweb@caxton.co.za](mailto:aphiweb@caxton.co.za)

AS THE New Year began, Yeoville police continued with their hard work in combating crime when they arrested one suspect in possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition.

The incident took place at the intersection of Fortesque Road and Raleigh Street, Yeoville.

According to police a unit was on patrol in the area when they noticed four suspicious men. Police spokesperson Constable Ihabo Malatji said that when the police approached the men they fled in different directions. The police then gave chase and managed to apprehend one of the suspects.

He added the police searched the suspect and found a pistol attached to his waist with six rounds of ammunition. The police recovered another pistol hidden under a vehicle which was parked nearby. According to Malatji, also found in the vehicle was one Silver Star pistol, one magazine with six rounds of ammunition, and one Astra Flying Wheel pistol with one magazine and five rounds of ammunition. "All the firearms' serial numbers were filed off," added Malatji.

The suspect was expected to appear in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court soon.

The police were still searching for the other three suspects.

Article highlighting illegal fire arm possession in the 'Zone of non-being'

Source: The North Eastern Tribune, 10 January 2014

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## Drug and bribe suspects nailed

**APHIWE BOYCE**

*aphiweb@caxton.co.za*

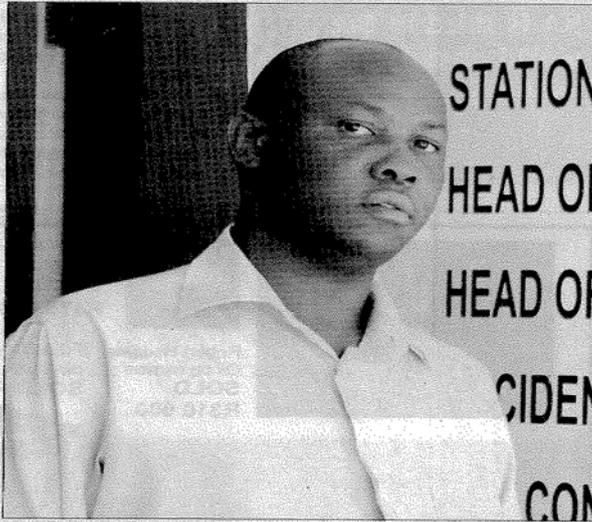
AS THE year begins the Yeoville police have upped their game: they arrested two men who were allegedly in possession of drugs and tried to bribe the police.

According to police, the incident took place at the corner of Hunter and Fortesque streets in Yeoville. Police spokesperson Constable Thabo Malatji said police were on a routine patrol on a stop and search operation when they noticed two men standing on a street corner.

Malatji said the police stopped and asked to search them. He said, "When the police searched them they [police] found a plastic [bag] in the pocket of one of the men which contained drugs [cocaine]."

Following questioning by police the man was placed under arrest and his friend allegedly tried to bribe the police. Malatji said, "While the police were handcuffing the suspect the other man approached the police and offered them a R200 bribe for the release of his friend."

The man was also arrested and charged with bribery. Malatji said both suspects were expected to appear in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court soon.



**An upbeat Yeoville police spokesperson Constable Thabo Malatji reports their success in combating drugs in the area as the new year begins.**

Article highlighting drug dealing in the 'Zone of non-being'

Author: Aphiwe Boyce

Source: The North Eastern Tribune, 17 January 2014

The common and easiest economic model is the informal economy which includes illegal street vending and drug dealing particularly along Rokeby and Raleigh Streets. It is not surprising that there is a high prevalence of crime in Yeoville due to lack of economic options that could be explored by many to earn decent living. Based on the background given on the transformation that Yeoville has gone through since its establishment, there is evident confirmation that it has become a 'zone of non-being'. Life is characterised by illegal activities such as drug dealing and various other forms of crime. The Community Policing Forum in conjunction with the South African Police Services (SAPS) is continuously involved in crime prevention programmes in Yeoville.

### **Perceptions on the meaning of xenophobia**

Dudu, a self-employed mother of three with a diploma, explains that xenophobia is a form of racial violence that has become pronounced amongst the black race and it is felt by those who are the victims (interview: 19/07/2013). Dudu's analysis is very important taking into account that it supports the decolonial epistemic perspective of this thesis, which argues that the colonial past's regimes were racist. The white colonialists were regarded as the supreme race and identified black people as subhuman beings and racialised all aspects of life during the apartheid era in South Africa. The current black townships are a project of the racial past which established them as Bantustans characterised by less privileges. Dudu articulates the cause of the May 2008 violence clearly and states that, 'it was claims relating to houses and jobs being taken away from the locals' (interview: 19/07/2013). This puts into perspective why the zone of non-being is generally violent and the media reports occluded instead of unpacking this violence.

According to Papi, a Zimbabwe University graduate employed by a bank, xenophobia is an unprovoked attack on an individual who is residing in a foreign country outside their country of birth by the locals of that particular host country (interview: 20/07/2013). The submission from the above perception is that xenophobia is blamed on the locals who attack foreign nationals for no reason, possibly no other than that of fear and hatred. Papi further explained that the cause of the violence in May 2008 in Alexandra Township was sheer misconception held by locals about foreign nationals' intentions and operations in the country. What seems to be the underlying factor in Papi's observation is the assumption that any form of attack is

xenophobic. In a follow up question to establish if Papi found violence to have been directly linked to xenophobia, he remarked, 'it follows and it would be difficult to prove otherwise'. What is established from Papi's views is that foreign nationals were attacked in May 2008 on the grounds of baseless xenophobic related reasons.

Dudu detaches xenophobia from the causes of the May 2008 violence in Alexandra Township by arguing that 'the violence had nothing to do with xenophobia because violence happened amongst native citizens on their own' (interview: 19/07/2013). She brings up the idea of prevalent violence in the 'zone of non-being' as a result of its racialised past and present. In her argument, is the view that the May 2008 violent attacks did not occur because of xenophobic tendencies as suggested by media. Instead, they were contestations relating to limited access to economic opportunities and basic services due the high demand exacerbated by the presence of foreign nationals. Jambo from the Republic of Congo, an electrician by qualification, argued along these lines and commented that 'citizens are generally unskilled, uneducated and lacking in entrepreneurial skills to create economic opportunities for themselves' (interview: 25/07/2013). This is an argument that media has ignored.

According to Albertina, a female teacher from Zimbabwe, xenophobia means turning against one's own and not appreciating the neighbourhood and brotherhood of fellow Africans (interview: 12/11/2013). Albertina (interview: 12/11/2013) concurs with Dudu and Jambo that the ordinary perception that foreign nationals took away job opportunities was instrumental in the May 2008 violent attacks. However, her view has been influenced by media which claims that because foreign nationals were the victims, therefore, it follows that the violence was a xenophobic act. Media has played a significant role in influencing society's perception of xenophobia. However, MaMpuru, a self-employed female with a university undergraduate degree from the Democratic Republic of Congo did not know what caused the violent attacks in May 2008 (interview: 25/07/2013). She viewed xenophobia as an act of attacking foreigners resulting in death (interview: 25/07/2013).

John, a Malawian national with an equivalent of a matric qualification, understands xenophobia as hatred of foreign nationals by the locals (interview: 21/07/2013). He argues that given the fact that violence did not include any local victims but only those of foreign

descent, then it was xenophobia (interview: 21/07/2013). Jambo and Dube of Zimbabwe who both have an equivalent of a matric qualification argue respectively that xenophobia is an action taken against foreign nationals and it is also a form of an uprising against foreign nationals (interview: 19/07/2013). The notion that any form of action by locals against foreign nationals is xenophobic has resulted in the simplistic terming of this phenomenon and it has since lost its original context and meaning. Police brutality has, for example become 'xenophobia'.

### **Reflections on why the violence happened in Yeoville and not in Sandton City**

This section of the research seeks to gather the views of foreign nationals regarding the confinement of the violence to 'zones of non-being' such as Yeoville. There was no reported violence in Sandton City, which is only separated from Alexandra by the M1 freeway. The participants were asked to explain why they thought violent attacks only occurred in the latter and Yeoville, and not in Sandton City. This question seeks to test the view by many scholars that violence happens in poor black townships where poverty is alarming while there is peace and stability in opulent suburbs. Any confirmation by participants of this view will serve as empirical evidence and dismiss media's claims.

Before looking at the explanations of participants regarding the occurrence of the violence in Yeoville and not in Sandton, it is instructive to look at Nyamnjoh's (2006) comments about two scenarios: the 'zones of being' and the 'zones of non-being'. Nyamnjoh (2006:17) writes that the 'zone of being' dwellers "can afford luxurious lives from fancy houses to expensive cars and such other high note standards of life but the majority of the ordinary South Africans are still trapped in shacks in the 'zones of non-being' and struggle with black foreign nationals for consumer crumbs". He continues his observation in the following vein:

Poverty in in the 'zones of non-being' has become a menace that has cultivated a culture of civil human rights disobedience that has grown into an act of public violence targeting foreign nationals in the fight for the little resources and opportunities described as consumer crumbs (2006:17).

According to Dudu, the attacks happened in 'zones of non-being' and not in Sandton City because the former were poverty stricken areas while the latter were mostly residential areas of rich whites (interview:19/07/2013). John echoes this view, that the attacks happened in

such zones as black townships and not in Sandton City due to poverty being more pronounced in the former than in the latter (interview: 21/07/2013).

Premised on the two perspectives of respondents above, violence is traced to the 'zones of non-being' and poverty is identified as the underlying factor. This has characterised the manner in which the matrices of power are constructed in the 'zones of non-being'. These texts argue against the simplistic terming of such violence by media as xenophobia by identifying poverty as linked to the May 2008 violence. The majority of ordinary black South Africans live and 'eat the consumer crumbs' (Nyamnjoh 2006:17) which is one of the major underlining features of the abject conditions in the 'zones of none-being'. The black masses in Yeoville and other 'zones of non-being' were not and will not be spared from the pervasive poverty on this particular side of the abyssal line which separates them from the opulent Sandton City.

Roberts (2006) expresses a similar view and also identifies poverty as one of the top priorities of the African National Congress (ANC) upon assumption of power following the 1994 democratic elections. The party had made a commitment to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 (Roberts 2006). Roberts (2006) laments that in spite of the will of government and the ruling party, the process of political and economic transformation has done very little towards improving the escalating state of impoverishment and the growing inequality regarding incomes and opportunities. This speaks to the state of poverty that has continued to characterize the hellish conditions faced by the majority of ordinary black masses in 'zones of non-being'. Most black natives in the 'zones of non-being' do not have the requisite means to access economic facilities such as market institutions to arrange for personal loans to invest in anything. They continue to play second fiddle to the better lifestyle displayed by many foreign nationals living in the same townships. Roberts (2006) refers to the Social Movement Survey to single out poverty as one factor that has continued to heighten social inequalities. This is worsened by unemployment, crime and HIV and AIDS and has caused many ordinary black South Africans' vulnerability, leading also, to numerous trade union organised strikes.

The only option that has been left to the desperate local masses particularly in the 'zones of non-being' has been to play a dirty power game in a bid to redress colonial imbalances of the

past. In line with this thesis's decolonial epistemic framework, it has become clear from the analysis of the respondents' submissions that xenophobia from a phenomenological point of view cannot be used to explain the May 2008 violent attacks. The attacks were instead symptomatic of a set of other social factors which can only be identified through asking the right questions such as why the violent attacks were only confined to some particular poor areas. Xenophobia on its own cannot fundamentally be used to explain the complex phenomenon of violence that was experienced in May 2008.

Accordingly, the violent behaviour in May 2008 is detached from sheer hatred of certain groups of foreign nationals as has been suggested by media through its simplistic claims that it was xenophobia. There seems to be an array of human factors surrounding the violence other than simple xenophobia. Papi also argues that this was due to the fact that Alexandra Township was a crime prone area with a high concentration of criminals (interview: 20/07/2013). There is no existing evidence of local citizens suggesting that their attack was motivated by hatred. This is testament that this was a territorial battle, fought to safeguard the remaining few opportunities of survival in this poor 'zone of non-being' amid the high levels of poverty. Poverty and crime come up as very key factors in this regard.

Dube introduces another dimension by stating that the attacks happened in 'zones of non-being' such as Yeoville and not in Sandton City due to the fact that the former is highly populated which results in a burden for housing while the latter is restricted to the few richer population groups (interview: 19/07/2013). Jambo blames the attacks in 'zones of non-being' on the diverse multicultural and multinational nature of the society that has a huge variation of mentality, background, literacy and that the society is generally resident to a low class profile of the population (interview: 25/07/2013).

Poverty manifests itself in a wide range of factors. Housing challenges, illiteracy and the poor historical background come up as manifestations of poverty that were also imbedded in the contestations that resulted in the May 2008 violent attacks. This enriches the counter argument advanced by this thesis that it cannot be loosely claimed that the May 2008 violence was merely a xenophobic act. Similar arguments were advanced. One such factor mentioned was the high concentration of foreign nationals in black townships. What is

significant in this point is that issues of belonging and the politics of exclusion became part of the contestations. The violence's image was largely displayed in the form of politics of identity which subsequently misled many including media that it was a matter of xenophobia.

Neocosmos (2006) aptly summarises the above arguments by stating that local power was at the root cause of the May 2008 violence than any other possible factor that can be thought of. The views of the research participants are indicative of the fact that violence which has become commonly known as xenophobia occurs in certain sites. Sites that are poverty stricken, without economic opportunities, home to illiterate and lower class black people are seemingly very prone to violence. This becomes racial, exclusionary, and political and is citizenship related. This answers well the research question: 'why is xenophobia taking place in certain areas and not others? This empirical evidence disqualifies media's simplistic view on violence and offers further research opportunities on 'what fundamentally is xenophobia? This also offers enough ground to argue that it is theoretically incorrect to name or describe the recent forms of violence involving locals and foreigners as xenophobia.

### **A phenomenological perspective of the violent May 2008 attacks**

One of the key requirements of this thesis is to investigate what was revealed by the experiences of the foreign nationals residing in Yeoville in respect of the May 2008 attacks. The research participants had to have been already in the country by May 2008 to take part in the study. Participants were asked how they had been affected by the May 2008 attacks that had occurred in Alexandra Township. Mosselson (2008:641) is of the view that "The violence of May 2008 was symptomatic of the politics of belonging and contestation for citizenship that has taken root in post-apartheid South Africa". In view of what Mosselson says, the thesis seeks to establish how much impact this politics of belonging had on the experiences of foreign nationals residing in the case study area. Nyamnjoh (2006) holds a similar view that issues of belonging have preoccupied many across the globe and nationality and citizenship have become central to contestations of belonging, to such an extent that the crisis of citizenship in Rwanda became genocidal in 1994. MaMpuru (interview 25/07/2013) testifies to that effect:

It was a Congolese man who was being beaten up and I had to escape into a taxi to Johannesburg City and since May 2008 I have not set foot in Alexandra Township.

Meanwhile Albertina revealed that she was emotionally affected and hated all local citizens around her. She felt the need to be avenged and got involved in an organized revenge plot (interview: 12/11/2013).

Albertina and MaMpuru's experiences reveal that the violence had a negative impact. Issues of human insecurity became heightened. This divided society and was expressed as politics of belonging and 'othering' of foreign nationals. The patriarchal system that had been introduced during the colonial regime and became a landmark of the apartheid system was ignited by this violence. Inequality and viewing other human beings as sub-humans became the subsequent effect of the May 2008 violence. This paralysed any known attempts by the government and civil society movements to re-integrate society, particularly taking into account the organised retaliation groups among the foreign nationals that came into effect. Past experiences remain stuck in the minds of people and this has a deep influence in how they relate to each other. The foreign nationals who experienced the May 2008 violence will live with such experiences over a long period of time. Morgan Ndlovu (2013:2) also believes that, "Events of the past have a special place in the memory of society and as such, the manner in which the past is imagined, reconstructed and disseminated in the present can either unite or divide people"

What is revealed by the May 2008 attacks is a possibility of a more intense war in the future should the government fail to reconstruct a better South Africa that will heal the wounds of those affected. The government must arrange peace, solidarity and reconciliation interventions. It would appear that the manner in which the memories of May 2008 have continued to be constructed in the minds of many today is one full of emotions, sorrow and fear. The South African state must be in the forefront of undoing the unforgettable past but if not much emphasis is invested in laying a foundation for an inclusive society, more damage could only be anticipated. If foreign nationals had organized themselves into revenge groups, the violence would have ceased to be one way and a serious battle would have ensued.

Jambo states that he was deeply touched to witness displaced people moving up and down with their belongings and never thought he would ever go back to Yeoville as he had escaped to stay with a friend in Sandton City (interview 25/07/2014). Dube also states that although

not directly affected, footage from the media coverage had an emotional impact on him and it was not by design to have escaped but he was just fortunate not to have been a victim (interview 19/07/2013).

Another element revealed from the May 2008 attacks is the extent to which locals are aggrieved and the resultant state of insecurity and fear. What is interesting is the fact that Jambo sought refuge just across the M1 highway, in Sandton City, a safer zone. From a decolonial epistemic perspective, this is a consequential confirmation of the fact that the 'zones of being' became the safety nets for humanity as 'zones of non-being' had turned 'carnivorous' and thirsty for human blood. What this tells us is that there may be talk of integrated communities yet there are fresh wounds, bleeding hearts and angry minds that may have revenge intentions. What is coming out is that although not physically abused during the attacks, a lot of foreign nationals have suffered gruesome emotional abuse and insecurity.

The attacks had a racial aspect to them. It was black on black violence. Dudu decries this racial violence by saying that although she was not directly attacked, she felt offended by the attacks on fellow black Africans by black natives (interview: 19/07/2013). It is clear that there is realisation of this racialised element of the violence directed at the poor black foreign nationals. It is not surprising that post-apartheid, there is still existence of racist mentality. It must not be surprising should the future attacks be orchestrated by black foreign nationals.

There has been an element of forced and permanent displacement. No foreign national condoned the May 2008 attacks. There was a breakdown of informal business and social networks after the displacement. What has not been revealed by previous studies is the impact of the violence and how it has contributed to the construction of an inclusive or exclusive South Africa. Given that there is still so much psychological insecurity and fears post- May 2008 attacks, it would be trivial to simply term it xenophobia. It remains difficult to suggest that all the blood bath was a mere hatred of foreigners and dismiss the possibility of other contestations. This thesis strongly argues on the basis of this empirical evidence that the simplistic terming of the May 2008 violence as xenophobia was conceptually misplaced.

What is confirmed by the research findings is that media had a casual approach in its analysis of the May 2008 attacks and lacked a conceptual framework. The general public was subsequently misguided by media's focus on xenophobia irrespective of the historical trajectory of South Africa and its dehumanising colonial system. This would lead to a possibility of failed efforts by government or civil rights movements should any form of intervention be only confined towards addressing xenophobia. Victims and survivors of the violence must not be misinformed about why there was such deep violence and anger. The former South African statesman, Mr Thabo Mbeki's refusal to accept media's ruling that the attacks were xenophobic would be the starting point for any truth and reconciliation efforts.

It is imperative to consider how the broader South African society would identify with such a past that has the blood of foreign nationals on their hands. Ndlovu (2013) holds that it would be impossible for the reformation of a new national identity with a common sense of belonging without a properly constituted recourse into the historical past. This thesis fully supports Ndlovu's (2013) views through its deployment of the decolonial epistemic framework in an attempt to reveal the hidden truth behind the complex phenomenon of xenophobia. This together with Mr Mbeki's call for research enquiry will free the minds of those who still ponder if for certain the Alexandra Township attacks of May 2008 were born out of simple hatred of foreign nationals.

Roefs (2006) identifies South Africa as an exclusionary state where there is existence of deep identity politics which divide society into various ethnic groupings, classes and political groupings. This view resonates with those of other theorists such as Fanon (1963), Mignolo (2006), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012), Neocosmos (2006) and Santos (2007) who are very anti-Eurocentric in their scholarly discourses and articulation of the history of the colonisation of Africa in general. The May 2008 attacks reveal that they were deeply contested around the questions of belonging, identity politics and citizenship beyond simple hatred of foreign nationals. This was spurred by the historical legacy of the apartheid system beyond media's blanket statement.

The continued migration of foreign nationals coincides with the struggle by most black locals to become citizens. Citizenship is still very new amongst the black natives and some of these

poor black locals still find themselves marginalised and excluded from citizenship. They do not fully enjoy the rights that are associated with this citizenship. This puts them in an awkward position and they often find themselves contesting the means and ways of full attainment of citizenship and belonging with foreign nationals. During the colonial era, the white foreigners had high order rights against the poor natives. They took over ownership of the state and its resources. There is fear that the foreign nationals would similarly take over the privileges associated with citizenship for example, jobs, housing and women.

The experiences of the foreign nationals living in Yeoville reveal the consequences of poverty below the human line. It is confirmed reality that in the shanty towns of the 'zones of non-being', some black foreign nationals find themselves with better life styles compared to an ordinary black South African. The May 2008 attacks revealed that ordinary black South Africans live at the deep end of poverty defined by joblessness and the escalating rate of housing challenges. This is what caused the violent attacks not the simplified version of hatred of foreign nationals by the locals that media has hailed thus far. This has subsequently resulted in the thinking that to achieve an enabling socioeconomic environment, foreign nationals should be driven away.

### **Who are the prime targets of violence?**

This section of the study seeks to address the research question relating to who the prime targets of xenophobia are as perceived by the research participants. The findings shall further assist to uncover the occluded causes of the May 2008 violent attacks. This shall also put into perspective why this thesis strongly counter argues media's perspective on the causes of the May 2008 violent attacks. The research participants' perceptions shall be used as text to validate the decolonial epistemic view that the causes of the May 2008 violent attacks were concealed by a thick mask of xenophobia. This requires unpacking to reveal the various layers of contestations. The research participants were asked to give an account on 'who are the prime target of xenophobia and why'?

Albertina's reaction is that Nigerians and Zimbabweans were targeted in xenophobic/violent attacks as a result of simple dislike and that Zimbabweans in particular are educated and skilled (interview: 12/11/2013). Dube argues that all foreign nationals are targeted during

xenophobic/violent attacks because they are illegally found in the country, compete for jobs and they are a cheap form of labour (interview 19/07/2013). The two texts reveal two things. One is specific on the perceived foreign nationals that are vulnerable to violent attacks while the other generalizes that all foreign nationals would be targeted during violent attacks. The reasons why the specific groups or foreign nationals are being attacked is clearly not xenophobia in its literal sense. Foreign nationals are considered tough competitors in the open job market system because they possess skills that locals do not. Consequently, the locals feel vulnerable to compete against skilled foreign nationals who are preferred by the free labour market system as skilled labour. There is a general argument that most locals have not achieved much post-apartheid.

The African National Congress led government has not abolished migrant labour. Migrant labour indirectly remains part and parcel of the nationalisation ideas that are contested at political level. The empirical evidence derived from the participants' responses reveals that competition for jobs between the locals and foreigners remains a continuous reality. It however gives rise to the discourse of entitlement and locals become generally unprepared to compete with any foreign nationals for anything. To this end, Nyamnjoh (2006:14) identifies citizenship as one of the forms of social classification and exclusion. The use of markers of identity such as "foreigner, immigrant and alien" excludes many Africans from various aspects and benefits of being part and parcel of the shared community.

Neocosmos (2010:10) supports the above by advancing an argument that there has been a significant shift from the citizenship that was the instrument of unity particularly during the colonial period to the current one which is founded on indigeneity and is exclusive in its nature. The Yeoville society is also built on these social forms of classification that are exclusionary by nature. Civil society and government generally become divided on the basis of the open labour market system. Government is forced to employ foreign nationals with scarce skills while the private sector also does the same and the issue of the 'Green card' deeply relegates locals to lower level of the open labour market structures. It is on such basis that certain foreign nationals become targeted during violence as indicated by one of the participants that Zimbabweans in particular pose stiffer competition due to their labour skills. Exclusion is not only limited to economic opportunities, but cuts across all spheres of life, including basic services such as health, education, housing and many others. John brings

another specific targeted category that poor black foreign nationals in small businesses are targeted during xenophobic/violent attacks because they are easily located from their business premises (interview: 21/07/2013).

Papi echoes John that foreign nationals operating informal business ventures are the main targets during the xenophobic/violent attacks for purposes of looting their business wares and robbing them of their cash (interview: 20/07/2013). Thus, John and Papi bring very interesting views relating to foreign business persons as the main targets, and their perceptions are two pronged. There is an element of identity and easy access as well as the benefits attached to attacking business ventures such as retail shops. They both argue that it becomes easy to locate foreign business persons from their business premises during an organized attack and that their wares and cash benefit the perpetrators of violence. Consequently, this dismisses the notion that locals attacked foreign nationals on xenophobic grounds as the major emphasis. Business persons are generally attacked in relation to business related issues such as uncontrolled lowering of prices making locally-owned businesses to be perceived as unviable and to also target their cash and wares of foreign nationals.

Mosselson (2010) similarly mentions that post-apartheid South Africa continues to receive migrants due to push factors such as political instability and economic hardships from their home countries. It is therefore not surprising that the three nationalities – Zimbabweans, Nigerians and Mozambicans are identified as target groups because their respective countries continue to experience failing economies. They face political instability and capitalist economies that have forced their citizens to migrate to South Africa as political and economic refugees. Locals have complained among other things of economic opportunities that are taken away by some of the mentioned foreign nationals. I have engaged with the public of Yeoville almost on a daily basis over a couple of years before and after the attacks. What caught my attention was that small informal businesses such as tuck shops, shoe repairs, mobile fast foods, and mechanical workshops are mostly operated by Zimbabweans and Mozambicans.

Dudu claims that blacks, usually Zimbabweans and Mozambicans, are targeted in xenophobic/violent attacks because they are perceived as hard working and marketable (interview: 19/07/2013). Interestingly, Dudu is self-employed and runs a small African restaurant in Alexandra and resides in Yeoville. Her business is located in a light factory site between Alexandra and Lombardy West residential areas. Within this factory site, there are several business units such as motor mechanics, panel beating and carpentry workshops owned by foreign nationals. There is a hive of business in this area and some have permanent spots and their services are well known across the 'zone of non-being'. It does not come as a surprise that such people become targets during violent attacks. They rate amongst the most competitive group of foreign nationals. They are very hardworking, robust in their physical engagements which also include manual labour such as construction, carpentry and glazing.

The advanced reasons regarding some foreign nationals as skilled, educated and marketable hold true. Foreign nationals are able to earn a living from their skilled work. As a result, locals are of the opinion that foreign nationals have better lifestyles, thereby inducing jealousy amongst the locals. Most if not all of the Southern African countries as well as other regions have very poor economies. Most foreign nationals from small economies such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique find it very difficult to resist the low paying jobs that avail themselves upon arrival in the country. Such are justifiable reasons for being a cheap source of labour. They opt for lowly paying jobs such as child minding and gardening which at times include free accommodation, safety and security, food rations and such other fringe benefits. They compete against locals in some of these areas.

MaMpuru's view is that anybody who is foreign looking was targeted in xenophobic attacks (interview: 25/07/2013). In essence, the addition of foreign nationals into the 'zone of non-being' alone is viewed as some form of contestation to begin with, which in the long run could degenerate into anything such as the May 2008 violent attacks. However, in any given reason, multi-ethnic co-existence had never existed and the colonial system had also been racially designed and it separated whites from the various native black ethnic groups. This has consequently seen a failure to reconcile ethnic groups hence no surprise that locals still feel that fellow black foreign nationals should not be part of the broader society of the 'zone of non-being'. This is a consequence of the coloniality of power.

Landau and Freemantle (2010) agree that exclusion goes beyond economic to social factors. For example, some asylum seekers had been denied emergency medical care while nurses in hospitals have been heard by foreign nationals using derogatory comments against them such as saying that foreigners are having too many babies and infesting hospitals. This has become part of the public culture exercised by the broader society including the nurses in public health facilities. The consequence of the manifestation of this public culture is that it identifies foreign nationals as outsiders and denies them human rights such as access to health. Foreign nationals particularly the expecting mothers delay their antenatal visits until very late in their pregnancies for fear of abuse and derogatory comments associated with their conditions. Foreign patients are also accused of exhausting state medication ahead of the only due recipients, local citizens. The practice further escalates to public hospitals where identity documentation is at times demanded before any medical consultation can be administered. This denies fellow Africans their right to health as a result of exclusionary public systems that are now entrenched into the general societal public culture.

To confirm the extent to which this culture of exclusion and ‘othering’ has gone, there is the context of the black racial discrimination as reflected in Mbongeni Ngema’s 2002 song “AmaNdiya.” This was a direct attack on South Africans of Indian descent. The South African local tribes are failing to reconcile on the basis of the politics of exclusion and the contestations of belonging. This presents a very interesting dimension for the study namely, why blacks are viewed as taking away social and economic opportunities to an extent of being called derogatory names such as *Makwerekwere*. The same does not hold for whites hence a pronunciation that this is equal to racial exclusion. Some locals have fallen prey to such racial attacks which are centred on autochthony discourses, racism and Afrophobia. This is practised on the basis of citizenship that is conceptualized on the basis of ethnicity.

The experiences presented through this study’s data confirm that participants continue to experience exclusion in this ‘zone of non-being’ and South African society in general. The foreign Africans continue to be identified by society as “other”, and they are identified through their accents, physical features and clothing styles (Neocosmos 2010). Foreign nationals are singled out through these different means and forms of classification as being the “insignificant other”. They become excluded from some state services and facilities such

as social grants and are faced with exclusionary tendencies, resulting in fierce contestations over identity and resources. The South African “identity card” remains a form of access to resources and it triggers contestations regarding access to opportunities. The lack of an identity card becomes a form of exclusion from formal employment.

### **Anything else more feared than xenophobia in the ‘zones of non-being’?**

In view of the many forms of contestations experienced in the ‘zones of non-being’, the study attempted to establish if there was anything more feared than the xenophobic attacks. The ‘zones of on non-being’ are characteristic of violent activities and from a decolonial perspective, not all violence in these sites is associated with xenophobia. The study deliberately enquired on this matter to have a qualified position relating to what foreigners feared the most in the ‘zone of non-being’. Findings of such specific enquiry assist in planning and allocation of resources towards implementation of advocacy interventions to curb crime. A question, “Is there anything that you fear more than xenophobic attacks?” was asked so that reflections of the factors and causes of human insecurity could be unveiled.

Albertina stated that she was afraid of the Police because they are abusive and she had been abused in the past several times (interview: 12/11/2013). MaMpuru and many others stated that they were afraid of crime such as mugging and robbery (25/07/2013). What is interesting from these findings is that most research participants identified crime as the most feared factor ahead of xenophobia in the ‘zones of non-being’. This confirms that the ‘zones of non-being’ are characterised by crime as testified by the newspaper articles speaking about firearms confiscated by the Police as well as drug dealing. Crime such as mugging and drug dealing in the townships is largely influenced by lack of alternative opportunities such as jobs to earn a living. This marks the height of poverty and inequality in places such as the black townships.

Police are generally feared by both South African citizens and foreign nationals. They are generally not viewed as law enforcement agents who are receptive and protective of the members of the public, but instead, as abusive and brutal forces of power. Corruption among the law enforcement agents manifests and preys on the socially insecure foreign nationals who comply with Police demands against the fear of being arrested or deported. What makes

them feared is that they are armed not only with guns but all sorts of rights that override those of foreign nationals who are not only illegal in the country, but are excluded from the basic human rights enjoyed by the ordinary citizens.

Hornberger (2008) with reference to the May 2008 violence describes police officers as generally tormentors of migrants, habitual exploiters who capitalise on the vulnerability of foreign nationals through deportation, extortion and exploitation. Hornberger's (2008) description of the police officers concurs with Albertina's (interview: 12/11/2013) experiences that the law enforcement agents are abusive and exploitative. The 'zones of non-being' are breeding sites for vulnerable foreign nationals who succumb to the exploitative and abusive police officers. They become victims of corrupt activities such as bribery to escape deportation to the poor countries of origin. Police are also human and they have shown exclusionary practices against their statutory call of duty by becoming exploiters and not protectors of humankind. The politics of exclusion manifests across government public institutions including police services and the foreign nationals remain fearful of the law enforcement agents in this regard.

Hornberger (2008:135) cites a specific example, that after the violent May 2008 attacks, victims had sought refuge from one of the police stations and the Station Commander announced that he wanted them gone as soon as possible with or without a place to go. Meanwhile over 80 percent of the research participants indicated that they feared crime more than anything else. Crime can be unpacked to indicate the magnitude, diversity and complexity of the social ills that are characteristic of 'zones of non-being'. Muggings, rape, murder, drug abuse and housebreaking including prostitution are some of the key crime related activities that have become part of life in Yeoville. Crime suspects are armed with illegal fire arms and they pounce on their targets and during police raids they can open fire in their defense. The general public, locals included, fear such death threatening activities where both the targeted and those who are not can fall victim at any given time. The record of such 'hellish' conditions is prevalent in these areas as compared to the suburban environment.

Crime is deeply associated with poverty and unemployment. There are deeper contestations for survival in an environment that is congested with poor black people who have no means

of survival. Crime has become so overwhelming that instead of combating it, many law enforcement agents enhance it for their corrupt gains. I have personally called for emergency police services particularly at night when I witness crime related activities such as women abuse and gender violence. My experiences have been that the police arrive at the crime scene very late when the perpetrator is long gone. In the event that they arrive on time, the perpetrator is taken away and freed before even arriving at the Police Station or the victim is told that their case is a civil matter which does not require police intervention.

### **Conclusion**

Black locals and the majority of fellow blacks from the broader African continent have taken over the once Jewish dominated community and transformed it into a 'zone of non-being'. The socio-economic conditions characterise the lifestyle in Yeoville which is defined by unemployment, illegal street vending, housing challenges and crime related activities. Life in Yeoville is earned through stiff competition of clinging onto the circumferences of the circle of belonging as well as attempts by some locals to break into the inner circle of belonging. The politics of belonging have continued under this arrangement. The majority of the foreign nationals in Yeoville witnessed the May 2008 violent attacks and still carry the emotional trauma, but they fear crime and the Police more than they fear a repeat of such attacks.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Introduction**

The chapter discusses the findings and concludes the research. In its discussion, the chapter explains what lay behind the May 2008 violence which had become popularly known as xenophobia. It further presents a theoretical conclusion with regards to why the violence had been confined to the other side of the M1 highway (Alexandra Township and the other 'zones of non-being' such as Yeoville) without crossing over into the opulent Sandton City. This chapter presents its theoretical conclusion which unmask the spectre of xenophobia to correctly contextualise the May 2008 violence. The chapter draws its conclusion from its research findings supported by various decolonial scholars. It also presents the research participants' perspectives on who they perceived to be the likely prime target during violence. The chapter further articulates the meaning of life in Yeoville Township and concludes with an argument against media's views on what caused the May 2008 violence. Realising that not all could have been covered in this study, the chapter recommends possible areas for further research in this particular xenophobia-violence phenomenon.

#### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

##### **What Lies behind the xenophobia phenomenon**

One of the key objectives of this study has been to clarify the misconception that xenophobia solely explained the violent May 2008 attacks. Neocosmos (2006:130) argues that the many educated and skilled foreign nationals attacked during the May 2008 disturbances had been living there in the first place, as part of the community for many years. In general, the ordinary poor black locals are still faced with the predicament of citizenship as a result of a racial and exclusive colonial past. Neocosmos (2006:140) further argues that citizenship has remained questionable for long hence locals resorted to asserting their own articulation of citizenship in opposition to that of government which they perceived as far too inclusive of outsiders. It was not simple hatred, but an array of contestations.

The study established from existing scholarly literature that Alexandra Township, where the violence erupted and spread to other settlements, has a history of exclusion and violence. This dates back to its colonial origins that were characterised by a patriarchal power structure which existed alongside the divide and rule system. Nieftagodien (2008:69) agrees with this finding by stating that Alexandra Township was subject to influx control policies during the apartheid era. In this regard, Santos' (2007) abyssal thinking theory which divides humankind into the two realms of life is most appropriate. This historical background clearly shaped the manner in which the May 2008 black on black violence was organised. Those identified as outsiders became victims.

The study found the history and origins of townships very significant to its quest to address its key research questions. It was very necessary to respond to why this violence only took place in 'zones of non-being' and did not spread across the M1 highway into Sandton City. Research participants identified poverty as the main cause. The black masses live in poverty in Yeoville while the rich lead lavish lifestyles across the freeway. This finding is confirmed by Nieftagodien (2008:68) who amongst many others, observes that residents of townships live under crowded conditions with high rates of unemployment and poverty. Poor black South Africans in Townships continue to expect but see no change in their lives in the context of twenty years of democracy. The new political dispensation was and still is expected to liberate black South Africans from poverty.

What has been established by the study is that the May 2008 violence was a residual manifestation of the apartheid colonial past. The problem has been that of poor delivery of priority services to the poor black masses by government. The twenty years of democracy have not brought anticipated joy especially amongst the poor black masses in the townships who strongly feel they are continually excluded from economic prosperity. The study has found Gelb's (2008) argument that the violence was a set of factors characteristic of townships and squatter areas' mounting challenges faced by blacks, to resonate with its study findings. Poverty, unemployment and poor housing conditions manifested as politics of belonging behind the May 2008 violence.

## **The Correct Name for the May 2008 Violence on Foreign Nationals**

Pillay (2008:93) states that a simplistic focus on ‘xenophobia,’ that South Africans hate foreigners or African foreigners would be misleading. This is in agreement with the findings of this study. Delving deeper into what lay behind simple hate/dislike and fear of anything foreign as an explanation of the violence that did not target all foreign groups or races has assisted in this argument. The study did not find any record of the white race targeted during the May 2008 violence that spread to other settlements across the country. Some black locals targeted some poor black foreign nationals by way of contestations for entitlements and access to resources and services. What has been imperative in this regard has been an analysis of the status quo in Yeoville.

Gelb (2008:79) mentions that journalists were informed by the local residents of Alexandra that violence was an effect of issues including crime, lack of work opportunities and lack of housing as well as basic services. The general perception was that the presence of foreign nationals contributed to the overall poor conditions and also affected general development in the areas dominated by ordinary black people such as townships. A similar view with regards to delayed development is expressed by Nieftagodien (2008) who confirms that the forceful driving away of foreign nationals through violence in May 2008 was not about hatred but a form of manifestation of some evil that believes that the exclusion of outsiders through force was appropriate means to effect development.

The study subscribes to Gelb’s account which defines what many, including journalists failed to present beyond this mask to correctly name the violence. Harber (2008) confirms that media presented two faces of violence, one which identified locals as perpetrators while the other sympathized with foreign nationals as victims. His argument was that one of the daily papers fueled the contestations of exclusion by its headline which read “Be very careful... don’t look or act like a foreigner”. Newspaper headlines brought another influence on the loose naming of violence as xenophobia. Based on the research participants’ views and those of scholars such as Gelb (2008), Neocosmos (2008) and Nieftagodien (2008), the conclusion is that the violence was an effect of an array of contestations beyond the simplistic naming, xenophobia.

### **The prime targets of violence**

In its quest to answer the question relating to who the prime targets of violence were during the May 2008 violence, research participants were engaged through an open question to give them the flexibility to bring out the core issues. What came out from the field work was that some black foreign nationals were the prime targets. This means that violence became structurally oriented on racial grounds. What followed after the structural positioning of violence on the black skin of African foreigners was the description and definition of the target which specified its location. The black African targeted was thus not in the 'zone of being' by location but in the 'zone of non-being', Yeoville. What had preceded this defined and located target was the totality of factors faced by the poor South African.

What influenced the violence was the socioeconomic factors that have been discussed in the preceding summary of findings which are characteristic of the 'zone of non-being'. If the black South Africans may have not been faced with the discussed magnitude of pervasive poverty, no foreign national would ever have been affected in the violence. Thus, it was not hatred. The targeted groups were those perceived as the strongest competitors for the various socioeconomic issues that have been identified. Assets such as business premises and places of residence such as shacks and hostels became part of the markings that were used to identify the targets. The targeted became those in defined categories of contestations residing or owning businesses in the 'zones of non-being'

The justification of using violence was to force the targets to leave the territory because they were perceived as outsiders not worthy of being part of the social fibre to share the community with due to their alleged contribution to the causes of failures of the poor black South African. The problem with this formula of identification was its inaccuracy given that anybody showing similarities of the perceived target could be attacked. Nieftagodien (2008) claims that two people who died within the initial days of attack included a South African. This South African was probably wrongly targeted through the unreliable formula of identification. The targeted violence was confirmation that the project of social inclusion was far off the track (Landau 2008).

### **Meaning of life in Yeoville**

The study identified Yeoville as a case study to reveal what the experiences of the May 2008 violence signified in the lives of the residents of the study area. The participants like many others felt the impact of displacement and one of them has never set foot back in Alexandra since May 2008. Life in Yeoville is not radically different from that of Alexandra. The histories of both townships have a common feature of exclusion. They both originated for certain classes of people which excluded other groupings. Yeoville is equally resident to a magnitude of foreign nationals who are economic and political refugees. Its residents are also affected by similar trends of socioeconomic challenges. These include housing challenges, crime, health related challenges as well as various other illegal activities such as drug dealing.

Life in Yeoville is characteristic of that of the 'zone of non-being' – drug dealing and murder are topical issues. The lives of the residents of Yeoville have emotional connections to the May 2008 violence that started in Alexandra. Some witnessed the attacks while others had relatives who were killed. There is a feeling of insecurity and there is uncertainty of survival in case of violence. Labelling is evident and 'othering' exists through names such as *AmaZim* (Zimbabweans) *Amangongo* (Congolese) and *omaG* (Nigerians). Life is structured on the politics of identities and belonging, insiders and outsiders. These markers manifest into how life is generally arranged in this 'zone of non-being'. Street vending has permanent territories which are selling points that belong to individuals from specific countries.

Areas such as education and business have also become imbedded into this culture of 'them and us'. Schools are established by foreign nationals in Yeoville and mostly enrol children of foreign nationals. This continues to show societal groupings as is also emphasised by the general language of use and identities. Similarly business is also identified on such grounds. '*EmashopamaNigeria*' (Nigerian owned shops) and '*emaTshayineni*' (at Chinese shops). Language identities have become part of the exclusion as it becomes difficult to just identify a shop without qualifying it as belonging to Nigerians or Chinese. Interestingly though, the same is not used for labelling locals such as 'ishop yama Zulu' (a shop belonging to the Zulu speaking people) or itekisi yamaZulu (a Zulu owned taxi).

Poverty is the underlying factor in Yeoville. It need not to translate into violence in the same manner in which the May 2008 violence was organised. What remains the same is that Yeoville is perfectly organised into a “zone of non-being”. It would not be contextually surprising if a similar or worse violence were to erupt in this ‘zone of non-being’. The lesson learnt from the Alexandra violence is that any other place with a similar setting or characteristics such as contestations of belonging, entitlements, citizenship, resources and other socioeconomic factors is equally prone to violence. Death cases from beer drinking spots or street arguments involving one or two people have the potential to turn into violence because Yeoville has all the characteristics that can ignite violence.

Life in Yeoville, which is a ‘zone of non-being’ like Alexandra portrays issues of exclusion and competition. It has become part of the culture to normalise exclusion which situates some groups as outside the scope of belonging. Those identified as belonging to the ‘outside’ are vulnerable to exploitation, harm and the forces of injustice. Police raids and confiscation of their wares from their vending sites represent the height of exclusion. Albertyn (2008) suggests that the May 2008 violence betrayed the core values of community inclusion, participation and Ubuntu. The force and power applied by the police during raids in Yeoville has a bitter end and is always devoid of sympathy. The constitution and reality on the ground continue to work in two separate worlds.

There are poor black South Africans in Yeoville. They are equally faced by the forces of inequality occasioned by the prevailing economic system that is not spared by the general global influences. Black people both local and foreign still remain marginalised and there are complications of this exclusionary-inclusionary binary; who is really part of those included as poor local remain faced with similar or even worse challenges? The attainment of democracy in 1994 celebrated attainment of inclusionary change. However, the system has continued to show persistent residues of an exclusionary past. Life in Yeoville remains challenged by the politics of belonging which complicates part of the existing social relations and societal arrangements such as local and foreign intermarriages.

### **Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations**

The study as informed by the application of the decolonial thinking perspective has arrived at a conclusion that the violence of May 2008 which started in Alexandra Township had no singular cause. This dismisses xenophobia as the overall cause of the violence which was characterized by political chanting, brutal killings, raping, looting and burning down of shacks. The study found out that most of the foreign nationals have been living in Yeoville for a long time or that at least it has a long history of hosting a diverse foreign population spanning back to the colonial era. On the basis of this history and the manner in which black townships originated, the politics of exclusion, contestations of belonging and citizenship, the culture of 'Othering' and entitlements will always prevail.

Santos' (2007) abyssal thinking theory divides humankind. The human line Santos (2007) proposes further creates more invisible lines and layers within society. Inequality has sustained this human line and those marked as outsiders in the 'zones of non-being' are further pushed down below the realms of life. Pillay (2008) confirms that inequality has a correlation with the creation of perverse practices such as cultures of entitlements and feelings of relative deprivation. Life in the 'zones of non-being' is defined by entitlement. This entitlement continues to be sustained through socio economic instability. This perceived entitlement is the justification and reason of clinging to the dwindling resources and few opportunities through any means including violence to retain the identity of bona fide citizenship in the 'zone non-being'.

The naming of the violence and the power of influence by media houses remains a problem. Respondents from various studies have not suggested that they attacked foreign nationals due to hatred but identify issues that threaten their social and economic wellbeing. Not every foreign national has been equally targeted during the violence but only those in the 'zones of non-being' where there are abject conditions beyond which there is no life. Further studies should be commissioned to find out if reverse hatred of locals by foreigners existed. Irrefutably, all 'zones of non-being' are characterised by the hellish conditions and violence resulting from contestations and can erupt at any time as long as inequality is sustained.

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## APPENDIX ONE

### **Semi –Structured Interview Guide**

Unmasking the spectre of xenophobia: an analysis of the experiences of foreign nationals living in Yeoville.

Welcome to this interview, my name is Alois Sibanda, a Masters in Development Studies student with Unisa. I wish to bring to your attention that your views relating to the May 2008 violence in Alexandra Township are very crucial to my study. Your views shall remain confidential and a false name shall be used to identify you in this interview as well as in the final report of this study.

Do you have any questions? Please ask any questions that you may have to clarify anything and feel free to ask questions at any point during the interview. May I also emphasise the right that you have to withdraw from this study at any point without having to explain your reasons to do so and this solely remains a voluntary participation.

### **Personal Information**

- A. Were you already in South Africa by May 2008?
- B. What is your highest level of Education?
- C. What is your source of income?
- D. Gender
- E. Age
- F. Nationality

1. Explain in your own words what xenophobia is.
2. In your view what caused the May 2008 attacks on foreigners in Alexandra and were those attacks xenophobic in your view, if so explain briefly?
3. Is what you understand as xenophobia directly linked or explained by the May 2008 violent attacks?
4. It seems xenophobic attacks happen timely, why do they not happen frequently?
5. Why did the violent attacks take place in Alexandra in particular not in other areas such as Sandton? / What made Alexandra to be the most suitable place for the xenophobia attacks instead of other surrounding areas?
6. In your view, who are the prime targets of xenophobia and explain why you think it is that way?
7. Discuss any other personal experiences of xenophobia.
8. Explain briefly what makes you to be or not to be a prime target of xenophobia?

9. What makes you to hate/like South Africans and which ones in particular?
10. Discuss any other fear/s that you have that you think is worse than xenophobic attacks?