Editorial: Love thy Neighbours – Exploring and Exposing Xenophobia in Social Spaces in South Africa

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Globalisation, political discord, environmental hardships, socio-economic strife and a desire to obtain an improved standard of living will continue to be drivers for human migration. At a continental level, Africa is poignantly subject to all of these factors so it's no surprise that migration is perceived as a common solution/ escape. South Africa (SA), the big apple of Africa has been perceived as a destination where dreams can be accomplished given legislative and policy advancements post-apartheid but this will soon plummet to South Africa being perceived as the rotten apple of Africa, if xenophobia is not addressed and repetitively swept under the carpet especially by government institutions, key political figures and civil society.

Whilst there is an understanding that xenophobia is not peculiar to SA, having reared in ugly head in numerous developed countries and continents such as Europe, it has been debated and discussed and certainly not avoided like the plague, the route South Africa has opted to follow. Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh and Singh (2005) declared a long time ago that 'South Africa is a highly xenophobic society' and despite the ongoing pronouncements and declarations, some to the contrary, as academia (through this special edition) there is the voice of social justice that calls for constant engagement with xenophobic discourses to understand and address xenophobic outpourings in its myriad forms in contemporary SA. But what constitutes xenophobia in a SA context? There are some constructions of xenophobia as an attitude (Bekker *et al.* 2008) which has culminated in foreigners being associated with undesirable behavior such as stealing the jobs of locals and criminal activities such as drug dealing and hijacking.

Violent outcomes for foreign nationals particularly those from Africa signaled another understanding of xenophobia, one that has been extended to denotations of action with xenophobia being understood as a verb (Von Holdt *et al.* 2011). There has been a plethora of research into the causes of xenophobia in SA and some of the threads that appear to emerge post 1994, include the following links: what constitutes the South African identity, media coverage of incidents and political suggestions that indicate prejudice. Khan (2007), drew attention to the preoccupation we, as South Africans, have about identity recognition which snakes its way into each and every aspect of our daily existence, from applying to attend a school or university, opening a bank account, buying furniture/ appliances. Equally important is the use of language, especially fluency in a South African language. So it's no shock that we differentiate between those in receipt of a South African identity document and who aren't. But isn't this strangely reminiscent of a 'dompass' mentality which has become ingrained in the SA psyche despite us overcoming apartheid?

Media coverage, also, has frequently been blamed for portraying foreigners as the perpetrators of unsavoury incidents, although recently the media spot highlighted the physical abuse by SA police of a Mozambican taxi driver in SA (in 2012) which led to a public outcry. After his subsequent arrest, he died in police custody feulling speculation about police brutality towards foreigners. But xenophobia is institutionalised in numerous other segments of South African society apart from the media. These include government departments such as the department of Home Affairs and financial establishments.

In the political arena, the president of SA, Jacob Zuma recently committed a huge *faux pas* when speaking about the introduction of toll highways in Gauteng. He remarked that as South Africans 'We can't think like Africans in Africa generally. [There was laughter at this remark.] We are in Johannesburg. This is Johannesburg. It is not some national road in Malawi' (eNews, 23 October 2013, 11h00; The Justice factor, etv, 28 October, 20h30). These comments drew continental criticism from leaders for implying that South Africans perceive themselves as superior to the rest of Africa. This type of sentiment is not unusual and it has led to scholars remarking that a particular brand of xenophobia was apparent in South Africa, namely that of Afrophobia (Osman 2009:09 cites Motha & Ramadiro

2005:18) which encompasses 'negative stereotypes towards people from other parts of the continent'. African immigrants are commonly described using the label: 'Makwerekwere' which is an inflammatory label (Neocosmos 2006; Steenkamp 2009) that refers to people who are not *au fait* with an Nguni or Sotho language and who are also 'pitch black' in complexion (Sichone nd: 11). Makwerekwere also has other undesirable meanings apart from being an African immigrant 'who lacks competency in the local South African languages' and being dark-skinned, it also refers to 'one who hails from a country assumed to be economically and culturally backward in relation to South Africa' (Azindow 2007:175). Segale (2004) long ago noted that the use of 'makwerekwere' constitutes hate speech, however as South Aricans, we have not chosen to explore ways to root out its use in society. In this edition, Muthuki (in her article in this special edition) concludes that Afrophobia has its roots in poverty on the African continent.

This special edition of articles explores and exposes xenophobia in an array of social spaces in SA, many of which have not previously been examined in studies. Furthermore, some contributions seek to provide direction to a somewhat impotent SA government to address the burgeoning xenophobic crisis as immigration spirals.

Daniel Tevera's article commences th edition by honing in on urban violence in SA cities. He examines the recent literature to create a deeper understanding of xenophobia in urban spaces. He argues that the apartheid footprint is still very prevalent in xenophobic incidents in city locales. His findings demonstrate that key discourses to understanding xenophobia evolve around the importance of human deprivation, (e.g. poverty and poor service), citizenship and belonging which play instrumental roles in the incidences.

Anand Singh's article by contrast boldly unpacks South Africa's racialised social order, where he argues that there is a tendency to downplay the extent and nature of poverty among Coloureds and Indians when compared to the situation of Africans. Using a case study methodology, he illuminates what he terms 'perceived xenophobic cum racist practices and how such issues are being viewed as deliberate attempts to alienate' SA Indians. He argues that the experiences of people across South Africa are far too diverse and complex to be packaged into one paradigm. Hence, he states that they could be collapsed into the interrelated categories of xenophobia, ethnocentric behaviour, racist attitudes, ethnic nepotism and narcissistic

egoism. He concludes that the alienation of Indians is more contextual than racist or xenophobic.

The next five articles are located in an education context with the first focusing on teachers' experiences of xenophobia, the second on teachers and lecturers' experiences and the third and fourth articles on students' experiences of xenophobia in higher education. The fifth article focuses on the perspectives of foreign learners in school. Zimbabwean migrants are the largest cohort of foreigners in SA and Suresh Singh's article examines Zimbabwean teachers' experiences of xenophobia in schools in the rural province of Limpopo, which borders Zimbabwe. He exposes a host of challenges that Zimbabwean teachers face for example 'local teachers, students and community members use local indigenous languages to exclude foreign teachers'. He concludes that locals need to acknowledge the value of Zimbabwean teachers in advancing education in schools where their skills are in dire need. This idea is furthered in the next article. Sadhana Manik's article continues the theme of Zimbabwean teachers in SA, by focusing on Zimbabwean school teachers and lecturers in KwaZulu-Natal province and their experiences of and thoughts on xenophobia. Her findings reveal that issues of race, class and location matters in incidents with xenophobic violence. Also, Zimbabwean immigrant teachers' experiences indicate that whilst their expertise is required in critical subjects, they are not valued by being treated with the respect deserving of professionals. She exposes Zimbabwean teachers' experiences of social and professional disconnections, which were either self / externally imposed, which led to their psychological trauma. Interestingly, she shares the view of Jesika Singh, the next article discussed, that institutions of higher learning are establishments where fear and the threat of violence hangs in the air for foreigners.

Jesika Singh's study is located in a rural university which is close to the South Africa's borders and it has experienced an influx of foreign students. She reports on foreign students' experiences of xenophobia in their daily lives on campus. Her article chronicles xenophobic attitudes in foreign students' interactions with other students in their attempts to integrate, by university academics in their teaching and by support staff. Her findings point to university institutions being sites that do more than promote 'teaching and learning' but rather spaces where hatred of the 'other' and a lack of integration and fear amongst foreign students is engendered. Janet

Muthuki's article continues this theme of xenophobia in institutions of higher learning but she moves the location of her study to an urban based university and unpacks the phenomenology of xenophobia by examining the xenophobic experiences foreign post graduate students. Interestingly, some participants in her study report that xenophobia in SA has a striking resemblance to xenophobia in their home country.

The next article by Nirmala Gopal, is written from the perspective of foreign learners and it provides insight into how foreign learners think and feel about xenophobia. Using thematic analysis, she highlights the 'social exclusion of children and youth through the threat of violence and intimidation' which she argues should be addressed by the state and civil society. She advances that South Africa should embark on the protection of the rights of foreigners by engaging with key role-players.

The next article by Vahed and Desai examines the causes of xenophobia in South Africa, and also distils measures that should be adopted to address xenophobia. They note the multitude of explanations have been advanced to account for the 2008 attacks. These include 'the absence of a clear immigration policy, porous borders, corrupt police and Home Affairs officials, socio-economic inequities in the country, and even the African National Congress's poor service delivery record which is resulting in ordinary South Africans venting their frustration on foreign nationals'. They advocate the possibility of legalising migrants which would then provide them with the protection of labour legislation, and to also offer amnesty to long term residents. These suggestions are embedded in previous decisions by SA where 'migrant workers who entered South Africa legally before the 13 June 1986 were regarded as 'ordinary residents' and received voter registration cards and South African Identification Documents' (Harris 2001: 22-23). They conclude by noting the futility of any attempts to restrict immigration into South Africa as immigration is an international concern.

The following article by Rukema and Khan is located in the metropolitan area of Durban. They hone in on Congolese and Burundian women's experiences during and after the 2008 xenophobic attacks against them. They explore the impact the xenophobic attacks had on shaping and reshaping foreigners' views about South African society. They also examine the coping strategies used to rebuild livelihoods in an attempt to recover from the emotional trauma of the 2008 xenophobic attacks. They conclude that 'the

emotional and psychological scars of the xenophobic attacks continue to remain a lived experience in the minds of victims.' The Next article by Yasmeen Vahed is also located in Durban. Her article examines the two issues of crime and xenophobia, in a mixed income suburb in Durban. She focuses on 'how residents and the police view the presence of foreign nationals in the local community and the social, economic, and political factors' which are responsible 'for shaping attitudes towards foreign nationals.' She concludes that her respondents' narratives 'associate crime with race and nationality.'

Continuing the theme of the criminal justice system in Durban is Shantha Singh whose study gives voice to foreign nationals awaiting trial at Westville Correctional Centre in Durban. She accesses their perceptions and responses of crime and criminality by documenting the experiences of foreign nationals awaiting trial. She reports that the increase in the crime rates in South Africa post1994 is frequently ascribed to immigrants, 'without any justifiable proof.' She notes the dissonance between SA Immigration Law and its practice by stating that a foreign national is only allowed to stay for 30 days whilst awaiting trial but the mean term was in excess of a year. She concludes that 'foreign nationals believe that they are treated unjustly by the South African criminal justice system… and they actually become victims of the South African criminal justice system.'

The next article by Desai and Vahed shift the focus to the role of non- governmental agencies (NGO) in xenophobic incidents. Using a case study methodology they examine one NGO, namely the Gift of the Givers in their role of 'providing assistance and material help' to victims of xenophobia in the 2008 attacks. This article notes a shift from the politics of xenophobia to a humanitarian focus by GOTG with the SA government as a key partner. Strangely, the government intended closing down the refugee camps following the 2008 incidents. The participants in the study bring to the fore a depravity amongst South Africans eager to take advantage of or dismiss foreigners in numerous ways: for example alleged corruption in refugee camps, the provision of rotten food and a home affairs department expecting refugees of the 2008 attacks to pay R 800 to renew their permits when they have lost all their property.

The final article by Mondli Hlatswayo explores xenophobia and the relationship between immigrant workers and trade unions at the workplace.

Using interviews and documents, he locates his analysis of COSATU within the 2008 xenophobic attacks and argues that COSATU's policies on immigrant workers and xenophobia are contradictory. He provides evidence that 'the federation claims to be opposed to xenophobia, but some of its policy utterances belong to what can be regarded as xenophobic discourse and national chauvinism'. He notes the humanitarian aid provided by COSATU during the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 but states that although it adopted resolutions against xenophobia, the federation as a whole, (notwithstanding the work by Cosatu Western Cape) has not used its strengths to rally against xenophobia.

It is apparent that xenophobia is pervasive, that it manifests itself in many ways, from the blatant physicality of violence to subtle forms of psychological violence and dehumanizing slander and that it has taken a stronghold in SA society. This special edition comes at a critical moment in SA, as it seeks to plunge the topic of xenophobia into the limelight again, in the hope that readers of this edition, feel sufficiently stimulated to generate the much needed dialogue and propagate a love for thy neighbours in their social gatherings, professional hubs and daily conversations.

Finally, we want to thank Wazir Surajlall for the cover painting, done in oils. It is an aesthetic representation of an owl, which denotes a wise creature associated with the concepts of wisdom and good advice.

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