

## Chapter 2

# Mind the Violent Afrophobic Language Gap and Its Impact on Anti-Immigration in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores xenophobic or Afrophobic language and its effects in perpetuating violence, hatred, and fear on non-South Africans. For decades, South Africa was subjected to colonial and apartheid regimes underpinned by governance ethos based on divisive policies that discriminate people based on race, gender, ethnicity, and place of origin. It argues that the derogatory language/vocabulary such as ‘amakwerekwere’ migrants, ‘amagrigamba’, ‘abelokufika’, and aliens is used to describe and perpetuate xenophobia-Afrophobia. The author concludes that the daily articulation of derogatory labels does not only perpetuate xenophobic hatred and violence against fellow Africans (Afrophobia), but it also becomes the basis for the re-enforcement of oppressive, discriminatory, and violent tendencies of the past.*

### INTRODUCTION

The advent of xenophobia and Afrophobic attacks directed at non-South Africans by South Africans have been documented in the media since the democratic dispensation. Akinola (2014, p. 56) argues that in South Africa, xenophobia is not a new phenomenon but “an extension of other forms of violence and intolerance”. Xenophobia or Afrophobia is linked to migration and it is evident from various studies that South Africa has been home to a number of voluntary migrants especially from United States of America, India and the United Kingdom (Dube, 2018, Mabera, 2017; Tewolde, 2020). Since the dawn of democracy in the early 1990s, South Africa saw the influx of immigrants whom the majority were from Europe, Mozambique, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Somalia, China, India, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Burundi and Cameroon (Tafuh, 2012, p. 9). The concept of migration was

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defined by Mdlalose (2014) as a movement of the people from the South to South, between east and west, from South to North and vice versa. Thus, migration took place either through enforcement or voluntary which Jinnah (2010) associate with a 'spatial phenomenon describing the movement of people from one space to another. The United Nations estimates that 72% of international migrants to South Africa in 2008 came from African countries (in Musuva, 2014: 379). In 2013, Statistics South Africa (2013, p. 6) estimated that the African migrant population between 2006 and 2010 stood at 074,000 and projected it would rise to 998,000 between 2010 and 2015.

Despite that many African countries are to date politically free; they continue to suffer from ill-designed economic reforms and policies underpinned by underdevelopment and unsustainable socio-economic development of their societies (Ramphele, 2017). Koenane and Maphunye (2015) opines that unless the economic and political situation improves, xenophobia and Afrophobia against foreigners would continue to haunt South Africa. To date, poor or the absence of democratic leadership underpinned by democratic values and principles witnessed people becoming victims of democracy deficit and greed. The notion of democracy deficit depicts the lack of political engagement and participation by the public whereby people resort to opting out of politics (Chou, Gagnon, Hartung & Pruitt, 2017). Consequently, in fear of their lives, citizens flee their countries and seek refuge in the neighbouring states and Europe as their final destination (Musuva, 2014: 383). Since the dawn of democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa has witnessed the influx of immigrants including those displaced due to political instability as economic issues. According to Akinola (2014), South Africa accommodates the largest number of asylum-seekers in the world. Thus, scrambling for scarce resources and job opportunities between South Africans and non-South Africans did not only fuel the tensions but also ultimately led to xenophobia and xenophobic attacks as acutely witnessed since 2008.

It is against this background that this chapter explores the xenophobic and Afrophobic attached language and its effects in perpetuating hatred and fear on non-South Africans. The chapter is partitioned into five sections. The first section lays the theoretical background of xenophobia and Afrophobia while the second section presents the research methods utilised to obtain the empirical data. The third section deliberates on the analysis of the findings which is further divided into socio-linguistic, socio-economic, socio-political, geo-spatial and socio-marital categorisation of xenophobic embedded vocabulary. The fourth section deals with the reassertion of citizenship through xenophobia and Afrophobia and finally the concluding remarks. This chapter argues that the language attached to xenophobia and Afrophobia has both negative and positive impact on foreign nationals. On one hand, the language ferments hatred and rage climaxing to deadly consequences, while on the other hand, the harassment, intimidation, deportation and killing of foreign nationals has made them resilient and to persevere against all odds.

## **FRAMING XENOPHOBIA AND AFROPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa for instance, xenophobia variably manifests itself through tribalism and ethnic superiority, racism and sexism pathologies (Nkwede, Obona, and Joseph, 2019). According to Tshishonga (2015: 165) xenophobia takes forms such as 'discriminatory attitudes towards non-nationals' and Musuva (2014, p. 382) highlights that xenophobia takes place within the context of crime, poverty, inequality and unemployment. The apartheid system of divide and rule has through the years planted seeds of hatred within the and between tribal groups and how it has now reached maturation through xenophobia. The notion of xenophobia has its roots from Greek-xeno meaning foreign and phobos which connotes fear

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