# Chapter 5

# Afrophobic–Induced Violence on African Immigrants in South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter interrogates the notion of violence within the context of Afrophobia that are prevalent in South Africa. Despite many factors contributing to Afrophobic-induced violence and hatred, the chapter argues that socio-economic deprivations among locals is at the center of perpetuating the scourge of violence and Afrophobic violent attacks on African immigrants. The chapter adopts the relative deprivation theory to understand the factors leading to Afrophobia and its induced violence against African immigrants in South Africa. The chapter also utilizes the Afrocentric approach based on Ubuntu philosophy to forge socio-economic development and prosperity in (South) Africa. The chapter argues that the escalation of Afrophobic violence does not only undermine the integration of the African economy, but also cripples its political quest for unity. The chapter made use of secondary data in the form of book chapters, books, and accredited papers or articles.*

## INTRODUCTION

The notion of xenophobia is an international phenomenon. All nationals have in one way or another experienced the scourge of xenophobia and its ugly manifestations. Scholars such as Charman and Piper (2012), Cronje (2008) and Amit (2010) traced the genesis of xenophobia to the World War II in 1939-1959 where over 2 million Jews were targeted and killed. As Crush et al. (2009) argue, Hitler believed it was the Jewish conspiracy that resulted in the defeat of Germany. Studies have found that Jews in Europe and America have frequently been subjected to violent massacres (Magwaza, 2018). For instance, xenophobic violence in Germany, USA, France and United Kingdom was racially bound and based on the maintenance of dominant white European heritage and race (Mikulich, 2009). In the case of other regions, in 1914, where thousands of Mexicans, Italians, and Asians immigrants were attacked

in the USA (Gevisser, 2008). As documented, Jews in such countries have frequently been subjected to violent massacres and alienation. Admittedly, xenophobic violence came in the form of anti-immigrant attitude towards Muslims and other race groups in South Korea. In the case of South Korea, a country once a country predominately dominated by Chinese and Japanese, immigrants were blamed for the unemployment and economic instability (Yakushko, 2008).

Evidently, violent xenophobic attacks have occurred throughout the late twentieth century and early twentieth-first century. In this regard, Arogundabe, (2008) and David (2010) state that in West Africa, the President of Equatorial Guinea in 2004, led by the mercenary, spurred a clampdown on all foreign immigrants in the country (Arogundabe, 2008, Campbell, 2009). The year 2007 witnessed immigrants from western countries were banned from owning businesses in Equatorial Guinea. In June 2015, the Chadian military expelled 200 to 300 Cameroonians as part of the 'clean-up campaign against undocumented immigrants. In essence, there is evidence that Afrophobic or Xenophobia perpetuate the rigid boundaries based on 'Us and Them' (Marotta, 2016, p. 197) rhetoric which in turn reinforces phobia and further undermine socio-cultural integration of African nationals into the South African society.

In the context of South Africa, this tension manifests itself in the form of Afrophobic violence against fellow African immigrants in South African's Townships, informal settlements and peri-urban areas (Amtaika, 2013 and 2017). Substantially, the transition to democracy did not eliminate poverty, unemployment and inequality but rather ignited social unrest and socio-economic deprivations endured mainly by black Africans. Violence in its different forms has been entrenched by colonial-apartheid policies in South Africa which were used as a divide and conquer strategy. Due to apartheid and its legacies, Pagel (2021:9) argues that the injustices sidlined the natives, mostly in terms of economic opportunity and socio-political position. Consequently, the previously disadvantaged blacks vent their frustrations and anger through violent demonstrations triggered by the historical deprivations. However, the emergence of xenophobia and Afrophobic violence in particular have increasingly grown, especially on asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees coming into South Africa. South Africa has sustained protracted decades of protests and violent attacks staged by both communities and liberation movements during the colonial-apartheid and post-apartheid epochs (Amtaika, 2013). Consequently, South Africa has been labelled as the "protest capital of the world" tagged under social protest orchestrated by the rebellion of the poor (Alexander, 2010; Amtaika, 2017). More often these social protests and discontent turn violent with foreign immigrants falling victims (Mkhize, 2017).

This chapter acknowledges that a) intolerance of African immigrants based on socio-economic grounds is growing, b) poverty, unemployment and inequality among South Africans is the basis for Afrophobic violence directed towards immigrants in the African continent, (c) Afrophobic or Xenophobic violence (attitude, physical and emotional) perpetrated towards African immigrants is the legacy of colonial and Apartheid policies of discriminatory and (d) violence against African nationals is sustained through physical and cultural appearance with immigrants being the victims of Afrophobic-xenophobic violence.

## Context Breeding Afro-Xenophobic Violence

South Africa gained its political independence in 1994 under the quest that the newly found democratic dispensation will address the legacy of colonial and apartheid challenges. Expectations of both locals and the world at large became overwhelming for the ANC-led government to deliver services and transform the country socially, economically and politically. At the policy front, policy frameworks such as the RDP (1994); the Constitution (1996), GEAR (1996), other Acts promulgated as well as the National

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