

# *‘They call us Makwerekweres’ –* **Foreign Learners Speak out against Xenophobia**

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## **Abstract**

While a number of studies on xenophobia have been conducted in South Africa, very little has been done to establish the effects of xenophobia on foreigners in schools. To help remedy the dearth of studies in this area, this article aimed to provide emic perspective on xenophobia from a select sample of Grade 12 foreign learners. Through the use of interviews, the study explored how these learners experience their host country, South Africa, five years after the widely publicized xenophobic violence. Thematic analysis of responses indicated, profoundly, learners’ thoughts and feelings on xenophobia. Participants described their emotional and physical exposure to various forms of xenophobia perpetrated either at the level of the community and/or the school. Participants felt that South Africans who do not take responsibility for their behavior shift blame to foreigners, hence fuelling xenophobia. Although learners perceive South Africa as a beautiful country with much to offer, they prefer migrating to countries with better opportunities. This research provided a baseline for further research into this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Learners, Xenophobia, Perceptions

## **Introduction**

Views on xenophobia appear divided with some scholars arguing that

xenophobia is rooted in history, others that modernization intensifies the unevenness of the global economy. Nyamnjoh (2006) blames xenophobia on an inconsistent set of global processes, marked with closures in the borderless flows and boundless opportunities accentuated by free movement of capital, creating economic disparities between countries and regions. The 'human development outcomes of xenophobia for both migrant and host populations are negative, pernicious, and damaging'. Attacks on non-nationals signify a threat to social order and justice which typifies lawlessness. When social conflict ensues, human rights are violated in the process as discrimination and ill-treatment of foreigners becomes socially acceptable leading to anarchism as was the case in the 2008 South African xenophobic attacks which made international headlines. This was a time when black foreigners living in informal settlements, particularly, were criminally attacked by local groups of Black Africans who accused foreigners of displacing them economically. This is a relevant example of how Xenophobia exacerbates the vulnerability of migrant groups, exposing them to regular harassment, intimidation, and abuse by citizens, employers, and law enforcement agencies. Crush (2000) argues that South Africans' negative attitudes towards non-nationals are largely oriented towards other Africans, although there are increasing reports of discrimination towards new arrivals from the Indian sub-continent.

### **Looking at 'Xenophobia' Internationally and Nationally**

Mayfield (2010) comments on the xenophobia in Europe perpetrated through the xenophobic right. According to Mayfield the chief reason behind the rise of the xenophobic right in the European Union (EU) is *not* the economic alternatives it offers, but rather its hostility towards unrestricted immigration from Africa, Asia, and the Balkans. Xenophobic parties in Europe range from simply wanting tighter border controls, to calling for a 'whites-only' immigration policy, to demanding the wholesale deportation of minorities.

In the EU although xenophobia is focused on Muslim immigrants, especially Moroccans, Indonesians, Arabs, Somalis, Afghanis, and Pakistanis, as well as African blacks it is often equally harsh against other European or 'white' immigrants, particularly Albanians, Bosnians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Poles, Balts, Romanians, and Russians. In Italy, the

center-right *Legia Nord* is more xenophobic towards Southern Italians than towards Muslims (Mayfield 2010).

Foreign nationals, including learners, residing in South Africa are protected in the South African constitution and by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) from xenophobic violence. Even the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has pointed out in its Braamfontein Statement that *'No one, whether in this country legally or not, can be deprived of his or her basic or fundamental rights and cannot be treated as less than human further reinforces protection of foreign learners'*. The South African Constitution seeks to construct a society where 'human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms' are abiding values. The implication of this is clear; xenophobic attitudes and practices violate the spirit and letter of the South African Constitution. Despite national and international legal protection for non-nationals, xenophobic attacks or xenophobia has a long history in South Africa. Reitzes (in Richards 2009) in examining the history of South Africa's immigration policy suggests that the policy is rooted in South Africa's racialised past and the political economy of the country. She highlights the racially discriminatory nature of South Africa's immigration policy, from as far back as 1913 through to the passing of the country's Immigration Act in 2002. She argues that South Africa's immigration policy has contributed towards conceptions of South African national identity and the construction of 'others', comprising migrants who are non-South African, indirectly perpetuating racial exclusionary practices and adding fuel to xenophobic sentiments and violence against foreign nationals. Misago (in Richards 2009) notes that xenophobic and anti-'outsider' violence have been a long-standing and increasing feature in post-apartheid South Africa. Negative attitudes to foreign nationals have also emerged through surveys. For example, in 1997 a survey conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) concluded that 25% of South Africans wanted a total prohibition of migration or immigration and 22% wanted the South African government to return all foreigners presently living in South Africa to their own countries. 45% of the sample called for strict limits to be placed on migrants and immigrants and 17% wanted migration policy tied to the availability of jobs. More generally other studies (Sooklal, Gopal & Maharaj 2005; Osman 2009) have shown that xenophobia is a global problem that has been experienced in

both industrialised and developing countries and impacts adults and learners alike.

As early as 1995, a report by the Southern African Bishops' Conference concluded that 'There is no doubt that there is a very high level of xenophobia in our country .... One of the main problems is that a variety of people have been lumped together under the title of 'illegal immigrants' and the whole situation of demonizing immigrants are feeding the xenophobia phenomenon.' In late 2000 there was a spate of xenophobic murders in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu, followed by attacks in Milnerton and Bellville South, and a total of 12 such murders were reported for 2000. In 2001 nine Angolans were murdered in Cape Town, including two Angolan brothers who were burned to death in a shack in Langa. Later in the year, locals in Du Noon, Western Cape, drove foreigners out of the settlement; and a mob of locals violently chased Zimbabweans from Zandspruit informal settlement, Gauteng, before torching their homes and businesses, with more than 800 Zimbabweans fleeing their homes – 112 shacks were gutted and 126 dwellings looted. In January 2002, police backed by soldiers descended on Milnerton, Western Cape, where violent clashes between locals and Angolan refugees left three Angolans and a South African dead, and a house gutted by fire.

Undergirded by a background that has stimulated the discourse on xenophobia this article emphasizes specifically how a group of Durban secondary school learners perceive themselves as victims of xenophobia. The aim of this study is not to understand individual constructions of xenophobia but instead to probe the discursive views through which participants give meaning to xenophobia.

Given that xenophobic attitudes are strongly entrenched in South African society it is not surprising that on 11 May 2008, South Africa was shaken by the outbreak of a wave of violence characterized by an intensity and fierceness previously unknown in this young democracy and instead reminiscent of apartheid bloodshed. The most severely affected groups were Africans from neighbouring states, such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, but migrants from more distant countries, such as Nigeria and Somalia, as well as a few South Africans were also victims of these attacks. Almost 35,000 people had fled their homes and camped out in temporary shelters, churches and police stations. Thousands more returned to their countries of origin.

Despite this the South African government through their Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula maintained that '*the violent xenophobic attacks on foreigners have not been so widespread to constitute a 'crisis'.*'

## **Xenophobic Constructions**

For Bekker, Eigelaar-Meets, Eva, and Poole (2008) xenophobia means '*the hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers*'. For Kollapen (1999) xenophobia is an inextricable link of violence and physical abuse. He further argues that 'xenophobia' as a term must be reframed to incorporate *practice*. It is not just an attitude: it is an activity. It is not just a dislike or fear of foreigners: it is a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage. More particularly, the violent practice that comprises xenophobia must be further refined to include its specific target, because, in South Africa, not all foreigners are uniformly victimized. Rather, black foreigners, particularly those from Africa, comprise the majority of victims. It is also important to explore why 'the unknown' represented by (largely Black) foreigners should necessarily invite repugnance, fear or aggression. Xenophobia manifests itself in various forms and its roots are equally varied (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh 2005).

## **Xenophobia and Schooling**

Schools exist primarily to ensure that effective learning takes place, so that children are socially and intellectually prepared to become responsible adults who actively participate in, and make a positive contribution to, society and the economy (Burton 2008). If learners are exposed to xenophobic violence then consistent with expectations, children who have been exposed to violence have been found to be more likely to manifest a variety of psychiatric problems including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety (Shields *et al.* 2008; Seedat *et al.* 2004; Ward *et al.* 2001; Ensink *et al.* 1997), with exposure to violence having been found to impact negatively on children's academic performance (Reddy *et al.* 2010; Boqwana 2009; Human Rights Watch 2001 quoted in Mkhize, Gopal & Collings 2012). Such undesirable outcomes have not, however, been found to be inevitable.

Exposure to violence or violent threats could exert greater pressure on the academic performance of foreign learners making it even more challenging for them to succeed in a country that is already foreign to them and where they may feel unwanted.

While we have insufficient assessment of the impact of xenophobia on foreign learners in South Africa, Dryden-Peterson (2010) argues that xenophobia not only furthers the social exclusion of non-nationals but also increased their economic barriers by reducing their ability to pursue livelihood activities in their host-country. Horst (2006) and Jacobsen (2005) supported this, agreeing that the limited livelihood opportunities available to non-national migrants due to their legal status result in increased poverty levels and a greater inability to cover education expenses. While some information on how foreign national learners are affected by the South African schooling system is available (Sookraj, Gopal and Maharaj 2005; Osman 2009) literature searches have exposed the dearth of literature and studies that specifically show any nexus between fear, intimidation and exposure to violence and academic performance.

## **Method**

This article is concerned specifically with the meanings of xenophobia as understood by a group of secondary school learners in the contemporary period where xenophobia remains an issue for both South Africans and foreign nationals either as perpetrators or victims. The primary aim of this study is not to understand individual constructions of xenophobia but instead probe the discursive views through which participants give meaning to xenophobia. This study is based on face-to-face interviews conducted with 24 respondents in KwaZulu-Natal who were selected through snowball sampling across the greater Durban area. There were 12 males aged between 18 and 20, and twelve females aged between 18 and 20 who participated in the interviews (see Appendix One for a demographic profile of interviewees). Interviews were conducted at a mutually arranged venue and each interview lasted on average an hour. This study is about the individual respondents in the first instance, but is an exploration of their discursive positioning in relation to Xenophobia. Questions were facilitated by a semi-structured interview schedule which focused on issues regarding their

understanding of Xenophobia, and their recollection of the 2008 xenophobic violence that plagued South Africa. Interviews took a conversational form with individuals sharing information with great enthusiasm. Utilising a working model of thematic analysis, data were analysed through a step-by-step procedure which began by searching through the transcripts of the interviews for repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke 2006 quoted in Gopal 2013). In the second part of the analysis, codes were produced to highlight emerging patterns. Each interview was coded, and these codes were matched across the 24 interviews. A thematic map was then produced where themes (discussed in the analysis section) were further refined in relation to the data from all respondents. It is critical to note that while the majority of research on xenophobia in South Africa has focussed on the nature, extent and description of the phenomenon, this study concentrates on the dominant themes generated from the interviews, which are centred on the perceptions of learners on xenophobia. Ethical clearance for the research was obtained from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and informed that information provided would be treated with extreme confidentiality. The only identifying data obtained from participants were age, grade, and ethnicity. Written informed consent was obtained from participants who were 18-years of age or older, with written parental consent and participant assent being obtained from younger participants. Since participation in the study was dependent on availability and willingness, the study may be limited in terms of the views of the respondents. It is also limited in that the results are not generalizable owing to the sample size. Another limitation is that the snowball sampling technique excluded participants who may have had experiences not captured in this study.

### **‘Broad’ Learner Constructions of Xenophobia**

In describing how they understood xenophobia S1 and S20 maintained *‘it is trouble between unsatisfied people’*. According to S2 *‘It is South African people looting foreigners for easy things’* and for S4 *‘It is the inhumane act of dehumanizing immigrants because of issues surrounding job opportunities and skills shortage that any country might be going through. Then start*

attacking foreign nationals for occupying these positions'. S5 and S6 respectively asserted, 'It is when people take things from us that doesn't belong to them' and 'I think it is the fighting between people of South Africa and people that are of other countries'. For S9 'Xenophobia is an attack on us foreigners by South Africans who are not happy with us foreigners being successful,' and for S13 –'It is when people without facts start a war against people they believe invaded their space'. S14 maintained, 'It is an attack on foreign nationals' while S15 noted that 'It is an attack of unhappy South Africans against people not born in their country'. S16 and S17 shared similar views such as -'It is war on refugees by unhappy South African people'.

S18, S19 and S23 added that xenophobia 'is when South African people take the law into their own hands and steal and kill foreigners' and or 'attack defenceless foreigners'. Some respondents for example S21 and S22 expressed their understanding of xenophobia as a somewhat extreme construction such as, 'Well xenophobia is the killing of foreigners by South Africans' and 'It's when people don't understand why they are not prosperous and blame foreigners for stealing from them'.

Responses suggest that foreign learners are aware of what constitutes xenophobia although some articulate xenophobia in elementary language.

## **Recollections of 2008 Xenophobic Attacks**

Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh, and Singh (2005) argue that South Africa's long history of racial politics and stratification has had an important, if difficult to quantify, effect on how citizens perceive non-nationals. Foreign nationals living in South Africa have been exposed to discriminatory behavior not just by South African citizens but also by state departments such as the Department of Home Affairs and the South African Polices Services (SAPS). The SAPS together with criminals have a history of exploiting foreigners' vulnerabilities. Consequently, foreign nationals are possibly less likely than South Africans to feel secure in public spaces, during the day or in the evenings. Leggett's (2003) findings from a study conducted in Johannesburg were that 81% of the respondents felt unsafe compared to 38% of South Africans). A study conducted by Crush and Williams (2003) demonstrate similar percentages across the country. These feelings of being unsafe seem



justified. The Wits University survey in Johannesburg, for example, showed that 72% of migrants mentioned that either they or someone they lived with had been a victim of crime in the country, compared with 56% of South Africans.

As indicated above, the 2008 attacks were preceded by a long history. However, Misago (2009) comments that the May 2008 attacks were extraordinary in their ferocity, intensity, rapid geographic space and the harm they caused. S1 recalls *'people burning and stealing from foreigners without a reason'* and a time that *'people was chasing and killing people from other countries'*. S4 re-collects *'hearing from my friends that we were under attack by the South Africans. Reason being we were taking their jobs and women. I was advised to avoid being outside after dark hours at night. I later saw on TV what was going on and it was very scary to imagine that all foreign nationals were under attack'*.

S5 recalled, *'South African people beat us and stole from us with no reason'*. Similarly S9 remembers *'being in Cape Town at the time and seeing the news of how foreigners were being attacked and then I got a call from my brother in Johannesburg telling me that another brother of ours was injured in the attack and I thought to myself, Hell no, I didn't come here to South Africa to die, but to have a better life'*. S6 recalled *'praying very hard that the attacks don't affect me and my family by locking us up and sending us back to our country'*.

For S10 the 2008 xenophobic attacks forged greater solidarity among foreign national learners, *'During that time I remember how much closer foreigner learners had to stand together and how my fellow brothers and sisters could not even sleep'*. S11 remembered that *'my family was panicking because they thought we will be killed by South African people'*, S12 recalled *'During the attacks people were saying that all foreigners must go back home and black South Africans were killing foreigners'*. S13 remembers specifically that she was *'on my way to school when my friends said I must go back home because South African people were beating and killing foreigners and I remember being very scared'*.

As indicated above the May 2008 attacks were unmatched by previous forms of xenophobic attacks or episodes. When respondents were asked for the causes of the attacks, not surprisingly one respondent S17 claimed *'All I remember was people being killed and robbed by South*

*African people for no reason and during that time I was scared to go to school and even wear my foreign clothes, because I did not want to be easily recognized. It was the scariest moment in my life,'* while S15 mentioned, *'All I knew is that South African black people attacked foreigners blaming foreigners for their poverty'*. Some respondents recollected suggestions to try and keep safe as expressed by S16 who remembers *'hiding myself under the wardrobe when Black South African people came knocking at my door, because they would beat us or kills us as we were not South Africans'* and by S18 who recalls, *'being told by my parents to be extra cautious when I was going to school because the South African people were attacking foreigners and during that time it felt like I was a prisoner'*. Respondents S21 and S23 recalled *'seeing horrible images on ETV of foreigners being killed'*.

From the findings above it is clear that most respondents were able to vividly recollect the nature of the 2008 South African xenophobic attacks. There is fear for some that it may persist given the nature of the violence during those attacks.

### **The 'Relationship' between Locals and Foreign Nationals**

International medical humanitarian organization Doctors without Borders (DWB) in 2010 expressed grave concern for the health and lives of thousands of survival migrants and refugees entering and living in South Africa. According to (DWB) sexual violence, appalling living conditions, police harassment, threats of xenophobic attacks, and a lack of access to essential health care still define the desperate lives of thousands of these vulnerable people.

DWB elected in 2010 to provide health care to survival migrants and refugees at its clinics in the border town of Musina and in Johannesburg (Doctors without Borders 2010 press release). Another example of the nature of the relationship between foreign nationals and South Africans was reported in June of this year (2013) when there was a deadly upsurge in violence against foreign nationals that spread through the country. The South African government insisted these acts of violence ought to be treated as criminal in nature, rather than xenophobic. Following these attacks Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed expressed his concerns about the treatment of Somalis in South Africa (The Daily Maverick accessed on 8

June 2013). On the same matter Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, expressed government's 'strongest condemnation of the recent attacks and killing of Somali and other foreign nationals in our country'. The minister reiterated that 'The looting, displacement and killing of foreign nationals in South Africa should not be viewed as xenophobic attacks, but opportunistic criminal acts that have the potential to undermine the unity and cohesiveness of our communities,' she said. 'There is no cause to justify this heinous crime'. Perhaps it would be appropriate to note how Sabelo, (2009) describes citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa 'A true citizen of South Africa was to be an 'Azanian' fully compatible to the right of African people to self-rule and the reclamation of all of their ancestral land (Halisi 1997; Driver 1980). As S1, in describing his political relation with South Africa maintains, '*We are always called names like makwerekweres and South Africans think we are people that just fell from the sky*'. Similarly, S2 refers to their status, '*when you want to apply for bursaries, you have to have a South African ID to apply. You cannot do it with your refugee status*'. S3 mentions '*sometimes when I go to hospital some nurses don't treat me well, they give me attitude*'. Other comments included for example those of S4, '*I feel like I will never be treated like a local due to the fact that I come from another country, also feel like this mistreatment is due to the misinformation given to local people due to political ambitions or to discredit the name of a country,*' and those of S5, '*when you go for a job, you are paid less because you are a foreigner*'. S6's comment focussed on extra financial pressure for bribes, '*because we as foreigners are always attacked by people here and when you go to report the matter I must have money to give the cops before he can hear my story*'. Another respondent S10 reported, '*Yes we are treated very differently by South Africans. They feel that we are here to steal their jobs and women. They show us no respect as they would their fellow South Africans*', S12 and S13 highlighted the issue of language, '*People treat me differently because I am a foreigner. Most of the time when I am in a public place, they don't trust me because of my English,*' S13 reported, '*There are times when I am appreciated by the public for my good skills and there are times when I am undermined because I am a foreigner*'. Learners also spoke of discrimination as obstacles to their learning, S19, '*I am treated differently as a foreign national, for example when you go to borrow books at public library, you*

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*cannot take it away because you don't have an ID only a status which does not qualify me for a card and this makes life difficult for me* and S21, 'South Africans treat foreigners differently at schools,' S22 reports, 'I don't get the same attention from school as South African learners do'.

In terms of understanding how respondents perceive their 'political space' in South Africa, generally responses spanned from being discriminated against by the South African home affairs, the public libraries, the South African Police Services and being discriminated against for the language they speak and for being foreign nationals.

### **Feelings of Safety**

The 2008 South African xenophobic attacks prompted the South African cabinet to establish the Inter-Ministerial Committee headed by the Minister of Police to deal with cases of xenophobia. When respondents were questioned on feelings of safety in South Africa, S6 claimed *'I feel unsafe as I was once attacked by people, who knew I was a foreigner, on my way back from school,'* while S10 stated *'I don't feel entirely safe because here in South Africa you are never safe after this xenophobic attack. Today you can smile at your South African neighbors, and tomorrow he may want to kill you'.* S11 maintained: *'I don't feel safe because of crime in South Africa every time when I go to school my parents always tell me to watch out and to avoid talking to anybody for my own safety. They want me to associate myself with other foreigner kids'.* Feeling unsafe could also affect academic outcomes as indicated by Gopal and Collings (2012). Although the statements on safety as expressed by the learners may not seem serious, deeper interrogation may show how these feelings impact the academic and cognitive development of learners.

Some respondents spoke of the possible anxieties around safety that they harbour eg.: S13 mentions *'I can never be sure when people can go crazy and start an attack on foreigners'* or S17, *'I only feel safe when I am at school, home or church, but when I am on the streets I am scared, because I always hear stories of girls being kidnapped and murdered and because I am a foreigner, I feel I am an easy target to South Africans,'* or S19- *'No because xenophobic attacks takes place every day is some way or another, so I never know when it's going to be mine turn'.*

All respondents expressed concerns for their safety. This stemmed from either being foreign nationals or because of their perceptions that South Africa in general is an unsafe country. Some worried about the possibility of being attacked 'unannounced'. Other respondents expressed fear of the people they knew (for example neighbours) who could perhaps strike when they were travelling between school, church and school.

### **Learners - A Future in South Africa**

Harris (2001:5) find that a culture of violence prevails in South Africa, 'where violence is seen as the legitimate and normal way of solving problems in the country'. Xenophobia must therefore be understood in relation to the high levels of violence that persist in South Africa.

What happened in May 2008 reflects deep tensions and dysfunctions in contemporary South African society and politics. If not addressed, the fractures and incentives that led to the 2008 killings could have grave consequences in the months and years ahead'. The scenes of hate that played out against foreign nationals in 2008 were 'extraordinary' in their 'intensity and scale', but not in their manner, as xenophobic violence has become a constant bed-fellow of post-apartheid South Africa.

The xenophobia indelibly stained South Africa's reputation as a country that respect the dignity of foreign nationals and was an acute embarrassment to the African National Congress (ANC) government, which relied on the hospitality of African states during its opposition against apartheid.

Learners demonstrated both positive and negative notions of future life in South for example S1 '*I can live a better life in South Africa- a life that I always dream about*'; and S3, '*Yes I would like to live in South Africa because it is a beautiful country, more beautiful than my country*' S4 '*I would love to live and help build this country through educating the African child about his / her neighbours and also contribute to the helping of the poor society*'. Other respondents spoke of wanting to remain in the country for future prospects '*I would like to live and pursue my studies in South African always makes it hard, to cope with everyday living*'. Still others such as S5, mentioned: '*Although I would love to live here for a long time, but I am scared because of all the attacks,*' and S6 '*If I can have a chance to go to*

*another country then I won't want to live in South Africa for a long time'.*

A minority of respondents (S7'; S9) for example) commented on wanting to 'remigrate' to greener pastures: *'My father always tells us that South Africa is not our country so I must not forget where I come from. He told me when I finish my studies and if my country becomes stable, I have to go back to my country, so I don't see myself staying a long time in South Africa'* and *'Yes I would to live in South Africa for a long time, so I can give back good things to this country'*

Many respondents spoke of the dualities of wanting to stay but of potentially being blocked by extrinsic forces for example S10: *'I would love to live in South Africa for a long time but my South African brothers and sisters don't make it easy'* and S11 *'Because South Africans don't like us foreigners I don't like to live in South Africa for a long time'*. Similarly S12 *'South Africa is a beautiful country I would like to be in this country for a long time but I am very scared about my life anything can happen at any time to us foreigners'*. Other respondents similarly reported such as S15 *'This is a developed country compared to mine so yes I would like to live here for a long time,'* and S14-*'Yes I like to learn about different cultures and people,'* and S16 *'I would love to live in South Africa for a long time and one day own my own business'.* and S17 *'If the people of South Africa can live in unity with foreigners then I would love to live for a long time in South Africa'*. S18 *'Yes, I would like to live in South Africa for a long time, but South African people make life difficult for us foreigners, in this beautiful country'*. One respondent shared that although South Africa is a beautiful country and *'anyone could like to live in this South Africa but since 2008 I am really scared to stay in South Africa. If I get a better opportunity in another country, I am ready to leave South Africa'*. For another respondent (S20) *I would like to improve my life and South Africa does not offer me such opportunities as a foreigner'*.

When respondents were questioned about their views of a future in South Africa, their opinions varied. Most respondents recognised the economic benefits of living in South Africa and compared them to their country of origin while others felt that they would love to live in South Africa for a long time if they could be accepted by the local people for example one respondent commented, *'I would love to live in South Africa for a long time but my South African brothers and sisters don't make it easy'*.

This comment also suggests the notion of wanting to be assimilated into the South African society if it was less hostile.

### **How South Africans are Perceived by Respondents**

For many victims of xenophobic violence, the battle does not end when the crowds disperse and they are re-integrated into communities. Instead, many victims of violence are left vulnerable and exposed. South Africans are viewed through negative stereotypes. Besides the feeling that South Africans are prejudiced and parochial, a prominent perception was that South Africans, especially black South African men, are extremely violent: Informants often depicted South African men as lazy, adulterous and not nurturing of their partners. Often, laziness and crime were interlinked ... South Africans were portrayed as unenterprising and wasteful ... poorly educated and ignorant (Morris 1998: 1127 - 1128). Some respondents (S1) think *'South African people in the city are very friendly and kind but people in the locations just think that they want to steal from them,'* or S2 thinks that *'they must stop accusing foreigners of all the bad things and start making opportunities for themselves,'* S3 maintains *'Ummm South Africans are good (laugh) but they are also bad'.*

A few respondents perceived South Africans positively as seen by S4, *'I believe South African people are lovely people. They have tolerated other Africans in their country and also intermarried with them. They have allowed us to live in harmony with them and even invested in business ventures in partnerships with foreign nationals,'* and S7 *'Some are good and others are not good,'* and S8 *'I think South African people are good but at times can be very rude to foreigners'.* Negative perceptions of South Africans were far more prevalent such as those by S6, *'They are evil people living in denial'* and those by S9 who thought *'South African people are self-centred and are too proud for nothing,'* S10- also thought *'South African people are lazy and depend too much on the government to provide for them,'* while S11 claimed that *'South African people are not good people the majority of them hate foreigners'.* Other respondents described South African more harshly for example (S12) perceived South Africans as people like other people but *'they are more selfish than other Africans. They want everything for themselves'* and S13 commented on communication skills by

stating *'I think South African people lack communication between people and they fight for everything'*. Similarly S14 thinks *'they are frustrated because they feel that the government only cares about foreigners and not them, which is not true,'* and S16 thinks that *'South African people can be kind if they want to but they are very stubborn and don't forgive easily'*.

One respondent S17 thinks *'South Africans can be egotistic and with that kind of attitude it will always make them unhappy people'* while another respondent S18 thinks that *'they must learn to respect everybody and stop blaming foreigners for their unhappiness'*. Another respondent S20 suggested *'South African people are good but need to be educated about foreigners'*.

From the responses above it emerged that the majority of respondents hold what may be termed negative perceptions of South Africans for example one respondent claimed, *'South Africans can be egotistic and with that kind of attitude it will always make them unhappy people'* while another respondent commented that *'they must learn to respect everybody and stop blaming foreigners for their unhappiness'*.

Other respondents described South Africans either as lazy, selfish or not taking responsibility for their lives but instead using foreign nationals as 'scapegoats' in internalizing their social and economic plight.

## **Conclusion**

Although children and youth living in South Africa are protected by national and international legislation this study has shown that foreign learners continue to be violated by local South Africans. Analysis of the findings also suggest that issues influencing xenophobic attitudes are around the views South Africans have of foreign nationals in terms of their own social and economic deprivation. Foreign nationals are perceived as hard working and dedicated individuals hence depriving locals of employment opportunities. The findings further demonstrate the 'social exclusion' of children and youth through the threat of violence and intimidation which should be addressed by the state and civil society at large. South Africa must ensure the protection of the rights of foreigners through engagement with all critical formal and informal role-players. Educating South Africans in accepting that South Africa like any other country will always be host to foreign nationals and that international policies protect their rights, may assist in helping South



Africans to reduce their antagonism and xenophobic attitudes towards foreign nationals. The South African government has an important part to play in ensuring that foreign nationals are not seen to be 'robbing' local people of jobs, economic and other state benefits.

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**Appendix 1: Demographics of Interviewees**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Q1: Age</b>	<b>Q2: Gender</b>	<b>Q3: Nationality</b>	<b>Q4:Country Of Birth</b>	<b>Q5: Age When Attacks Occurred</b>
S1	22	Female	Rwandese	Rwanda	17
S2	20	Male	Burundese	Burundi	15
S3	18	Male	Mozambique	South Africa	13
S4	22	Male	Congolese	D R Congo	17
S5	20	Female	Burundese	Burundi	15
S6	21	Male	Rwandese	Rwanda	16
S7	21	Male	Zimbabwean	Zimbabwe	16
S8	21	Male	Burundese	Burundi	16
S9	19	Male	Kenyan	Kenya	14
S10	20	Male	Kenyan	Kenya	15
S11	22	Male	Zimbabwean	Zimbabwe	17
S12	20	Male	Congolese	D R Congo	15
S13	19	Male	Congolese	D R Congo	14
S14	20	Male	Rwandese	Rwanda	15
S15	21	Female	Rwandese	Rwanda	16
S16	18	Female	Zimbabwean	Zimbabwe	13
S17	20	Female	Zimbabwean	Zimbabwe	15
S18	20	Female	Zimbabwean	Zimbabwe	15
S19	18	Female	Ugandan	South Africa	13
S20	20	Female	Ugandan	Uganda	15
S21	21	Female	Congolese	D R Congo	16
S22	19	Female	Congolese	D R Congo	14
S23	20	Female	Congolese	D R Congo	15
S24	20	Female	Burundese	Burundi	15