

Race-ing xenophobic violence: Engaging social representations of the black African body in post-apartheid South Africa

Malose Langa & Peace Kiguwa

To cite this article: Malose Langa & Peace Kiguwa (2016): Race-ing xenophobic violence: Engaging social representations of the black African body in post-apartheid South Africa, *Agenda*

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2016.1222086>



Published online: 24 Aug 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Race-ing xenophobic violence: Engaging social representations of the black African body in post-apartheid South Africa

Malose Langa and Peace Kiguwa

abstract

Intra-African migration to South Africa continues to be plagued by xenophobic violence and negative sentiments against black foreign bodies. The end of apartheid, exacerbated by regional and broader economic and political tensions on the continent, as well as general support of the anti-apartheid struggle by many African countries, has facilitated greater movement across and within the region. South African migration and economic isolation has in significant ways characterised the myriad forms of social group integration brought about by this transition. In this article we utilise the postcolonial theories of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko to understand and critique the predominantly negative social representations of black foreign nationals. These social representations are used in the legitimisation of xenophobia and other violent attacks against this group. We argue that the politics of race, language, gender and class underpin these incidences of xenophobia. We conclude with an argument for increased engagement with postcolonial contexts of intergroup relations using postcolonial approaches that are able to critically engage with the psychosocial aspects of a postcolonial State.

keywords

Fanon, Biko, postcolonial subjectivities, migration, xenophobia, South Africa

Introduction

How does paradise and utopia – embodied through the nation-state, get constructed? What utopic visions of a society exist, if they do, and how do these intersect with simultaneous constructs and representations of membership? Who gets left out and how do these representations come to justify enactments of violence against bodies categorised as ‘outside’ of legitimate membership?

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa (SA) has become a key destination for many African nationals (Landau *et al*, 2005) on the continent. The widespread and

public violent attacks against black foreign nationals in 2008 and 2015 are indicative of the increasing unrest and hostility against this social group. This specific aspect of xenophobia in SA implies a politics of race that has been critiqued by postcolonial and psychosocial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko. These theories represent a significant paradigm shift from mainstream social psychological theories that often fail to engage with the historical and political implications of race, and blackness in particular. It is our contention that traditional social psychological engagement with intergroup conflict can benefit from more psychosocial and psychopolitical

Agenda 2016

ISSN 1013-0950 print/ISSN 2158-978X online

© 2016 M. Langa and P. Kiguwa

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2016.1222086>

UNISA
university of south africa
PRESS

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

pp. 1–11

readings of violence, particularly when such violence takes on racialised, classed and gendered forms such as xenophobic violence in SA.

In the process of delegitimising of foreign nationals on the basis of nationality, South Africans are able to bond as a unified group (i.e. South African) and at the same time ignore their own ethnic and racial divisions, which are also a source of intergroup conflict in the country. In SA today ethnic markers of identification are still prominent in a post-apartheid context, and in some contexts have come to supersede 'race' as a primary identification marker among the black majority. This is seen in T-shirts that the youth wear 'Zulu 100%', 'Pedi 100%' or 'Xhosa 100%'. Group stereotypes associated with specific social groups often provide lenses through which individuals belonging to the group are understood and related to by others in the society.



Available from US T-shirt company, SunFrog.

Many South Africans accuse non-nationals of taking their jobs (Hassim *et al*, 2008). However, Landau *et al* (2005) have found little evidence to support this claim. In fact, many non-nationals are creating jobs through street trading, despite being abused and harassed by law enforcement

officials on a daily basis (Landau *et al*, 2005; Langa, 2011).

But how do we read xenophobic violence in SA? Gibson (2015) has questioned the assumption that the violence was xenophobic. He argues that the term xenophobia is too empty to explain anything. Similarly Mngxitama (2008) has argued that xenophobia is hatred of foreigners and that in SA foreigners are black and there are no white foreigners, just tourists, investors, professionals and potential employers. For Mngxitama (2008) this is an indication that xenophobia is hatred of the self among black people; he argues that this is negro-phobia rather than xenophobia.

The reading of xenophobic violence since SA's advent of democracy remains a core aspect of analysis of the nation-state as ongoing national project. In this sense then, our reading of the nation and its current articulations in the social imagery must be understood relative to other configurations of citizenship and national identity. These include current configurations of race, gender and sexuality, and class among others. Constructs of legitimate citizenship continue to exemplify the project of the nation that has been fundamental to the country's troubled socio-history as well as current attempts to reclaim and reconfigure categories of belonging. The ways that gender and class configure in this project remains largely unspoken and untroubled.

The different meanings that become attached to different migrant bodies, the different layers and nuances of violence that are enacted against these migrant bodies and so on reflect broader socio and gender politics of citizenship and belonging. The reproductions of classed, racialised and gendered relations of power and violence in contexts of migration and movement attest to these different layers of difference and its configurations in xenophobic violence today (Palmary *et al*, 2010).

The psychosocial importance of engaging blackness

In engaging the psychic manifestations and resurgence of social and structural oppression on the lived and internal lives of blacks, both Fanon and Biko effectively

grapple with the psychosocial dimensions of racial oppression. Such an approach is particularly enlightening in its reminder that socio-structural and political realities cannot be devoid from the psychological and interior lives of society members and vice versa. Stevens (2015) argues that such an orientation is important given the tendency for pathologisation of black experience in traditional approaches and models rooted in western contexts that engage whiteness as centre and normative. This emphasis on the psychosocial impact of racism demands that we understand and engage possible processes for emancipation that attend to the deep-seated impact of racism on people and model.

Emancipation therefore cannot be conceived purely in terms of political, legal and social liberation but must also incorporate aspects of the psyche. From the works of key theorists such as Mbembe (2011, 2012), Mngxitama (2008), Gqola (2008), Biko (1978, 2005), Ratele (2013, 2014), Sithole (2016), and Fanon ([1967] 1986), among others, the urgency to engage the effects of racism in the lives of black people in addition to more structural aspects of violence is evident. This is a useful orientation for us to understand that the 'stranger' is a racialised figure. If we take from this body of thought we are better able to understand how this particular figure has come to be and continues to be configured in racialised terms.

Engaging upsurges and resurgences of xenophobic violence in SA must intersect with other analyses and engagements with the broader structural violence that continues to dehumanise and violate many South Africans' lives in a post-apartheid State. The everyday and normalised structural violence that dictates the parameters within which many South Africans attempt to recognise their humanity – both in their eyes and the eyes of the other – have become so normalised that other manifestations of violence, such as xenophobia, can be spoken about via rhetoric of 'abnormal'. Even more so, removing the layers of one systemic form of violence inevitably lays bare other hidden and enmeshed forms. Effects of gender in structural and the everyday material lived experiences of raced, classed and gendered bodies exemplify this struggle and complexities of

intersectionality: the everyday systemic violence that intersects with different forms of violence. Segalo (2015) points out the narrow engagements with gender-based violence in society today that fail to see systemic violence more broadly as implicated in the enactments and re(productions) of black masculinity as inherently violent. Ratele (2015) makes a similar argument and follows on the gendered reading of violence that Gqola (2008) makes when she asserts that xenophobic violence in many instances takes on sexualised forms, exposing different and myriad layers of intersecting violence re-enactments.

Related to this, the position that young black men occupy with specific reference to violence is necessary to understanding the enactments of xenophobic violence and (black) masculinities within this climate. The existing statistics show that young black men are both perpetrators and victims of violence (Ratele, 2013). The highest rate of homicide among young men in SA is estimated to be 184 per 100,000 (Ratele, 2013). The question becomes what makes young black men be so violent to each other, including male foreign nationals? First and foremost, it is important to analyse the position that a black man finds himself in in the post-colony. In a white supremacist context, black masculinity is the most marginalised form of masculinity. Like Staples, Biko (1978:30–31) makes similar claims about race and the emasculation of black men:

He looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the inevitable position. Deep inside him, his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction – on his fellow man in the township ... all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated and drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.

Under apartheid black masculinity was positioned as inferior to white masculinity, and despite changes post-1994 many black men in reality remain impoverished and arguably still emasculated (and marginalised). This seems to be at the root of a young black man's anger, which he often averts in the

wrong direction, towards his fellow black men who are of foreign origin. He blames them for his subordinate and marginalised position of being unemployed and living in abject poverty. He uses violence as a means to regain his sense of masculinity, which is played out in xenophobic violence. Dodson and Oelofse (2000, cited in Langa and Kiguwa, 2013) make a similar argument in their study on conflict between local residents and Namibian immigrants in the Miza-moyethu community in the Western Cape. In one of complaints reported by the local residents it is noted that foreign nationals were perceived to be better off than local men because they “dressed smartly and flashed money around, thereby ‘corrupting’ local women” (*ibid*:125).

Contested masculinities are bound up within contestations of material freedom and consumption that become almost inseparable. Gqola (2008) has engaged this through the notion of possession in relation to (black) women’s bodies when she talks about an “imagined emasculation” (p. 218) in which black South African women are constructed as the property of black South African men, deserving and having no agency. The reinforcement and assertion of heteronormative masculinities in much of the discursive explanations for hostility and violence toward black African immigrants must be understood within the socio-history of gender violence in SA. In other words, the implied meanings of masculinity are linked to economic and cultural relations of power that are best read in relation to historical relations of domination that continue to be reinscribed in the present day. In this context, power relations are played out between black masculinities (embodied in black South African and foreign nationals) through access to women. More significantly, black women’s bodies become the site through which these contestations and anxieties are played out. Gqola (2008:218) reiterates this point when she asserts that the “sexualisation of xenophobia” attests to the broader commodification of black women’s bodies:

Negrophobic xenophobic sentiment is often couched as a battle between two sets of men. This is very evident in the oft-heard retort, ‘these guys come here and steal our women and jobs’....

Specific masculine entitlement and ‘threat’ are clearly encoded in this resentful articulation: black South African women and jobs are the entitlement of black South African men.

Constant negotiation of masculinity is made possible through the discursive commodification of women’s bodies, in which the female body merely becomes symbolic capital that attests to virile and powerful manhood. Black heterosexual masculinity is in conflict with other non-South African black masculinity in ways that allude to the contestations of hegemonic masculinity that are reinscribed through sexual prowess and material wealth. It is worth noting the very real continuity between the young men’s anger towards more well-off male foreigners. There is a sense of young men’s masculinity being under siege due to their unemployed status – hence their response with a reimagined masculinity, which is characterised by violence. And yet, can we engage xenophobia in terms purely characterised by displacing the original violence and complicity of the nation and those who are privileged through it – on to young black men whose “attitudes can be explained”? Gqola (2007) and Ratele (2008) have urged that we consider the psychopolitics of gender and sexuality in ways that acknowledge notions of possession of the feminine body and negotiation of masculinity through the possession of women. For Fanon, violence in this case is not seen as pathology, but a need to recognise socio-economic conditions under which the black majority live. However, he cautions that if he is not helped to channel his energy into real sources of his frustration, this may be deflected in the form of black on black violence.

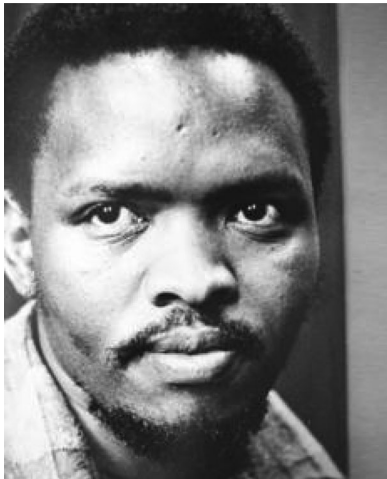
Several core concepts of Fanon and Biko are useful for us here, as outlined below.

Biko’s Black Consciousness

The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) emerged in the 1960s led by Steve Bantu Biko, who was the student leader at the University of Natal until he was expelled due to his active involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. In his book *I Write What I Like* Biko provides some key tenets of what

BCM is. In terms of Biko's (2005:49) work, Black Consciousness is defined as:

the realisation by the black man [or woman] of the need to rally together with his brothers [and sisters] around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realization that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black Consciousness therefore, takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life



Black Consciousness Movement leader, fallen hero, Steve Biko. From sahistory.org.za

Biko's work captures the psychosocial complexities of psychological liberation and transformation in postcolonial contexts, engaging the interiority of black inferiority and its implications for a true project of liberation. In the words of Biko (2005:22): "as long as blacks are suffering from inferiority complex [...] they will be useless as co

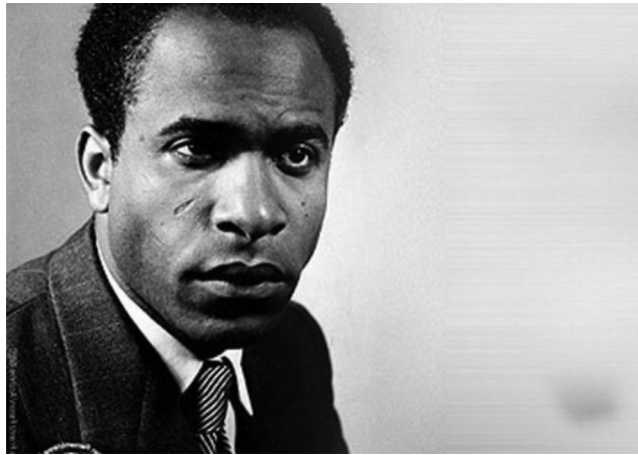
architects of a normal society where a man (sic) is nothing else but man for his own sake".

Creating a truly liberated post-apartheid SA means that the multifaceted and complex inferiority complexes deeply buried within the psyche of many blacks must be addressed. The current scourge of xenophobic violence in the country is a perfect illustration of the presence of racial politics in intergroup relations today. The role of the police as agents of institutional power in this dilemma further highlights the unique face of xenophobic violence – a face that is decidedly racialised and classed. As Harris (2002), Mngxitama (2008) and Mbembe (2011) have observed, xenophobia in SA cannot be thought of separately from negrophobia. This is because African foreign nationals remain the dominant targets of xenophobic violence in the country and have been at the receiving end of much police violence in comparison to other foreign nationals (Langa, 2011). Biko's views still remain relevant in post-apartheid SA. In their edited book *Biko Lives* Mngxitama *et al* (2008) discuss the importance of BCM in connecting the past and the present. For these authors the current living conditions for the majority of black people raise questions about the politics of blackness, especially in the post-colony.

Fanon's problematic on blackness

Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967, 1986) extends Du Bois's problematic on blackness as problem. The latter's explanation on what it means to be defined and represented as a "problem" (Du Bois, 1903, 1997) remains an urgent text exploring the existential and sociopolitical meanings of being black in white racist society. His starting problematic is to interrogate the existential meaning of being posited as an inherent problem as well as the often unarticulated nature of such a representation (Kiguwa, 2014).

By remaining unarticulated, we are often left with no critical and reflective space to ponder, interrogate, question and challenge the postulation of a problematic black body and subjectivity. For Fanon, this problematic extends to both 'black' and 'white' as existential entities. More than this, this



Frantz Fanon. From Pluto Press blog.

problematic also highlights the importance of self-emergence via the 'other' as a precursor to humanity.

Sithole (2016) observes that Fanon's concern for the psychic state of the black subject, i.e. survival, remains one of the core problematics of blackness even today. The conflation of survival with humanity is again crucial to understanding the im(possibilities) and complexity of living in a post-colonial and post-Apartheid society. Fanon's relevance today is related to this continued state of survival – the ways that the black subject is doomed to repeat conditions of dehumanisation against the self and others. His project therefore remains important to understanding how we may begin to think of possibilities for liberation that begin with the damaged sense of self.

Understanding relations of subjection and black subjectivity in the post-colonial world is key to unravelling psychosocial meanings of oppression and liberation today. SA remains something of a contradiction in its championing of a raceless utopia that recognises the humanity of all defined racial groups, conferring a citizenship for all that in principle remains an illusion. In the face of ongoing and increasing structural, symbolic and material violence in the lives of many peoples living in SA's young democracy, the ideal of a raceless utopia is not only problematic but also violent in its configuration and enactment.

Social psychologists Durrheim and Mtose (2006) examine the everyday race troubles of social groups by exploring the lived experiences and everyday realities of race and racism. They argue for a reading of racial formations in the 'new' SA alongside new and continuing class formations, as a starting critique of the implicit naivety and ideological function of the idea of the 'Rainbow Nation' (Kiguwa, 2014). We would argue that the current context of migration cannot be thought about separately from these myriad and intricate complexities of violence and psycho-existential struggles of race and racism. The construction of nationhood and citizenship in post-apartheid SA remains fraught with tensions, contradictions, psycho and social politics of identity, belonging and nationhood. Enactments of xenophobic violence in itself exemplifies these tensions and contradictions as well as class and racial formations.

Biko's (1978) project of a Black Consciousness that reclaims the meanings attached to blackness as being and representation, while still pertinent to the modern project of psychological liberation, must equally be read in relation to Fanon's (1967) caution to not take for granted that the work of liberation is complete with such a project of conscientisation. Indeed, Fanon's (1952) caution to treat such a project reclamation as only part of the struggle for liberation is a critical reminder that structural and symbolic systems of

oppression and dehumanisation continue to exist within the postcolony. What is therefore needed are more concerted and reflective efforts at destabilising and destroying structural systems of oppression that reproduce hierarchies of racialised, gendered and classed power.

Current systems of technologies of subjectivity and the self (Foucault, 1979) that are fundamental to immigration and policing of the migrant body today come to mind. Racial, class and gendered embodiment come to be made and remade via different registers of surveillance and disciplinary bio-power. Taxonomies of racial classification get made or indexed via technologies that make possible different markers of identification, such as the ID photo. Such markers of identification are crucial not only in framing possibilities for access into utopia – for entry and existence and a sense of belonging, but also come to function as markers for exclusion for other kinds of bodies.

Alienation and estrangement

Avoiding the psychological reductionism that the concept may sometimes mean, Fanon (1952) engages the notion of alienation to discuss the psychosocial – the linking of personal-subjective proper to sociohistorical contexts of production and analysis (Hook *et al*, 2004). Through this, Fanon is at pains to draw our attention to the continuous and intersecting worlds of the individual and his/her social, political and economic world. He also engages a related concept of estrangement to highlight other psychosocial effects of domination and oppression: the individual's sense of being cut-off, separated from his/her world as well as from a subjective understanding of the self and the social condition of the world (Hook *et al*, 2004).

Here, race is Fanon's pivotal point of engagement and reference but we can also see how such psychosocial effects also extend and engage aspects of social living that include classed and gendered relations of power and subjectivity. Both alienation and estrangement remain core dimensions of the dehumanisation project – both within and beyond the colonial project. Fanon (1952) argues that due to many years of colonial oppression, the colonised subject

develops an inferiority complex about his/her sense of being in the world that may often be reflected in the self-alienation and violence directed against oneself and others in similar conditions of oppression. It is important to note here that Fanon's (1952) engagement with inferiority complexes is not an essentialist understanding that pathologises individuals or groups. Rather, it is a more socio-political analysis that seeks to unravel the evident apathy and despair of colonised peoples in radically altering their society's continued dehumanisation of themselves.

This state of apathy and despair continues to characterise postcolonial states that repeat and enact structural violence against its citizenry. Post-liberation culture and blackness is thus fraught with contradictions of being, evident in intrinsic violence against blackness that characterised colonial rule. Political liberation therefore did not necessarily entail psychological liberation and transformation, but rather was characterised by a different kind of enslavement that witnessed increased negrophobia and violence directed against the other.

Post-liberation culture and blackness is thus fraught with contradictions of being, evident in intrinsic violence against blackness that characterised colonial rule

Depersonalisation

Dimensions of intrapsychic violence for Fanon (1952) include processes of dehumanisation – characterised by what can best be described as a “socially induced inferiority complex” (Hook *et al*, 2004:99). Living in a society that reifies race in different ways is inevitably accompanied by induced complexes of inferiority among devalourised population groups. Moving away from the potential danger of individualisation, Hook *et al* (2004) refer to this process as a “systematic” form of depersonalisation, highlighting its sociopolitical and economic origins and configurations. State apparatus agents such as the police enact these myriad forms of depersonalisation in their normalised treatment and harassment of particular migrant bodies. These enactments are marked by raced, classed and gendered attributes that again reinforce and highlight

the sociohistorical and colonial contexts of dehumanised black subjectivity.

Discourses of geography, place and culture play a role in perpetuating xenophobic violence. The geographical spaces are more rooted in the history of colonialism, which equates Africa as a Dark Continent embodying political unrest, economic and social instability such as poverty, civil wars, corruption and HIV/AIDS. Many of the stereotypes used against African immigrants are based solely on the long history of how Africans have been positioned in relation to SA (Harris, 2002). Politics of skin colour play a role in who is marked as a foreigner or not. Many African foreign nationals are identified as the 'other' based on their cultural and physical features that include hairstyles, accents, vaccination scars, and dressing style. As Gqola (2008:211) notes, it is a "difference marked on their bodies, through phenotype". The excerpt below shows how the South African Police also use biocultural features in 'othering' refugees:

To establish whether a suspect is illegal or not, members of the police focus on a number of factors. One of these is language: accent and inability to speak one of the African languages. Appearance is another factor in trying to establish whether a suspect is illegal – hairstyle, type of clothing worn as well as physical appearance (Minaar and Hough, 1996, in Harris, 2002:174).

Language, accent, dress code and physical appearance are seen as markers or signifiers of difference. More recently, xenophobic violence across SA highlighted the influence of symbolic and other social markers in the identification, stigmatisation and discrimination against foreign nationals (Hassim *et al*, 2008; Misago *et al*, 2010). Many foreign nationals interviewed in Harris's (2000) and Misago *et al*'s (2010) study mentioned that they were arrested on the basis on their physical appearance (e.g. being too dark, tall and muscular). The quotation below by one of the police officers confirms this (Harris, 2000:174):

In the case of Mozambicans a dead giveaway is the vaccination mark on the lower left forearm ... [while] those from

Lesotho tend to wear gumboots, carry walking sticks or wear blankets and also speak slightly different Sesotho.

Police use social prototypes (e.g. vaccination marks, wearing gumboots or blankets) to capture similarities and differences between groups of immigrants. These are the same stereotypes that local residents also use to justify their acts of violence against immigrants. Very recently Somali immigrants were forced to abandon their trade in the inner city of Cape Town. They were attacked by local residents, who accused them of stealing their customers and selling cheap goods. Verbal rejection through the use of terms such as *amakwerere* or *amagrigamba* reflects hostility and hatred of African immigrants. Here, blackness is understood through terms of reference that are negative and from which the individual so positioned is unable to escape.

Internalisation

It is via this systematic process of depersonalisation that Fanon (1952) engages a simultaneous psychosocial effect of internalisation. For him, such a process perfectly embodies what it would mean to have the social or the external world incorporated into the subjective and personal (Hook *et al*, 2004). The process whereby the internal world comes to be intertwined with the external, such that they remain enmeshed in a complex and messy relationship with each other, is important to how we may think about oppression and liberation. Kessi (2013) demonstrates the importance of internalisation as discussed by Fanon for community mobilisation initiatives. She argues that internalisation processes influence strategies and resistances toward community mobilisation endeavours and are significant to understanding tensions and problems of emancipation within such projects. Kessi further discusses the role of the internalisation process and how individuals and members of a community take on roles as either passive or active actors in changing their communities.

SA's transition to democracy in 1994 and the resultant ideal of a racially democratic country that has no tolerance for racial, economic and other forms of inequalities

and marginalisation, has not only been central to the broader narrative tropes of the 'Rainbow Nation' but also increasingly come to be attacked by many citizens as inaccurate. The glaring socioeconomic and other disparities that continue to trouble the country have not only contributed to ongoing racial tensions but also increased hostility against black African immigrants living in the country. Traditional social psychology has attempted to understand such climates of hostility through reference to scapegoating hypothesis (see Harris, 2002) among other psychological approaches.

While these have been useful to understanding some of the forms and nuances of xenophobic violence in SA, the need to engage the psychopolitics of identity re (enactments) in violence is necessary. Put differently, mainstream psychological engagement with issues of identity have often ignored or downplayed the political contexts within which identities are deployed and enacted. Postcolonial and psychosocial theories attempt to engage these different political contexts that not only concern themselves with the interior aspects of identity but also the historical, sociocultural, economic and political aspects. For example, some individuals come to be excluded from citizenship participation based on varied socio-historical contexts of representation and reproductions of legitimate citizenship. Nationality here becomes the basis for delegitimation whereby African foreign nationals are excluded because of their categorisation as African nationals and accused of social ills, such as increased crime in the country, as illustrated in the quote below:

Approximately 90 per cent of foreign persons who are in South Africa with fraudulent documents, i.e., either citizenship or migration documents, are involved in other crimes as well. (Remark by Masethla (2002) then Deputy Director of Home Affairs)

Some of these views were also directly reflected in the perceptions of respondents interviewed during Forced Migration Studies Programme research in locations affected by violence in May 2008 (Misago *et al*, 2010). Social ills such as poor economic opportunities, crime and general social

chaos were attributed to foreign nationals in justifying violent acts against them. Many of these views continue to influence xenophobic violence, including another outbreak in 2015. As an example, a South African justified the 2007 violence against Somalis living in Motherwell in the following terms:

The approach for the Somalis to come and just settle in our midst is a wrong one. Somalis should remain in their country. They shouldn't come here to multiply and increase our population, and in future we shall suffer. The more they come to South Africa to do business, the more the locals will continue killing them (Landau and Haithar, 2007)

A respondent from Madelakufa II in Them-bisa reflected this widespread perception:

These people come here to destroy. They come here and as South Africans we are deprived. They don't even have ID documents, they commit crime and when you report that to the police, where will they find that person? They also have illegal guns and these people don't mind to shoot when they pick pocket you (Misago *et al*, 2010:85).

Similarly, a resident of Itireleng in Tshwane stated:

As long as the foreigners are here we will always have unemployment and poverty here in South Africa;... there was no poverty and unemployment in SA before the influx of foreigners, ... there is too much of them now, if the government does not do something people will see what to do to solve the problem because it means it's not the government problem, it is our problem (Misago *et al*, 2010:123)

Utopic visions of a SA devoid of socio-economic and other problems are inherent in how current constructs and visions of a SA in crisis are represented in the enactment of xenophobic violence. The preceding quotes attest to the predominant negative representations of the black African foreign body as inherently imbued with *social disorder*. Intersecting with this construct of disorder is the notion of erosion of order: erosion of a way of being, culture, and health (via constructs of the visions of a SA

void of social disease and disorder). A politics of citizenship also appears to be central in how this body is represented. In the face of massive poverty and unemployment, the poor try and enforce “a national citizenship regime through which they are defined as citizens with right to lay claims to a redistribution of resources through the simultaneous exclusion of foreign nationals as non-citizens who[se] access to or accumulation of resources is rendered illegal” (Von Holdt *et al*, 2011:29).

Xenophobic violence is therefore used as a means to exclude foreign nationals as non-citizens and not deserving to enjoy the rights that South Africans enjoy. At the symbolic level, such violent xenophobic attacks are seen as justified due to what many residents perceive to be the failure of the State to maintain law and order in preserving the rights of citizenship for South Africans only (Von Holdt *et al*, 2011).

Conclusion

Xenophobia, in its different racial, class and gendered manifestations, remains a testament to the continued failure to broaden how we frame and recognise violence that inevitably turns these bodies against each other, whether as scapegoating and/or readily accessible targets for venting frustrations and anger at the State. This article has argued for the value of engaging the psychosocial contributions of Fanon and Biko to this decolonisation project as part of unpacking the current manifestations of xenophobic violence in SA against predominantly black (poor) African migrants.

We have focused on some of the dominant racialised tropes via which this violence is enacted, performed and justified. Current framings of such violence in moralistic rhetoric fails to frame more pertinent concerns related to how we conceive of violence more broadly, the traumatic effects of a socio-history of oppression and dehumanisation, as well as what possibilities exist for dealing with these recalcitrant effects. Racing xenophobia is important, for it allows us to not separate enactments of violence from the racial socio-histories within which this violence finds meaning and justification. Racing xenophobia is important because it

reminds us that the decolonisation project remains a distant reality, and is not to be confused with the formalised achievements of independence and democracy across the continent and in SA in particular.

Fanon and Biko’s call to take seriously the psychosocial project of oppression and liberation remains as relevant today, in a democratic SA, as it ever was.

References

- Biko S (1978) *I Write What I Like*, London: Bowerdean Press.
- Biko S (2005) *I Write What I Like*, Cambridge: African Writers Series.
- Du Bois WEB (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chicago: AC McClurg and Co.
- Du Bois WEB (1997) *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York: Bedford.
- Durrheim K and Mtose X (2006) ‘Being-black-in-the-new-South-Africa’ in G Stevens, V Franchi and T Swart (eds) *A Race Against Time: Psychology and Challenges to Deracialization in South Africa*, pp. 107–153, Unisa Press: Pretoria.
- Fanon F ([1967]1986) *Black skin, White Masks*, Pluto: London.
- Foucault M (1979) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Gqola P (2008) ‘Brutal inheritances: echoes, negrophobia and masculinist violence’, in S Hassim, T Kupe and E Worby (eds) *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Reinvention of Difference in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Gqola PD (2007) ‘How the ‘cult of femininity’ and violent masculinities support endemic gender based violence in contemporary South Africa’, in *African Identities*, 5, 1, 111–124.
- Gibson NC (2015) *Fanonian practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali baseMjondolo*, Scottsville: UKZN Press.
- Harris B (2002) ‘Xenophobia: A new pathology for a New South Africa?’ in D Hook and G Eagle (eds) *Psychopathology and Social Prejudice*, pp 169–185, Lansdowne: UCT Press.
- Hassim S, Kupe T and Worby E (2008) *Go home or die here: violence, xenophobia and the reinvention of difference in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Hook D, Mkhize N, Kiguwa P and Collins A (eds) (2004) *Critical Psychology*, Lansdowne: UCT Press.
- Kessi S (2013) ‘Re-politicizing race in community development: Using postcolonial psychology and Photovoice methods for social change’, in *Psychology in Society*, 45, 19–35.
- Kiguwa P (2014) ‘Telling stories of race: A study of racialised subjectivity in the post-apartheid academy’, unpublished Doctoral thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Landau LM, Ramjathan-Keogh K and Singh G (2005) *Xenophobia in South Africa and problems related to it*, Forced Migration Working Series, Number

- 13, Johannesburg: Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Landau L and Hairthar K (2007) 'Somalis are easy prey', in *Mail & Guardian*, available at: <http://mg.co.za/article/2007-03-06-somalis-are-easy-prey> (accessed 20 May 2016).
- Langa M (2011) *Exploring experiencing of torture and CIDT that occurred in South Africa amongst non-nationals in the inner city of Johannesburg*. Research report written for the Centre of Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Braamfontein Centre.
- Langa M and Kiguwa P (2013) 'Violent masculinities and service delivery protests in post-apartheid South Africa: a case study of two communities in Mpumalanga', in *Agenda*, 27, 1, 20–31.
- Masetlha B (2002) 'The migration system in South Africa', presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs, Cape Town, 15 April.
- Mbembe A. (2011) 'Fanon's nightmare, our reality', *Mail & Guardian*, available at <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-12-23-fanons-nightmare-our-reality>.
- Mbembe A (2012) 'Metamorphic thought: The works of Frantz Fanon', in *African Studies*, 71, 1, 19–28.
- Misago JP, Monson T, Polzer T and Landau LB (2010) *May 2008 violence against foreign nationals in South Africa: Understanding causes and evaluating responses*, Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa.
- Mngxitama A (2008) 'We are not all like that: Race, Class and Nation after Apartheid' in S Hassim, T Kupe and E Worby (eds) *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Reinvention of Difference in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Palmay I, Burman E, Chantler K and Kiguwa P (eds) (2010) *Gender and Migration: Feminist Interventions*, London: Zed Press.
- Ratele K (2013) 'Subordinate black South African men without fear', in *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, LIII, 1–2, 247–268.
- Ratele K (2008) 'Analysing males in Africa: Certain useful elements in considering ruling masculinities', in *African and Asian Studies*, 7, 4, 515–536.
- Ratele K (2014) 'Psychology in society (PINS) and traditions: Back towards a critical African psychology', in *Psychology in Society*, 46, 50–59.
- Ratele K (2015) 'The singularity of the post-apartheid black condition', in *Psychology in Society*, 49, 46–61.
- Segalo P (2015) 'Gender, social cohesion and everyday struggles', in *Psychology in Society*, 49, 70–82. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-8708/2015/n49a6>
- Sithole T (2016) 'The concept of the black subject in Fanon', in *Journal of Black Studies*, 47, 1, 24–40.
- Stevens G (2015) 'Resistance, reclamation, and redefinition' in I Parker (ed) *Handbook of Critical Psychology*, pp 182–189, Routledge: London.
- Von Holdt K, Langa M, Molapo S, Mogapi N, Ngubeni K, Dlamini J and Kirsten A (2011) *The smoke that calls: insurgent citizenship, collective violence and the struggle for a place in the new South Africa*, Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.



MALOSE LANGA is a Programme Co-ordinator of Masters in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He is also a Senior Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, as well as an Associate Researcher at the Society, Work and Development Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand. His research interests include collective trauma, violence, masculinity, and youth at risk. Email: malose.langa@wits.ac.za



PEACE KIGUWA (PhD) is Senior Lecturer in the School of Human and Community Development in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Her research interests include gender and sexuality, critical race theory, critical social psychology and teaching and learning. Her current research projects include a focus on young women's leadership in higher education and destabilising heteronormativity project with the African Gender Institute and Action Aids International. She has co-edited three books and has published in both local and internationally accredited journals. She is currently co-editor of the accredited journal *Psychology in Society* (PINS) and co-editor on three Special Issue journals. Email: peace.kiguwa@wits.ac.za