

# The Hate that Hate Produced

A lot has been written and said about the causes of the perennial xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Most analysts blame inequality, unemployment and the economic malaise that has hit black South Africans hard.

“South Africans are not xenophobic, they are hungry”, said South Africa’s Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, while speaking at the University of KwaZulu-Natal last week.

Others blame ‘drug dealers’, an euphemism to mean foreign nationals that are allegedly committing crimes in the country. This is one of the most nonsensical explanations ‘impartial’ south Africans give for the violence. There is a popular story in this theory that has been endlessly repeated in the wake of the latest violence. A heroic south African Tax driver allegedly got killed as he tried to stop an alleged drug dealer from selling drugs to a native minor. To spice up the theory, they add that native south Africans are trying to protect the police that is also being attacked by these foreigners.

So, Africa’s most sophisticated military and economic power has its forces so hapless that they need protection from citizen mobs! Also, these heroic south Africans somehow only get heroic at stopping crimes when the perpetrators are foreign, but do nothing when their fellow citizens rape and murder women at the highest rate in the world, carjack innocent motorists and commit an ogre of violence everyday, something that has made the rainbow nation the murder capital of the world! Who are these people kidding?!

Where as there is some truth to all the theories above, one of the factors that has not received enough attention is the role of Apartheid and South Africa’s history of racial segregation

that sought to socially engineer the society to make sure that blacks were at the very bottom of stratum in all spheres of life.

Besides its sheer brutality and terrorism against the black population, the apartheid government introduced a string of laws that ensured everyone in the country knew their place, according to the colour of their skin of course. Known sometimes as 'Petty apartheid' because of the sheer absurdity of some of its forms, it was always the most visible form as opposed to 'grand apartheid' that aimed at denying blacks quality education, employment, residence, etc. The practice of segregation in the routine of daily life – in lavatories, restaurants, railway cars, buses, swimming pools and other public facilities was intended to make blacks sub-human.

At the heart of the apartheid beast was the division of people into racial groups using a complex and trivial series of tests. The result was the classification of the population into one of four groups: White, Black, Indian and Colored, with Colored and Indian groups further subdivided. The grouping was primarily based on appearance – skin color, facial features, appearance of head (and other) hair. For political, diplomatic and economic reasons, certain groups and their descendants, including Japanese, Taiwanese and South Korean immigrants, were classified as "honorary White." Only the White group could live free of any restrictions. All other racial groups suffered the laws of Petty Apartheid.

The privileges and the suffering however differed in severity even among the major subgroups; i.e, the Blacks, Indians and Coloureds, with the Indians and coloureds being considered superior to blacks. Nelson Mandela in his biography recalled the implications of these subdivisions, when he told of how while in Prison, this segregation still applied to the letter. Whites for example received tea with milk for breakfast, with unrationed sugar provided as well. Indians and coloureds received 'pap' (porridge meal) or plain tea, but with sugar

added. Blacks received the worst kind of 'pap', without sugar.

As those who follow south African society knows, this segregation to a great extent still exists. Whites own most of the economy. Many Indians still consider black south Africans inferior to them and racism is perverse in their Indian community.

Consciously or subconsciously, some black south Africans, after liberation in 1994 must have been tempted to find a subgroup that they were superior to in this social hierarchy. Then entered thousands, perhaps millions of Africans from the rest of Africa who came south looking for work. These were to become the scapegoats for all the problems these newly freed people were to face. Apartheid, through divide and rule, had for many years used this tactic to sow intertribal divisions so that the natives never really focussed on their true enemy; the white Afrikaner segregationist. Thousands died when blacks in the 'homelands' and townships fought against each other.

U.S President Lyndon Johnson is said to have told in aide in the 1960s: "If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you."

I guess the saying can now be altered for context to say, "If you can convince the lowest black South African that he's better than the best Nigerian, and that the Nigerian is the cause of his problems, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and to blame, and he'll empty his pockets for you."

As Julius Malema has severally told his compatriots, they are exhibiting misdirected anger. The inequality currently ravaging south African society lies squarely at the feet of apartheid and hundreds of years of colonisation and segregation. Africans had no hand in that. To the contrary

they had a hand in ending it. What a terrible way to pay them back!

One of the worst indignities of apartheid in South Africa was the policy of 'Separate Development'. The policy served as a structural solution for apartheid's planners who wanted to turn South Africa into a white republic in which blacks did not feature as citizens. Also known as the "Bantustan" policy, it sought to assign every black African to a "homeland" according to their ethnic identity. The racist government also developed separate services for these areas which were inferior to those provided to whites. No aspect of this 'development' was more pathetic than education.

The Bantu (black) Education act of 1953, a pillar of the apartheid project, was intended to separate black South Africans from the main, comparatively very well-resourced education facilities available for white South Africans.

The impact of this inferior education was later to haunt the apartheid regime. The Bantustans were awash with ill-educated, unemployed and unemployable youth who formed the core of many revolution struggles including Mandela's. The famous 1976 Soweto uprising was led by the products of this education, who protested the addition of another insult into the system, that of making it mandatory for all south African black students to study in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor.

Even today, 25 years after the end of Apartheid, 8 out of 10 south African children can't read and understand a simple sentence. These are the type of people attacking foreigners right now.

The ghettos that replaced the 'homelands' are the places where these xenophobic criminals live, in 'hostels' which were built by the apartheid regime for decades served as homes for male migrant workers, especially those that came to work in

the mines. They were also meant to accommodate black workers who had moved to cities – often to work in mines – as strict rules meant black labourers could not live in areas designated for white people. The hostels, the last one was built in the 1980s, were also usually organised by ethnicity. The BBC reports that Post-apartheid, the hostels, run by local municipalities, are now mostly home to thousands of young men from the Zulu ethnic group – the largest in South Africa – who come to cities in search of work. Some residents do not pay rent, as the local authorities find it difficult to keep a track of who exactly lives in the hostels. Rooms meant for four people often house 11; the Jeppestown hostel, for example, has 3,200 beds but up to 10,000 people reside there. These have become the hotbed for the xenophobic war being waged against African immigrants. Like war zone trenches, the criminals come out to attack and disappear back in when pursued by authorities. Many of the residents are unemployed – and the hostels have always been dangerous places to visit, even for the police. Over the years many police officers were murdered there.

Hurt people hurt people, the old adage goes. It is well known that those who have been physically and emotionally damaged tend to inflict their hurt and pain on other people. The legacy of apartheid is of a population broken at its core. Just like American inner cities still suffer the plague of violence that stemmed from Jim Crow laws such as redlining in Chicago, Baltimore and Englewood, the current violence in South Africa wouldn't be in the form, and shape that it is in, were it not for apartheid.

Stopping it will require further efforts at dismantling covert apartheid that still bedevils the Rainbow Nation

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