

Social Movement Responses to Xenophobia: A CASE STUDY OF THE SOWETO ELECTRICITY CRISIS COMMITTEE, THE ANTI-PRIVATIZATION FORUM AND THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA

by Trevor Ngwane & Nonhlanhla Vilakazi



The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies



Social Movement Responses to Xenophobia: A CASE STUDY OF THE SOWETO ELECTRICITY CRISIS COMMITTEE, THE ANTI-PRIVATIZATION FORUM AND THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA

by Trevor Ngwane & Nonhlanhla Vilakazi

Part I: Executive summary	1
Problems and recommendation.....	2
Part II: Introduction	4
Terms of reference	5
Methodology	6
Part III: Profile of organisations investigated :	
SECC, APF and CAX	7
Civil society and social movements: some theoretical points.....	7
Background to the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee	10
The SECC's response to the xenophobia.....	11
Motsoaledi	12
Background to the Thembelihle Crisis Committee	12
The TCC's response to the xenophobia	13
Background to the Wynberg Concerned Residents	13
The WCR's response to the xenophobia.....	14
The Coalition Against Xenophobia.....	14
The Sounds of Edutainment.....	15

Part IV: Research findings: Detailed overview.....18
Incidence of xenophobia attacks in the 3 areas.....19
Causes of xenophobia21
Response to the xenophobic attacks.....26
Contradictions and dissonance in the struggle against xenophobia31
Work beyond the immediate response to the attack.....33

Part V: Lessons: Identity, ideology and vision in the struggle against xenophobia35

Part VI: Conclusion.....38

Part VII: Appendices39
Appendix A.....39
Appendix B41
Appendix C.....42
Appendix D.....43
Appendix E45
Appendix F.....46

An investigation into how three social movement organisations responded to the xenophobia violence that broke out in South Africa in May 2008, reveals that participation in such organisations by ordinary working class people makes them to be less xenophobic and even likely to help the victims of xenophobia, rather than join in the attacks. Members of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and the Anti-Privatisation Forum were positioned by their organisations prior to the xenophobia attacks to respond in a progressive way to these attacks. These two organisations were also central in the formation of the Coalition Against Xenophobia that publicly united different civil society organisations against xenophobia. However, the response of individual members appeared to vary according to how well their organisation provides leadership, education and guidance to its members, among other factors. The SECC seemed to provide the most systematic and consistent influence and activity around these issues, and its members were the most active and involved for a period longer than the other APF affiliates in organising against xenophobia and reaching out to the victims.

Political understanding provides the ideological framework within which individuals evaluate the world and respond to its challenges. Alternatively, an undeveloped political understanding or consciousness opens a person to being swayed by the self-serving and circular arguments of the xenophobes. Membership in a social movement organisation and adherence to a progressive

political philosophy or position, such as revolutionary Pan-Africanism or democratic socialism, tends to provide individual social actors with an ideological foundation for opposing attacks against African immigrants in a country like South Africa. Preventative work is very important in the battle against xenophobia. Progressive political education, including programmes that accentuate a feeling of solidarity between people from different countries, discourages the acquisition of xenophobic attitudes and greatly reduces the likelihood that a person will join in xenophobic violence. Such programmes are best organised by social movement organisations with a progressive leadership; with such leaders more likely to challenge, persuade and win over members who have caught the xenophobia virus. A vision of a new kind of society where all are treated equally and with respect irrespective of race, creed, sex, sexual orientation or country of origin, where all forms of oppression and exploitation, including xenophobia, have been eradicated, is necessary to inspire and guide the struggle against xenophobia. This is because the analysis of the social movements studied suggests that it is the capitalist system itself, its history and its nature that is at the root of xenophobia. Competition, individualism, divide and rule, colonialism, racism, tribalism and apartheid were all seen as closely related to the development of the capitalist system. From this point of view, the struggle against xenophobia is a struggle against the capitalist system itself.

Problems & recommendations

Role of social movements/ organisations in society

- They should be viewed more positively as they seem to make a contribution in fighting anti-social attitudes such as xenophobia.

The importance of political education in social movement organisations

- Political education is crucial to the work of social movements and other civil society organisations because it keeps members in line with the progressive policies of the organisation.

Ideology, history and philosophical outlook are important attributes that influence how individuals respond to social events such as the outbreak of xenophobia. Preventative work is important in the struggle against xenophobia

- Politics, ideology and an understanding of history by individuals and groups need to be taken seriously and carefully nurtured if we are to fight against anti-social attitudes and behaviour such as xenophobia.
- There is a need to develop programmes before the outbreak of xenophobia attacks on an ongoing basis. Deterrents and sanctions against xenophobic talk and action should also be regarded as preventative measures.

Cultural exchange and interaction between immigrants and local "borners" have a positive impact on how people respond to xenophobic attacks

- Conscious programmes to increase interaction between immigrants and local communities are necessary. Sports, music, politics and other cultural activities can provide the content and contexts for such interaction.

A CASE STUDY OF THE SOWETO ELECTRICITY CRISIS COMMITTEE, THE ANTI-PRIVATIZATION FORUM AND THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA

Putting together coalitions requires leadership and co-ordination skills especially maintaining a coalition beyond the immediate issue

- Training in coalition building including coordination skills is necessary. Tolerance and open-mindedness are crucial attributes in keeping coalitions going and together.

The struggle against xenophobia is sometimes seen as separate or distinct from other struggles. This leads to progressive struggles being possibly tainted with xenophobia

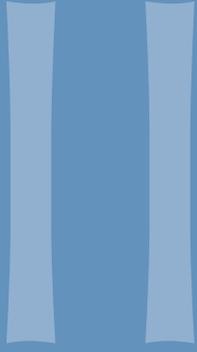
- Social struggles for water, electricity, housing and for service delivery should all be combined with the struggle against xenophobia.

Xenophobia has roots in the history, culture and political economy of South Africa, Africa and the world

- The struggle against xenophobia needs to attack it at its roots, namely, exploring and challenging the political and economic mechanisms that give rise to it, including questioning the capitalist system itself.

The widespread existence of xenophobic attitudes due to institutional and historical factors means that if these are not challenged or nothing is done or said about them, they are likely to thrive

- Community and social movement leaders need to constantly and consistently talk about and engage people in activities that reject xenophobia and promote unity and solidarity between local and immigrant communities.



Xenophobia is the fear and hatred of “foreigners”¹ Most of the academic and popular literature on the problem of xenophobia, especially arising out of the May 2008 attacks of African immigrants by South Africans, understandably tends to focus on the causes of the attacks and then move on to solutions. However, it is my contention that some solutions will be one-sided if researchers do not also consider the question from a positive angle, namely, why are some people not xenophobic? Why do they prefer to embrace and accept people from other countries and places? Why do some people end up helping the victims of the attacks rather than join the attackers? These questions relate in particular to ordinary working class people, people who in the South African context are sometimes theorised to be in competition with working class immigrants and likely to exhibit anti-immigrant feeling with some even joining in the attacks.²

¹ According to Ras Zweli Cush of Sounds of Edutainment (interview respondent). Most respondents would probably understand and agree with this definition. However, B. Harris observes that xenophobia “is not just an attitude: it is an activity ... it is a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage.” Xenophobia: A new pathology for a new South Africa? in D. Hook and G. Eagle *Psychopathology and Social Prejudice*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 84, 2002.

² “Violence against foreign nationals is often explained by perpetrators and commentators alike, as reflecting competition for scarce resources, such as houses and unemployment.” Duncan Breen and Tara Polzer, ‘Xenophobia: Calling government to account’, *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 33 Number 3, August/September 2009, p.29.

The report looks at why some working-class people choose to pledge their solidarity with the victims, what are the reasons behind their solidarity, what makes them oppose the attackers, why do they attend the marches and demonstrations against xenophobia, what are the tensions and contradictions exhibited in their response?

The research explores these questions by way of **an investigation of the response of 3 organisations to the xenophobic attacks**. It looks at the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and the Campaign Against Xenophobia (CAX).

The investigation into the SECC locates this organisation in the Soweto context by way of conducting interviews beyond the membership of this organisation, including having a special focus on Motsoaledi residents, an informal area in Soweto. With respect to the APF, the focus is on two of its affiliates, namely, the Thembelihle Crisis Committee (TCC) and the Wynberg Concerned Residents (WCR). The former organises from a shack settlement in Lenasia, and the latter from a small community of people living in an abandoned factory building in Wynberg, with Alexandra township across the road. However, it should be noted that the SECC is also an affiliate of the APF. With respect to CAX, the focus is on CAX itself with a special look into the Sounds of Edutainment, a group of cultural workers who associated themselves with CAX and other initiatives against xenophobia.

The report records what these organisations did before, during and after the attacks. These are organisations which generally preached tolerance and solidarity between South Africans and the African immigrants who were targeted for attack by the xenophobic mobs. They actively organised against xenophobic attacks and attitudes. The report looks at what they did and what they achieved. It also looks for strengths, weaknesses, tensions and contradictions in their response. The assessments made in the report are based on material collected through 39 interviews. Both of us (the researchers) learnt a lot from being involved in this project, especially from talking to ordinary working class people and activists about xenophobia and its political economy. Their responses were rich with both the pathos and wisdom of lived experience and conveyed the buoyancy and resilience of the human spirit in the face of hardships and challenges. We hope this report manages to convey some of that fighting spirit and the hope it inspires.

Terms of reference

This research looks at **how social movements responded to the outbreak of xenophobic violence** in May 2009 in Johannesburg.

It looks at the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Coalition Against Xenophobia. The SECC and APF can be regarded as social movement organisations that politically stand outside of the dominant ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance. From about 1967, the social movements have made a substantial impact on the South African political landscape. From local

level struggles around service delivery, land redistribution and evictions to major court cases around issues like water meters to more spectacular demonstrations at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), the movements have shown an ability to mobilise and build, in broad terms, a progressive, anti-neoliberal momentum.

In this context it was noticeable that the May 2008 xenophobic violence caught many of the movements unawares. Some quickly scrambled to confront the violence and lend support to the victims. This study looks at the mobilisations in the Johannesburg area. It reflects on the debates in the organisations, the content of press statements and allied documents and the organisation of the major march by CAX. It also considers the support work in camps and the mass mobilisation like that against the Lindela immigrant detention camp.

Significantly it seeks to look at the impact of the violence in Soweto, especially the work that was done to ensure the violence does not spread across the township. The study will rely on interviews, documents, perusal of websites and personal observations and reflections.

Methodology

The study relied on **open-ended interviews and participant observation** for its data.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in 3 research sites, viz. Soweto, Thembelihle and Wynberg. Some interviews were conducted with Johannesburg-based organisations. Some of the respondents were ordinary members of their communities, others were leaders and activists. It should be stated up front that the researchers are themselves opposed to and campaigners against xenophobia. And it is on this basis that we participated in a research project we hope can provide some solutions in the struggle to eradicate xenophobia.

The interviews were guided by a set of questions. Please see Appendix 2. Data analysis consisted of listening to the interviews, transcribing some of them and organising the responses according to themes, and then comparing the responses with each other. The researcher's interpretation of the data has played a large hand in the presentation of the findings, however respondents have been allowed to speak with their own voice in the report as much as possible.

The interviews went very well, because both the researcher and research assistant are known by many of the respondents, or found people who could introduce them. The respondents opened up and seemed quite free to express their opinions, including making critical comments against government, capital and their own organisations. A lot of data was generated in the interviews, but due to time constraints, could not all be adequately harnessed for the purpose of this report.

The study collected information on the work of the different organisations from interviews and from written documents such as memoranda submitted during marches, press statements and pamphlets. Reference was made to other studies in the same field in order to locate this investigation within a more or less established scholarly line of enquiry.

Civil society and social movements: some theoretical points

Civil society is a contentious concept in politics. The recent literature, coloured by the emergence of the globalisation social movements, tends to emphasise the role of civil society as some kind of watchdog that interacts with the state “to stem its excesses”³. From the point of view of the ruling elites and its institutions, civil society has been accepted as an important part of global governance, hence the practice of parallel civil society meetings during international meetings of the world’s states. These civil society meetings are expected to develop positions and recommendations which are then submitted to the decision-makers for consideration. Most of these civil society organisations turn out to be non-governmental organisations. In general, democratic theory assumes a distinction between the state and the rest of

³ S.Ouma “Civil Society and the nation-state – The case of Kenya”, Development Dialogue, No. 49, November 2007, p. 109.

society, and then regards civil society as crucial to democracy because it acts as a brake to state power on behalf of the masses. This is partly based on the classical writings of Hegel and de Tocqueville. From this point of view, therefore:

Civil society is the independent eye of the society, consisting of popularly self-organised and vigilant civil associations.⁴

It has to point out, however, that not all civil society is “civil” in the sense that it is “good for democracy”. Civil society is not homogenous, for example:

If one takes the category of NGOs for instance, they come in different forms. There has been talk of DONGOs (donor-organised NGOs), MONGOs (my own NGO), GONGOs (government-owned NGOs), FANGOs (family-owned NGOs), FONGOs (first-lady NGOs) and so on.⁵

From this point of view, in addition to NGOs, we can identify community-based organisations which potentially represent a broader segment of society. Some of these organisations are grassroots organisations that might not be as well organised as the NGOs and sometimes arise exactly because mainstream civil society is unable or not willing to represent their interests. Into this category falls the social movements and, like the NGOs, they too can be characterised by a great deal of diversity in organisation, leadership, goals and methods. Grassroots movements can be well organised or badly organised, they can have good or bad leaders, their goals might be progressive or reactionary, they might use peaceful or violent methods to achieve these, and so on. Another important consideration is class and ideology in social movements.

It is in this context then that one can talk of ‘civil’ civil society and ‘uncivil’ civil society. Just as some NGOs have sometimes been set up to enrich a few people (say in the name of development), social movements can be born that pursue anti-social ends such as racism and xenophobia. Indeed, most of the academic theory on social movements during the early 20th century was influenced by trepidation and hostility born of the rise of communist and fascist movements in Europe. This was changed by the later rise of ‘good’ social movements such as the civil rights movement which many (though not all) academic and movement analysts could positively identify with. The xenophobic attacks in South Africa appear to be a case of the rise of a reactionary movement, a case of uncivil society.

The academic and political literature is replete with the topic of social movements.

What are social movements and what is their role in society?

This is neither the place, nor is there enough space to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the subject. However, it is appropriate to make a few remarks on an approach to the subject that seems closest to our thinking in order to provide a theoretical framework for the empirical account that follows.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Our approach to social movements is a Marxist one.

We believe in the primacy of class struggle, in the necessity for working class people to form organisations and movements in order to fight for their needs in the light of vested (capitalist) interests. However, the theory explicated below seems to complement, nuance and enhance our understanding of social movements in the light of the basic argument we make in this report about the role of social movements in the struggle against xenophobia.

Eyerman and Jamison have argued for a cognitive approach to the study of social movements.⁶ They view social movements as “forms of activity by which individuals create new kinds of social identities.”⁷ They set out to study the process by which a group of individuals are transformed into a social movement. They see this process as largely reliant on meaning or consciousness because they assume that social action is conditioned, and best understood, by the actors’ frame of reference. Movements are ‘bearers of new ideas’ in society, and their success is premised on the extent to which these new ideas are diffused in society.

“ Social movements are thus best conceived of as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities, and even ideals.”⁸

This approach seems best suited for our purposes here because it tries to understand social movements from their own terms. Eyerman and Jamison’s theory contains a historical and contextual aspect which sees societies as creatively constructed by collectivities, in particular, by social movements. They emphasise that social actors often find opposition and resistance to their new ideas and actions. From this perspective their theory is in line with a Marxist approach, albeit they place primacy on social construction of reality rather than on class struggle. They give the example of the USA civil rights movement to make their point about the role of social movements in introducing and diffusing new ideas, in this case about racial equality, into society. Another example could be the feminist movement. Eyerman and Jamison make the interesting observation that it is exactly when a movement’s ideas are sufficiently adopted by or spread into society that a movement loses, as it were, its reason for existence. They thus see movements as transitory, historical phenomena.

It seems to us that the movements considered below show some of the attributes theorised by these authors. Post-apartheid society found the masses of South Africa greatly influenced by the ideas formed during the struggle against apartheid, a struggle that gave birth to and was led by powerful community, labour and youth movements. When ordinary people faced new problems in the ‘new’ democratic South Africa, they began to form new organisations and movements which, as they attracted academic and intellectual analysis, were promptly called the ‘new social movements’. These movements built upon and in certain ways went beyond the identities formed during the struggle against apartheid. Since they were compelled to struggle against the ‘legitimate’ democratic government, they had to create new identities and arguments to justify and understand

⁶ R. Eyerman & A. Jamison *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991.

⁷ Eyerman & Jamison, op. cit. p.2

⁸ Ibid. p.4

their actions. These had to be formed often in opposition to the identities and understandings propounded by the ruling party and hegemonic bloc in society. To us, this explains to some extent why they were able to go against the grain and actively fight xenophobia in a context where the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance seemed hamstrung and paralysed, or seemed to pay lip service in this important and progressive struggle.

Background to the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee

The SECC organises in Soweto, with its sprawling mostly working class suburbs consisting of 305 000 households⁹ with an average of 4,2 persons per household. The housing in Soweto is fairly diverse ranging from the notorious 4-room 'matchbox' houses originally built by the apartheid regime to backyard dwellings of corrugated iron and brick built rooms in backyards. The area is interspersed with informal settlements containing approximately 12800 shacks¹⁰.

Soweto is famous for the role it played in the struggle against apartheid. In 1976, students rose up against the apartheid regime after many years of repression of the Soweto community, starting with the establishment of the suburb in the 1950s through the forcible removal of people from 'white Johannesburg', notably from Sophiatown. The student uprising gave new life to the struggle in South Africa and served to rejuvenate the African National Congress which was caught up at the time in enervating exile politics. The regime was shaken to its core by the student uprising and came under increasing pressure, especially from the arguably even more-frightened South African capitalist owners, to reform the system. Thus the regime started to allow for housing ownership, including the entry of developers into Soweto who built houses for the emerging black middle class. The latter project, encouraging the growth of a black buffer class, was the idea of capital. This move did not help the regime because Sowetans were so radicalised by the events of 1976, that anyone visibly moving into the social category of middle class was viewed with suspicion. It also did little to stop the emergence of service payment boycott – the 'rent boycott' – a popular and effective strategy that was used to undermine the system. Instead, the race-class game by the regime and capital only served to put black professionals under tremendous pressure to prove their political loyalty to the 'black community', hence creating fertile ground for black consciousness as the dominant ideology of struggle. The relevance of black consciousness to this study is that it defined all black people, including people of Indian descent and of mixed race, as black. It was therefore an antidote and vaccine against tribalism and xenophobia.

The SECC is a small community organisation that organises around electricity, water, housing and other basic services in Soweto.

⁹ Soweto Integrated Spatial Framework Context p.7 downloaded from http://www.joburg-archive.co.za/2008/sdf/soweto/soweto_statusquo_context.pdf on 15 March 2010.

¹⁰ Ibid p 7.

Its struggle for access to electricity for all is well-documented, especially its strategy of ‘communing’ electricity, namely, re-connecting residents who are cut off by the authorities for failure to pay their bills on time.¹¹ The SECC is one of South Africa’s ‘new social movements’, organisations that rose to prominence in the early 2000’s organising the masses mostly against specific aspects of the ANC government’s “neoliberal” policy. They reached their zenith when South Africa marked a decade as a democratic state. After that it was a free for all with communities organizing themselves autonomously and separately in widespread and apparently uncoordinated protest action throughout the country. David Harvey observes that “urban social movements take on mixed political coloration” because of the axis of class struggle and “other axes” of revolt and revulsion. “The vision of possible alternatives is put up for grabs”¹² The point here is that an organisation such as the SECC could have responded in a number of different ways to the challenge of xenophobia, and the fact that it reacted the way it did, invites investigation and explanation.

The SECC’s response to the xenophobia

What factors shaped the response of the SECC to the xenophobia attacks?

It seems it was, among other things, **it’s pre-existing political will**, what Eyerman and Jamison call its “cognitive praxis”, **to fight against xenophobia, combined with its ability to invoke and use its standard repertoire of ideas and practices in what appears to have been an effective response to the crisis.**

For example, a few months prior to the May 2008 attacks, the SECC was involved in solidarity work with the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum with the two organisations supporting each other’s programmes. It approached the question of xenophobia from the position of solidarity with the working class in neighbouring countries. With respect to its practice, the SECC was able to use its local branch meetings, its tradition of militancy, its politics and organisational experience to sustain the anti-xenophobia campaign activities for almost a year after the attacks happened. There was training, distribution of pamphlets, pickets, marches and other methods used to raise awareness and highlight the issue.¹³

The SECC responded to the xenophobia challenge by developing a programme of action which contained an array of activities with given time frames. The SECC also participated in CAX structures

¹¹ P. Bond *Unsustainable South Africa: environment, development and social protest*, University of Natal Press, Durban, 2002 and Maj Fill-Flynn *The Electricity Crisis in Soweto*, Municipal Service Project, 2001.

¹² Harvey, D. (1985), *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanisation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 2.

¹³ Interviews with SECC members. Documents of the SECC.

and deliberations consistently sending its representative, Vusi Nyokana, to attend meetings.¹⁴ SECC members participated in CAX and APF activities around xenophobia, including attending meetings, workshops, pickets, the big CAX march, the Close Down Lindela campaign, etc. In addition, the organisation conducted its own activities including pickets and a march. It collected and donated clothes to refugees of the xenophobic violence and visited the camps. During the height of the attacks, SECC women went to Alexandra to visit the victims of the attacks living in the local police station together with other APF comrades.

Motsoaledi

The Elias Motsoaledi informal settlement nestles behind the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital's giant incinerator and the Devland industrial area in Soweto. The people of Motsoaledi have carefully divided the land into residential yards of more or less equal size, and there is space left for the hoped for paved roads. Each yard seems to ache for an RDP house. The community has been waiting for houses since the dawn of democracy, about the time the informal settlement was born. No toilets, no roads, no schools, no recreation facilities. Most respondents interviewed in this area professed their loyalty to the ANC although they had no qualms telling anybody who cares to listen how the ANC had failed them.¹⁵ What is significant about Motsoaledi is that there were no attacks reported in this area. Tight local community control and good relations between immigrants and locals might explain this.

Background to the Thembelihle Crisis Committee

The research looks at the Thembelihle Crisis Committee, an affiliate of the APF that organises in an informal settlement. This provides a contrast to the work of the SECC by showing similarities and differences in the challenges faced by these organisations and their communities. The research findings suggested complementarity and actual mutual support in the work of these two organisations. Thembelihle is a community formed about 30 years ago, and has been under threat of forcible removal since the dawn of democracy. About 3 000 families live in this unplanned and unwanted settlement on the edges of Lenasia, south of Johannesburg, not far from Soweto. What you notice about the shacks in Thembelihle is that they are standing in good order, big yards, fences, roads albeit unpaved and with water taps in each yard. It is an example of a resilient community saying 'yes', but the authorities saying 'no' and refusing to provide basic services because the area is 'not proclaimed'. The apartheid regime had set up a battery of communal taps at one end of the settlement and the residents organised themselves and installed water taps into each yard. Many people were injured during the dramatic clashes between police, red ants and Thembelihle residents when the Johannesburg City Council attempted to evict the community a few years ago. The Council

¹⁴ Vusi Nyokana, SECC leader, interview.

¹⁵ The APF's attempt to organize this area fell to nought as the Motsoaledi Concerned Residents operated for a few years then collapsed. The SECC is busy helping the former APF structure to revive. From participant observation information and interviews with Motsoaledi residents.

strongmen had to withdraw their attack after pitched battles. The local councillor was banished never to set his foot at Thembelihle again, because he agreed to the mass removals. Despite recent rapprochement between the councillor and the community structures, it is the latter that seem closer to the community and that hold more authority than government structures.¹⁶

The TCC's response to the xenophobia

Unlike the SECC, the TCC did not have a sustained programme in place during and after the xenophobia attacks.

But when a local trader was attacked and robbed and rumours circulated of an impending attack on immigrants, **the TCC leadership swung into action using its organisational machinery, its authority and experience to organise and provide leadership to the community.**

The culprits were apprehended and handed over to the police. A big community meeting was called which was attended by the locals and the immigrants. Frank discussion took place, including heated debates on the issue. The anti-xenophobia position won the day and it was agreed that the attacks would not be allowed in Thembelihle.¹⁷ Later the TCC leadership organised patrols to make sure that no attacks occurred. They worked closely with the threatened communities. The TCC also organised a soccer game involving immigrants playing locals as a gesture of goodwill and solidarity.

Background to the Wynberg Concerned Residents

This affiliate of the APF organises among a small group of 30 families that live in a disused factory building at 173 Old Pretoria Road, Wynberg, just across the road from Alexandra township, the hotbed of the xenophobia attacks. This community or APF members who live here are a section of the Wynberg Concerned Residents, an organisation that was formed to resist forced removals and eviction from old council houses. The residents lost the battle and a shopping mall was built where their houses used to be, they now live in a government shack settlement on the edges of Alexandra. This defeat severely weakened the organisation and many people regard this APF affiliate as 'weak' or facing serious organisational challenges.¹⁸ An independent researcher came to the same conclusion.¹⁹ The organisation hardly calls meetings and is often absent from APF activities, although

¹⁶ Interviews with Thembelihle residents.

¹⁷ Thembelihle interviews with TCC members and ordinary community members.

¹⁸ Participant observation recollections and reflections by the researchers.

¹⁹ Respondent, APF member.

there has been some recent improvement. The people at No. 173 live under threat of eviction from Ayob, their landlord, a man who claims to have bought the place. He has made life difficult, but recent support from the SECC for the residents has helped to keep Ayob at bay.

The WCR's response to the xenophobia

The interviews reveal that for some of the immigrants living at No.173, there was a fear of attacks against them. An interviewee told the story of how he slept in the open veld in fear of his life. What is worse, he said, was that "the people you live with turn against you"²⁰ Some WCR respondents exhibited strong anti-xenophobic views during the interviews. However, close relations including marriage between immigrants and locals living at the old factory meant that spouses had to protect each other. But this does not mean the South African spouse will necessarily be less xenophobic.²¹ It will not be surprising to hear that this affiliate of the APF did not do much campaigning against xenophobia.

The Coalition Against Xenophobia

CAX was formed during the height of the attacks. Largely spearheaded by the APF, it was able to grab the moment through a high profile and well-publicised campaign in the form of a big march and an overnight demonstration at Lindela, an immigrant detention camp.

These events conveyed **people's revulsion and embarrassment at the attacks, and the spirit of unity and solidarity** between locals and immigrants.

CAX's success was to bring together scores of organisations united against xenophobia. Some have criticised CAX for failure to sustain its activities beyond the attacks, but despite its short-lived success, CAX's intervention reinforced the anti-xenophobic attitude in society.²²

The CAX outfit was faced with the challenge of keeping together many disparate organisations with different priorities, time constraints, resources and methods of work. Most of the organisations that joined soon fell by the wayside. Weak coordination has also been blamed for this.²³ But there is no doubt that the success of CAX in staging a 6 000 person strong march on 24 May 2008 was a decisive intervention in the struggle against xenophobia. The march was well publicised in the local and international press, including in the various new media mediums such as Youtube, Facebook and Flickr.²⁴ The good response to CAX's call for a march might have a lot to do with its mobilisation

²⁰ Respondent, Wynberg resident, immigrant from Mozambique.

²¹ "I only live with him because I am impoverished. I don't like these people" (Wynberg respondent, South African).

²² Please Appendix 3 for a list of CAX member organizations.

²³ Sthembiso Nhlapho, APF and CAX.

²⁴ Please see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeVz_un1eRM, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26992164@N08/>, and <http://picasaweb.google.com/nicolas.red/AntiXenophobiaCoalitionMarch>.

tactics and the initial composition and constitution of the coalition. CAX was spearheaded by the Anti-Privatisation Forum almost during the height of the xenophobia attacks when the issue was prominent on the national psyche. Through speedy organising work the APF was able to attract more than 50 civil society organisations to join the coalition. The very good participation of immigrant organisations in CAX activities strengthened and gave credibility to the initiative. This was a result of a conscious effort by its initial organizers to link up with such organisations in order to fight together with, rather than for them. The prominent role of immigrant organizations during the planning phases of the march affected the nature of the demands submitted by the marchers to the authorities.²⁵ Thus, CAX called for the removal of colonial borders reflecting the experience and views of the immigrants themselves, and perhaps the radical politics of social movements such as the APF.

The use of **various methods of mobilisation for the march helped to attract a wide range of people and organisations** to the march, including middle-class people and people across racial lines.

Methods used included direct meetings with organisations, email lists serves, word of mouth, flyers, posters and through an advertisement that was placed in the high-circulation Daily Sun. A series of press conferences and the distribution of media packs ensured that the mass media gave the march prominence before and after the event.²⁶

The Sounds of Edutainment

This is an organisation of cultural workers who joined CAX. Its leadership is part of the Rastafarian faith community. It initiated anti-xenophobic public awareness programmes a few years before the attacks. The interviews suggest that the founders of this organisation were unhappy at the way immigrants were treated by the police, including their own personal experience of state racism and xenophobia. This contradicted the belief that Africa is for all Africans and threatened their sense of justice. This organisation has conducted many programmes working with artists around xenophobia. Its members have produced many poems and songs against xenophobia. In this respect I include in the body of the text of this report the poem "ID", a lament against the treatment of African immigrants:

²⁵ Please see the memorandum submitted during the march, Appendix F.

²⁶ I would like to thank CAX coordinator Mondli Hlatshwayo for availing me with the report he wrote on CAX activities, The Narrative Report on the Work of the Coalition Against Xenophobia, Report of the Coalition Against Xenophobia.

//

Id

By Prince Shapiro

*From village to village
We are under-privileged
From Cape to Morocco
We are one African nation
From region to region
We suffered from religion
From pillar to post
We paraded with politicians
Yet still we suffer from identity crisis
Id keeps me hiding from de police
Id new name for dompas which delivered your Mandela to prison*

*Tell me government-man
Tell me where I belong
Afrika is my home
Afrika is my destiny
I 'n I need no proof
I 'n I need no identity
Mine complexion is mine identity
The proof is the melanin in me*

*Tell me government-man
Tell me where I belong
Am I not black enough... I ask
Dem say- "Yes you are but show us your identity
before we feed you to dogs"*

*Tell me government-man
Tell me where I belong
In Europe dem call me Afrikan
In Asia dem call me Afrikan
In Australia dem call me Afrikan
Even in America dem call me Afrikan
Back home dem call me Kwere-kwere
Back home dem call me Zizimbane
Back home dem call me Kirimane
Back home dem call Ngongongo
What a ridiculous thing*

*Tell me government-man
Tell me where I belong
You are white you quite alright
Dem call you a tourist*

*You are black get back and
Show them your identity
Before they feed you to dogs
Before they throw you out of a moving train
Before they mug you under the pretext of bribery
Darker than rest and twanging are the crimes we commit in public*

*Tell me government-man
Tell me where I belong
Your Afrikan renaissance
This rebirth of colonization
A new nonsense which makes no sense
Coz you diss mine identity
Where is my home
Where do I belong
Government-man*



The investigation revealed an interesting and rich diversity of experiences, attitudes and opinions to xenophobia in Soweto, Thembelihle, Wynberg and related areas in Johannesburg. This section gives an overview of the findings focusing on the main points and some that are relevant across the 4 case studies investigated.

Elites in society, such as government and business leaders, have a large interest in and influence on how ordinary people respond to the challenges of modern existence. However, this research reveals that ordinary people's responses are sometimes crafted in opposition and resistance to the ideas of the elites and the way of life they presuppose. This is in line with Eyerman and Jamison's theory of social movements [see the section on social movement theory earlier in study]. Such is the case with social movement organisations like the SECC, APF and CAX investigated here. These organisations were formed to defend the interests of working class people or the subaltern classes against the perceived impositions of big business and government elites. The research reveals that the nature, character and effectiveness of their response depended upon the extent to which their standard repertoire of ideas and practices were adequate (or not) in dealing with the new challenge at hand. The xenophobia challenge tested the strength and ingenuity of the organisations, and in many cases

revealed weaknesses and inadequacies in their work. It also revealed hidden strengths and brought into being new talents and new networks among allied organisations.

If we compare the responses of the 4 organisations, viz. the 3 APF affiliates, SECC, TCC, WCR and the coalition CAX, we find that these organisations operate in different communities and at different levels thus they face different challenges or the same challenges, however they express themselves in different ways. To illustrate this, let us first look at what happened in each area with respect to the xenophobia attacks.

Incidence of xenophobia attacks in the 3 areas

Whoever was killed didn't know when it was going to happen. You worry about yourself, you ask why was I born a migrant, you don't know what to do, you feel threatened. You ask yourself questions. If I don't do something tomorrow I will be a victim.²⁷

The events of May 2008 brought pain and shame, I was so humiliated I could not believe the anger and desperation that might lead people to do such horrible things to other human beings. I think even ourselves as South African we hate each other that is why it's difficult to love and respect other people.²⁸

The events of May 2008 devastated many people, throwing a new light on the country and its people. In the areas under investigation there were incidents of xenophobic attacks, although all the people interviewed (the respondents) agreed that these were fewer than in other areas. In Soweto for example:

Here in Soweto we did not experience such activities because people have more information about these issues and they are tired of fighting. During apartheid we lost so many lives we don't want to bring those memories.²⁹

Sowetans did not bother to fight because they suffered a lot during apartheid so the event brought bad memories.³⁰

²⁷ Marc Gbaffou, African Diaspora Forum, interview.

²⁸ Mosley Radebe, SECC member.

²⁹ Mosley Radebe, SECC member.

³⁰ Florence Kwashu, SECC veterans and branch leader.

There was an attack in Chiawelo organized by the youth but as a branch we managed to stop it by encouraging foreign nationals to report any criminal activities.³¹

At the end of the xenophobia homicidal frenzy 62 people lay dead and scores were injured across the country. The areas under investigation did not record many casualties of xenophobia. In Motsoaledi, for example, there were no reported attacks. In Wynberg immigrants were threatened and some had to hide themselves from their neighbours to avoid attack.³² There were a few attacks in Soweto which led to injuries and robberies. At the teeming Baragwanath taxi rank in the area there was a reign of terror on at least one day when African immigrant traders were robbed of their goods by a mob forcing them to flee. If we compare this with Alexandra, we can say that the areas looked at here recorded low levels of xenophobic attacks. This raises the question of why this is so.

Displacement is one way of ascertaining the seriousness of the xenophobia attacks in terms of the disruption of people's lives. Displacement figures give a fuller picture because they also take into account people who flee threatened attacks, rather than those actually attacked. Some victims were completely displaced with some emigrating back to their countries of origin, others temporarily housed in emergency camps, and some later to be reintegrated into their old communities or finding new places to live. Some people left their homes in a hurry because of the general atmosphere of threat and fear. Generally, Soweto, Wynberg and Thembelihle experienced low levels of displacement. However, this statement should not hide the reality that many individuals had their lives disrupted trying to keep away from the xenophobic mobs.³³ In Thembelihle immigrants grouped themselves together and held protective night vigils in response to threatened attacks. The TCC conducted street patrols to reinforce the immigrants' security. The main incident in Thembelihle was an attack on a local Mozambican trader, but the culprits were later apprehended and arrested.³⁴ Some people were reported to have faced criminal charges after attacking immigrants in Soweto.³⁵

Why was there less xenophobia in the areas under investigation?

With respect to Soweto, as in the other areas, it appears that ideological, political and structural factors combined to influence the outcome. Conditions in Soweto appear to be somewhat different from say Alexandra, where there were serious incidents of xenophobic attacks. Immigrant communities in Soweto are integrated within the community with many of them, especially those from Mozambique, living in areas such as Chiawelo or parts of Pimville where they speak the same language, Tsonga, and sometimes share the same facial features as the locals. Indeed, one of the respondents, a member of the SECC, was born and bred in Soweto, but told us that his grandfather was originally from Mozambique. Sowetans also seemed to be more advanced in their 'cosmopolitanism' than

³¹ Ibid.

³² Interview respondent, a Mozambican national.

³³ Such as one Wynberg respondent who had to sleep in the open veld until the attacks subsided and he could go back to his room at the old factory.

³⁴ From the Thembelihle interviews e.g. Sphiwe Segodi, chairperson, TCC. Also, Mapfumo, Thembelihle resident and Zimbabwe national.

³⁵ Jabu Molobela, SECC member (interview respondent).

Alexandra, given their history. The politics in Soweto managed to overcome organised tribalism during the struggle against apartheid, whereas in Alexandra the division between 'bona fides' and 'non-bona fides' seemed to have only been temporarily overcome during the intense anti-apartheid mobilisation of the 1980s. With respect to Thembelihle and Motsoaledi, it might be the case that the well-ordered physical layout of the shacks with proper and reasonably-sized yards, roads combined with a strong community structure of local leadership must have contributed to less xenophobic attacks there. But we should admit that this is a vexed question which requires further research.

Causes of xenophobia

The research set out to ascertain how the organisations investigated understand the causes of xenophobia, and how this understanding is related to their campaign activities and general response to the xenophobia attacks. Secondly, it set out to find out what the causes of xenophobia in the geographic areas covered by the research were. It was easy to pose this question to respondents given the topicality of the issue and the reported widespread xenophobic attitudes reported to exist among people.³⁶ For example, it is significant that the two informal settlements investigated here had very low levels of attacks (Thembelihle and Motsaoleli). Why is this so? Respondents were asked why some people were opposed to xenophobia. Respondents who held xenophobic attitudes were asked why this was so.

Factors that were said to cause xenophobia can be broadly divided into structural-economic-social and ideological-historical-political issues. The former refers to the socioeconomic conditions people find themselves in, and the latter to their interpretation of and ideas about their situation. In general, the people who are xenophobic in attitude, tended to emphasise the socioeconomic competition between immigrants and locals as the reason that they are against 'these people'. Some also emphasised how different immigrants were from 'us'. On the other hand, the people opposed to xenophobia tended to have fairly elaborate theories that traversed history and politics to argue why immigrants should be treated well. They tended to emphasise the similarity between immigrants and locals, referring to their common ancestry and destiny, the fact that they are all black and African.

We must share the wealth of the country because we all belong to Africa and we are Africans. We must encourage people not to be against each other and practice the culture of ubuntu.³⁷

During apartheid most activists went to exile, people in those countries treated them with respect and others got a better education during their stay so it is most important for us to do the same by allowing them to share with us our freedom.³⁸

³⁶ "Opinions of xenophobia expressed in surveys are worse [in South Africa] than those exhibited by citizens of any other country with similarly available data" Mattes, R., D. M. Taylor, et al. (1999). *Still Waiting for the Barbarians: SA Attitudes to Immigrants and Immigration*. Cape Town, Southern African Migration Project, 1999, quoted in Nahla Valji, *Creating the Nation: The Rise of Violent Xenophobia in the New South Africa*, Unpublished Masters Thesis, York University, July 2003, p. 5.

³⁷ Respondent, Z. Mabizela, SECC Dlamini branch leader.

³⁸ Mosley Radebe, SECC member, Dlamini branch.

Respondents who were activists, that is, active participants and leaders in social movement organisations, tended to see the causes of xenophobia as largely the same, or having the same source as for the problems they dealt with in their daily struggles. They pointed to the system of capitalism, the divide and rule tactics of the oppressor, the legacy of apartheid and the pre-eminence of the interests of the rich over the poor as fundamentally behind the xenophobia. The activists saw the campaign against xenophobia as part of 'the struggle'.³⁹

Social movement activists locate the xenophobia problem in history and within the political economy of the country, the continent and the world. The SECC and APF work within a Marxist class analysis to explain causes. CAX consists of a broad range of organisations which have a wider diversity of perspectives on the issue. CAX documents tend to focus on the issue itself rather than making general statements, but its approach is compatible with the stronger arguments of the APF. CAX's work was mostly conducted from the offices of Khanya College, a Marxist-oriented education NGO and left-leaning publishing house.⁴⁰ The leftist organisations tend to blame the capitalist system and the government of the day for policies that promote xenophobia.

Many respondents emphasised that xenophobia is not a new thing. They trace it back to colonialism's divide and rule tactics, and to apartheid ideology which sought to instill hatred between black people.

If you look [at] the borders which say: this one does not belong here, [they] were created by the oppressor.⁴¹

Xenophobia has to do with apartheid. Johannesburg is not our home. Gauteng. A lot of people came from Limpopo, Zululand, coming to the city of gold to find employment. Soweto is divided into Shangaan section, Zulu section. I think it is the system of apartheid which made people xenophobic. This is how it started.⁴²

The South African government is still using racial classification. Nothing much has changed since the days of apartheid. This job of classifying people along racial lines is done by the Department of Home Affairs.⁴³

³⁹ Interviews with SECC, TCC and CAX leaders.

⁴⁰ CAX's funds and administration was organised at the offices of Khanya College in solidarity and support of the anti-xenophobia struggle. (interview respondents).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Teboho Mashota, Remoho (APF) and CAX.

⁴³ Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, Memorandum to the Department of Home Affairs during the March against Xenophobia held on 18 July 2008 in Soweto (document).

Others find xenophobia in everyday culture:

For example, a pink colour is associated with Shangaans, or violence with Zulus. Or you say these people are Zulus they come from there, these are Shangaans, etc. For me that is being xenophobic. Before we can look at other countries it starts in our country. People are not even aware that they are xenophobic.⁴⁴

Today the xenophobia or tribalism of old seems to have taken a new form:

Now it is us South Africans, united with the Vendas, Zulus, uniting and attacking people from across the border saying they take our jobs, our wives, our houses. This has to do with poverty which is being created by the government. Because people want someone to pay.⁴⁵

The respondent is pointing to a link between the formation of the new South African nation and the turning against African immigrants. In a paper examining the role of the transition with a focus on nationalism and the nation-building project adopted post-1994, Nahla Valji commented:

Uncovered [...] a model of nation formation that has been exclusionary in focus, thus providing an environment in which the growth of intolerance towards others could be fostered.⁴⁶

Some respondents pointed to a lack of political education among the masses, especially those swayed by xenophobic arguments and mob action.

I think it is illiteracy. It plays a role, people divert from the real issue. They divert. They need to understand the real core issues before they can engage in such activities as xenophobia attacks. So I think illiteracy is the problem.⁴⁷

In this case illiteracy seems to refer to a lack of historical knowledge and political understanding.

The reason why people are xenophobic is that people don't have understanding of the background of other people. They don't have details about other people.

⁴⁴ Teboho Mashota, Remoho (APF) and CAX.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Nahla Valji, *Creating the Nation*, op. cit: p. 4.

⁴⁷ Meshack Tlali, APF and CAX.

They think they are the only ones living in the area and there are no other people. People only know that there is the USA and Europe but they should know about Africa and that there are other people living there.⁴⁸

Politically, how mature are they? The attacks were led by young people. They don't know a lot about the history of the struggle.⁴⁹

Many pointed to the competition for scarce jobs:

People are saying the foreigners are taking our jobs because they are being exploited by the bosses. They are being used as cheap labour. You find a South African saying I am not gonna work for R100 but the foreigner will take that R100. That's why people are xenophobic they don't understand that they are taking that R100 because in their countries there is war and poverty. There is poverty in South Africa but there are African countries where poverty is worse than in South Africa. Poverty plays a big role in xenophobia.⁵⁰

People think it is people from other countries that are creating the problem forgetting that service delivery is a government issue and not an individual's issue.⁵¹

But others are not so broad-minded:

They overcrowd other people and they cause damage to our country and bring diseases especially Nigerians they come with drugs that affect our kids.⁵²

These people must come in our country with permission; people have illnesses which are brought by foreigners. They occupy our space because there are no laws stopping them from entering our country.⁵³

⁴⁸ Sthembiso Nhlapho, APF and CAX.

⁴⁹ Sphiwe Segodi, Thembelihle.

⁵⁰ Teboho Mashota, Remoho and CAX.

⁵¹ Meshack Tlali, APF and CAX.

⁵² Respondent, Soweto.

⁵³ Soweto respondent.

But a word of caution against dominant explanations:

Maybe it is service delivery that is the cause but we don't know because no research has been done. We need to research whether it is the main cause.⁵⁴

However, other respondents took a different approach, emphasising the culpability of the elite and their system.

This is how capitalism survives, through turning the struggle for what working class people need into a struggle of working class people against each other. There is no way in which the working people are going to realise their goal of houses for all, jobs for all and a better life for all if they ignore the real enemy and rather scramble against each other for leftovers.⁵⁵

There are structural factors that provide the material framework for xenophobia. The continuation of exploitation and oppression in South Africa, the frustration that arises from that, the lack of avenues to change or improve the situation, these are some of the reasons provided by key informants in the research. The analysis goes beyond one country into a critique of economic and power imbalances in the world. At the same time the local also seems to be important. For example, in Thembelihle local traders were attacked because they were immigrants. This suggested, on the one hand, criminal intent as their goods were stolen, but the hate speech was linked to these traders undercutting South African born traders in business. While some local traders in Thembelihle did indeed express frustration with business competition I think the suggestion that small traders are behind the xenophobic attacks is stretching the point too far.⁵⁶

Sometimes immigrants are accused of not taking part in community meetings and in workplace struggles.⁵⁷ This is related to their sojourner status in the areas that they live and their precarious position at the workplace because they do not have official documents. One respondent was concerned that even when male immigrants marry local women, sometimes their children show them no respect because of what they hear in the street about their fathers being 'foreigners'.⁵⁸ Immigrants seem to end up being the losers in the game in that they suffer injustice and are then blamed for this, for example, at work they are forced by the bosses to accept little pay, but fellow workers turn around and blame them for accepting less money.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Marc Gbaffou, Africa Diaspora Forum.

⁵⁵ Sphiwe Segodi, TCC and Socialist Group.

⁵⁶ Some commentators, such as Oupa Lehlere of Khanya College, have suggested that local traders, understood in class terms as the black petty bourgeoisie – "the small man" – are behind the xenophobic attacks. I think this view emanates from an unmediated application of the theory of the emergence of fascism on a different historical context. (He expressed these views from a talk he gave at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Conference on Africa and the Global Crisis, 19-21 November 2009, at the Randburg Towers Hotel, Johannesburg).

⁵⁷ Respondent, Thembelihle.

⁵⁸ Bhayzer, Thembelihle leader.

⁵⁹ Mapfumo, Thembelihle, immigrant.

The advantage to the ruling class, especially big business of a divided working class was emphasised mostly by some respondents. One said that the capitalists enjoy the spectacle and gloat when workers attack workers, African attacks African.⁶⁰

Some reject capitalism, others demand radical reforms:

“ We say no to capitalist divisions. We say no to the capitalist cancer that is xenophobia. We want to unite with all our African brothers and sisters and other working class peoples of the world. We say the way forward is sharing, compassion and solidarity.”⁶¹

“ What we need is a complete overhaul of governments’ immigration policies. Immigration should not be seen as a problem, but as an opportunity to enrich and strengthen our society. No one is illegal! Ours struggle knows no border!”⁶²

This reference to colonial and apartheid history is a constant theme in most respondents who reject xenophobia and declare their solidarity with other ‘foreign nations’, including African immigrants in South Africa. It is as if the struggle against xenophobia is a continuation of the anti-colonial struggle. At the same time, it is lamented as a failure of a (national liberation) struggle that lost its way:

I always say xenophobia is the unsatisfactory consequence of the death of black consciousness, of the rise of a pro-capitalist nationalism.⁶³

The most blamed party is the South African government, with almost all respondents, whatever their attitude, politics or outlook, blaming the government of the ANC for various failures.

Response to the xenophobic attacks

“ Let’s do something otherwise we will be victims, I told my fellow members of the Ivorian community in Johannesburg and other immigrant community contacts I have.”⁶⁴

Many people did not expect the ferocity and extent of the xenophobia attacks. But when the penny dropped, the seriousness of the situation galvanised people and organisations into action.

⁶⁰ Ras Zweli, Sound of Edutainment.

⁶¹ Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, March against Xenophobia, press statement, 26 June 2008.

⁶² Coalition Against Xenophobia, Demands for the Closure of the Lindela Repatriation Centre, pamphlet, action held on 21 November 2008.

⁶³ Ras Prince Shapiro, Sounds of Edutainment, interview.

⁶⁴ Marc Gbaffou, African Diaspora Forum. Clearly for some, the response time is a matter of life and death.

I was around Soweto and I also played a major role in supporting and helping the victims. I went to Alexandra with the group of women called Remoho to give groceries and supporting other women by giving them strength. I also went with SECC to Small Street at Central Methodist Church where we donated clothes for people who are staying there. I also went with Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum, we visited places and police stations where victims were given a shelter. I was also invited by Woza to Zimbabwe where we visited many places and we went to jail where Mrs. Magodonga was arrested for marching against state repression we also went to farms where we donated food and clothes to women who are unemployed.⁶⁵

But other people responded by attacking. This research indicates that xenophobic attacks are less likely to happen or take root in communities where there is a credible and progressive organisation and leadership willing to preach and fight against xenophobia.⁶⁶ The position against xenophobia needs to be communicated to members before the outbreak of attacks. This is a safeguard against their being swayed by the mob psychology of the attackers. Some can even be mobilised to actively participate in campaign activities against xenophobia. The Thembelihle experience highlights the importance of timely and decisive action to stop the xenophobia attacks.⁶⁷ Open dialogue, discussion, debate and challenge to xenophobic attitudes and actions can win the day and avert disaster.

The SECC and TCC have worked in their communities for about a decade.⁶⁸ Both have won the respect of many local residents. They have also developed communication structures and channels which they could use during the crisis of the xenophobic attacks. They have the political will that moved them to respond urgently and decisively against the attacks. Their position against xenophobia was developed much earlier than the incidence of the attacks. The SECC and TCC, as APF affiliates, have an almost decade-long history of involvement in APF discussions, activities and excursions that promoted brotherhood and sisterhood between working class people, wherever they may be in the world. The APF is part of the Southern African Social Forum (SASF), which in turn is affiliated to the African Social Forum of the World Social Forum. Once a year APF members attend an SASF gathering held in one of South Africa's neighboring countries. During these meetings unity, commonality and solidarity in struggle across the national borders are affirmed. One respondent from Thembelihle and two from Soweto had within the last couple of years visited Zimbabwe in solidarity missions organised by the civil society sector.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Florence Kwashu, SECC veterans and branch leader.

⁶⁶ In this respect we note the argument of Breen and Polzer who write that: "What was the key difference in places where xenophobic violence occurred or did not occur in May 2008? It was not the number of foreign nationals living there, or levels of unemployment and poverty, it was the legitimacy of local leadership structures." Ibid. p.28.

⁶⁷ In Thembelihle the local community organisation, the TCC, was able to help nip in the bud an impending xenophobic attack through political intervention calling a mass meeting and generally organising together with a wide range of community groups a collective position against xenophobia (interviews with Thembelihle community members and TCC leaders).

⁶⁸ Soweto and Thembelihle respondents.

⁶⁹ Sphiwe Segodi of TCC visited Zimbabwe in a 2-week fact-finding and solidarity mission organised by civil society organisations. Florence Kwashu of the SECC visited Zimbabwe in a similar mission organised by Women of Zimbabwe Organisation (WOZA). (interviews).

There is a bit more of a mixed profile with CAX member organisations. Some, like the Somali Association of South Africa, Ethiopian Community of South Africa and the Group of Refugees Without Voice, were already working around issues of immigrants and refugees even before the xenophobia attacks erupted. There are many human rights and social movement organisations which also joined CAX, for example, Lawyers for Human Rights, Treatment Action Campaign and the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project. This indicates that many organisations were already interested and working around issues of social and economic justice, and it was no doubt this orientation that made them identify with CAX's mission. The point here is that civil society organisations and movements tended to respond positively to the crisis because of their pre-existing progressive orientation.

Almost all of the social movement organisations investigated here, the SECC, TCC and CAX responded by actively organising against the xenophobic attacks and attitudes. Perhaps with the exception of the Wynberg Concerned Residents organisation which adopted a more passive and ambivalent stance. CAX was able to bring together scores of individuals and organisations who pledged their solidarity against xenophobia and expressed this emphatically during the anti-xenophobia march and the "Close down Lindela" campaign, an overnight vigil at the notorious immigrant detention camp⁷⁰. The SECC developed a programme of action around xenophobia that included workshops, demonstrations, marches, visits and donations to the victims of xenophobia.⁷¹ The TCC acted swiftly to avert an outbreak by way of community meetings, patrols and public awareness programmes, including innovative methods such as organising soccer matches involving the local and immigrant communities.⁷²

How effective was the response? The Thembelihle case was the most effective response in stopping the xenophobia decisively and timely. But:

For a moment we achieved that the xenophobic stopped. But I must be honest that no attacks does not mean there is no xenophobic mentality, even among some of our members.⁷³

South Africans are wearing a sheep skin, they are the great pretenders, they act as if they are against xenophobia.⁷⁴

In the Motsoaledi informal settlement there were no attacks at all; this was explained by one respondent as due to the good relations that exist between immigrant and local communities in this informal settlement.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ From CAX documents on the Lindela campaign.

⁷¹ Interviews with SECC members.

⁷² Interviews with Thembelihle residents and TCC members.

⁷³ Siphwe Segodi, Thembelihle.

⁷⁴ Respondent, Soweto.

⁷⁵ "Singomkhaya" [it is like we are from the same village] explained the Motsoaledi resident in isiZulu.

"Why are some people not xenophobic? Why do they accept African immigrants as brothers and sisters?" Most of the respondents pointed to everyone being African and black. Others invoked "ubuntu", African humanism and/or international working class solidarity. Still others pointed out that all are God's children. "People are not the same."⁷⁶ One respondent suggested that people were socialised into xenophobic attitudes and emphasised the need to teach the children.⁷⁷

Close interaction between immigrants and locals benefited the anti-xenophobia attitude. Many people married to immigrants assisted their spouses sometimes to hide. Often they too were under threat of attack.⁷⁸ Other ties between immigrant also counted:

There were those who were fully behind them because some of these foreigners are staying in our yards paying rent and they are a great help because they have skills.⁷⁹

There were incidents reported in Bara Taxi but taxi drivers were on the alert and mentioned that they will deal with those who attack foreigners because these are people they work with on a daily basis. Sowetans did not bother to fight because they suffered a lot during apartheid so the event brought bad memories.

There are immigrants who have lived so long in the place that they are seen as part of the community. One example is Comrade Makam who arrived in 1956 from Mozambique and moved to Thembelihle 20 years ago. He is an active member of the Thembelihle Crisis Committee. Charlie Nyatumba, SECC legal officer, was born in Kliptown and his father was originally from Mozambique. These social bonds between immigrant and the local community probably had a bearing on how people responded to xenophobia. Both respondents quoted here actively participated in the activities of their organisations in the campaign against xenophobia.

The organisations in a manner of speaking came with their repertoire of organising practices and traditions to the new task at hand: dealing with xenophobia. Some of this was adequate to the task, some failed the test, some had to be adapted and enhanced to meet the new challenges.

The plan was to have a campaign but unfortunately we did not put in place a programme to tackle the xenophobia question on a long term basis.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Zanele, Thembelihle.

⁷⁷ Bhyzer, Thembelihle.

⁷⁸ Respondent, Wynberg, immigrant.

⁷⁹ Z. Mabizela, SECC Dlamini branch leader.

⁸⁰ Sphiwe Segodi, Thembelihle.

“Lack of coordination was the problem in CAX. I saw from the starting point till the ending point. Yes, there was the problem of funds but it was not the biggest problem. I think the biggest problem was leadership skills that are there. Leadership caused CAX to go down the drain.”⁸¹

Some organisations did work way before the xenophobia violence erupted, such as the Sounds of Edutainment. This group of cultural artists was conducting awareness programmes against xenophobia a long time before the famed attacks in May 2008. It co-operated with other organisations including with Khanya College, the APF and the SECC.⁸² The APF, inspired by a vision of working class internationalism, campaigns and builds links with organisations and struggles in other countries. In this way there was previous interaction with comrades from Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and other Southern African countries by APF members. They came across the issues and questions arising out of the xenophobia attacks earlier.

More work needs to be done:

“It’s not an easy task. But much as in campaigns like HIV, the state has the capacity to roll out programmes. But also as NGO and community organizations we should do something to fight xenophobia.”⁸³

For example, the SECC resolved to dedicate its September 24 celebrations to the campaign against xenophobia:

The organization also organized a Heritage Day celebration which was held at Careers Centre. It was attended by Zimbabweans, Malawians, Mozambicans and other comrades from neighbouring countries. The event was a success, we ate different dishes, people paraded their clothes and we enjoyed music performed by different African groups. The diverse cultures and entertainment brought unity.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Respondent.

⁸² Khanya College produced a publication against xenophobia. It also had a winter school on the subject consisting of activists and community leaders from Southern Africa.

⁸³ Sphiwe Segodi, Thembelihle.

⁸⁴ Florence Kwashu, SECC veterans and branch leader.

Contradictions and dissonance in the position and practice

All 3 organisations, the SECC, TCC and WCR are affiliates of the APF. From the research it emerges that the APF took a formal position against the xenophobia attacks, actively organised against the xenophobic attitudes and encouraged its affiliates to do the same.⁸⁵ Rehad Desai, the progressive documentary film maker, exposed the contradictions of the APF position and practice when he caught members of an APF affiliate spewing xenophobic slogans in Alexandra.⁸⁶ It was a sad and embarrassing moment for the APF and it made an effort to investigate, discuss with and convince the leadership of the xenophobic affiliate against holding such attitudes.⁸⁷ Alexandra has a complex history that needs to be considered in explaining the xenophobic attacks there.⁸⁸

So what about the 3 APF affiliates under investigation in this research? Were there any contradictions in their response? The findings suggest that the stronger and more active the organisation is, the more likely it is to mobilise its members against xenophobia and to deal with dissonant voices inside its ranks. In other words pro-xenophobic, dissenting voices existed in all 3 organisations, but these were handled differently by each organisation. The SECC was able to identify and intervene in sorting out xenophobic attitudes in one of its branches because of the existence of routine mechanisms to deal with problems in its structures. The TCC successfully intervened and contained the beginnings of a community-based movement against African immigrants which was sparked off as a move against immigrant traders. There is no doubt that more lives would have been lost or bodies maimed if this community and its leadership had failed to respond promptly and effectively to ward off the attacks.

Some interviews conducted in Wynberg contain strong xenophobic content suggesting the need for further research into questions of gender, economic inter-dependency and the complex dynamics inherent in intimate relations and how these might intersect with xenophobic attitudes. Only one leader out of three in WCR seemed to accept African immigrants in a way that could be said to be in line with the APF position.

There were sometimes different interpretations by members of their organisation's position on xenophobia. But in general, people interviewed, (especially the leaders), held positions that were in line with their organisation's position. The one exception is Wynberg whose members exhibited xenophobic attitudes.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ This is based on information from APF respondents and our participant observation of APF meetings prior to this investigation.

⁸⁶ Rehad Desai's documentary on xenophobia was shown on national TV.

⁸⁷ The affiliate concerned was the Alexander Vukuzenzele Crisis Committee.

⁸⁸ Mzwanele Mayekiso has argued that the insider-outsider dynamic has been existing and had a profound impact on Alexandra local politics for decades. M. Mayekiso and P. Bond, *Township politics: Civic Studies for a New South Africa*, Monthly Review Press, 1996.

⁸⁹ Interviews with Wynberg No. 703 residents.

An activist points to the challenge ahead:

“ The APF played a big role in organising the masses to be part of the march; taking a stance against xenophobia, saying no to xenophobia. Because when the attacks came we wanted to do something, we wanted to stop them; it was wrong, what was happening was politically wrong. But we did not get into the roots, into the cause of the xenophobia. The APF played a big role but there are lessons to be learnt in terms of teaching our members. For we do have members who are xenophobic, we need to educate people about who is the enemy, etc.”⁹⁰

The SECC seems to have succeeded somewhat in ironing out the ideological crinkles in ideology in its Dlamini branch:

“ [At first] I and other comrades felt that these people should go back to their countries because they are suffering whether we want them to stay or not for them it’s a daily struggle to survive here in South Africa.”⁹¹

The Dlamini branch supported the SECC march against Xenophobia though we had different understanding of the issue.”⁹²

People and the community are now treating foreigners as their brothers and sisters because they have more information on this issue. Foreigners can now do their things without fear.”⁹³

Comrades are now understanding the issue. Unlike before they do support the initiative took by SECC to raise awareness about xenophobia and they want the campaign to be strengthen so that people can have a clear understanding about the issue.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Teboho Mashota, Remoho (APF) and CAX.

⁹¹ Z. Mabizela, SECC Dlamini branch leader.

⁹² Mosley Radebe, Dlamini branch member.

⁹³ Z. Mabizela, SECC Dlamini branch leader.

⁹⁴ Mosley Radebe, Dlamini branch member.

Work beyond the immediate response to the attacks

“ We have work to do, we still have work to do. The government must have a clear plan, don't wait and then blame it, do something to prevent it. If you blame there are already some victims. Government must have a clear plan together with the migrant community to fight xenophobia. Our father and mother is the government it has some means to address issues, it can implement things easily.”⁹⁵

This trust in government went together with a preference for methods of struggle that were not aggressive or too radical. This indicates the difficulty of coalitions, they bring diverse political cultures and traditions. But everyone agreed on the need to sustain the work around xenophobia. The TCC leaders admitted having some problems sustaining their programmes and re-dedicated themselves to reviving their programme.⁹⁶ The need for ongoing work on xenophobia is underlined emphatically by the research.

A point was made about integrating xenophobia into all other campaigns:

“ When we address any issue we must not isolate xenophobia e.g. dealing with service delivery we must add xenophobic issues, because xenophobia is caused by lack of service delivery. Whatever we do we must engage it. As CAX we have already agreed to add it in all our programmes So that people continue being conscientised and be clear so that we don't have a repeat of what happened.”⁹⁷

We need to go down to the ground and engage the people, specifically on the ground. What is xenophobia, how they feel about it, how they view it, what causes it. We need to develop an understanding on what causes migration in Africa. This needs education. As activists we must spread the message down.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Marc Gbaffou, African Diaspora Forum.

⁹⁶ In our experience the Thembelihle community, like many informal settlements, is a precarious community in the sense of unsettled living without support from and sometimes even attempts to remove the community by the authorities. Thembelihle is still resisting attempts to forcibly remove the residents. It is the same with the WCR, the factory owner has on many occasions come and threatened the people with evictions. The SECC has over the past couple of years worked with the factory residents fighting off the eviction and cooperating on the programmes of the Operation Khanyisa Movement, the coalition of APF affiliates that won a seat on the Johannesburg City Council.

⁹⁷ Meshack Tlali, APF and CAX.

⁹⁸ Sthembiso Nhlapho, APF and CAX.

Although we say it is capitalism we still have a lot of work to do in our communities. By educating our members and making them understand the relationship that we as South Africans have with foreigners. And that actually the enemy is not the working class but it is the system.⁹⁹

This is because:

The struggle against capitalism is not only when it comes to services like water, electricity, which we fight for daily. The struggle is broader. Capitalism can attack in many ways. In this case capitalism was able to divide the working class through xenophobia; through not providing enough houses. It is a vicious cycle which can destroy the working class and make poor fight poor.¹⁰⁰

The government should call meetings around the country, invite foreign nationals together with South Africans and get views from both sides and find out what are the challenges and problems that cause xenophobic attacks. I think by doing that people will have a lasting solution that will favour everyone and they should be also informed about these issues.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Teboho Mashota, Remoho (APF) and CAX.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Z. Mabizela, SECC branch leader.

Identity, ideology and vision in the struggle against xenophobia

The main lesson from the research findings seems to be that **communities need to be organised so that when challenges such as xenophobia emerge, the people are in a position to deal with it collectively and correctly.**

The strains of modern living take their toll on ordinary working class people, but they need to educate themselves about their history and their destiny in order to have a clearer basis for political action and relating to each other. Often the way forward is to organise resistance against the attacks and deprivations, the capitalist system's visits on the poor rather than allow divisive responses such as xenophobia to take root. To root out xenophobia requires attacking it at its roots, exploring the

political and economic mechanisms by which certain people are targeted as enemies that can be attacked with impunity. This requires a study of history and taking into heart the lessons from the point of the subaltern classes.

Just as human beings cannot live by bread alone, they cannot make sense of the world and make independent, balanced choices without politics. The research reveals that political understanding and activism increase the likelihood that a person will be accepting of other people, albeit from other countries. This is because it provides the ideological framework within which individuals evaluate the world and respond to the challenges of life they come across. Some ideologies, such as revolutionary Pan-Africanism, espoused by some respondents, tend to provide an ideological foundation for opposing attacks against African immigrants in a country like South Africa. Socialist ideas, “ubuntu” – African humanism, such ideologies seem to provide a progressive frame of reference for individuals and groups to accept and embrace immigrants.

The research reveals the importance of preventative work around the issue of xenophobia. “Lamenting after an attack will not help”, passionately argued one respondent.¹⁰² This kind of work arises out of a sense of vision and purpose which tends to exist in people of strong moral convictions. This is certainly the case with the Rastafarian artists of the Sounds of Edutainment who sacrificed a lot of time and energy doing work long before the attacks. They were inspired by a vision of a united Africa and a united people run along socialist principles. Ideological work, political education and other methods of raising awareness proved to be crucial in how organisations and individuals who belong to or look to them for direction respond to crises such as that of xenophobia attacks. Those organisations doing less of this, tended to be more open to political confusion leading to some of their members embracing and espousing the hateful message of xenophobia. Patient, daily work with ordinary working class people is a firmer foundation for building a better society than spectacular once-in-a-blue-moon events. But this does not imply ignoring the importance and history changing potential of extraordinary events.

Practical programmes to conduct against xenophobia might involve organising public awareness campaigns, education activities, cultural exchange, or developing and supporting a human rights culture that is defined in universal and internationalist terms. Socioeconomic development seems to be a key variable in all the good intentions and goals set. Some respondents emphasised the need for deterrents and sanctions against those whose hostile thoughts might turn into violent action. They have to be made to pay a heavy price for their barbaric actions. One respondent wanted to know why xenophobia and associated attitudes and actions should not be declared a crime against humanity.¹⁰³

Lastly, the solution to xenophobia is tied to a vision of a different kind of society. A society where all forms of oppression and exploitation, including xenophobia, will be eradicated. Some respondents suggested as a starting point, changing laws that discriminate against immigrants. The slogan: “No one is illegal” expresses a deep human solidarity and respect for the rights of others. Working class and Pan-Africanist ideologies were invoked by some respondents to call for the scrapping of

¹⁰² Marc Gbaffou, chairperson of the African Diaspora Forum, respondent.

¹⁰³ Siphosiso Thys, Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum, respondent.

the (colonial) national borders that divide African countries. The dream is to unite all of humanity, reconcile humanity with nature and create a world where all can be the best that they can be, and not the worst that they are made to be by the sorry material and ideological circumstances that they find themselves in.

“ The government should play a major role in bringing peace and stability and as an organisation we have a great job on our shoulders to educate the nation about xenophobia. I think with or without money we must continue with our struggle for socialism where all people will live equally and share the wealth of the country despite of their origin.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Florence Kwashu, SECC veterans and branch leader.

Social movement organisations, civics, political parties, trade unions and other organisations are important in the struggle against xenophobia. They should be rooted in the community and win the confidence of the people.¹⁰⁵ They need a progressive politics that aligns them with the struggles of the people of the world. They need to study history in order to properly locate their struggle, deal with questions of identity progressively and give clarity on their goals. They should constantly engage their members in political education activities for the sake of ideological development. We should encourage interaction between people of different cultures, immigrants and locals need to mix and get to know each other as a way of building understanding and empathy among members of society.

The xenophobia attacks woke everyone up to the need to cherish and nurture the bond South Africans have with people from other parts of the continent. This research hopes to contribute to the strengthening of that bond.

¹⁰⁵ D. Breen and T. Polzer distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate leadership in a community. The former “act in the interests of the entire community” while the latter are people who hijack community structures “for personal and often monetary gain”, op. cit. p.28.

APPENDIX A

List of interviews conducted:

SECC

Vusi Nyokana, leader	
Zodwa Madiba, councillor	
Charlie Nyatumba, legal officer	
Zethi Mabizela, branch leader	
Ngema, branch member	
Florence Kwashu, veterans and branch leader	
Mosley Radebe, branch member	
Ben Ngema, branch member	
Jabu Molobela, branch member	
Teboho Mahloba, branch leader	10

Soweto community members

Gladys, Motsoaledi informal settlement	
Alice Bhengu, Motsoaledi	
Nomgadi Busi, Motsoaledi	
Noncedo Sogoni, Motsoaledi	
Nosizwe, Motsoaledi	
Ericson Goliath, White City	
Stephen, immigrant	7

Thembelihle Crisis Committee

Bye Bye, organiser
 Sphiwe Segodi, chairperson
 Dikeledi, TCC member
 Makam, TCC member, naturalised citizen
 Zulu, community leader
 Zanele, community member
 Petros Nyathana, community member
 Mapfumo, immigrant
 Nomsa Nkosi 9

Wynberg Concerned Residents

Anthony Ngwenya, community member
 Zanele, chairperson
 Olga, secretary
 Queen Ramokgale, community member
 Robert, immigrant
 Lerato, community leader 6

APF/CAX

Sthembiso Nhlapho
 Meshack Tlali
 Teboho Mashota 3

Sounds of Edutainment/CAX

Zweli Cush
 Prince Shapiro 2

Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum/CAX

Sipho Thys 1

African Diaspora Forum/CAX

Marc Gbaffou 1

APPENDIX B

Interview schedule

Name

Organisational affiliation (if any)

Contact details (address, telephone)

PART ONE :

EXPERIENCES / IDEAS OF XENOPHOBIA

What makes people to be xenophobic?

How have you personally experienced these influences?

PART TWO:

EXPERIENCES / IDEAS AGAINST XENOPHOBIA:

SOLIDARITY AND GOOD INTENTIONS TOWARDS AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS

What makes people to be opposed to xenophobia?

How have you personally experienced those influences?

PART THREE

RESPONSE OF THE RESPONDENTS TO XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS

Where were you when the attacks in May 2009 happened?

What did you think? Do? Then? Later?

How did the May 2008 xenophobic attacks change your thinking about the matter?

Were there less or more violence in Soweto (or Thembelihle or Wynberg or your area) than you expected? Why do you think so?

How can xenophobia be combated?

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS SCHEDULE WAS USED TOGETHER WITH OTHER SCHEDULES OF
QUESTIONS.**

APPENDIX C

List of Coalition Against Xenophobia member organisations

African Renaissance Civic Movement
Alternative Media Productions
Action Aid International
Amnesty International (South Africa)
Animal Rights Africa
Anti-Privatisation Forum
Black Sash Trust
Blakbox Imprint
Ceasefire Campaign
Central Methodist Church / Refugee Ministries
Children's Rights Project
Christians for Peace in Africa
Earthlife South Africa (Johannesburg)
Education Indaba Forum
Ethiopian Community of South Africa (ECSA)
Foundation for Human Rights
Freedom of Expression Institute
General Industrial Workers Union of SA (GIWUSA)
Golden Triangle Community Crisis Committee (Golcomm)
Group of Refugees Without Voice
Imbawula Trust
Inner City Resource Centre
Islamic Relief Johannesburg
Jubilee SA
Keep Left
Khanya College
Kliptown Concerned Residents
Landless People's Movement (Gauteng and Northwest)
Lawyers for Human Rights
Lesbian and Gay Equality Project
Masibambane Unemployment Project
Medicins sans frontiers
Merafong Demarcation Forum
NEHAWU Johannesburg
Pacifique Sukisa Foundation
Palestinian Solidarity Committee
Samigos
Social Movements Indaba (SMI)
Somali Association of SA (SASA)
Sounds of Edutainment
Treatment Action Campaign
Ubuntu Indaba Forum, Umzabalazo we Jubilee
Workers World Media Production and Yeoville Stakeholders Forum

APPENDIX D

Memorandum of the Coalition Against Xenophobia handed over to the authorities during the march of 24 May 2008

Memorandum

To: The Premier of Gauteng, Mbazima Shilowa;
The Department of Home Affairs;
The Department of Housing

As we gather today, united in our common outrage at the brutal acts of xenophobic violence unleashed over the last few weeks, it is important to remember that these horrific acts that have spurred us into action are the result of many years in which xenophobic attitudes, practices, and beliefs have been allowed to exist and proliferate amongst all of us. It is not uncommon for elected leaders, police and other government officials to voice xenophobic attitudes and beliefs in their actions. And the policies designed by the Department of Home Affairs have done little to integrate our brothers and sisters from other parts of Africa into our society. As ordinary citizens and members of civil society organisations come together to accept our responsibility for the persistence of xenophobia in society, and to play a role in eradicating it, it would be appropriate for government to take responsibility for the role that it has played in allowing the current situation in which we find ourselves in today. Those who have openly attacked others have claimed that South Africans are being denied access to scarce jobs, basic services, and better lives because of the need to compete with people from other African countries for these limited resources. But poverty and unemployment are situations we share with our brothers and sisters from other parts of the continent as a result of the neoliberal macroeconomic policies that all African countries have adopted. These policies are designed to pit one group of the working class against another, and the South African government has made no attempt to develop alternatives to this system that can lead to 'a better life for all'. The government has also been extremely slow to respond to our current crisis, offering only short-term, 'quick-fix' solutions without attention being given to longer-term approaches that tackle the root causes of the problem.

The desperate conditions in which many of us find ourselves today are a direct result of the policies adopted by the elected leaders of Africa. As we take action as ordinary residents and members of civil society against xenophobia, we call on the South African government to acknowledge its role in the crisis, and to assume responsibility for providing solutions to the problems that speak to the root causes of the problem, and that provide immediate relief to affected people and long-term change for us all. To this end, we call on the South African government to:

- › Provide immediate emergency support for individuals and families displaced by the current violence;
- › Immediately suspend and revisit existing policies relating to immigrants, in particular those regarding the definition and treatment of refugees, both political and economic No one is illegal! There should be no Lindela!
- › Suspend the neoliberal macro-economic policy approach, and instead provide access for all who live in South Africa to proper jobs, decent quality housing, water, electricity, and the general means to live in a dignified manner so that there will be no need to fight over resources; and,
- › Investigate the actions of the police and other state authorities in the current wave of violence, with the aim of devising mechanisms for encouraging anti-xenophobic practices amongst state authorities.

Signed by:

.....(Coalition) Date:

..... Date:

..... Date:

..... Date:

African Renaissance Civic Movement, Alternative Media Productions, Action Aid International, Amnesty International (South Africa), Animal Rights Africa, Anti-Privatisation Forum, Black Sash Trust, Blakbox Imprint, Ceasefire Campaign, Central Methodist Church / Refugee Ministries, Children’s Rights Project, Christians for Peace in Africa, Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg), Education Indaba Forum, Ethiopian Community of South Africa (ECSA), Foundation for Human Rights, Freedom of Expression Institute, General Industrial Workers Union of SA (GIWUSA), Golden Triangle Community Crisis Committee (Golcomm), Group of Refugees Without Voice, Imbawula Trust, Inner City Resource Centre, Islamic Relief Johannesburg, Jubilee South Africa, Keep Left, Khanya College, Kliptown Concerned Residents, Landless People’s Movement Gauteng & Northwest, Lawyers for Human Rights, Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, Masibambane Unemployment Project, Medecins sans frontiers (Doctors without Borders, Merafong Demarcation Forum, NEHAWU Johannesburg, Pacifique Sukisa Foundation, Palestinian Solidarity Committee, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Samancor Retrenched Workers Crisis Committee, Samigos, Social Movements Indaba (SMI), Somali Association of South Africa (SASA), Sounds of Edutainment, Treatment Action Campaign, Ubuntu Indaba Forum, Umzabalazo we Jubilee, Workers World Media Production, Yeoville Stakeholders Forum

APPENDIX E

Pledge Of Solidarity of the Coalition Against Xenophobia

There is always the danger that a pledge made on the day of a march like this might be forgotten once the crowds have dispersed and the marchers have returned to their normal lives. But our pledge begins with the simplest of affirmations –

We will not forget what has happened here in these last two weeks. We will not forget the blood spilled of one brother and sister by another. We will not forget the images of our parents and sisters fleeing the violence brought to bear in our name. And we will not forget that it took too long for us to act in defence of our family – a family that knows no borders. We remember so that we can work together to stop this violence and to ensure that “never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another.”

APPENDIX F

Pictures



THE BIG MARCH ORGANISED BY THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA IN JOHANNESBURG

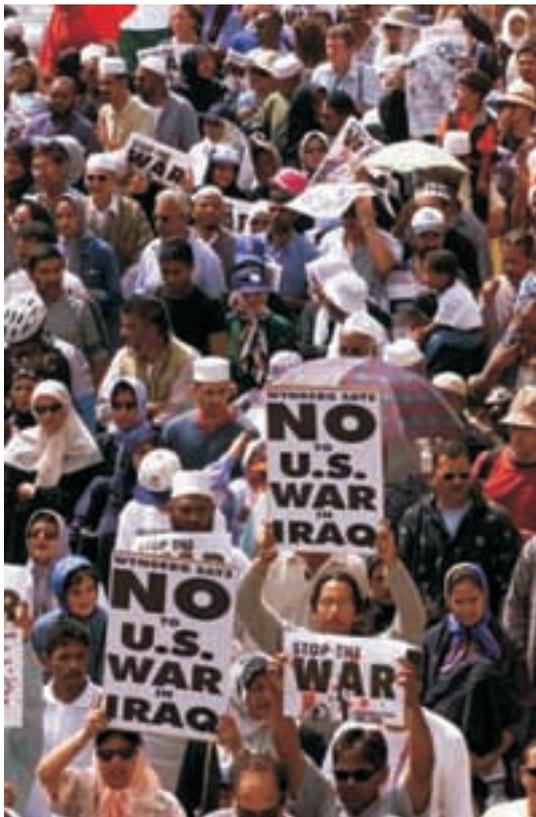


THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA MARCH, THE PICTURE ATTESTS TO THE MULTI-RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PROTEST ACTION

A CASE STUDY OF THE SOWETO ELECTRICITY CRISIS COMMITTEE,
THE ANTI-PRIVATIZATION FORUM AND THE COALITION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA



FLORENCE NKWASHU, SECC AND APF MEMBER AND RESPONDENT IN THIS RESEARCH, IN AN ANTI-WAR MARCH



ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS, NOTE THE REFERENCE TO WYNBERG, THE SAME AREA WHERE THE APF AFFILIATE STUDIED HERE IS BASED



COMRADES PICKETING LINDELA IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRE



POSTER USED IN THE CAX ANTI-LINDELA CAMPAIGN



ACCUSATORY MESSAGE AT THE CAX ANTI-XENOPHOBIA MARCH



UNIFYING MESSAGE AT THE CAX ANTI-XENOPHOBIA MARCH