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### There Is No Black In The Rainbow (Nation): A Bikoist and Fanonian Approach To Understanding "Xenophobic" Violence In South Africa

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There Is No Black In The Rainbow  
(Nation): A Bikoist and Fanonian  
Approach To Understanding  
'Xenophobic' Violence In South Africa

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By Reshoketswe Mapokgole

Supervised by Professor Garth Myers

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## **ABSTRACT**

South Africa has for at least the past 6 years experienced the problem of violence against African immigrants. The violence has become popularly known as “xenophobia”. In the thesis I investigate why the “xenophobic” violence broke out against African immigrants in Alexandra, May 2008. I also attempt to give explanation for to why it was poor Blacks that participated in the violence. I focus on the racist, anti-Black historical past Blacks experienced in South Africa and how this past contributed to violence that broke out.

I use Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko’s philosophies to analyze the violence because both authors’ works are focused in explaining the Black person’s experience under a colonial (in South Africa’s case apartheid) situation and how these experiences can translate into violence against their fellow Blacks. At the center of both Biko and Fanon’s ideologies is the idea of alienation Blacks experience. Alienation encompasses the economic exclusion Blacks experienced during apartheid and continue to experience today, together with the inferiority complex they hold. The paper also questions what the violence should be named and the problems that arise with simply calling it xenophobia. Lastly in the paper I propose a means in which the root causes of the violence can be addressed using Biko’s Black Consciousness ideologies and Fanon’s anti colonial revolutionary theories.

### **Acknowledgements**

I first want to thank my mother for introducing me to Steve Biko as child. I may not have understood his ideologies then, but they have stuck with me throughout and it is through my love for Biko that the idea for this thesis arose. I also want to thank her for

the countless times she played Bob Marley in our house, the phrase “emancipate yourself from mental slavery” stuck in me and has guided me throughout this project. I want to also thank my grandmother for the stories she has shared with me of her growing up under apartheid. They have haunted me and taught me many things, the most important being to never forget our history as Black South Africans. I would also like to thank my friends for reminding me when I wanted to give up, that I could do it.

I would like to thank Professor Marcano, for introducing me to race and racism philosophy during my sophomore year and for our Friday meetings in my senior year discussing Frantz Fanon. I would like to thank her especially for continuously encouraging and challenging me throughout writing this thesis. I also want to thank Professor Bauer for her questions that helped me clearly structure my thoughts. I would also like to thank Katherine Hart, for all the help she gave me doing research for this thesis and all the times she encouraged me to keep writing.

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## INTRODUCTION

On May 11, 2008, a Mozambican man was burnt alive in Alexandra, a township in Johannesburg.<sup>1</sup> The perpetrators stood and watched as he screamed in pain, some laughed. Soon pictures flooded the Internet and Ernesto Ahabeto Nhamuave became known as “the flaming man”.<sup>2</sup> In the same month, sixty-three other people marked as African immigrants, bodies that do not belong to South Africa, were killed, and thousands more were displaced.<sup>3</sup> Fully twenty-three of those killed were South African. The rainbow nation’s<sup>4</sup> declaration that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it was betrayed. The violence became known as xenophobia. Could South Africans have a fear of foreigners so pervasive that they burn them alive? Middle-class and White South Africans were quick to separate themselves from the perpetrators, expressing disgust and disbelief in what happened<sup>5</sup> while the government argued the violence was only criminal activity. Is this violence then simply the barbaric acts of the poor? Are their actions independent and separate from the socio-economic inequalities they bear every day and the racialized history, which continues to degrade their lives daily?

This paper seeks to explain why the violence broke out and to suggest a way forward using Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko’s anti-colonial theories. Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist, philosopher and revolutionary. He was born in the French Colony of Martinique and lived the remaining years of his life in France and Algeria. He is regarded

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Worby, Shireen Hassim and Tawana Kupe. “Introduction: Facing the Other at The Gates of Democracy” In *Go Home or Die Here*, ed. by Shireen Hassim, Eric Worby and Tawana Kupe, 1-25. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Glynnis Underhill and Sibonile Khumalo, “No Justice for Burning Man,” *The M&G Online*, July 30, 2010, <http://mg.co.za/article/2010-07-30-no-justice-for-burning-man>.

<sup>3</sup> Hassim, Kupe and Worby “*Introduction*,” 1.

<sup>4</sup> South Africa is known as the Rainbow Nation. A term coined by the South African Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu aligning to the different cultures that makeup South Africa’s population.

<sup>5</sup> Hassim, Kupe and Worby “*Introduction*,” 6.

as one of the most widely read and influential thinkers on decolonization theory. His books *Black Skin, White Mask*, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* are considered the pillars of many liberation movements in Africa. *Black Skin, White Mask* and *The Wretched of The Earth* are key sources for this thesis. Steve Biko was a South African anti-apartheid activist, Blacks Consciousness Movement leader and philosopher. He is one of the key leaders that revived the anti-apartheid movement during the 1960s and 1970s. He is also the founder and first President of SASO<sup>6</sup>, a Black student organization pivotal to Black student movements against apartheid. Biko's writings in *I Write What I Like* is a key source for this paper as it shows Biko's thoughts on race consciousness and the anti-apartheid struggle.

Most scholarship on xenophobia focuses on the current state of South Africa in explaining the violence. They fail to indicate the importance of Black South Africans' past in their analysis of the violence. This paper seeks to show how the violence against African immigrants is rooted in the socio-economic and psychological violence Blacks experienced under apartheid. I trace the history of Black South Africans under a racist regime and show how important its effects on Blacks' current socio-economic situation are in understanding the violence today. I use Fanon and Biko because they provide a historical account of Blacks' situation under an oppressive colonial/apartheid system. Their works also focus on how anti-Black oppression affects Blacks psychologically. I argue, using Fanon's ideologies from *Black Skin, White Mask*, that the violence broke out as a result of the alienation Blacks experience because of the racist structures that existed under apartheid and continue to exist in the post-apartheid era. In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon argues that the problem of alienation is primarily economic and secondly a

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<sup>6</sup> SASO stands for South Africa Student Organization.

result of an internalized inferiority complex.<sup>7</sup> Biko similarly observed, that as a result of the economic injustices and social violence Blacks endured under the apartheid regime that Blacks would violently turn against each other.

Moreover, using a Fanonian and Bikoist lens to understand the violence, indicates that to call the violence xenophobia absolves some actors from accountability. It also ignores the pivotal role the history of apartheid played in creating the racial drama, which manifested itself into the violence. Authors Gqola and Mngxitama argue the violence that took place is not only xenophobia, but is rather “Negrophobic” xenophobia.<sup>8</sup> To name the violence Negrophobic xenophobia provides a more accurate picture of the violence than simply calling it xenophobia. However in order to encompass that those targeted are not only Black, but sought out as the Black that is African, I argue, using Fanon and Biko that the violence is both Negrophobic and Afrophobic Xenophobia. Fanon’s analysis of the Antillean person and their resentment of Africans, and Biko’s observation on the anti-Africa narrative in South Africa allowed me to discern that the violence is both Negrophobic and Afrophobic. This label encompasses the role of the immediate socio-economic realities together with the anti-Black, anti-Africa history of apartheid on the violence.

The paper is divided into two chapters. The first chapter explains that the violence broke out as a result of the exacerbated experience of alienation for poor Blacks in the post-apartheid era. Although a majority of Blacks experience alienation, this paper focuses only on the exacerbated alienation of poor Blacks, as they were the main perpetrators of the violence. In Chapter One I illustrate how South Africa is still a racist

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<sup>7</sup> Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Mask*. (New York: Grove, 2008), 2.

<sup>8</sup>Hassim, Kupe and Worby “Introduction,” 16.



society because the effects of policies essential to apartheid such as the Group Areas Act and Bantu Building Workers Act are explicitly visible and remain slightly unchanged. The chapter also elaborates on how the socio-economic and psychological violence Blacks experienced under apartheid is manifested in the violence against African immigrants. The first chapter is made up of four sections. The first section argues that South Africa remains fundamentally racist, economically and socially. The second section explains alienation while the third and fourth sections deal with the inferiority complex and the socio-economic conditions which led to the break out of the violence. In Chapter Two I argue that the violence should be labeled Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobia instead of only xenophobia. In addition, in the second chapter I also argue that not only the main perpetrators be held accountable for the violence but also the government, Black middle class and whites. This is important because in order to propose a way forward post the May 2008 violence, and seeking a solution for the root cause, all actors accountable have to be identified.

The violence in Alexandra marked the beginning of more violent breakouts against African immigrants. Since May 2008, South Africa has experienced bouts of violence taking place against immigrants within the townships. Fanon said, “The explosion will not happen today. It is too soon...or too late.” The explosion is already taking place in South Africa. The occurrence of the Afrophobic and Negrophobic Xenophobic violence is a clear indication of this. Devan Pillay captured the position of South Africa wonderfully.

The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, writing about capitalist crisis, characterized it as a period in which the old is dying (and it’s taking a long time to die) while the new struggles to be born and in this ‘interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.’ We (South Africans) are now

in such an interregnum between the old and the new struggling to be formed.<sup>9</sup>

This violence is one of the varied morbid symptoms that appear; loudly haunting the country and the government that true, radical change is yet to take place in the post apartheid era.

### **Literature Review**

Belinda Dodson<sup>10</sup> argues six accounts can be identified for explaining the occurrence of “xenophobia” in South Africa. The six axes are: economic, socio-political, cultural stereotyping, political discourse concerning constitutional rights, political discourse as supported by political leaders and denialism.<sup>11</sup> Through analysis of the accounts I’ve grouped them into four. The four accounts are as follows, the socio-political, the economic, political discourse in South Africa and lastly denialism.

Economic disparities resulting in high rates of unemployment are the most argued cause for explaining the violence of May 2008. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor leaves the poor experiencing further marginalization and exclusions from the benefits of living in post-apartheid South Africa. It is these marginalized groups that were the main perpetrators of the violence. In addition, economic disparities have consequently generated a culture of entitlement among both the rich and poor in South Africa. Rich South Africans argue their taxes are used to support the poor, while poor Blacks blame

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<sup>9</sup> Devan Pillay. “Relative Deprivation, Social Instability and Cultures of Entitlement,” In *Go Home or Die Here*, ed. Shireen Hassim, Eric Worby and Tawana Kupe, 93-103. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 101.

<sup>10</sup> Belinda Dodson is an Associate professor at the University of Western Ontario, one of her major research themes is on Xenophobia in South Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Dodson, Belinda. “Locating Xenophobia: Debate, Discourse, and Everyday Experience in Cape Town, South Africa.” *Africa Today* 56, no 3 (2010) 5.

African immigrants for the lack of jobs and other socio-economic problems plaguing their communities.<sup>12</sup>

The socio-political account argues that it is partly as a result of “othering” immigrants that the violence took place. It is this othering of African immigrants that makes it clear that violence cannot be labeled as merely xenophobic, but rather Negrophobic and Afrophobic xenophobia. In post-apartheid South Africa a new construction of an oppositional “other” took place and foreign Africans quickly became this ‘other’.<sup>13</sup>

The South African government has used African immigrants as scapegoats for explaining the problems of criminality and lack of employment in the country.<sup>14</sup> The jargon of discussing criminality in South Africa is ubiquitous with stories about African immigrants. For example, right after 1994 in an address to the nation Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s first Black president indirectly blamed African immigrants for crimes taking place in South Africa. He stated “the fact that illegal immigrants are involved in violent criminal activity must not tempt us into the dangerous attitude which regards all foreigners with hostility.”<sup>15</sup> Although Mandela was warning the nation against ‘xenophobic’ actions, he, like many other political leaders made criminality synonymous with the presence of immigrants. Moreover, South Africa’s rigid laws regarding African immigrants are viewed as anti-immigrant.<sup>16</sup> South Africa’s attempt to control the influx of immigrants into the country has created a discourse of anti-immigration not only in

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<sup>12</sup> Dodson, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Dodson, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Pauw H, and T. S. Petrus. "Xenophobia and Informal Trading in Port Elizabeth" *Anthropology Southern Africa* (2003), 175.

<sup>15</sup> Dodson, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Pauw and Petrus, 175.

government offices such as Home Affairs, but also among the population.<sup>17</sup> The political discourse shows how laws regarding immigrants, together with how immigrants are spoken of in the political realm have created an environment fertile for “xenophobic” violence in South Africa.

Lastly, denialism as an ideology for explaining the violence is tied to South Africa’s former President Thabo Mbeki arguing that violence was merely criminality and not xenophobia.<sup>18</sup> In 2010, Mbeki commented on the violence in Alexandra of May 2008, saying: “when I walk down the streets of Johannesburg and this other Black person approaches me, there is no way of my telling they are Zimbabwean or Mozambican...you don’t have any evidence of racism among our people.”<sup>19</sup>

The four axes, socio-political, economic, political discourse and denialism are offered as a means to understand the occurrence of the May 2008 violence. However these accounts do not fully encompass the historical and socio-economic present realities of South Africa. In incorporating Biko and Fanon’s ideas on the Black situation in South Africa this thesis tackles the historical and socio-economic realities of Black South Africans today and how they created an environment for violence against African immigrants to take place.

This thesis seeks to explain the violent breakouts from a Bikoist and Fanonian perspective. Firstly, both thinkers, as a result of their work’s focus on anti-colonial theory and anti-apartheid struggle demand for the violence to be analyzed through giving attention to the violent history of apartheid in South Africa. Secondly, it is both Biko and

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<sup>17</sup> Pauw and Petrus, 175.

<sup>18</sup> David Everatt, “Xenophobia, State and Society in South Africa.” *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* (2010), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Everatt, 14.

Fanon's theories on the colonial situation that create a framework for arguing that the violence should be labeled Afrophobic and Negrophobic Xenophobia, not only Negrophobic Xenophobia. Lastly seeing as that more 'xenophobic' violence continued to take place post May 2008, the thesis evaluates how Fanon's anti-colonial revolutionary discourse and Biko's Black Consciousness concept can provide a means to deal with the root causes of the violence. Both authors' philosophies make it clear that without a redistribution of wealth, and a creation of a positive Black consciousness, the violence will continue to take place.

This violence against African immigrants is a sore indication that a majority of Blacks are living under poverty and continue to be excluded from the country's wealth. In analyzing Fanon's rhetoric on revolutionary violence, I argue, given that should there be no equal redistribution of wealth in the coming years, the poor's only means to attain wealth may be through sabotage or other violent means. The rage of the poor is currently misdirected, African immigrants are not their enemy, rather their true enemy is the government, the small Black middle class and whites. An attempt toward resolving the issue of current or future violence should aim for economic empowerment of the poor through a redistributing wealth and an eradication of neoliberal policies. In addition, a positive Black consciousness should be generated within poor Black communities. Biko and Fanon's work remind us that complete liberation is yet to take place in South Africa and that failure to address this issue will lead to more violence taking place against both poor Black South Africans and African immigrants.

## **Chapter 1. Explaining why violence against African immigrants broke out.**

The violence of May 2008 in Alexandra popularly labeled as xenophobia took place as a consequence of the experience of alienation Black South Africans faced during apartheid, and continue to face in the post apartheid era. In May 2008 Alexandra became the epicenter of the violent outbreaks against African immigrants that soon broke out in other parts of Johannesburg and the country at large. The 1994 overturn of the apartheid regime resulted only in a transition of political power to the Black majority; failing to create what Biko calls a complete systematic change that included the transformation of socio-economic racist institutions in South Africa.<sup>20</sup> Fanon argues "...the effective disalienation of the Black entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities."<sup>21</sup> He goes further to argue that the alienation of the Black person "...is the outcome of a double process: primarily economic; subsequently, the internalization- or better, the epidermalization- of this inferiority."<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, from a Bikoist and Fanonian perspective I argue the violence is a consequence of the experience of alienation amongst poor Black South Africans. The economic inequalities and the "epidermalized inferiority complex"<sup>23</sup> within poor Blacks in Alexandra caused the outbreak of the Negrophobic and Afrophobic Xenophobic violence. The feeling of being inferior is epidermalized, meaning that it is attached to one's skin color, and in this case one's blackness. The failure to eradicate South Africa's

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<sup>20</sup> Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander, and Nigel C. Gibson, "Biko Lives," In *Biko Lives: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*, ed. by Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander and Nigel C Gibson, 1-20, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Fanon, "Black Skin," 4.

<sup>22</sup> Fanon, "Black Skin," 4.

<sup>23</sup> Fanon, "Black Skin," 4.

racist institutions has further exacerbated the alienation of poor Black South Africans, and as a result, this alienation has manifested itself into this violence on the ground. The violence of May 2008 broke out as a result of South Africa's racist structure, which fosters a socio-economic situation that exacerbates alienation among the poor.<sup>24</sup>

### **I. South Africa's racist structure**

This (South Africa) is one country where it would be possible to create a capitalist black society, if whites were intelligent, if the nationalists were intelligent. And that capitalist black society, black middle class, would be very effective...South Africa could succeed in putting across to the world a pretty convincing integrated picture, with still 70 percent of the population being underdogs.<sup>25</sup>

(Steve Biko, 1972)

A society is either racist, or it is not;<sup>26</sup> South Africa was and still is a racist society governed by racist institutions. For Fanon racism occurs when a dominant group economically exploits and imposes otherness over one group because of their race.<sup>27</sup> Biko, echoing Fanon's explanation of the colonial situation, defined racism as "discrimination against a group by another for the purposes of subjugating or maintaining subjugation."<sup>28</sup> This definition indicates that racism is two fold. Racism under the

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<sup>24</sup> The poor in this regard, as it does in most cases in South Africa refers to Blacks. Moreover, although alienation is experienced by most, if not all black South Africans, this paper focuses on the exacerbated feeling of alienation within poor black communities because it was within these communities, specifically Alexandra that the violence against African immigrants broke out.

<sup>25</sup> Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson, "*Biko Lives*," 1.

<sup>26</sup> Fanon, "Black Skin," 63.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis R Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of the European Man: An essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 42.

<sup>28</sup> Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, (New York: Harper & Row, 2004), 27.

apartheid regime was enforced through white folks as the dominant group<sup>29</sup> using both political and economic power to subjugate and ‘other’<sup>30</sup> Blacks.<sup>31</sup> The apartheid government installed the Group Areas Act in 1950 as a means to legitimize territorial segregation, dispossession of Black people’s land and the prevention of Blacks from acquiring high skilled jobs.<sup>32</sup> Dr. Daniel Francois Malan then Prime Minister of South Africa stated the Group Areas Act embodied the essence of apartheid.<sup>33</sup> This Act was one of the four pillars of apartheid as it guaranteed exclusion of Black South Africans from obtaining any wealth or land.<sup>34</sup> The Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 was later implemented to complement the Group Areas Act in order to ensure further exclusion of Blacks from high skilled labor and to permanently keep Blacks out of the suburbs. South African society remains racist today because the main pillars of the apartheid regime remain untransformed. Today racial segregation is explicitly illustrated in the organization of Black townships versus white areas while the exclusion of a majority of Blacks from high skilled jobs remains high.

The Group Areas Act, as a result of legalizing the dispossession of land from Blacks under apartheid facilitated for Whites to keep within their race the greater amount of the country’s wealth leaving Blacks in abject poverty with neither arable land nor

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<sup>29</sup> White people are regarded the dominant group in this case because they have the economic power.

<sup>30</sup> To other a group as Didier Fassin, a renowned sociologist, anthropologist and ethnographer puts it takes place when one group distances itself from another group, suggesting that their cultures are incommunicable and their social worlds incommensurable and thus, arguing that the two groups cannot coexist. Moreover such othering takes place when one group is considered inferior and are always only viewed as nothing but objects. (When Bodies Remember 2007)

<sup>31</sup> Mabogo P. More, “Biko: Africana Existentialist Philosopher,” In *Biko Lives: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*, ed. by Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander and Nigel C Gibson, 46-68 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 50.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Centre against Apartheid. *The Group Areas Act and Its Effects*. By Barry Higgs, (Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, 1971), 1.

<sup>33</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 1.



property. The Act allowed for Blacks to be removed from their land with very little to no compensation for their property or assets because it was the government that decided what value property had. Moreover, the Group Areas Act also made it illegal for Blacks to own land or property.<sup>35</sup> This inevitably made Blacks to completely rely on the apartheid government for survival. The Building Bantu Workers Act placed in law that Blacks could not perform any skilled work.<sup>36</sup> It complemented the Group Areas Act because it further enforced that Blacks could only work in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. Hence Blacks made an income enough for survival and nothing more. Furthermore, territorial segregation under the slogan separate but equal designated only thirteen percent of South Africa's land to Blacks under Bantustans.<sup>37</sup> Bantustans, as the apartheid government proclaimed were areas marked as settlements for Black people to have independent economic and political states.<sup>38</sup> However Bantustans were created solely to keep Black people out of the city, and to create unskilled labor reserves for the apartheid economy.

The colonizer-colonized relationship is manifested spatially.<sup>39</sup> During apartheid, this divide, as a result of the Group Areas Act was clearly laid out. The city and suburbs were reserved only for whites, with Blacks only able to enter for a short amount of time and in most cases as servants to the whites.<sup>40</sup> The areas reserved for whites were spacious and received the best services while Bantustans were small confined areas that

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<sup>35</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Biko, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Kavanagh, Christopher. "South Africa promises end of overlordship" (London, The Sunday Times) *The Sunday Times Digital Archive* October 6, 1963

<sup>39</sup> Nigel C Gibson, "What Happened to the "Promised Land"? A Fanonian Perspective on Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Antipode* 44, no.1 (2012): 54.

<sup>40</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 1.

received little to no access to services.<sup>41</sup> The colonizer-colonized relation is manifested spatially, it is important, in the process of decolonization that the land must become completely reorganized. The “natives” should no longer be constrained to only thirteen percent of the land. However, 20 years after apartheid fewer than three percent of the land has been taken from white hands, meaning that a population of 80 percent of Blacks still remains confined to thirteen percent arid land.<sup>42</sup>

South Africa’s current spatial layout is still divided into what Fanon called the colonizer and colonized quarters, and this is seen with the separation between suburbs occupied by whites with a small Black middle class and Black townships. As a result of Blacks continuing to live in confined Black townships, Black South Africans consequently receive less quality education, lack access to health care and also still participate in unskilled and semi-skilled labor. For example Alexandra’s spatiality is rooted in its past. The poor housing structures, the dilapidated transport infrastructure with dusty roads together with the ethnic make-up of the area are due to its racially historic past. Moreover, just like the situation under the apartheid regime, a great amount of South Africa’s wealth is locked within the hands of the white minority. The 2011 census has illustrated this well, showing that an average white family earns at least 4 times as much as a Black family in South Africa.<sup>43</sup>

Yet neo-liberal authors argue that since South Africa is in the post apartheid era the racist structures that functioned under the apartheid government are no longer

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<sup>41</sup> *The Group Areas Effect*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson, “*Biko Lives*,” 2.

<sup>43</sup> Aislinn Laing. “South Africa’s whites still paid six times more than Blacks.” *The Telegraph*, October 30, 2012.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/southafrica/9643548/South-Africas-whites-still-paid-six-times-more-than-blacks.html>

existent.<sup>44</sup> In this argument, authors usually cite the government's attempts at creating housing and eradicating poverty as indications that racist structures no longer govern South Africa. However, simply providing access to basic needs such as education, food and shelter does not mean that racist institutions in which economic exclusion takes place no longer exist. This is a situation in which "resistance is allowed to be stopped at Blacks simply gaining access to water, adequate shelter, electricity and food (little more than the basic needs of animals)."<sup>45</sup> There has been in South Africa, very little to no success in countering the effects of apartheid.

The ruling party, ANC's neoliberal form of governance has maintained the racial structures of the apartheid regime. This consequently led to the creation of a small Black elite- the Black middle class and the failure to redistribute wealth locked in white hands. In a neoliberal governed country the market and private companies largely control service provision.<sup>46</sup> As a result it is the wealthy that now rule the country, and since there has been no redistribution of wealth, the wealthy are the whites with a small Black middle class.

By moving from apartheid to neoliberalism, post-apartheid South Africa considers whiteness an economic problem only in as far as it is a barrier to Black inclusion. The material legacies of racial capitalism are ultimately reduced to the liberal problem of equal access.<sup>47</sup>

Neoliberal ideals of inclusion and providing basic needs halt South Africa and South Africans from attaining a complete systematic change. Neoliberalism has

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<sup>44</sup> Hassim, Kupe and Worby, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>45</sup> Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson, "Biko Lives," 19.

<sup>46</sup> Garth Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice*, (London: Zed Books Ltd. 2011), 107.

<sup>47</sup> Mngxitama, Alexander and Gibson, "Biko Lives," 9.

succeeded, using Biko's words "to put across to the world, a pretty convincing picture"<sup>48</sup> regarding equality in South Africa.

In predicting clearly the current state of South Africa, Biko stated in the 1970s in an interview that "if we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions what is likely to happen is that Black people will continue to be poor, and you will see a few Blacks filtering through into the so called bourgeoisie. Our society would be run almost as of yesterday."<sup>49</sup> Black people in South Africa continue to still be poor and it is only to a small extent a class problem. It is largely as a result of being Black in a country that legalized the dispossession of wealth from Blacks; and has failed to redress these injustices. The post-apartheid Black Economic Empowerment program that was meant to redistribute South Africa's wealth only enabled the formation of a small Black elite.<sup>50</sup> The majority that is poor in South Africa is Blacks.<sup>51</sup> It is a direct consequence of racist structures that have not been eradicated in the post-apartheid era, in which there has been no redistribution of wealth or land appropriation for Blacks.

Fanon defines the process of decolonization as one in which "the first becomes last, and the last becomes first".<sup>52</sup> It is a change in which a "new species of men and women"<sup>53</sup> come to rule, in a society in which the whole structure has been changed from bottom to top.<sup>54</sup> Anything short of a complete systematic and structural change is not

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<sup>48</sup> Gail M. Gerhart, "Interview with Steve Biko." In *Biko Lives: Contesting the Legacies of Steve Biko*, ed. Andile Mngxitama, Amanda Alexander and Nigel C Gibson, 21-42, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 42.

<sup>49</sup> Biko, 169.

<sup>50</sup> Gibson, 54.

<sup>51</sup> Gibson, 53-54.

<sup>52</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove, 2001), 27.

<sup>53</sup> Fanon, "Wretched," 27.

<sup>54</sup> Fanon, "Wretched," 27.

decolonization; it is only a substitution from one colonial power to another.<sup>55</sup> The government's move to neoliberalism has only maintained apartheid's anti-Black racist structures. Dr. Malan was correct to call the Group Areas Act the essence of apartheid. Because it is this Act that lives on into the post apartheid era despite its technical repeal, and this is seen in the spatial layout of the country and the labor Blacks perform.

A racist structure is one in which discrimination occurs against one group because the dominant group has the power to do so. Without a transformation and reorganization of the apartheid spatiality and a redistribution of wealth, South Africa has essentially undergone no liberation. This indicates that South Africa is still a racist society that is governed under the same apartheid institutions only with a Black face. There was no complete disordering of South Africa's racist structure. Real change did not take place in South Africa because the economic structure and its policies were not reorganized. As indicated, economic exclusion for Blacks is also rampant in the post apartheid era. In addition, the country is still spatially divided within the colonizer-colonized realm. Therefore in Fanonian terms, the post apartheid reality in South Africa is that those that were first are still first, and those that were last, are still last.

## **II. Alienation**

It is as a result of the racist structures, which continue to exist in South Africa that the experience of alienation is reinforced within Black South Africans. This alienation is experienced more so in poor Black communities such as Alexandra because of the harsher economic conditions they face. The Afrophobic and Negrophobic Xenophobic violence that broke out in May 2008 is a consequence of this experience of alienation.

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<sup>55</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*," 27.

The alienation South Africans experience is as a result of a twofold process, and using a Fanonian lens it is the internalized inferiority complex and the economic injustices they face.<sup>56</sup> Howard McGary<sup>57</sup> argues that alienation is a kind of “unfreedom” that can be best understood using the idea of constraints.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Black South Africans experience unfreedom as a result of constraints fostered by their economic conditions and the epidermalized inferiority complex they experience. Both the economic conditions and the inferiority complex were developed under the apartheid regime and continue to exist in the post-apartheid era.

Access to constitutional rights and constitutional freedom are not enough to ensure that Black South Africans do not experience alienation. The internal constraints, such as an inferiority complex can be so severe that it prevents a group from experiencing freedom.<sup>59</sup> W.E Du Bois<sup>60</sup> best captured how an inferiority complex works in what he identified as “the problem of double consciousness.” He describes this double consciousness as “a sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”<sup>61</sup> This definition of the double consciousness fits the inferiority complex Black South Africans experience. It is as a result of having been viewed only as objects by whites under the apartheid regime that Blacks too begin to see themselves from the eyes of the whites.

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<sup>56</sup> Fanon, “*Black Skin*,” 2.

<sup>57</sup> McGary is an American philosopher whose work focuses on political philosophy and African American philosophy.

<sup>58</sup> Howard McGary, “Alienation and the African American Experience.” *In African American Philosophy: Selected Readings*, ed. by Tommy Lee Lott, 468-477, (NJ: Prentice Hal, 2002), 471.

<sup>59</sup> McGary, “*Alienation*,” 471.

<sup>60</sup> W.E Du Bois is a prominent thinker on race issues and race philosophy in America.

<sup>61</sup> McGary, “*Alienation*,” 471.

Fanon best captures the experiences of being Black in an anti-Black racist world. He says: "I will say that the Black is not man. There is a zone of nonbeing...an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born. In most cases, the Black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into real hell."<sup>62</sup> What is indicated here is that in a racist anti-Black society, the Black person cannot undergo any authentic upheaval to assert his/her being because coming into the world the whites have already provided an essence for the Black person. In an anti-Black society the Black person is completely objectified, such that they are regarded only as how whites see them. For Blacks to see themselves only as object creates in them a feeling of inferiority because then it means they do not define themselves, it is the subject that sees them which defines them. This is complete unfreedom.

Furthermore, this feeling of inferiority, of being alienated, is made worse by the harsh economic conditions Blacks live under. The economic conditions Black South Africans are subjected to create unfreedom for them. This is because as a result of their economic conditions they have access only to certain schools, places, hospitals and so on. It is their economic conditions that confine them to the townships they live in. The alienation Blacks experience is as a result of both the economic conditions, and the inferiority complex Blacks face.

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<sup>62</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 2.

### III. Inferiority complex amongst poor Blacks in South Africa

The exclusion of Blacks from economic benefits, together with the inferiority complex they face are the main factors that caused the outbreak of the May 2008 violence in Alexandra. There is a fantasy of inclusion in the rainbow nation.<sup>63</sup> This observation is made to show that African immigrants are unwanted in South Africa, however scholars fail to see that a large population of Blacks also remain excluded from the economic benefits of the 'new' South Africa. The colonizer-colonized geographical layout that still exists in South Africa is the most prominent feature that explicitly shows this exclusion of the Black majority. Other scholars have argued that it is as a result of the 'bad immigrant' discourse within the political realm and South Africa's rigid laws on the influx of African immigrants that led to the violence. Although these factors are important in strengthening anti-African immigrant sentiments within the Black majority, even without them the violence would have occurred. The experiences of alienation - of feeling inferior as a result of these exclusions from the benefits of a post apartheid South Africa - have created in the poor the need to assert their superiority and their belonging in the country. Black immigrant bodies have become the place for poor Blacks to assert themselves. It is these harsh economic injustices and feelings of inferiority that resulted in the breakout of the violence in Alexandra.

Blacks' inferiority complex was enforced under apartheid. The use of fear, physical violence and social violence to govern Blacks were key in fostering the inferiority complex within Blacks. During the apartheid era Blacks were made to feel and believe that they were inferior. The Group Areas Act and the Bantu Building Workers Act legalized social violence on Black communities. These Acts played a great role in

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<sup>63</sup> Hassim, Kupe and Worby, "Introduction," 3.



solidifying the inferiority complex within Blacks. The Group Areas Act forced thousands of Blacks to live in small confined spaces with little to no services. Moreover a majority of Blacks, as a result of the influx of cheap labor were made to live in prison like hostels the government had built.<sup>64</sup> These hostels, built in Alexandra epitomized and clearly showed how Black areas were simply cheap labor reserves for the apartheid economy. Since Blacks could not live in the city, and could only go in for work, they were confined to the small, undeveloped areas.

Going into the cities meant that Blacks could see the differences between their living quarters and the Whites quarter. They were well aware of the vast differences, and to some extent were powerless to change the situation. The Bantu Building Workers Act made it illegal for Blacks to work in high skilled jobs, meaning their confined squatters were a permanent situation. To live in such conditions and fail to escape them creates in a community a sense of inferiority. Biko writes, in responding to this situation “it will not be long before the Blacks relate their poverty to their Blackness.”<sup>65</sup> And under apartheid this is what happened, the poverty Blacks faced as a result of the Acts enforced was then associated with being Black; Blacks began to think it was as a result of something they internally lacked that they were under such conditions. Moreover the inability to get out of this poverty further confirmed within the Blacks their inferiority. The social violence Blacks experience under apartheid was legalized; it made Blacks feel inferior and even worse impotent to change their socio-economic situation.

In addition, the apartheid government’s use of fear as a method to maintain the subjugation of Blacks also reinforced this inferiority complex. Blacks were well aware of

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<sup>64</sup> Africa Fund, *Hostels: Housing Apartheid Violence*. (Africa Fund, 1991), 1.

<sup>65</sup> Biko, 68.

the riches whites enjoyed, the use of fear through violence and the omnipresence of the police in Black areas created a feeling of impotence within Blacks to change their conditions. It is this feeling of impotence that further enforced their inferiority complex. Biko made this observation, regarding the apartheid government's use of violence and fear that "...the great plan is to keep the Black people thoroughly intimidated and to perpetuate the super-race image of the white man."<sup>66</sup> In this regard not only are s forced to accept their horrid social situation, they also in turn begin to view whites as superior because of the wealth they enjoy and subsequently saw themselves as inferior. This fear under the apartheid regime eroded the Black soul; it made it impossible for Black people to behave like free people.<sup>67</sup> This constant intimidation from the police enforced an atmosphere of submission within Blacks. When a group is forced in this manner to not revolt against their social condition, a feeling of impotence within the group develops and as a result aggression builds up within them.

Because of the pervasiveness of the fear used by the government, the aggression within the Blacks under apartheid was targeted towards other Blacks in the townships. The violence in the townships between Blacks was as a direct result of the inferiority complex they experienced. Biko made this observation regarding the state of Black people under apartheid.

...The type of Black man we have today has lost his manhood. Reduced to an obliging shell he looks at the white power structure with awe...Deep inside his anger he mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction- on his fellow man in the township, on the property of Black people.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Biko, 83.

<sup>67</sup> Biko, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Biko, 30.

The violence and fear imposed on Black people under apartheid not only created an inferiority complex within them but also a feeling of impotence in which Blacks targeted other Blacks to deal with this impotence.

Moreover through the use of fear to control, the apartheid government turned the Black person into objects; Blacks were viewed only as criminals. To be viewed as an object means that you are regarded as completely known, thus having no freedom to assert yourself as anything different. Biko argued, under apartheid “no Black (person) could ever at any moment feel certain that they are not breaking the law.”<sup>69</sup> Fanon says, “Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always assumed guilty.”<sup>70</sup> To be constantly targeted, to know that at any moment your home can become trashed, to know that at any moment you could be the one the government chooses to make an example of, this was the reality of Black folk under apartheid, living in constant fear. To live constantly on the lookout in your country means that really you are excluded from the country, not regarded as its citizen.

Violence in the townships eroded the humanity of the Black person.<sup>71</sup> The formation of the colonial situation in itself is a form of violence.<sup>72</sup> Black South Africa’s history was made synonymous with barbarism; even worse the Black South African became the objects to identify with evil.<sup>73</sup> The imposition of external cultures on the native, the distortion of the native’s history, all this is violence that leaves the native naked, without a future or a constructive past to look back to. Under a structure in which the Black person is referred to in zoological terms, and his religion is regarded as only

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<sup>69</sup> Biko, 81.

<sup>70</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 35.

<sup>71</sup> Biko, 81.

<sup>72</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 31.

<sup>73</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 32.

superstitious, a sense of inferiority develops within him. “This is where the African began to lose grip on himself...” and began to see him/herself through the eye of the other, the white man, as only an object, an animal.<sup>74</sup> The set up of apartheid or settler government in South Africa was in itself violent, it broke down the social structure of Blacks, and it in turn broke apart the being of people, turning them into objects. It is in this process that the inferiority complex developed within the Black majority.

The Negrophobic and Afrophobic violence that took place in Alexandra is a recreation of violence Blacks underwent during apartheid. Under the apartheid regime, violence against Black people was a constant reality. As Biko stated, the Black person was constantly alert, uncertain of when he/she would be the victim of physical violence by the government.<sup>75</sup> Black people’s homes would be burnt, people harassed in the streets and some simply arrested.<sup>76</sup> This is the same kind of violence that took place in Alexandra. One of the victims of the violence in May had his home not only was his home destroyed, but also the Spaza Shop<sup>77</sup> he owned was pillaged and burnt. The violent acts Blacks employed in Alexandra resembled the violence that whites under apartheid used against Blacks. Lewis Gordon argues that such events of violence indicate, “ritualistic behavior that transforms the participants, through...bad faith into White figures in pursuit of the anti-Black world’s embodiment of weakness and evil-the Black, the dark, the nigger.”<sup>78</sup> What Lewis Gordon shows regarding the South Africa situation is that in an act of faith Blacks in Alexandra transformed themselves into the whites that

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<sup>74</sup> Biko, 45.

<sup>75</sup> Biko, 81.

<sup>76</sup> Biko, 81.

<sup>77</sup> A spaza shop are mini-grocery stores found in townships, selling basic goods.

<sup>78</sup> Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 114-

had oppressed them. Bad faith allowed them to believe that the use of violence against the poor and not the government would relieve them of their socio-economic reality and their inferiority complex.

Gordon suggests that “perhaps many Blacks are killed by Blacks because many Blacks have adopted this society’s attitude toward Black life.”<sup>79</sup> The violence in South Africa against Black immigrants is a projection of the hate Blacks endured under apartheid. Fanon shows this well when he observes, “as I begin to recognize that the Negro is a symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognize I am the Negro.”<sup>80</sup> Echoing Biko’s words, as a result of the inferiority complex developed under apartheid and reinforced in the post apartheid era, poor Black South Africans have lost their personhood.<sup>81</sup>

In the same tone of mimicking the violence imposed on Blacks under apartheid, in the attacks mounted against Black immigrants, Black South Africans overdetermine Black immigrants from without. To overdetermine someone from without is to regard them as completely known. In post-apartheid South Africa a new construction of an oppositional “other” took place and foreign Africans quickly became this other.<sup>82</sup> Mngxitama writes, “Blacks are criminals by virtue of their appearance. The African immigrant similarly to Black South Africans under apartheid is regarded as completely known. They are dirty, stinking...”<sup>83</sup>

Black immigrants are deemed criminals in South Africa. From the book *anti-Semite and Jew* Sartre argues that the anti-Semite others the Jew in order for the anti-

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<sup>79</sup> Gordon, “*Bad Faith*,” 114.

<sup>80</sup> Gordon, “*Bad Faith*,” 115.

<sup>81</sup> Biko, 30.

<sup>82</sup> Dodson, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Mngxitama, Andile. “Blacks are Kwerekweres, Whites are Tourists.” *New Frank Talk* (2010), 2.

Semite to elevate their status in society.<sup>84</sup> In an act of bad faith, the African immigrant is chosen as the immediate other and is overdetermined from without, similar to how African people were under apartheid. Alexandra residents, in order to justify their superiority, use such stereotyping of African immigrants. Thus, labeling the African immigrant with such negative stereotypes is done as a means for poor Black South Africans in Alexandra to assert themselves in a society that seems to have excluded them.

Fanon argues that for every society there is a collective catharsis<sup>85</sup> through which the aggression of the people is channeled.<sup>86</sup> For South Africans, moments through which this channeling of aggression was to take place were halted. During the Rivonia Trial<sup>87</sup>, Nelson Mandela spoke of violence taking place amongst Africans in places such as Zeerust and Sekhukhuniland. He argued that this violence is as a result of internalized violence within Blacks in South Africa as the result of the violence imposed on them under apartheid.<sup>88</sup> He further argued that Umkhonto We Sizwe<sup>89</sup> was created to redirect violence from Black communities and to channel this violence against the apartheid system.<sup>90</sup> The arrest of the ANC's main leaders halted this redirection of the violence, and so it continued to take place within Black communities amongst the Blacks themselves.

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<sup>84</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, (New York: Schocken, 1948), 25.

<sup>85</sup> A collective catharsis is an outlet for a society to release aggression.

<sup>86</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 112.

<sup>87</sup> The Rivonia Trial took place between 1963 and 1964 in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is considered the most important trial in South Africa because it led to the sentencing of the main ANC leaders to Robben Island in 1964.

<sup>88</sup> Nelson Mandela, "*Rivonia Trial*", (Johannesburg, 1963), Testimony

<sup>89</sup> Umkhonto We Sizwe was the military wing of the African National Congress. It was founded in 1961 as a means to respond to the apartheid's government use of violence against Black South Africans.

<sup>90</sup> Nelson Mandela. "*Rivonia Trial Testimony*", (Johannesburg, 1963)

Aggression has built up within the Black masses since apartheid and no outlet has been provided for the aggression of the Blacks that remain marginalized to be channeled. Black South Africans have undergone oppression for over 300 years<sup>91</sup> under white domination, however they have had little to no outlet for dealing with the social, physical and psychological violence they underwent. The post apartheid era situation in South Africa has also failed to provide an outlet for Blacks, especially the poor living in harsh conditions such as Alexandra. Therefore poor Blacks have created the use of violence against Black immigrants as an outlet for them to channel their aggression, which continues to accumulate with the oppressions they face in the post apartheid era. Fanon argues that such violence between Blacks is one way in which the aggression of the Black masses is set free.<sup>92</sup>

#### **IV. Socio-Economic conditions**

The socio-economic conditions experienced by Alexandra's residents are also a significant reason as to why the violence against African immigrants broke out. The living situation of Alexandra residents is strikingly similar to that under apartheid. In describing the living situation in Alexandra Mngxitama says:

The multitudes that are trapped there are excluded from 'our'<sup>93</sup> democracy. Their lives are punctuated by violence 24/7. The violence of hunger, denigration, hopelessness and perpetual terror waiting for what the state is going to do next wondering what dust bowl follow.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> The arrival of Jan Van Riebeck in 1652 was the beginning of white domination in South Africa.

<sup>92</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*," 42.

<sup>93</sup> By "our" democracy Mngxitama is indicating that most South Africans do not gain the benefits of living under a democracy, especially inhabitants of areas such as Alexandra. Thus he calls it "our" democracy, the middle class and the rich folk.

<sup>94</sup> Mngxitama, 8.

As a result of South Africa's racist structure and its incomplete liberation from apartheid, Alexandra spatiality is that of a Bantustan, and it is as a consequence of the immediate interaction with such a violent spatial situation that the violence broke out. In the early 1990s violence broke out in Alexandra hostels between Black South Africans. The spatial violence and economic injustices they faced forced Blacks to use violence against each other as a means to deal with their socio-economic conditions. The violence ended in 1994 as a result of Nelson Mandela coming into power, signaling the end of apartheid and creating hopes for economic inclusion for all Blacks. However, it is clear in the striking similarities between Alexandra during apartheid and Alexandra today. As a result of Alexandra's unchanged spatiality, the violence of May 2008 broke out in the same hostels in which the violence of 1990s broke out. This is a clear indication that Blacks are still experiencing the same kind of spatial violence and economic exclusion as they did under apartheid. The prison like hostels that were built under the Group Areas Act are still homes for other people in Alexandra. The residents of Alexandra are seeking a collective catharsis to channel their aggression regarding their living situation. Under the apartheid regime residents in overcrowded townships responded to such conditions through attacking their fellow Black folk; today in a similar manner the aggression is targeted towards Black immigrants.

South Africa's geographical layout remains divided into two, the cramped townships in which a majority of Black people live and then the previously white suburbs and gated communities which are today occupied by a small Black middle class and whites. The poor infrastructure and poor housing of Alexandra is even more visible as a result of the squatter's close proximity to Sandton. In his description of the differences



between the settler's town and the native's town, Fanon indirectly gives an accurate picture of Alexandra and Sandton.

The settler's town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town...the settler's town is a well-fed town. The town belonging to the colonized people...is a world without spaciousness, (people) live on top of each other, and their huts built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, a town on its knees.<sup>95</sup>

According to an article in the *City Press*<sup>96</sup> Sandton is home to 15,300 millionaires.<sup>97</sup> It is considered the richest square mile in South Africa.<sup>98</sup> The prices of homes range from hundred thousands to millions.<sup>99</sup> Only four miles away from Sandton there exists Alexandra. It has a population of 350,000 and 81percent of its residents are cramped in 1.2 square miles worth of space.<sup>100</sup> Thirty percent live in informal structures; and a majority of these structures are shacks usually built on top of each other, similar to the native town Fanon describes. In addition only 29 percent of Alexandra residents are employed, while the 71 percent that is employed works in semi-skilled or unskilled labor.<sup>101</sup> How Alexandra and Sandton can both coexist so close to each other is in itself a crime, and structural violence. The N1 motorway road is the only thing that divides the two areas. Their co-existence indicates that indeed in South Africa there is only a fantasy of inclusion.

Fanon further argues that as a result of such inequalities between the settler town and the native's town; the native envies the settler and wants what the settler has. Hence,

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<sup>95</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*,"30.

<sup>96</sup> City Press is one of South Africa's largest newspapers.

<sup>97</sup> Skurie..

<sup>98</sup> Skurie..

<sup>99</sup> Skurie, Jaclyn. "Where Africa's Rich Live." *City Press*, May 26, 2013, <http://www.citypress.co.za/lifestyle/where-africas-rich-live>

<sup>100</sup> Noor Nieftagodien, "Xenophobia In Alexandra." In *Go Home or Die Here*, ed. Shireen Hassim, Tawana Kupe and Eric Worby, 65-77, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008), 68.

<sup>101</sup> Nieftagodien, "*Alexandra*," 68.

as a similar feeling of envy exists within the inhabitants of Alexandra, they blame African immigrants as the reason as to why they do not have the city lights benefits. An attack on the African immigrants leads them to believe that perhaps in their removals they can benefit.<sup>102</sup> From Dodson's ethnographic research with African immigrants who have encountered the violence, participants have told her that they are attacked because Black South Africans "say that we are stealing their jobs, they blame us for their poverty."<sup>103</sup>

The lives of those living in Alexandra are punctuated by social violence. The poverty, and poor housing structures are an immediate and physical reinforcement of an inferiority complex within the residents. The Alexandra environment subjects its residents to degrading conditions. Biko wrote that the conditions of living in confined spaces under apartheid were so unbearable that aggression built within the masses. And as a means to express this aggression Blacks turned against each other using violence. He captured the experiences of living in the squatters well.

Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood. There we see a situation of absolute want in which Black will kill Black to be able to survive. This is the basis of the vandalism, murder, and rape and plunder that goes on while the real sources of the evil---white society---are sun tanning on exclusive beaches or relaxing in their bourgeois homes.<sup>104</sup>

For 350,000 people to survive without turning to violence in a cramped space that is 1.2 square miles is a miracle. This rage leading to violence should however be directed towards overturning the neoliberal capitalistic system which maintains the apartheid structures that continue to oppress the lives of the poor, such as those living in Alexandra.

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<sup>102</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*," 132.

<sup>103</sup> Dodson, 20.

<sup>104</sup> Biko, 82.

Fanon says in the colonial situation with its spatial divides; the natives fight amongst each other as way to avoid accepting the reality of the colonial situation.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Alexandria residents attack African immigrants as a means for them to escape the reality of their degrading situation of living in Alexandria.

African immigrants are attacked because they are perceived to be taking from poor Blacks what is rightly theirs. One Malawian male said regarding his experiences with violence from Black South Africans: “The Xhosas (an ethnic group in South Africa) are a bit naïve towards us, they blame us for causing unemployment to them.”<sup>106</sup> Another Somali male, lamenting to similar harsh treatments from Black South Africans said “others say just because we are foreigners we can’t run business because we are getting their jobs, but it doesn’t mean that. Others they rob us.”<sup>107</sup>

Alexandria residents are citizens that own neither land nor property in a country that have since apartheid excluded them from benefits. They then seek other means to assert their belonging to the country. Sartre argues that the anti-Semite exists through the Jew because most anti-Semites do not own any property their means of creating value in themselves, and maintaining that they belong to France is through arguing that the Jew does not belong.<sup>108</sup> It is through the Jews that anti-Semites elevate their status in society. Sartre uses the example of anti-Semites accusing Jews of being robbers, hence, inevitably putting themselves “in the position of people who can be robbed” because they have

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<sup>105</sup> Fanon, *“Wretched,”* 40.

<sup>106</sup> Dodson, 16.

<sup>107</sup> Dodson, 16.

<sup>108</sup> Sartre, 25.

something worth being stolen.<sup>109</sup> Sartre writes “they have chosen anti-Semitism to establish their status as possessors”, anti-Semitism is the “poor man’s snobbery.”<sup>110</sup>

Analogous to the case of anti-Semites, the Alexandra residents, as working class citizens promote their social status via accusing African immigrants as stealing jobs from them. In this regard the residents then place themselves in a position for people qualified to have the jobs they argue are stolen from them. Even though the anti-Semite preaches for extermination of all Jews, he finds the existence of the Jews completely necessary. This is so because without the Jews the anti-Semite would have no one to be superior to.<sup>111</sup>

Although anti-immigrant laws and political discourse on African immigrants promote “xenophobic” sentiments, they are not the reason why the violence broke out. The alienation, encompassing the feelings of being inferior, and economic injustices that poor Blacks face are the more foundational reasons as to why the violence broke out. The existing effects of the Group Areas Act on the spatial divide in South Africa, together with the kind of labor a majority of Blacks participate in indicate that the racist structures of apartheid were not completely eradicated. As a result, poor Blacks experience further marginalization while only a few South Africans enjoy the benefits of the rainbow nation. Should alienation persist and continue to be exacerbated among the poor, so will the violence. People react to their situations, socio-economic inequalities that reinforce alienation and the inferiority complex are the situation of the Black poor that acted out the violence, until these situations change, the violence will keep taking place.

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<sup>109</sup> Sartre, 25.

<sup>110</sup> Sartre, 24-25.

<sup>111</sup> Sartre, 28.

## **Chapter II: Who is to blame for the “xenophobic” violence?**

The question of responsibility and how to move forward from the violence has been a heated discussion in South Africa. The anti-xenophobia industry in South Africa absolves some actors of any accountability in calling the violence racism, and also simply naming it xenophobia.<sup>112</sup> Mngxitama and Gqola argue that the Black middle class and white South Africans escape blame.<sup>113</sup> In naming the violence Afrophobic and Negrophobic Xenophobia, the roots of the violence, together with those accountable are made clearer. Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobia is a societal problem, therefore everyone in the South African society is to blame for the violence that broke out and also continues to breakout. Those to be held accountable are not only the perpetrators who committed the violence. The government should be held accountable for the neoliberal policies that maintain high socio-economic inequalities that exacerbate the alienation of poor Blacks. As noted, it is as a result of this alienation that the violence erupted. In addition the Black middle class and white South Africans who enjoy an abundant amount of wealth at the expense of the poor living in townships such as Alexandra are also to be held accountable for the violence; because they also contribute to high socio-economic inequalities in South Africa.

After May 2008, more violence against African immigrants has taken place not only in Gauteng Province<sup>114</sup> townships like Alexandra but has also spread to other parts of the country. Efforts to deal with the violence have only addressed the consequences of the violence and not the causes of the violence itself. In moving forward, simply aiming

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<sup>112</sup>Mngxitama, 3.

<sup>113</sup> Worby, Hassim, and Kupe, *“Introduction,”* 16.

<sup>114</sup> Provinces are similar to states in America, however they are smaller. South Africa has nine Provinces, and Gauteng is one of them. Alexandra is a township within the Gauteng Province

to provide basic needs to the poor is not enough, as the past 20 years have indicated. South Africa's new society needs to be reborn, and a complete disordering of the apartheid system needs to take place for the rebirth. Biko's legacy continues to haunt the country because a complete systematic change is yet to take place. Both Biko and Fanon's philosophies and their understanding of racism have shown that only complete liberation, a disordering of the system in economic and social institutions can lead to the disalienation of the poor. Addressing the root causes would thus mean the poor are empowered economically; and that a positive Black consciousness is developed within Black communities in order to eradicate the existing inferiority complex.

### **I. Naming the violence: Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence**

“More than anything else, the naming debate opens up the question of responsibility, who is to blame and who should ultimately be held accountable for what occurred?”<sup>115</sup> To label the violence xenophobia does not only take away the role that the history of apartheid plays in the violence, but it also absolves those accountable for the violence of responsibility. The term xenophobia means simply a fear and a hatred of foreigners. However the violence was not targeted towards all foreigners in South Africa. It was only towards Black African immigrants, not white foreigners, Indians or other mixed race groups. As Mngxitama observes, calling the violence xenophobia, makes it a crime without context or history.<sup>116</sup> Mngxitama and Gqola<sup>117</sup> label the violence as Negrophobic xenophobia and some instances Afrophobic, using the two terms,

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<sup>115</sup> Worby, Hassim, and Kupe, *“Introduction,”* 3.

<sup>116</sup> Mngxitama, 6.

<sup>117</sup> Pumla Gqola is an Associate Professor in the African Literature Department at Witwatersrand University. She is also one of the leading South African thinkers in Black Consciousness Literature, Post Apartheid studies, slave memory in African World and also African Feminist thought.

Afrophobia and Negrophobia interchangeably. However using the terms Negrophobic and Afrophobic interchangeably fails to appreciate that the violence was acted out not only against the Black, but also a Black that is considered African. The violence was both Negrophobic and Afrophobic. Using Fanon's ideas on the psychopathology of Blacks and Biko's observation on anti-Africa narratives, it becomes clear that the fear and dislike of Blacks, although connected to Africa, is not the same thing as the fear and dislike of Africans.

Mngxitama employs Chinweizu's<sup>118</sup> description of Negrophobia "as a fear and dislike of Blacks...a psychological disease of the mind which harvests Black bodies everyday."<sup>119</sup> This description captures that Negrophobia is not only hatred but also a psychological problem within Black communities as a result of the colonial tortures or slavery torments experienced. Hence it connects the Negrophobic xenophobic violence of South Africa to the oppression and psychological traumas South Africans endured under the apartheid regime. Gqola argues the violence is Negrophobic because the identity of the criminals is marked in their pigmentation, being Black.<sup>120</sup>

...No one is attacking wealthy German, British, or French foreigners...anywhere else in South Africa. This is unthinkable. What makes attacks on some foreigners (white foreigners) unthinkable has to do with how sexualized, class marked and racialized South African stories about immigrants are...what makes it unthinkable is the clear value and whiteness of the safe Europeans versus the disposability of and blackness of the brutalized African foreigner.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Chinweizu is a Nigerian poet and writer.

<sup>119</sup> Mngxitama, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Gqola, "*Inheritances*," 211.

<sup>121</sup> Gqola, "*Inheritances*," 213.

As a result of the internalized and inferiority complex Black South Africans value whites more than they do Blacks. Gqola's understanding of the violence covers the inferiority complex that poor Black South Africans struggle with and how its severity as a result of their socio-economic conditions becomes manifested into this Negrophobic xenophobic violence.

Both Gqola and Mngxitama use the terms Negrophobic and Afrophobic interchangeably, as if they are one; however, their focus is more on Negrophobia and not Afrophobia. Of course there is a connection between the two terms as there is a connection between being Black and Africa. Placing Fanon's observation of the Antillean Black person and their rejection of Africans in parallel with Black South Africans rejection of Africa indicates that the violence is not only Negrophobic but also Afrophobic. The Antillean's rejection of the African Negro is as a result of his cultural situation.<sup>122</sup> Fanon states that the Antillean grows up in a culture exposed to white heroes, and Black villains in texts, radios, and even in school.<sup>123</sup> "In the Antilles the view of the world is white because no Black voice exists."<sup>124</sup> Therefore although the Antilleans are Black they develop a kind of Afrophobia, in which they do not simply fear and resent Black, but rather the Black that is African.

It would be an exaggeration to suggest no Black voice exists in South Africa, it is however true that the dominant voice thus far has been a white voice, which sometimes has come from Black mouths. Mngxitama observes, as Biko did, that South Africa is a

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<sup>122</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 118.

<sup>123</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 118.

<sup>124</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 118.



little European country at the tip of Africa.<sup>125</sup> As Biko once noted, it is in this Southern tip of Africa that white values are preserved.<sup>126</sup> This observation is in parallel with what Fanon declared regarding there being no Black voice existing in the Antilles. Comparable to the situation in the Antilles, Black South Africans are mostly exposed to the idea of the rest of Africa as a dark continent.

The narrative of Africa in such a manner grew out of apartheid and remains perpetuated in the post apartheid era. Under the apartheid regime, references made to African culture were barbarism, witchcraft and the rest of Africa was the Dark Continent.<sup>127</sup> Biko further notes that as a result of the education system, regarding what is taught about Africa it is no surprise that a Black child begins to despise anything to do with African heritage.<sup>128</sup> In the post apartheid era, there exists the perception amongst a majority of South Africans as South Africa being better than the rest of Africa. To illustrate this point, President Jacob Zuma has also made remarks regarding the notion of South Africa being better than other African countries.<sup>129</sup>

Therefore as a result of this clear separation between South Africa, and the rest of Africa, when the perpetrators attacked, they were not simply attacking any Black, but rather the Black they assumed to be African. Gqola writes that it was the dark skinned Black people who were attacked and assumed to be the African immigrants, and as a result during the violence in Alexandra, twenty-three South Africans were killed.<sup>130</sup> It is

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<sup>125</sup> Mngxitama, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Biko, 68.

<sup>127</sup> Biko, 32.

<sup>128</sup> Biko, 33.

<sup>129</sup> Dodson, 11.

<sup>130</sup> Worby, Hassim, and Kupe, "Introduction," 2.

the Black African that has been turned into a phobogenic object<sup>131</sup>. Poor Black South Africans are scared of Blacks from Africa taking their jobs, killing their families and even raping their women. Being a phobogenic object means that the African immigrant is fixed by the other, they thus cannot be more or less; all they can be is a phobogenic object that the poor view as a threat to their prosperity. There exists in South Africa stereotypical ideas of the bad African immigrant. In most cases African immigrants are regarded as thieves, killers, drug dealers; basically criminals. Hence in similar fashion to how Black South Africans were othered under apartheid, in attacking African immigrants they consequently use the same tags that were used against them during apartheid.

One Kenyan male, in ethnographic research conducted by Dodson on xenophobia in South Africa, made the distinction with how he is treated by whites versus Black people, emphasizing further that it was his dark skin complexion that sparked terrible treatments from South Africans. He said:

I live in a white community. My neighbors are very friendly and helpful. When I meet them we share stories about the ever-changing weather...Xhosas (Blacks) some of them are extremely nice but others are racists. I am very dark brown in complexion so they scorn and laugh at me. They also mock my accent.<sup>132</sup>

The Kenyan man was not mocked simply because he is Black, but because he is the Black that is from Africa or assumed to be from Africa. His dark skin complexion and accent gave him away as being a Black that does not belong in South Africa but rather Africa and as a result he received bad treatments from Black South Africans.

Thus although Mngxitama and Gqola are correct in calling the violence Negrophobic Xenophobia because the victims are always Black, they should also note

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<sup>131</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 117.

<sup>132</sup> Dodson, 16.

that the violence is both Negrophobic and Afrophobic, the two should not be used interchangeably. The intentions of the perpetrators is not only to attack the Black, but rather the Black that is African because South Africans have created a separation between their Black and the Black from the rest of Africa.

## **II. Who is to be held responsible for the violence?**

The anti-xenophobia industry in South Africa in calling the violence racism functions on bad faith because it not only absolves those actors accountable but it also, most importantly shifts blame from the socio-economic inequalities that led to the violence. Didier Fassin best explains bad faith as a “hypothesis which leads to lying to others and often to oneself: “I know but I don’t want to know.”<sup>133</sup> In this case, the anti-xenophobia industry is acting in bad faith as it places blame for the violence solely on the perpetrators from Alexandra, shifting the blame from the main perpetrators being the government, the Black middle class and the whites that have maintained economic power throughout the years since 1994. Moreover, not only is it an act of bad faith on part of the anti-xenophobia industry to call the violence racism, it is also faulty. As defined earlier through Biko and Fanon, racism not only deals with attempting to subjugate a group, but also having the power to subjugate.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, the perpetrators of the violence in Alexandra, although attempting to subjugate the African immigrants, had no power to do so.

The violence that took place was not racism; rather it was Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence. Psychological diseases which were bred under an

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<sup>133</sup> Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*, (London: University of California Press, 2007), 119.

<sup>134</sup> Biko, 27.

anti-Black racist society in which Black bodies are deemed unworthy, and as a result, Blacks too begin to view Black bodies in a similar manner society views them. Fanon has argued that whites are quick to label violence between Blacks racism as a means to absolve themselves of the oppressions they undertook in over Blacks.<sup>135</sup> Anti-xenophobia industry in South Africa acts on bad faith. Its failure in naming the violence racism is a clear indication of this. This is because it absolves the key actors being the government, the Black middle class and the whites off any responsibility.

The actors least responsible, however responsible nonetheless, are the immediate perpetrators as they are the ones who acted out the violence against the African immigrants. The Alexandra residents acted on bad faith. Instead of addressing their anguish straight at the government, they avoid the responsibility of having to do that and simply target the African immigrants. Comparable to the situation of Alexandra residents is that of the anti-Semite in Sartre's *anti-Semite and Jew*. It is as a result of acting in bad faith that the anti-Semite creates the Jew.<sup>136</sup> Among other reasons it is through the creation of the Jew that the anti-Semite absolves himself of responsibility towards confronting the French government and creating change. Sartre points out that the anti-Semite is able to avoid accountability for others and himself by declaring all things evil to be Jewish.<sup>137</sup> Famine, wars, revolts and other crises that take place, according to the anti-Semite are directly or indirectly linked to the Jew.<sup>138</sup> In attributing the problems of

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<sup>135</sup> Fanon, "*Black Skin*," 77.

<sup>136</sup> Sartre, 25.

<sup>137</sup> Sartre, 40.

<sup>138</sup> Sartre, 40.

the world to the Jews, the anti-Semite is able to avoid the responsibilities he would have to take on to modify the world and attempt to rid it of its crises.<sup>139</sup>

Alexandra residents act in a similar manner as the anti-Semite in that they blame African immigrants for all the evil that takes place in South Africa, specifically in Alexandra and their lives. African immigrants are blamed for the socio-economic problems Alexandra faces; poor housing, lack of jobs and the reason for high crime. In a focus group conducted by the Southern African Migration Project, when a group of South Africans were asked about their concerns, the top three issues had to do with immigrants.<sup>140</sup> Two of these issues were unemployment and crime, which they both linked to the presence of African foreigners; the third issue was simply the presence of African foreigners.<sup>141</sup>

Mngxitama allows us into a conversation he's had with a young man marching against the violence on African immigrants. The young man shares how he has come to the sad conclusion that it is African immigrants who are to be blamed for the evils taking place in Alexandra. "My...cousin was shot dead in Alexandra," the young man says. He goes further to say that he is certain that it is a Black immigrant that shot him. Mngxitama then asks the important question that if it had been a South African who committed the crime, would there be people punishing the South African's entire village.<sup>142</sup> The young man responds: "how do you expect us to live? These people accept peanuts while we lose our jobs."<sup>143</sup> This conversation indicates that for African immigrants, similarly to the Jews

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<sup>139</sup>Sartre, 40.

<sup>140</sup>Everatt, 16.

<sup>141</sup>Everatt, 16.

<sup>142</sup>Mngxitama, 15.

<sup>143</sup>Mngxitama, 15.

and how Blacks are treated in an anti-Black racist society, if a single individual commits the crime the entire group is held accountable.

Alexandra residents choose to blame African immigrants for all the evils that take place. Moreover, when the young man states “they take peanuts, while we lose our jobs” he indirectly illustrates that it is those that employ African immigrants and paying them only peanuts that are responsible, not the African immigrant that simply wants a job. Fanon argues that the “natives” fight against each other to release their rage regarding the poor socio-economic conditions they face because they cannot fight the real enemy.<sup>144</sup> In this regard, Alexandra residents acted in bad faith because through blaming African immigrants for the trouble they and their township face, they’ve absolved the government, Black middle class and whites for their responsibility in the violence. In addition they have also absolved themselves of responsibility to confront the government and create change.

The South African government is one of the key actors to be held accountable for the violence that took place. The government’s neoliberal policies have maintained the apartheid racist structures into the new democratic South Africa. Socio-economic inequalities have worsened in South Africa as a result of the racist institutions, hence further alienating the poor who are mainly Black. As Fanon has taught us, “exploitation can wear a Black face.”<sup>145</sup> The Black South African government has simply taken the position of the former white settlers; hence they have failed to overturn the violent conditions that functioned against Blacks during apartheid. The government has

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<sup>144</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 42.

<sup>145</sup> Gibson, 59.

legitimized further dispossession of Black South Africans. It does now seem that the people have “awoken to the unutterable treason of their leaders.”<sup>146</sup> However they misdirect their rage not to the government but those in the immediate vicinity. The violence against African immigrants broke out and continues to erupt as a result of the racist institutions governed under neoliberalism, which further widen the gap between the rich and poor.

South Africa’s Black middle class and whites are the groups that are usually left out in giving accounts on who is responsible for the violence. Yet it is they, together with the government that are the key actors that should be held accountable. After the first breakout of the violence in May 2008, whites and the Black middle class were the ones that expressed the most surprise and disgust at the violence that had taken place.<sup>147</sup> In expressing their surprise they quickly, in an act of bad faith, separated themselves from the Alexandra residents who committed the violent acts. Alexandra residents also became “othered”; their actions were deemed incomprehensible. It is an act of bad faith for the whites, and Black middle class to “other” the Alexandra residents because it then places the violence in a vacuum, and completely disconnected from the lives they, the wealthy, lead. This thus absolves them of any responsibility.

Mngxitama makes it clear:

To think of this violence as a consequence of the relatively comfortable lives we lead would be too much. But if we look at the wealth enjoyed by our white counterparts, if you follow the money trail, historically, you will see that the creation of Sandton (the super rich suburb) was made possibly

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<sup>146</sup> Gibson, 59.

<sup>147</sup> Dodson ,11.

by the creation of the sprawling Alexandra (the favela right at its door step). Alexandra is a direct product of Sandton.<sup>148</sup>

Therefore, this othering of the Alexandra residents who committed the violent acts on African immigrants is an act of bad faith because it is a means for them to disconnect themselves from the violence occurring, thus absolving themselves of any responsibility. Whites in South Africa still maintain the same settler luxuries they had under the apartheid regime. For this to be possible it must mean that there is a majority of Blacks that have remained poor long after the end of apartheid. The socio-economic inequalities manifesting themselves in poor housing, lack of access to health care and quality education are a direct result, as Mngxitama has shown, of the wealth white hands have kept since apartheid.

The Black middle class too acts in bad faith and similarly to the whites should be held accountable for the violence that took place- perhaps even more so than the whites. The Black middle class are the biggest criminals because they are the few that have done what Biko predicted, they are perpetuating an image that suggests there is equality in South Africa.<sup>149</sup> As Biko predicted: this Black middle class has been very effective in creating this image that not only fools the international world, but South Africans as well that inequalities no longer exist on the basis of race.<sup>150</sup> Both the whites and a few Black elites enjoy abundant wealth at the expense of poor Blacks living in townships such as Alexandra. Moreover in focus groups conducted by the Southern African Migration Project, it was clear that it is not only the poor that hold anti-African immigrant

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<sup>148</sup> Mngxitama, 12.

<sup>149</sup> Gerhart, "Interview", 42.

<sup>150</sup> Gerhart, "Interview", 42.



sentiments. Across all classes, race, and gender it was seen that African immigrants are highly unwanted in the country.<sup>151</sup>

NGOs and Civil Society Organizations responded strongly to the violence of May 2008 in attempts to resolve the issues that arose; however these attempts only dealt with the symptoms of the violence and not the root causes.<sup>152</sup> Everatt observes it was the first time after apartheid that such strong responses of aiding the weak had taken place in South Africa. Community based organizations, social movements, school children and students; all came together to work alongside each other in helping the victims with food donations, cooking meals and clothing donations.<sup>153</sup> CSO's and NGOs focused mainly on relief, on how to help the victims of the violence to recover and not how to deal with the violence to ensure that it does not take place again.

Many of the CSOs and NGOs were made up of Black middle class and white elites, and through bad faith the Black middle class and whites used their "help" to avoid truly interrogating the root causes of the violence being the socio-economic inequalities, which keep them wealthy and leave the poor even poorer. Mngxitama argues that "help is the most potent form of exercising power."<sup>154</sup> He argues vehemently against white liberals and their help, however he fails to recognize the same acts of bad faith in the Black middle class, which through their acts have become similar to the white liberals Biko detested.

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<sup>151</sup> Everatt, 16.

<sup>152</sup> Everatt, 8.

<sup>153</sup> Everatt, 9.

<sup>154</sup> Mngxitama, 21.

The manner in which the Black middle class and whites have responded to the violence shows that both these groups have taken on the same characteristics of the white liberals. Biko argues under the apartheid regime, Blacks spoke with more urgency against the regime than the white liberals that sought to change the apartheid regime. Food donations, clothes and humanitarian aid are not a response of urgency to the Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence. This is only a response to the problems caused by the violence and not the problems causing the violence against African immigrants. To deal with the root cause of the violence immediately forces both the whites and Black middle class to question the economic system that keeps them wealthy and leaves the rest poor. Of course this is not to say relief missions are not important. However they are not enough to keep the violence from taking place.

### **III. A way forward from post May 2008 violence in Alexandra**

There is a Tswana saying, that one cannot talk to a people unless they are fed. Economic freedom, in which there is a proper redistribution of South Africa's wealth should take place for alienation to be eradicated. To respond to the alienation of poor Blacks is to respond to the Afrophobic and Negrophobic violence that took place in May 2008 and has continued to take place since then all over the country. As Fanon has argued, the disalienation of the poor will take place in first addressing the economic injustices. Without addressing these injustices South Africa will remain in an interregnum of incomplete liberation. Alexandra, as the epicenter of the violence, is symbolic because of its clear cut socio-economic problems and its close proximity to Sandton, one of the

wealthiest areas in South Africa. The contrast between the two places, with the rich and the poor living so close, and Alexandra being the first place to experience a major violent breakout, is a clear and powerful indication that economic inequalities need to be addressed in attempts to resolve the root causes of the violence.

Fanon argues for complete transformation of the economic system. He states that in order to eliminate alienation, which is a consequence of racism, there should be a complete transformation of the institutions of bad faith which foster racism. In a racist society, institutions running on bad faith make racism, and oppression against Black people into accepted things about society.<sup>155</sup> This is so because, in a racist society racism becomes so familiar that it is invisible and thus accepted.<sup>156</sup> Racism in South Africa has become so familiar that places like Alexandra and Sandton can coexist in close proximity to one another and it is not seen as racism. Because alienation is a consequence of racism, institutions of racism should be eliminated so that alienation no longer stand to take place. Fanon makes sure to indicate that there's a difference between reform and transformation. For Fanon, reform of institutions would not be enough, as due to bad faith in which racism is concealed, reform would only deal with the problems caused by racism and not deal with the problem of racism itself.<sup>157</sup>

Fanon argues the use of violence against an oppressive system is for the oppressed not only mentally liberating but also is the best way to ensure complete liberation takes place. The colonizers will not, through mere negotiations let go of their place of power; only force will lead to a complete eradication of the colonial situation.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Gordon, "*Fanon*," 38.

<sup>156</sup> Gordon, "*Fanon*," 38.

<sup>157</sup> Gordon, "*Fanon*," 66.

<sup>158</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*," 48.

Negotiations only create a situation in which the former colonizers “in the capacity of master said (say) to the Negro, ‘From now on you are free’. But the Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom, for he has not fought for it.”<sup>159</sup> The case of South Africa perfectly fits this argument. The negotiations regarding the end of apartheid in the 1990s only led to the white minority maintaining economic power with only a small group of Blacks attaining wealth. In addition, Blacks today are viewed as objects that have were offered their freedom by whites.

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him feel fearless and restores his self-respect. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic and nation is demobilized through a rapid movement of decolonization, the people have the time to see that the liberation has been the business of each and all and that the leader has no special merit.<sup>160</sup>

According to Fanon, violence is key in dismantling a system in which whites are viewed as masters and Blacks as slaves. The set up of the colonial situation is in itself violent hence a proper dismantling of colonization should be violent as well.<sup>161</sup> Fanon argues for both physical and socioeconomic violence. Fanon’s socioeconomic violence, for South Africa would take place when wealth is no longer in the hands of a white minority. To completely remove the colonizer’s imposed tradition will in itself be a violent action. Biko also argued for social violence in countering an inferiority complex. He argued that the complete value system whites upheld in South Africa had to be eradicated in order for Blacks to no longer view themselves through the eyes of the whites.<sup>162</sup> He however, unlike Fanon did not argue for the use of physical violence.

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<sup>159</sup> Fanon, “*Black Skin*,” 172.

<sup>160</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 74.

<sup>161</sup> Fanon, “*Wretched*,” 31.

<sup>162</sup> Biko, 51.

Therefore, socio-economic and physical violence are for Fanon necessary in ensuring complete freedom for Blacks, both economically and mentally.

The case of South Africa today makes Fanon's argument of violence against the colonizer more tricky than it would be in the colonial situation, because after all South Africa is in its 'post apartheid' era. The violence that erupted against African immigrants in Alexandra was not revolutionary violence. In accordance with Fanon's argument this violence represented impotent rage that may possibly turn into revolutionary violence. However what would revolutionary violence mean in today's rainbow nation? It is clear poor Blacks have no other means to have their voices heard but only through the use of violence. In twenty years, less than three percent of land has been transferred to Black hands, and more than 50percent of the poor remain Black. In addition the Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence has not lead to the government addressing the root causes of the violence, only its effects. Revolutionary violence in this case, since poor Blacks do not have economic power to turn the socioeconomic situation around, would mean the use of violence against the government authority together with the Black middle class and whites. The use of violence is dangerous and can lead to civil war.

I do not propose the use of violence, however if the government fails to equally redistribute wealth, the poor may have to employ sabotage violence as a means to create change. After all, what other means of creating change do the poor have? Strikes and strikebreakers have indicated that they do not yield transformation of the system. Sabotage as revolutionary violence, similar to the kind employed by Umkhonto We Sizwe during apartheid could yield better results. In this regard, only infrastructure representing neoliberalism and the oppression of the poor would be sabotaged. Not only

will this shake the neoliberal economy and the position Black middle class and whites hold, it may also alert the government to turn to the needs of the poor. Sabotage is in itself a freeing form of violence, it too releases Blacks of their despair, because in participating it would indicate that finally they recognize who is to blame for their situation.

Neoliberal policies have clearly failed to empower the poor. All they have done is keep the poor alive with only enough to survive. Neoliberalism does not need to be altered rather it needs to be eradicated for the poor to no longer be poor. To illustrate this, post-apartheid South Africa's Free Basic Water initiative, a neoliberal initiative, only created a situation in which the poor did not have enough access to water- they only received what the private company regarded as enough.<sup>163</sup> Neoliberal policies are simply the rich dictating to the poor what their needs are. What the violence has made clear is that South Africa is in desperate need of economic reform; the harsh inequalities in income and spatiality that exist manifested themselves into the violence. To halt the violence, economic reform, addressing the needs of the people from the bottom to top is highly required.

Secondary from economic liberation and economic empowerment is the problem of an epidermalized inferiority complex within Black societies, which also needs to be addressed in responding to the Afrophobic and Negrophobic violence. Biko's Black consciousness philosophy plays a great role in this part. It not only argues for bringing the Black person to be aware of himself and his situation but it also calls for a unity of Blacks.

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<sup>163</sup> Garth, 110.

Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the Black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation- the blackness of their skin- and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.<sup>164</sup>

This definition of Black consciousness indicates that firstly Black people have to be conscious of the situation they have been placed in and authentically respond to it. An authenticity that is similar to that which Sartre described of the authentic Jew, in which the Jew responds to the persecutions of the Jew.<sup>165</sup> This is an authenticity in which the Black person takes on being Black with the intention of confronting the systems oppressing him/her. In this regard, for Black people awareness of their situation means recognition of the historical factors that have led to the inferiority complexes they have regarding their blackness. Biko argues the inferiority complex is so strong within Blacks that it has rendered them into empty shells accepting their oppression. He argues then that there should be an inward looking process within Blacks in which they recognize they have the power to change their situation, that they have the freedom to change things.

Black Consciousness also demands of Blacks further recognition of the socio-economic conditions that create their current place in society. In *The Negro and Psychopathology* Fanon argued each society has an outlet for channeling its rage against their socio-economic conditions. The violence in South Africa against Black immigrants is meant to channel the rage of the poor. However this means that the Blacks are not authentically confronting the economic institutions, which oppress them. Blacks consciousness also argues for the importance of having a supportive Black community. Howard McGary has argued and illustrated that although having limits, supportive communities, such as in the case of African Americans, can minimize the damaging

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<sup>164</sup> Biko, 53.

<sup>165</sup> Sartre, 137.

effects of alienation.<sup>166</sup> The African American community, the church and the family have helped African Americans deal with alienation. For South Africa it is also important for Black communities to recreate not only positive images of what it means to be Black, but also what it means to be African; in addition to a reeducation of Africa and African history from the distortions which were imposed.

In naming the violence xenophobia and calling it racism, the anti-xenophobia industry acts in bad faith because it absolves the government together with Black elites and whites from any accountability. It only identifies the perpetrators of the violence as the only ones to be held accountable. It fails to account for the history of apartheid and how its oppression against Blacks is manifested into the violence. In naming the violence both Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobia, the history of apartheid and the role of the government's neoliberal policies are held accountable to the violence that took place. In addition the Black middle class and whites that enjoy wealth at the expense of poor Blacks also then fail to escape blame.

Gqola and Mngxitama are correct in arguing the violence is Negrophobic, however their fault is in using both Afrophobic and Negrophobic interchangeably. The violence is both Negrophobic and Afrophobic because it is not only target towards Blacks but also the Black that is African. Only in naming the violence properly can a solution, a means forward to addressing it take place. Biko's Black consciousness philosophies argue for an eradication of the Black person's inferiority complex. Revolutionary violence through sabotage complements the eradication of an inferiority complex for it deals with addressing the socio-economic issues Blacks face. McGary is correct in pointing out that supportive communities can only minimize the effects of alienation for

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<sup>166</sup> McGary, "Alienation," 477.



they address directly the inferiority complex and not the economic aspects causing alienation.<sup>167</sup> Only in addressing both economic injustices and the inferiority complex within Black communities a complete liberation of Blacks can take place.

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<sup>167</sup> McGary, "Alienation," 477.

## CONCLUSION

Biko lives!!! Two words slashed across a ghetto wall. A phrase that haunts the nights of South Africa's rulers. Reactionaries and opportunists of every stripe hope and pray that it will disappear under a rain of blood and the white-wash of reform. But it remains, bold and powerful; not a tired and worn out slogan but a battle cry of a generation whose hopes and aspiration are for revolution, and end to all exploitation and oppression.<sup>168</sup>

The Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence is a direct consequence of the social and economic violence Blacks experienced under apartheid and continue to experience in the post apartheid era. The effects of the Group Areas Act and Bantu Building Workers Act still exist as harsh as they did under apartheid; this indicates that South Africa's move towards neoliberalism has only maintained racist structures. The geographical layout of South Africa, with the divide between where poor Blacks and the rich live is a clear indication of this. As a result of South Africa remaining an anti-Black racist society, poor Blacks experience further alienation. Their inferiority complex is reinforced and they are still confronted by harsher socio-economic conditions similar to ones under apartheid. Poor Blacks are alienated because of the economic exclusion they face, and also because of a feeling of inferiority which is tied to their blackness. It is as a means to escape these experiences of alienation that Blacks turned to violence towards African immigrants. The government's neoliberal form of governance does not tackle the issues of apartheid, instead it allows for the poor to remain poor and have enough to simply be alive, while the rich get richer.

Naming the violence Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobia best captures the historical and current socio-economic experiences Blacks undergo. Moreover, this label

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<sup>168</sup> Mngxitama, Alexander, Gibson, "*Biko Lives*," 1.

also ensures that the government and Black middle class together with the whites are also held accountable for the violence. Only through naming the violence as it is, a fear and hatred of Blacks and also of Blacks from Africa means that the root causes of the violence can be identified and eradicated. Biko's Black Consciousness philosophy and Fanon's anti-colonial revolutionary theories provide a foundation for proposing a means to move forward to a society in which no more Afrophobic and Negrophobic xenophobic violence takes place. Biko argues for a creation of a positive Black consciousness within Black communities in order to eradicate the inferiority complex Blacks hold.

The violence that has taken place since May 2008 and continues to take place should serve as a wake up call to South Africans. The rainbow nation is a lie. South Africa does not belong to all those who live in it, a majority of its Black population experiences exclusion everyday, in their economic situations and their immediate living conditions. Only for a moment they have turned their rage to African immigrants, but soon the 'native' always learns of the real enemy. Racism in the post apartheid reality has been so familiarized that it is no longer questioned. This is why Sandton and Alexandra can coexist next to each other and have it not be questioned everyday. Biko's memory haunts the nation and the government because complete systematic change is yet to take place. The Black middle class shakes in their thoughts of Biko, because it is they that perpetuate a faulty image of equality in the rainbow nation like Biko said they would. Whites on the other hand go on as they did enjoying an abundance of security and wealth. Biko reminds everyone in South Africa that complete liberation is yet to take place. It is however more complicated in the post apartheid era because unlike under apartheid when the enemy was well known, it's not that way anymore.

Both Biko and Fanon have been essential to this thesis because it is their theories on a colonial and postcolonial situation that provided a structure for it. Moreover their arguments on alienation, inferiority complex and economic injustices that Blacks face allowed lead me to understand the historical and present reasons as to why the violence of May 2008 in Alexandra erupted. Biko and Fanon are heroes for Blacks and fearless critics of anti-Black racism. Their memories haunt us and urge us to demand more from our African governments and ourselves.

For real change to take place, it has to come out of places like Alexandra and other Black townships. Government policies are not simply going to change even though they recognize they are keeping the poor even poorer. Black middle class and whites can argue they are helping with relief but they cannot start the movement towards change because they benefit from the inequalities in South Africa. As Fanon has indicated, it is the poor that truly have nothing to lose.<sup>169</sup> Therefore it is the poor, the main ones affected by the racist structures that should demand for the eradication of neoliberal policies that maintain racism to change. Fanon argues the poor's main source of power in creating change is revolutionary violence. Should the demands of radical transfer of wealth of the poor continue to reach deaf ears, revolutionary violence will in deed be the poor's only means of attempting to create change. What the Negrophobic and Afrophobic xenophobic violence indicates is that South Africa will soon reach a cross road, in which either the poor use revolutionary violence against the government, Black middle class and whites or a radical transfer of wealth takes place.

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<sup>169</sup> Fanon, "*Wretched*," 47.

In the 1970s Biko argued that there was no such thing as speaking on behalf of the people because the experiences of all Blacks were similar.<sup>170</sup> However today the experiences of all Blacks are not similar, there are a few Blacks that enjoy the post apartheid benefits, while a majority of Blacks are in poverty. Therefore, there truly should be no speaking on behalf of the poor, the poor must, in facing the chances of impossibility in turn imagine the impossible and fight for change. A failure for this positive change to take place, may lead to use of violence against the government.

Mngxitama asks what it means for the Black person to be free<sup>171</sup>, for both Biko and Fanon the Black person is free when s/he is no longer alienated, meaning that s/he has both economic freedom and the capability to define himself/herself, as s/he no longer struggles with an inferiority complex. A means towards resolving this continuous problem of “xenophobia” in South Africa should aim to create a new species of Blacks that is not poor, but is rather, in the Fanonian and Bikoist perspective, free.

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<sup>171</sup> Mngxitama, 23.

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