

The “X” word raises its ugly head again

By

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No religion in the world condones Xenophobia, except for one. This religion is the dominant one today, practiced by many who already have another “cover-up” religion called Islam, Christianity or Hinduism. One of the hallmarks of this religion is that everyone practices it, but everyone denies it. It’s called “Capitalism, Greed and Exploitation.”

Although Xenophobia is defined as “the irrational fear or hatred of people perceived to be foreign,” and in our context, Afrophobia as “violence enacted upon foreign nationals from other parts of Africa,” the underlying factor is economic, and not ideological, religious or racial. After 1994 when South Africa made the transition from a political entity to an economic system, the borders of South Africa were opened to the world. Everyone was welcome in Africa’s largest and most lucrative capitalistic economy. From 1994, our resources wouldn’t be exclusively for South Africans, but for anyone who entered her borders, legally or illegally. There are no countries left in the world today, only economies. In the future, economies will even collapse, it will only be ideologies.

According to official statistics which I doubt very much, SA currently has 2.3-million foreign nationals from 53 different countries: Zimbabwe (605 416), Mozambique (377 021), Lesotho (142 694), Malawi (74 180), Swaziland (33 151), Zambia (27 163), Ethiopia (25 578), Congo (25 031), Nigeria (23 757) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (22 538). There are no records for Pakistanis, Indians, Somalis, or asylum-seekers at all, whether they actually come from

war-torn countries or not. Some immigrants are given asylum status from countries which are more politically stable than SA, whilst others have continued taking refuge here 10 years after the war in their country had ended. These factors have forced some to revise the official figure to about 6-8 million, or 5-6% of our entire population.

Here to Stay

Foreigners are here to stay, and weren't we all foreigners at one stage or the other? Although I, like many of my readers, are 3rd or 4th generation Asians, we were foreigners at one stage in this country. After a few decades of integration, we became accepted as South African. A few hundred years before this, our indigenous Zulus or Xhosas, due to economic or political reasons, may have also come from somewhere else and claimed this land as theirs, before the Europeans decided to colonize South Africa some 400 years ago and make them foreigners in their own country. And by the same token, all human beings are foreigners on earth because the original abode of the Father of Mankind, was not earth, but paradise! So, let us forget this whole “foreigner” business. In fact, let's even forget this whole nationalistic business of Zimbabwean, Mozambican, Egyptian, Somalian or Chinaman – we are all human beings created by the Mighty Lord belonging to the human race. All of us make up a single unit called “Humanity.”

Let us also understand that the Mighty Creator uses a technique called “emigration” to populate His earth as He wishes. The first emigration in history was from heaven to earth by Sayyadina Adam and Hawa (May peace be upon them), we then had the emigration of the descendants of Habil and Qabil in different areas, and then an entire population shift after the Great Deluge of Sayyadina Noah (May peace be upon him). Prophet Moses (May peace be upon him) was forced to flee from the palace of the Pharaoh due to a homicide accusation, Prophet Joseph (May peace be upon him) unsettled the Israelites from Palestine and settled them in Egypt, and the Best of Creation, Sayyadina Muhammad (May the choicest of blessings and peace be upon him) was forced to flee Makkah to Madinah, from whence Islam spread to Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and throughout the world. Due to economic prospects, the entire USA population comprises of about 20% foreigners, and this figure is as high as 30% in some European countries. Countries experiencing war and extreme recession are free to go wherever

they choose. Man does not own the land, he is only a trustee over it.

And just look at how the foreigners have changed the landscape of SA in many areas, making it colourful and friendly! Most of the CBD (Central Business District) of certain cities and towns are now dominated by foreigners, forcing the locals to build malls in order to cater for the shortage in retail space. As entire blocks of flats are being occupied, many locals are shifting in to security villages and looking for quieter areas to settle in. These factors have created a boom in the construction as well as the business sector. The influx of foreigners who mainly take up menial jobs such as spaza-shop owners, security guards, shop assistants and domestics are also forcing our children to seek an education in order to survive. They are also sending a message to our businessman to venture into manufacturing or seek more specialized markets in the property, mining, technological and agricultural sectors.

Nobody can steal your piece of bread, and the foreigners have merely come to South Africa to find theirs. In fact, some foreigners have come to South Africa to actually give South Africans their bread. Many businessmen and flea-market owners operate profitable shops by buying their merchandise directly from the Chinese, haircuts and cell-phone repairs have become affordable due to the Pakistanis, meals have become tastier due to the Bengalese, and you could even wear branded clothing at a fraction of the price due to the Ethiopians! Thanks to the Egyptians, we don't have to go for Hajj or 'Umrah to buy our next set of Kurta or Abaya, and the Turks with their sweet tooth have not only given us a beautiful Masjid in Midrand, but also brought different types of gums, sweets and chocolates to our shore. Without Japanese cars, Indian IT technology, German machinery, and French cuisine, South Africa will not be South Africa.

As many foreigners are loading their goods and trekking back to their countries of origin, remember that they will not only take back with them bitterness and resentment, but South Africans in their countries of origin may even suffer. These double-refugees who had to run from the fire and into the burning pot, will not forget how South Africans had deteriorated to such an

extent that they preferred wealth over humanity. And that day may not be far! South Africa may find itself in the near future on the brink of economic and political collapse, and we may need to take refuge in the same countries which we alienated. No one is an island in today's times. Then, the situation will be reversed. So, let us take their presence in South Africa as a challenge and an opportunity to create a new tapestry of humanity, not as a threat.

Let us never have a repeat of May 2008 and April 2015. Let not our religion of greed and exploitation cloud common sense. By pushing the foreigners out of South Africa, we will never be able to do with they do. We do not have the resources, nor the expertise to compensate for this dreadful loss. **They will leave with their own bread, and yet we will not be able to make our own**. And so I end with the words of the former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, who addressed the nation after the tragic Xenophobic events of 2008 in which over 100 000 foreigners were displaced: “We have gathered here today to convey to all Africans everywhere, to all African nations, severally and collectively, to our own people, and to the families of people who were murdered, our sincere condolences, and our heartfelt apologies that Africans in our country committed unpardonable crimes against other Africans.”