



## **SOUTH AFRICA UP IN FLAMES: “THE BIRTH OF NEW BLACK APARTHEID MENTALITY”**

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For the past few weeks, some of South Africa’s beautiful cities were up in flames-not because they were attacked by an external invading force-but because irate black South African youths with seditious agendas yet to be deciphered by their state intelligence took up arms against black outsiders who have sought refuge in this economically prosperous country known for exclusive kraals, beautiful sceneries, extensive Velds, unique click languages and rigorous historical struggle against British and Boer minority rule respectively.



Earlier this week, nationals of Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Somalia were targeted by angry black youths who felt foreigners were taking up their jobs and business opportunities. Using crude weapons of differing shapes and sizes including machetes, knobkerries (wooden clubs), bottles, hammers and swords, deranged youths poured in to the streets of major cities in droves with the intention of driving out fellow Africans seeking refuge in their country.

Emboldened by dysphoria-a psychiatric condition that denotes to mean extreme dissatisfaction or unease, indifference or emotional unease or perhaps jealousy of seeing fellow Africans excelling in social and economic aspects, marauding South African youth left nothing at their disposal to molest, burn and even kill fellow Africans in search of refuge and economic achievement.

South Africa, a rich and prosperous nation that just came out of the shadows of apartheid has been described as having the highest crime rate in the world. In the meantime, it is

not just about crime-it is-as one influential religious figure put it, “the birth of new black apartheid mentality”. Harrowing incidents of innocent migrant victims doused in paraffin and set ablaze and the indiscriminate torching of their businesses kept the world gazing at what triggered such impulsive mayhem in Africa’s only hope and emerging economic power. Within days of the violence, over a dozen people died and thousands sought shelter in churches and in police stations. To better understand the history of South Africa, we need to reflect its past injustices.

## **Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid**

South Africa’s ‘architect of apartheid’ was none other than Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd.<sup>1</sup> Born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 1901, he moved with his parents to South Africa at age two. In his childhood, Verwoerd lived in Bulawayo in the former Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where, in 1913, he was enrolled in the famous Milton High School. In 1917, his family moved to the Orange Free State settling in Brandfort. The devastating Spanish flu epidemic delayed his matriculation exams until 1919.



Later on, he attended the University of Stellenbosch where he excelled in class and graduated with honors. A very bright student, Verwoerd completed his master’s degree in 1922 and was conferred on with a doctorate in 1924. He is credited with writing several works that are still available at the University of Stellenbosch. In 1925, after completion of his doctoral studies, Verwoerd left for Germany where he visited the universities of Hamburg, Berlin, and Leipzig. It was while in Germany that he was joined by his fiancée, Betsie Schoombie, consequently marrying her on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1927.

Upon returning to South Africa in 1928 with his new wife, Verwoerd became professor of psychology at the University of Stellenbosch while at the same time playing a great role in the re-shaping of the ruling National Party where he became editor of its sole newspaper, *Die Transvaler*, in 1937.

In 1950, Frederick Malan, who was then Prime Minister, appointed him Minister of Native affairs. Prime Minister Malan’s retirement from politics in 1953 opened a political path for Verwoerd. Following the death of National Party leader J.G. Strijdom in

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrik\\_Verwoerd](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hendrik_Verwoerd)

1958, he was appointed Governor-General. Verwoerd's predecessors and successors may have died of natural causes but what cut short his life at the mere age of 65 while holding the nation's Premiership, may be hard to swallow.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 1966, after wrapping up a historical political talk with Chief Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho at the Union Building in Pretoria, Verwoerd entered the House of Assembly at 2:15 PM where a deranged 'dark-skinned' (colored) Assembly Clerk of Mozambican origin, Dimitri Tsafendas, who had instructions from a large worm in his stomach, stabbed Verwoerd four times in the chest only to be pronounced dead upon arrival at Groote Schuur Hospital.

The creation of Apartheid set the stage for the creation of homelands that were like concentration camps that restricted the movement of the black-skinned African regardless of national origin, religious conviction and political affiliation. It was Daniel Francois Malan who hypothesized the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951 resulting in the establishment of "homelands" that constituted 13% of South Africa's landmass.

### **Former Black Homelands (Bantustans) during Apartheid Era**

During the apartheid era, there were a total of ten self-governing black homelands for different black ethnic groups and all were re-incorporated into South Africa on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1994, when Nelson Mandela became President. They included Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, Qwaqwa, Transkei, and Venda. Lack of resources in these homelands forced millions of various ethnic groups to migrate to major cities within South Africa where resources were available. This population explosion caused friction and scramble for space between different communities.



With most cultivable land still in the hands of former white settlers, black communities are short of the physiological and agricultural density required for ample sustenance which has direct impact on the Malthusian theory of population increase and shortage of food supplies. The current increased migrations have risen out of economic push and pull factors. Had it not been due to intervening obstacles, South Africa would have by now been the most populated country in Africa. Many migrants' prospected journeys to

South Africa are hindered by rough and dangerous situations.

Prior to the end of the white 'Afrikaner' minority rule in 1994, black South Africans lived in abject poverty, had lower educational standards than whites, owned fewer resources, and relied primarily on other African countries for military and financial support and for strategic and political guidance. Today, Black South Africans, despite regaining their freedom and democracy, desolately live in the same squalid conditions inherited from past apartheid regimes-if not worse.

Thus, the recent spate of violence directed against African migrants who are part of the many fibers rejuvenating the South African economy, is nothing but a lame excuse to advance a hidden agenda that is open to government scrutiny. It is a known secret that many economic powers of our modern world have been built on the strength of immigrants.

Nelson Mandela, the first President of post apartheid South Africa, was a political prisoner for the apartheid regime for twenty eight years mainly in the horrifying Robben Island (Dutch for seal Island) Maximum Security Prison, Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town, and the Victor Verster Prison near Paarl where he was finally released on February 11, 1990 by F.W. De Klerk, South Africa's last white ruler. His statement from the dock in the Rivonia Trial ends with these words: "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die".<sup>2</sup>

Author of *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela is revered in the world as a Statesman and Peacemaker. Today, the freedom Mandela fought for is no longer in place because a few thousand jealous black South African thugs have hijacked the nation and taken the law in to their own hands. "Remember the horror from which we come from", Mandela reminded his fellow South Africans in a 2008 speech. His former wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela had this to say: "We are sorry. It is not South African to do this". What inspired the mayhem is a subject of media coverage and a source of discussion almost in every corner of the world.

Killing other African migrants with gusto did not start at once as it had been slowly creeping from city to city for several years hence the ratio of premeditated brutality tragically skyrocketed recently with killed refugees from Somalia alone thought to number several hundreds. South Africa's foreign refugees who have been victimized relate stories of collusion and inaction by the police who often record such incidents as 'criminal' rather than 'xenophobia'. It was recently revealed by a concerned minister at a hastily and unconventional meeting aimed at curbing xenophobia that the police

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/mandela.htm>



imprudently displayed ineptitude and weakness and that they should have instead applied more lethal force to combat crime against foreigners.

Foreigners, especially black migrants have been raped, robbed, attacked, and killed in Cape Town, George, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Durban and also in the slums and ghettos concurrently and in isolated forms for many years with a few or hardly any perpetrators arrested. One wonders what went wrong with the South African judicial system and the application of law and why it has taken such a long time for the state security to mobilize forces before things got out of control.

President Thabo Mbeki, who is known to have initiated and chaired several international conferences on peace and security in Africa and the world over, failed to overturn the unfathomable social turmoil that ailed South Africa when he was in power. A man described as a lame duck has no one else to blame but his own flaws. The root cause of the xenophobia or Afrophobia seen in South Africa has nothing to do with past injustices by the apartheid regime. The problem is in the mismanagement of the economy, corruption and ineffective leadership.

Obviously, black South Africans are not violent and hot-blooded, but they have been made to be so, as they had been immersed in centuries of misrule and chauvinism by a succession of white minority regimes that owned and operated the country with iron fist such that blacks are up to this day restricted to a few Bantustans that cannot sustain them in all aspects. The proliferation of shanty towns due to scarcity of housing for blacks has constituted to a drastic increase in crime, drug addiction and alcoholism, disease, and starvation. Unemployment and social discrimination should be a national concern as major corporations and other business conglomerations still remain in the hands of a few apartheid sympathizers.

## **Zulu Boy President Jacob Zuma**

Jacob Zuma, the man who replaced Thabo Mbeki has not been up to task. When he took over the leadership of South Africa's ailing economy, many thought he would overturn the social debacle that afflicted post-apartheid South Africa. Jacob Zuma, the '100% Zulu boy', has been shrouded by allegations of sexual abuse and misappropriation of funds for some time consequently becoming a victim of his own conscience. Unlike Mbeki who was Xhosa, Jacob Zuma hails from South Africa's largest



tribe and also Africa's largest, the Zulu (people of heaven), thought to number 10-11 million, who fiercely fought the Boer-British domination of KwaZulu-Natal in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Jacob Zuma, the man ordinary South Africans thought would usher in an era of economic prosperity and tranquility, did little to protect the struggling African immigrants whose properties were looted and sent packing. Thus, the current spate of unrestrained violence against non-South African blacks could be a harbinger for a sudden change in Pretoria's political scene. With the unifying African slogan Ubuntu going down the drain and being replaced by animosity towards the struggling African immigrant, tomorrow's South Africa faces a bleak future.

Furthermore, Human Rights Watch, a global organization committed to 'protecting human rights worldwide' has been very critical of how the South African immigration officials, police, and border patrols treat migrant workers awaiting deportation to country of origin.<sup>3</sup> "Police, immigration officials, and military border patrols in South Africa often seriously abuse undocumented migrants when they arrest them", said Georgette Gagnon, deputy Africa director at Human Rights Watch. As reported by Human Rights Watch, "undocumented migrants awaiting deportation are locked up with criminal suspects or even convicts, while migrant children are often held alongside adults".

"South Africans will kick down a statue of dead white man but won't even attempt to slap a live one. Yet they can stone to death a black man simply because he's a foreigner.."--  
R.G Mugabe



The 2008 wave of xenophobic attacks against black migrants may have started in Alexandra Township, but the truth of the matter is, migrants, notably Somalis, had been killed in various regions of South Africa without legal justifications for almost a decade. The number of Somalis killed in South Africa in the last decade narrowly number 500.<sup>4</sup> "Most troubling for the authorities is the fact that the hot spots of anti-immigrant violence are some of the same townships that had been the furnaces of anti-apartheid violence. A little more than a decade after the end of apartheid, the new government is sending the same riot police in the same armored trucks into those same townships to suppress mob violence against immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/pt/news/2007/02/26/south-africa-migrants-abused-officials-and-farmers>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1808016,00.html>

Somalis arriving South Africa in the last decade brought diverse business ventures visible in many towns and cities while neighboring Zimbabweans brought with them professionals including doctors, nurses, teachers, and much needed engineers. Rather than being grateful for such unparalleled services, a few disgruntled politicians with apartheid-era inclinations have chosen to finance a few malevolent thugs with arms, drugs, and alcohol for the deliberate disintegration of the 'Rainbow Nation' whose formation would have been impossible without the support of the same people they wish to drive out or out rightly exterminate.

A nation that prides to have the best economy in black Africa; a nation that has to its credit several Nobel Prize winners for peace and literature; a state that once amassed nuclear arsenals of immense destruction; a nation with unrivalled infrastructure in the African continent has descended in to chaos within a matter of days with political analysts speculating it to be headed for destruction. The new 'Rainbow Nation' may never be the same again unless the current administration takes a strong stand in the preservation of peace and security and the creation of jobs for the suffering unemployed youth languishing in the homelands and ghettos.

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