

The Migration Experience and Multiple Identities of Zimbabwean Migrants in South Africa

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This study shows how South African authorities and locals create 'spoilt identities' for non-South Africans through the *makwerekwere* image. It also shows how the non-South Africans, in this case Zimbabweans, try to resist such claims creating their own strategies and moral defences against such stereotyping. They also invent their own identity of South Africans. These Zimbabweans go on to reinvent themselves and create new identities as *injiva*. My argument is that while the process of identity formation is that of claims and counter-claims, it largely requires certain material, economic, symbolic resources to be deployed for successful identity formation. The command of certain resources and ability to adapt quickly to the new environment determines the level of success in evading the *makwerekwere* identity and also in carving a positive *injiva* identity.

Keywords: *Injiva*, *makwerekwere*, migrants, xenophobia, South Africa, Zimbabweans.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The mobility of people in and out of Zimbabwe predates artificial colonial borders imposed by the colonialists such that even after the establishment of these borders people tended to ignore them as they continued to visit their relatives in other areas [1]. Therefore the mobility of people across borders whether for political, economic and social reasons is as old as the borders themselves [2]. Zimbabwean migration to South Africa became popular in the colonial era when Zimbabweans migrated to South African mines, plantations and farms, Crush [3]. The motivation for migration tended to be socio-economical and political. In some cases migration was viewed as 'rite of passage for males', while in others males were pressured by colonial authorities to migrate to satisfy a host of colonial demands. Migration tended to be the solution to the following circumstances that affected colonial citizens:

1. cyclical recurrence of droughts in the semi-arid regions of Masvingo, Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and the Midlands which depended mostly on rain-fed agriculture.
2. expropriation of land through various legal instruments such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, the Land husbandry Act of 1951 and taxation (hut tax, poll tax, dog

tax etc.).

3. 'forced labour' under the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau (RNLB). Most desertions from Rhodesian mines resulted in migration down South. The RNLB wages simply could not compare with the attractive wages offered by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA).

Mamdani [4] captures the motivation for migration as follows:

"Migrant labour was semi-coerced and semi-servile...The institution was set and kept going through a web of extra-economic compulsions. The native was traded and kept on course like a beast by one set of laws; not simply directly with a whip as would be a beast, but through legally defined injunctions and prohibitions that left him- and eventually her- 'free' to work as a migrant in one of the many laborious and dirty jobs most easily found in mines, plantations or farms".

Such migration tended to be circulatory, male dominated and temporary [5]. There were no formal processes of inclusion into the South African community and non-South Africans remained isolated communities.