

The Politics of Exclusion in South Africa: A Dilemma for Permanent Immigrants

Despite the fact that South Africa prides itself as a rainbow nation, identity politics remains a vice in the country. The paper examines how permanent immigrants in South Africa have been excluded from fully participating in the country's socio-political economy by being denied citizenship by birth for their children, politically scapegoated, institutionally discriminated and culturally side-lined. It argues that the South African government lacks both the capacity and the will to integrate permanent immigrants into the country. The exclusion of permanent immigrants debunks the notion that the country belongs to all who live in it. The paper recommends that the South African government should address inequality and unemployment in the country to curb the negative stereotypes that natives have towards immigrants. Awareness campaigns using a bottom-up approach should be held to educate citizens on the rights of permanent immigrants to foster integration and social cohesion. Efficiency in the processing of visas is imperative to counter institutional discrimination and social stigmatization.

Keywords: *Permanent immigrants, exclusion, indigenes, South Africa*

Introduction

The Republic of South Africa prides and parades itself as a rainbow nation. This is because a key landmark of the post-Apartheid era was a national identity cemented by unifying the diverse cultural, racial and ethnic groups in the country. The country's first democratic constitution which was promulgated in 1996 has also been hailed as the most progressive in the world as it is imbued with wide-ranging socio-economic and political rights (South African Government, 2022). The Freedom Charter, a blueprint for the country's constitution promulgated in 1955, states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it". Unfortunately, that is just in theory. Identity politics in South Africa is evident in intractable poverty and inequality, sporadic outbursts of racism, polarized views over proposals for the expropriation of land and ire over the renaming of towns with Afrikaner or Dutch names to indigenous African names. Polarisation in identity goes as far as sexuality where people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community for instance, fight to be accepted in society. In some universities, students have been demanding the removal of colonial statues (Campbell, 2017). A critical assessment of the country's socio-political and economic landscape reveals that just like many other African countries, identity informed by the politics of indigenisation, is a mainstay in South African politics.

South Africa plays host to perhaps the most diverse range of migrants when compared to other African countries. The country is a migration hub that's draws skilled and unskilled labourers largely from Southern, East, Central and Western Africa and as far as Pakistan, Bangladesh and China (Segatti, 2011:9). For most of these migrants, South Africa is their preferred destination because of its economic

1 and political stability and a progressive renowned constitution that offers civil,
2 political and economic rights. South Africa's labour market is similar to developed
3 countries such as United States, Germany and United Kingdom who depend on
4 foreign labour for development. Hence, available economic opportunities attract
5 both skilled and unskilled migrants. The Department of Home Affairs grants
6 specific visa and citizenship statuses to immigrants who apply and meet the
7 requirements to make their stay permanent in the country. However, permanent
8 immigrants (for the sake of this article permanent immigrants will be used in
9 reference to those who are holders of South African permanent residency visas as
10 well as naturalised citizens) do not enjoy the perks that come with this status as
11 they are negatively stereotyped and marginalised emanating from the country's
12 entrenched politics of exclusion.

13 During Apartheid, Africans who came to South Africa were not regarded as
14 immigrants but temporary contract workers. The idea of immigrants was officially
15 accepted in 1991 and migrants were only recognised formally in 1993 and
16 integrated in the country (Matema, 2021). Regardless of this, it appears the notion
17 of a Rainbow Nation remains more of a myth than a reality. This is because the
18 heightened sense of ethnic and national identity endemic in South Africa has
19 exacerbated the dichotomy of 'us and them' making it problematic for full
20 integration to take place. This is part of the reason why permanent immigrants
21 residing in South Africa are often met with insistent questions like 'where are you
22 from?' and 'when are you going home?'. This is a stark reminder that some
23 citizens are more equal than others (Misgun, 2021:217). Such cleavages debunk
24 the notion that the country belongs to all who live in it.

25 Africa's modern states are a consequence of colonialism which imposed
26 arbitrary borders, bifurcated states and separated indigenous communities on the
27 continent. Mamdani (1996) argues that "colonial rule strengthened and polarised
28 an apparent physical difference into an antagonistic political relation". It is through
29 colonialism that identity schisms were entrenched within and between African
30 communities, driven by the notion of sons and daughters of the soil. Though
31 ideology was a more prevalent source of conflict during the Cold War era,
32 identity-based politics re-emerged more prominently from the 1990s. Du Plessis
33 (2001:13) states that "the return to identity did not mean that it was absent or
34 dormant during the Cold War era". It builds upon the nature of the 'self against the
35 other'. It is closely tied to the freedom connected with liberal democratic politics
36 that emphasizes economic, social, and political rights in the political system
37 (Alumona and Azom, 2017:292).

38 Unquestionably, sub-Saharan Africa was stripped of its identity and became a
39 relic of colonialism. Drives to universalize Western values under the guise of
40 globalization have further exacerbated the identity crisis on the continent. Africans
41 now have to negotiate their identity vis-à-vis the global identity (Olaniyi et al.,
42 2010:4). It has contributed immensely to socio-economic inequalities inversely
43 intensifying tribal cleavages due to unequal access to resources. Such tribal
44 divisions precipitated secessionism such as in the Katanga region of the Congo,
45 South Sudan and the Tigray region in Ethiopia (Alumona and Azom, 2017:293).
46 Fukuyama in Benson (2020) states that "identity can be used to divide, but it can

1 and has also been used to integrate”. If properly harnessed by the state, it can be a
 2 powerful force in enhancing nation-building through national cohesion. Tapping
 3 into Fukuyama’s assertion, Africans are divided largely along different national,
 4 ethnic, linguistic and religious lines and they attach so much importance to these
 5 identities. In countries like Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Rwanda and Nigeria people had
 6 been divided, marginalised and excluded by the powerful currents of identity
 7 politics (Alumona and Azom, 2017:292). Benson (2020) avows that “national
 8 identity cause splits even within the nation itself, let alone between the nation and
 9 others”. Politics of identity can worsen existing societal divisions and contribute to
 10 intolerance and discrimination within and between citizens as its key feature is
 11 exclusion. That notwithstanding, politics of indigenisation is a common trend in
 12 post-colonial African states, South Africa being no exception.

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15 **Politics of Exclusion in contemporary South Africa**

16

17 The politics of exclusion was a key feature of Apartheid South Africa. It was
 18 exemplified through legislations like Homelands, Native Reserves, Group Areas
 19 and Bantu Acts which segregated largely black natives whilst amassing fertile land
 20 and natural resources that favoured the minority white population (Rushwaya,
 21 2018:2). At the dawn of democracy, the ANC-led government pledged to build an
 22 inclusive society based on equality and justice. Despite this commitment, identity-
 23 driven politics has excluded large segments of the population from being part of
 24 the rainbow nation. For instance, the coloured communities still feel
 25 disenfranchised more than their black counterparts. Farred (2001:183) argues that
 26 “Post-apartheid society has empowered black citizens more than their coloured
 27 counterparts, blacks have been transformed by the universal franchise into more
 28 powerful citizens”. Coloureds feel vulnerable and alienated because racial
 29 categorisation is still endemic in the country even though the constitution does not
 30 recognise Blacks, Coloureds and Indians as distinct groups. There is also the
 31 continuation of gross inequalities in the distribution of the country’s wealth which
 32 excludes most citizens (Stinson, 2009:31). The World Bank (2018) analyzed the
 33 wealth inequality which concluded that the top ten percent owned South Africa’s
 34 71 percent of the wealth while the 60 percent of the indigents owned only seven
 35 percent. South Africa has become a more unequal and exclusionary society
 36 making a mockery of the notion of the rainbow nation.

37 Racial exclusion cuts across all spheres of life including in sports where some
 38 sporting codes are predominantly a white man’s sport. The racial exclusion in
 39 sports between blacks and whites is a tumultuous one. Under Apartheid, the
 40 Football Association of South Africa (FASA), the International Cricket Council
 41 and the International Rugby Board were banned in 1961, 1970, and 1981
 42 respectively from any international play till they included blacks in their teams
 43 (Oates, 2019). The belief was that blacks could not play a Whiteman’s sport and
 44 were viewed as primitive people who only enjoyed dancing and hunting (Archer
 45 and Bouillon, 1982:8-9). Exclusionary politics was thus an endemic feature in the
 46 society and the cycle continued in the democratic state. Presently, there are

1 significant strides that have been made in these sporting codes with inclusivity of
 2 black players taking place. However, the transformation and representation of
 3 whites and blacks remain unbalanced. Oates (2019) argued that “Cricket and
 4 rugby are the problems, because they still have a lot of black players who are left
 5 out, and they are competent and talented, but they’re just never selected”. The
 6 exclusion of blacks from these sporting disciplines still exists in the rainbow
 7 nation.

8 Exclusion from accessing key services hampers any efforts of national
 9 cohesion. It is overtly linked to most political systems with implications that
 10 threaten to maintain the unequal distribution of wealth and privileges. In
 11 predominantly black townships, service delivery protests are a daily occurrence
 12 due to the lack of basic services. The July 2021 civil unrest is one typical example
 13 that highlighted how most black-dominated communities are economically
 14 marginalized, with high unemployment and poverty rates which contributed to the
 15 looting that took place (Vhumbunu, 2021). Daily protests are fuelled by deep-
 16 rooted and acute socio-economic challenges faced by the disadvantaged citizens.
 17 The legacies of Apartheid exclusion still exist in the new democratic state which is
 18 mostly felt by the previously disadvantaged citizens. Consequently, whilst natives
 19 still suffer from exclusion in South Africa, permanent immigrants have not been
 20 spared either. The relative political and economic stability and a rights-based
 21 system make the country a preferred destination for immigrants from across the
 22 African continent and beyond. Despite the flaunted notion of a rainbow nation,
 23 exclusionary politics is particularly endemic and applies especially to immigrants
 24 even those who have made South Africa their permanent home.

25 26 27 **Manifestation of exclusionary politics on permanent immigrants**

28 **Absence of *jus soli***

29
30 Citizenship acquisition comes with rights and obligations that give an
 31 individual a sense of belonging to a state. This sense of belonging bestows a
 32 national identity which is characterised by a community membership and
 33 attachment to the nation-state (Simonsen, 2017:3). Lack thereof creates a feeling
 34 of exclusion that separates citizens from immigrants caused by differences in
 35 language, ethnicity and nationality with the latter being the most dominant cause
 36 of exclusion. This is because citizenship is closely tied to identity politics.
 37 Citizenship is attained either by birth or through naturalisation, with the former
 38 reserved for indigenes. In some countries birth-right citizenship is granted
 39 automatically as long as the child is born within a country’s territory even in cases
 40 where parents are not citizens or even legal migrants.

41 World Population Review (2022) states that “at present, 33 countries in the
 42 world have unrestricted birthright citizenship, also known as *jus soli*, and another
 43 32 nations have some form of restricted birthright citizenship”. States with
 44 unrestricted birthright include Lesotho, Mexico, Jamaica and USA whilst those
 45 with citizenship restrictions include Australia, Egypt, France and the United
 46 Kingdom. (World Population Review, 2022). South Africa is one of those

1 countries that do not confer nationality by birth to children born to immigrants.
2 Absence of *jus soli* (nationality by birth) even by holders of permanent residence
3 permits is a form of exclusion used by the South African government to prevent
4 non-natives from fully enjoying the benefits of the rainbow nation. It is imperative
5 for citizenship statuses to be conferred at the very least, on the children of
6 permanent residents as this will enhance feelings of belonging to the nation. This
7 will enable the children to have full rights and duties of a citizen like any other
8 South African, be able to assimilate and become full members of their respective
9 communities.

10 Additionally, the politics of economic globalisation has intensified issues of
11 social membership and acceptance in communities based on the politics of
12 indigenization. Marshall's theory of citizenship equally pushed for by Turner
13 (1994:192) conceptualised capitalism "as a dynamic system in which the constant
14 clash between citizenship and social class determined the character of political and
15 social life". Marshall's idea of citizenship was grounded on liberalism where there
16 is a need for economic profitability, taxation requirements, and rights of citizens to
17 access basic state provisions (Turner, 1990:192). Contrastingly, The Department
18 of Home Affairs (DHA, 2017) stipulated on its online website:

19
20 Children born of permanent residents follow their parents' status. We do not separate
21 children from parents. What can be done is to record notice of birth of the child. Such
22 notifications of birth can thereafter be taken to the parents' countries of origin for
23 registration and issuance of passport, after which the child will be issued with a
24 derivative permanent residence permit status, upon application.

25
26 Also, the process of applying for a visa like permanent residency is expensive
27 in South Africa even for relatives of permanent immigrants. This is because such a
28 permit is not applied from the DHA, although all the adjudication is done by the
29 department. Foreign nationals are required to go to their nearest Visa Facilitation
30 Services (VFS) which are limited in number as compared to DHA facilities that
31 are available in every district in the country. As a result, VFS centres are not easily
32 accessible to everyone as others must travel far and wide to get to the nearest
33 centre. For instance, there is only one VFS office in the Eastern Cape province.
34 Information gathered from some respondents show that some immigrants
35 commute from Umtata to submit applications at the VFS offices in Gqeberha
36 in the Eastern Cape which is a distance of about 500kms. They again have to drive
37 back there for collection when the outcome is finalized (which might be a rejection
38 requiring further drives for appeals). This is an exclusionary tactic that can
39 dissuade qualifying immigrants from applying. Exorbitant visa application fees of
40 about R1550 are charged and similar fees are paid for appeals of rejections (Visa
41 Facilitation Services, 2022). Some respondents stated that they have been waiting
42 for the finalisation of the permanent residence applications for their spouses for up
43 to seven years. The DHA appears to lack both the capacity and the will to process
44 applications of immigrants and their family members (Ryan, 2022). Such onerous
45 processes that treat permanent immigrants differently from South Africans alienate
46 them further from the notion of the rainbow nation.

1 Just like in any other country, PRP holders in South Africa can acquire
2 citizenship by naturalization which guarantees voting rights. The process to obtain
3 one can be difficult and lengthy. Most African states grant citizenship by
4 naturalization after years of legal permanent residence. However, there are
5 countries like Nigeria, Chad, Uganda and Sierra Leone which require 15-20 years
6 of legal stay while the Central African Republic requires 35 years before granting
7 citizenship. The Democratic Republic of Congo and Egypt have stricter rules with
8 the latter reserving naturalization only for people who are Arabs or Muslims
9 (Manby, 2010:64). In the case of South Africa, it grants citizenship after a legal
10 stay of five years as a PRP holder. This lengthy process means PRP holders are
11 excluded from voting, yet they are part of the community. Jacobs (2018) asserted
12 that “permanent residency allows the holder to live and work in South Africa
13 unlimitedly...do all activities a citizen is permitted to do except for voting in the
14 South African elections”. Aristotle (1995:117) explains how humans by nature
15 realize their full potential within a polis by sharing in the “civic life of ruling and
16 being ruled in return”. The five-year period of waiting to be able to participate
17 politically defeats Aristotle’s assertion as permanent immigrants’ realisation of
18 their full potential in civic life is delayed. They remain disenfranchised till
19 naturalisation conditions are met which exposes them to being used as political
20 pawns. Once people feel marginalised just like permanent immigrants, they give
21 up on the social contract that unifies them.

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23

24 **Political scapegoating**

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26 Identity politics in South Africa reinforces institutional and societal
27 discrimination against permanent immigrants. It is used to deflect attention from
28 real issues like the socio-economic failures of the government. Shoki (2020) avers
29 that “In South Africa, the political class is scapegoating immigrants to distract
30 from their failure to root out the country’s massive inequality”. Political
31 scapegoating of immigrants is dominant in politicians’ speeches and political
32 addresses peddling negative immigrant sentiments. The current ANC minister of
33 Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi is prejudiced against immigrants and has on
34 numerous occasions argued that most foreigners are not in the country as migrants
35 but criminals. During his tenure as health minister, he blamed the overcrowding of
36 public hospitals on immigrants. AmaShabalala (2022) quoted Motsoaledi who
37 stated that “We are the only country that accepts rascals. Even the UN is angry
38 with us that SA has a tendency, because of something called democracy, to accept
39 all the rascals of the world...this must change comrades. We can no longer allow
40 our country to be the stomping ground for all the rascals and low-lives of the world
41 running here and using our democracy”. The director of Amnesty International
42 South Africa, Sheilla Mohamed, rebuked Motsoaledi’s prejudice, stating that “stop
43 this shameless scapegoating of refugees and migrants, stop fuelling xenophobia
44 with these unfounded remarks” (Eisenberg, 2021).

45 The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor
46 mentioned that “the belief and the reality that our people have is that there are

1 many persons from Nigeria, who are dealing in drugs in our country, who are
2 harming our young people by making drugs easily available to them” (Onapajo,
3 2019). Such narratives generally stereotype and criminalise all Nigerians
4 regardless of their status. As a result of their vulnerability by being a minority
5 group, immigrants are soft targets for political points. Herman Mashaba, the leader
6 of the Action SA party, stated his dismay over the recent extension of
7 Zimbabwean permits citing that “this indicates illegal immigration is not a priority
8 for the Home Affairs ministry and poses a risk of a continued squeeze on our
9 healthcare and social services...SA belongs to South Africans”, (Nkanjeni, 2022).
10 His utterances are misdirected as visa extensions were made for legal immigrants.
11 As a former Democratic Alliance Mayor of Johannesburg, Mashaba would share a
12 series of tweets castigating immigrants for high crime in the city. One of his viral
13 tweets was under the banner of Johannesburg being a world cup of crime. He
14 tweeted:

15
16 #WorldCupofCrime This slide gives you the type of prevalent crimes being
17 committed by different nationalities @HermanMashaba 26 October 2019.

18

19 This tweet prompted citizens to respond sharing their opinions as follows:

20

21 South Africa is a play ground for foreign national thugs...they are doing as they
22 please...We're officially a Lawlessness country. Weak Government, weak law
23 enforcement agencies [sic]. @Williams95576637 26 October 2019

24 Guys this is a lot of tax payers money, they come into our country commit crime then
25 they go to jail for us to provide for them in jail. This is not right in so many levels,
26 R300 per day on each of them [sic] @sayit18890 26 October 2019.

27 YA neh, then they say we Xenophobic, Mashaba is the only guy who is connected to
28 his citizens coz he knows exactly what is going on on the ground we need someone
29 like dat for President, the one who will make decisions to best suit his constituents
30 [sic]. @MkaizerMappiza 26 October 2019

31

32 Mashaba only shared crime statistics committed by African immigrants in the
33 city, a ploy he used to push a narrative of foreign blacks being criminals to his
34 fellow black citizens who would vote for him or his party. The head of the
35 governance, crime and justice at the Institute for Security Studies refuted
36 Mashaba's shared statistics arguing that

37

38 Most people from other countries living in South Africa do not commit crimes. They
39 are largely law-abiding people, even if they are here illegally...its gutter-level
40 politics. It's trying to demonise vulnerable people, it's trying to distract from failures,
41 and it's a measure of his xenophobic, bigoted attitude towards people from other
42 African countries. It's not a measure of anything else (Bornman, 2019).

43

44 Other notable leaders like Gayton Mackenzie of Patriotic Alliance, Bheki
45 Cele minister of Police, former president Thabo Mbeki, and Bantu Holomisa of
46 United Democratic Movement, have at different intervals blamed immigrants for
47 societal ills. Scapegoating becomes an effective tool for political persuasion and
48 mobilization to strengthen a politician's or political party's support base. Some

1 politicians give life to Plato’s concept of a ‘noble lie’ where untrue information is
 2 purposely propagated to advance an agenda. South Africa faces a conundrum on
 3 how to handle immigrants especially illegal immigrants (Alfaro-Velcamp and
 4 Shaw, 2016:986). This leaves permanent immigrants prone to backlashes as most
 5 natives cannot differentiate a legal from an illegal immigrant. Societal ills are
 6 blamed on immigrants which suggests that they are the cause of South Africa’s
 7 problems. Government officials and politicians alike use migrants as their
 8 scapegoats for campaign purposes which leaves permanent immigrants vulnerable
 9 to exclusion. It is a convenient excuse that politicians use to deflect attention from
 10 their failures to implement policies and reforms to address socio-political and
 11 economic challenges.

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14 **Institutional discrimination**

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16 With an upsurge in autochthony, calls from South African natives demanding
 17 for opportunities to be reserved only for locals have left permanent immigrants
 18 side-lined. Institutional discrimination has been applied from an economic
 19 perspective. The Department of Employment and Labour (2022) drafted the
 20 National Labour Migration Policy and the Employment Services Amendment Bill
 21 meant to address and protect indigenes' access to work opportunities against
 22 foreign nationals. The amendment bill proposed having a quota system in place
 23 for employment of foreign nationals. A foreign national according to the
 24 department, is an individual who is not a citizen or a holder of a permanent
 25 residence permit (Department of Employment and Labour, 2022). Regardless of
 26 permanent immigrants being considered as equals with citizens, it has led to
 27 institutional discrimination as some sectors regard them as foreigners and not
 28 citizens when it comes to employment. They are overlooked based on their
 29 countries of origin. Narratives abound of permanent residents in the country being
 30 side-lined for job opportunities on these grounds even in instances where there are
 31 no available South Africans to occupy such vacant positions.

32 Institutional discrimination is at variance with social justice theory which
 33 advocates cooperation, inclusion and equal access to opportunities for everyone.
 34 Kelsen (1960) in the words of Aristotle asserted that “injustice arises when equals
 35 are treated unequally, and also when unequals are treated equally”. A typical
 36 example of how equals can be treated unequal is drawn from the case of Kevin
 37 Malunga who was the Deputy Public Protector, a permanent immigrant who
 38 renounced his Zimbabwean citizenship and was naturalised in 2010. He vied for
 39 the Public Protector post but was overlooked citing lack of security clearance.
 40 Maqhina (2019) reported that the “State Security Agency had said he did not meet
 41 the requirements for a top-secret security clearance due to his status as a
 42 naturalised citizen”. Security clearance was used as an unjust measure to exclude
 43 him, yet he had attained full status of a citizen which did not preclude him from
 44 vying for that position. Therefore, justice can only be attained when equals are
 45 treated equally (Abubakhar, 2018). Permanent residents are thus treated differently
 46 from natives and as Orwell echoes in his 1945 classic, *Animal Farm*, “some

1 animals are more equal than others”. In as much as they enjoy other rights, they
2 remain marginalised economically.

3 Nyakabawu (2022:7) argues that “exclusion becomes more visible in
4 naturalised people where the state constantly reminds its other citizens on how
5 they differ from indigenous fellow citizens”. Indigeneity in the country has been
6 crafted around ‘black indigenous South Africans’ contributing to black-on-black
7 prejudice and violence. Fanon stated that South Africa’s form of black nationalism
8 was transforming into virulent forms of black-on-black racism (Mbembe, 2019).
9 Institutional discrimination also contributes to black-on-black racism which refutes
10 the Freedom Charter and Constitution’s pronouncement of a South Africa that
11 ‘belongs to all who live in it’. Johnson (2014) claimed that “too often, racism is
12 seen as a social phenomenon that happens to black people. But it happens through
13 black people as well”. Economically, institutional discrimination has led to the
14 negation of the rights of black permanent immigrants. As Carruthers (2002:427)
15 argues, their status is only a “pass of the game of achieving an embodied and
16 performed citizenship that is recognised as legitimate by the dominant national
17 community”. It is merely for co-existing with indigenes as most remain excluded
18 from key areas and have been relegated to inferior citizens. Colonialism and
19 Apartheid legacies thrust upon a culture of segregation which shaped how blacks
20 now view each other. Thus, being permanent does not guarantee economic
21 equality in their adopted country.

22 The BEE policy for instance, specifically excludes permanent immigrants,
23 foreign nationals and whites. The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
24 (2021) highlighted that “White people, foreign nationals, permanent residents, do
25 not qualify for a benefit under the BEE Act”. The department’s practice is contrary
26 to what social justice theory stands for, which values cooperation, inclusion and
27 having equal access and opportunities for everyone. BEE is unjust on black
28 permanent immigrants. Black permanent immigrants are not different from
29 natives hence opportunities reserved for natives should be extended to permanent
30 immigrants. The department has been carrying on-going investigations on some
31 companies who benefited off the policy to ascertain if they are citizens by birth
32 and revoking all those who unscrupulously benefited from the policy.

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35 **Lack of Cultural Integration**

36

37 Permanent immigrants’ lack of cultural integration affects their adaptation
38 into communities because changes in culture and language makes them to be more
39 prone to exclusion. This is as they are expected to adopt some of the host
40 community’s cultural elements like learning the local language to fit into the
41 general civic life of the mainstream society. Information gathered from
42 observational studies shows that South Africa has a strong inclination towards its
43 indigenous languages which vary from one province to another. These provinces
44 have a strong working knowledge of each language and English is seldomly used
45 even though it is equally an official language. South Africa also has a strong
46 affinity to cultural practices which ostracise the other. Language as one of the

1 facets of identity is used by citizens to profile and exclude immigrants leading to
 2 the notion of ‘amakwerekwere’ which refers to the languages that natives regard as
 3 indecipherable (Siziba, 2014:174). Some immigrants who live on a permanent
 4 basis in South Africa struggle to assimilate in communities because of barriers in
 5 language. An excerpt based on an immigrant’s experience extracted from Mesthrie
 6 et al. exemplifies how difficult it is for immigrants to integrate if they do not
 7 know the local language dominant in their host community.

8
 9 They tend to scare us and push us towards one another. Because of the xenophobic
 10 attacks we are afraid of them. We turn now to form our small-small camps, like when
 11 you come to Parow, it is occupied mostly by foreigners. As I said earlier your social
 12 network can help you learn a language. For example, if especially the South African
 13 blacks, if they were really receptive, we would have so many close friends who are
 14 South Africans and that would help us to learn their language. But since they call us
 15 Kwerekwere, they call us foreigners, they attack us, they hate us, so that social
 16 network is not there (Mesthrie et al., 2022:53)

17
 18 Immigrants from countries like Nigeria, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of
 19 Congo and Bangladesh can relate to what was highlighted. However, it is different
 20 for immigrants from countries like Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique
 21 and Swaziland who are neighbours with South Africa. Immigrants from these
 22 countries can easily assimilate due to shared or similar languages spoken. Lack of
 23 cultural integration can be experienced by these nationalities if they dwell in a
 24 province where their language is hardly spoken. For instance, Zimbabwean
 25 immigrants made up of Ndebele and Shona speakers can assimilate with ease as
 26 Ndebele is a Nguni language with similarities to Zulu and Xhosa whilst Shona is
 27 similar to Venda. Muzondidya (2010:46) elaborates that “Zimbabweans from the
 28 Southern district who spoke Nguni languages at home find it relatively easier to
 29 assimilate than their Shona-speaking counterparts, who have an advantage only in
 30 the Venda speaking communities of Northern Limpopo province”. Despite having
 31 an upper hand some immigrants still find it difficult to assimilate as most of them
 32 do not live in areas where their shared languages are spoken as in the case with
 33 Zimbabwe’s Shona people who live in Johannesburg. Again, a lack of
 34 reciprocation from citizens makes immigrants to keep within their own immigrant
 35 groups, consequently failing to integrate leading to exclusion. Locals are regarded
 36 as people who are intolerant and hostile to immigrants (South African Migration
 37 Project, 2008:1). South Africa has 10 indigenous languages which are part of the
 38 12 official languages including English and sign language. Information gathered
 39 from ethnographic studies show that the plurality of languages tends to exclude
 40 even South Africans from other provinces who do not speak the dominant
 41 language in a province. This lack of cultural assimilation in South Africa is
 42 different from Western societies with often nation-wide languages and religions
 43 which make learning the language and thus integration of immigrants, easier.

44 Permanent immigrants in South Africa still find it difficult to fully assimilate
 45 into their host societies as explained by Huntington’s clash of civilizations.
 46 Huntington (1996:28) asserts that “in this new world the most pervasive, important
 47 and dangerous conflicts will be...between people belonging to different cultural

1 entities”. Cultural civilizations are defined by common objective elements like
2 language, history, religion, and subjective self-identification of ‘us and them’
3 (Orsi, 2018:3). Lack of integration thereof intensifies civilizational consciousness
4 within South Africans and their awareness of such differences with immigrants
5 often leads to conflicts. On the other hand, immigrants’ cultural integration does
6 not guarantee an end to conflicts as competition for resources, opportunities, and
7 scarce commodities remains endemic. This is the plight of most permanent
8 immigrants as they remain at a generally inferior social, economic, and political-
9 level which impinges on their state of belonging to the rainbow nation.

12 **Conclusion**

14 South Africa, post-Apartheid, emerged as a democratic rainbow nation that
15 embraced unity in diversity. The rainbow nation is unfortunately marred by the
16 politics of identity resulting in the politics of exclusion. There are gross
17 inequalities in the distribution of the country’s wealth which excludes most
18 citizens, especially the indigents. White privilege and racial divisions still exist in
19 the country as evidenced by quotas in some sporting disciplines. Identity politics
20 has worsened societal divisions, contributing to intolerance and discrimination
21 within and between citizens as its key feature is exclusion. Whilst natives continue
22 to suffer from exclusion in their birth country, permanent immigrants have not
23 been spared either. Permanent immigrants have been excluded from fully
24 engaging socially, politically, and economically in South Africa. The absence of
25 birthright citizenship for children born to permanent immigrants is a form of
26 exclusion used by the South African government which prevents non-citizens from
27 fully enjoying the benefits of the rainbow nation. Political scapegoating of
28 immigrants is also used by politicians to deflect attention from real issues like the
29 socio-economic failures of the government. This leaves permanent immigrants
30 vulnerable to a backlash from natives. Institutionally, the demand by natives for
31 economic opportunities to be reserved only for locals has left permanent
32 immigrants marginalized. In spite of their permanent status, they are still not
33 considered on the same economic wavelength as indigenous South African
34 citizens. Lastly, permanent immigrants' lack of cultural integration affects their
35 adaptation into communities contributing to further exclusion. Genuine efforts to
36 address this predicament should start with the South African government
37 acknowledging and redressing inequalities and exclusion that its citizens continue
38 to suffer post-Apartheid. This will help curb the animosity that some natives have
39 towards immigrants which is largely shaped by a past that promoted ethnic
40 divisions and subnational identities. Awareness campaigns using a bottom-up
41 approach to educate citizens on the rights and duties of immigrants should be
42 conducted in communities. This will go a long way to foster social cohesion.
43 Efficiency in the processing of permits by the Department of Home Affairs should
44 be done within prescribed timeframes. Measures should also be put in place to
45 counter institutional discrimination in the labour market. Taping into the skills of
46 permanent residents will go a long way in addressing the skills shortage in South

1 Africa and will equally contribute significantly to making South Africa a true
2 rainbow nation.

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