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Dedates around xenophobia in university spaces through the context of decolonisation and transformation

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Abstract

The emergence of xenophobic violence is linked directly to the dissemination and development of certain ideas and perceptions. This paper will examine perceptions of xenophobic violence held by university students looking particularly at the University of the Witwatersrand. The research attempts to understand the perceptions and understandings of the university students, and how they conceptualize their individual perceptions in the context of university unrest and university transformation. These perceptions will be discussed and analysed through individual interviews in conjunction with questioners. Questions of perceived identity and the evolution of identity will be tackled in an aim to fully understand these perceptions. This focus on the tertiary institution serves to increase the analysis of xenophobic violence through the analysis of perception and debates. The dominant discourse around xenophobia is often focused on how the xenophobic attacks occurred and what drove the xenophobic attacks. However, there is limited focus on what drives xenophobia and the discourse that emerges in the xenophobic attacks. This paper will provide an analysis of this discourse to develop an understanding of the origins of xenophobic mentalities and the differing perceptions of foreign nationals held by university students.