

African Immigrant Traders in Inner City Johannesburg

Inocent Moyo

African Immigrant
Traders in
Inner City
Johannesburg

Deconstructing the
Threatening 'Other'

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*To my wife Precious, daughter Khanyisile Yothando Moyo and son
Nelson Methembe Moyo*

Foreword

This book is timely as Africa navigates the negotiation of a continental free trade area and hopes to eventually establish an African Economic Community in which capital, goods, services and people move across its 130-year-old artificial borders separating its indigenous people, erected by colonialists. This book also comes at a time when the world is experiencing increasing populism on both extremes of the political spectrum; the consequences of which partly saw a rightist campaign successfully pull the United Kingdom of Great Britain out of the European Union having appealed to supporters who were concerned that the country had lost control of its immigration policy and was threatened with an invasion of its territory by foreigners.

Borders in Africa and the legacy thereof, as constructed by colonialists, run at various levels. Beyond the physical markers of state territory that they are, they also delineate the distinction between people who belong to one socio-economic and cultural group or another. In this sense, borders distinguish between groups, defining who belongs and who does not. Alongside this, those who do not belong are *othered* and considered to be a threat to the *in*-group. This book correctly brings these aspects of borders to the surface and exposes them for the threat

they present to humanity. With a focus on South Africa, it highlights the othering of immigrants from other African countries and the way in which borders are erected around them, to the exclusion of immigrants from other parts of the world, and singles out the African immigrant as problematic. Through its deconstructionist stance, the book contests this negative construction of African immigrants to expose a complex reality around the developmental and in some cases retrogressive impacts that such immigrants have on host communities. Such an exposition undermines and dismisses any efforts which always construct all African immigrants as a threat. This makes this book a balanced treatment of the case of African immigrants in contemporary South Africa and calls for the recognition of the positives that they bring to host communities.

This is important considering that immigrants, incorporating traders, are a silent game changer with regard to the integration of African economies, particularly those whose borders they endlessly transverse as they ply their trade in a quest to make ends meet. However, in addition to citizens, some African governments not only overlook but also demonstrate hostility towards these actors and, somewhat inimical to the African continental integration agenda, have attempted to restrict movement and brand as criminal, the cross-border trading activities of immigrants. The restriction of movement is also a threat to human dignity as it violates the human right to movement of immigrants, as enshrined in international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, indeed, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which expressly protects the freedom of movement of people.

This book tackles debates around these challenges, and is an important contribution to the literature on migration, immigration and informal cross border trade.

Pretoria, South Africa
November 2016

Christopher C. Nshimbi

Acknowledgements

This book was conceived when I attended the International Geographical Congress (IGU) meeting in Japan in August 2013, the attendance of which was made possible by a travel grant by the same IGU. The academic atmosphere afforded me quality time for deep reflection. As I attended the many Population, Political and Urban Geography sessions, among others and after I presented my paper, I realised that, after all, it was possible for me to contribute to debates around issues of migration in a book long treatment of the case of African immigrants in South Africa. As I continued with my Ph.D. research and the analysis of the data, that I had gathered, the “voice” within me that I should write a book grew louder and louder until it reached a crescendo.

This coincided with and gained traction as a result of the academic guidance and mentorship that I received from Professor Joan Fairhurst and Professor Melanie Nicolau. So my first thanks go to the IGU and particularly Professor Michael Meadows, (University of Cape Town), the Secretary General of the IGU and Professor Joan Fairhurst and Professor Melanie Nicolau. I can never thank these academics enough. The one man, whose understanding, compassion and willingness to

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There is a very long list of friends and academics, whose names it's not possible to list here. In this long list, I wish to isolate Dr. Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, a polished political economy scientist and DST-NRF RCA Research Fellow and Deputy Director: Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn), Department of Political Sciences University of Pretoria, whom I met in Japan in 2013. Since then, we have worked together on many projects. We have debated and "argued" over a lot of academic issues, which fall within the province of political economy and political geography. Our debates and "arguments" always lead to a project and this is the case up to this day. Christopher has a huge and insatiable appetite for emancipatory research, a commonality that draws us together. Christopher's trademark is his desire to "pick a brain", which is both inspirational and challenging. Thanks a lot, dear friend Christopher.

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Richards Bay, South Africa
November 2016

Inocent Moyo

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Abbreviations

AEC	African Economic Community
ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
BBP	Better Buildings Programme
CBD	Central Business District
CD	Compact Disc
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CIPC	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHS	Department of Homeland Security (USA)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DVD	Digital Video Disk
EAC	East African Community
ECCSA	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
HPCSA	Health Professionals Council for South Africa
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USA)
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
INA	Immigration and National Act (USA)

JDA	Johannesburg Development Agency
JMPD	Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department
JMTC	Johannesburg Metropolitan Trading Company
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
QLTS	Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAPS	South African Police Service
SARS	South African Revenue Services
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro-enterprise Economy
STA	Street Traders Association
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UMA	Union du Maghreb Arabe
VAT	Value Added Tax

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