

## Gender-based violence on less advantaged migrant women in peri-urban Johannesburg and how they respond

### Authors:

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### Abstract:

This paper examines how less advantaged migrant women (less advantaged in respect to their legal status: irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) navigate Soweto and Diepsloot, Johannesburg in light of recent gender-based violence incidences and xenophobic attacks by the police, taxi drivers and the broader society. These peri-urban settlements are reported to have some of the highest gender-based violence prevalence in South Africa<sup>1</sup>, 500 sexual-assault cases were reported to the Diepsloot police since 2011<sup>2</sup>. The South African Police Service recorded 51,895 sexual assaults in 2015/16 in all of South Africa<sup>3</sup>. Most recently there has been an intensified public response resulting from recent rapes in taxis and the police being reluctant to help<sup>4</sup>. In 2017 foreign-owned shops were looted and three foreign nationals were killed in Jeppestown, Johannesburg<sup>5</sup>. The goal is to show how less advantaged migrant women experience, negotiate and respond to xenophobic treatment and especially gender-based violence. Moreover the intersectionality of their 'illegality' and 'womanhood' is explored, to highlight their particular vulnerability and showcase the fluidity of xenophobic and gender-based violence. With a 'right to the city' approach, the essay draws out how women's rights are diminished in urban spaces. It further explores how less advantaged migrant women navigate the city with the politics of invisibility, how they choose to remain in abusive relationships to avoid other more violent public spaces, and how they participate in the political 'protest' culture to strive for gender and urban justice. Binaries such as colonised/free black women's bodies are illustrated. The contrast of citizen/migrant rights and the diverging reality is demonstrated. In addition, concepts of visible/invisible borderlines are explored.

*Key words: gender-based violence, xenophobia, right to the city, illegal aliens, gender justice, urban justice, politics of*

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.genderjustice.org.za/news-item/wits-sonke-study-reveals-alarming-levels-mens-violence-women-diepsloot/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21718578-survey-38-men-one-township-admit-having-used-force-or-threats>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-09-02-africa-check-factsheet-south-africas-201516-crime-statistics/#.WTBS4WiGPIU>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ewn.co.za/2017/03/24/joburg-taxi-rapes-second-victim-battling-to-get-police-help>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.migration.org.za/uploads/docs/march-2017-xenowatch-special-report.pdf>

visibility, domestic violence, borders;

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