
UJ CONVOCATION AGAINST XENOPHOBIA

TODAY AT 12.00
SANLAM AUDITORIUM
APK CAMPUS

UJ PLEDGE AGAINST XENOPHOBIA

All of us gathered here today, the University of Johannesburg's staff and student body, collectively and individually reject in the strongest possible terms all violent and discriminatory acts against people who are not South African

We call upon all South Africans to uphold the values of the South African constitution and to hold firm to the fundamental principle that all people, irrespective of country of origin, are equal before the law and entitled to dignity and respect.

We call upon our government to act decisively to quell all xenophobic violence now.

As individuals and as a university we solemnly pledge not to engage in, or support in whatever way, any act that amounts to prejudice and discrimination against people who are not South African and to stand up and defend the rights and human dignity of all

We solemnly pledge to further educate ourselves, our friends and our family about the scourge of xenophobia and how our own humanity suffers when we injure others. We say: 'An injury to one is an injury to all!'



RETHINK. REINVENT.



WHAT IS XENOPHOBIA?

Literally, it means fear of foreigners. In practice it can range from using unkind language to displays of hatred and physical attacks - sometimes even death. In 2008, a third of the people killed during what was described as Xenophobic attacks were South Africans. Thus xenophobia extends to local people who look or appear different.

DO FOREIGNERS TAKE SOUTH AFRICAN JOBS?

No. All over the world, studies have always shown that migration has been linked to growth of the economy. Most foreign migrants to South Africa are young and well educated; they contribute to building the local economy and increased employment. You cannot steal something that does not exist. Foreigners create jobs.

WHY ARE XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS OCCURRING?

This is complicated, but a key reason is high unemployment. This is a consequence of the state of economy, not the presence of foreigners. Some of the violence arises from people who feel powerless, perhaps because they are jobless, picking on people who are even more powerless. However, all ideas of one group's superiority over another should be condemned.

WHAT ABOUT UJ?

At UJ some of the best academics come from outside South Africa. They add great value to teaching and research. Internationally, higher proportions of foreign students are regarded as a marker of success. Foreign students pay higher fees and contribute to sustainability of our university. UJ is a very cosmopolitan university and we take pride in this.

DO WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES?

Yes. This is an obligation in international law. In the years of the struggle against apartheid people from all over the world acted in solidarity with our struggle. Many countries, mainly in Southern Africa, saved South Africans from imprisonment, torture and death. Furthermore, our neighbours suffered invasions, wars and death by the apartheid army because they identified with the liberation struggle.

Neighboring countries suffered damages of more than 60 billion dollars caused by apartheid South Africa's destabilization campaigns. They suffered that we may be free.

IS IT JUST BLACK PEOPLE WHO ESPOUSE XENOPHOBIA?

No. Studies by the Human Sciences Research Council shows that there are high levels of xenophobic sentiment across South Africa. This affects all classes and colours of people.

HOW DOES SOUTH AFRICA SUFFER FROM XENOPHOBIA?

We are destroying any and all attempts to offer moral and political leadership to others on our continent. As we have foreigners in our midst so there are South Africans all over the world where they are the guests of other people among whom they live, work and do business. Their business profits us and our country. What if those nations start acting against our fellow South Africans we are acting against them now?

If today an injustice is done to others, tomorrow an injustice may be done to us

WHAT CAN I DO?

Argue against xenophobia with your classmates, friends, family and neighbours.

Protect any people who are afraid of being attacked, providing shelter if necessary.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT I CAN DO AT UJ?

Yes.

→ Speak to students from the international community and enquire about their welfare. Ask how you can help.

→ Ask your lecturers to discuss the matter in class and do a presentation on the myths about the threat of foreigners.

→ Speak to your friends and family and encourage them to have reasoned discussion with humane and compassionate hearts instead of blind and uninformed prejudice.