

## **SOME ARE MORE SOUTH AFRICAN THAN OTHERS? THE CASE OF THE TWITTER HASHTAG #WEREJECTMAYOROFJHB**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is a growing concern about discriminatory behaviours on social media in recent years. However, there is a dearth of literature focused on the abuse of foreigners on South African Twitter. This paper interrogates the views of the online community on South African Twitter on the appointment of children of immigrants to political office. A case study of the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB was carried out. The scapegoating theory guided this study. The hashtag started on social media following the election of Jolidee Matongo, mayor of the City of Johannesburg, on the 10th of August 2021. Within the hashtag, the researcher used confirming and disconfirming sampling to sample 30 tweets. The sample of tweets was drawn from a population of 120 tweets on South African Twitter within 24 hours preceding the election of Jolidee Matongo as the new mayor of Johannesburg. Critical discourse analysis was used. The findings revealed that there were multiple dissonances in the construction of South African citizenship in general and Jolidee Matongo's citizenship. The views on South African citizenship under the hashtag were at odds with the Constitution and the laws of South Africa. Racial and afrophobic perspectives emerged from the analysis.

**Keywords:** afrophobia, hashtag, immigrant, citizenship, South Africa.

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a growing concern about online communities that perpetuate discriminatory behaviours through promoting othering on Twitter, and Facebook among other social media platforms (Tynes, Giang, Williams, Umana-Taylor, Mitchell & Williams, 2014; Umana-Taylor, Tynes, Toomey, Williams & Mitchell, 2015). This paper aims to interrogate the views of the online community on South African Twitter on the appointment of children of immigrants to political offices. A case study of the election of Jolidee Matongo is carried out on Twitter under the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB. Contemporary literature has viewed South Africa as a space of discrimination and violence targeting black foreigners. Recurring violence targeting black foreigners in some parts of South Africa has been reported over the last two decades (2008; 2015; 2019). In examining afrophobic attacks in South Africa, research has predominantly focused on physical attacks leading to death, maiming, displacement, and looting. This paper sought to add to the emerging discourse on social media as a frontier for discrimination and othering of immigrants and some citizens. Many studies have interrogated the recurring phenomena of violence targeting foreigners in South Africa in general and black foreigners in particular. Discrimination, hatred, and violence have been conceptualised in various ways including "new pathology for a new South Africa (Harris, 2002, p. 169); afrophobia (Tarisayi & Manik, 2021); xenophobia (Adjai &

Lazaridis, 2013; Manik & Singh, 2013; Masenya, 2017) and 'xenophobia-afrophobia' (Waiganjo, 2017). This paper views the hatred and discrimination of black foreigners in South Africa as afrophobia.

Ngan and Chan (2013) argue that, "the dynamics of social exclusion and inclusion of certain groups of citizens and migrant workers is a complex and multi-dimensional process, which is shaped by institutional frameworks as well as informal practices." The engagement on South African Twitter is viewed as part of informal practices in the light of Ngan and Chan(2013)'s view. Additionally, Ngan and Chan (2013) argue that frameworks reinforce hegemonic ideas about insiderness and outsidersness in host countries. Hegemonic ideas about insiderness and outsidersness are usually influenced, shaped, and manifested along racial lines. This discrimination of black foreigners in South Africa is thus unpacked in this paper as shaped by hegemonic ideas of insiderness and outsidersness. Lim (2010) argues that there is general contempt in the domestic society for the outsiders. Outsiders are stereotyped and considered a threat to social cohesion. Resultantly, the election of the new mayor regarded by some as not being a bona fide South Africa is viewed as a threat to "social cohesion and a danger to the livelihood and very lives of real citizens..." (Lim, 2010, p. 55).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researcher was guided by the scapegoating theory. Tella and Ogunnumbi (2014, p. 148) state, "The historical heritage of the scapegoat theory can be traced to Freud's ego-defensive mechanism, which he labelled displacement." Basically, displacement shifts aggression to another target when the original target becomes inaccessible. In the South African context, displacement is premised on the end of apartheid and the transition to democracy. During apartheid, aggression was directed toward whites and after the transition, black immigrants became the target. According to Musikane, Hewitt & Toendepi (2020, p. 3), the theory of scapegoating holds that "the vulnerable target groups are blamed by the more powerful groups for all societal ills, which they may not be responsible for." Within the context of South African migration discourse, black South Africans blame black immigrants for their misfortunes and economic hardships. The hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB is analysed through the scapegoating theoretical lens.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper draws from a qualitative case study of the views on South African Twitter on the election of Jolidee Matongo to the position of Executive Mayor of Johannesburg. The qualitative research followed an interpretivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018,p. 19) state, "...the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience". Thus, this study sought to understand the views shared on South African Twitter on the election of a politician with an immigrant parent. Purposive sampling was utilised to select the case of one hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB on South African Twitter. The hashtag started on social media following the election of Jolidee Matongo, mayor of the City of Johannesburg, on the 10th of August 2021. The hashtag #WeRejectMayorOf JHB read in full 'we

reject mayor of Johannesburg'. Within the hashtag, the researcher used confirming and disconfirming sampling to sample 30 tweets. The sample of tweets was drawn from a population of 120 tweets on South African Twitter within 24 hours preceding the election of Jolidee Matongo as the new mayor of Johannesburg. The tweets were generated using a Twitter hashtag tracker. The study was only confined to English tweets; therefore, tweets in South African indigenous languages were not included in the study. However, the researcher notes that most of the tweets under the hashtag were in English, suggesting the intended audience was more comprehensive than people fluent in South African indigenous languages. Moser and Korstjens (2018, p. 10) view purposive sampling as the "selection of participants based on the researchers' judgment about what potential participants will be most informative." Thus, the researcher selected the most informative tweets for this study. At the same time, depth in the selected tweets was enhanced through confirming and disconfirming sampling. Moser and Korstjens (2018, p. 10) explain that confirming and disconfirming sampling entails "confirming and disconfirming cases sampling supports checking or challenging emerging trends or patterns in the data." The sampled tweets were analysed using critical discourse analysis.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

The researcher utilises critical discourse analysis to interrogate the verbatim narrations in the sampled tweets. Critical discourse analysis for Mogashoa(2014) tries to unite and determine the relationship between the actual text, the discursive practices, and the larger social context that bears upon the text and the discursive practices. Essentially, critical discourse analysis was used to unite and determine the relationship between the tweets in the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB and the larger context that bears upon the tweets. The actual text in the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB is analysed concerning perceptions against black foreigners in South Africa. The epicentre of critical discourse analysis is the study of language use: "be that in interviews, focus groups, diaries, social media or documents" (Turner, 2020). Turner (2020) states "Language is more than a neutral way of communicating, it's deeply connected with actions and personal identity, and can even shape the way we think about and understand the world." Thus, it can be argued that the language used in the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB was analysed to glaringly expose the link between the tweets and the views on migration in South Africa.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The findings from the critical discourse analysis of the tweets on the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB are presented as themes. The themes were drawn from the actual text of the tweets. The following themes are presented: Jolidee Matongo, South African citizenship, the nationality of Jolidee Matongo's father, and the Afrophobic dimension. The researcher presents the tweets verbatim before discussing and analysing them.

## Jolidee Matongo

To contextualise this study, the researcher sought to find out from the sampled tweets, who is Jolidee Matongo? However, this section does not claim to be a biography of Jolidee Matongo because it is not and does not have the depth of one. One informative tweet explains, "*Jolidee Matongo was born and raised in Soweto. An active member of #COSAS<sup>1</sup> at #OrlandoWestHigh while some of us were with #PASO in the early '90s. Judge a man on his performance, not based on the origin of his parent(s). We are all descendants of immigrants.*" The above tweet points out that Jolidee Matongo was born and bred in Soweto, South Africa. Identifying the new mayor's birthplace as Soweto has a vital significance in the discourse on his citizenship. Soweto is a township southwest of Johannesburg that has been recorded as an arena for activism and struggles against apartheid (Forsee, 2019). The above tweet goes further to state that Jolidee Matongo was a student activist with COSAS. Essentially, the tweet constructs Jolidee Matongo as an anti-apartheid activist with an impeccable struggle history, and therefore there is no questioning of his nationality. Furthermore, the tweet acknowledges the contentious issue at the epicentre of the sampled hashtag that Jolidee Matongo is indeed a son of an immigrant. However, being a son of an immigrant should not be used to judge him but his performance. In this context, his performance is viewed within his political activism in the struggle against apartheid in Soweto. Another tweet by one prominent opposition leader in South Africa stated, "*We grew up with Jolidee Matongo in the YL, and today, we are canvassed to reject him because his father was Zimbabwean. I'm sorry, don't count me in your nonsense. Politically we disagree, but he remains a black brother of mine.*"

Evidently, in the above tweets, is the consensus that Jolidee Matongo was a son of a Zimbabwean immigrant, but that should not deprive him of his South African citizenship. The above tweet further questions the logic or lack thereof of viewing Jolidee Matongo as a foreigner on the premise that his father was a Zimbabwean immigrant. Fundamentally, these tweets under this theme concurred with media reports on the background of Jolidee Matongo. A newspaper article by James de Villiers entitled Joburg has a new mayor. Who is Jolidee Matongo? Reported that, Jolidee Matongo was born in 1975 in Soweto, Gauteng, South Africa. He matriculated at Orlando West High School where he joined the Soweto Students Congress (Sosco) and Congress of South African Students (Cosas). Jolidee Matongo is the son of an immigrant from Zimbabwe, Edward Matongo, and a South African mother. According to news reports, his late father, Edward Matongo, moved to South Africa more than five decades ago. Hence, some tweets within the hashtag clearly articulated the history of Jolidee Matongo and his early political activities in Soweto. It was also interesting to note that prominent political figures across the political divide utilised Twitter to defend Jolidee Matongo and his right to run for political office in South Africa. In trying to understand the construction of Jolidee Matongo's **citizenship** under the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB*, another interesting question emerged *who is a South African (who was considered South African enough to run for political office?*

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<sup>1</sup> Congress of South African Students (COSAS) is an anti-apartheid student organisation established in 1976.

## South African citizenship

This section draws from the tweets under the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* to construct South African citizenship. The following questions were unpacked using the case study hashtag: ‘Who is a South African?’ or ‘Who qualifies to be regarded as a South African? These simple questions were made complex by the thought-provoking question: Who is a South African if Jolidee Matongo is not? There was an apparent dissonance among the tweets sampled on the question of South African citizenship, leading to several dimensions emerging. One tweet was instructive and informative to the South African citizenship discourse premised on the South African Constitution and citizenship law. The tweet explains, *“They have started hashtags, basically fighting over who is more South African. Own it (sic), he [Jolidee Matongo] is a citizen of South Africa as protected by the Constitution which also protects [those] who arrived in 1652.”* The tweet subscribed to what the researcher terms the legal perspective on South African citizenship. The legal perspective to the above questions is informed by the Constitution of South Africa and the South African Citizenship Act, 1995 (Act 88 of 1995) as amended. Essentially, South Africa being a democracy, issues on citizenship must be approached from a legal perspective according to this thread within the cacophony of tweets on the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB*.

The researcher drawing from the South African Citizenship Act, 1995 (Act 88 of 1995) as amended by the South African Citizenship Amendment Act, 2010 (Act 17 of 2010), which came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2013, notes that Jolidee Matongo is a South African by having been born to a South African mother in South Africa. Legally, South African citizenship can be acquired by birth, descent, or naturalisation (South African Citizenship Act, 1995 as amended). The tweet under discussion ends by pointing out that the same Constitution that protects people who arrived in 1652, also protects Jolidee Matongo. The year reference to 1652 in the tweet deliberately tries to view white South Africans as descendants of immigrants because of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. However, most tweets under the hashtag argued that Jolidee Matongo was not a South African, or at least he was not South African enough to run for political office because he was a descendant of an immigrant. Reference to 1652 brought another dimension to the South African citizenship debate. Hence, this paper’s view that the construction of the South African citizenship under the hashtag was nuanced. One tweet oblivious of the legal perspective states, *“One day every department will have children of foreigners as rulers and even the president will have a foreign father. You are what your father is. These men are not South Africans as long as their dads are foreign.”* Principally, the tweet argues that one can only be a South African if one has a father who is a South African. Hence, the tweet was adamant that having an immigrant father automatically disqualified Jolidee Matongo from election to the office of mayor of Johannesburg. Several tweets held similar views that only people born to South African fathers are South Africans. It was evident that there was confusion between what the law says and some cultural practices in South Africa. Cultural practices steeped in patriarchy hold that a child belongs to the father’s family. Thus, there was an apparent dissonance between the understanding of South African citizenship in the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* and the prevailing laws of South Africa. Resultantly, there was a seeming lack of knowledge of the legal requirements of South African citizenship on South African Twitter, as aptly revealed by the view that Jolidee Matongo is a foreigner. This view on South African citizenship can be argued to be aligned to specific sections

within South African Twitter since it managed to generate retweets and likes within the period under study. Furthermore, the views on South African Twitter on the issue of South African citizenship can be regarded as microcosmic of the South African society.

However, other contradictory views were raised questioning this prevailing view on South African citizenship represented by the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB*. One tweet responds, *"So my kids aren't South African because their father isn't? What's this rubbish #WeRejectMayorOfJHB logic."*

The above tweet captures the fears of a South African mother whose children have an immigrant father. The tweet summed up the South African mother's fears for her children's future in South Africa. The mother saw her children through the discrimination against Jolidee Matongo. Furthermore, the tweet reveals that the hashtag, despite targeting Jolidee Matongo, had wider ramifications on other people within South Africa in similar citizenship circumstances. In a similar vein, another tweet opines, *"The son of a South African woman cannot hold a leadership position in South Africa? You guys hate the black woman that much #WeRejectMayorOfJHB."* The tweet brings to the fore the gender dimension of the conversation on South African citizenship. According to the hashtag, the gender dimension views Jolidee Matongo as an attack on the South African woman. Discrimination exhibited against Jolidee Matongo is constructed as discrimination against black South African women in general and black South African women who have children with immigrants. According to this perspective, children of immigrants with South African mothers have become an arena to express hatred for black South African women who marry (have relationships) with immigrants. The targeting of the children of immigrants in South Africa, as in the case of Jolidee Matongo, can be viewed as an extension of the narrative "they steal our jobs and our women." (Maluleke, 2015; Nkealah, 2011). One tweet states, *"Our South African ladies must not bring us into their nonsense, and if you get married, you go live at your husband's home, not your husband becomes our citizen, go live with you in-laws in your husband's country not here."* The tweet considered marrying an immigrant as 'nonsense' and thus confirmed the above narrative of 'stealing our women'. Resultantly, the election of Jolidee Matongo was viewed by the discourse on the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* as promoting the children of people who 'stole their jobs and women' and thus had to be rejected. Hence, the researcher argues that the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* should not be interrogated in isolation because it is located within the migration question in South Africa. Tarisayi (2021) notes that South African Twitter has become a new frontier for afrophobic attacks, and the views expressed under the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* further support this treatise.

### **The nationality of Jolidee Matongo's father**

The views under the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* tellingly suggest that it was more about the nationality of Jolidee Matongo's father to a greater extent. Several tweets revealed that several politicians in South Africa are children of immigrants but are not subjected to the reaction that followed Jolidee Matongo. One tweet gave the example of Minister Blade Nzimande whose father is a Mozambican (This was also confirmed by the MyHeritage website)<sup>2</sup>. The tweet states,

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<sup>2</sup> MyHeritage website claims to document biographical summaries of notable people)

*"Minister Blade Nzimande's father (Phillip Sphambano) is from Mozambique, and we didn't hear all these noises when he was first appointed as a Minister during former President tenure #NoToXenophobia Joburg Mayor is one of us even if I differ with him politically #WeRejectMayorOfJHB."* The tweet cited above reveals that another South African politician shared almost similar parentage with the new mayor under discussion. Minister Blade Nzimande's father was a Mozambican immigrant, but his citizenship was never questioned when he was appointed. Additionally, this particular tweet's import argues that if all people born in South Africa to immigrant fathers are foreigners, why was the appointment of Minister Blade Nzimande not met with a similar outcry or hashtags as in the case of the new Johannesburg mayor. Another tweet cited the case of Herman Mashaba, another South African politician and former mayor of Johannesburg. The tweet states, *"He is going nowhere! Herman Mashaba as mayor of Joburg. His father is from Mozambique, yet you had no qualms then."* It is interesting to note that not only does Herman Mashaba have foreign parentage, but he was also accepted as a mayor in Johannesburg. Thus, glaringly revealing double standards to a certain extent.

The above cases cited by the sampled tweets can be utilised to bolster the view that politicians with Mozambican fathers were accepted compared to Jolidee Matongo with a Zimbabwean father. Essentially, leading to the exciting position that 'some are more foreign than the others' and equally so 'some are more South Africa' than others. Neither the appointment of Minister Blade Nzimande nor that of Herman Mashaba was met by hashtags, as in the recent case of Jolidee Matongo. Thus, the researcher's argument that it was more about the nationality of Jolidee Matongo's father. Another tweet was explicit, *"We will NOT ACCEPT a Zimbabwean Mayor of Johannesburg until Harare<sup>3</sup> has a South African Mayor! We are tired of being fools! Let them shout false xenophobia. We have a right to like or dislike a Mayor! #WeRejectMayorOfJHB #PutSouthAfricansFirst."* The tweet was adamant that Jolidee Matongo was a Zimbabwean and should not be allowed to mayor Johannesburg. The above tweet rejecting Jolidee Matongo as a mayor of Johannesburg is within the stereotypes against immigrants from Zimbabwe who are accused of criminal activities in South Africa. Additionally, the stereotypes reflected on the hashtag confirm the scapegoating theory to a greater extent. A response to the tweet highlighted, *"That is a silly rant. There is nothing new there. Former ANC President Albert Luthuli was born in Zimbabwe."*

The tweet above tried to downplay the hashtag by indicating that another prominent politician in the history of the struggle for democracy in South Africa was born in Zimbabwe. That did not stop him from rising to be the president of the ANC. However, a disconfirming tweet critiques the view that only Jolidee Matongo has been subjected to afrophobic attacks for holding a political office in South Africa because of having immigrant parentage. The tweet states that *"It is just a blatant hatred from a lot of South Africans for anything black originating from any African country. They do the same with the EFF girl [Naledi Chirwa] whose parents are from Malawi."* The tweet points out that another politician born in South Africa to Malawian parents has also been accused of being a foreigner. Additionally, the above tweet contends that all the attacks on politicians with immigrant parents were due to hatred of black originating from other parts of the African continent. A study carried out by Tarisayi (2021) focusing on three hashtags: *#PutSouthAfricansFirst*, *#NormaliseHiringSACitizens*, and *#SAHomeAffairsCorruption*

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<sup>3</sup> Harare is the capital city of Zimbabwe.

established that there was a view in some sections of South African Twitter that “*foreigners are already taking over*” every time an immigrant or their descendant is appointed to a senior position. Essentially, it can be argued that the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB furthers the sentiments that were pursued under the #PutSouthAfricansFirst, #NormaliseHiringSACitizens, and #SAHomeAffairsCorruption advocating that immigrants should not be hired in South Africa.

Another clear view captured by the sampled tweet confirmed that the hashtag was more about the appointee's link with Zimbabwe that caused the hashtag. The tweet explained, “*I think more than anything, this is more about the immigration issues ordinary South Africans have with Zimbabweans and seeing a Zimbabwean descendent being appointed in such a major role specifically in that city. And Zimbabwean newspapers celebrating him as if it is beneficial for them adds fuel.*” This tweet suggests that the appointment of Jolidee Matongo and the subsequent reactions under the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB were informed by the antecedent migration issues held by ordinary South Africans towards Zimbabweans. Zimbabweans have previously been accused of criminal activities in South Africa. One tweet even highlighted that Zimbabweans were responsible for the theft of cellular tower batteries and the new mayor's appointment was viewed in the light of these long-held stereotypes. This situation was further exacerbated by the coverage of Jolidee Matongo in Zimbabwean media (and social media). The media (and social media) reaction in Zimbabwe is viewed by the above tweet as adding impetus to the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB. One tweet revealed, “*His appointment is mostly celebrated by Zimbabweans; why? Whose mayor is this, South Africans or Zimbabweans? #WeRejectMayorOfJHB.*” The tweet raises the question, why are Zimbabweans celebrating if Jolidee Matongo is a South African? The celebration among Zimbabweans was utilised to justify the argument that Jolidee Matongo was not a South African citizen on South African Twitter. In particular, black immigrants in general and Zimbabweans have been viewed as 'stealing jobs' from locals by some sections of society. Hence, this appointment became fodder for paddlers of anti-migrants discourse. It is no coincidence that another tweet explicitly states, “*We reject the appointment of foreigners to rule over us, a Zimbabwean will always be a Zimbabwean regardless of the place of birth and regardless of the status of the documents. We want native South Africans only.*” The significance of the above tweet is an acknowledgment that Jolidee Matongo was born in South Africa and the status of his documents legally made him a South African. However, in the same breadth, the tweet argues that by being a son of a Zimbabwean immigrant, the new mayor of Johannesburg was still a Zimbabwean.

### **Afrophobic dimension**

Another exciting thread that emerged from the analysis of the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOf JHB was the afrophobic dimension of the discourse. Some of the tweets indicated that Jolidee Matongo was targeted by the selected hashtag because he was a child of a black immigrant. This thread on the hashtag #WeRejectMayorOfJHB gives examples of white South African politicians with immigrant parents to articulate that the discrimination against Jolidee Matongo was afrophobic. One tweet states, “*Natasha Mazzone, born in Pretoria in 1979 to two immigrant parents, is an MP. Father Italian, mother British, and you all question a Mayor born from a South African woman? Who is more South African here? You need to heal and start focusing on your lives.*”



Central to the above tweet is that the hashtag targeting Jolidee Matongo's election was discriminatory since he was not the only politician in South Africa with immigrant parents. The tweet raises another engaging question *'who is more South African'*, a person with a South African mother and migrant father, and someone born in South Africa to both immigrant parents.

Additionally, the tweet highlights the fact that Natasha Mazzone is an MP in the South African parliament. Not only is Natasha Mazzone an MP, but she is also actually the Chief Whip of the official opposition. The tweet attaches the image of Natasha Mazzone to emphasise the racial dimension of the argument. Both Jolidee Matongo and Natasha Mazzone are children of immigrants born in South Africa. However, the latter is white. Another tweet on the selected hashtag states, *"Natasha Mazzone still has ties with the Italian family but no noise and many whites who hold dual citizenships and are in powerful offices in this country. No mayor is being rejected based on where they originate from."* Thus, the tweet links the discrimination and targeting of Jolidee Matongo to his race, hence leading to the argument that only children of black immigrants are considered foreigners in South Africa. In addition, another tweet states, *"Imagine if Natasha Mazzone's parents were from Nigeria, the gangsters of #PutSouthAfricansFirst were going to eat her alive but because her parents are from Italy, she is welcomed and called madam."* The tweet highlights the difference in the treatment of foreigners of African origin and those of European descent in South Africa. Contemporary literature has noted the dissonance in the treatment of immigrants in South Africa based on the colour of their skin (Mbecke, 2015; Tarisayi, 2021; Tarisayi & Manik, 2021). Essentially, South African Twitter hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* confirms the view that race is an important aspect in the unpacking of the discourse on the experiences of immigrants in South Africa. Adding to the tweet citing the apparent non-targeting of Natasha Mazzone, another tweet states, *"This [tweet was accompanied by a video of an interview of Michael Waters] is Michael Waters DA MP he comes from Britain, but I never heard any noise from the #PutSouthAfricafirst group, the only foreigner they know is of African Origin."* The tweet cites another politician in the South African parliament with a foreign background accepted as a South African MP. Fundamentally, the tweet also points out that there is a view that only immigrants or their children of an African origin are considered foreigners. The racial dimension in the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* confirms other studies that alluded to the phenomenon of Afrophobia in South Africa (Long, Chiliza & Stein, 2015; Mbecke, 2015; Tarisayi & Manik, 2021; Tarisayi, 2021). Hence, the researcher argues that there was overwhelming evidence of an afrophobic dimension in the hashtag that was selected for this study.

Another example cited by the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* was the election of Chinese national Xiaomei Havard to the South African parliament. One tweet states, *"Xiaomei Havard was born in China and moved to South Africa to study. She got South African citizenship and she is now a South African Member of Parliament. Jolidee Matongo was born in Soweto to a South African mother and Zimbabwean father, yet xenophobes are angry that he is Joburg Mayor. Xenophobes are ignorant and daft!!! They are scared of other races and target their black brothers; what a bunch of clowns!"* Despite the tweet being uncouth in its engagement, it indicates that a South Africa by naturalisation was in the South African parliament while Jolidee Matongo's citizenship was being questioned. In contrast, a South African by birth's citizenship was being questioned. Additionally, the above tweet highlights the sentiment that Jolidee Matongo was being targeted because he was a black African with foreign parentage. Thus, the traffic generated on

South Africa Twitter targeting Jolidee Matongo can be regarded as a double standard wherein only a black politician is construed as a foreigner while other people of other races in similar circumstances are spared. Another prominent South African politician whose name was cited is former Cape Town Premier Helen Zille. Helen Zille was born in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, South Africa. Her parents migrated from Germany in the 1930s to avoid Nazi persecution. Her citizenship was allegedly never questioned because she is not a black African, according to one tweet that criticised the premise of the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB*. Fundamentally, cases of white (and Chinese) politicians who occupy senior political offices in South Africa were utilised to bolster the view that the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* was afrophobic in its targeting Jolidee Matongo.

The afrophobic dimension can also be supported by another tweet citing the celebration of the success of South African comedian Trevor Noah. The tweet states, *"Trevor Noah was born and raised in Soweto. His father is foreign. Same circumstances as the new Johannesburg mayor. Both have South African mothers. Yet the one with an African father is said to be a 'foreigner'."* This tweet notes that both Trevor Noah and Jolidee Matongo were born in Soweto to South African mothers, but surprisingly one was considered a foreigner. The tweet further points out the apparent difference between the two personalities was that Jolidee Matongo's father was a black African. Another tweet states, *"Based on the same argument<sup>4</sup> Trevor Noah would be rejected, yet he is celebrated as one of the best South African exports. Father is Swiss-German and mother is a South African. You guys are funny."* The above tweet clearly articulates the dissonance within the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* by stating that Trevor Noah was celebrated as the best South African export while the citizenship of Jolidee Matongo was being questioned. Another tweet concurs, *"Trevor Noah's father is Swiss, his mother is a South African, but you claim Noah as South African. Let's come back to South Africa quick, the new Mayor of JHB, his father, is a Zimbabwean but you call him a foreigner. Look at yourselves."* The difference between Trevor Noah and Jolidee Matongo is that the former is coloured and the latter black African; thus, the hashtag was afrophobic (targeting a child of a black immigrant). Hence, the researcher argues that the hashtag was afrophobic because of its apparent targeting of a politician whose father was a black immigrant. It was interesting to note from the hashtag that several tweets questioned the logic of Jolidee Matongo, a foreigner while considering Trevor Noah a South African. The two (Jolidee Matongo and Trevor Noah) were viewed as sharing similar circumstances have been both born and raised in Soweto to South African mothers and foreign fathers. The only striking difference between the two is the race; Jolidee Matongo is black while Trevor Noah is coloured. Essentially giving credence to the notion that the social media campaign against the appointment of Jolidee Matongo was afrophobic to a large extent.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis of the discourse on the sampled hashtag on South African Twitter, it can be concluded that there were multiple dissonances in Jolidee Matongo's citizenship. The

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<sup>4</sup> The argument is that children of immigrants are foreigners in South Africa regardless of having South African mothers and being born in South Africa.

dissonance stems from the understanding that Jolidee Matongo was born in South Africa to a South African mother. Despite these circumstances surrounding Jolidee Matongo's background, some views under the hashtag questioned his right to run a political office in South Africa. Whereas other tweets argued that the new mayor was a Zimbabwean because his father was an immigrant from Zimbabwe. Across these tweets questioning the new mayor's citizenship was the view that only people with South African fathers could be regarded as South Africans or at least be South African enough to run for political office. Other contradictory views expressed in the hashtag proffered a legal perspective that cites the Constitution of South Africa that citizenship can be acquired by birth, descent, and naturalisation. The study further established that the discourse under the hashtag *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* was microcosmic of the South African society as it confirmed scholarship that reveals that there was afrophobic discrimination in some sections of South Africa.

Some views under the hashtag indicated that several white politicians with immigrant parents were being accepted and occupying senior political offices in South Africa without their citizenship being questioned. However, Jolidee Matongo's citizenship was put under a microscope essentially because his father was a black immigrant. Fundamentally, this position questioning Jolidee Matongo's citizenship was construed as afrophobic. Names of white (and Chinese) politicians cited with immigrant parents or foreign origin included Natasha Mazzone, Michael Waters, Helen Zille, and Xiaomei Havard. Additionally, critical discourse analysis of the hashtag revealed that the *#WeRejectMayorOfJHB* was related to other previous hashtags such as *#PutSouthAfricansFirst*, *#NormaliseHiringSACitizens*, and *#SAHomeAffairsCorruption*. A common aspect of all these three hashtags *#PutSouthAfricansFirst*, *#NormaliseHiringSACitizens*, and *#SAHomeAffairsCorruption* was a hatred of black immigrants. Thus, the case study hashtag revealed that their children have now extended the hatred and discrimination against black immigrants. From the views expressed under the selected hashtag, the researcher argues that there is a need to educate some sections of South African society on the position of the Constitution regarding citizenship. It is not enough to have a constitution and laws that protect the rights of citizens (and immigrants) without investing in promoting awareness thereof among the country's citizens.

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