

Social Ties and the Dynamics of Integration in the City of Johannesburg among Zimbabwe Migrants

Octavia Sibanda

*Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Fort Hare, 4 Hill Street
East London 5200, South Africa*

Telephone: 0437047517; Fax: 0437047516; E-mail: octasah@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT The emergence of South Africa as one of the economic giants in Africa has had a profound influence on neighbouring countries especially those undergoing socio-economic challenges. The progressive position of South Africa has acted as a catalyst in cultivating a desire amongst African men and women to migrate and explore better opportunities. South Africa seems to be highly preferred by African migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, the latter being the focus of this study. The migrants depend on a wide range of social ties to make it in the host country. These social ties also influence the identity formation process when the migrants arrive and attempt to establish themselves in the new environment. This paper attempts to show how the new trends in the migration to Johannesburg which is one of Africa's biggest cities has illuminated new social trends in the making and maintaining of identities. At the arrival in big cities such as Johannesburg, new contacts or social networks assume a very pivotal and significant position. The isolation created by migration leaves a gap in migrants' lives thereby putting pressure on the new migrant to explore for possible and options in establishing new relationships for socio-economic and political gains. New identities begin to emerge in response to a wide range of socio-economic factors impacting on the lives of these migrants.