

Xenophobic rights

By Letsatsi Ribane

I was sold a dream of promise, growth and prosperity in a land that welcomes and cherishes diversity. I was promised that my children would have equal opportunities as their fellow South African peers. They would not be set apart because of where they come from or the sounds of their voices singing ballads of a darker time. We were told we would forget about the dim memories once we bore the fruits of a South African citizenship under the country's constitution. I believed that it is always darkest before the dawn, and that the darkness in the ballads that my people sing will be lifted by light in this new land with promises and opportunity and the gold of Egoli.

I did not believe that one day I would come back from work and find my home ransacked and ruined. That my neighbours would cry for blood, my blood dripping at the tips of their powerful hands. In those same hands lay my opportunities, my hope, the life we were promised, the rights we never had, the respect that we could never have been given in vain of being different. My family had been robbed of their rights against discrimination and prejudice, and all we could do is watch as they torched our shack and shrieked with such a profound hate "foreigners", "baKwerekwere" blood at the tip of their tongues. It was at this point that I asked myself if the law is really what it is, or does it only pretend to be a sovereign father, aiding me as I struggle through my journey on this Earth, hoping to dance as I reach the end. My rights weren't protected, and we have been pushed into refugee tents, forced to live in fear of rejection, in a country that we were told accepts and relishes in diversity.

I was sold a dream of promise, growth and prosperity in a land that welcomes and cherishes diversity. I was met by a broken dream, broken promises and refugee camp to keep me safe from my African brothers and sisters. We are the definition of xenophobic violence, with no rights and no protection from a government we should be able to trust.