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**Race and Ethnicity in Durban in the 21st Century: Some
Glimpses into Contemporary Realities and Future
Possibilities**

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ABSTRACT

In late March 2015 the Zulu Monarch, King Goodwill Zwelithini apparently made a claim that foreigners are changing the face the country and is alleged to stated that *"we all urge all foreigners to pack their bags and leave."* As word of this statement spread central Durban turned into a virtual war zone between local Black Africans and Black African foreigners. Ever since then suspicion between locals and foreigners remain ever present. The city of Durban has South Africa's busiest port, and is the largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Official statistics estimates the central city's population at around 550 000, and the wider metro region at around 3.8 million. Characterised by a warm temperate east coast climate, sunshine through most of the year, well developed transport networks, attractive shopping malls, an encouraging infrastructural environment for business development, and a cosmopolitan population made up of 51% Black Africans, 25% Indian/Asian, 15.3% White, and 8.6% Coloured (people of mixed racial descent), Durban has become a major attraction for foreigners from other parts of Africa and South Asia. The city's largest ethnic group are the Zulus. The economic successes among segments of people from each of these categories serve as aspirational possibilities to migrants from the poorer hinterlands of the province, and more widely from the rest of the country as well as the African continent. Over the last decade the rapid improvements in roads along the national highways and proliferation of state of the art shopping malls in decentralised zones, bears all the hallmarks of a smart city in the making. But against the background of high economic growth rates especially of the 1960s and 1970s, current low economic performances, poverty and urban ghettos and high unemployment rates highlights an irony between infrastructural appearances and human realities. Couple these with constant cries of corruption by the city's officials, this paper will present glimpses into how locals and foreigners view the politics and the future in the city of Durban.

Keywords: ethnicity; racial tension; xenophobia; smart cities; South Africa