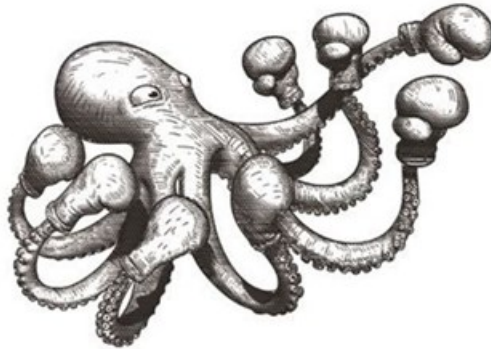


# MullenLowe's commercial for Save the Children exposes xenophobia

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Thousands of migrant children seeking refuge in South Africa face hatred, harassment, and violence. As a wake up call to South Africa, and the world, advertising agency MullenLowe South Africa has created a commercial for NPO Save the Children that shows the horrifying realities of xenophobic behaviour.



**M U L L E N L O W E**  
**S O U T H A F R I C A**

**Indololwane, the word for elbow in isiZulu, is South Africa's new pencil test for migrant children.**

The story created by MullenLowe South Africa sheds a glaring light upon one very loaded word: "Indololwane", which in isiZulu means elbow. It is a word that was used in the early 1990s in South Africa, during the bloody conflicts between ANC members and IFP members in Gauteng and elsewhere. During those dark days, if you were not Zulu and were going to visit Natal, you were advised to remember this word because it would save your life, if ever you encountered IFP militants.

The 'indololwane' test made news again in 2008 when the *Mail & Guardian* ran an article headlined "The 21st century pencil test" Following violent xenophobic attacks in Alexandra (Gauteng) where migrants were blamed for crime and stealing jobs, the attacks spread across the country. According to the article, Ramaphosa settlement on Gauteng's East Rand became one of the areas that witnessed inhumanity on an unthinkable level. The xenophobic attacks left 62 people dead, 1,700 injured and 100,000 displaced.

“ On 24 May 2008, following more brutal attacks, an incident was reported where a Zimbabwean woman was attacked by the marauding mobs. They took her money, her passport and asked her what elbow is in Zulu. She did not know. ”

Seven years later, on 11 April 2015, xenophobic violence erupted again. Extending from KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng it resulted in seven deaths – the victims were both foreigners and South Africans. In October of the same year, similar attacks were reported in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, where more than 500 people were displaced.

“ In 2019, another story broke out in the news: “indololwane” was being used to discriminate against African migrants and their children. They were being denied access to healthcare, education, and other essential public services in South

Africa. ”

With the re-emergence of xenophobic sentiment in South Africa in recent years, a *Daily Maverick* article, published on 5 September 2022, noted: “Attacks or incidents of xenophobia are becoming more frequent and immigrant children are hyperaware that, at any given moment, their family could be next.”

Lwandile Fikeni, creative director, MullenLowe South Africa, explains the impetus behind the commercials: “Taking from the emergence of “indololwane” and its current use, our story portrays the parents of migrant children teaching them how to pronounce the loaded word, for it might save their lives. The fear that these parents must live with each day is shown in the agony, stress, and frustration as their children get the word wrong every single time.”

“ NPO Save the Children is asking for help: help us protect migrant children facing discrimination. ”

Banele Senatla, Save the Children South Africa campaigns manager, says: “We want to make it clear that this story is not aimed at pointing a finger at a specific group or identity. Our intention is to bring awareness around what is being done in our name, in our languages, and in our culture. It is the instrumentalisation of our painful history to achieve sinister ends that the work seeks to expose and to rebuke.”

Senatla explains that putting the commercials in the public domain was a decision that was heavily considered. It is an uncomfortable truth, one which is not preferable to a comfortable lie that may have devastating consequences for us all, including our children.

Migrant children across South Africa face discrimination every day. Help us protect them by supporting our work. Save the children, #togetherwecan <https://www.savethechildren.org.za/>

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