This paper examines the socio-economic activities of West African immigrants in South Africa, who suffer from xenophobia and discrimination, yet are motivated by such problems towards socio-economic successes. Immigrants engaged in various business and other activities outside the law, which paradoxically enable them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

West African immigrants find themselves trapped in South Africa. They are excluded from the socio-economic opportunities that could benefit them and the lives of their families back home. The majority of these immigrants have sacrificed all they have, some taken life threatening risks in search for greener pastures in South Africa. Against their aspirations and hopes the situation in South Africa is not as they had imagined. They are easily being harassed and molested by the Police, suffer from serious xenophobia, and are discriminated against in where they had initially taught will be their dreamland. They are seen as aliens who bring diseases, steal jobs from South Africans, and interfere in the socio-economic affairs of the country. ‘Wes-A-Phobia’ is the term used in this paper to describe the fear, hatred and the resultant discrimination of West African immigrants in South Africa. Resulting from these, immigrants have adopted various strategies to survive and cope with the prevailing situation. Namely, engaging in various small business activities and other activities outside the law. This paper illustrates how immigrants cope with ‘West-A-Phobia’, and how their coping strategies especially those outside the law have become very popular and profitable, enabling them to succeed as well as send remittances back home even though excluded from the mainstream society.