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Black politics in Kroonstad: political mobilisation, protests, local government, and generational struggles, 1976-1995

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines political mobilization and protests in Kroonstad's black townships, in the northern Free State Province, South Africa, from 1976 to 1995. It attempts to explain the reason(s) why these townships lagged behind when it came to mobilizing and protesting. It also explores the various entry points employed by some of the residents of these townships to politics; and how they in turn assisted in mobilizing other residents. Furthermore, it shows that local community politics in these townships did not follow the common pattern as in other townships and because of this the residents reacted differently. It demonstrates that until the early 1980s political restraint in these areas existed because of the influential role of the "respectables" or elders in politics. From the mid-1980s the situation changed after students and young people assumed leadership role in local politics. This caused generational tensions, particularly between teachers and students. Furthermore, the thesis examines the divisions between the progressive' activists in the townships, leading to the formation of the Maokeng Democratic Crisis Committee and Activists' Forum, and political violence between the Three Million Gang and the "community", which disrupted the momentum of political mobilization and protests. Finally, the thesis explores the tensions between the provincial leadership of the ANC, supported by the national leadership, and the local branch of the South African National Civic Organisation, which cost the ANC in the first democratic local government elections.