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Khumalo, Vusumusi 'Vusi' Rodney

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From Plough to Entrepreneurship: A History of African Entrepreneurs in Evaton 1905-1960s

By

Vusumuzi 'Vusi' Rodney Khumalo

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in fulfillment for the degree of the Masters of Arts in History

July 2013

Supervisor Prof. Noor Nieftagodien

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted as a dissertation or thesis at any other university.

……..

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, July 2013

Abstract

Evaton was distinct from other African freehold settlements in the Reef. There were several aspects that made it unique; these were its economic history and expression that delayed local incorporation into wage labour, self-sufficiency, demography, and geographical location. Physically, the area had big yards which enabled residents to be relatively successful subsistence farmers for the first three decades of its development. Subsistence farming facilitated economic independence and allowed local residents to refrain from working for white industrialists.

This study is motivated largely by the fact that Africans were deprived of economic and political autonomy by white governments. This marginalisation lies in the complex and inter-connected processes of displacement and dispossession by which Africans were first dispossessed of their own land; then deprived of independent productive opportunities. The increasing scarcity of land as scarce commodity and African land ownership in Evaton– best explains the history of African local economic independence. For the local residents, land possession in Evaton provided a space where moral economy that fostered racial pride and solidarity was forged. It is where Africans created educational, religious and economic institutions that served as the base of challenging white political humiliation. These institutions provided ways to assert African dignity in the face of racial segregation. This work develops the logic explanation that stick together all forces that constrained Africans to give up labour to industrial economy in Evaton.

It provide us with the understanding on how local Africans struggled for economic independence and how independence changed over time in Evaton. It demonstrates how local residents resisted the forces of proletarianisation by adapting into different economic transformation that threatened their economic autonomy. The nature of these changes is represented by the shift from agricultural economic production to entrepreneurship. This progression has revealed how local entrepreneurs, particularly former sharecroppers, the educated residents, and independent farmers prioritised economic independence.

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I would also like to extent my gratitude to the people of Evaton whom this study represents. Without their contribution, particularly Dwight Seremi who passed away while the project was in progress, Paul Seshabela and many others, this work would have not succeeded. Thanks to Tladi Kekane who inspired me to write this topic. His passion and attachment to the history of Evaton stimulated my academic interest. It would be unfair not to acknowledge Maisela Kekane who offered me accommodation and food during my fieldwork. He also spent time during the early stage of the project discussing interesting themes. Besides, he introduced me to many informants. To both Tladi and Maisela this thesis really owes its genesis. I would also like to pay homage to the late Alf Kumalo for showing interest in my work. His door was always open for me to ask any Evaton related questions. Thanks to Prof Bob Edgar for reading and commenting on the draft of this work

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List of Abbreviations

AME Church	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC	African National Congress
NAFCOC	National African Federation Chamber of Commerce
PAC	Pan African Congress
TUATA	Transvaal United African Teachers Association

Photos/ Plates

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