SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

FOR THE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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The impetuous sun guillotines
through the hours in your cell
a slit of a window
projects a bright rectangle of time
on your wall
Your soul confined, harnessed
deprived of color and air
Your imagination measured out
in proportions of four by four
by four by four and
morning meals, calisthenics,
afternoon meals, walking
walking miles away from memory
evening meals, calisthenics and
sleep, inspired sleep
A squatter's village in a valley of wind
a heap of refuse avalanches into the road
zinc roofs pierce the tarnished sky
The townships, fire and drums,
the villages, homelands, the uprising,
skirmishes in your soul
The night bled dry
the unwielding air
the broken road alert with death
You dream of the yellow windows
water spigots dripping like cheap candles
dogs rambling through rubbish
A dirge of smoke from the last cooking fires
The roofs of the huts cold, tight,
contorted
Wake up!
Sleeping miners open their beacon eyes
in a tower of rags
Banners of fists wave
above the precise, visionary face
of youth, expert in hope
reckoning with freedom
Wake up!
The guerrillas inhale
the blue wilderness
Wake up!
to the morning meal
the calisthenics
the death of separation