

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