

# In Detention

Chris van Wyk

## The Poet

Born in 1957 and lived for a few years in Johannesburg's Newclare area (adjacent to Sophiatown) before his family relocated to Riverlea, a mainly working-class 'coloured' suburb.

He was strongly influenced by political events (Soweto uprising of 1976).

He published poems in the literary magazine Staff Rider (an outlet for many black writers after 1976).

## Context and Background

In the 1950s, South Africa struggled under Apartheid Law.

The law aimed to separate the white minority from the black majority.

Abolished by Nelson Mandela in 1991 when he was elected president of the African National Congress.

This poem is a protest against the government and their murder of 67 political activist prisoners.

Poem brings to light the power that our government has to keep us in the dark about certain issues.

During this era prisoners were held in detention.

"Detention Without Trial".

People could be locked away almost permanently without access to law courts to prove their innocence.

Prisoners who were regarded as politically dangerous often met with a savage death while in detention.

van Wyk uses his poem to enlighten readers to the injustice of Apartheid.

## The Poem

He fell from the ninth floor  
He hanged himself  
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing  
He hanged himself  
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing  
He fell from the ninth floor  
He hanged himself while washing  
He slipped from the ninth floor  
He hung from the ninth floor  
He slipped on the ninth floor while washing  
He fell from a piece of soap while slipping  
He hung from the ninth floor  
He washed from the ninth floor while slipping  
He hung from a piece of soap while washing.