

The Death of Stephen Biko

Tom Paxton

Stephen Biko lay in shackles on a urine-sodden mattress
In the solitary section, he was made to lie there naked
Ah, ah!
Given nothing he could wash with, exercise was not permitted
Stephen Biko lay in shackles, compliments of Colonel Goosen
Ah, ah, Africa!

Port Elizabeth the prison, South Africa the nation
Stephen Biko lay in shackles, though his hands and feet were swollen
Ah, ah!
In the close interrogation he was beaten like the others
He was put back in the shackles, compliments of Colonel Goosen
Ah, ah, Africa!
Ah, ah, Africa!

He was sick and he was dying, prison doctors came to see him
When the cops spoke to the doctors they said, Nothing much is wrong here
Ah, ah!
Just a short stay in the infirmary, then it's back down to the shackles
On a urine-sodden mattress, compliments of Colonel Goosen
Ah, ah, Africa!
Ah, ah, Africa!

When they found him in a coma, when the man was clearly dying
He was naked, but they stowed him in the back of a Land Rover
Ah, ah!
Though a hospital was near by it was no part of a prison
So they took him to Pretoria - seven hundred fifty miles
Ah, ah, Africa!
Ah, ah, Africa!

There was no one on the journey who could help the man survive it
And the medical equipment was just one bottle of water
Ah, ah!
When they reached Pretoria prison they brought no medical records with them
And they said, he might be faking, it's a hunger strike he's staging
Ah, ah, Africa!
Ah, ah, Africa!

Stephen Biko in Pretoria was laid down upon a mattress
On the stone floor of a prison, and he died his lonely death there
Now, the country was South Africa; the victim, Stephen Biko
The victim, all South Africa; the victim, all humanity
At the death of Stephen Biko
Ah, ah, Africa!
Ah, ah, Africa!