

IF THE SHU FITS

Voices from Solitary Confinement

Compiled by

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Permissions, Description, and Acknowledgements for
If the SHU Fits – Voices from Solitary Confinement

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Description and General Notes

If the SHU Fits shares voices of the victims of solitary confinement telling their stories. Included are excerpts of letters, blog entries, government reports, and speeches of family members, all organized into a Reader's Theatre Format. The script published here is designed to be flexible, and we have not designated assigned roles. You may choose to change the order, to eliminate and/or add material.

We feel it can be presented in as informal setting as a living room or church committee meeting to a full-blown production in a theatre. We have kept it short (it runs about 50 minutes), as a tool to facilitate discussion of the issues presented and action to be taken.

We strongly urge any presentation of **If the SHU Fits** to be supplemented by some follow-up - a panel or individual presentations, or participation in a letter-writing, advocacy, and/or direct action campaigns.

Special Thanks, Acknowledgements, and Permissions

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Laura Magnani of the STOPMAX project of the American Friends Service Committee.

READER#3

All I have is this pen, this paper, and the truth.
I write to you as a survivor of torture soon to
experience more, in hopes that you will use my
account here as you see fit to shed a light on the
use of torture in the United States. My name is
Sean Swain - Mansfield Correctional Institute-Ohio.

READER#7

My name is JRF
Within a Cage
How can you
Lock me in a Cage,
Within a Cage,
For some misdeed done,
Within a Cage?
All you can do,
Is feed my rage.
You can't teach me anything good,
Within a Cage...
Except Monsters control the Locks,
And in terror I've lost the keys.
Within a Cage.
I plead and pray,
But it simply gets worse,
Every day.
Within a Cage,
Animosity worsens,
Empathy is lost,
And the Days turn into,
Daze...
Within a Cage.

READER#1

In Oregon, long-term isolation units are called
Intensive Management Units (IMUs); in Pennsylvania,
they are called Restricted Housing Units (RHUs); in
California and New York, they are Security Housing
Units or SHUs. California and other states also
use another euphemism, Administrative Segregation.
Despite the variety of names, the general practice
of incarceration in these units and facilities are
solitary confinement. Let's see if the SHU fits.

NOTE: the video of Why Solitary Confinement is Modern Day Torture | Molly
Crabapple <https://youtu.be/I9xeIRpLUdc> is shown

READER#1

**Statement from Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor
Collective**

READER#5

Torture is unequivocally unacceptable under any
circumstances.

READER#3

But what has been unfolding in the SHUs is a
systematic use of torture by the state for years
and decades.

READER #4

Torture of both minds and bodies ---

READER#2

Of many thousands of prisoners ---

ALL

To break them.

READER#3

To either have them die in long-term solitary
confinement or be driven insane through the
psychological torture of years and decades of
isolation.

READER#4

We call for an end to all violence and hostility
between different groups of prisoners throughout the
state of California, including those in SHU, Ad-Seg,
General Population and County Jails, beginning October
12, 2012.

READER#3

We simply cannot allow CDCR/CCPOA- Prison Guard's
Union,

READER#5

IGI,

READER#4

IGU,

READER#3

OCS,

READER#5

--and SSU, to continue to get away with their constant form of warehousing of tens of thousands of prisoners, including the 14,000 (+) plus prisoners held in solitary confinement torture chambers for decades!!!

READER#2

We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit!! Because the reality is that collectively, we are an empowered, mighty force, that can positively change this entire corrupt system into a system that actually benefits prisoners, and thereby, the public as a whole.

READER 3

The people have the power to change things now.

READER 4

Know this: Our spirit and resolve remains strong and we know we can count on you all!

ALL

Together we can make it happen, ---

READER#2

--- not only for ourselves, but, more importantly, for the generations to come.

READER#4

With the Utmost Solidarity, Love and Respect-Onward in Struggle,

ALL

Pelican Bay State Prison *Short Corridor Collective:*

READER#5

Arturo Castellanos, *Short Corridor Collective*

READER#2

Antonio Guillen, *Short Corridor Collective*

READER#3

Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa, s/n R.N. Dewberry,
Short Corridor Collective

READER#4

Todd Ashker, *Short Corridor Collective*. My name is Todd Ashker. They'll never let me out. I'm going to die here, I know that. But I have a choice. I can slowly rot or I can fight. Fight to change things.

READER#1

Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) is a supermax prison in Crescent City, California explicitly designed to keep California's alleged "worst of the worst" prisoners in long-term solitary confinement. It takes its name from a shallow bay on the Pacific coast, about 2 miles to the west. The prison lies in a detached section of Crescent City that is several miles north of the main urban area.

READER#4

The heat inside the bus was as stifling as the tension which lingered in the surrounding atmosphere. As the bus roared angrily down Highway 101 the trance inducing drone of the big diesel engine lulled me into reflections of my life. Memories that had soared past me like the scenery flying by outside the barred, tinted windows of anonymous Grey Goose and as swiftly as the life I had led thus far. The restless dismal chimes of shackles and chains broke me away from the melancholy spell I had fallen under, and there followed the sudden realization that the world of oceans, mountains, and landscapes would all soon be but a memory of another lifetime. Looking around me I found not to be alone in this realization, for the other prisoners there seemed to be entertaining similar thoughts, but no one dare speak of them.

READER#5

What awaited us at the Pelican Bay SHU with its eerily silent corridors was a purgatory of sorts, a vacuum of uncertainty, sealed off from every thing and every one. A place where one is virtually entombed in a concrete vault with scarred and pitted walls depicting the idleness, boredom and, in some cases, the lunacy of a previous occupant.

READER#4

It's a world of its own where, for most, refuge can only be found through a dreamless state of slumber.

READER#5

There is a look in the SHU prisoner's eyes that is haunting. A foreboding look from eyes that have themselves stared into the eyes of madness and human cruelty. Eyes that have looked far into the abyss of emptiness. Eyes belonging to a species of a lesser God. My name is Hector Gallegos - Pelican Bay State Prison

READER#6

Prisoners in the SHU are there for varying lengths of time and are placed there for varying reasons. If one commits a specific crime or breaks a prison rule, he is given a determined amount of time in Administrative Segregation. But for those who have been accused of gang affiliation (also known as "validation" - their sentence is open-ended or indeterminate. Often the only way for them to get out of the SHU is to "debrief" (name others who have gang affiliations.)

READER#3

My name is Sitawa Jamaa, s/n R.N. Dewberry. KDK (CDC) has held me in solitary confinement for the past 28 years for my political beliefs and spiritual morality as a **"New African Revolutionary Nationalist" (NARN)**. If I undergo their "debriefing," to which I have refused to do for the past 28 years, and shall not change my mind!!! I ask myself, "What weight does customs hold under the law?" For though it may be termed "debriefing," using a euphemism does not change what it is: betraying a confidence, committing an act of treachery for personal gain. Considering how our community in the U.S. was brought into being and considering the command and control needs which existed from the 'get-go,' if any community has a historical aversion to stoolies, tattlers, rats and the like, isn't it ours? Therefore, I shall die before my tormentors (KDK(CDC)/U.S. government) turn this freedom fighter into a debriefer. **I shall never be found among the broken men of my era!**

READER#2**CAGE THE MIND**

Before they cage the body,
They cage the mind.
They capture the soul by breaking the spirit.
With negative thoughts of nothing.
Can you cage a thought or capture the wind?
It's not the prison guards with guns.
But inmates and convicts,
who refuse to become one.

No positive light.
The prisoners cage.
The locks of the mind.
Negativity and self hate.
A refusal to be a positive light.
Jealous of the next person,
Because they want to live right.
Like a person without sight.
Darkness in to the middle of the night.

The real prisons are scales of the mind.
Locks of negativity.
Standing in place and mocking time.

Those who challenge every positive thought.
Ask them why?
Is it to hold you back?
Without a doubt.
But it is the system that cages the body.
But first they cage the mind.

You hold the key.
With a positive mentali - ty.
Free yourself with positive thoughts.
Don't be afraid to dream.
Don't let your dreams become a nightmare.
Negative thoughts are prisons of the mind.
Standing in place and marking time.
Like the darkness of the soul.
A ball of confusion.
The truth must be told.
Can't you see?
Only the truth can make you free.
Positive thoughts are healing for the soul.
Free the mind and body will follow.

Before they cage the body they cage the mind.
 It's not the prison guard with the gun.
 But inmates and convicts who refuse to become one.

Negative thoughts of nothing.
 Taking honey from the bee.
 Make you kill your brother.
 Because you failed to see.

Look in the mirror and see yourself.
 But you hold the key.
 With a positive mentali - ty.
 That's the key.
 So unlock the door.
 And come back to me.
 Merge with the totality of mentality.
 Take a vacation from madness.
 A trip from sadness.
 See the light.
 Hope and gladness.
 Days without night.
 Can you cage a thought or capture the wind?

It's all an illusion.
 But I'll say it again.
 Can you cage a thought or capture the wind?

READER#8

Herman Wallace was a courageous fighter for justice, a political prisoner who this system locked up in conditions of torture, in solitary confinement, for 41 years.

NOTE: Herman Wallace Audio and Picture projected upon the screen as the sound of his voice is played.

READER#8

On October 1, 2013 Herman Wallace was finally freed after a federal judge ruled that his original indictment in the killing of a prison guard had been unconstitutional. Three days later, on Friday morning, October 4, 2013 Herman Wallace died of cancer in New Orleans. He was 71. This is the reality of isolation.

READER#4

I awoke to the sound of heavy raindrops pounding down on the steel bars of my captivity. Only to smell within my memory the sweet scent of freedom being pumped through my cell through an outside vent. The wet grass and smell of moist dirt was in my nostrils reassuring me that concrete is only a man made hell to deprive me of happiness once taken for granted. My name is Jack Morris.

READER#6

I never seen the sky, or felt the warmth of the sun, or breeze pass by me, the trees and grass or a rain drop, I never knew how painful it could be to be denied nature itself. I had a small narrow window which does not open, but all I could see was brick walls and nothing more. I remember from those brick walls was a small plant growing from within the cracks of the brick that was my only part of nature that gave me hope. As the wind would blow against the leaves of this plant, I would actually close my eyes and pretend this very wind was blowing against my face. I know it sounds crazy, but it was the only part of nature that I had. Then one day I could not stand it and I so desperately need to feel real air, so I started to scrape the seal from the window with my finger tips, I was determined to make an opening. For three months of every day I scraped and scraped where my fingers bled, but I managed to make a very small opening and I only had room to place one side of my nose against this opening at a time and I would take such a deep breath where I was finally able to inhale a very small amount of air but it was all I needed in order to survive. The officers there felt sorry for me and they would bring me a paper and a pen to keep myself busy with being I had nothing and there is where I started to doodle on paper and from there was how I became an artist. I never in my life knew how to draw, I couldn't draw a heart to save myself, but after three years of the madness of being locked like an animal instead of letting it get to me I put all my pains on paper and before I knew it I had art! *The Writer of this letter is a 45-year-old mother of three who was housed in the segregation unit of a New Jersey prison.*

READER#5

My name is Toby Chavez. New Mexico Penitentiary. Living life in solitary confinement has been the most horrendous experience I have had to endure in all my 43 years on this earth. I have been in prison for 15 years, 13 of them in solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is designed to dehumanize, cause a person to become dependent, and spiritually break an inmate to the core of his soul. Each and everyday that comes and goes takes a piece of humanity away from me to the point I don't really know who I am. The lack of human contact I have with other inmates is like being thrown into a black hole and completely forgotten! I haven't been able to hug, kiss or hold a family member in over 14 years! I'm not able to receive visits from my wife or have any type of real quality time with my loved ones. I'm stuck, alone and have very few words I can speak with other human beings. I'm forced to eat every meal, exercise, and play games by myself. I laugh at myself sometimes because it's the only voice I can hear. My own shadow has literally become my only friend. If and when I get the opportunity to speak with my wife, mom, or loved ones, I have to put on a mask with a smile, because I never want them to see the monster I'm becoming by the psychological damage created by solitary confinement. I live each day contemplating death, throwing in the towel and just calling it quits. A person can only take so much loneliness. My name is Toby Chavez. New Mexico Penitentiary.

READER#4

The SHU on the mind is like drowning or being caught in quicksand when you first realize your plight, you fight fruitlessly with all your might to save yourself! But at some point you realize that your fate is irreversible and your ultimate demise only a matter of time. So you let go, hopelessness sets in, believing no one can hear you, no one will help you and no one cares. You are so mentally worn out and emotionally exhausted that you cannot even help yourself! That sense of helplessness is the final distress that befalls a long-term SHU prisoner before the cruel and stupid sadistic part of it all begins the descent into madness. My name is Martin Bibbs - Pelican Bay State Prison.

READER#4 (cont.)

SHU syndrome now is when you begin to live and adapt to the distorted world of the SHU. In order to survive, exist one must distort his mind to make an abnormal existence normal! It's the vision of reality. As you must adjust your eyes to light, to bring into focus that which is around you. So must a SHU prisoner distort his mind in order to bring into focus, his new reality. One cannot hold onto normalcy. For normal in an abnormal world is craziness! This fact is the battle of a SHU prisoner's soul. The death grip of sanity! The irony of it all is that for SHU prisoner to hold on to his sanity, he must embrace - accept his insanity. It has been said for hundreds of years that those whom the gods wish to destroy first they drive mad! That is the SHU objective.

READER#3

My name is Darrell Burnett—Pelican Bay State Prison. Despite the mental, emotional and physical challenges of enduring life inside these concrete tombs, based solely on the politics of paranoia and presumption of guilt, my spirit remains undauntedly resilient. Free and strong. I too consider myself progressive and being warehoused inside these modern dungeons for almost four decades does not define my identity nor personhood. I reject the dehumanizing, demonizing and denigrating labels of language that marginalizes my worth as a human being to be no more valuable than a chimpanzee or other captive species imprisoned at the city zoo. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, --

READER#7

"Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle. The tireless exertion and passionate concern of dedicated individuals." On many levels Dr. King would be disappointed; especially when his own life and legacy has become so marginalized as if he was a new age Santa Claus. He is only relegated to the, ***I have a dream speech***. He is portrayed as less critical, less challenging, less provocative. He would probably feel betrayed by some of the men who stood shoulder to shoulder with him. But now misuse his name for personal gain and ambitions. No one ever speaks about his position on war, poverty, and hunger. He would be disappointed at the indifference, lack of tolerance,

READER#7

mistrust, fear mongering, economic inequalities, mass incarceration, economic disparities, homelessness, torture, senseless wars, racial profiling. I think we honor his legacy by continuing his unfinished work.

READER#2

What about the families of those locked up in these tombs for the living dead? How does being isolated from their love ones affect them? Many of them do continue the work.

READER#6

My name is Marie Levin. My brother is Sitawa Jamaa who is in the SHU in Pelican Bay. Today is day 24 of the historic Hunger strike of prisoners held in solitary confinement. The five core demands are just human things that you and I would respect: End group punishment and administrative abuse; abolish the debriefing policy and modify the gang status criteria; comply with the U.N. Commission recommendations to end long-term solitary confinement; provide nutritious food; create and expand constructive programs.

READER#1

My name is Irene Huerta and I am the wife of Gabriel Huerta, my husband has been in Pelican Bay Prison for 28 years, and I stand here as a proud wife because he endured all 3 hunger strikes. I told him that CDC was not going to budge and let us continue the fight. Here we are continuing the fight. And I want to thank all of the families.

READER#6

My name is Georgiana Williams. My oldest son was in the SHU at Pelican Bay. You worry day by day if your child is OK. You can't visit them because they are so far away. They can't call you. All you can do is write them. You wonder if they are alive or dead and the only thing I can do is pray.

READER#3

All I have is this pen, this paper, and the truth. I write to you as a survivor of torture soon to experience more, in hopes that you will use my account here as you see fit to shed a light on the use of torture in the United States. When you give

READER#3 (cont)

your passive consent for your government to torture anyone you have relinquished power to your government to torture everyone. Your government subjected me to torture. I'm first. You're next.

READER#2

During one retaliatory stint in segregation, I learned of **Torture Cell 182**. I do not know the name of the man who was in that cell, the cell next to mine. He spoke only broken English. His cell had no bedding. He had no toothbrush, no cloth, no soap. The temperature was uncomfortably cold for me with all my clothing and wrapped in a blanket, so the victim in **Torture Cell 182**, to keep from experiencing hyperthermia, had to pace 24 hours a day. All night, all day. For days. I came back to Mansfield Correctional in 2009 and was placed on the gang list for my religious belief. I was taken to a row of cells hidden behind the medical clinic. The cell I was placed in had no bed, no mattress. Just like my neighbor long ago in **Torture Cell 182**, I had to pace 24 hours a day to stay warm, I could not sleep. I survived. Since September, two other of the state's victims have not. I do not know their names, but two prisoners have died on Torture Cell row since I was fortunate to be removed from there. They died, perhaps pacing the same cold cement floor that I paced, hour after hour, day after day, feeling ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard. I now face the rest of my life at Supermax, locked in a concrete tomb, dying in complete isolation. I have been approved to be transferred to this torture facility by **psychological professionals who affirm that I am sane enough to be driven crazy.**

READER#6

Last night another girl hung herself. As they drug her out of her cell and down the stairs and put her on the stretcher, it occurred to me that it's become so common, so common it hurts. I woke up out of my sleep and got off my bunk, got a sip of water and looked out the window and there they were silently dragging her out, no alarm, no sense of emergency or urgency. Just your run of the mill ordinarily scheduled suicide. Nothing special going on here, just all in a days work. I laid in bed praying her spirit would fight for

her life since she obviously didn't have the strength to fight for it herself. By the time breakfast rolled around her bed was already filled by a new inmate. Like rotating cattle. And it's frustrating because what one person can I be angry with? I feel like an itty bitty worm on a big ass hook. I may not like the women around me, I may not even speak to many, but I never for one tiny second, never ever do I forget that we are all in this struggle together. Each of these women is a part of me. Each one worthy of better than this.

READER#1

56-year-old Jerome Murdough, a mentally ill homeless military veteran died in his Riker Island Solitary Confinement jail cell on February 15, 2014. Murdough had been arrested and charged with trespassing after being discovered sleeping in an enclosed stairwell on the roof of a public housing project in East Harlem. According to city officials, Murdough was incarcerated alone in a 6 by 10ft cinderblock cell at Rikers Island mental observation unit at about 10:30pm on February 14, 2014 a week after his arrest. There, he was supposed to be monitored every 15 minutes as part of a suicide watch, but he was left unattended for about four hours. At about 2:30am the following day, he was discovered slumped over in his bed, already dead. Officials estimated the temperature in his cell reached over 100 degrees. "He basically baked to death." He was a military veteran who served his country. He died in Solitary Confinement.

READER#5

Juan Mendez the *UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment*, presented a written report on solitary confinement to the UN General Assembly's Human Right Committee, which singled out for criticism the routine use of supermax isolation in the United States. Mendez stated:

READER#5

"I am of the view that juveniles, given their physical and mental immaturity, should never be subjected to solitary confinement".

NOTE Growing Up Locked Down video or the following speech have been used interchangeably at this point.

READER#8

My name is Dayvon Williams. I am a member of the Youth Justice Coalition. During my time of incarceration, when I was 18, I was placed into solitary confinement for 2 weeks - 24 hours a day. I have epilepsy and I had a seizure. The guards were called by my cellmates, but the officers thought I was playing and they put me into solitary confinement. From the moment I was put into "the hole" I felt isolated and depressed. The room was freezing! It was dirty, and there wasn't a bed, only a hard concrete seat built into the wall. The room was very small. Immediately, I felt trapped.

There was a tiny window in the door that I would peek out of just to see outside of the claustrophobic cell. One day, the guard caught me looking outside the window, and he put paper over it, so I could no longer see anything. I hadn't had a shower for the first four days after coming into solitary confinement. I smelled myself and started to feel disgusting. I received a change of clothes only once during my 2 weeks in solitary confinement. I was ignored like I didn't even exist. After a few days in solitary confinement I started to feel like I was going crazy. I started to make up stories and started talking to myself. My imagination was blasting. I look back now and see how creative the mind can be, but also how dangerous. If a person did not already have mental health problems before coming into solitary confinement, spending enough time in there, you would lose your sanity.

I had several epileptic seizures while in solitary because sometimes they didn't bring my medicine on the time it was needed, or several times they didn't bring it at all. Stress is one of the main triggers of my seizures. I kept knocking on the door after passing out from having a seizure, but I was ignored. There were no books or paper to write or anything to address the complete boredom of being in the hole. Only 2 or 3 days would pass by and it felt like a week. I would never know if it was either day or night. Being locked down was traumatizing. As human beings we were treated worse than caged animals. Everybody deserves to keep their sanity but I felt my mind slipping away. This was one of the worst experiences in my life. I would not wish this upon anyone.

READER#8 (cont.)

The cruel punishment of solitary confinement must be eliminated. It would be much better to spend time in effective programs that focus on helping people to grow and change, than on investing in the torture in isolation. Those people such as myself who have experienced solitary confinement must be given the opportunity to present our observations and solution. Those most impacted by solitary confinement and our families must be recognized as experts on this issue. Isolation erased our humanity! But we are fighting back so that no one can erase our memories.

READER#3

Representatives for the Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor Collective - March, 2014

READER#4

Last summer we went on hunger strike - we were willing to starve ourselves to death rather than continue to endure these dehumanizing conditions forever. We ended the strike because several compassionate legislators promised to call the hearings that are taking place today. Yet today the legislators will hear from psychologists, lawyers, others experts, corrections officials - but not from us - who have the most experience with the conditions we face - because California (CDCR) prison officials refuse to let us testify, even remotely via video or audio.

ALL

It is a sham,

READER#2

This new reform effort still maintains the basic conditions at Pelican Bay, and will continue to keep prisoners in isolation for vague gang affiliation based on artwork, literature, communications, or informants' testimony that does not meet California's judicial standards for reliability in criminal trials.

READER#5

We have written petitions and letters to the Governor, filed a class action Federal lawsuit, and gone on hunger strikes seeking real reform, not the bogus reform California officials now propose. It's time for California to do the right things. It's time for the legislature to enact meaningful reforms.

READER#1

What are some of the alternatives to solitary confinement? And what can we do right now?

READER#7

Begin using the **Mississippi Model**, where reform of the classification system led to a significant reduction of the solitary confinement population at Parchman State Penitentiary, leading to significant decreases in violence.

READER#2

Support mental health alternatives to solitary confinement in jails and prisons, including individuals and group therapy, regular access to psychiatrists, substance abuse counseling, specialized psychiatric service units, discharge planning, and community reentry assistance.

READER#3

Implement training for correctional officers on how to respond to individuals experiencing psychiatric crises in ways that de-escalate rather than escalate these crises.

READER#8

Inmates not be placed in isolation longer than 72 hours.

READER#4

Impose a seven-day limit on supermax stays for inmates being investigated for in-prison crimes.

READER#5

Stop the brutal "cell extractions" of uncooperative and often mentally ill inmates.

READER#6

Use "informal sanctions" to discipline unruly prisoners, like taking away commissary or recreation privileges, as alternatives to solitary confinement.

READER#3

Create an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) consisting of local volunteers who perform inspections of the facility and submit an annual report.

READER#8

"Juveniles, given their physical and mental immaturity, should never be subjected to solitary confinement."

READER#1

Meet the 5 Core Demands of the CA Hunger Strike!

READER#4

A quote by Fyodor Dostoyevsky to remember, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons."

READER#2**I Shall Not Die**

I shall not die a thousand deaths of compromise
 Giving up names in exchange for food or blanket.
 I will bite my own arm to smother my screams
 And rob you of the satisfaction when you disassemble
 me. I shall not die shamefully, my chin against my
 chest, kneeling before the humiliating hole I dug for
 myself, waiting upon the pistol shot. I will always
 refuse the blindfold. I shall not die abandoned and
 alone obliterated from the memories of those I love.
 My fate never questioned. Someone will always stand in
 the rain outside your office window, my name on a
 cardboard sign. No matter how many times you cut my
 throat or hang me from my own bed sheet, Bludgeon me
 with your night stick or fire your bullets into my
 brain, whether you encircle me in a South African
 Bantustan, or a coca cola factory in Bolivia, or alley
 behind the stonewall, or a prison in the heart of it
 all, I shall not die. A million times - I shall not
 die. You will only get my corpse. My name is Sean
 Swain. All I have is this pen, this paper, and the
 truth. Please remember that I lived.

READER#3

My name is Robert Stockton, this is my poem, *Living Tomb*.

READER#5

Suddenly we found ourselves without the world's care,
where the cold and desolate embrace our stare.

READER#6

Through endless mazes we walk in chains, and with each
passing day it seems less and less strange.

READER#7

With a will not broken, only tested with time, we send
words to our loved ones,

ALL

"We're doing just fine."

READER#2

There's nothing to compare it to but small personal
lies; we do anything to keep away needless tears in
their eyes.

READER#6

New rehabilitation as a castaway, whether young
or old, means we're tossed into a place with no
hope to hold.

READER #1

To escape, we walk circles under a steel screen,
trying to find a way to kiss the sun's beam.

READER#4

We stand alone arguing what to do;

DAYVON

No one really knows the pressures we stew.

READER#7

Rules come and go, changing direction like the winds;
when you think you've found comfort, a new struggle
begins.

READER#5

Some stand agitated at the back of their cells;

READER#6

some scream out insane in broken up yells.

READER#1

You may have a glimpse of what we all see

READER#2

or a mental picture of a soul who's not free.

READER#6

But no one can really see behind the gray walls
that gloom,

READER#4

or walk where we walk,

(ONE BEAT)

ALL

embraced by a living tomb.

THE END