

# SHADOWPROOF

## *THE THINGS MUSICIANS AT TERRITORIAL PRISON CARRY: 'BATTLE CRY' VIDEO PREMIERE*



*Screen shot from Die Jim Crow Records' video for "Battle Cry" by Dane "Zealot" Newton*

The Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility was constructed in the late 1800s when the state of Colorado was still a territory. It is the oldest prison in the state's prison system. It is also the site, where the first compilation album for Die Jim Crow Records was recorded.

[Die Jim Crow](#) is the first record label in the United States dedicated to incarcerated musicians. The label recorded seven musicians at Territorial in Cañon City in April 2018.

The tracks laid down during these sessions represented an array of genres—Americana, indigenous Nahuatl chant, blues, and hip hop, etc—and matched the diversity of the musicians, who were indigenous, Black, queer Jewish, and white. Some of these men are serving life sentences.

“In the 150 years since the prison's construction, '[TLAXIHUIQUI](#)' is the first recorded music to

make it outside the forbidding walls of Territorial into the free world,” according to Die Jim Crow Records.

Shadowproof is honored to premiere “Battlecry” from “TLAXIHUIQUI.” It was created by Dane “Zealot” Newton, who is a Black musician at Territorial.

“It was like me writing something to rid myself of a certain past that I was carrying,” Newton said of “Battlecry” in an interview done by Die Jim Crow Records. “It was me trying to come to understand my past and where I was at that point.”

Newton shared, “Just me growing up the way I was, in an abusive environment and me not knowing how to deal with that, growing up in that environment.”

Opening up even more, Newton added, “My mom had me when she was 14. My father was 19. And he took off immediately, so you grow up in that kind of world where it’s watching your mom do drugs and come in and out of these abusive relationships.”

“I think you have to be honest about the brokenness in everybody, especially your own [self], before you can move forward. You gotta look yourself in the mirror.”

Newton’s first three years of incarceration were from 2007 to 2009. He felt everything stripped away from him. He questioned how he would deal with relationships moving forward, and he eventually learned to write and play music.

“I’ve always sang, but I was never really able to write my feelings, or play any instruments. So, the whole process of me writing music, and singing was me cleansing myself, ridding myself, confronting my past, confronting my failures, being willing to put it all out there.”

“Battlecry” centers on the struggle of asking forgiveness. “For the people I’ve harmed and the relationships I’ve damaged, I feel like even today, knowing who I am as a man, I still cannot reach back and ask them for forgiveness.”

“I feel like I would still be out of line, and out of place to ask anyone for forgiveness. Because now in my maturity, not just as a man, but as a human being, you realize just the devastation, the scars that you inflict on people.”

Die Jim Crow produced a video that Newton particularly liked because of its blooming flowers. He said it reflects a “person coming into, growing into, moving forward, or towards something.”

It’s been awhile since Newton was able to pick up a guitar at Territorial. “The funny part is, I’ll get this melody going and this rhythm, and I’ll start writing something. But my memory is bad so then I’m like, what was the melody? And if I start a beat on the wall in here, I don’t think these dudes would like that.”

Newton laughs and mentions that he sometimes waits in his cell until it is late at night. With everyone sleeping, he sits up and starts a rhythm.