



Die Jim Crow is a project that provides current and formerly incarcerated musicians a platform. They are launching a non-profit record label to further support a network of artists in prisons throughout multiple states.

To coincide with a Kickstarter [fundraising campaign](#), Die Jim Crow released a [single](#) called “Plastic Bag” that features Carl Dukes, who was incarcerated for 31 years.

“This is a drag, draggin’ around this plastic bag with every damn thing I own,” Dukes sings. “P.O. promised me a three-quarter house. This brace on my neck. Now they tellin’ me I’m denied, denied.”

Based on his diary, Dukes wrote the lyrics, which recall the experiences he endured after he was released from prison in 2008.

Dukes was told when he left prison that he would have to check in to a three-quarter house, which is like a halfway house with a lower level of supervision. But when he showed up, he was told he was not in the system.

He left the three-quarter house for Bedford & Atlantic, a men’s homeless shelter in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

Dukes had neck surgery just before his release. He wore a brace. While standing in line, he felt like he was going to faint. He had a mesh bag. It held all his belongings. He worried he might wake up to find it missing if he collapsed.

The Bedford & Atlantic shelter informed him he had to go to Bellevue. Dukes hopped aboard a train to get to that shelter, and he stood in another line. He finally got a bed close to 1 am, but the shelter informed him he would have to leave in the morning. He had to report to the parole office anyway.

He found some stability over the next few months. Still, what he went through made him think of the plastic bag that institutions give prisoners. New York does not give out plastic bags.

Over 31 years, Dukes was incarcerated at the following facilities: Clinton, Comstock, Attica, Auburn, Greenhaven, Fishkill, and Otisville.

Dukes likes singing and writing songs as a hobby. At the Fortune Society, where he replies to letters from incarcerated individuals looking for programs that can help them re-enter society after prison, he often hums music.

He listens to Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and Johnny Hartman. After learning some of their songs, he was interested in creating some original music.

Dukes' voice naturally fits the jazz sound of the tune. Toward the middle of the song, he repeats the lyrics. It leads into a section where audio of a homeless person, Tyree "Poem Da Rap" Wigfall, is featured while a saxophone solo percolates underneath.

Vocalist Apostle Heloise comes in on the track and sings, "They can throw me away, they can throw me away. Like a plastic bag," making the thrust of the tune more explicit.

It is art from the heart and soul that may remind one of Gil Scott-Heron or Lonnie Holley.