

Episode 81 Fury Young DN81

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Joshua B. Hoe

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Hello and welcome to Episode 81 of the decarceration nation podcast the podcast about radically reimagining America's criminal justice system. I'm Joshua Hoe, among other things, I'm formerly incarcerated, a freelance writer, criminal justice reform advocate, and the author of the book writing your own best story, addiction, and living hope. We'll get to my interview with fury young in just a second, but first the news. A few big events next week.

First, I'll be the moderator of a zoom webinar about the sex offender registry called the evidence base case for ending sex offender registries. The webinar will happen at noon eastern standard time on Thursday, May 28. And it will feature Miriam Aukerman, who was the lead attorney for dose the dose versus Snyder case that went all the way to the US Supreme Court. Vincent Schiraldi, who's a national expert in parole and probation, and Judith Levine, who is the co-author of the new book, 'The Feminist and the Sex Offender.' I'll include the registration information in the show notes. I hope to see you all In the audience on zoom,

I also should probably notice a note that the ACLU of Michigan is having a day of action on May 27. You can look to their website to see all of the information that you need to register for that event. And I'd also like to give support to a few projects that are helping folks during this time of COVID.

First, my guest today, if you're a young has started to fun to get PPE to incarcerated people. In addition, my friends at the Prison Creative Arts project here in Michigan has started a fund for people who are returning from incarceration but are struggling to find work during this time of crisis. I will include links to all these projects in the show notes.

Now let's get to my interview with Fury Young.

In 2013, an artist and activist and fury Young was reading the book The New Jim Crow, and listening to the out the artists of the band Pink Floyd and decided to create a concept album using incarcerated Formally Incarcerated people. The project started with a recording of Albert Woodfox, the legendary formerly incarcerated activist and author who spent over 40 years in solitary confinement. Somehow between that original project and now, that labeled that album project died, Jim Crow became a record label project. Jim Crow is the first record label in the United States to four formally and currently incarcerated musicians. The record label is a nonprofit enterprise designed to provide artists with a high-quality platform to be heard. Welcome to the decarceration nation podcast fury young.

Fury Young

2:36

Thank you very much, Josh.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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I always ask the same first question. I may have already answered part of it above. But how did you get from where you started to where you are now in trying to change the narrative around mass incarceration using music and the talent talents of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people?

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Fury Young

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All it's been a long journey. It's been actually seven years This month because I started the project in February 2013. And when I first got the idea for it, I just wanted to make a really great concept album, sort of like Pink Floyd the wall, which you mentioned, and it has just taken a lot of organic

twists and turns since then. So I first got access to a prison in Ohio. That's actually where it started. You had said Albert Woodfox, but that was way later that was actually last year. But the first prison I started recording in was Warren Correctional Institution in Ohio. And from those recordings, I and my co-producer, an engineer, Dr. Israel, put together an EP, which came out in 2016. And then there was a period afterward where we weren't gaining access to any states and I was also working a full-time job as a carpenter during this whole time during the first six years of the project. And so there was a lull in access. And meanwhile, I continue to try to gain access and work with formerly incarcerated artists. And it was still all under the objective of trying to make this full-length LP arm. And the EP was like a precursor to that. Eventually, I made a colleague, who was the former director of corrections in Oklahoma, and his name is Justin Jones. And he's a friend now. And he started pitching the project to certain state DLCs that he had relationships with and then we got access to a few of those. So suddenly, a lot of access actually started to come in and with that access came a lot of new collaborators and after a trip in March of last year, where I started with recording Albert Woodfox and then from there I met Dr. Israel in Mississippi we recorded for our musicians out of juvenile prison. Then we went to South Carolina, first to a prison where we recorded 13. Record nine artists. And when I got back from that trip is when I just realized there's no way this is going to just be one album. And I brought it to the Board of Directors, which at that point had formed we had become a nonprofit at that point. And I had started to do it full time and left my full-time job as a carpenter. And no one batted an eye. It was just like a really organic evolution. I think that the voices that we've captured, like really demand to be heard and they didn't, they weren't going to wait energetically. They just like weren't gonna wait to be just on all on one album and Potentially not all make the cut. So now we're a record label and we're going to be releasing a ton of stuff, we have a lot of new stuff we're working on. And then a lot of recordings that we've captured over the past five years that are gonna start to see the light of day. So yeah, that's where we're at now, we fully

launched in May, our first LP comes out May 8, from and we're in an exciting place.

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Joshua B. Hoe

6:29

So let's jump back a little bit because I'm still a little bit confused. So you're reading the book, *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, and you're listening to Pink Floyd. And somehow, you get the idea to make a concept album using incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. So can you kind of walk me through how that happened?

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Fury Young

6:51

Yeah, I mean, it not to sound stupid, but I mean, it kind of just happened like the way he just said it. I mean, I yeah, I like I was a young activist. I was 23 at the time. I was very, I don't know, if I delisted it because the word but I just, I was like, super passionate about activism and I still am today but way, way more like, jaded, I guess, but I just really wanted to like do something I wanted to, like take action and, and like really do something major and I had been involved with like Occupy Wall Street and I had been studying history at a community college class that really inspired me around genocide. And that's like, that was the original propeller that got me into history. occupy started and I got really into activism and so I had all these giant notions but with occupy, there were like a lot of frustrating moments because it was so everywhere at once and I felt like I could really take On, I wanted to take on something that had a certain direction to it and a really clear vision. And that's when I read *The New Jim Crow*. And I happened to be listening to a lot of concept albums at the time. And that's when I got the idea. It really just happened like that.

And, and I just want to make sure you're not, you're not yourself formerly incarcerated, right?

Fury Young

8:27

No,

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Joshua B. Hoe

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how did I mean, I understand you're reading the book, and I understand. You know, actually, I know a lot of people who are involved in occupy, what made you think of music and prisons?

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Fury Young

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That's a good question. Um, I had known, First of all, I had known people who'd been incarcerated. It wasn't like I was some total stranger to the issue. But I'm a New Yorker and I, at the time of reading that book, like I just didn't really know. America very well, aside from New York, my little bubble here. I had lived in LA for a little bit, but it was I was pretty much just like a real New York kid. And like the people I know who've been locked up, we're all New Yorkers. And so when I read that book, it like, really brought me outside of just the New York bubble that I had known and showed me how, how much of a nationwide crisis it really was mass incarceration. And I before it, so I felt like a deep connection to the issue already. And then like reading that book, I just took it one step further. And I felt like I had always wanted to be a film director growing up. So I felt like the tool of a concept album was very cinematic and could potentially be a very effective way for people to put themselves in. in the shoes of those who were formerly on currently incarcerated, and I also wanted to hear it from the horse's mouth, like, you know, Michelle Alexander bless her heart, and it's an incredible book, really well researched and all that, but she is a, you know, a lawyer, who also has never been incarcerated. So I wanted to hear from people who were actually living it or had lived it, what their experiences were like, and I thought that music would be a really powerful way to do that to do

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Joshua B. Hoe

10:31

have experience in music, or was this another leap, so to speak, it was a major leap.

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Fury Young

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I really had no experience in music pretty much I had played some guitar, started taking guitar lessons. I like that community college that I took that genocide classes and I also took a good classical guitar class, but that was my entree. I was about it. I like it when I was making movies as a kid. I, I put a lot of emphasis on the soundtrack like I like my first movie was 30 minutes. And it was basically just like a really long music video opera kind of thing.

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Joshua B. Hoe

11:15

That is that's an I mean, I was, you know, my last guest. One of my last guests was Lisa Fithian, who was also involved in Occupy. And she talked about kind of these moments where you kind of reach the edge and you just start doing things you never expected was possible. I guess this is one of those instances. So how did you get them from where you have this idea to actually connecting with I think you said prison in Ohio, and then other prisons and then actually reaching people who are in prisons to start doing the project?

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Fury Young

11:52

I use the word again, like a really organic process. So like when I first got the idea I didn't even want to be the person to execute it, I thought I would pass it off to someone else. Because it was really focused specifically on the black experience. And I'm a white Jew from the Lower East Side has never been to prison, though I hadn't, you know, known like black and

Latino people who had been incarcerated my whole life, but still, you know, um, so I wanted to like pass it off to someone else. And I just kind of like kept getting encouraged to, like, keep going with it. And I started writing to people in prisons. And they would all tell me that I was like, really passionate and that I should pursue it and then formerly incarcerated people that I was starting to interview would also kind of share the same notion. So It just like slowly became a thing where I took responsibility for it. And it felt like it if no one else is going to do it, I'm going to do it. And so I started eventually reaching out to prisons, I found a website called prison arts coalition.org. I think I've changed their name since to the justice arts coalition, but a really good resource. And they have lots of links to prison arts programs across the country, and I probably pulled out like, you know, 20 or 30, maybe more and like, emailed all of them. And one of the few people who got back to me was the choir director at Warren Correctional Institution in Lebanon, Ohio. And her name is Dr. Cathy Roma. She had been volunteering as a choir leader there for like over 20 years and she really liked the project. She had read the book, The New Jim Crow was very moved by it and it took like about a year and a half since first making content or to actually get access. But eventually we did. And, and then at that point like, we went me and Dr. Israel went to Warren twice in 2015. And this the second time we went there, we realized we had an EP on our hands. And we finished it out with some formerly incarcerated musicians. And we did a Kickstarter for funding and so forth. And at that point, it'd be it finally became like, something that I was starting to own up to a little bit more like, this is what I do, you know, um, and then, as I said, there was that brief period where access was tricky. started to gain more access eventually got into a ton of prisons recorded with a ton of people, and then that's when it became a record label.

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Joshua B. Hoe

14:55

And how many prisons have you been in contact with or been inside or working with people in,

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Fury Young

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I've recorded and five so far. I've visited probably like, maybe between 10 and 15. Um, I started just writing to people, right, like I was explaining before. So a lot of those people I still talk to and I haven't been able to gain access to those states or those prisons. So, I write to people and like about 10 different states and work really closely with folks in currently two states that we have access to. And then, like, you know, a handful of other folks who are just really involved in other ways like Mark Springer and Ohio is on our board of directors. Anthony McKinney in Ohio is someone who is innocent and I helped him with his case. So got pants and a lot of pots and prisons?

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Joshua B. Hoe

16:01

Well, I get that, you know, it makes sense that you I mean, I can't imagine it was easy, but it makes some sense that you've gotten to the point where you were able to get ahold of people in prisons. Was there a trick to the? I mean, aside from the one kind of director that you got in touch with, has it been a challenge to work with departments of corrections?

Fury Young

No comment. I guess you should leave that one to me, right. Yeah, it's been. There's been some ups and downs.

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Joshua B. Hoe

16:37

Yeah. Well, I guess I could try this a different way. If someone else were trying to start a project something like what you were doing not exactly the

same thing, but say, you know, maybe a writing program or something like that. And they were starting to go through this. What do you have advice for them about how to kind of approach the official end of this I mean, it's always personal. assistance, you know,

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Fury Young

17:02

but you're sometimes going to have to speak their language, you know, you might need to say the word some words, you, you know, you wouldn't say to your friends and your loved ones you. I mean, I never ever use the word offender, I find it very offensive. But, you know, I'll be honest, I've used that word when speaking to certain people, and DLCs because that's a word that they use and it makes a project that's already extremely threatening on face value because it's called die Jim Crow a little less, a little less abrasive. So I feel like I can get away with that one and sell out a little bit if I have to, um, in those situations, because I know it's for a greater cause. Sometimes, you know, I personally don't like the word inmates, but I've used I've had to use that word too. So you need to talk the talk with their talk. Sometimes. But never, ever, ever compromise when it really matters. Like right now I'm really trying hard to get a trust system set up. So folks who are incarcerated can make royalties, I'll leave the state anonymous in which I'm trying to do that. But we have some coals in the fire on that.

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Joshua B. Hoe

18:24

Here in Michigan, we have a program called the Michigan Creative Arts project. And they actually have been able to get some of the payment for people who buy art on the outside back to prisoners. So I'll try to connect you with them later and see if they may have some ways to work with you on you know, that part of your model. Have you? So you go through this whole process and you say there are some other members of your team, how did you start hooking up with the other members of your team?

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Joshua B. Hoe

18:58

Yeah, sure. Sure. So over the first few years of working on Jim Crow, I was just reaching out to people all over the country, in different facilities, and formerly incarcerated as well, and made some lifelong connections, lifelong relationships, friendships. And one of those people was bL charelle, who is now the deputy director of Jim Crow. And she did 10 years in the Pennsylvania prison system. I actually connected with her during the last few months of her incarceration. And when she was released, luckily, shortly after, we became quite close, and we put out the EP with her on a couple of tracks and she starred in the first music video we released and when we formed a nonprofit she was now Someone that I asked to be on the board right away. And then, as we grew into a record label, I asked her to be the deputy director of the record label. So we work very closely with all the moves we make as a label. And I also work with Maxwell Melvin's, who is our senior advisor who helps us with our overall direction, especially in regards to programming and working with DLCs. He's got a lot of love, excuse me a lot of experience. Having done this group, a lifers group in the 90s, which I think I mentioned, was actually nominated for a Grammy in 1992. And we have a really incredible operations director and grants manager, Operations Director, Stephanie Lindemann, who's got a lot of nonprofit experience and helps us with governance and protocol, a role and accounting and so forth. And our grants manager is Jen Chapin, who's gotten a lot of grants out there in the past few weeks because we really need more funding. And there's a lot more of all that to come. So we've got a good team of staff. I still work very closely with Dr. Israel, who is our engineer and mixer and co-producer. I'm actually in his studio right now. We spent the day working on vl shirelles album doing some mixed stuff. And then in terms of formerly incarcerated musicians. Next week, my bl and doc are going to be Excuse me. We're going to be in South Carolina, back at Allendale, which is a men's prison and then Graham correctional which is a women's prison. We also are starting work at a new facility in Colorado called Arkansas Valley. I'll be going there and March 4, we

recorded at Colorado territorial two years ago. So we're picking up where we left off, one of our main artists was transferred to arc Valley. So we have access to three prisons right now. We've got recordings from three other prisons that are to be released on the label. And I still in close communication with a lot of folks, either in those places like that we have already recorded that we no longer have access to or places where I was never able to gain access to but I just am really close with some of the folks in those places who are still behind bars. So yeah, I work, communicate with a lot of people. I probably get like, two calls from prison a day.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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So you'd say you've got let's say, you've got your team. You finally got an artist. You've got a DLC that's willing to work with you So you had to the prison. Yeah. How does the magic happen from there?

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Fury Young

23:04

out of the magic happen? Well, a lot of preparation.

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Joshua B. Hoe

23:09

Yeah, well, I mean, like, for instance, when I was in, it was like what, for instance, when I was in prison, and when we did have a music room, but we didn't have like, you know, soundboards.

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Fury Young

23:23

Right, right. Well, I attribute a lot of that to Doc, Dr. Israel, who is our engineer and he brings in good equipment and is very professional when it comes to getting good sounds knowing a room knowing where to set up vocals, knowing how to mic you know, he's even Mike drum kits pretty well on the inside. So I think that says a lot if you can make a drum kit in a

prison visiting room. You know how to engineer so Yeah, we you know, it's kind of like a makeshift studio. Everyone is on headphone monitors if we need to we track instruments separately and vocals later and it's just kind of like being in the studio but you're just in prison. And one funny side note to that as we've recorded in some really random places like a library, or a barbershop.

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Fury Young

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A visiting room like lawyers booth. Yeah. Barber does. Yeah. The barbershop might take the cake that was at a juvenile facility in Mississippi.

Joshua B. Hoe

Yeah, I've been a few of those lawyer rooms

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Fury Young

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Carolina. Yeah, I bet you have I'm in South Carolina at the men's prison we recorded actually in the unit we recorded it was like my first time being you know, in sound stuff. They let you on the unit

Joshua B. Hoe

24:56

Really? Right in the unit.

Fury Young

Yeah,

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Joshua B.Hoe

24:58

in South Carolina. Sir, oh man they have you know, I'm sure you're aware of this, but a large portion of South Carolina's prison system was essentially on lockdown for like a year last year. So that's a that's a pretty impressive get. I don't know if I've heard of someone getting into the unit like that except on a tour. That's, that's interesting. That must have been fascinating in a weird kind of way.

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Fury Young

25:26

Yeah, I mean, you know, for someone who's never been to prison, like the first day is kind of fascinating. Just as a total outsider, but then, I mean, and this is something sick society just gets so wrong is like, that just wears off so quickly. And you're like, Okay, I'm just around other human beings, you know?

Oh, that's definitely true.

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Joshua B. Hoe

25:48

Yeah, it's definitely it's just a roomful of how much closer you're just closer with a lot more here would be exit a lot of those.

Fury Young:

Yeah.

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Joshua B. Hoe

25:58

So you know, admission. Again, where I was at, we have the ability, like I said, to have call outs for music and we had music rooms, but they pretty much almost entirely phase out the ability of people to have personal instruments as property. Has that been typical where you're at? Or do they are you mostly work with people who have the ability to practice kind of in their cells or? etc?

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Fury Young

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totally depends on the prison. It's not even a state to state thing. It's like a per prison thing. And, you know, in some places, yes, you can have instruments in yourselves in some places that are unheard of. And in some places have band rooms. In other places, they don't even have a guitar.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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So how do you deal with that and how do they approach How do you know what you're going to record in a, in a world where you're, you know, the person who you're recording may not have had access to instruments or practice. And, you know, you're trying to put together, you know, music.

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Fury Young

27:17

Yeah, well we take what comes to us. So when we get access, the first step is to identify someone who is really into the project who's trustworthy, who's you know, someone who is actually incarcerated, who can identify those who would also be interested because, you know, we don't really just work with like one person out of prison, so they'll form like a group of people. And in certain cases that have been just all vocalist and we'll just be recording hip hop, but most of the time, we'll find bands and That person who becomes the project director will be like, kind of the bandleader to at the same time. So we work with what we got, you know,

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Joshua B. Hoe

28:10

yeah, that makes a lot of sense. That's kind of the way that's actually how prison works and a lot of ways. So it actually makes sense that that would be the way this works, too. So, you know, one question that I have almost

immediately, you know, knowing a little bit about how business music the business of music works, is how have you made that work? As I understand it, kind of in the post streaming economy, most bands who make money make most of their money by touring, and the recorded music served as a kind of like an appetizer, people test the thing and then they'll go to the show. So how are you making a record label work? For your nonprofit and for your artists?

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Fury Young

28:58

Yeah, well, we are a nonprofit. So, in 2020, most of our revenue comes from grants and from donors. We haven't quite gotten to a point yet where we are making any money whatsoever on streams or downloads or it's almost impossible to make money on streams. Right, right. But even physical sales, but we also don't have a lot of stuff in the marketplace. We haven't done any aggressive distribution or publicity yet but with the release of bL shirelles, album Masada, Troy, which comes out May 8, we have a public system plays, we're going to have distribution in place. So we're going to pull out all the stops for that, and then we'll see where it takes us. But we definitely want to get more revenue coming in from sales.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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And so but you did put out the Die Jim Crow EP, is that correct? Yes. And so you said you didn't have wide distribution on that. But what was kind of your model, what did you do to kind They get the word of that out.

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Fury Young

30:03

Yeah, with the EP, we didn't have a publicist or distributor in place. And our biggest reach with that was my brother happened to know someone who wrote for Rolling Stone. And we premiered our first music video on Rolling Stone calm, which is really cool. But it didn't lead to anything really it. I think

then these days, you have to have like 10 things roll out at once. The publicity push a proper publicity push in order to really make a dent just because there's so much content out there. Um, oh, you know, it didn't really go anywhere. Which was fine because I don't think we were ready at the time. We weren't a record label at the time we were still this concept album LP dream. So yeah, for the P have bl chiral, which is coming out on May 8, we have a publicist in place and distribution. And we're really going to pull out all the stops. So now that we're a record label and not just a passion project, things are running a bit differently. Yeah.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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Yeah. So talk a little bit more about so I assume that part of the reason you called it died Jim Crow is because of the Alexander book. But is there more to it than that? Or is that?

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Fury Young

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Well, when I started the project, it was specifically going to be a concept album about racism in the US prison system. And I want it to work with currently and formerly incarcerated black musicians pretty much strictly so the title of the LP was going to be called die Jim Crow is still will be, but that's where it all comes from. And yes, inspired by Michelle Alexander's book titled The New Jim Crow. And what is I think, though, If I may add to that, I think that when we formed the record label, it was really clear that it should still be called Jim Crow? Because the prison system has its roots in slavery and Jim Crow and convict leasing and you know, a racist system. So for me die Jim Crow is very fitting when you talk about prison. I also think that in a modern-day context, Jim Crow can really relate to the incarcerated you know, Jim Crow, is basically the other, the awesome to them, and die. Jim Crow, to me, means death to stereotypes, whether it be of people who are incarcerated people who are getting out of prison, so-called free felons, or maybe, you know, I hate to say it, but uh, you

know, like, people who are so stuck in the 19th century, they're still actually racist against black people, which to me is just kind of like mind-boggling, but it exists. So I think the title is important.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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Yeah. And so in a perfect world, let's say everything works out the exact way that you're hoping what ultimately will be the effect of, you know, the project? How do you want it to kind of play across society?

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Fury Young

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Hmm, well, I think the music has to be really, really good. I want the first thing people to hear when they hear the music is Wow, that's a really great song. And then they find out that it was recorded in prison and then their mind is blown up. And further, because they found that out. And then at that point, they might have to reconsider their notions of prison and those who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated are. I think most people don't really have a clear understanding of, you know, why people end up in prison arm. People, just a lot of people just think, Oh, you do the crime you do the time. And it's so much more complicated than that.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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Yeah, that's definitely true. So, you know, we talked at the beginning a little bit about Albert Woodfox, how did he come into the project? And you know, I personally think his book solitary should be mandatory reading in the United States. So if you could talk about him a little bit, that'd be great.

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Fury Young

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Albert is definitely a hero of mine. I met him at a symposium in Philly on November 8 2018, or maybe November 9, but I was introduced to him and

he's a really cool guy actually, he's kind of laid back. super intelligent. Very serious, though at the same time, if he gives you His word, it's his word. And he said that he was interested in recording his voice spoken word kind of thing on a song. You know, he's not like a singer or anything. And he stuck to his promise. And a few months later, I was in New Orleans and I went to his home. He was gracious enough to have me in his home for several hours. And we recorded his spoken word part over an instrumental that I had recorded in that doc and I had recorded in a copy Rado prison that was composed by Michael Tennyson, who has done over three decades in prison and he spent about a year in solitary, but he can post a song that was about solitary confinement. It's gotta be a pretty powerful combination.

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Fury Young

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Yeah, it's a pretty heavy song. Yeah, we're gonna actually release it in August on the album that we're putting out from those sessions. I'm not exactly sure where Albert's Park fits in. Perhaps it will be a remix from a single for that song. But we recorded a vocal in Colorado with the composer Michael Tennyson, which is extremely powerful.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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Do you want to talk about like some of the other artists that people might hear if they start listening to you, the records you produce?

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Fury Young

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Yeah, I would be really honored too. We have an EP that you can check out right now. If you go to die Jim Crow comm if you click music, there is a link to our EP. Right now it's not just on Soundcloud and Bandcamp but it will be on all streaming platforms shortly. And it's six tracks and it was mostly recorded at Warren Correctional Institution. We worked really

closely with Mark Springer, Anthony McKinney, and Charles Williams and Charles is on the cover of the album. And I think it's a really good record. It's got a lot of different styles on it, some hip hop, some rock, some soul, some jazzy elements, there's the first song is like a minstrel parody. And we also worked with a few artists who were formerly incarcerated, including bl chiral. That was our first collaboration with her. All also apostle he Lois and coral dupes and Pastor Anna and he's at Ward and Dexter nurse and they all contribute to the record and I think it's a great place to start. In May we have bL shirelles solo LP first album debuted LP she's put out a couple of mixtapes, but this will be her debut LP. And it's a rap album, but it's got a lot of r&b vibes and some very heavy rock vibes. It's really soulful. She's an amazing writer, one of my favorite rap writers ever. And I think I think folks are really gonna like that album. It's really it's coming along very, very well. And then in August, we have this album that I was just mentioning before when you asked me about Albert Woodfox, it is called territorial. It's from Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility. doc and I were there in April 2018. And we recorded Seven News. editions Michael Tennyson, Dane new and Kevin Woodley Jose tala Montas, Archie, and lefty, and Frankie, and we got some really great stuff. It's hip hop. It's jazzy. There are some Native American chants. Archie and lefty are Lakota natives. And they did several native chances, one of which will definitely be on the album. There's one song that almost sounds like Creed. Like I'm not like a fan of Creed. But it kind of has that like alternative VMO II vibe. But it's a black dude who has been locked up for well over a decade, and he's got a lot of influences behind him. So it's just coming from a different place than creed. But it sounds kind of like that, for lack of a better description, and that's my favorite song on the album. That's from Dane aka zealot. So that's album is going to be really interesting, really all over the place in terms of influences. And yeah, so just lookout for a lot of stuff from us coming out in 2020. Starting in May, we also have a single of the month. So you'll be hearing from a lot of different artists.

Joshua B. Hoe

And so you started out as a carpenter, he kind of went through this whole process where you came up with an idea you've gone taking it to the point where you've gone to prisons all over the United States. Sounds like, what have you? How has this all changed you?

Fury Young

Well, what I was saying before about how being in the unit of the prison in South Carolina, after a day, the sort of interestingness wore off, because I had just felt like, I'm just around human beings right now. I mean, I feel like That's definitely something that's changed. I really feel comfortable in all the situations that I'm in when I'm recording in prisons or just you know, talking to someone on the phone or meeting them at their house or whatever, they're now out on the streets. People are people right, you know, and just because you did, let's say 43 years in solitary confinement, like Albert Woodfox, it doesn't make you some kind of like a mutant person or some other or some foreign entity, which is really amazing in a lot of ways that he is totally pulled together.

Joshua B. Hoe

After that much time in solitary. Sorry to interrupt, but oh, that's okay. Yeah, it is amazing. I mean, he is so together, it's, it's really like astounding.

Fury Young

You know, he's he that's why I say he's really a hero of mine. And he actually just donated a ton of books to that men's prison that I was just talking about in South Carolina. Awesome. No, I mean, it's Yeah, it's made me a more patient person, I guess more open-minded and in some ways a bit more impatient because now I'm the executive director of a nonprofit record label. And, you know, I'm a workaholic and there's a lot of people that we're trying to advocate for. And it's a lot so it kind of just makes you more straightforward and, and more focused and yeah, it's a, it's an honor and a privilege. Do I want to do it for the rest of my life? Probably not.

Because it's, it takes years off your life, but do I want to communicate with people who are incarcerated and help them and make music with them for the rest of my life? Absolutely. You know, I would love to get to a place where the record label is really firm and set up, and maybe I even you know, hand off the title of executive director. To someone who's formerly incarcerated, and then I can work for the organization, as a producer, as a music producer, which was my initial role with the project is starting it. So I think it's a, it's been quite a journey, it's going to continue to be a journey. And like I said, I'm honored and privileged to be a part of it.

Joshua B. Hoe

I always ask the same last question. What questions do you wish I'd asked but have not.

Fury Young

You know what, the more you do media and press, the more questions you get asked and you get kind of like fatigue from it all. And I think that you have really covered all grounds and ask some questions that I've never heard before. I think your perspective of being formally incarcerated is probably very made this program very unique. I know Only like I said haven't been like asked some of these questions before so I think you kind of covered all the bases

Joshua B. Hoe

Great that's why I like to hear. Yeah, so last but not least, why don't you tell everyone again how they can find your all your stuff died Jim Crow also put links to it on everything I possibly can.

Fury Young

Well you can check out Die Jim Crow dot com you can find us on Instagram at Dodge, Jim Crow, everything is actually just at Die Jim Crow, Facebook, Twitter. So we're really easy to find. And I encourage you guys

to check it out. And you know, we're a nonprofit so donations are always welcome. Comments on videos or follows on social media are very, very encouraged. We're still super grassroots so we really appreciate your support, please check out bL shirelles album as well. Troy when it drops on May 8, and all our other releases going forward. I think we have a lot to offer society and culture and music. So thanks a lot for listening. And thank you, Josh, so much for for having me on board.

Joshua B. Hoe

Oh, absolutely. So good to have you on. And thanks so much for doing this.

Fury Young

Yeah, definitely. My pleasure.

Joshua B. Hoe

And now my take,

We just went through a few months where every single day we would get new reports of deaths and massive numbers of new infections throughout our prison system. here in Michigan. It seems surreal, even now, as I'm saying it, because we just had two full days without the announcement of another death in the Michigan Department of Corrections. At the same time, it's hard not to remain furious about why this happened the way it did well in advance of this becoming a crisis. All of the criminal justice organizations in Michigan banded together and predicted what would happen. We also made a long list of suggestions of how it might be solved. Unfortunately, while some of our kind of minor suggestions were adopted, especially when it comes to jails, the vast majority of our suggestions were ignored. And ultimately, the end result so far has been 59 incarcerated people who have died and 3263 incarcerated people who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Michigan prison system. Since then, we've done everything we could to bring attention to the need for strong actions

from the governor. Everything from direct discussions, to drive in protests to Twitter storms, to, you know, working across the aisle to doing everything we could and still nothing. This crisis is not over. But it does seem to be tapering down a little bit. And that is great news. wanted to take a chance, however to say that when it is finally all over, that does not make what happened, okay? these deaths were predicted these deaths were preventable. Our governor was given evidence that the risk of recidivism for people over 50 who have done over five years of time, a cohort that covers the vast majority of people who have died and worth the risk of death re-offend at a rate of less than 1%. In other words, our government should have had the political courage to face down the public's prejudices. And on a case by case basis release people who are at risk, regardless of if their sentences were violent, nonviolent, long or short. Obviously, we should have gotten rid of all the people who could easily be released. Obviously, we should have done everything we could do to try to expedite the parole process, but we also should have worked on a case by case basis to help The people who are most at risk, most of whom who are not parole-eligible, the governor should have commuted more people and expanded the parole board. New support should have been offered to help people reentering our communities. None of this happened. At the end of the day, I will celebrate the decline of reported infections and deaths. Most people will move on and forget that this all happened. It'll go out of sight out of mind, but it's gonna be a lot harder for me to ever forget. For me to ever forget that 59 human beings in our care are incarcerated brothers and sisters have died. To forget that likely down the road we'll we will find out that most if not all of these deaths were preventable.

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