

UNCHAINED MELODIES



BENDING THE BARS TRACK 1 & 2: “8th Floor” & “Hands Up”

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

- We will look at two songs from the album Bending the Bars
- First, we will explore the artists of the songs and the song lyrics
- Then, we will take a moment to understand the songs' meanings
- Finally, we will take a moment to pause and reflect on the songs

MEET THE ARTIST

KASHDAT

“Music was always an outlet in my culture,” Kashdat says, describing how hip-hop provided the soundtrack to parties, barbecues, and time with family and friends. Based on his powerful stage presence and fabulous flow, you’d never guess that Kashdat came to rapping relatively recently. Locked up without anything else to do, Kashdat felt like a higher power was directing him to learn to write music. Soon, his talent was recognized throughout the jail, and 8TH FLOOR became a local hit: “Whenever I moved to a different dormitory,” he says, “people there were like ‘Let us hear the song, man.’” Crowds would gather and people learned the hook, and soon

people were singing 8TH FLOOR throughout the Main Jail. Kashdat kept writing, and now has enough tracks for multiple albums. He describes himself as “a natural entertainer” and is continuously polishing his craft. “My goal is to let people know that I’m a musician, I’m an artist, I’m very talented, and I wanna get my message out in the world.”



THE SONG

8TH FLOOR

This is a collect call from...Kash
At the Broward County Main Jail
If you are willing to accept please press zero

Thank you for using Securus
Dedication

For them boys on the 8th floor, the ones we ain't gon see no more, see no more
Niggas need a hero, crackers need to let them go
One time for the nigga J-lo, my dawg Lil' Psych, his homie named Smoke
Robbing a Dunkin Donuts, chasing a little dough
They all got life, stuck on the 8th floor
Trapped in a room with places they can't go
Stuck in a cell with niggas they don't know
They got four walls a bunk and a window
They gotta have collect to talk to their kinfolk
The crackers ain't s*** made him take it to the door
Offer him 25, he only 24
Played the game creep try the nigga like a ho
Till the end I'm gon pray they let my niggas go
For them boys on the 8th floor, the ones we ain't gon see no more, see no more
Niggas need a hero, crackers need to let them go
8th floor, 8th floor, 8th floor, for my niggas on the 8th floor
They got time they ain't comin' home, good heart money had em doin' wrong
On drugs, streets had his mind gone, hit the wrong lick, got caught, now his bid long
Life'll take you through some s*** just to make you strong
But if that judge give you life then your ass gone
8th floor stuck up in a different time zone
Hoping for appeals, praying that you make it home
For them boys on the 8th floor, the ones we ain't gon see no more, see no more
Niggas need a hero, crackers need to let them go
8th floor, the 8th floor, the 8th floor, it's for them niggas on the 8th floor
This call has just been terminated
No third party calls allowed
Thank you for using Securus

WHAT'S THE SONG ABOUT?

In Broward County, Florida, the 8th floor of the Main Jail houses people facing life sentences or capital charges. For a few months, Kashdat was locked up with them and became a witness to their lives, and those experiences inspired this track. Although they are described to the outside world as “the worst of the worst,” Kashdat came to see the men on the 8th floor differently: “When you’re back there with them and you actually get to know them,” he says, “they’re actually good people that just went the wrong way.” For Kashdat, releasing this track is a way to honor the men he met on the 8th floor while advocating for all people who are caged: “I want attention to be brought to the justice system and change a few things.”

MEET THE ARTIST

PRINCE JOOVEH FT TUESDAY TUENASTY

Prince Jooveh is a revolutionary, a self-taught intellectual, and a multi-faceted artist. In middle school, he started playing alto saxophone and quickly added keyboard and steel drums to his repertoire, while also developing a reputation as a remarkable freestyler. As a teenager, Prince Jooveh was mixing his own tracks and printing his own CDs when he got locked up at just 18. "Music is everything inside," he says. "If you go back in history every struggle has its peaceful place with music, that's the power center." After spending half his life behind bars, Prince Jooveh describes himself as "a reformed, militant individual" who uses his voice to "fight against injustices for those who don't have the know-how or the energy to fight against a system that is weighted against them."



THE SONG

HANDS UP FT TUESDAY TUENASTY

It's hard to maintain this soldier-like mentality, label me a casualty
Cuff me up and wrestle me just to put on handcuffs
Dammit I got my hands up
I don't f*** with none of y'all cops, every one of y'all b*****
80% of y'all cowards, y'all stay all up in our business
We ain't got s*** for your investigation, can't ner one of us witness
So hop your ass in that squad car, put your foot on the gas and then hit it.
You done k***** too many of our mothers then hurt too many of our sisters
You brought tears to all of our mamas, and you wanna wonder why we keep p*****
You wanna wonder why we g*****, cuz y'all do the same thing
Then you wanna dress it up with a uniform and a badge but ain't s*** change.
We don't need your assistance, we taking care of ourselves
Don't offer none of your protection, we don't need none of your help.
As soon as you see we young and black y'all reaching out for your belt
Y'all k*** us that's an accident, we k*** y'all that's death!
Man tell me how's this justice, just tell me how's this fair
Cuz the truth of the matter's disgusting, don't ner one of y'all care
Beyonce told you Black Lives Matter, y'all jumpin' outta your chair
You got the truth right in your faces, don't act like it ain't there.
It's hard to maintain this soldier-like mentality, label me a casualty
Cuff me up and wrestle me just to put on handcuffs
Dammit I got my hands up
I ain't forget about D.O.C., crooked ass cops tryna beat on me
Spray me up with that pepper spray, come around the way you gon rest in peace
Y'all set us up with false paperwork, jump us no one-on-one
Y'all wonder why we get mad as f***, come bust your head straight m***** one.
We got prisons filled to the max, still you refuse to cut back
I know exactly who you got targeted just as sure that I know that I'm black.
Y'all work us like dogs and don't ner one get paid
Y'all tell me what is that called, ain't no way around - it's a slave.
Y'all cuff us up and y'all muscle up, and try to cuff us up and ruffle up
Let me out of these cuffs and I'll f*** you up, gimme one-on-one and I'll f*** you up.

Y'all ain't got no life, somebody's f***** your wife
Cuz you corrupt and she'd love to get a good convict in her life.
It's hard to maintain this soldier-like mentality, label me a casualty
Cuff me up and wrestle me just to put on handcuffs
Dammit I got my hands up
We are not free. The only thing we're guilty of is pain and poverty.
The rich get richer and the poor get prison.

WHAT'S THE SONG ABOUT?

HANDS UP is an indictment of the prison system inspired by Prince Jooveh's personal experiences facing racism, brutality, and injustice during 18 years in the Florida Department of Corrections. Rapping with propulsive force, he describes the corruption, apathy, and cruelty of the criminal punishment system and the critical need to reject stereotypes about prisoners and embrace solidarity. With haunting vocals by Tuesday Tuenasty revealing the connection between poverty and incarceration, HANDS UP is a song for the current moment and for the movement for liberation.

TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT

1. Now that you've learned about the artists and read over the lyrics take a moment to reflect on what these songs mean to you.
2. Do you have a favorite song between the two, if so why?

