



Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison

By Shaka Senghor

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Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison

By Shaka Senghor

New York Times Bestseller

A memoir of redemption, reform, and second chances amidst America's mass incarceration epidemic.

Shaka Senghor was raised in a middle class neighborhood on Detroit's east side during the height of the 1980s crack epidemic. An honor roll student and a natural leader, he dreamed of becoming a doctor—but at age 11, his parents' marriage began to unravel, and the beatings from his mother worsened, sending him on a downward spiral that saw him run away from home, turn to drug dealing to survive, and end up in prison for murder at the age of 19, fuming with anger and despair.

Writing My Wrongs is the story of what came next. During his nineteen-year incarceration, seven of which were spent in solitary confinement, Senghor discovered literature, meditation, self-examination, and the kindness of others—tools he used to confront the demons of his past, forgive the people who hurt him, and begin atoning for the wrongs he had committed. Upon his release at age thirty-eight, Senghor became an activist and mentor to young men and women facing circumstances like his. His work in the community and the courage to share his story led him to fellowships at the MIT Media Lab and the Kellogg Foundation and invitations to speak at events like TED and the Aspen Ideas Festival.

In equal turns, *Writing My Wrongs* is a page-turning portrait of life in the shadow of poverty, violence, and fear; an unforgettable story of redemption, reminding us that our worst deeds don't define us; and a compelling witness to our country's need for rethinking its approach to crime, prison, and the men and women sent there.

— Oprah's Super Soul 100 Member

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A] harrowing [portrait] of life behind bars . . . Gritty, visceral . . . Senghor writes about the process of atonement and the possibility of redemption, and talks of his efforts to work for prison reforms that might turn a system designed to warehouse into one aimed at rehabilitation."

—**Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times***

"My first glance at the person on the book's cover—a dreadlocked, tattooed, heavyset black male—left me skeptical. Full of judgment. Why should I be interested in the story of a murderer? But as [Senghor's] words unfolded, so did my understanding—of what it means to fall short, to go astray, to lose your way . . . His story touched my soul."

—**O: The Oprah Magazine**

"[A] powerful memoir."

—**The Washingtonian**

"No one has forced us to look at the core questions about humanity and our broken criminal justice system with more authenticity and clarity than Senghor . . . If Senghor's tale is any indication, redemption, mercy and grace aren't just emotional ideals or spiritual buzzwords. They are the sharp, effective tools that can be used to rebuild lives and communities, one person at a time."

—**Erica Williams Simon, TIME.com**

"Probably the most important book I've read in the past few years . . . Few people, sadly, come out on the end of two decades of hard time and find their way back to the life Shaka is now leading. Here, he tells us why that is, and why it doesn't have to stay that way."

—**Shaun King, *New York Daily News***

"Senghor's story, laid bare, forces us to ask: is this not our fellow human being? Does he not deserve a second chance? If he failed himself in the most profound way, how did the rest of us fail him too?"

—**The Guardian**

"Extraordinary . . . You will reconsider everything you've ever thought about poverty, the prison industrial complex and the connection between the two."

—**Essence**

"[An] inspiring book that gives hope for those who believe in the redemption of the incarcerated . . . Not the usual ghetto tale."

—**Publishers Weekly**

"An extraordinary, unforgettable book. *Writing My Wrongs* is a necessary reminder of the deep humanity, vulnerability and potential that lies within each one of us, including those we view as 'thugs' or 'criminals'. Shaka's story illustrates that if we muster the courage to love those who do not yet love themselves, a new world is possible."

—**Michelle Alexander, professor of law, Ohio State University, bestselling author of *The New Jim Crow***

“Shaka Senghor’s terrific and inspiring book affirms that we are all more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. This beautiful and compelling story of recovery and redemption offers all of us powerful truths and precious insights as we seek recovery from decades of over-incarceration and excessive punishment.”

–Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, bestselling author of *Just Mercy*

“A profound story of neglect, violence, discovery, redemption and inspiration. Consistently touching and surprising, *Writing My Wrongs* is, ultimately, deeply hopeful. Prepare to have your preconceptions shattered.”

–J.J. Abrams, director, writer, producer

“Shaka Senghor is a once-in-a-generation leader, championing a cause that will define a generation: mass incarceration. Behind prison walls, *Writing My Wrongs* is already taking its place alongside the memoirs of Malcolm X and George Jackson as must-read literature. In the broader society, its publication will propel him into the ranks of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Michelle Alexander—powerful visionaries whose words are shaking the foundations of our nation’s understanding of itself.”

–Van Jones, CNN contributor, bestselling author of *Rebuild the Dream* and *The Green Collar Economy*

“I basically read this book in one sitting and wouldn’t shut up about it for months. People would say to me, ‘Good morning. How are you today?’ And I’d just start talking about atonement and solitary confinement and recidivism. Shaka’s book reminds us of the great imperfections that remain in our nation, but his determination to move from community liability to asset reminds us that no life should be written off. We need this story. It isn’t pretty, but it is beautiful.”

–Baratunde Thurston, supervising producer, *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*, bestselling author of *How To Be Black*

“Essential reading for anyone who believes in the deeply spiritual and transformational power of redemption. Our nation must confront this concept to reach our own promise as a country. No matter who you are or where you’ve come from, this book holds strong, inspiring lessons and shows that the difficult pathway to redemption can bear abundant fruit for many. In the end we are all, no matter our path, more powerful agents of service than we realize.”

–U.S. Senator Cory Booker

“If you’ve wondered what makes it possible for good people to do terrible things, and what a man can endure to reach redemption, then you must read this book. Senghor’s story is told with brutal self-assessment and tender attention to what makes profound change – in a person and also in our communities – not only possible but imperative. In this unforgettable memoir, Shaka takes us from the streets of Detroit into solitary confinement in prison, and against all odds, home safely and successfully to a family and community that needs him.”

–Piper Kerman, bestselling author of *Orange is the New Black*

“More than the proverbial ‘We Fall Down/We Get Up’ story. It’s a testament to the power of the mind, and the fact that none of us should ever be defined by our lowest point.”

–Detroit Metro Times

“Delivered with a stark realism that is only occasionally relieved by humor and the bizarre characters [Senghor] encounters.”

–Herb Boyd, *Amsterdam News*

“Senghor's fearless self-reflection serves as a cautionary tale for the young and a guidebook for anyone seeking atonement. His lessons about owning your failures and taking accountability resonate in every walk of life, from the streets to the boardroom.”

—Mellody Hobson, president, Ariel Investments

“*Writing My Wrongs* is a gritty, no-holds-barred look inside the degrading world of American’s prisons and the inspiring story of how one man overcame the biggest obstacle—himself—to reclaim his life. Shaka’s painful journey from callous street thug to compassionate community activist is a roadmap for those who believe in the power of redemption.”

—Maurice Ashley, American chess grandmaster, author of *Chess for Success*

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Shaka Senghor, a member of Oprah's SuperSoul 100, is a writer, mentor, and motivational speaker whose story of redemption has inspired thousands. While serving 19 years in prison, Senghor discovered redemption and responsibility through literature, his own writing, and the kindness of others. He is the author of six books, a former Director's Fellow at the MIT Media Lab, a Community Leadership Fellow with the Kellogg Foundation, and the founder of The Atonement Project, which helps victims and violent offenders heal through the power of the arts. He currently serves as the Director of Strategy and Innovation with #cut50, a bipartisan initiative to safely and smartly reduce the U.S. prison population in half by 2025, and speaks regularly at high schools, prisons, churches, and universities around the country.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joseph Cash:

Inside other case, little folks like to read book Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison. You can choose the best book if you want reading a book. Provided that we know about how is important a new book Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison. You can add know-how and of course you can around the world by just a book. Absolutely right, since from book you can understand everything! From your country till foreign or abroad you will be known. About simple issue until wonderful thing it is possible to know that. In this era, we could open a book or maybe searching by internet gadget. It is called e-book. You can use it when you feel bored to go to the library. Let's learn.

Ida Vanwormer:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information today can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even a problem. What people must be consider whenever those information which is in the former life are difficult to be find than now could be taking seriously which one is appropriate to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you have it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an

American Prison as the daily resource information.

Barbara Fontenot:

Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to put every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison but doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource information that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into completely new stage of crucial imagining.

Victoria Austin:

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