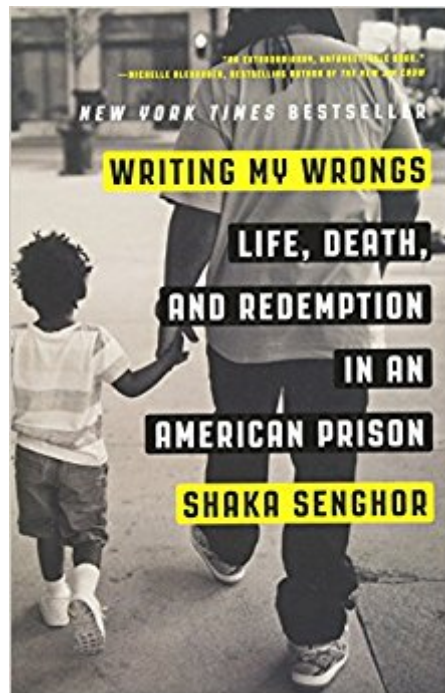


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# Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, And Redemption In An American Prison



## Synopsis

New York Times bestseller from member of Oprah's Super Soul 100 | one of World Economic Forum's "Most Recommended Books of 2016" Now in paperback, the harrowing, \*inspiring\*\*, and unforgettable memoir of redemption 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. the New York Times\*\* Bryan Stevenson Michelle Alexander

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] harrowing [portrait] of life behind bars . . . [A 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.](#)" [œMichiko Kakutani, The New York Times](#) ["My first glance at the person on the book's cover](#) [œa dreadlocked, tattooed, heavyset black male](#) [œleft 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](#) [œof what it means to fall short, to go astray, to lose your way](#) [A . . . A His story touched my soul.](#) [A](#) [œO: The Oprah Magazine](#) "[A] powerful memoir." [A](#) [œThe 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](#) [A . . . A If Senghor](#) [œs tale is any indication, redemption, mercy and grace aren](#) [œt 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.](#) [A](#) [œErica Williams Simon,](#) [A 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.](#) [œShaun King, New York Daily News](#) ["Senghor](#) [œs 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?](#) [œThe Guardian](#) ["Extraordinary . . . You will reconsider everything you](#) [œve ever thought about poverty, the prison industrial complex and the connection between the two.](#) [œEssence](#) ["\[An\] inspiring book that gives hope for those who believe in the redemption of the incarcerated](#) [A . . . A Not the usual ghetto tale.](#) [œPublishers Weekly](#) "An extraordinary, unforgettable book. [A](#) 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'. [A](#) Shaka's story illustrates that if we muster the courage to love those who do not yet love themselves, a new world is possible." [œMichelle 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 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.

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.

One of the best memoirs I've read in a long time. *Writing My Wrongs* is about the power of hope, change, and redemption. It sheds light on the gritty reality of prison and the truth of mass incarceration. An important, poignant and powerful book, which should get the hands of every youth in public schools, detention centers, and prisons across America.\*\*\* I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Reading this book will give you a glimpse in to the life of a truly redeemed man, a man who understands forgiveness and moving past the anger and the hurt of life. Hearing his take on life

and choices can give the reader some insight to either aide or support their journey . Better yet it can help some one better understand what it is like to go thru the fire and come out alive ready to serve.-Thank you Shaka for writing this book and telling your story that is so similar to many. You have given them a voice and I hope by people reading your words they can began to see the story within the person.

Just finished reading this book and couldn't put it down. Mr. Senghor had a harrowing experience growing up and in prison, not unlike many Black men from distressed neighborhoods ridden with drugs and poverty. Reading about the process of his transformation was hopeful and inspiring. The chapters cut back and forth from before he went to prison to his experiences in prison. I think that story structure worked effectively. Praises to Mr. Senghor for his excellent writing. I highly recommend this book.

When I saw Shaka Senghor interviewed on PBS, I bought the book right then. This is a well-written, thought provoking, honest redemption story. It is a cautionary tale that teaches about the consequences of decisions. But it is also about hope and forgiveness of others, but mostly about forgiving one's self.

In the last few years I've learned: Never to judge a book by its cover, never judge where a person have been, and never assume just because a person isn't walking the same journey like yours doesn't mean they're unmotivated. And then there's Shaka Senghor. He's the epitome of "second chances". Anyone can say they're redeemed, but actions truly speak louder than words -- and in his latest book, "Writing My Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison", proves that seeking a second chance takes perseverance and crazy, unwavering faith. In this novel, Shaka writes an honest portrayal of his childhood leading to his nineteen years in prison. The descriptive details through page after page is extraordinarily raw, conveying prison life only a former inmate could do.. If you work with kids, or a community activist, or just enjoy a great read, this book is for you! Moreover, Senghor's prolific storytelling will move you to think deeper about self-worth and overcoming challenges when hope is all you have. In other words, grab your copy today!

I saw this book during an interview with Shaka on the Daily Show. Decided to support him in his

efforts and purchase. Glad I did, it was a good read and the whole time you have to remind yourself this IS his story. It shows the true reality and struggles from his raw point of view. Would highly recommend. I think my favorite part is he includes a recommended reading list towards the end of the book...wish more authors did this to show what other authors inspired them.

Outstanding! I'm from the Detroit area and am familiar with most of the places Senghor writes about. Well, the neighborhoods ... not the prisons or jails. I left Michigan in 1962 (to follow the California dream) and remember Detroit when it was a thriving, beautiful city. The racism and corruption destroyed the city plus industrial decline. Many of my relatives left Detroit to escape to the "White" neighborhoods. He is an amazing individual and writer. Senghor's brilliant retelling of his journey through his abusive childhood, his painful teenage years, drug trafficking and violence of the Detroit streets, and his years of incarceration is an eye-opener. Senghor is a role model and educator not only for Blacks but for all of us no matter what color or age. And for anyone who doesn't understand what it means to be Black in this country, Senghor's book will educate you.

Wow! What a story - I've purchased this book 3x now because I keep finding people who I know will love it. I appreciate the honesty of the author, who is sharing some pretty difficult experiences. His ownership of mistakes and ability to turn his life around to help others is beautiful. This is very well written, and I couldn't put it down. I highly recommend this book.

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