

Do you recall when you were still a teenager? For the majority of us, this was the time we had our first experience of independence from our parents. They were thrilling times when we could attempt drinking, smoking, and dating for the first time. However, these were also the times of emotional confusion when we strived to discover boundaries and had a conflict with our parents – and perhaps the law as well

The majority of us survived through these tricky years mainly unharmed. But for others, as well as the author, Shaka Senghor, went off the tracks. This book summary is the story of how, at the age of 14, Senghor got into a world of drugs and violence at the height of the 1980s crack prevalent in Detroit.

In spite of being brought up in a safe home with a loving family, he fell into extremely destructive behaviors like selling drugs, committing murder and finally, seeing himself in prison. This summary will explain Senghor's life journey, highlighting to you what led him astray and how he discovered redemption.

## Chapter 1 - Shaka Senghor's childhood changed suddenly when his parents' divorce damaged him emotionally.

Our lives can frequently take unexpected changes and turns, putting us in situations far from where we imagined we'd be in, or circumstances we'd never imagined. Shaka Senghor, the author went through such a change at a young age, and it had a powerful impact on the remaining of his life.

In Detroit, as a child in the 1980s, Shaka was brought up in affectionate, loving surroundings with a big family. Shaka's parents would frequently hold family get-togethers, which ended up being interesting by singing, eating, and dancing.

The family would be together to hang Christmas decorations during the holidays, and Shaka remembers with specific affection how his father would offer him as well as his three sisters' money so they could go to the local ice skating rink.

Shaka had a hopeful future in front of him. He recalls how, when his mother asked him on what he would like to become when he grew up, he'd proudly said he would like to become a doctor. And Shaka said, by becoming a doctor he could give lollipops to children getting their treatments, and assist sick people to get better.

However, things changed suddenly for the worse when his parents' marriage got into a problem. Their first separation happened when Shaka was just eleven, and it shattered him. The very close family life he'd developed to rely on had been taken away from him.

A year after their separation, Shaka's parents fixed things and got back together again, much to his happiness; sadly, this only happened for just a few months. Shaka's parents split once again, and this time, they said to Shaka that he had to relocate to a different area of Detroit with his father. Feeling confused and rejected, Shaka held himself responsible for the situation. What did he do to make his mother want to reject him?

## Chapter 2 - In an attempt to discover his own way, Shaka got in the hands with the wrong crowd, directing him into a world of drugs and violence.

Have you ever considered running away while you were still a kid? Actually, Shaka was one of the few that eventually did that. In 1986, Shaka turned 14, at the peak of Detroit's crack epidemic. He was engrossed with smoking cigarettes, dating girls and staying out till late at night.

Shaka's mother was disheartened. Whenever he went to see his mother during the weekend, she didn't know how to handle his unruly behavior but to physically punish him, or telling him that he had the choice to pack up and leave the house. Soon, Shaka did exactly that.

Having no revenue of his own, Shaka went to stay with his friends, telling them to give him food and shelter. He started living in the filth of a friend's basement, understanding that if he needed to live in a decent place, he had to get a job.

He got a deal for work when Shaka was introduced to a man named Miko. Miko was searching for a person to “roll” with him –meaning, sell drugs for him. He offered a weekly payment of \$350 to Shaka, with an additional daily allowance of \$10 for food. Provided that Shaka would need to hang out at the place where Miko’s customers would see him, day and night, seven days weekly.

On the drug-dealing hierarchy, this was the lowest job you could find. However, the pay was good and Shaka was desperate; therefore, he accepted the offer. Miko tried him out with a bag that has one hundred small crack rocks, also called “nickels.” Shaka’s work was to sell these for \$5 each. At the age of only 14 years old, Shaka was very armed with a loaded shotgun to ensure that customers didn’t attempt to jump him or destroy off.

### Chapter 3 - Shortly, Shaka learned the social validation that goes with dealing, and the ugly lives of the addicted.

The majority of 14-year-olds have different main concerns than adults; when you’re young, it’s very easy to get engrossed by your yearning for social acceptance and money. This was particularly the case for Shaka, and with the lack of parental guidance, nothing was refraining him.

Immediately, Shaka became engrossed by the money he was getting. Armed with his new weekly pay, he started going to local malls regularly, shopping for the newest clothes and sneakers. Choosing between the Jordans, Filas, and Ballys, Shaka used more money setting his wardrobe in a short time than the majority adults do in years.

Shaka’s new way of life came with newfound attention from his mates. Girls gathered around him, and that made his male friends have more respect for him, allowing this newfound lifestyle more and more intoxicating.

However, this didn’t indicate Shaka didn’t know the darker parts of the drug world. As a dealer, he encountered a lot of apparently normal people whose lives had been destroyed by drug addiction.

For example, one man called John was the example of a normal middle-class life before his addiction to crack made him lose his job and family. Shaka and his team spent time in John's old family home, which he allowed them to use for business. There, Shaka was surrounded by ruins of John's old life, like portraits of his wife and kids.

Immediately, Shaka came to realize of a creeping sensation that money couldn't buy all the things. Eventually, the piles of cash in his pocket couldn't buy him what he actually wanted which is to be loved and accepted. As Shaka used more time with his high-strung, drug-addicted customers, he became more and more lonely – however, he'd never have acknowledged it to himself.

## Chapter 4 - Shaka remained down a dark route, and things came to an end when he was imprisoned of murder.

What do you imagine when you think of drug addicts? Loving mothers? School teachers? Recognized professionals? As Shaka would shortly learn from experience, the crack epidemic that engrossed Detroit in the 1980s affected all parts of society and all regions of the community.

The drug world led Shaka in one on one contact with misery and suffering. In one incident, Shaka was visited by a woman called the "head doctor." With dirty clothes, tangled hair and red eyes, she showed all the clear signs of crack addiction. People referred to her as the "head doctor" because she would give oral sex in exchange for drugs with anyone who possessed drugs, even though they were only a kid, like Shaka.

Experiences such as these caused damages to Shaka's sense of morality and compassion. Taking crack himself, soon enough, Shaka saw himself in dangerous circumstances. At only the age of 15, Shaka tried suicide by overdosing

But, he survived just to be shot in the leg several times by a rival dealer when he was just 18. Even though his desperate friends called in for an ambulance, no assistance came.

Circumstances like these were all really popular at the height of Detroit's crack epidemic since

emergency services saw Shaka's neighborhood as a really dangerous to go to. This experience made Shaka feeling nervous and vulnerable, and to handle this, he started carrying a gun every time.

Shaka's situation got worse when another attack occurred—however, this time, it was Shaka that did the shooting. At the age of 19, Shaka had a disagreement with two of his male clients. Having become suspicious and anxious, he assumed the men were undercover police officers, and when the tension increased, Shaka took his gun and shot one of the men.

This shooting would transform his life forever, as he was faced with a 19-year prison sentence.

## Chapter 5 - While in prison, Shaka had no break from the violence that had afflicted his life on the streets.

American prisons are really unsafe places. Theft and violent crimes are common there, and guards can do a bit to defend inmates from one another.

Let's look at the story of a prisoner on Shaka's block called Seven. As soon as Seven offered part of his breakfast to a new inmate. After, Seven questioned the new inmate how he was going to compensate him for the food. The new inmate, bewildered, said that he assumed Seven offered the food because he wasn't hungry.

Unexpectedly, Seven took hold of the inmate by his throat, choking him until he had almost passed out. Afterward, Seven raped the inmate while the whole guards and fellow inmates were watching; surprisingly, they did nothing to prevent him. Shaka saw all this happen before he even got to prison – it happened while he was waiting for sentencing at Wayne County Jail.

In the sentencing, Shaka was sentenced to 17 to 40 years in prison for the murder he did. One of the first prisons he saw himself in was known as the Michigan Reformatory.

Do you recall reading the gladiators of the Roman Colosseum who would fight to the death just for pleasure? This prison was called the "Gladiator School" by the inmates.

Immediately, Shaka discovered that, in prison, those who displayed weakness are picked on. During Shaka's first day at the Michigan Reformatory, he saw another new inmate called Kevin. Kevin look like a nice guy to Shaka; however, when experienced inmates searched the ranks for new inmates to pick on, they selected Kevin as a weak link.

After, Shaka saw some inmates take Kevin away, and he thought that the inmates were going to rape him. Shaka would later discover that Kevin had committed suicide.

## Chapter 6 - For years, Shaka protested against the system for years –however, through reading and writing, Shaka's viewpoint on life was changed.

When you consider the best places to get educated, prison probably wouldn't be part of the first you would think of—however, this was actually the circumstance for Shaka. With the entire time he unexpectedly had, Shaka started to borrow novels from the library of the prison.

Soon, Shaka found the works of authors like Malcolm X. These authors talked about subjects like the history of African people in America, and their books assisted Shaka to understand the subjects of race in America. He now understands more why prisons were excessively occupied with black people.

However, although he was learning a lot, Shaka held onto a “kill or be killed” prison mindset. He saw himself in regular arguments with guards and other inmates, and this frequently signified physically injuring fellow black inmates in order for him not to be seen as being weak.

Shaka detected the flaw in studying the harassment of his people while at the same time harming other black inmates, and it made him confused and frustrated. Ultimately, he was punished with seven years of private imprisonment for his violent deeds.

In these seven years, Shaka began writing a journal, and it was in the pages of this journal that he really started to think about the occurrences that happened in his life that got him in prison. Shaka was able to deal with his behaviors for the first time

This was a life-changing experience for Shaka. He began to participate in community activities in prison. Shaka planned events for Black History Month and Kwanzaa, for his fellow black inmates and he also advised younger inmates and nurtured literacy, exploration, and self-reflection.

Shaka's community activity made him learn about an organization called Helping Our Prisoners Elevate (HOPE). Through HOPE, Shaka saw Ebony, a woman that worked for the organization. While they were doing their developing relationship, Ebony gave Shaka the important support required to prepare him for his release from prison. Eventually, at the age of 38, Shaka got out of prison on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2010.

## Writing My Wrongs by Shaka Senghor Book Review

The world of crime, drugs, and violence is the really usual reality for a lot of people, especially those people who have been systematically troubled by our present society. However, it is likely for people with distressed pasts to be rehabilitated, and seek hope and meaning through reading, writing and community participation.

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