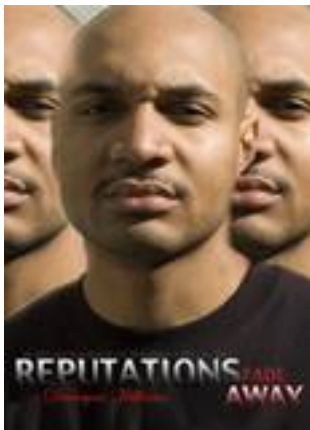


Book Review: Reputations Fade Away by Dawayne Williams

Written by Kam Williams



"I can understand and relate to why most Black men are giving up on life, especially the ones my age... Only a few of us make it off the streets and become successful... It's sad that for many of the guys I knew growing up, their first job was selling drugs. "

"I realize that many Black men, like myself, have wasted too much time getting a street education, chasing money, clothes, cars, drugs... and most of all, women. This epidemic is widespread and now we're suffering from our personal lack of knowledge because we haven't found our way.

Everyone should have a purpose, a career and a dream... A person that doesn't plan for the future, dream for tomorrow, and hope through hell that there's a light at the end of their tunnel will never accomplish anything worth having or living for... Ever since I've changed... I can only apologize for the things I've done and said... I'm here to tell y'all that reputations really do fade away.."

- Excerpted from the Conclusion (page 247 and 250)

By any yardstick you want to use, Dawayne Williams had a very tough childhood. He and his younger brother were raised in the projects in Washington, DC by a single-mom while his dad (who denied paternity anyway) was in and out of prison for a variety of criminal offenses. Consequently, Dawayne grew up without a male role model to emulate. So, it's no surprise that he would already have joined a street gang as a junior high school student to deal crack and weed and woo older women until he ended up shot and stabbed multiple times and behind bars like his absentee-father.

What IS amazing is that he somehow survived not only to tell the tale but to recount it all in *Reputations Fade Away*, the most riveting memoir this critic has encountered in recent memory. If nothing else, Dawayne definitely has a bright future as writer, given his ability to keep the reader enthralled and on the edge of your seat. His autobiography is written in Technicolor in vivid words which jump right off the pages. So I hope Hollywood takes note and turns this bio-pic into a feature flick.

Nearly everybody in Dawayne's world has a nickname, even his parents, Chicago and London. His daughter is called Promise, and his fellow hoods have imaginative sobriquets ranging from Charcoal to Chop to Nut to Rollo. Even the author himself has several pseudonyms such as

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Kojak, Fat Booty and Kool.

Dawayne liberally laces his dialogue with the sort of slang used by thugs which is likely to have you wishing for a glossary explaining that earthy variety of ghetto-speak. And he describes in graphic detail things you'd never expect, like how to make crack from cocaine and the etiquette involved in getting a virgin to agree to a gangbang.

Obviously, Dawayne was never an altar boy, although his good looks and line of work apparently kept him quite popular with the ladies anyway, as they were always eager to swap sexual favors for drugs. Nonetheless, he only managed to have shallow, unsatisfactory relationships with women, including a failed marriage which produced a child but lasted less than a year.

Since being born again, Dawayne has found Jesus and sworn off most of his profligate ways once and for all, though he does confess to falling off the wagon occasionally to sleep with lustful church ladies or to smoke a little weed. Hey, the convert tends to revert.

A bit of a Bible thumper now, he even enjoys quoting appropriate verses from scripture, such as 1st Corinthians, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things."

A man who deserves an award just for still being alive and for having endured the most horrible childhood imaginable without going insane.