

An Interview with Author Kevin M. Weeks

Where are you from?

Just like the main character, Teco Jackson, I am from West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or West Philly, as we call it.

How has your life in West Philly shaped your writing?

Do you remember the theme song from the sitcom The Fresh Prince of Bel Air with Will Smith? I can identify with the street kid who was instigating the fight. (*laughing*) Therefore, my writings come alive with the images I have in my mind of the street life.

When did you know for sure that you were a writer?

As the reader will see from the book cover, I am incarcerated. I began writing in 2002, but couldn't stay focused. Then I started to talk to young men, who were coming into the system, about not taking the same path that I took when I was their age. I was shocked by their interest in the wisdom I was sharing with them and was encouraged by them to put my thoughts to paper. When I prayed to God and asked Him if this is the gift He gave me, my ability to write manifested itself after I completed the first chapter of my first book. Not until I listened to God did I visualize myself as a writer.

How were you able to accomplish self-publishing this book while in prison?

First and foremost, I realized that I had to put in the necessary research and hours into understanding the publishing industry. There was a point when I couldn't find anyone to type my manuscript. So, I decided to change my approach and share the information I'd learned about publishing with others. Then, and only then, did I find a sponsor who believed in me.

Do you see writing as a career for you?

I see writing as a long-term career. My goal is for *The Street Life Series* novels to take readers away from their daily routine to relax or to discuss different topics in the book.

What discussion topics would you liked discussed?

Though I cannot be with my children, I'd like to provide an avenue for mothers and fathers to talk to their daughters and sons about situations in the book. One of my female friends shared with me that my book brought something to her attention. Her mother told her "never sit on a guy's bed when going over to his house" and vice versus; however, she never had this discussion with her daughter. So a topic might be: What values/ideas have your parents passed down to you that you have not passed down to your children or grandchildren? Then there was another occasion when I learned that a mother was shopping at a brick and mortar bookstore and her thirteen-year-old daughter picked up an urban fiction book to purchase. Needless to say, the mother was upset after reading the first couple of pages. Therefore, my novels have an Author's Note page with a parental advisory, so parents don't have to read the chapters for content. This topic might be: Should authors be held to the same level of accountability for explicit language content as musicians? In addition, each of my novels includes a wise quote to provoke thought.

What books are you reading now?

U R a BRAND by Catherine Kaputa, **Blink** by Malcolm Gladwell, and **David** by Charles Swindoll.

As we conclude this interview, do you have any closing thoughts?

To be successful: inspiration is the key; a sponsor is the foundation; and a mentor is the guide.