

I Can Take It From Here: A Memoir of Trauma, Prison, and Self-Empowerment

Lisa Forbes

Truth to Power (Jun 7, 2022)

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Lisa Forbes writes with power and insight about recovering from trauma, incarceration, and subsequent injustices in her memoir *I Can Take It from Here*.

Forbes served fourteen years in prison for the murder of a former lover. She spent much of that time reading original thinkers like William James and Malcolm X, whose work challenged her underlying assumptions of their respective cultures. Upon her release, she worked to put what she learned into action, facing Kafkaesque roadblocks to employment and housing in her quest to rejoin society.

This skillful, varied text alternates between dramatic scenes and philosophical reflections. Its dramatic organization represents deep understanding of the political contexts of Forbes's personal suffering, including racism and misogyny; this enhances her analysis of how "external circumstances and internal mental patterns kept reinforcing each other."

The book's reflective tone—and Forbes's significant knowledge and insight about systemic causes of incarceration and recidivism—sometimes clashes with its finger-pointing at individuals. But Forbes, who came from a family of readers and has herself been an avid reader since childhood, finds a more resonant explanation for "the way things are" by immersing herself in trauma recovery theory. After working for years in nonprofits that attempted to help people who were recently released from prison, she writes that "so many former prisoners suffered from the same thing I did: trauma. Like me, they were caught in a terrible loop that included the same bad decisions they had made before."

An inspirational memoir that moves from childhood trauma to incarceration to eventual reintegration into society, *I Can Take It from Here* is compelling as it argues that trauma resolution for individuals is critical to criminal justice reform.

MICHELE SHARPE (May / June 2022)

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