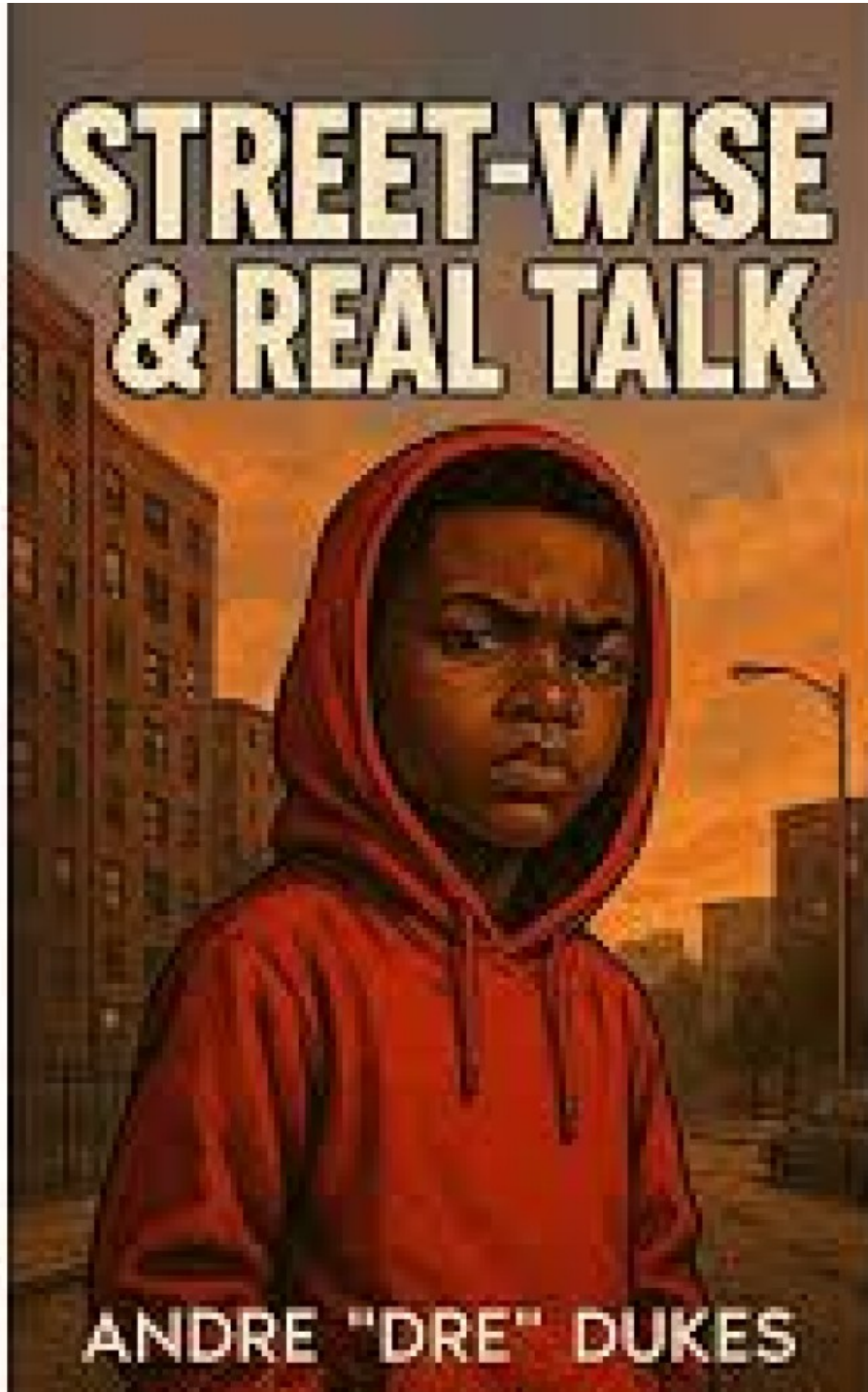


After five bullet holes and nearly 10 years in prison, Detroit native writes book to inspire at-risk adolescents

Andre Dukes, who's been a bodyguard for celebrities like Eminem and NFL superstar Deebo Samuel, uses life story to reach troubled youth.



Detroit, Michigan Dec 15, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - In a bookstore, you'll find plenty of memoirs written by former criminals and drug addicts. However, Detroit native Andre Dukes wanted to do something different with his story.

Instead of writing a standard autobiography, he decided to channel his experiences – being in and out of prison from the age of 19 through his early 40s – to write a book for adolescents.

Over the course of a year, Dukes wrote “[Street-Wise & Real Talk](#),” a fictional book for 10- to 16-year-olds. Based on his real-life experiences, this book follows young characters who live in broken homes and housing projects while struggling with bad influences and pressure coming from every direction.

Dukes said he had started to write a memoir at first but, after getting a job at a juvenile facility, he was inspired to switch gears.

“When I went back to read what I had written, it sounded like everybody else’s autobiography. I’ve read a lot of books by ex-gang members and ex-drug dealers, and I didn’t want to sound like everybody else,” he said.

“I asked myself, ‘Who is this helping?’ The week I got hired at this job, a bell went off. I realized, I speak these kids’ language. Parents can tell their kids the same thing for 10 years, and they won’t listen. But they listen to me because I’ve been through it.”

Born in Flint and raised on the east side of Detroit by his mother and stepfather, Dukes grew up with a deep respect for his stepfather, who taught him valuable life skills that would later become essential.

However, growing up in the 80s, Dukes faced a tumultuous teenage and early adult life marked by drug abuse, street violence and being shot five times. He has since turned his life around and achieved remarkable success – not only being promoted to supervisor at his current job but also serving as a bodyguard for celebrities like rapper Eminem and NFL superstar Deebo Samuel.

Because of this, hundreds of kids at the facility are drawn to Dukes and often specifically request his guidance. He is more than an employee; he’s a motivational speaker and a keystone for these kids. Since he started, there have been about 50% fewer AWOLs (juveniles who run away from their placement) and more than 50% of the kids are now obtaining their GEDs.

Dukes may look intimidating – clocking in at 350 pounds and standing at 6-foot-8 – but he has a compassionate heart and is a natural protector who strives to inspire the next generation to create positive changes in their own lives. As a father of five, this mission is even more important to him.

“My older kids watched me struggle, but I’ve always tried to keep my chin up for them, even when I was down, he said. “My kids and my wife are my rock.”

A Different Kind of Book

Dukes decided to write this book for kids as young as 10 because that’s when things started to go wrong for him. Age 10 was the first time he drove a stolen car, and three years later marked the first time he got shot – a case of mistaken identity as a Black teen running through the alleys of Detroit.

“I’m telling you, a lot of kids growing up in Detroit at that age are like grown men because of what they’ve been through – believe it or not. They had to grow up and get streetwise quick,” he said.

Dukes made sure he was age-appropriate when writing this book. Even though he knows that, honestly, kids, especially in big cities like Detroit, do swear, he makes it a point not to use a single cuss word in his book. He even attended Toastmasters classes – which help members improve their public speaking

and leadership skills – so he could work on expanding his vocabulary prior to writing the book.

“I use street talk without cussing. I use their lingo. I want kids to know they don’t have to cuss or yell to get a point across. You can be cool without cussing,” he said.

He also made sure to never glorify a life of crime in his book.

“I’ve read a lot of autobiographies where the author will glorify all the money they’ve made, and they make it sound fun. It’s easy to finish a book like that and be tempted to hustle again. I don’t want you to put my book down and ever think that. I have a lesson in every chapter of my book, and I focus on the consequences,” he said.

Next up, Dukes is working on a second book targeting an 18-plus audience, which will dive into the nitty gritty details and darker realities of his life.

He has seen firsthand how bad it can be – with several loved ones and acquaintances dying from overdoses and shootings. Two years ago, he lost his brother to a drug overdose, and his son-in-law also recently died from an overdose.

“I’ve had to go to so many different funerals of babies. Because I work with kids, I’ve seen a lot,” he said.

Dukes credits his survival to his wife of 30 years. She was the one who convinced him to check into the Henry Ford Maplegrove Center in West Bloomfield for rehabilitation. There, he met attorney Daniel Mercier, a man Dukes says helped him stay sober.

“He’s my sponsor right now, to this day,” said Dukes. “He walked me through getting clean for the first time. I remember riding bikes with him, and I almost started crying. I had gotten so entwined with drug addiction, I forgot I used to like to ride bikes,” he said.

Now, his goal is to be that person for others – like Mercier and his wife were there for him. He wants to not only inspire the kids at his facility, but to also reach youth across the country before they have a chance to make the same mistakes he did.

He jokes that he could have been a pro sports player with his build and stature, and he’s even had strangers ask, “Are you ex-football or ex-basketball?” To which he replies, “Ex-convict.” But, at the end of the day, he’s grateful things turned out the way they did.

“I’m a firm believer that God didn’t make me to play football. He didn’t make me to play basketball. He made me to be able to endure a total of nine and a half years in prison, five bullet holes, and a whole lot of years of addiction so I can give back and make a difference,” he said.

“[Street-Wise and Real Talk](#)” is available for purchase on [Amazon](#). To inquire about booking speaking engagements in the Metro Detroit area, contact Dukes at andredukes93@gmail.com.



Media Contact

SARI M CICUREL PR

*****@gmail.com

2487660945

4000 Winterset lane

Source : Andre Dukes

[See on IssueWire](#)