

As human beings we are blessed with the ability to express ourselves through language and, by extension, the written word. From the beginning of time, words have been used to capture the mundane details of life, identify objects, show the way to hidden places, record history, and foretell the future. There is also power in words where they allow us to share our innermost thoughts, feelings and ideas. Writing allows us to harness our energy, both positive and negative, and our words bear witness to our lives. While we all have the ability to write ourselves into diaries, essays, blogs, journals, articles and poems, there comes a time when an individual will so accurately capture the essence of a movement with their words.

Over a decade ago in 1995, Kimberly A. Collins wrote Remember My Name, a poem that has been used by Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) observances to memorialize victims that have lost their lives to the horrific epidemic of domestic violence. During the 2010 National Call for Unity, as part of the kick-off to DVAM, Ms. Collins recited this poem in the hopes that through spoken words we will never forget the names or the lives of those lost to domestic violence, that we should continue to heal through our shared connections and experiences, and that we shall remain committed in our efforts to end violence in our homes, our families, and communities.

Remember My Name

When you remember my walk upon this earth

Look not into my steps with pity.
When you taste the tears of my journey
Notice how they fill my foot prints
Not my spirit
For that remains with me.

My story must be told
Must remain in conscious memory
So my daughters won't cry my tears
Or follow my tortured legacy.
Lovin'

is a tricky thing
If it doesn't come
from a healthy place,
If Lovin'
Doesn't FIRST practice on self
it will act like a stray bullet
not caring what it hits

You may say:

Maybe I should've loved him a little less
Maybe I should've loved me a little more,
Maybe I should've not believed he'd
never hit me again.
All those maybes will not bring me back
– not right his wrong.
My life was not his to take.

As your eyes glance my name
Understand once I breathed
Walked
Loved
just like you.

I wish for all who glance my name
To know love turned fear – kept me
there
Loved twisted to fear,
Kept me in a chokehold
Cut off my air
Blurred my vision
I couldn't see how to break free.

I shoulda, told my family
I shoulda told my friends
I shoulda got that CPO
Before the police let him go
But all those shoulda's can't bring me
back
when I lied so well
To cover the shame
To hide the signs.
If my death had to show
what love isn't
If my death had to show
that love shouldn't hurt
If my death had to make sure
another woman told a friend
instead of holding it in
If my death reminds you
how beautiful
how worthy
you really are
If my death reminds you
to honor all you are
daily
Then remember my name
Shout it
from the center of your soul
Wake me
in my grave
Let ME know
My LIVING was not in vain.

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About the Author

Kimberly A. Collins is a mother, writer, poet and English Professor. She is also the founder of S.O.A.R. (So Others Ascend Righteously — <http://www.soarllc.com>) where she facilitates Writing for Healing workshops and writes an inspirational column "Wednesday Wisdom." As the first employee for the D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence, she put a public face to the Coalition's effort to inform and empower women, in the D.C. Metropolitan area, around the issue of domestic violence. During her tenure, Ms. Collins' writing and oratory skills were in demand at various venues during October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities, and other venues including speaking on behalf of the D.C. Coalition about the Nicole Brown Simpson case on NBC Nightly News and during the Telephone Operators Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, where they were in need of an expert to inform their audience about the prevalence and dangers of domestic violence through statistics as well as through Ms. Collins' poetry.

Ms. Collins' poems about domestic violence are inspired by the testimonies of women she meets at speaking engagements, the Simpson case, the quilt of women who have and continue to lose their lives at the hands of men, and the women she helps to claim their voice through S.O.A.R.'s Writing for Healing workshops and retreats.