

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.

Copyright 1995 Kimberly A. Collins, Washington, D.C.,  
reprinted with permission.

## 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.