

Summer 2006

\$10.00 per copy

# "COLLARD GREENS for the GHETTO SOUL"

**Women Telling their Stories of  
Hope, Encouragement and Inspiration**

**NORTHERN MANHATTAN PERINATAL PARTNERSHIP  
CENTRAL HARLEM HEALTHY START PROGRAM  
127 West 127th Street  
3rd Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10027**



# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Outreach for Kenjeania JEANE FLOYD .....	2
Someone who has fallen but refuses to stay down! KAREN GREEN .....	3
The Miseducation of "I Love You" LISA HENDLEY .....	4
Hold Your Head Up RASHIDA MOORE .....	5
Cynthia's Love Overboard CYNTHIA NUNEZ .....	6
"My Story" KAREN OWES .....	7
I'm a Woman SHELLY PARRIS .....	8
Pregnancy & Intimacy ANGELA PERUZA .....	9
"The Trials and Tribulations of Life" MARISA SCAVELLAIO .....	10



# Introduction

The stories included in this volume were created by a group of women from the *Central Harlem Healthy Start* program at Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership (NMPP), Inc. These women, participants of the NMPP's Consumer Involvement Organization (CIO), meet monthly in fellowship to discuss health and social issues impacting their lives as well as strategize ways to make positive changes within their community. The goal of these women, which evolved into a social support network for moms, was to become empowered and proactive!

These stories are the result of a leadership development workshop facilitated by a theater professional and storyteller. Through this workshop, the CIO members discovered that the telling and sharing of their personal life stories

was a way to heal as well as a tool for self-discovery and advocacy.

Each story represents a very personal challenge that was successfully overcome by the author. In some cases, just the *telling* of the story proved cathartic and thereby beneficial to the storyteller! Since so many other women have similar experiences and challenges in their lives, it was decided to compile these stories in a book format so that they may be shared, and hopefully, inspire those who may not have the benefit of a social support network.

*"Once you tell your story, you're an advocate."*—these stories are now part of a grand strategy that begins to build a strong support system connecting women in need.

Should you like to learn more about the work of NMPP, we can be reached at [NMPP@Sisterlink.com](mailto:NMPP@Sisterlink.com)

Ron Turner,  
Consortium Manager  
Central Harlem Healthy Start

Credits:     Photographs by Jackie Grant ([JGrant@sisterlink.com](mailto:JGrant@sisterlink.com))  
                 Design by William Jones ([williamjonesdesign@yahoo.com](mailto:williamjonesdesign@yahoo.com))  
                 Edited by Ron Turner ([ron\\_turner1@yahoo.com](mailto:ron_turner1@yahoo.com))

# OUTREACH FOR

# Kenjeania

**O**ne of my hardest ordeals in life is my relationship with my 17 year old daughter Kenjeania. My story is in the form of a poem about a severed and strained mother and daughter relationship with the dearest hope of reparation. It's called Outreach for Kenjeania

Kenjeania, Kenjeania, do you hear me calling your name? I haven't forgotten you and I can never break this chain that binds us together: a mother and her child. Searching for trust, searching for understanding, to rebuild a broken relationship, that had a crash landing. I still see my little girl smiling innocently at me; I also see a lady screaming, yelling and rebelling against me. I've loved you right, I've loved you wrong, maybe I've loved you too strong holding on too tight, not letting you take flight for fear of you falling hard and breaking your spirit beyond repair. It's my job to co-pilot your plane until you can fly alone on your own. This is outreach to Kenjeania who is somewhere out there soaring high. When you come down no matter where you land, I'll be there waiting to hold your hand. This message is to my little girl, excuse me... young lady... and to all the Kenjeanias of the world. Mothers hold on tight to your daughters — they need us!

*1. We Make Our Children.*

*2. We Love, We Nurture, We Provide And Protect.*

*3. We Don't Make Their Minds.*

Sincerely,  
Jeane Floyd — a mother in crisis!

# SOMEONE WHO HAS FALLEN *but refuses to stay down!*

**M**y name is Karen Green and I am 34 years old. I have four children that I love very much. My struggle was being in the wrong kinds of relationships and not knowing how to get out. Not knowing how to get out caused me to get my children taken away from me.

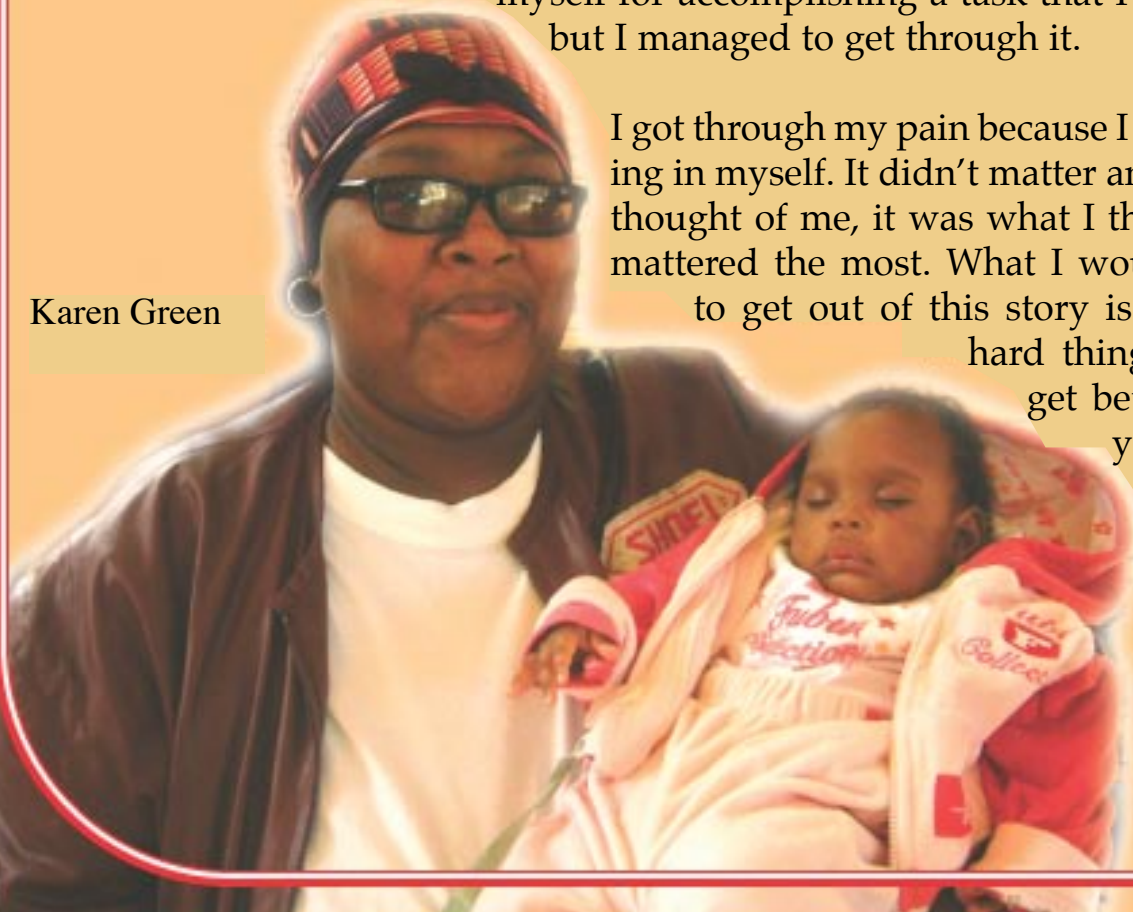
For several years, I fought like hell to get them back and I did. I went through a lot of depression and a lot of guilt because if I had gotten the order of protection, my children would have never been taken away.

It's hard dealing with your children once they get out of care. They are not the same kids that were taken from you. As a mother, you try so hard to make everything right but for me I feel like I can't get it right to save my life. I took parenting classes, domestic violence classes, and a Drug program and completed everything. I was very proud of myself for accomplishing a task that I thought was so hard but I managed to get through it.

I got through my pain because I finally started believing in myself. It didn't matter any more what anyone thought of me, it was what I thought of myself that mattered the most. What I would like for someone to get out of this story is that no matter how hard things may seem, it will get better if you believe in yourself. No one can take that away from you.

God bless us all!

Karen Green





# THE MISEDUCATION OF "I Love You"

From a tender age  
We yearn to hear those words  
From mama, papa  
Brother and sis  
Extended family, friends.  
I apologize if anybody been missed;  
But as we get older we misuse the  
Words or confuse the words  
To get our way to get by.  
I love you as my bed partner  
But I hate you as my baby mama.  
I love you in that... hustling  
But I hate you working, training and busing it.  
When will we know if its genuine or not?



When we met, you "love" my smile,  
You "love" to look into my eyes;  
But now we reconnect by seed and  
You wipe the smile off my face and  
When I look in your eyes,  
all I see is despise.  
I see hate, anger, you want away;  
But you love me, right baby?

Lisa Hendley

It was just fine yesterday.  
It was like yesterday when I was  
In the game, nickel baging it 5 or 10 for it  
I packed your pockets, again and again.  
Now its time to go legit, and  
you can't handle it.

Can't handle my lay away tickets  
Can't stand waiting for the train.  
All that love you had for me  
Is replaced with disdain and pain;  
But you love me, right baby?  
That's why you draw a heart on the wall  
With your and my name.  
How can I know when "I love you" is  
Genuine?  
It even gets misused by children...  
I love you mommy for toys for birthday  
But I hate you mommy for no toys on  
Christmas.  
But me they don't know  
I had to keep up the rent, so we don't end  
Up in the snow.  
I love you.  
I'm laughing now, I just learn to love  
Myself.  
So I wasn't in love, I was having fun  
Using love as a cover-up  
Now it's no longer fun, the cover is blown  
So now when I look in your eyes  
I see despise, hate and anger  
I want away  
But I said I love you, right baby?  
It was just like yesterday.

# Hold Your Head Up

Lost my Dad, my number one  
fan, no one there to hold my hand  
My mom always encouraged me  
To be the best, be all that God  
Made me and don't settle for less.



So with these lessons, my adult  
Life began, always working hard and  
Being a good young woman to my mom  
But soon time passed and the young  
Woman started to grow, there was so  
Much to life that she yearned to know.

Family pressure and the pressures  
Of the world made me regress back to  
Daddy's frightened little girl. The world seemed so big...  
Too big for me and being perfect is what I wanted to be.  
What happened to the American Dream I had read about in books?  
It seemed to be hiding and I didn't know where to look.

Heartache set in and my smile began to fade away;  
I began asking God why was I made?  
The answer did not come to me that day but I can clearly  
Remember the things my parents said:  
"Be all you can be and don't settle for less, hold your head up and  
Let God do the rest."

I did just that and things got better;  
I realized I had to live and love the person in the mirror.  
Hold you head up, be proud of who-you are  
Was what I heard in my head and with that, I got  
Back on track with educating myself and accomplishing my goals.

I graduated with a degree and started a family  
and I know there is more God has in store for me.

This story I have to share with others:  
brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and mothers;  
I hope these words encourage you to hold your head up  
And be all that you can be and don't settle for less.

Ché (Rashida Moore)



# CYNTHIA'S "Love Overboard"



**A**s a woman, I've had to make a lot of tough choices. I've been through one bad relationship after another.

I have now decided that me and my four children need to have a fresh start. I, along with the help of God, was about to remove myself from my last relationship because of the domestic violence and the impact it had on my children.

I have three boys and a teenage daughter. I have to set an example for my daughter, to show her love isn't like this love, but a good thing, a gift from God even though I sometimes miss having a significant other.

I know I made a good choice as a mother and a woman.

Cynthia Nunez



# “My Story”

**T**his is my story and it is not a long one. I am an African American female and the mother of Afrika, Kwanzaa, Imani and Faith. They are my children and the reason for me being involved in life.

I am unmarried but by no means single. I live a life filled with verve, passion, love and revolution. Yeah, I am an old school revolutionary. Why else would anyone name their children Afrika (Motherland), Kwanzaa (First Fruit), Imani (Faith) and Faith? I wanted to keep the name of Afrika in my mouth and on my mind for all the time I had on this earth. I want each of my children to carry the 7 principles of Kwanzaa with them through their life, one principle for each day of the week as long as they live. I expect that all the people in my family will live by faith...the kind that gets you over the hump and through the storm, pass the barriers and to the summit of the mountain.

Being a mother has made me resourceful, independent, organized and understanding. This is all I have to say and this is my story...triumph over tribulation.

Karen Owes





# Woman

I 'M A WOMAN  
I'm strong  
I'm black  
I'm alive and full of joy!

I'M A WOMAN  
I'm strong  
I'm black  
I'm from the earth  
And I will give back!

I'M A WOMAN  
I'm strong  
I'm black  
I bear fruit and  
brought forth children!

I'M A WOMAN  
I'm strong  
I'm black  
And I will live life and never,  
Never look back!

Shelly Parris



# PREGNANCY & *Intimacy*

Angela Peruza

**T**erry was emphatic about the baby being a distraction  
After all, he had not planned for this new addition  
That's all he kept saying over and over again  
He alienated my feelings from any kind of intimacy  
So I tried to stay away from intimate relations  
Because his attitude was doing a number on my fragile emotions.

I fell into a depression  
Even though it was bad for my condition  
I began to worry nightly about this person that slept beside me  
I first slept with him  
Out of gratitude for my situation  
I feared saying no to any intimate relation.

It all came to a head that Mother's Day weekend  
When he treated me like a prostitute in his bed  
I finally said "No" when he began to touch me  
And told him he was not having any part of my body  
If he could not accept the baby growing within me  
I knew he was hurt and angry, but I didn't feel sorry  
After all he had caused me so much worry  
I felt used and abused and totally confused  
I knew he was surprised but I didn't give a damn  
Cause he was just one big sham!

At this point in time,  
hardly slept at night  
Sleep only came in the wee hours of the morn  
And in broad-day-light!  
Hardest of all was the last month of my pregnancy  
At any minute, I expected to end up in Emergency  
I was scared, edgy all the time and had little money  
Thank God for true friends and my loving family!



# "THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS of Life"

Marisa Scavellaio

**T**his is a story about my life.  
I want you to know that you can grow.  
Enrich your soul and your heart.  
Don't ever think that you're not smart.  
Battered and abused all my life  
How I grew up, I had to fight  
Became a mother and not a wife.  
Children grown that I can't see  
I wonder if they think of me?  
I want them to be proud of me  
I chose a man that was no good  
I stayed 12 years, why could I not see?  
What that man had done to me  
When I looked in the mirror and said why me?

This is not a place for me. I lost my hope  
I locked him up and moved on.  
I found my hope that I thought was gone.  
There stood a man that I hold dear  
He stuck by me threw it all  
We lost our house. Had nowhere to go  
Went to the shelter and here we are  
We have 2 girls we love them a lot  
I look at them and say, "Thank God".  
We got our place. Now we have a  
Home. It was a struggle but we  
Made it through.  
We stuck together  
Through it all.  
Now I can truly stand tall  
This time we will have it all.

I go to groups so I can see that  
There is a future for me. They keep  
me strong so I can move on  
I never look back, I'm not alone.  
How we struggle to make ends meet  
We pay our bills and that is all.  
We will truly stand tall  
For we will never fall.

When I was growing up I had no one.  
No mother, no father,  
No sister, no brother. My grandmother  
Raised me all my life. When she got mad  
She made fun of me. She called me names  
It made me feel really sad. I still loved  
Her anyway. She died on my birthday  
And that was sad. It also made me mad.  
Now I give my girls all the things  
I never had. When she asks, do you love me?  
It breaks me down, I give her kisses  
And we clown around  
I look at them and never frown  
I would not change a thing at all  
All the love they bring to me  
Now I have a family  
No one can ever take that away from me  
The love we share  
There is nothing else to compare.







“COLLARD GREENS for  
the G HETTO SOUL”

Women Telling Their Stories of  
Hope, Encouragement and Inspiration

Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc.  
Central Harlem Healthy Start  
127 West 127 Street  
3rd floor / Suite 305  
New York, NYC 10027

212-665-2600 / ext. 306

