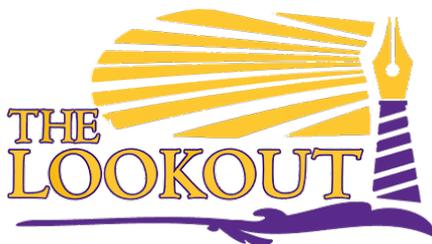


Grandma's Greens: Blessings for the Soul



Carlmelo Martin

Carlmeo Martin is a sprinter at East Carolina University representing the ECU Track and Field Team. He grew up in Boiling Springs and graduated from BSHS, where he was an active member of the track team. Here at ECU, his mission is to grow as a versatile author and songwriter. He is driven to inspire not just his own community but to connect with people on a universal level. In today's music landscape, he believes one critical element often lacking is the presence of genuine soul and emotion. When he writes poetry, he digs deep, tapping into the core of human experiences to connect with the reader's past, present, and future. His goal in songwriting and on his way to becoming an author isn't just to craft sentences that fit together logically, but to tell unique, compelling stories that resonate with listeners, offering reflection and relatability for both himself and his audience.



Abstract

Grandma's Greens is a warm, down to earth tribute to my grandmother and the life lessons she lovingly serves to her grandkids, weaving family memories into each dish she cooks. Through her pot of greens and Sunday meals, she teaches patience, strength, and love, sharing food and pieces of her spirit. It's a celebration of her kitchen as a gathering place for her grandkids, her legacy where each meal is seasoned with stories that bind the family together. This poem is also apart of my personal project called "The Black Renaissance," which is a project that expresses black culture in a way that ties in modern society, the culture, history, slavery, personal stories, and the internal struggles of African Americans from the past and the present.

You've seasoned my life like a pot of greens, simmered slow, pulling every ounce of flavor from my genes. Every correction you dished out, you stitched strength into my jeans. Pots of beans and the hum of old machines, you wove love and labor into life's routines. You've shown me that raw talent, much like unwashed greens, only reaches its full flavor when rinsed of the unseen scenes. Your lessons weren't drills but ingredients in a brew. Now you've served the dish, and while we eat, we savor what is true. You taught me that the game, like a soulful meal, is meant to be savored, even when it's tough to chew.

The temperature rises; the water starts to boil, that's when our minds get tested. Even in the heat of battle, we sip a glass of essence. Orange juice, I'm concentrated, my focus is now elevated. Ev-

ery opp gets decimated into thirds, body split can't be reciprocated.

You taught me that strength isn't found just in steady hands, but in withstanding the heat when life makes its demands. Now, as the temperature rises and bubbles break free, I carry your patience, steady as the simmering tea. When the water roars and the air grows thick, I've learned that every challenge, every moment, will click. Just as you watched the pot without rushing the boil, I now face the flames, rooted deep into the soil. You showed me how heat reveals what lies within, that true flavor, like strength, is pulled from deep within the skin. So, when the world turns up the pressure and tests my core, I know I'm seasoned for what's waiting behind each door. In those moments of fire, I've learned not to flee but to let the heat shape what's destined to be.



Grandma, let me hold your hand; we need to pray and read the Ten Commands. Walk with God, let Him lead us on the path to go. Life is short, and none can tell when it's our time to go. In the church, our hands are raised, shouting His name, giving Him worship and all the praise. Praying with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, giving Him an offering, the church members proposed. Singing songs and dancing upon the altar, reaching for the sky, and testing our limits, jumping over obstacles like a pole-vaulter. The Holy Ghost has touched us oh, my God is great. My troubles are falling off, shivering off the weight. Now I wear the armor of God; let me put on the breastplate. Shotgun to

my chest, the devil ain't winning today. I'm lying inside the pulpit; the water cleanses me of my sins. A new body is something I will commit. Let me tell you what God can do, the benefit not everyone will admit. They think His love is counterfeit, but how can His love be false if none of you will submit? Grandma taught me that; I applied it and saw everything falling into place after that.

Now I'm dishing out pieces of comfort, like Grandma's cornbread, warm and golden, sharing the kind of strength that sticks, like those home-cooked meals we'd hold onto. Her wisdom's like sweet tea, steady and sweet, pouring out the kind of care that's never complete. I'm learning to serve up kindness, like a Sunday

spread, fried chicken crispy with courage, greens tenderly fed. When folks around me hunger for hope, I dish it out slow, just like she did, letting every moment show. Mac and cheese, baked with patience, reminds me to wait, and that sharing what we've got only fills up the plate. She showed me that life's not about what we keep, but in feeding each other, in making it deep. Now I pass it on, the love she left in me a little soul food for souls, keeping her legacy free. With every plate I fill, her spirit's right here, making sure that love, like her cooking, is always near.

And now I see us all, her grandkids huddled close, crowded in that little kitchen, where love rose like bread dough. The smell of cornbread and greens filling the room, each of us a thread, woven by her steady hand and wooden spoon. She'd hand me the spoon, a twinkle in her eye, saying, "Go slow now; good things don't rush by." She'd show us how to taste, not just with our tongues, but with patience and heart, like songs waiting to be sung. The pots clattered and hissed, steam filling the air, her laughter blending with the aromas, a melody rare. She'd move through the kitchen, graceful and wise,

adding pinches of salt like secrets, a dash of spice in disguise. We'd each have a task, simple but grand, one chopping onions, another stirring by hand. She taught us that cooking was more than a meal; it was sharing a memory, something we could feel. Every glance, every taste, was more than just food. It was a lifetime of wisdom, her version of "I love you." In that kitchen, we weren't just her grandkids at play; we were her legacy, her love stirred in every way. With each cornbread rising, each pot on the boil, she'd whisper, "This is how we make it through life's toil." We learned that family was the spice in the stew, a little bitter, a little sweet, but will always be true. As she'd hand us our bowls, filled with soul and grit, she'd smile that smile, saying, "Eat every bit."

Now we feel like the dream team. We may be runners, but we feel like shooters. Moving quickly around, dribbling with maneuvers, going left or right, like Harden pulling off a screen. With all that you have seen, what's another way to cause a scream when you see a lot of us on a TV screen? This is exactly what it means to

move as a team, making history and reaching for the unseen. With each pass, we're reading the game's hidden seams, in sync chasing after our dreams. When the whole team moves like one, making crowds beam on the screen, this is the heartbeat of hustle, the pulse of the scene, where each lap isn't just a run it's part of a larger scheme. When you coach, it's so effortless,

smooth criminal, guiding us through every interval, showing us that every struggle only makes us more formidable. Dehydrated and malnourished, you drive us to flourish, turning every drained step into fuel for the finish.

Achieving our goals, digging deep, reaching to our soul.

Well, here's a pot of green beans. 🥕



Image by Samantha Smith
The prettiest lettuce in the bunch. This photo was taken in the University of South Florida Gardens. Even though it was January, it was still warm enough out to keep the plants big and vibrant.