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Teresa Kennedy: Photographed exclusively for UPTOWN by Mike Schreiber.



### COVER

Photography by William Richards.  
Clothing: Mr. Bentley's own.  
Makeup: A inside Castro @ facebeater.com  
Grooming: DJ Rags using TIGI bedhead products

## finest TERESA KENNEDY

by Elizabeth Clara Brown



MIKE SCHREIBER

What might a Harvard-trained business executive have in common with a yoga instructor? Or what might *she* have in common with a holistic health counselor who provides her services to families, children, and cancer survivors out of a brownstone in Harlem? Teresa Kay-Aba Kennedy is one and the same. It's no wonder she caught the attention of Bill Clinton's Harlem Small Business Initiative and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. Thirty-something, with enough life experience to last several lifetimes, she's taking Harlem by storm.

Kennedy's earliest memories are of sitting around the dinner table in Australia—where she first started school—listening to her parents tell stories of a magical place called Harlem. Before she learned to read, and before her American parents returned to New York after several years abroad, Kennedy was familiar with names like Langston Hughes and Romare Bearden, legends of that neighborhood once so rich with art and culture it boasted its own era in history. How appropriate then, that in 2002 she opened the Ta Yoga House at 71 West 128<sup>th</sup> Street. "It was like coming back home."

Born in Ghana, West Africa, Kennedy remembers herself as a precocious child with type-A tendencies, who skipped a couple of grades, graduated early, moved quickly through her studies and became the youngest student in her class at Harvard Business School. The following years were complete with high-powered jobs: film development at Universal Studios, then seven years at

Viacom with MTV-Networks. With a salary in the top one percent in the country, it looked like she was living a dream. But the road from Harvard to Harlem was not without its tribulations.

In March 1997, Kennedy was diagnosed with a stress-induced ulcerated digestive system. As she spent ten days in the hospital, all she did was pray—for health, for answers, for the chance to live a life in which her work aligned with her values. Then she put herself in the care of her mother, who nursed her back to health.

In her quest for healing, Kennedy gathered certifications in yoga instruction, holistic health counseling, lifestyle and weight management and consulting, among other health-related practices. Today she believes the success of her companies (Ta Life, Inc., which offers yoga instruction, cooking classes, holistic health counseling and outreach services and Power Living Enterprises, which she describes as "a multimedia lifestyle company offering inspirational content, success-oriented products, professional and personal training services, and networking events.") is due to her knack for "blending the business with the creative." That's who she is. And her personal mission statement echoes the same goal: "To express my true self and to create a prosperous life as I help people from all walks of life live better."

Elizabeth Clara Brown