

YOU GO, GIRL!

Fierce fashion feline and author Deborah Gregory is on the prowl again with release of new *purrlicious* book *Catwalk*

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On June 24, **Deborah Gregory's** highly anticipated teen novel, *Catwalk* (Delacorte Press; \$8.99) pawed its way onto book shelves and unleashed feline fatale characters Pashmina Purrstein and her fierce friends — Angora, Felinez and Aphro — who are primed for rising above the ranks of the runway.

Catwalk follows four best friends — Pashmina, Felinez, Angora and Aphro — at Manhattan's Fashion International High School who are about to enter the contest of their lives. Each year, students split up into fashion houses and compete to design, produce, and show fully original fashion lines.

Actually, the felines hope to jumpstart their fashion frenzy by competing in the 35th annual Catwalk Competition at global-groovy Fashion International

purrfect summer page turner, some of Gregory's friends — supermodel Beverly Johnson, actress Lynn Whitfield, Anansa Sims and Nole Marin of America's Next Top Model — walked the pink carpet to attend a party they hosted in her honor at the Laboratory Institute of Merchandising.

The spacious place was turned into a pink palace to celebrate the release of *Catwalk*, the bestselling author's newest *purrlicious* novel and book series. The fierce fête featured performances by Rose and 757 and legendary voguer Benny Ninja and the House of Ninja.

Throughout the passionate evening where thrown kisses were the evening's exercise Gregory was a vision of *pinklicious* splendor surrounded by staff also dressed to thrill in luscious pink. Why even the bar served up lots of Pink Alize martinis to the delight of the crowd who used

try in sold-out concerts.

The Cheetah Girls is comprised of a 13-book collection (Livin' Large and Supa Dupa Sparkles bind-ups were published with the release of the movie) about five talented inner-city pre-teens who unleash their growl power onto the music scene and show their spots as a singing group who make their dreams come true in the *jiggy jungle*.

"The *jiggy jungle* is the magical place that exists inside every dangerous, scary, crowded city. It's that place where dreams really do come true. You have to find this place and not let anyone stop you from getting there," she explains.

Ready to pounce again, the Disney Channel original movie, *Cheetah Girls 3*, filmed on location in India, premieres August 15, 2008. The Cheetah Girls original movie debuted on August 15, 2003 on The Disney Channel, executive produced by Whitney Houston.

The Disney Channel original movie stars Raven Simone, Adrienne and Kiely from the pop singing group, 3LW, and Sabrina Bryan as the Cheetah Girls. Emmy award winner Lynn Whitfield comprises the role of the Cheetah Girls manager. Gregory serves as a co-producer on the film project.

The Cheetah Girls original motion picture soundtrack will be available on Disney's Holly-



Purrfecto!-Deborah Gregory with prime presidential candidate Barack Obama at his fundraiser in West Orange, NJ
(Photo by E. Lee White)

The pictures are provocative and include a host of celebrities who also posed nude including Stacey Dash, Rosario Dawson, Vanessa Williams, Beverly Johnson, and LisaRaye. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds will go to photographer Mfon Essien's breast cancer organization set up upon her untimely death.

This year, Gregory also launched her company, Cheetahrama, offering her origi-

black family legacy.

Gregory received her A.A.S. from Fashion Institute of Technology followed by a Bachelor of Science from Empire State University in 1986. The full figure diva studied design at Fashion Institute of Technology and gathered a ton of know-how about the industry while working in Milan as a model in the late 70's. When she returned to New York, Gregory opened her own boutique in SoHo for plus size women -- the first of its kind



Deborah Gregory with pet pooch Cappuccino

High School located in the Big Apple, the fashion cap of el mundo where each year, five competing houses compete in the annual Catwalk Competition for the chance of a lifetime.

Pashmina and her posse have to assemble the ultimate fashion street team while four other houses are struggling to also claw their way to center stage. But winner really does take all in this scenario — and the prestigious prizes and perks will be well worth it, that is if they earn their *purr* points while ripping the runway and survive the wicked competition.

The winner gets a scholarship, a professional show, and a real shot at a career in fashion. Bouncy, smart, and nearly irresistible, *Catwalk* is a fierce introduction to a fashion world where *fabulosity* trumps waist size, and there truly is room for everyone. Sashay, parlay! In *Catwalk*, the robust author creates a new YA series that takes her famously upbeat urban voice and combines it with the appeal of Project Runway and America's Next Top Model.

On Wednesday, June 25, one day after the release of the

fancy catwalk drinks to drown down the catnip treats.

The juicy interpreter of words had been a contributing columnist for a decade to *Essence* magazine. The pink princess has also contributed to nationwide publications including *Entertainment Weekly*, *Redbook*, *US*, *Spin*, *Paper*, *Seventeen*, *More*, *Savoy*, *Heart* and *Soul and Vibe*.

Gregory's current pop culture column, *The Diva Diaries*, appears monthly in *Grace Magazine* where she covers "celebs, style and dishy drama." The column is similar in style to "Chit-chat and all that," which she authored for *Essence* in the past. Each aims to keep readers on the pulse with up-to-date news about the hottest celebrities and happenings. In addition to monthly columns, Gregory also writes feature articles revolving around entertainment.

Writer, performer and designer Gregory has penned the most popular urban tween book series in history, "The Cheetah Girls" novel series (Disney Publishing Worldwide), whose characters have literally taken on a Hollywood life of their own as Disney superstars — touring the coun-

wood Records and hits stores on August 12. In 2001, the series was chosen as the Blackboard Children's Book of the Year.

Gregory is currently writing an adult novel as well as developing a one-woman show "Leopard Lives" — a coming of age story about a foster child growing up in the New York City foster care system of which Gregory is also a survivor. She has performed segments of her work-in-progress one-woman show at the Women of Color Festival, winning the festival's Best Comedy Award for 2001; Dixon Place, Caroline's Comedy Club and Solo Arts Festival.

Gregory has also contributed to several books including, "Men of Color: Fashion, Mission, Fundamentals," (Artisan Publishing); "Body and Soul," "SoulStyle: Black Women Redefining the Color Fashion," "Essence Total Makeover Book," "50 Most Influential People." She also contributed to photographer Marc Baptiste's book of nudes, "Beautiful" (Rizzoli/Universe Publishing) as well as posed for the famed fashion photographer.

"Every Cheetah Girl possesses 'growl power.' Without it, she may misuse her talents or not assert herself. This happens to girls a lot. They just sort of get lost in the shuffle. Talent is only one part of a very big equation out there in the jiggy jungle. You have to have growl power to show the world that you got it going on!" . . . Deborah Gregory

nal designs including hand-crafted decoupage art cases and hair accessories including mirror compacts, pillboxes, business card holders, cigarette cases and vanity cases which are sold at stores nationwide including the Studio Museum of Harlem gift shop. For more information about purchasing her Cheetahrama collection wholesale, contact mamachee tahs@aol.com or call 212-744-6092.

An NABJ award-winning contributing writer for *Essence Magazine* who had contributed to *Redbook*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Vibe*, *More*, *Heart & Soul* and *US* magazines, survival was crucial. Homeless on the sidewalks of Brooklyn at age 3 with her single mother and two sisters, Gregory was separated from her family and became a ward of the State.

The budding author spent her childhood in the foster care system until she aged out at 18. Upon becoming a journalist, in 1990 she spent a large portion of her career searching for the mother who was committed and piecing together the puzzle of her early years and a painful

in the high-profile shopping neighborhood.

Gregory currently lives in New York City with her pooch Cappuccino who poses as the Cheetah Girls mascot Toto. A creature of habit, the full-bodied author frequently returns to her fashion roots in her feature articles, and recently contributed a chapter to a new book, "SoulStyle: Black Women Redefining the Color of Fashion."

