

# Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley

## A Devotional on Being Seen

She has probably, unbeknownst to us, always been one of the “adored ones.” On special assignment in the United States Congress, she exudes the graceful and tactical fighting skills of the famed Dora Milaje warriors by serving as 1/4th of The Squad, maintaining a consistent, progressive voting record, and putting forward the The People’s Justice Guarantee. This initiative is “a comprehensive, resolution devoted to dismantling the injustices within the criminal legal system so that it is smaller, safer, less punitive, and more humane.” And now, her aesthetic resembles that of the famed, female guards: bald and beautiful. But while the Dora Milaje of Wakanda wear a bald cut by choice, she has embraced hers because of alopecia.

Ayanna Pressley is the first African American woman elected to represent Massachusetts in Congress, and her recent courage in revealing her diagnoses with alopecia adds to the growing list of reasons she is living black history, black power, black excellence and black girl magic.

## Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley

Many of us have only seen Congresswoman Pressley with Senegalese twists, a kinky curly wig or now, a smooth bald head. But imagine with me this same woman with hair straightened, still maintaining its luscious fullness, cropped just above her shoulders and feathered with bangs sweeping to the right. This is a picture of her before her Congresswoman days when she served as Boston City Councilor At-large making her the first woman of color to serve in the role in the 100 year history of the Boston City Council. While delivering a riveting talk at TEDxRoxburyWomen, she told the story of growing up in church where the saints would share their testimonies “seeking comfort and strength from their church family.” Then, she inserted a poignant revelation about the act of testifying saying, “But as an adult, in hindsight, something greater than that was at work. They were exerting themselves in their testimonies saying ‘See me! Hear me!’ Acknowledge not just my struggle, but my very existence...To testify is to bear witness to, to proclaim oneself as an intrinsic part of the world. In their testimony they were saying ‘I am here.’” Think for a moment. How familiar and personal is the cry of “See me! Hear me! I am here!” I imagine it is a very familiar sentiment to many of us individually and as a people.

## The God Who Sees

There was a woman in the Bible for whom this exclamation was also very personal. In Genesis 16, Hagar became pregnant by Abram at his wife Sarai’s suggestion. This suggestion soon became the cause of strife between the two women. Hagar, pregnant outside of her own choice began feeling privileged above Sarai, and Sarai began feeling belittled by Hagar’s pregnancy and started to mistreat her.

Hagar subsequently left the household and while journeying through the wilderness was met by an angel of the Lord who asked her where she came from and where she was headed. She replied that she was running away from her

mistress. In response, the angel said that the Lord had heard of her misery and told her what the future of her son would be. At this moment, “She gave this name [El Roi] to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me’” (Genesis 16:13).

## **Strength in Being Seen**

Perhaps Hagar felt uplifted because in the midst of her struggle her existence was validated. She knew she was more than her current struggle, that her cares were complex and valid and that her response was the best she could muster up at the time. But it didn’t seem like anyone else in Abram’s household could see that. Yet, out there in the desert God saw her as more than current situation. He saw her as the woman who gave birth to not just a son, but a great nation. Ishamel literally testifies that “God hears.” After this encounter, Hagar is strong enough to return to the household. And one can’t help but see that her new strength is rooted in how God sees her and therefore how she now sees herself. What a gift, to be fully seen.

## **The Gift of Being Seen**

I believe we see ourselves most clearly in the company of those who truly love us, those who are honest with us about where we need to grow and develop, but who also remind us of the greatness in us that we cannot see or from which we shy away. There is something positively life changing about being seen for more than our struggles.

It is what Hagar experienced during her time of distress in the desert, it is the plea that Congresswoman Pressley heard in the testimonies of her church family, it is the courtesy, yea even the gift that we should extend to others. And I thank God, it is life changing gift that Jesus Christ gave us through His life, death and resurrection. He saw us healthy. He saw us happy. He saw us fruitful. He saw us as an “intrinsic part of the world.” We are seen.

## **Sources**

[Exclusive: Rep. Ayanna Pressley Reveals Beautiful Bald Head and Discusses Alopecia for the First Time](#)

[Dare to be yourself, tell YOUR story: Ayanna Pressley at TEDxRoxburyWomen](#)