

Amelia Boynton Robinson

A Devotional About Preparedness

In the acclaimed movie “Selma”, directed by the extraordinary Ava Duverney, the gifted actress, Lorraine Toussaint, portrays the unshakable civil rights pioneer, Amelia Boynton Robinson having a conversation with the brave Betty Shabazz (and yes, I used *many* superlatives, because they are well deserved!). In the movie, Boynton Robinson is portrayed as saying, “*I know that we are descendants of a mighty people, who gave civilization to the world. People who survived the hulls of slave ships across vast oceans. People who innovate and create and love despite pressures and tortures unimaginable. They are in our bloodstream. Pumping our hearts every second. They’ve prepared you. You are already prepared.*” The concept of preparedness is one that daily lingers in my reflections and observations. So when I read a familiar passage from Exodus, the idea of preparedness caught me, yet again.

“*Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt.*” But Moses said to God, “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*” He said, “*But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain*” (Exodus 3: 9-12 ESV).

A Lesson in “But”

The English Language Arts educator in me first noticed two sentences that began with the contraction “but.” This word sometimes negating the words spoken or written before it signals to readers or listeners that the important part of the sentence is coming up on the other side of the “but.” God told Moses he would send him on a successful mission. Moses negated what God said with his more important question of “Who am I?” God then returns the volley with a “but” of His own, negating Moses’ negation (you’re following me, yes?) and giving us all a lesson in preparedness. I’ve read this passage several times, but it wasn’t until a second or third reading that I noticed that God’s response of “*But I will be with you...*” didn’t quite answer Moses’ question. I started to think of all the responses He could’ve given Moses instead:

- Moses, you were the baby preserved from death for this very time. You were born for this. Literally. It’s your destiny!
- Moses, you are the man who was raised in the courts of the country I am sending you to topple. You know it inside and out! You are like special ops.
- Moses, you are the one whose zeal for swift justice is well known. You know I saw you handle that Egyptian who was beating the Hebrew? I need a swashbuckler like you to get this job done. You in?

Instead, Yahweh, in so many words, said, “But Moses, you are a man who I am with.” Now, I can’t articulate for sure Moses’ intentions in asking “*Who am I that I should go...*” but I can tap into my humanity and surmise that Moses

could have been seeking validation for why he was needed or called upon. However, Yahweh's idea of preparedness turned Moses' question on its head. Instead of validating why He needed Moses, Yahweh needed Moses to validate his need for Yahweh.

The Truth About Validation

I sometimes seek validation of myself when I should be validating the One who seeks after me! I sometimes muse about my preparedness when I should be meditating on the One who prepares me. I am not suggesting we be willfully unprepared for life's assignments. I am suggesting that we remember who has assigned us to this life.

God, why have you chosen me?

God says, "I am with you."

God, why do you think I can carry out this task?

God says, "I will be with you."

God, why are you not answering my questions?

God says, "My presence is an answer."

And might I add, that God is not being flippant at all! Whatever He tasks us to do for Him, it is He who fulfills the purpose ([Psalm 57:2](#)) and it is He who gives us the energy ([Colossians 1:29](#)) to live and love for him day after day. In fact, one of the names of God, Adonai, actually describes God as our loving master who not only gives us tasks but also equips us for them!

We Are Already Prepared

Amelia Boynton Robinson was already prepared for the life of fearless activism that she would lead. She became the first African American woman to run for Congress in the state of Alabama in 1964. She spearheaded and organized the 1965 march in Selma across the Pettus bridge where she suffered a brutal beating, yet she survived and continued to walk in her activist calling. In fact, Boynton Robinson recalls of her childhood that, "We felt like we had to be leaders, because this is what the community expected." The expectations held of her as a child was a part of her preparation. The expectation Yahweh has of us is a part of our preparation. He expects you to "Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track." (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG). Emmanuel, God with us, is our preparation. We are already prepared.

Sources

[Amelia Boynton](#)

Miss Mary Hamilton

A Devotional About Names

Names mean so much within the cultures of the African Diaspora. Our names may be "monikers that have a history that forever may be a mystery" as Poet

Sha'Condria 'iCon' Sibley describes about the name Tynishia in her poem "To All the Little Black Girls With Big Names (Dedicated to Quvenzhane' Wallis). She continues writing,

If those who assume ever stop to think that maybe...

Transatlantic submerged native tongues

have reemerged in the form of ghetto monikers.

Sounds a lot like Tinashe

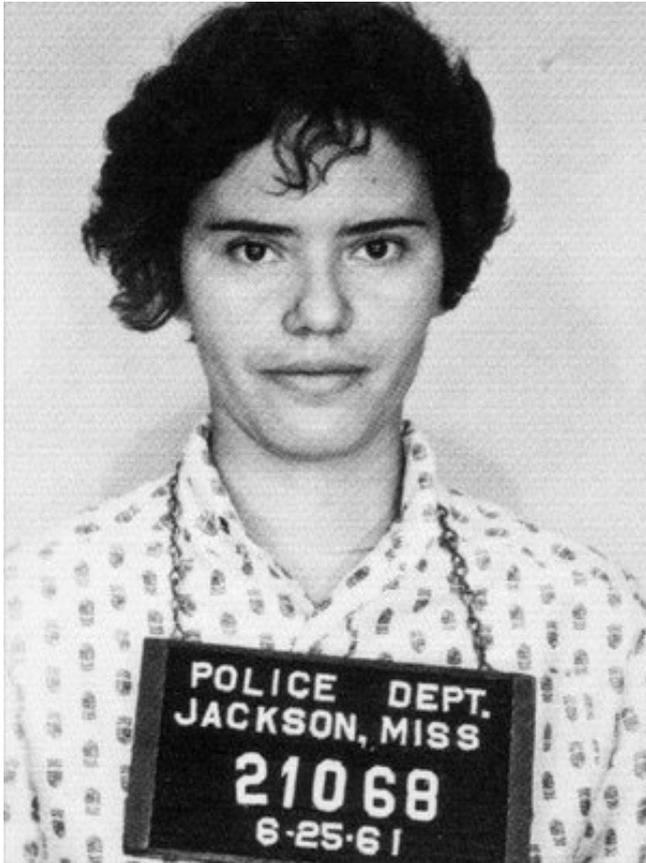
a name from the Shona tribe meaning "God is with us"

because when her mother died, He was all she had.

Our names, when spoken or read, convey sturdiness and whimsy, tradition and originality, assimilation and uprising. It is not only *what* our names convey that signify our culture, but also the nuances of *how* we relate to names. I know it wasn't only my Grandma (whose dazzling name was Goldie Amelia Patterson) who, when trying to get my attention, would call me by each of my cousin's names before she got to mine. Expecting me to respond immediately as if I knew telepathically that it was me for whom she was calling, she'd declare, "KiaKarenJamarEricShalisha...Porsche, you know I'm talking to you!" Or how about that story you told just the other day about "whatshisname" whose name you nor any of the folk listening to your story could remember, yet they all confidently said "Oh yeah yeah, whatshisname! We know who you talkin' bout!" There is so much diversity and nuance associated with names in our culture, but there are also expectations.

Honorifics

One expectation about names that upends others is the use of the *honorific* – a word that expresses respect, confers honor, appreciation or affection. You know honorifics well. *Mrs.* Pauletta Washington. *Auntie* Maxine Waters. *First Lady* Michelle Obama. The *Mrs.*, *Auntie* and *First Lady* all ascribe an intention and describe a relationship towards each woman that would otherwise be lost if the honorific was omitted. This is exactly what *Miss* Mary Hamilton knew, and because she knew it she chose to do something for the culture regarding names; something that we still benefit from today.



Miss Mary Hamilton

Miss Mary Hamilton was a teacher, a Freedom Rider and the first female field organizer in the South for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). While testifying as a witness in a case in Alabama, the prosecutor called Miss Hamilton by her first name only, which was par for the course of how African Americans were addressed in 1963 courtrooms. Mary Hamilton refused to answer the question, stating instead, "My name is Miss Hamilton. Please address me correctly." Twice the prosecutor repeated his use of only her first name. And twice Mary Hamilton replied that she would not respond unless she was addressed correctly. She was never addressed correctly, thus she never responded. Subsequently, she was held in contempt of court, fined \$50, and jailed for 5 days.

The story doesn't end here for I believe you already get the feeling that Miss Mary didn't take no stuff. In fact, she took her case all the way to the United States Supreme Court whose landmark ruling, HAMILTON v. ALABAMA, 376 U.S. 650 (1964) "established that people of color are entitled to the same courtesies and honorifics as whites."

What's My Name?

Now that you know or have been reminded of what Miss Hamilton did on our behalf, will you, if involved in a legal proceeding, ever willfully ask to be called only by your first name? Will you reason that, despite what happened in 1963, you'd be fine with however someone chooses to address you in 2020? I doubt it, for it would be an affront to Miss Hamilton and to the culture! In the same way I proudly accept what Miss Hamilton won for us, I accept what Yeshua Hamashiach has won for us. He has made it possible for us to be addressed as valuable (Matt. 6:26), loved (John 3:16) and specially made (Psalms 139:13). These and other descriptors all ascribe an intention and

describe the relationship He wants with us. And because of these honorifics, we are empowered to do good works ([Ephesians 2:10](#)), restore communities ([Isaiah 58:12](#)), say the right thing at the right time to people ([Isaiah 50:4](#)) all while living healthy, prosperous lives ([3 John 1:2](#))! He most definitely did something for the culture – for every culture under the sun regarding names – that all people benefit from today.

Sources

[To All the Little Black Girls With Big Names \(Dedicated to Quvenzhane' Wallis\)](#)

[Mary Hamilton](#)

[Mary Hamilton, The Woman Who Put The 'Miss' In Court](#)

[When 'Miss' Meant So Much More: How One Woman Fought Alabama – And Won](#)