

# Call Me MISS HAMILTON

One Woman's Case for  
**EQUALITY AND RESPECT**

Carole Boston  
**WEATHERFORD**

illustrations by  
Jeffery Boston  
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# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Imagine being snatched from the continent of your birth, shipped across the ocean, stripped of your traditions, and then being grouped by skin color—black or Negro—rather than by tribe. Imagine being assigned a new name by a slave trader or slaveholder. Imagine having no last name at all and then when slavery ends being able to choose one for yourself and your family. Imagine white people never addressing you by your last name but by first name only—or worse. If you are a man, you are called “boy.” If you are a woman, you are called “aunt.” If you are lucky. Behind your back—or even to your face—you might be subjected to racial epithets. Even if you are grown, white children call you by your first name while addressing white adults with respect. And white adults never address you as “Miss,” “Mrs.,” or “Mr.,” as you must address them.

For Mary Hamilton, that inequity was not just disrespectful; it was intolerable. That is why she took a brave stand. In court and in jail, she would not respond when addressed only by her first name.

Little is known about Mary's personal life or teaching career. However, her legacy of activism still resounds in courtrooms across the country. Because of the so-called “Miss Mary Case,” all citizens are entitled not just to due process of law—fair treatment in the judicial system—but also to due respect, the right to be called Miss, Mrs., or Mr. in a court of law.



Mary Hamilton with CORE cofounder James Farmer

# Timeline

- 1935:** On October 13, Mary Lucille Hamilton is born to Robert Emerson DeCarlo and Elizabeth Winston Hamilton.
- 1937:** On March 26, William H. Hastie is confirmed as the first Black federal judge in the Virgin Islands.
- 1939:** Jane Bolin is appointed as the first African American woman judge in the United States on July 22.
- 1940:** Thurgood Marshall leads the newly formed NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.
- 1942:** The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) is founded in March.
- 1946:** On June 3, the US Supreme Court rules in *Morgan v. Virginia* that segregation in interstate bus travel is unconstitutional.
- 1947:** On April 10, Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers becomes the first African American to play Major League Baseball in the twentieth century.
- 1948:** On May 3, the US Supreme Court rules that courts cannot enforce racially based discrimination in real estate contracts in *Shelley v. Kraemer*.
- 1953:** Miss Hamilton graduates from East Denver High School.
- 1954:** On May 17, the US Supreme Court rules that school segregation is unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.
- 1955:** On August 28, Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old boy, is lynched while visiting Money, Mississippi.
- Rosa Parks spearheads the modern Civil Rights Movement and the Montgomery Bus Boycott by refusing to give up her seat on a bus on December 1.
- 1956:** On November 13, in *Browder v. Gayle*, the US Supreme Court affirms that bus segregation is unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment.
- 1957:** In January, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) is organized in Atlanta, Georgia.
- In September, in Little Rock, Arkansas, nine African American students integrate Central High School.
- 1960:** On February 1, four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College stage a sit-in at Woolworth's whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, sparking sit-ins across the country.

On May 6, the Civil Rights Act of 1960 outlaws voter suppression on the basis of race.



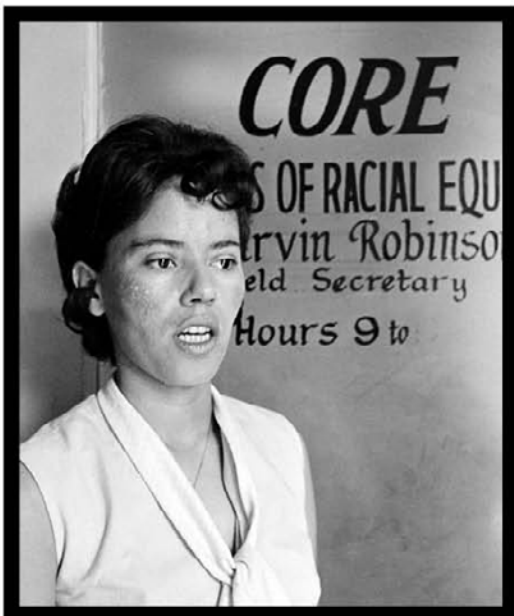
In March 1960, picketers outside the F.W. Woolworth store in Atlantic City, New Jersey, protest the chain's segregated lunch counters in the South. Woolworth's lunch counters were desegregated on July 25, 1960.



Members of the Washington Freedom Riders Committee hold protest signs out of bus windows in late May 1961.



Freedom Riders arrive in Montgomery, Alabama, on May 24, 1961, guarded by police and members of the National Guard.



In this April 1, 1964, photo, Mary Hamilton answers questions from reporters in her New Orleans office after the US Supreme Court decided in her favor.

**1961:** On May 4, the first Freedom Rides begin.

On June 26, while working with CORE, Miss Hamilton is arrested as a Freedom Rider in Jackson, Mississippi.

**1963:** In June, after hundreds of civil rights activists are arrested during protests in Gadsden, Alabama, Miss Hamilton refuses to answer the questions of a white prosecutor who addresses her by her first name.

On August 28, two hundred fifty thousand people participate in the March on Washington where Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech.

On September 15, four girls are killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

**1964:** On March 30, in *Hamilton v. Alabama*, the Supreme Court rules that African Americans must be addressed with honorifics the same as whites.

On April 23, Miss Hamilton is featured on the front cover of *Jet* magazine for her legal victory.

On June 21, three civil rights workers are killed in Mississippi during Freedom Summer.

On July 2, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

**1965:** On February 21, Malcolm X is assassinated in Manhattan, New York.

On March 7, civil rights activists are assaulted by Alabama state troopers during the Selma to Montgomery March.

On August 6, the Voting Rights Act is signed into law by Johnson.

**1966:** In November, Constance Baker Motley becomes the first African American woman appointed to a federal judgeship.

**1967:** On October 2, Thurgood Marshall is sworn in as the first African American US Supreme Court justice.

**1968:** On April 4, Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

On April 11, the Civil Rights Act (Fair Housing Act) of 1968 is signed by Johnson.

In November, Shirley Chisholm is elected as the first African American woman to serve in the US Congress.

**1971:** Miss Hamilton earns her master of arts in teaching at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York, and goes on to teach English at Sleepy Hollow High School.

On April 20, the Supreme Court rules in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* that busing will be used as an effective means of integrating public schools.

**1983:** On November 2, Ronald Reagan signs a bill declaring Martin Luther King Day a federal holiday.

**1990:** Miss Hamilton retires from teaching.

**2002:** On November 11, Miss Hamilton dies from cancer at the age of sixty-seven.

## Further Reading

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***For anyone who has ever been called "out of their name."  
You have a right to demand respect!***

**—C.B.W.**

***For my mother, who has always stood tall in the face of  
adversity and demanded the respect she deserves; and  
my Bre'Anna who is always by my side rooting for me.***

**—J.B.W.**

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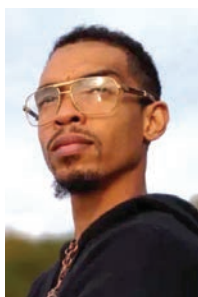
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## Carole Boston Weatherford

is the author of numerous books, including Caldecott Honor winners *Freedom in Congo Square*, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie, *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer*, *Spirit of the Civil Rights*

*Movement*, illustrated by Ekua Holmes, and *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*, illustrated by Kadir Nelson. A Sibert Honor winner and two-time NAACP Image Award recipient, she won a Newbery Honor for *Box: Henry Brown Mails Himself to Freedom*, illustrated by Michele Wood. Her writing spans the slavery and segregation eras and covers such topics as jazz and photography. When she's not traveling or visiting museums, Carole is mining the past for family stories, fading traditions, and forgotten struggles. The daughter of educators, she has a passion for rescuing events and figures from obscurity by documenting American history. She lives in North Carolina.



## Jeffery Boston Weatherford

is the illustrator of the award-winning verse novel *You Can Fly: The Tuskegee Airman*, written by Carole Boston Weatherford. He has an MFA from Howard University and is also a fine artist and spoken word poet.

Jeffery created the illustrations in *Call Me Miss Hamilton* using scratchboard, a process in which he transferred his final sketches to black boards and, with specialized tools, scratched away the areas that appear white. He lives in North Carolina.

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