

# **Fannie Lou Hamer**

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When I was first introduced to Fannie Lou Hamer I was a freshman in college who had spent my entire life in Mississippi, but I had never even heard of her. That bothered me. I considered myself a lover of history and equally passionate about current events, but the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, a civil rights leader from My Mississippi, had never reached me. I was introduced to Mrs. Hamer before I had recognized the power of my own voice and before I had fully grasped the unspoken scars that you carry just growing up black in Mississippi. I recognized a part of myself in her. I saw members from my family, my church and my community in her. Fannie Lou Hamer's story challenged me, her faith inspired me, and her voice empowered me to embrace all sides of my identity. She helped me fall deeper in love with history and question who's controlling the narrative. She still inspires me daily. I want to be more like her as she pushes me to be unapologetically me. She challenges me to love America enough to question her, to fight for her to reach her full potential and make tomorrow better for the next generation just as Mrs. Hamer fought to make this day better for me. I consider it a great privilege of my life to honor this remarkable woman.

*Sharon Miles*