



# The Power of Names: Uncovering the Mystery of What We Are Called

*Mavis Himes*

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## **The Power of Names: Uncovering the Mystery of What We Are Called** Mavis Himes

Our proper name is as much a part of us as our own skin. It travels with us like a passport, testifying to our unique presence on this earth. The articulation of our name rolls off our tongue with ease and familiarity, yet we rarely turn and examine the part our name plays in what makes us who we are. Our first name reflects the hopes and dreams of our parents and family, our culture, and our own sense of self, while our surname carries our ancestral history, a branding of both affiliation and transmission.

In *The Power of Names*, Mavis Himes explores both the profound ambivalence that many of us feel toward our names and the conscious and unconscious impact our names have on our lives, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill. She explores such questions as: What do our names mean? How do they influence our destiny? What does it mean to lose or change our name - and what does this reveal or conceal about who we are?

Himes engages readers through a skillful interweaving of reflections on her own Jewish surname, shortened by immigrant ancestors to accommodate a new life in a new world; the historical and cultural impact of a group on naming practices; the various ways different cultures celebrate the naming of infants; the power of names in myth and legend; and the impact of names on friends and patients from her practice. Readers are invited to consider their own names, the names they give others, and the names of those around them as a starting point for understanding the stories of our lives.

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