

# Zilphia Horton and the Highlander Folk School: Empowering the People Through Song



## A Singing Army: Zilphia Horton and the Highlander Folk School by Kim Ruehl

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 9523 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 299 pages



## A Life Dedicated to Music and Social Justice

Zilphia Horton was born in 1915 in Tennessee, where she grew up surrounded by the rich musical traditions of the Appalachian region. From a young age, she exhibited an exceptional talent for singing and playing guitar, which would later become her powerful tools for social change.

In the 1930s, Horton attended the Highlander Folk School, a progressive institution established in 1932 to provide education and leadership training to marginalized communities. It was here that she met and began collaborating with other renowned folk musicians, such as Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie.

## The Highlander Ethos: Education for Empowerment

The Highlander Folk School espoused a philosophy of "education for empowerment." It believed that by providing marginalized individuals with knowledge, skills, and leadership opportunities, they could become agents of their own liberation.

Music played a central role in this educational approach. Horton and her fellow musicians taught students how to use songs as a means of expressing their experiences, challenging injustice, and organizing for change.

### **Music as a Catalyst for Social Change**

Under Horton's guidance, the Highlander Folk School became a vibrant hub for social activism. Students from diverse backgrounds came together to learn, sing, and work alongside labor organizers, civil rights leaders, and other change-makers.

Horton's songs, which often drew upon traditional folk melodies and lyrics, resonated deeply with audiences and provided inspiration for countless movements. Her most famous composition, "We Shall Overcome," became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement, sung by millions around the world.

### **Zilphia Horton's Legacy: Empowering Generations**

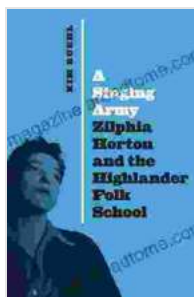
Zilphia Horton's impact extended far beyond her lifetime. Through her work at the Highlander Folk School and her collaborations with other musicians, she inspired generations of activists and musicians to use their voices for justice.

Today, her legacy continues to live on through the countless individuals and organizations that have adopted her approach to music education and social change. From community choirs to youth empowerment programs,

Horton's passion for using music as a tool for empowerment continues to resonate.

Zilphia Horton was a pioneering figure in the fields of music education, social justice, and activism. Through her work at the Highlander Folk School, she empowered marginalized communities to use their voices for change and inspired countless individuals to recognize the transformative power of music.

Her legacy serves as a reminder that music is not merely entertainment but a powerful force that can be harnessed for social progress and the betterment of society.



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