

## Guide My Feet While I Run This Race

Ella J. Baker's life work—to improve the lives of ordinary people—came to fruition in the 1960s, when she played a key role in the movement for civil rights. She had worked in the movement for most of her adult life, first as director of branches of the NAACP, then as executive secretary of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

She became known as the godmother of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Instrumental in establishing the organization in 1960, she fostered its growth over the next few years, helping its members grapple with the problems of a young, brash, and brave organization.

The tenets which she had held throughout her life became a part of SNCC. Her emphasis on developing local leadership, her belief in people's ability to change their own lives, her sense of community, became integral to the young people who fought so hard for dignity, justice, and equality.

In all her work, Ella Baker stressed the worth of the ordinary person and his or her potential for leadership. Perhaps her most heartfelt credo was expressed in her keynote speech to the 1964 state convention of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party: "Until the killing of

black men, black mothers' sons, becomes as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest."

When necessary, her vibrant voice rang out in speech or in song. But Ella Baker became a calming, questioning, quiet counselor whenever she was called upon to give advice, guidance, sustenance to another human being.

She was a teacher, an organizer, and more; she was a nurturer.

—Joanne Grant,

author of *Fundi*, the film tribute to Ella Baker

Ella Baker's favorite song was a spiritual sung in black churches throughout the South and then adapted for the movement, *Guide My Feet While I Run This Race*. This transcription is by Ethel Raim.



Ella J. Baker.

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G G7

Guide \_\_\_\_\_ my\_\_ feet  
Nev - er turn\_ back while I run this race\_\_ (Oh)\_\_\_\_\_

C G D7

Guide \_\_\_\_\_ my\_\_ feet  
Nev - er turn\_ back while I run this race.

G B7 Em

Guide \_\_\_\_\_ my\_\_ feet  
Nev - er turn\_ back while I run this race,\_\_\_ 'cause I

G C D7 G (C) (G) (D7)

don't want to run this race in vain (race in vain)..

Guide my feet . . .  
Guide my heart . . .  
Guide my tongue . . .



Guide my vote . . .  
Guide my mind . . .