

# Ella's Song

by Sweet Honey In The Rock



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does the chorus mean – *We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes?*
- Who are WE? What is the alternative to “resting?”
- What is the particular injustice the song describes?
- Do you believe that people’s lives are valued differently in our society based on demographics? Which demographics? Race? Class? Sexuality? Other?
- Why do you believe that? Why do you think that is?
- What does the song suggest should be done about it? Who should be doing it?
- Is there a particular audience this song is trying to reach?
- How do you believe change happens? What does good leadership mean to you?
- Who are leaders in your world? What qualities do they have?
- Do you see yourself as a leader? Why or why not?
- According to this song, what is the philosophy of how change happens? What is this song’s philosophy about leadership?
- Do you agree with these philosophies?
- How does change happen/has change happened in your life?
- Can one person ever really change things all by themselves?
- Do you believe that youth are a valuable part of movements for social change? What can/do youth contribute?
- In what ways are you participating in social change?

## POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Research project on Ella J. Baker – Learn more about her philosophy and leadership style. Study other civil rights leaders, and compare their approaches to leadership and change.
- Analyze leadership styles – Deconstruct ideas of leadership, identify contemporary leaders and different approaches to leadership. Encourage an exploration beyond well-known western leaders. Reflect on different cultural ideas of leadership – some cultures focus more on naming a leader, on crediting one person for change, while other cultures see change as a product of the whole group.

## Background Information

*Ella's Song* is about Ella J. Baker, an organizer during the Civil Rights Movement. She believed that people should have control over their own lives. Although she was involved in political and social struggle all her life, and worked with several Civil Rights organizations such as the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), she is probably best known for her work with SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). This song describes her leadership style.

*"I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others."*

--Ella J. Baker

