"A Song Workers Everywhere Sing:" Zilphia Horton and the Creation of Labor's Musical Canon

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Abstract
Zilphia Horton, a college educated, middle class white woman from the rural American south, created the canon of music that would become central to the black freedom struggle in postwar America. Horton's work in the post-New Deal labor movement established the methods of incorporating protest music in movements of social justice that prevailed for the rest of the century. The work songs and hymns that she collected, arranged, notated, and published while music director at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, TN—including "We Shall Overcome," "This Little Light of Mine," "We Shall Not Be Moved"—motivated generations of activists as they transformed the nation. This paper addresses Horton's methods of collecting, teaching, and applying music as a powerful medium of social change - to motivate, to express shared emotions, problems, and goals, and to unify a diverse and divided movement. She
developed the musical canon of labor, assured its transmission into civil rights, and created one of the most important and lasting musical legacies of the twentieth century.

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Zilphia Horton, zilphia horton we shall overcome
Zilphia Horton April 14, 1910 – April 11, 1956 was an American musician, community organizer, educator, Civil Rights activist, and folklorist. She is best known for her work with her husband Myles Horton at the Highlander Folk School where she is generally credited with turning such songs as "We Shall Overcome," "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," "We Shall Not Be Moved," and "This Little Light of Mine" from hymns into songs of the Civil Rights Movement.

Content. 1 Biography. The tobacco workers brought their song to Tennessee, and Zilphia Horton, Highlander’s music director, started using it in workshops in Tennessee and beyond. "I remember teaching it to a gang in Carnegie Hall that year, and the following year I put it in a little music magazine called People's Songs," Seeger adds. "Over the years, I remember singing it two different ways. I'm usually credited with changing ['Will'] to 'Shall,' but there was a black woman who taught at Highlander Center, a wonderful person named Septima Clark."