

To document ella  
baker's life



To document Ella Baker's life is to recount the history of the civil rights movement. Whenever there was a cause to fight for or a group to organize, this dedicated woman was there. Ella was born 1903, she grew up and received her education in North Carolina. Upon and at one time, president of the New York branch Ella went South in the 1950s to help the civil rights movement as it was developing in Alabama.

With 30 years of organizing experience under her belt, Ella's advice to Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 was invaluable. She stayed South and helped Dr. King set up the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). A few years later she played an important part in helping to organize student sit-in demonstrations that were occurring all over the South. This activity led to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), one of the most powerful student-activist movements formed in U. S. history.

She also helped to found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964, which helped to give African Americans in Mississippi more political power. Ella continued to serve as the "godmother" and mentor of SNCC as it moved into other human rights issues. Her greatest asset was her ability to organize and mobilize people of all generations. Although her name was not publicized as much as other male leaders, the civil rights movement would not have been the same without her.

Shortly before her death in 1986, a documentary titled "Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker" was aired on public television. Fundi is the Swahili word for a person who passes on skill to a younger generation. It is a fitting description

of Ella Baker's legacy. graduating from Shaw University, she moved to New York City just before the Depression of 1929. There she became active in various causes. She worked briefly with the Work Projects Administration (WPA) and then worked to end discrimination in organized labor through the NAACP.