

# **SING YOUR SONG**

## **HOUSE PARTY GUIDE**

**Premieres on HBO**

**October 17th at 9p/8c**

**Also available on HBO On-Demand**

**October 18th - November 14th**

**“What do you do now?”**

**–Harry Belafonte**

**Host a House Party**

Invite your friends, family, and colleagues to watch the movie, and then discuss how you can make a difference.

SING YOUR SONG tells the rich story of the life of Harry Belafonte. Inspired by singer and actor Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte rose to fame as a singer, despite trying tours across a segregated country and his provocative crossover into mainstream Hollywood. Belafonte’s groundbreaking career personifies the American civil rights movement, while impacting many other developments in social justice. SING YOUR SONG reveals Belafonte as a tenacious hands-on activist, who worked intimately with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., mobilized celebrities for social justice, participated in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and took action to counter gang violence, prisons and the incarceration of youth.

**For more information on Harry Belafonte, the film and ways to engage visit us at [singyoursonthemovie.com/](http://singyoursonthemovie.com/) and follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/harrybelafonte/](https://facebook.com/harrybelafonte/)**

## House Party Tips:

**We want you to invite your friends, family, and colleagues over to watch Sing Your Song together.**

**Here are some tips for hosting a great screening:**

1. Invite your guests via email, phone or listserv. Tweet about it (include @singyoursong and the hashtag #singyoursong), create a Facebook Event, and share [facebook.com/HarryBelafonte](https://www.facebook.com/HarryBelafonte) with your friends too. Use a site like [Evite](https://www.evite.com) or [MyPunchbowl](https://www.mypunchbowl.com) for invitations and RSVPs.
2. Before the film starts, introduce the movie. Ask everyone - what do you know about the life of Harry Belafonte? Then hand out slips of paper and pens or pencils and have everyone write down what they think they know.
3. After the screening, hold a 30 minute group discussion. See below for a few sample questions. Have people share what they wrote down. What have they learned about Harry Belafonte's career and achievements? Have their perceptions changed? What have they learned about the historical events Belafonte witnessed and movements he participated in (eg. Civil Rights movement, fighting Apartheid, raising awareness about famine in Africa)?
4. Encourage everyone to go to [singyoursongthemovie.com](https://singyoursongthemovie.com) and continue the discussions via Truth or Dare where you'll find a series of questions that Harry Belafonte has asked and wants people to discuss. Also, ask your friends to "like" the [Facebook page](#) and, if you like, log on to the website to add themselves to the mailing list. Have a laptop or tablet available in the room for people to sign up right away.
5. The next day, send a thank you to your guests and some follow up comments on the discussion.

## Talking Points:

After the credits roll, turn up the lights and get the conversation going. Here are four discussion prompts to start you off:

1. Harry Belafonte decided early in his career that he would use his position as artist and entertainer to fight the injustices he witnessed and experienced firsthand. In order to do this, he took risks. Whether it was breaking social taboos (*Three for Tonight, Islands in the Sun*), speaking truth to power (March on Washington, Haiti) or standing up to intolerance (Voter registration in Mississippi and Alabama), Belafonte made choices that challenged the conventional thinking. Does an artist whose work deals with social issues have a responsibility to make such choices? Why? Why not?
2. Miriam Makeba says “Belafonte means a lot to people-- struggling people around the world because he took all our struggles and made them his own.” What examples are there in the film of this? Can you think of any examples in your own life? What was the effect?
3. Belafonte says “I just kind of figured after all this, all of these many years, the last thing that I would be winding up doing’ with the last years of my life is still lookin’ to fix those things that I thought we fixed 50 years ago.” What things still need fixing? What prevents us from fixing them?
4. Towards the end of the film, Ruby Dee comments at the Gathering of the Elders- “Well, over the years, I’ve come to places like this so many times. And I leave without an assignment. We need an assignment.” What’s your assignment for the group? Ask the group- what injustices do you see in the world around you and what can you do to about them? Belafonte is currently working on such issues as Prison Reform and the Convention on the Rights of a Child. Take a look at the resources below to learn more.

## Sing Your Song Resources:

**Truth or Dare:** a video blog where you can engage in conversation with Harry Belafonte or take direct action on a featured campaign.

<http://www.singyoursonthemovie.com/truthordare>

**The Journal:** A deep rooted history of Harry Belafonte and the people and events in his life that had an effect on the world as we currently know it.

<http://www.singyoursonthemovie.com/journal>

## Sing Your Song Timeline:

**March 1, 1927** | Harry Belafonte is born in New York City.

**1932-40** | Belafonte spends the early years of life with his grandmother in Jamaica.

**1943-45** | World War II - Joins the Navy and works as a munitions loader.

**1946** | Joins The American Negro Theatre and becomes immersed in the work of Paul Robeson .

**1954** | *Carmen Jones* is released.

**1956** | *Scarlet Ribbons* is released.

**1956** | Belafonte meets with Dr. Martin Luther King at the Abyssinian Baptist Church.

**1957** | *Island in the Sun* is released.

**1959** | Tonight with Belafonte is televised.

**1959** | Helps Tom Mboya organize the Airlift Africa project – a student exchange with Kenyan students including Barack Obama, Sr.

**1959** | Introduces Ms. Miriam Makeba to the United States.

**August 28, 1963** | The March on Washington

**1964** | Works with Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee on voter registration in Greenwood, Mississippi.

**1965** | Organizers concerts for those who marched from Selma to Montgomery .

**April 4, 1968** | Dr. Martin Luther King is assassinated.

**1968** | Appears with Petula Clark on her television special and sings “On the Path of Glory.”

**June 5, 1968** | Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated.

**August, 1968** | Riots at the Democratic Convention in Chicago.

**1974** | Testifies in support of Dennis Banks and Russell Means of the American Indian Movement.

**1979** | Speaks against Nuclear proliferation at one of the largest in Bonn, Germany.

**1985** | *We Are the World* raises awareness of the pandemic of hunger in Africa. With the funds raised, Belafonte organizes efforts to bring medicine, supplies to Ethiopia.

**February 11, 1990** | Nelson Mandela is released from prison. Mandela serves as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

**1994** | Receives the National Medal of the Arts.

**2005** | Together with daughter Gina, Belafonte begins raising awareness about issues related gang violence and youth incarceration. Organizes The Gathering for Justice.