

Holly Near Biography (2023)

After 50 years of bold work, Holly Near is still one of the most consistent and well-informed voices for change. Her work is loving, challenging, funny, thought provoking, and remains rooted in the global community. As an outspoken singer and ambassador for peace, Holly brings a unique integration of world consciousness and self-evaluation, always growing and sharing experience humbly and boldly.

Holly discovered her unique and recognizable voice at an early age, learning to sign along with recordings of some of the world's great singers. After graduating high school, Holly attended UCLA but her academic journey ended after just a few months when she was spotted by agents and drawn into the world of film and television. She did guest spots on TV shows like *The Partridge Family*, *Room 222*, *All in the Family*, and played supporting roles in films like John Cassavetes' *Minnie and Moskowitz* and George Roy Hill's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. She moved to New York and performed for a short run in *Hair* on Broadway but soon turned to singing full time, as a soloist as well as sharing the stage with her sisters Laurel and Timothy. Throughout her career she has enjoyed collaborations with such artists as Mercedes Sosa, Ronnie Gilbert, Inti Illimani, Emma's Revolution, and her long-time songwriting partner, the late Jeff Langley.

In her early twenties, Near traveled with the Free The Army Show and the Indochina Peace Campaign; an experience that enabled her to learn about the function and consequences of the military industrial complex. While on the FTA tour in 1971 Holly was first introduced to the concept of global feminism. By 1974 she was crossing paths and sharing songs with the wave of new lesbian feminist performers such as Meg Christian, Cris Williamson, Linda Tillery, Mary Watkins, and Alive! Near dove into the feminist movement, trying to understand the depth of sexism and homophobia by turning those lessons into song.

Holly is known for the anthemic quality of some of her songs. As a songwriter she takes up the challenge of turning big concepts into small, personal stories. In response to the slaughter of the students at Kent State, she wrote *It Could Have Been Me*. And following the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk in San Francisco, she penned *Singing For Our Lives*, which has become an anthem for the LGBTQ community and appears in the Unitarian Church hymnal. The chilling disappearance of people in Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship brought forth *Hay Una Mujer Desaparecida* to commemorate the women who had "been disappeared."

In 2019, Near began a website project called *Because of a Song*, an online historic archive that documents some of the influential artists that rose from the feminist lesbian music scene in Oakland, California. The site can be viewed at www.becauseofasong.com.

A recipient of dozens of awards from organizations such as the ACLU and the National Organization of Women, Holly was one of Ms Magazine's Women of the Year recipients and has been nominated for Grammys as well as the Legends of Women's Music Award.