

Sen. Taylor: Statement on passing of Harry Belafonte

Posted on Wednesday, Apr 26, 2023

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MADISON - Today, Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement regarding the passing of noted actor, singer and activist Harry Belafonte:

“While more than 40 years my senior, Harry Belafonte always felt more like my contemporary. Leading the calls for divestiture in South Africa and an end to apartheid, as college students we modeled our protests after Belafonte.

It would be much later in life, that I would come to understand the trailblazing path of both his career and commitment to racial justice. Iconic firsts, such as having the first album by a single artist to sell more than a million copies, or in the height of 1959 segregation becoming the highest paid Black performer in history, made Belafonte a household name. Yet, it was how he used his success that will forever endear him to millions around the world.

As a supporter of Dr. King, Belafonte used both private funds and raised money to support the civil rights leader and the cause of racial equality. He used his celebrity and platform to call attention to the unfair treatment of Blacks, domestically and abroad. He was unafraid and unapologetic in his criticism of racism. Today, we’d call that “woke”. Living through years of segregation and even legislation aimed at devaluing his humanity, Mr. Belafonte would have called it “necessary”.

I join those mourning Harry Belafonte’s passing. I honor his boundless contributions, life, and work to make us live up to the ideals of America.”