



Sojourner Truth

"I feel safe even in the midst of my enemies, for the truth is powerful and will prevail."

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was one of the most important voices for freedom and equality in 19th century America. She began life as a slave by the name of Isabella Baumfree in the state of New York. Sold several times and abused during her youth, she eventually ran away and lived with an abolitionist family until a state law granting emancipation took effect on July 4, 1827. While working to reunite her family, Isabella participated in the religious revivals of the day, experiencing a spiritual calling to serve as a preacher. In 1843, she adopted the name Sojourner Truth and began speaking out against the evils of slavery. Although she never learned to read or write, her fiery speeches made her the most prominent woman in the abolitionist movement. She acquired even more fame after the publishing of her life story that detailed her experiences as a slave. It was in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention where the moment for which she would become best known occurred. Rising to command the floor, she gave an impromptu speech called "Ain't I a Woman?" that remains to this day a powerful statement of strength and equality for women. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Truth continued to be an influential leader, working to enlist black soldiers for the Union cause and fighting for the rights of freed slaves. Her importance was such that she met with both Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, the latter actually in the White House. To the end of her life, she was a fierce advocate for numerous reform causes in addition to African American and women's rights. She passed away at the age of 86 at her home in Michigan on November 26, 1883.

Sojourner Truth was one of the most important voices for freedom during a critical moment in our country's history. Inspired by her faith, she became a powerful role model for women in her fight for justice, and her words continue to inspire people across the world to this day.