

# Profiles in Leadership



## Sojourner Truth



# Sojourner Truth

Born: 1797 Died: 1883

# Sojourner Truth

Born into slavery in Hurley,  
New York in 1797.

She was tall - 5 feet 11 inches.

She was freed following the  
New York Anti Slavery Law of  
1827.

She lived for a time with a  
Quaker family, who gave her  
some education - she never  
learned to read.





# Sojourner Truth

No formal record of the speech exists, but Frances Gage, an abolitionist and president of the Convention, recounted Sojourner Truth's words.



# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

“recounted by Frances Gage”

Several ministers attended the second day of the Woman’s Rights Convention, and were not shy in voicing their opinion of man’s superiority over women. One claimed “superior intellect”, one spoke of the “manhood of Christ” and still another referred to the “sin of our first mother”.

Suddenly, Sojourner Truth rose from her seat in the corner of the church.

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

“For God’s sake, Mrs. Gage, don’t let her speak!” half a dozen women whispered loudly, fearing that their cause would be mixed up with Abolition.

Sojourner walked to the podium and slowly took off her sunbonnet. Her six-foot frame towered over the audience. She began to speak in her deep, resonant voice: **“Well, children, where there is so much racket, there must be something out of kilter, I think between the Negroes of the South and the women of the North - all talking about rights - the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what’s all this talking about?”**

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

Sojourner pointed to one of the ministers. **“That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me any best places. *And ain’t I a woman?*”**



# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

Sojourner raised herself to her full height. **“Look at me! Look at my arm.”** She bared her right arm and flexed her powerful muscles. **“I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. *And ain’t I a woman?*”**

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

**“I could work as much, and eat as much as man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! *And ain’t I a woman?* I have borne children and seen most of them sold into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me. *And ain’t I a woman?*”**

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

The women in the audience began to cheer wildly.

She pointed to another minister. **“He talks about this thing in the head. What’s that they call it?”**

“Intellect,” whispered a woman nearby.

# **“Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech**

**“That’s it, honey. What’s intellect got to do with women’s rights or black folks’ rights? If my cup won’t hold but a pint and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?”**

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

**“That little man in black there! He says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman. She stood with outstretched arms and eyes of fire. “Where did your Christ come from?”**

# “Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech

**“Where did your Christ come from?”**, she thundered again. **“From God and a Woman! Man had nothing to do with him!”**

The entire church now roared with deafening applause.

# **“Ain’t I a Woman?” Speech**

**“If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right-side up again. And now that they are asking to do it the men better let them.”**

# Sojourner Truth

After her death she received many honors:

- monument to honor her.
- US postal stamp
- Mars probe Sojourner was named in her honor





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