

Sojourner Truth: Abolitionist

Sojourner Truth was the self-given name, from 1843 onward, of Isabella Baumfree, an African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist. Truth was born into slavery in New York, but escaped with her infant daughter to freedom in 1826.

Sojourner Truth first came to Michigan to address the Friends of Human Progress Association meeting on October 4-5, 1856. This text of her address was recorded by the acting secretary of the Association, Thomas Chandler, and published in the Anti-Slavery Bugle (October 1856).

Has not God given to all his creatures the same rights?...

I learned that I was a human being. We had been taught that we was a species of monkey, baboon or 'rang-o-tang, and we believed it -- we'd never seen any of these animals.

But I believe in the next world. When we gets up yonder, we shall have all of them rights 'stored to us again -- all that love what I've lost -- all going to be 'stored to me again. Oh! How good God is.

My mother said when we were sold, we must ask God to make our masters good, and I asked who He was. She told me, He sit up in the sky. When I was sold, I had a severe, hard master, and I was tied up in the barn and whipped. Oh! Till the blood run down the floor and I asked God, why don't you come and relieve me -- if I was you and you'se tied up so, I'd do it for you.

This version of one of Sojourner Truth's addresses is taken from an unidentified newspaper, June 12, 1863, reporting on a meeting held at the state Sabbath School Convention, held in Battle Creek, Michigan.

"Children, who made your skin white? Was it not God? Who made mine black? Was it not the same God? Am I to blame, therefore, because my skin is black? Does it not cast a reproach on our Maker to despise a part of His children, because He has been pleased to give them a black skin? Indeed, children, it does; and your teachers ought to tell you so, and root up, if possible, the great sin of prejudice against color from your minds. While Sabbath School Teachers know of this great sin, and not only do not teach their pupils that it is a sin, but too often indulge in it themselves, can they expect God to bless them or the children?

Does not God love colored children as well as white children? And did not the same Savior die to save the one as well as the other? If so, white children must know that if they go to Heaven, they must go there without their prejudice against color, for in Heaven black and white are one in the love of Jesus. Now children, remember what Sojourner Truth has told you, and thus get rid of your prejudice, and learn to love colored children that you may be all the children of your Father who is in Heaven."

Friendly Questions:

1. How did your slave owners view you and how did they treat you?
2. What do you think God would say about slavery?

Unfriendly Questions:

1. Does not the New Testament say that slaves should be obedient to their masters?
2. In every society doesn't some one have to do the "dirty" work?