



Sojourner TRUTH

Sojourner Truth is an important national symbol for strong women of all races.

Because her mother was a slave, when Sojourner Truth was born in New York state in 1797 she was a slave. She was given the name Isabella.

At the age of nine, Isabella was taken away from her parents and sold to a different owner. She worked hard, but like most slaves, her master whipped her. After one whipping, she remembered her “blood run down the floor.”

Isabella was sold twice more before becoming a free person in 1826.

A few years later, her life changed **dramatically**. According to Isabella, God had given her a new name. She would be called Sojourner Truth. She then began traveling or “sojourning” across the North to tell people the “truth” about slavery.

Besides giving talks about the evils of slavery, Sojourner **composed** her autobiography. Since she could neither read nor write, she told her life’s story to a friend who wrote it down. *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* was published in 1850.

Standing six feet tall with a deep voice, Sojourner gave powerful speeches. According to one observer, listeners were “melted into tears by her touching stories.”

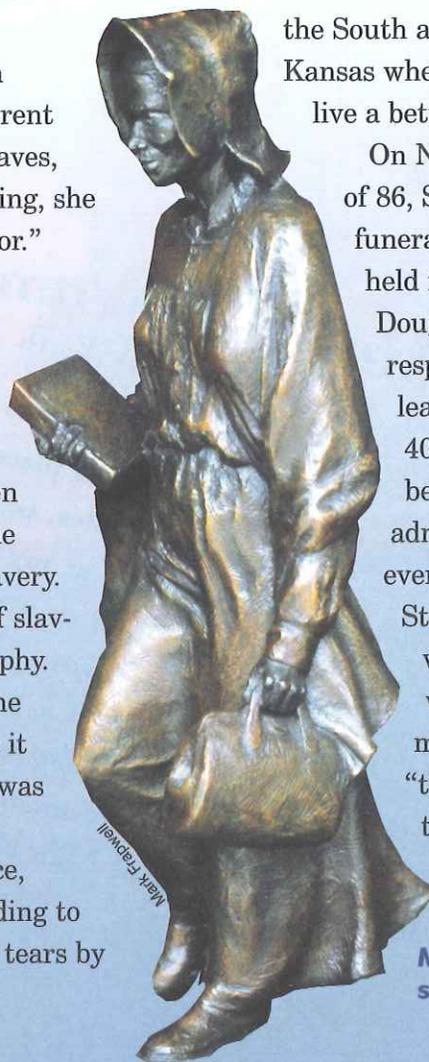
In the late 1850s, Sojourner moved to Battle Creek, Michigan.

During the Civil War, Sojourner traveled to Washington, DC, and met President Abraham Lincoln. She remembered that no one had ever treated her “with more kindness and cordiality than . . . that great and good man.” Sojourner

stayed in Washington and helped former slaves (called freedmen) who fled to the nation’s capital.

After the war, Sojourner continued to **campaign** for women’s rights, especially the right to vote. She also urged freed blacks to leave the South and move west to states like Kansas where she believed they could live a better life.

On November 26, 1883, at the age of 86, Sojourner Truth died. Her funeral was one of the largest ever held in Battle Creek. Frederick Douglass, the nation’s most respected African American leader of the time, said that for 40 years Sojourner Truth had been “an object of respect and admiration to social reformers everywhere.” Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who led the campaign to get women the right to vote, were more direct. They said she was “the most wonderful woman the [black] race ever produced.”



Manuelita Brown crafted this sculpture of Sojourner Truth.

WOMEN'S

RIGHTS



Battle Creek Historical Society

In 1851, Sojourner Truth gave a speech at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio. At the time, there were no television cameras or tape recorders to record exactly what a person said. Years after the convention, Frances Gage, who heard Sojourner give that speech, published it for the first time. Gage did not accurately write down what Sojourner really said. Some historians even believe that Gage created the line, "ain't I a woman?" However, Sojourner Truth's words have become a lasting expression of women's rights. Below is part of this famous speech.

Ain't I a Woman?

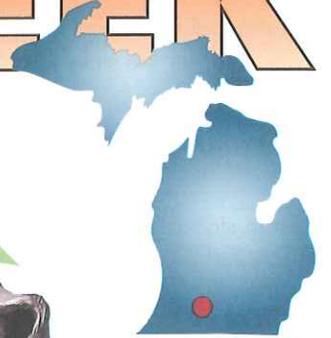
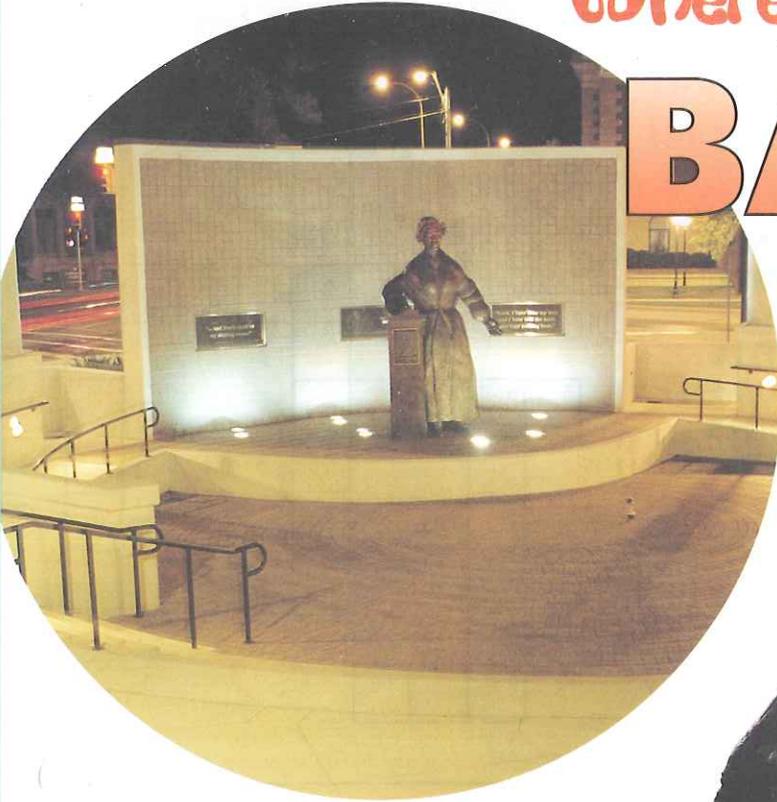
By Sojourner Truth

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 ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? . . .

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? . . . From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

Where to Take Your Family

BATTLE CREEK



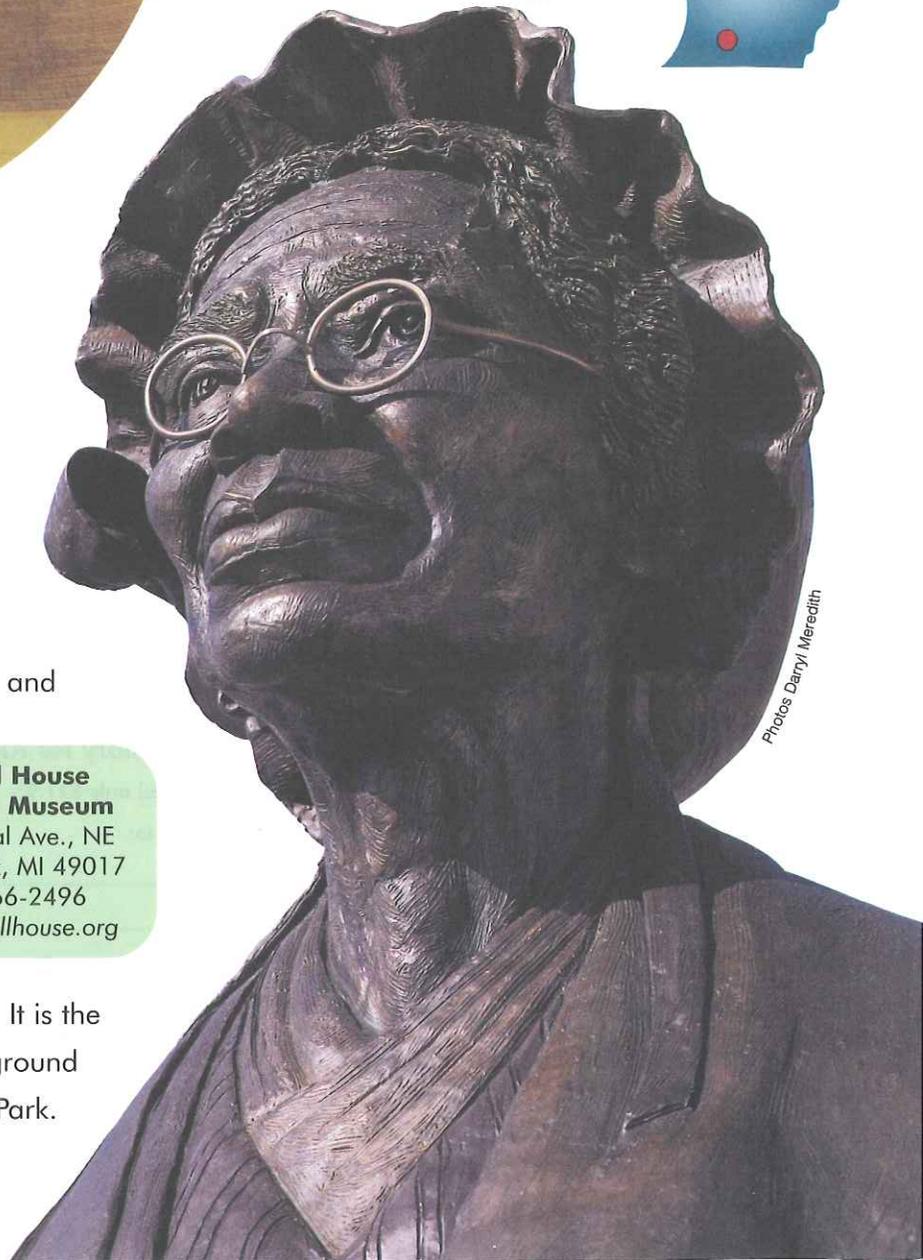
To learn more about Sojourner Truth, visit Battle Creek.

In 1999, the city dedicated a 12-foot bronze statue of Sojourner in Monument Park at the intersection of Michigan and Division in downtown Battle Creek. The park is landscaped like an amphitheater (above).

Battle Creek's Kimball House Museum and Sojourner Truth Institute displays artifacts related to Sojourner, such as her clothing, photographs, and writings of her speeches.

**Kimball House
Historical Museum**
196 Capital Ave., NE
Battle Creek, MI 49017
(269) 966-2496
www.kimballhouse.org

Battle Creek is also home to the Underground Railroad Monument. It is the nation's largest monument to the Underground Railroad and is located near Monument Park.



Photos Darryl Meredith

What Did You Learn?

ACROSS

1. Truth was taken away from her parents and sold when she was only _____.
4. In the late 1850s, Truth moved to _____ Creek, Michigan.
5. Truth could not read or _____, but she told her life story to a friend who wrote it down.
7. Truth urged freed blacks to leave the _____ and move west.
8. Truth stood _____ feet tall.

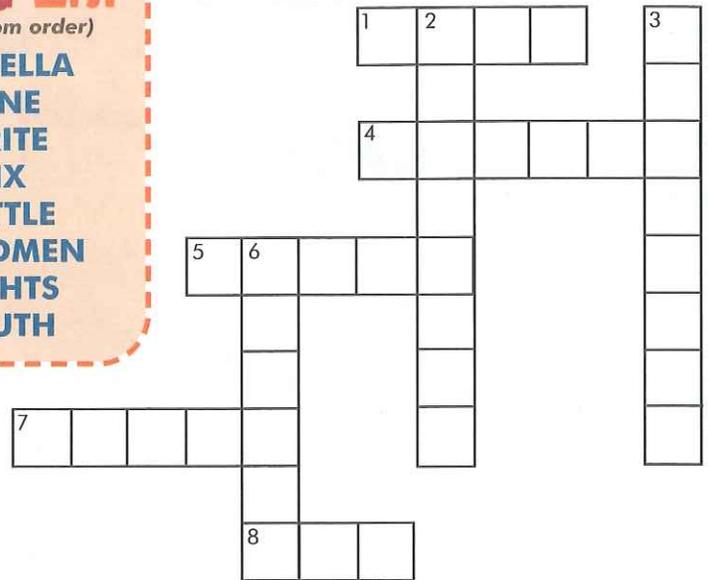
DOWN

2. When Truth was born, she was given the name _____.
3. During the Civil War, Truth stayed in Washington, DC, and helped former slaves called _____.
6. After the Civil War, Truth traveled around the country giving speeches about women's _____.

Word List

(in random order)

ISABELLA
NINE
WRITE
SIX
BATTLE
FREEDMEN
RIGHTS
SOUTH



Vocabulary

Accurate: done exactly to fact, without error

Campaign: action taken to accomplish a specific purpose

Compose: to put together or create something

Dramatic: forceful in appearance or effect