

# Sojourner Truth: "Ain't I a Woman?"

By Original speech from the public domain, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.15.16

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Sojourner Truth, circa 1870. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

*Editor's note: A former slave who escaped to freedom in 1826, Sojourner Truth was an influential advocate for many causes, including women's equality and the abolition of slavery. In 1851, she gave the following speech – unscripted – at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention. She was considered controversial in her day. Though American slavery ended within her lifetime, women were only given the vote in 1920, about 40 years after her death.*

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that between the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in trouble pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

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 tilled soil and planted crops, and no man could outdo 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? I have had thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

## "They Are Asking To Do It"

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup will only hold a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't it be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?

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

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.

Thank you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.