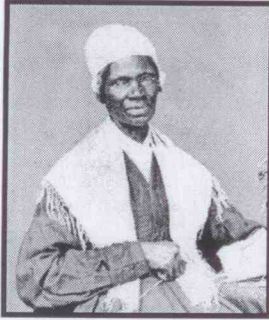


A Journey In Truth:

A tribute to the life and ministry of Isabella Baumfree/Sojourner Truth

By: Lenward C. Hood



In order to understand and appreciate the journey of Sojourner Truth, we must see the distinct differences between her birth as a slave named Isabella Baumfree and her new name Sojourner Truth. The new name denotes a new birth in freedom, conceived in and born of a divine experience.

It was in 1797 that Isabella Baumfree was born a slave in Ulster County, NY. While in the bondage of slavery, Isabella suffered cruel, harsh and

inhumane treatment by her slave master. According to her own words, her master whipped her with a bundle of rods that were bound together with cords. During the difficult time of her oppressive treatment, Isabella sought refuge through religion and praying to God. It is significant that prior to and during 1827, New York was in fact a slave state, according to state law. However, contrary to the facts of law, Isabella saw herself as being free in the trinity of her person. Her actions bore witness to her vision of freedom.

Consequently, very early one morning in 1827, Isabella, along with her infant daughter, walked away from the slave quarters and the oppressive hands of the slave master and wandered away, not sure where she was going. According to history, she wandered to the home of Isaac and Maria Van Wagner. It was there that she was received with kindness.

During her stay with the Van Wagner's, Isabella stated that she was inspired to preach as a result of a life changing religious experience. The time span between 1829 and June 1, 1843 was a period of perfecting and preparation for the journey. She was being perfected by the teachings of Evangelists and other leaders in the church. On June 1, 1843, Isabella Baumfree changed her name to Sojourner Truth. The new name was in agreement with, and a reflection of, her call, mission and ministry. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a sojourner is one who stays in a place temporarily, or a stay that is short in duration.

According to her testimony, Sojourner Truth's call was to travel and preach the absolute truth. It is essential that it be understood that the absolute truth comes from God, who is sovereign, and that we must hold it to be self evident. As her new name denotes, Sojourner began a sojourn travelling to preach what she believed to be the absolute truth as a Woman's Rights advocate and an abolitionist.

Her Woman's Rights advocacy is an established part of history, wherein in 1854, at an Ohio Woman's Rights convention in Akron, Ohio, she gave her most famous speech with the legendary phrase "Aint I A Woman". As an abolitionist, during the civil war, she spoke on behalf of the Union, as well as for enlisted Black troops for the cause and freeing of slaves.

Sojourner Truth's life work and witness is testament to the words of scripture that teaches us that if we continue in the word, we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. It is inspiring to know that Isabella was not made free because her slave master decided to release her and let her go. Instead, she was made free by the truth, also, the coming into the knowledge and truth as it relates to who she was, as endowed by the creator. The world will little note, nor long remember the name Isabella Baumfree; however the name and work of Sojourner Truth will long endure.

Although Sojourner's life was finished and her body was laid to rest in Battlecreek, Michigan in November 1883, the journey in truth continues, it is perpetuated by as many as receive and embrace the truth.

The memories of Sojourner Truth will never die, because they are distinguished by her work, and it belong to the ages.

Reference:

Sandburg, Carl. 1939. *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years Volume 2*, San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.