



Isabella eventually felt a calling to speak out about the injustices she saw. Inspired to legally change her name to Sojourner Truth in 1843, she went on to travel and spread her message of freedom. She continued to speak passionately on the subjects of women’s rights, universal suffrage and prison reform until old age. She died in Michigan on November 26, 1883.

Today, Sojourner Truth is remembered as one of the foremost leaders of the abolition movement and an early advocate of women’s rights. She is perhaps best known for her 1851 speech “Ain’t I a Woman” and her advocacy for reparations for enslaved African-Americans. A bust installed in the U.S. Capitol in 2009 recognizes Sojourner Truth’s invaluable contributions to securing equality and justice for all.

SOJOURNER TRUTH was enslaved for the first 29 years of her life—until she literally walked to freedom. Named Isabella at her birth in 1797, she was one of 12 children of James and Isabella Baumfree enslaved by Col. Johannes Hardenbergh in Rifton, NY. All of the children would be sold away from their parents and each other.

By age 13, Isabella had been sold three times and enslaved by four different Ulster County families. Her rough childhood left physical and emotional scars she kept throughout her life. In 1826 John Dumont rescinded his promise to free her, so Isabella escaped. She walked 11.5 miles with her infant daughter Sophia—leaving three other children behind—to secure her freedom. Today, it is possible to retrace the likely course of her route (see map).

Isabella had barely begun to get used to her new life as a free person when she learned that Peter, her youngest son, had been sold illegally over state lines. The case she fought to gain his return from Alabama was one of the first in which a black woman successfully challenged a white man in a U.S. court.

“We have all been thrown down so low that nobody thought we’d ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again...”

— Sojourner Truth

LEARN MORE ABOUT SOJOURNER TRUTH

The Narrative of Sojourner Truth dictated by Sojourner Truth, edited by Olive Gilbert; 1850 <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850.html#27>

Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend by Carleton Mabee; 1995. A biography by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author (and Ulster County resident)

Dream Big, Little One, Vashti Harrison (2018) Children’s book about 18 trailblazing black women in American history, including Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman

Town of Esopus website. Detailed information about Sojourner Truth’s time in Ulster County. www.esopus.com/visit/sojourner-truths-time-in-esopus-ny/

The Mindful Walker blog by Susan DeMark. Excellent description of Sojourner Truth statue in Port Ewen. mindfulwalker.com/beyond-gotham/the-child-who-became-sojourner-truth

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION

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Monkey Joe’s Roasting Company

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WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM SCENIC HUDSON

Scenic Hudson is committed to preserving and connecting people to Kingston’s natural and historic treasures. They partnered with Kingston Land Trust, Harambee and others to protect the Pine Street African Burial Ground, resting place of enslaved African-Americans, and created an “outdoor classroom” for city schoolkids at Esopus Meadows Preserve. They’re currently working with New York State to transform a former industrial site into a 508-acre riverfront park. ScenicHudson.org

SOJOURNER TRUTH LifeWalk



Sojourner Truth Life Walk

(APPROXIMATELY 4.3 MILES)

1 WALK STARTS

Esopus Town Hall (284 Broadway, Ulster Park)

2 Jug Tavern

(corner of River Road and Route 9W, Port Ewen): Business of Martinus Schryver, to whom Truth (then called Isabella) was enslaved around age 11

3 Sojourner Truth Memorial Statue

(172 Broadway, Port Ewen): Depicts Isabella carrying molasses from the waterfront to Jug Tavern. Believed to be only U.S. statue depicting an enslaved child at work

4 Monkey Joe's Roasting Company

(478 Broadway, Kingston): Stop for refreshments

5 Ain't I a Woman

(corner of Franklin and Furnace Streets, Kingston): Mural painted by Jetsonarama (Chip Thomas) and Jess X Snow honors Truth's contributions to women's rights movement and her role as a humanitarian

6 Pine Street African Burial Ground

(157 Pine Street, Kingston): Long-forgotten and recently protected burial site of enslaved African-Americans

7 St. James United Methodist Church

(corner of Pearl and Fair streets, Kingston): Isabella attended church here for the first time around age 29

8 Pronkstillevan

(289 Fair Street, Kingston): In 2015 O+ Festival artist Gaia painted "Pronkstillevan," which references the Dutch word for "ornate still life." It includes portraits of neoclassicist painter John Vanderlyn as well as Sojourner Truth, both born in Ulster County in roughly the same period

9 Ulster County Courthouse

(285 Wall Street, Kingston): Where Isabella won a landmark 1828 legal case to have her enslaved son Peter returned to her

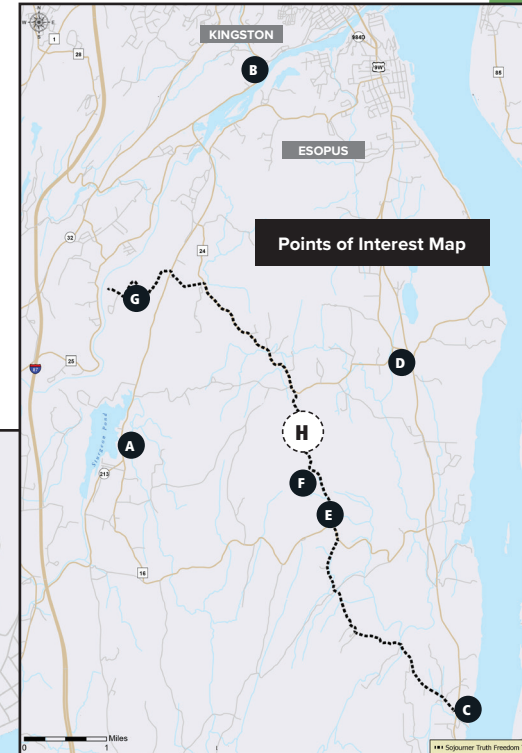
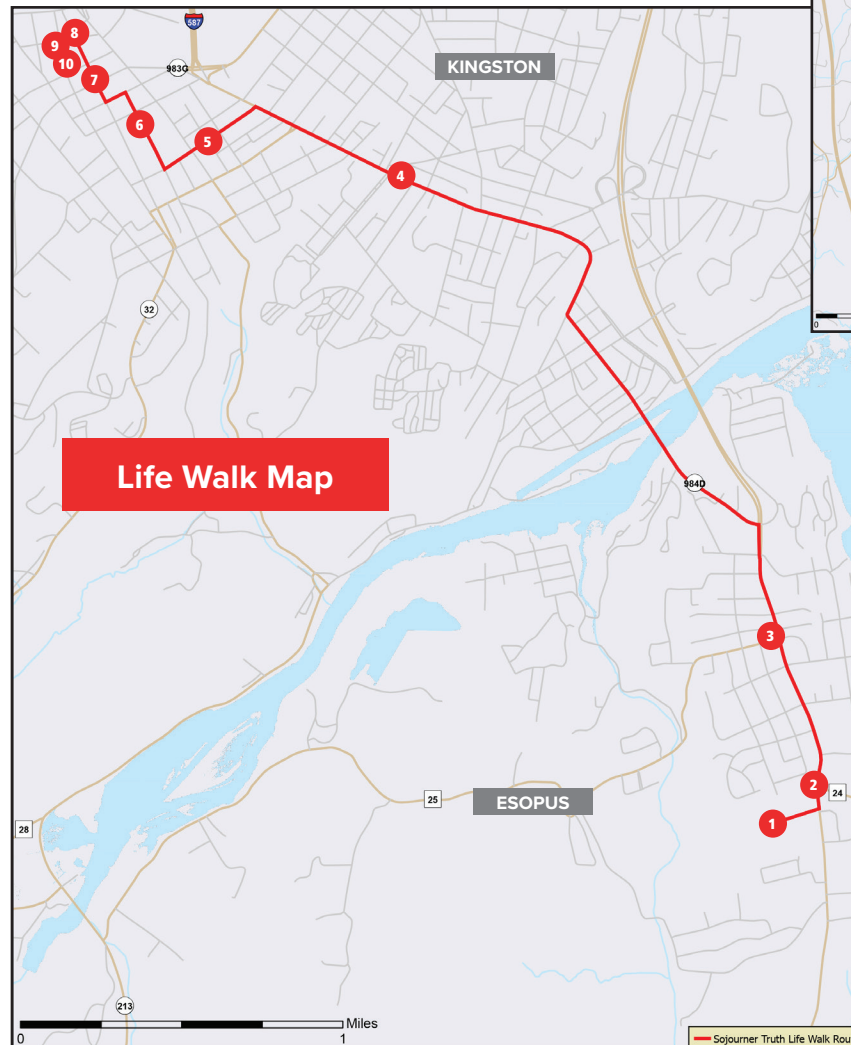
10 Old Dutch Church

(272 Wall Street, Kingston): Walk ends. Enter church for reenactment of Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech



Sojourner Truth Memorial Statue (photo: Susan DeMark | Mindful Walker)

Pine Street African Burial Ground (photo: Seth McKee)



Robert Rodriguez, Jr.

Sojourner Truth Additional Points of Interest

(IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF HER LIFE)

Unless otherwise noted, sites are not open to the public. Please respect landowners' privacy

- A Johannes Hardenbergh House** (Route 213/ Main Street, Rifton): Birthplace of Isabella Baumfree in 1797
- B John Neely House** (Route 213, Rondout): Approximate location of second home in which Isabella was enslaved, from age 9-11. During lectures Truth later gave about her early life, she displayed scars from beatings received here
- C John Dumont Farm** (Route 9W, West Park): Approximate site of farm where Isabella was enslaved from 1810-1826. Here she married Tom, also enslaved by Dumont, and gave birth to 3 daughters and 2 sons
- D Klyne Esopus Museum** (764 Route 9W, Ulster Park): Now featuring local history exhibits, it once housed the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church where John Dumont and one of Isabella's daughters attended services (esopushistorymuseum.org/)
- E Shaupeneak Ridge Preserve** (143 Poptown Road, Esopus): Public trails traverse landscape through which Isabella may have traveled on her escape route (ScenicHudson.org)
- F Levi Rowe House** (Poptown Road, Esopus): Approximate location of home of Quaker family where Isabella first stopped on her walk to freedom with infant daughter Sophia
- G Isaac and Maria Van Wagenen House** (Van Wagner Road, St Remy): Home of Quaker family where Isabella ended her walk and stayed for several months. The family paid Dumont \$25-\$20 for Isabella, \$5 for Sophia—to secure their freedom
- H Sojourner Truth Freedom Trail** ----- Likely route of Isabella's 11.5-mile walk to freedom