Sojourner Truth

Editor's note: Sojourner Truth was an important defender of many causes, such as women's rights and the abolition, or end, of slavery. She was born a slave and escaped in 1826. In 1851, she gave the following speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention. She was considered controversial at that time. American slavery ended within her lifetime. Still, 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 place. I think that between the negroes of the South and the women of 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 they go. 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 dirt 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 can get food. And I was whipped as well! And ain't I a woman? I have had 13 children and saw most of them sold off to slavery. When I cried out with my mother's heartbreak, 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 crowd whispers, "intellect"]? That's it, honey. What does that have to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup will only hold a pint, and yours holds a quart, would it not be mean not to let me have my little share?

Then that little man in black there, he says women cannot have as many rights as men, because Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? He came 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 by herself, these women together ought to be able to 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.

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