

## Activity V.

# **Speak YOUR Truth**

## NOTES

The purpose of this activity is for students to analyze a famous speech about fairness and equality, to use it as a model for a persuasive essay on a topic they are passionate about, and to employ critical thinking skills to argue their position.

- ★ This activity should take one to several class periods depending on how much you want to give for homework and how much you want to do in class.
- ★ Supplies: lined paper or 8 ½" X 11" computer paper; pens and/or pencils.
- ★ A copy of Sojourner Truth's speech is provided.
- ★ When students use Sojourner Truth's speech as a model, they will generate a paper that does not follow the traditional format for a 5-paragraph essay. If your school is focusing on the traditional format, please feel free to use that style instead of this more unusual one.
- ★ Although this activity is designed as a follow-up to the "Sojourner Truth: A Woman Ain't I?" performance at one of our courthouses, the text of the speech allows you to use this activity without seeing the performance.

## Activity V.

# Speak YOUR Truth

In her famous speech at the 1854 Ohio Women’s Rights Convention, Sojourner Truth describes the false stereotypes and assumptions that stood as roadblocks to the cause of women’s rights.

The purpose of this activity is to give you an opportunity to speak your own truth.

### DIRECTIONS

Read “Ain’t I a Woman?” out loud. Analyze and discuss the content and structure of the speech.

Write a 1 – 2 page essay in which you express what you know to be an important truth.

*Examples:*

- ★ An essay that reveals something true about you as a person
- ★ An essay that reveals something that you’ve observed to be true about your family, your neighborhood, or your school
- ★ An essay that reveals a truth about current world problems such as the war in Iraq, the Darfur situation, global warming, etc.

1. The first paragraph should provide the “hook” – one to three sentences that grab the reader’s attention and relate to your specific truth.
2. The second paragraph should state an idea that’s an argument against your truth and provide two or three details to prove that idea is wrong. *For example, in the second paragraph of her speech, Sojourner Truth says that men think women aren’t strong, that they have to be “helped into carriages and lifted over ditches.” To prove that idea wrong, she says that she has performed farm work as well as any man, has handled a whipping as well as any male slave, and has given birth to thirteen children – a difficult task NO man has ever done.*
3. The third paragraph should follow the format of the second paragraph, but you should provide just one or two details to prove that the opposite idea is wrong.
4. The fourth paragraph should follow the format of the third paragraph: only one or two supporting details are required to prove the opposite idea is wrong.
5. The fifth paragraph is your conclusion for which you have two options.
  - ★ Summarize the arguments in the body of your essay.
  - OR
  - ★ Issue a call to action, the way Sojourner Truth calls upon women to fight for their rights.

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## HANDOUT

### **Sojourner Truth (1797-1883): *Ain't I A Woman?***

Delivered 1851

Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix 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 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? I have borne 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?

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 won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you 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 much 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 they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

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

Courtesy of the Internet Modern History Sourcebook

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<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html>