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“I mean Ain’t I a woman?”

“Aint I a Woman.” Those words have a lasting legacy that will remain iconic and powerful for forever. Those four words coined by Sojourner Truth were first spoken at the Women's Convention in Akron Ohio in 1851. The annual Women’s Rights Conference was a convention that allowed women to discuss concerns, unite and fight for civil rights. Sojourner Truth was born a slave, but died an abolitionist and giant in the civil rights and womens movement. Sojourner Truth being one of the few black women there, her presence at the convention was undoubtedly recognized, but also, her impact from the event will go down as a major win for the Women's movement.

By the mid nineteenth century, women became the most resistant and vocal to their treatment in society. The Women’s Rights Convention held in Akron, Oh in 1851 was not the first conference held by the organization. The first event like this was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. The annual meetings raised the clarity of women's issues and was the beginning of the women's rights movement in the United States. In my own opinion, basically it was the parent event that created modern day feminism. At the convention, there were many speakers who read speeches and essays regarding education, common law and other civil liberties. This mainly spoke to the treatment of white women, so you can imagine how Black women and enslaved women were treated at the time.

Isabella Baumfree was her name given at birth, Truth renamed herself in 1843 after hearing from God. She chose Sojourner Truth because she believes God has called her to preach the truth. After she renamed herself she began preaching the word of God and being an advocate against slavery.

Though the transcripts may not be accurately written from that moment, her speech at the convention is still very much relevant today. “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!” (Truth,1851)

“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?” (Sojourner Truth, 1851). At that moment Sojourner Truth used her voice to shine light on the ways society was failing both women and black people.

Truth found herself right in the middle of the biggest civil rights failures, which had not been done in such a public way. Even 170 years after she gave her infamous speech, the same words “Ain’t I a Woman” still echoes with millions of black women today. I would even go to call her the Mother of today’s “Black Feminism”.

Which leads me to my next point, Feminism v. Black Feminism. Black Feminism is not a term I coined and is still fairly new to the world. Sojourner Truth’s speech, even though it couldn’t have been more than a couple of minutes, was one of the first moments where the

intersection between enslaved people and women's rights were recognized at such a massive event in history. At the time, the Women's Suffrage movement was fairly new to the world. From the very beginning, the Women's Suffrage movement was mainly viewed from the perspective of middle class white women in the U.S. That moment in time is still very much referenced in today's fight for women's rights. So for Truth to take the stand she did in that moment, was not only iconic but also trailblazing. Even today, black women are seen at the forefront in every fight against women.

For example, Tamika Mallory, a black woman, is a Black Lives Matter activist, but her notoriety started with her fight for women's rights. Tamika Mallory and Bob Bland, a white woman, are co-presidents of the national Women's March. They organized one of the biggest women's rights rallies in history. Even if Mallory or Bland never publicly said how Sojourner Truth's legacy impacted their lives or the way that they fight, her influence is undeniable.

In conclusion, Sojourner Truth's legacy and impact is undoubtedly prevalent today. Even as an ex- slave, she had not had the education or privileges that white women at that time had. But her voice was the most powerful in that moment. The strength behind her experience ultimately gave her voice the power to capture the attention of millions of people. More than a century old, that speech and her other activism proves that her power influenced the entire civil rights movement, not just women's rights, labeling her one of the most dynamic trailblazers this country has ever seen.

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