

The tall black woman came to the White House to meet Abraham Lincoln.

"You know, Mr. Lincoln," she said, "I'd never heard of you before you were talked of for president."

Lincoln smiled and said, "But I had heard of you many times before that."

The woman was known as Sojourner Truth. Her real name was Isabella Baumfree. The White House was a long way from the first house she had known. She was born a slave in New York. And she grew into a strong woman with a mind of her own.

Isabella was a loyal worker, but she could also be a fighter when she felt she had been wronged. When she was young, her master promised to free her by the Fourth of July. All she had to do was continue to work hard. Isabella worked as hard as she could, but July passed. She knew her master had lied. So one morning she walked away from his land, never to return. Isabella was now a free woman.

A few years later, her small son Peter was illegally sold. He was taken South as a slave. Isabella went to court and demanded the return of her son. The judge agreed with her. Soon Peter was back home.

In 1843 Isabella took the name Sojourner Truth and left New York. She began preaching against slavery. She preached that God loves all people. He didn't mean for any man to be the slave of another.

In her time, women were not expected to

make speeches in public. Most people felt that was a job for men. And many people refused to listen to black speakers. Sojourner Truth had a double burden, but she overcame it. The message, spoken in her low voice, moved her listeners. This woman, who could neither read nor write, became one of the best-known women in the country.

It took courage for a black woman to speak to crowds of whites, but Sojourner was a fighter. Once an angry mob threatened to burn down the town hall where she was scheduled to speak. "If you burn down the building," she said, "then I will speak upon the ashes." The angry crowd backed down.

After meeting Lincoln, Sojourner decided to stay in Washington. The Civil War was being fought and thousands of slaves were fleeing North. Many had come to Washington. Sojourner worked with the former slaves. She taught them to cook and to make comfortable homes for their families. Later she worked in a hospital set up for them.

With the North victorious, slavery ended in the United States. But Sojourner continued to speak out. She spoke on behalf of many causes, such as temperance and equal rights for women.

Sojourner Truth carried her message to the people of the United States until she was over eighty years old. Finally, she returned to her home in Battle Creek, Michigan, where she died in 1883.

## CHECK YOUR READING

1. **Sojourner Truth came to see Abraham Lincoln at**
  - A the White House
  - B the Capitol
  - C his farm
  
2. **This brave ex-slave's real name was**
  - A Iris Lincoln
  - B Isabella Baumfree
  - C Barbara Baum
  
3. **Sojourner went to court to get her son back when he**
  - A ran away
  - B was jailed
  - C was sold
  
4. **Sojourner spoke out against**
  - A high taxes
  - B slavery
  - C the Civil War
  
5. **In the 1840s, women were not expected to**
  - A stay at home
  - B make speeches
  - C work hard
  
6. **Sojourner showed courage when she spoke to crowds of**
  - A whites
  - B slaves
  - C women
  
7. **After meeting the president, Sojourner stayed**
  - A at home with her family
  - B in Washington
  - C in the state of New York
  
8. **Sojourner taught former slaves to**
  - A read and write
  - B bandage wounds
  - C make decent homes for themselves
  
9. **After the North won the war, slavery**
  - A moved to the western states
  - B was allowed in all states
  - C ended in the United States
  
10. **Sojourner retired and returned to her home in**
  - A Washington
  - B Battle Creek, Michigan
  - C New York City