

SOJOURNER TRUTH, "ADDRESS AT THE WOMAN'S
RIGHTS CONVENTION IN AKRON, OHIO," (29 MAY 1851)

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Abstract: Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech in Akron, commonly titled "Ain't I a Woman," stands as a landmark in the fight for racial and woman's equality. Truth spoke before a woman's rights convention, making arguments about women's physical and intellectual capacities, as well as religious arguments in support of equal rights. While it is clear that she asserted her identity as a woman and a citizen in this speech, our understanding of her words is complicated by the lack of an authentic text of her remarks. This essay explores the challenges in recovering Truth's rhetoric and offers an analysis of her arguments for equal rights.

Keywords: Sojourner Truth, Identity, Textual Authenticity, Civil Rights, Feminism

The Declaration of Sentiments adopted at the 1848 Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York called for "a series of Conventions" that would continue the reform efforts across "every part of the country."¹ In response to that call, a Woman's Rights Convention met in Akron, Ohio on May 28 and 29, 1851. The convention featured a number of women speaking in defense of their rights and calling for moral change and legal reform. Sojourner Truth participated in the convention and spoke on the second day.² She was the only woman speaking at the convention who had been held in slavery. In her speech, Truth argued forcefully for the rights of women, drawing particular attention to the position of women of color in the social and legal hierarchy of her time.

What Truth said that day is the subject of much debate.³ The speech Truth delivered at the Akron convention is today commonly titled "Ain't I a woman?" However, the contraction appears in different versions of the speech as: "Ar'n't ," "A'n't," and "Ain't."⁴ Marius Robinson published a version of the speech in the Salem, Ohio *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in 1851.⁵ This version was written in standard English and represents the first supposedly complete text of the speech. In 1863, Frances Dana Gage produced the most widely known version of the speech in a southern black dialect,⁶ and others, including rhetorical critic Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, have edited Gage's text into standard English.⁷ In 1850, Truth published an account of her life, the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, and a later edition of that memoir included a copy of the Gage version of the Akron speech.⁸ There are several questions to consider in determining the most authentic version of the speech. How do the words ascribed to Truth vary among the versions? What are the differences in the accounts of the context of the Akron convention? What written version best captures the quality of Truth's delivery, particularly the accuracy of what scholars call "eye dialectal" indicators?⁹ What were each writer's motivations in constructing the different versions of the speech, and how are those differing motivations reflected in the texts?

There are several reasons why it is important to establish an authentic version of Truth's Akron speech. Despite excellent biographies of Sojourner Truth that address the controversies surrounding the various versions of the speech,¹⁰ many encyclopedias, anthologies, and scholars continue to use the Robinson or Gage texts, sometimes in expurgated form and often without indication of the source or an interrogation of its authenticity.¹¹ Public interest in the speech likely leads readers to one of the multiple versions found online, and these texts often appear without attribution or contextualization.¹² When discussing the role of archival research in studying female orators, Susan Zaeske and Sarah Jedd note the questionable authenticity of many speeches found on the Internet, and they cite Truth's Akron speech as a good example of the problem.¹³

In this essay, I argue that the Robinson text of Truth's 1851 Akron speech is the most valuable for readers interested in Truth's rhetorical strategies. Robinson's version of the speech and his description of the context are most consistent with the historical evidence. Gage's text, while preferred by some scholars, is, in some regards, inconsistent with that historical and linguistic evidence. Each text depicted a very different Sojourner Truth. In the Robinson text, Truth came across as brave, confident, and witty. In the Gage and Campbell texts, essential features of her lived experience were masked by linguistic errors and historical inaccuracies. This created a Sojourner Truth who appeared less skilled as an orator and less confident of her own agency. The popularity of the Gage text has thus minimized Truth's rhetorical power and legacy. If we are to assess the rhetoric of one of the nineteenth century's great voices for freedom, we must consider Truth's rhetoric based on the best available evidence.

The first section of this essay provides a brief biography of Sojourner Truth from her 30 years of slavery to her career as a professional speaker on the antislavery lecture tour. The second section explains how we came to have conflicting versions of the Akron speech, and it outlines the differences among them. In the third section of the essay, I discuss the rhetorical and historical authenticity of the various texts of the speech, showing how Gage's version is not supported by contemporaneous evidence. Fourth, I analyze Truth's rhetoric as represented in the Robinson text, including her claim for equality based on her tripartite division of humanity into body, mind, and spirit. The final section considers the legacy of Truth's rhetoric and the implications of assessing her rhetoric based on the differing texts of her most famous speech.

Sojourner Truth's Life

The woman who would come to be called Sojourner Truth was born around 1797 in Ulster County, New York. Truth's given slave name was Isabella.¹⁴ Nell Irvin Painter identified three significant time periods in Truth's life: "slavery, evangelism, and antislavery feminism."¹⁵ Her first spoken language was Dutch, yet she learned to speak English around the age of ten—albeit with a decidedly Dutch accent.¹⁶ Her language skills were typical of those in Isabella's region, where slaves in New York and New Jersey not uncommonly "spoke good English and Dutch," a legacy dating back to at least the 1740s.¹⁷ Truth never learned to read or write and had no formal religious training, other than learning from her mother how to recite the Lord's Prayer in Dutch.¹⁸

During her first 30 years of life, Isabella remained in slavery under six different owners. She would give birth to five children during this time.¹⁹ In 1817, New York passed a law

requiring that all slaves born before 1799 be set free on July 4, 1827. Isabella's fifth owner, John J. Dumont, promised he would release her one year early. When the time came, however, Dumont broke his promise, claiming that Isabella still owed him additional work because of an injury that he claimed had affected her productivity. Finding this decision unacceptable, Isabella took her youngest child and left in the fall of 1826.²⁰ She escaped to the van Wagenen's home five miles away. The van Wagenens opposed slavery and paid Dumont for the freedom of both Isabella and her daughter.²¹

Following her emancipation, Isabella moved to New York City where she worked as a housekeeper and cook. During this time she continued to develop her strong religious beliefs and subsequently joined two churches—first a Methodist church, and later an African church. She was also part of several religious movements of the time, including perfectionism (an offshoot of Methodism practiced in homes instead of churches), the Kingdom of Matthias (led by Robert Matthews who believed himself to be the Prophet Matthias and Jesus Christ), and Millerism (William Miller predicted the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world in 1843).²² When not living in the homes of her employers, Isabella settled in several different religious communities. Regardless of the form her religious practice took, Isabella maintained that she had a direct connection to the Holy Spirit and was unwavering in her devotion to Jesus.²³

Isabella's participation in Millerism and her belief that the world was coming to an end likely contributed to her decision to leave domestic employment in New York and set out on a new course with a new name. Just before leaving New York on June 1, 1843, she informed the woman she was working for that "her name was no longer Isabella, but, SOJOURNER; and that she was going east." When the woman asked why she was going east, Truth replied: "The Spirit calls me there, and I must go."²⁴ Truth believed that she had been called to lecture, "'testifying of the hope that was in her'—exhorting the people to embrace Jesus, and refrain from sin."²⁵ Her new first name represented her transient life and her plan to travel around the country to preach. Sojourner was a wanderer, spending time in different places, but not making any of them her home. Her choice of "Truth" as a surname, on the other hand, reflected her total faith in God and the Holy Spirit who spoke to her.

In 1850, Truth published the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, which she sold at her public appearances as her primary means of support. The *Narrative* was a historical and dramatic literary creation based on conversations between Truth and her friend Olive Gilbert. Later editions featured an addendum—the *Book of Life*—which reproduced correspondence and newspaper articles about Truth, including Gage's text of the Akron speech.²⁶ Truth joined the antislavery lecture circuit, traveled around the country, and spoke before meetings on abolition, woman's rights, and religion.²⁷ According to an account in the *Democrat and Chronicle*: "Her appearance reminds one vividly of Dinah in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' A white handkerchief was tied closely about her head and she wore spectacles, but this was the only indication of her extreme age. Her voice is strong, has no touch of shrillness, and she walked about as hale and hearty as a person of half her years."²⁸ While she was not alone in her quest to bring about change, Truth was often the only black female to speak at these events.²⁹ As she spoke about abolition and woman's rights she addressed audiences that were often mixed in their disposition toward her beliefs and her participation in the events.

While on a speaking tour through Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio in the spring of 1851, Truth visited the home of Marius and Emily Robinson in Salem, Ohio.³⁰ In March of that year, the Robinsons' newspaper, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*,³¹ advertised a women's rights convention to be held in Akron. The call asked for the attendance of "all the friends of Reform, in whatever department engaged, we say—Come, give us your presence and counsel . . . Slavery, political and personal, will crush humanity."³² It was there that Sojourner Truth would deliver her famous address that is the subject of this essay. Following the Akron convention, Truth spoke at abolition and woman's rights meetings throughout the country. Her religious practice embraced the spiritualism of the 1850s, leading her to finally settle in a religious community near Battle Creek, Michigan. Truth's activism continued in speeches to the New York City Anti-Slavery Society and the American Equal Rights Association. Following the start of the Civil War, Truth became an outspoken advocate for the Union even before the abolition of slavery was clearly stated as a goal of the war. Truth met many of the notable people of her time, including Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, and Ulysses S. Grant. Following the Civil War, Truth turned her attention to two main causes, universal suffrage and black resettlement in the west. Truth's rhetorical efforts for these causes focused on the economic benefits of equality and highlighted the profound inequalities for black women. She remained politically active into the 1880s, despite several premature reports of her passing. Sojourner Truth died at her home in Battle Creek, Michigan on November 26, 1883.

Sojourner Truth's Speech at Akron

The second annual meeting of the Ohio Woman's Rights Convention was well-advertised and attracted hundreds of women and men to the Universalist Church in Akron on May 28-29, 1851.³³ Frances Dana Gage, an activist in the abolition and woman's rights movements, as well as a poet and novelist, presided over the convention. Also in attendance were Jane Swisshelm, editor of the Pittsburgh *Saturday Visiter*, Marius and Emily Robinson of the Salem *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and Emma Coe, a prominent woman's rights speaker. The proceedings of the convention did not indicate what Sojourner Truth said but simply noted that "remarks upon the subject of the education and condition of women were made by Mrs. Coe, Sojourner Truth and Rev. Geo. Schlosser and Ms. Coates."³⁴ There are many published versions of what Truth may have said that day, but three versions of the speech are of particular interest here, including ones prepared by Truth's contemporaries, Robinson and Gage, as well as a more recent version edited by Campbell.³⁵

Robinson Text (1851)

The oldest account of Truth's speech that provides more than a passing mention of it was published by Marius Robinson on June 21, 1851 in the Salem *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. The article contained a brief introduction followed by a text of Truth's speech. Although the introduction to the article is unsigned, it was likely prepared by Robinson, who served as one of three official secretaries of the convention.³⁶ Robinson's version was not the first published account of the Akron speech, but rather the first attempt to convey what Truth said in full.³⁷ Robinson

acknowledged that "it is impossible to transfer to paper, or convey any adequate idea of the effect produced upon the audience."³⁸ In recording the speech, Robinson took literary license in deciding to report Truth's speech in standard English with no dialectal indicators. In this version, Truth declared "I am a woman's rights" (1). She used biblical evidence and personal experience to support her claim for equality between the sexes. Notably absent from this version is any form of the question, "Ain't I a woman?" Nor does this version include any mention of a contentious atmosphere at the convention.³⁹

Gage Text (1863)

The most common rendering of Truth's speech—the one that introduced the famous phrase "Ar'n't I a woman?"—was constructed nearly twelve years after the Akron conference by Frances Dana Gage. Her version first appeared in the New York *Independent* on April 23, 1863, was reprinted in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* on May 2, 1863, and also appeared, slightly revised, in the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* and the *History of Woman Suffrage*.⁴⁰ None of the three later versions credited Gage's original version in the *Independent*, and two omitted Gage's admission that her version had "given but a faint sketch" of Truth's speech.⁴¹ In her article, Gage set the scene of the convention as one of confrontation with opponents of abolition and woman's rights. Following her introduction, Gage included a text of Truth's speech interspersed with reporting of the audience's reactions. Gage's version of Truth's speech was little noticed at the time, possibly because it was eclipsed by Harriet Beecher Stowe's article about Truth published in the April 1863 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*.⁴²

There are three main features of the Gage text that distinguish it from Robinson's 1851 version. First, Gage provided some context for Truth's speech, describing the confrontational atmosphere at the convention. Second, Gage wrote the text in a nineteenth-century southern black dialect. And third, she included the famous question, "Ar'n't I a woman?" (1). The question appeared four times in the Gage text, following arguments about work, food, physical and emotional pain, and righteousness. Gage reported that after Truth delivered her speech, the crowd gathered around her, applauded, and shook her hand. It is this version of the speech that has been reproduced numerous times, though often with changes and omissions.⁴³

Campbell Text (1989)

The third text of Truth's speech is a version of the Gage text edited by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. It represents a non-dialectal version of the Gage text that appeared in the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*.⁴⁴ Campbell authored several articles about Truth's Akron speech, and she has directly addressed the authenticity and dialectal variations of the available texts.⁴⁵ Conceding that "there survives only a partial text of [Truth's] most famous speech," Campbell suggests that we must be satisfied with "incomplete" stenographic reports of Truth's "spontaneous utterances."⁴⁶ Campbell's text basically follows Gage's version, except that she "removed purely dialectical indicators."⁴⁷ There are three clear difficulties with Campbell's version of Truth's speech: A standard English version of the speech existed from the time period; it is not common for scholars to rewrite historical texts into modern versions in the same language; and Campbell did not explain her methodology for making editorial choices.

Campbell cited the 1878 edition of the *Narrative* as the source for the speech text in her 1986 and 1989 works. Writers in Gage's time did not typically render non-standard English

speech in dialect, aside from that of African Americans,⁴⁸ and Campbell herself has noted "the failure to record the words of women is an example of women's recurring loss of historical agency."⁴⁹ Although Robinson's version was not widely known at the time, rewriting the speech seems to be a drastic step within a piece of scholarship that purports to investigate the style and content of an important speech by an early African-American feminist.

The third issue with the Campbell text is that she did not articulate a methodology for the editorial choices or even indicate which words she elected to change.⁵⁰ Among the significant changes Campbell appears to have made, however, were the terminological change of "niggers" to "Negroes" and numerous more minor dialectal changes (e.g., "tink dat" to "think that").⁵¹ As for the famous question of the speech, Gage used "ar'n't," which Campbell translated as "ain't" in one version and "aren't" in another.⁵² Even if "ain't" was the proper grammatical form of the time, as Campbell claimed,⁵³ why change it to "aren't" when other anachronisms (such as "'twixt") remain unaltered in the text?⁵⁴ In a 2005 article, Campbell acknowledged the questionable authenticity of the text in *Man Cannot Speak for Her* and returned to Gage's unexpurgated text from *History of Woman Suffrage*, noting that she wanted readers to experience "what it must have been like to hear Truth speak."⁵⁵

Authenticity and Truth's Akron Speech

There is no clear agreement among scholars as to which text of Truth's 1851 Akron speech should be viewed as the most authentic version. Not only is it uncertain what Truth said that day, it is similarly unclear what sorts of conditions she encountered when delivering the speech. An examination of the reports from Akron indicates four areas of disagreement. First, did the speakers at the Akron convention experience vocal opposition from opponents of women's rights? Second, did the supporters of woman's rights object to a black speaker during the convention? Third, which version of Truth's speech most closely captured the sound of Truth's voice? Finally, were the stylistic features of Truth's Akron speech consistent with reports of her other public discourse? In the following section, I argue that, for both rhetorical and temporal reasons, these questions are best answered with reference to the Robinson text.

Vocal Opposition at Akron

Gage offered various accounts of the events surrounding Truth's speech. In 1853, Gage reported to the National Women's Rights Convention that even though some people opposed their cause at previous meetings and were invited to voice those objections, "no one has had a word to say against us at the time."⁵⁶ In the 1863 version, however, Gage recounted a tense scene in Akron, with opposing speakers and clergy shouting at the attendees and offering arguments against equality. Gage reported that a minister "claimed superior rights and privileges for man because of superior intellect; another because of the manhood of Christ."⁵⁷ She elaborated that other clergy also made arguments against woman's rights, while "boys in the galleries and sneerers among the pews were enjoying hugely the discomfiture, as they supposed, of the strong-minded."⁵⁸

Questions surrounding the context for Truth's speech are not limited to the alleged opposition to woman's rights. Questions also surround the opposition among woman's right

supporters to a black speaker at their convention. Many of the convention participants listed in the *Proceedings* were supporters of both woman's rights *and* abolition,⁵⁹ and the call for a woman's rights convention appeared in an antislavery newspaper, suggesting some overlap between the causes.⁶⁰ Still, black speakers often had difficulty advocating for reform causes. Although white women orators faced hostility in the antebellum period, they generally risked less in terms of their personal and economic stability than black women speakers.⁶¹ According to Gage, when Truth rose to speak there was some disruption, but "the "tumult subsided at once"⁶² when she asked the audience to allow Truth to speak. This framing of the convention placed Gage at the center of controversy and cast her as the brave proponent of racial equality.

Gage's account of a hostile reception is supported by at least three sources: The *History of Woman Suffrage*, Sallie Holley, and Hannah Tracey Cutler. Yet these sources are either unreliable, contradicted by other accounts, or not clearly independent of Gage's influence. The *History of Woman Suffrage* explicitly used Gage as the sole source for its report, and the inclusion of Truth's Akron speech in the *History of Woman Suffrage* helped to form Truth's legacy.⁶³ Lisa Shawn Hogan has argued that the *History of Woman Suffrage* devoted considerable attention to controversial women who stood up to significant opposition. This framing of the history may help explain why they chose to use Frances Gage's account of the Akron speech.⁶⁴

In a book about activist Sallie Holley's experiences at the Akron convention, John White Chadwick likewise suggested that there was an atmosphere of confrontation. Chadwick wrote: "They went to Akron to a Woman's Rights convention meeting there, and heard Aunt Fanny Gage, Sojourner Truth, Caroline M. Severance, and other champions of the faith, and were vastly entertained, especially by Sojourner's discomfiture and rout of a young preacher who had the temerity to come up against her."⁶⁵ Again, however, the credibility of this source is in doubt given the second-hand reporting and its temporal distance from its subject. Yet this source, like the *History of Woman Suffrage*, has been used to support the authenticity of Gage's account.⁶⁶

The third source that presumably supports Gage's account came from Hannah Tracy Cutler, a friend of Gage's and, like Robinson, a secretary of the Akron convention. Cutler was credited with two conflicting accounts of the convention. The first, in 1851, reported that Cutler thanked "the citizens of Akron for their hospitality in receiving the delegates . . . and for so kindly and respectfully attending upon their deliberations."⁶⁷ Cutler wrote a somewhat different account of the Akron convention in *The Woman's Journal* in 1896, however.⁶⁸ In that account she said that the audience was mixed in its support for woman's rights, and that "Our opponents claimed the rights of free speech, and hurled the apostle Paul at our heads with great violence."⁶⁹ In the article, Cutler did not mention that Truth gave a formal speech but commented on two of her retorts to clergy. She also mentioned that Truth spoke at an informal meeting the day after the convention and recalled Truth saying that she "never found any men ready to carry her over the mud puddles," and that "she could do as big a days' work as any man, and eat as much, too, if she could get it."⁷⁰ This phrasing was quite similar to Gage's version of Truth's speech, of course, but Cutler's account of the convention differs significantly from Gage's report and cannot be taken as confirmation of the authenticity of her friend's version of the speech.⁷¹

The Robinson version depicted a peaceful context for the speech that is better supported by contemporaneous evidence. The *Proceedings* of the convention made no mention of vocal opposition.⁷² Robinson wrote: "We must add that the citizens of Akron by their urbanity and generous hospitality, have secured for themselves a lasting place in the hearts of the numerous visitors present on the occasion."⁷³ It is true that opponents of woman's rights and abolition often directed their hostility at convention speakers, but there is no conclusive evidence that such hostility erupted at the Akron convention. In the Robinson version, Truth did not single out any specific opponent in attendance. In addition, newspapers often recorded disruptions when Truth spoke in other occasions, yet these same newspapers did not report similar disruptions at Akron.⁷⁴ The lack of contemporaneous evidence of opposition at Akron is likely because there was none, not because reporters omitted to mention such details. The conclusion best supported by the historical evidence is that the 1851 Woman's Rights Convention in Akron was a peaceful gathering at which women and men spoke in favor of woman's rights before a friendly or, at worst, a quietly oppositional audience.

The Sound of Truth

In addition to issuing conflicting reports about the context for Truth's speech, Robinson and Gage remembered Truth's voice very differently.⁷⁵ Both Robinson and Gage acknowledged that the texts they produced were not word for word transcriptions of Truth's performance. In examining the language of the speech, I pay particular attention to two features: First, the reporting of the speech in dialect and, second, the authenticity of the question, "Ar'n't I a woman?" The issue of Truth's spoken language is significant in that it informs our understanding of her ethos and her persuasive effect, while the veracity of the "Ar'n't I a woman?" refrain speaks to Truth's rhetorical strategies.

The sound of Truth's voice was not likely captured accurately by Gage's dialectal rendering. The *New York Tribune* observed that "Mrs. Truth, in consequence of her unhappy situation in early life, is totally uneducated, but speaks very fluently in tolerably correct and certainly very forcible style."⁷⁶ And there is evidence that Truth did not approve the printing of her speeches in dialect.⁷⁷ An 1879 newspaper article from the *Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph* reported that:

Sojourner also prides herself on a fairly correct English, which is in all senses a foreign tongue to her, she having spent her early years among people speaking "Low Dutch." People who report her often exaggerate her expressions, putting into her mouth the most marked southern dialect, which Sojourner feels is rather taking an unfair advantage of her.⁷⁸

That Truth did not write out her own speeches complicates the authenticity debate. Suzanne Pullon Fitch and Roseann M. Mandzuik observed that as someone who was denied an education and could not read nor write, "Truth had to rely on others taking down her thoughts as she presented them in public. What is available is a collection of partial transcriptions and reports that often are a combination of the words of the reporter and Truth."⁷⁹ This is a problem evident in her *Narrative*. While Truth did agree to its publication and sold it as her

primary means of support, her very illiteracy made it impossible for her to give fully informed consent to the language used in the book or any other accounting of her words.

Even if we do not have an authoritative version of the speech, we can make some informed assumptions about the sound of Truth's voice. Although there is little in the historical record that attempts to transcribe the sound of black New York English-Dutch language patterns, one of the few attempts comes from a travelogue composed by Dr. Alexander Hamilton in 1744. Hamilton reports that his enslaved driver, Dromo, who spoke an eighteenth-century southern black English dialect, tried but largely failed to communicate with a black woman in New York who spoke in a Dutch-English hybrid.⁸⁰ It cannot be known whether Sojourner Truth's speech sounded the same as the woman's, but the report offers insight into those with a similar dialect from a similar location some fifty years prior to Truth's birth.

Of particular concern is the legitimacy of the famous question: "Ar'n't I a woman?" The basic meaning of the question did not first appear in Gage's report about Akron. Evidence existed that variations of the phrase were much more historical. According to Carlton Mabee and Susan Mabee Newhouse:

The motto 'Am I not a Woman and a Sister?' was a reversed sex version of the motto, 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' which was used as early as 1787 in Britain by the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The motto 'Am I not a Woman and a Sister?' appeared in 1832, along with a picture of a female slave in chains, as the heading of the Boston *Liberator's* Ladies Department.⁸¹

Maria Stewart, who helped pave the way for African-American female speakers, also reportedly asked during an 1833 speech: "What if I am a woman?"⁸² In Gage's version of the Akron speech, Truth was reported to have said:

Dat man ober dar say dat woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have de best place eberywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place; And ar'n't I a woman? Look at me. Look at my arm. I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ar'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man, (when I could get it,) and bear de lash as well—and ar'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chillen, and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none, but Jesus heard—and ar'n't I a woman? (1)

There are several features of this rendering of the speech that raise questions about its authenticity. All sources, other than Gage, lack anything similar to the repetition of the question "Ar'n't I a woman?" It seems unlikely that if Truth asked the question repeatedly, other versions would have left out such an important structural and stylistic component. Mabee and Mabee Newhouse, in an examination of available reports of Truth's other speeches, found that she was "not given to such rhythmic repetition. On the other hand, an examination of Gage's speeches and writings indicates that Gage was indeed given to it."⁸³ Truth's statement about her children in the Gage version similarly lacks corroboration. Gage claimed that Sojourner Truth said she had thirteen children, most of whom were sold into slavery. Yet, the *Narrative* indicated that

Truth had only five children.⁸⁴ Her son Peter was sold away, but Truth was able to challenge that in court, winning him back in 1828.⁸⁵ The Gage text treats Truth as powerless rather than as someone who was able to have remarkable success in challenging the injustices she confronted.

Superiority of the Robinson Version

I contend that the version of the Akron speech published by Marius Robinson in 1851 is the more authentic version of Truth's speech. Robinson's text should be preferred on the basis of corroborating reports on the setting at Akron and in relation to the content and dialect of Truth's performance. Among the sources that reported a peaceful convention are the *Cleveland Daily True Democrat*,⁸⁶ the *Boston Liberator*,⁸⁷ The *Cleveland Herald*,⁸⁸ and Gage's earliest account of Akron.⁸⁹ There are no credible accounts that support Gage's claim that Truth faced open hostility at Akron.⁹⁰

On the issue of the content and language of Truth's speech, the Robinson text offered a fuller treatment of the speech than any other published in 1851. The article in the *New York Tribune* included every significant argument made in the Robinson version.⁹¹ The primary difference is that, predictably, the *Tribune's* version was reported in the third person, while Robinson's version featured Truth speaking in first-person voice. Robinson's version, for example, quoted Truth as declaring, "I am a woman's rights" (1), whereas the *New York Tribune* reported: "She said she was a woman."⁹² While the two reports do not feature identical words, they both claim that Truth made a declarative statement about her gender and did so in non-dialectal English. No other extant account of the speech supports Gage's report of the repeated question: "Ar'n't I a woman?" Nor do they support Gage's rendition of Truth's delivery in dialect.

The larger point of this essay is that Gage's text should not be treated as an authoritative rendering of Truth's speech. If the reader is most concerned with how others have constructed Sojourner Truth's image, then Gage's words are all important. Most expurgated versions of Truth's speech also rely upon Gage, but those miss the essential character of the work, even as Gage presented it. If our purpose is to appreciate Truth's rhetorical skills, however, the Gage text may lead us to erroneous conclusions about Truth's agency and esteem as a speaker.⁹³ For these purposes, Robinson's version is more reliable. We simply cannot know for certain what Sojourner Truth said that day, but we can reasonably be sure that it was not what Gage reported. Far too much time passed between the delivery of the speech and Gage's recording of her ideas to make that version credible. Given that the only other substantial text is Robinson's—and given that the authenticity of that version is supported by evidence of the day—the analysis that follows will rely upon the Robinson text.

Truth's Rhetorical Power

The main purpose of Truth's speech was to advocate for woman's rights from the perspective of a woman of color. She referred to her experiences in slavery and as a still oppressed free woman. Yet her comments were mainly concerned with issues of gender equality. Fitch and Mandzuik observed that "this speech is important because it brings together

the two causes for which Truth spent her life's work, antislavery and women's rights."⁹⁴ Based on arguments about body, mind, and spirit, she claimed that women should be accorded the same rights as men. In the first section of the speech, Truth argued that women were physically equal to men. In the middle section, Truth argued that women should have rights reflecting their intellectual capacities. In the third section, Truth used biblical arguments in support of civil rights for women. Throughout, Truth employed her experience, knowledge, and deft humor to articulate her argument for equality.

Truth began her speech with a bold assertion of her womanhood. She declared: "I am a woman's rights" (1). The syntax was a bit unusual, but this is perhaps an even more powerful rhetorical figure than the famed question "Ar'n't I a woman?" Instead of asking the audience to confirm her gender, she made the stronger declarative statement through the personal embodiment of her cause. With her statement, "I am a woman's rights," Truth positioned herself as a physical, intellectual, and religious embodiment of her cause. This statement forecasted the three argumentative sections of the speech. Throughout the speech, Truth's arguments were in the form of retorts to anticipated objections, a rhetorical strategy classically called *procatalepsis*.

Beginning with an embodied argument for equality, Truth first argued that the value of the body was to be found in the work it can do. She said, "I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?" (1). The work she discussed was the physical work in the fields and the products of her labor. She claimed that "I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it" (1). What is striking about this depiction of her physical role in agricultural life is that it subverted notions of femininity at the time. Notice that Truth argued that she could gather and consume as much food as a man, but did not mention the domestic task of preparing the food. Painter observed that Truth's "experience as a worker validates her claim, and the work in question, as well as the criterion for equality—muscular strength—are masculine. She does not mention her household work."⁹⁵ Truth's argument challenged the prevailing concepts of chivalry and women's fragility employed by those working against woman's rights and even by some privileged female supporters. Nancy Isenberg argued that the construct of *chivalry* "accentuated physical prowess and bodily strength as the distinguishing mark of civil capacity."⁹⁶ Chivalry gave agency in the public sphere to white men only. Non-white men were presumed to lack the moral fortitude to protect their countries or their families, and the female body was viewed as "an object of conquest."⁹⁷ As with so many arguments of the time, chivalry doubly impacted Truth as a woman of African descent.

Truth also challenged those in the woman's rights cause who would separate their movement from abolition. Jacqueline Bacon offered an analysis of Truth's speech, finding that "Truth exposes the hypocrisy of white antebellum society, which represents white women as inviolate while sanctioning physical labor for oppressed slave women whose experience is ignored in definitions of femininity."⁹⁸ As the above quotations show, Truth used her experience to advocate for women who enjoyed no such privilege. Many white activists invoked the cult of domesticity or true womanhood in their arguments for equality, portraying women as worthy of rights but not of work.⁹⁹ Truth argued instead that if work were required for equal rights, then women like her had earned their equality.

Following her physical justifications for equality, Truth turned to claims based on intelligence. Through her shrewd use of analogy and humor, Truth took on the belief that women were intellectually inferior to men. She asked, "As for intellect, all I can say is, if a woman have a pint and man a quart—why cant she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much,—for we cant take more than our pint'll hold" (1). The *New York Tribune* reported that the audience responded with "roars of laughter."¹⁰⁰ Truth demonstrated that her intellect was equal to that of a man's, not by denying the offending claim, but by subverting it. She ironically accepted her opponents' claim through the use of an analogy of measurement (demonstrating knowledge) and comically reassured her audience that since women lack intellectual capacity, men had no need to fear them. By turning the hypothetical argument around, Truth showed that she was smarter than those who opposed equality on the basis of intellectual capacity.

Truth's humor represented a good strategic choice. Fitch and Mandzuik observed that Truth "often used herself to show the comic results of ignorance grown out of slavery."¹⁰¹ Humor can serve several strategic functions (e.g., to display cleverness, to win the admiration of the audience, to deflect criticism),¹⁰² but the comic frame can also serve to soften the edge of the speaker's anger or hostility toward his or her opponents. In the nineteenth century, women who employed humor generally did so in print rather than in public speeches,¹⁰³ but Truth made it a central feature of her rhetorical strategy in the Akron speech. Offering advice laced with humor, she sarcastically portrayed opponents of equality as merely confused: "The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and dont know what to do. Why children, if you have woman's rights give it to her and you will feel better. You will have your own rights, and they wont be so much trouble" (1). By pretending to be concerned with how the men who opposed equality felt, she more subtly made the point that opposition to gender equality was rooted in ignorance.¹⁰⁴

Having countered the intellectual objections, Truth left behind her comic persona and engaged the contentious biblical arguments against woman's rights. Truth employed four biblical examples as evidence in this section: The condemnation of Eve; Jesus' attitudes toward women; the role of women in the resurrection of Lazarus; and the role of Mary in the biblical story of Jesus (1).¹⁰⁵ Ellen Carol DuBois argued that "almost until the Civil War, conflict with clerical authority was the most important issue in the women's rights movement."¹⁰⁶ Truth began her defense of a woman's connection to God by demonstrating that her lack of education had not dulled her faith. She said: "I cant read, but I can hear. I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin. Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again" (1). Truth's point was that her inability to read resulted from her lack of educational opportunities rather than a lack of intellect.¹⁰⁷ She made clear from her statement that she may not be able to read the Bible, but she had heard its words. The metaphor of setting the world right side up connected Truth's religious claims with her earlier arguments about women having the physical and spiritual strength to correct the problems of the past. Equality was necessary to give them a chance to use both their physical and their spiritual strengths in full measure.

Truth also cited evidence that Jesus responded to the pleas and arguments of women and did not deny their equal humanity. Her argument that Jesus valued the ideas of women countered those who used the Bible to argue against women's equality. In addition, Truth

turned to the story of Lazarus for further support that the Bible did not support the subjugation of women: "The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother. And Jesus wept—and Lazarus came forth" (1).¹⁰⁸ Truth's use of this story served two purposes. First, she demonstrated that great change could result from the efforts of women. It was not Lazarus who asked to be healed when he was ill. It was Mary and Martha who sought Jesus' help before and after Lazarus's death. With this story, Truth suggested that women's voices could be powerful enough to bring about miracles.

The differing actions of Martha and Mary in this story illustrated one of Truth's key arguments: that women of all sorts were needed to affect change. The Bible recounted the story in the following way. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha went directly to speak to him, while Mary remained at home. Martha told him, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."¹⁰⁹ Jesus responded that he could do something now, even if he was late in arriving.¹¹⁰ Martha then went to Mary to say that Jesus wanted to see her. Mary repeated Martha's argument to Jesus: "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."¹¹¹ But unlike Martha, Mary wept as she said this. The response, "Jesus wept," is the shortest verse in the King James Bible and the only one that Truth quoted directly in the Akron speech.¹¹² Jesus then went to the grave and raised Lazarus from the dead. It was the persuasive combination of reason and emotion—and the combination of the aggressiveness of Martha with the reticence of Mary—that brought about the desired result. Truth used the same strategies in her speech, offering arguments based on both reason and emotion. The story of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus illustrated the need for all sorts of women to get involved in the fight for equality, whether as leaders of the movement or as more passive supporters. Like the resurrection of Lazarus, change would not come without the intercession of all types of women.

Truth addressed the legacy not only of the first biblical woman, but also of the woman who brought forth Jesus into the world. Arguing against the idea that women did not deserve equal rights because Jesus was a man, Truth asked, "And how came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and woman who bore him. Man, where is your part?" (1). Again, Truth displayed humor and wisdom in emphasizing the role of a woman in the story of Jesus. Concerning Truth's argument about the origin of Jesus, Bacon observed that "Truth does not refer to Mary but to 'a woman,' a semantic choice to universalize women's role in Christianity. Mary's central role in Christ's presence on earth is not just a part of a particular narrative but a sign of women's personal connection to Jesus."¹¹³ Through these examples and counter-arguments, Truth established that her knowledge and intellect were at least on par with those of her audience. Her embodiment of a strong body, quick mind, and pious spirit made a powerful claim for the equality of the races and the sexes.

Truth concluded her speech by summing up the challenges facing men from both the abolition and woman's rights movements. In the final sentences of the speech, she observed, "But the women are coming up blessed by God and a few of the men are coming up with them. But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between a hawk and a buzzard" (1). The metaphor of the hawk and buzzard represented a dilemma that could lead to paralysis and was common to the era.¹¹⁴ In Truth's speech, it functioned to suggest how white men were caught between demands for equality from both blacks and women and needed to respond. Perhaps Truth thought her persuasive abilities could

help them respond positively to both movements. As a symbol of both abolitionism and the woman's rights movement, Truth was concerned about freedom for her race, but she also was part of the movement for gender equality. As a voice for both movements, Truth rightly saw entrenched privilege as their common foe. With the concluding statement of her speech, Truth again used humor to show the audience that she understood the defensiveness of those opposed to both racial and gender equality, but that she was also confident of victory.

Conclusion

This critical analysis was designed to shed light on the controversies surrounding the authenticity of various versions of Sojourner Truth's famous speech in Akron. Focusing on Robinson's text, it suggests how Truth used her considerable rhetorical skill to advocate for equal citizenship. As Lindal Buchanan has argued, Gage's text, "although historically unreliable," provides insight into "the setting and substance of Truth's address that long ago day in 1851" and is "largely responsible for the former slave's place in our cultural memory."¹¹⁵ It helps us to understand the prevailing image of Sojourner Truth and the source of the famous question attributed to her, "Ar'n't I a woman?". Yet as Shirley Wilson Logan has argued, a more complete understanding of Truth and her place in the history of the struggle for racial and gender equality requires that we consider multiple versions of that famous speech in Akron.¹¹⁶ An understanding based solely on the Gage text may serve to reinscribe the classism and racism of the first wave of feminism by caricaturing one of its few well-known black speakers. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn wondered why the white suffragists "seemed to find an illiterate Black woman more compatible than the several educated ones in the universal suffrage movement. Could it be that whites felt they could not manipulate the voices of literate Black women as easily as they could the voice of one who could not read?"¹¹⁷

Marius Robinson's version of Truth's speech gave the world a Sojourner Truth who was in full command of argument, language, and her audience. She used her position as the only woman of color to speak at the Akron convention to remind her audience that she brought together their support for both woman's rights and abolition. Truth demanded her full rights as a citizen—as a woman *and* as a person of color. Her speech challenged those who supported gender equality to recognize that abolition was only the beginning.

Sojourner Truth exists today in a bifurcated way. As Painter argued, Truth was both a real person and a symbol.¹¹⁸ Both her real struggle and the symbolism of her memory should be kept in mind as we consider her legacy. The seeming preference for the Gage version of Truth's speech at Akron speaks to "the role of symbol in our public life and to our need for this symbol."¹¹⁹ Truth's struggle to establish her identity is mirrored in the efforts by others to control it. The very complexity of unpacking Truth's history reflects the challenges she faced in establishing her own identity. Her struggle to define herself as a person, a woman, a woman of color, and a citizen did not end with her speech in Akron. Throughout her life, she fought against a society that found it normal to think of her as less than human, and even her supporters competed to define her identity for her. Sojourner Truth's bold declaration of her own identity serves as an important reminder that the struggle for equality is a difficult and ongoing rhetorical process within a democratic society.

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Notes

1 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (New York: Source Book Press, 1887), 71.

2 There is some controversy as to the date on which Truth delivered the Akron speech. The preponderance of the evidence points to May 29, 1851 as the date of delivery. The *Proceedings* of the convention recorded that Truth spoke in the morning session of the second day (i.e., May 29). Sources that indicated the speech was delivered on May 29 include Frances Dana Gage and C. Peter Ripley. Suzanne Pullon Fitch and Roseann M. Mandziuk indicated that the speech was delivered on May 28. bell hooks indicated that Truth spoke in Akron in 1852. Several other references to the speech seem to take their evidence from hooks and repeat the 1852 error, including Sara L. Crawley, Lara J. Foley, and Constance L. Shehan, Manning Marable, and Chris McCloud. See: *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851* (Cincinnati: Ben Franklin Book and Job Office, 1851), 7; F. D. Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, April 23, 1863, 1; C. Peter Ripley, ed., *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 4 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 81; Suzanne Pullon Fitch and Roseann M. Mandziuk, *Sojourner Truth as Orator: Wit, Story, and Song* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 103-108; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), 159; Sara L. Crawley, Lara J. Foley, and Constance L. Shehan, *Gendering Bodies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 219; Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 69; and Chris McCloud, "Truth, Sojourner (1790-1883)," in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 732.

3 There is no version of the speech that claims to be a verbatim account of what Truth said, nor were there modern journalistic standards concerning accuracy or transcription at the time. Speeches were often stenographically recorded, but reporters did not claim that they were offering a verbatim account in their publications. According to Hazel Dicken-Garcia, "We simply do not know today what was precisely true about an event reported in 1850. News items did not identify sources, or did so so rarely—even as late as the 1890s—that it is impossible to search out whatever sources might still exist. News items did not specify how information was gathered; this in itself says something about the standards and values at the time, but it leaves little basis for studying what standards might have governed news collection,

preparation, and presentation." See: Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 67.

4 In the nineteenth century versions of the speech, the contraction employed is "A'n't" or "Ar'n't." The use of "Ain't I a woman?" appears to be a twentieth-century phenomenon. Likely popularized by bell hooks as the title of her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, the "ain't" version goes back at least as far 1912 in *The Crisis*. See hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*; and Martha Gruening, "Two Suffrage Movements," *The Crisis*, September, 1912, 246.

5 "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, June 21, 1851.

6 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1. This and all remaining references to the Gage version of Truth's 1851 Akron speech are cited with parenthetical references to paragraph numbers in the speech text that accompanies this essay.

7 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol. 2, *Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 99-102.

8 The first edition of the *Narrative* was published privately in 1850 by William Lloyd Garrison and edited by Olive Gilbert. Frances Titus made several changes for the 1875 edition of the *Narrative* that Martin L. Ashley argued "were designed to enhance Truth's public image. She left out derogatory remarks, changed the dialect passages into standard English and exaggerated public reaction to Truth's speeches." See: Sojourner Truth and Olive Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave, Emancipated from Bodily Servitude by the State of New York, in 1828: with a Portrait* (Boston, MA: Printed for the author, 1850); Sojourner Truth, Olive Gilbert, and Frances W. Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth; a Bondswoman of Olden Time, Emancipated by the New York Legislature in the Early Part of the Present Century; with a History of Her Labors and Correspondence, Drawn from Her "Book of Life"* (Boston, MA: Published for the Author, 1875); and Martin L. Ashley, "Frances Titus: Sojourner's 'Trusted Scribe,'" *Heritage Battle Creek, A Journal of Local History* 8 (Fall 1997), <http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Archive/Titus-TrustedScribe.htm> (accessed June 11, 2012).

9 Eye dialectal indicators are "visual devices to indicate a spoken dialect The dialogue is suffused with spelling substitutions that do not change at all the pronunciation of the words themselves. Far from even trying to approximate black speech . . . eye dialect functions to mark the speaker, invidiously, as ignorant and of low class. Examples of such spellings are 'sed' for 'said,' 'kum' for 'come,' and 'kase' for 'case.'" See: Albert Tricomi, "Dialect and Identity in Harriet Jacob's Autobiography and Other Slave Narratives," *Callaloo* 29, no. 2 (2006): 622.

10 See: Carleton Mabee and Susan Mabee Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth: Slave, Prophet, Legend* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); and Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

11 One of the reasons that reliable versions of the Robinson and Gage texts are needed is the wide variation in anthologized versions of speeches. Ripley and Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson published only the Robinson version, while Beverly Guy-Sheftall, McCloud, and Lucinda

J. Peach included only the Gage text. Lorie Jenkins McElroy included an expurgated version of the Gage text. Painter, Fitch and Mandzuik, Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay, Andrew Bailey, Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, and Richard W. Leeman and Bernard K. Duffy printed Robinson and Gage. Philip S. Foner and Robert J. Branham and Dorothy L. Pennington included an expurgated Gage text and the Robinson version. Shirley Wilson Logan printed Gage's and Campbell's versions. See: Ripley, *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 4:81-83; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Before They Could Vote: American Women's Autobiographical Writing, 1819-1919* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 177-179; Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: New Press, 1995), 36; McCloud, "Truth, Sojourner (1790-1883)," 732; Lucinda J. Peach, ed., *Women in Culture: A Women's Studies Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 78-79; Lorie Jenkins McElroy, ed., *Women's Voices: A Documentary History of Women in America* (Detroit: UXL, 1997), 76-79; Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 125-126; Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*, 103-106; Henry Louis Gates and Nellie Y. McKay, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2004), 246-247; Andrew Bailey, *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought. Volume One, from Plato to Nietzsche* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2008), 963-965; Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal: An African American Anthology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 66-68; Richard W. Leeman and Bernard K. Duffy, *The Will of a People: A Critical Anthology of Great African American Speeches* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), 46-48; Philip S. Foner and Robert J. Branham, *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 228-229; Dorothy L. Pennington, "The Discourse of African American Women: A Case for Extended Paradigms," in *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*, ed. Ronald L. Jackson and Elaine B. Richardson (New York: Routledge, 2003), 294-295; and Shirley Wilson Logan, *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 24-25.

12 The top three results of a Google search for .edu sources of "Sojourner Truth speech" delivered three different versions of the Gage text. None mention the context or controversy over the versions. See: Modern History Source Book, "Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman," <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html>; History Matters, "Aint I A Woman': Reminiscences of Sojourner Truth Speaking," <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5740/>; and Society for the Study of American Women Writers, "Sojourner Truth," <http://www.lehigh.edu/~dek7/SSAWW/writTruthSpeech1.htm> (accessed May 31, 2011).

13 Susan Zaeske and Sarah Jedd, "From Recovering Women's Words to Documenting Gender Constructs: Archival Research in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, ed. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 193.

14 There are several versions of the name Truth was given at birth. Most accounts agree on Isabella, yet some argue for Belle or Bell. Painter called her Isabella, while Margaret

Washington referred to her as Bell Hardenbergh, using the last name of her first enslaver. Washington reported that after her freedom was purchased by Issac Van Wagenen in 1827, she changed her name to Isabella Van Wagenen. Other sources give her the last name Bomefree or Bumfree. Washington found that her father "James, was nicknamed 'Bomefree,' merging the Dutch word for tree (*bome*) with the English word 'free.'" See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 3; and Margaret Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 7, 9, 60.

15 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 113.

16 Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*, 10.

17 Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 117.

18 Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 17-18.

19 Painter wrote of the historical evidence of Truth's "five children . . . Diana, born about 1815; Peter, 1821; Elizabeth, 1825; and Sophia, about 1826. The fifth, perhaps named Thomas, may have died in infancy or childhood and may have been born between Diana and Peter." See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 19.

20 Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 41.

21 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 25.

22 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 309n2.

23 Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America*, 69-80.

24 Both Painter and Washington claim the significance of this date is increased by its coincidence with Pentecost, the Christian celebration of the Holy Spirit's introduction to the Apostles. Pentecost occurs seven weeks after Easter Sunday. In 1843, that would have been June 4 (Easter Sunday was April 16); June 1, 1843 was a Thursday. If Truth changed her name and left on Pentecost then perhaps the *Narrative* misstates the date, but no mention of Pentecost is found in the *Narrative*. See: Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 100; Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 73; and Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America*, 148.

25 Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 101.

26 The version of the speech found in the *Book of Life* reproduces the Gage text from the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. See: Truth, Gilbert, and Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 131-135; and F. D. Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 2, 1863, 4.

27 Nell Irvin Painter, "Difference, Slavery, and Memory: Sojourner Truth in Feminist Abolitionism," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 147.

28 Quoted in Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 225.

29 For example, Truth was a part of the Massachusetts Northampton Association and bought her first house there in 1850. See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 75. At other times, Truth led a life in which she was separated from large segments of white society due to the period's attitudes concerning gender and race. Carla L. Peterson also found that Truth's "adult life was marked by a relative isolation from the black community." Carla L. Peterson, *Doers of the*

Word": *African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24.

30 Marius Robinson was a Garrisonian who "taught in the Cherokee Nation (then located in Georgia) and in Alabama before enrolling as a student at Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati." See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 119.

31 "The Robinsons moved to Salem only in April 1851, when Marius had hesitantly agreed, despite lack of experience in journalism, to become the editor—Emily the publishing agent—of the only antislavery paper west of the Alleghenies, the *Salem Anti-Slavery Bugle*." See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 120.

32 C. D. Smalley, M. L. Gilbert, and E. Robinson, "Women's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, March 29, 1851.

33 The church, which is no longer standing, was on Main Street between Perkins and Market Streets. See: Ohio Historical Society, "Marker #6-77: Site of Sojourner Truth's Speech on Women's Rights," *Remarkable Ohio*, <http://www.remarkableohio.org/HistoricalMarker.aspx?historicalMarkerId=169> (accessed June 11, 2012).

34 *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention*, 7.

35 See: "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem(OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 4; Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1; and Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:99-102.

36 *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention*, 1.

37 Earlier reports of the speech include the *New York Tribune* and the *Boston Liberator*. See: "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Tribune*, June 6, 1851, 7; and "Woman's Rights Convention," *Boston Liberator*, June 13, 1851, 4.

38 "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 4.

39 "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 4.

40 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1; Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 4; Truth, Gilbert, and Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 131-135; and Stanton, Anthony, and M. Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1:115-117.

41 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1. The *Narrative* and the *History of Woman Suffrage* omit Gage's accuracy claim. In the *History of Woman Suffrage*, Truth was identified as "Mrs. Stowe's 'Libyan Sibyl.'" The text they included was largely similar to Gage's article in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, but several edits were made, most notably, "ar'n't I a woman" to "a'n't I a woman." See: Truth, Gilbert, and Titus, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, 131-135; Stanton, Anthony, and M. Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1:115-117; and Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 4.

42 Mabee and Mabee Newhouse suggest that Gage published her version of Truth's speech in response to Stowe's article. See: Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1863, 473-481; and Mabee and Mabee Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth*, 68.

43 See notes 11 and 41 above.

44 Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:99-102. There are numerous expurgated versions of the Gage text, often without comment or attribution. See: Jacqueline Bernard, *Journey Toward Freedom: The Story of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York: Distributed by Talman, 1990), 165-167; Foner and Branham, *Lift Every Voice*, 227-228; Pennington, "The Discourse of African American Women," 294; and James Daley, *Great Speeches by African Americans: Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Barack Obama, Jr., and Others* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 11-12.

45 See: Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Style and Content in the Rhetoric of Early Afro-American Feminists," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 434-455; Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:99-102; and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 1-19.

46 Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 1:20, 1:35n3.

47 Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 1:35n3. Campbell argued that given Truth's northern upbringing and native Dutch language "it is unlikely that, though illiterate, she spoke in a substandard Southern dialect, in which the speech was recorded by Mrs. Gage." See: Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:99.

48 Tricomi argued that "to transcribe the dialects of slaves or ex-slaves while neglecting to render that of whites in dialect as well—whether by region, class or ethnicity, or all three—is to make another inequitable, problematic 'literary' decision." See: Tricomi, "Dialect and Identity," 619.

49 Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," 17n28.

50 For a discussion of the practices of intralinguistic translation, see: Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Bowdlerization and Expurgation: Academic and Folk," *The Journal of American Folklore* 80, no. 318 (1967): 374-386.

51 Campbell, "Style and Content," 435; and Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:100.

52 See: Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:100.

53 Campbell argued in 1986 that "In this period, 'ain't' was the proper grammatical form for a negative interrogative in the first person singular." This claim seems difficult to support. J. M. Garnett in 1881 argued that "the very objectionable *ain't* is certainly colloquial, but should not be written, and when used in conversation should be limited to its use as a substituted for *are not*: *I ain't* and *he ain't* are still solecisms." See: Campbell, "Style and Content," 444n6; and J. M. Garnett, "Review," *American Journal of Philology* 2, no. 8 (1881): 492.

54 Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, 2:100.

55 Although the *History of Woman Suffrage* version is different from Gage's original publication, Campbell argued that she used it "because it is the longer and more frequently cited version of the text." Despite recognizing that the words Gage reported were almost certainly inaccurate, Campbell claimed that "Gage's fiction has a dramatic agency as a performative text that is greater than historians' facts." See: Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," 13, 17n35.

56 Proceedings of the National Women's Rights Convention Held at Cleveland, Ohio on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1853 (Cleveland, OH: Gray, Beardsley, Spear, & Co., 1854), 7.

57 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1.

58 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1.

59 Among the participants who also supported abolition were Mary A. W. Johnson, Emily and Marius Robinson, and Jacob Heaton. See: *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Akron*, 3, 6-7.

60 Painter observed that the call for the convention published in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* "cited four evils that women's rights would combat: war, intemperance, sensuality, and slavery. Rather than fearing contamination by the antislavery cause, as Gage asserts, the organizers deliberately reached out to abolitionists." See: Painter, "Difference, Slavery, and Memory," 151.

61 Peterson argued: "As with all other public speakers—male or female, white or black—Truth needed carefully to assess the rhetorical context of her lecturing and to negotiate the complex relationship between self, situation, subject, and audience, a task particularly problematic . . . for black women." See: Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, 18.

62 Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1.

63 The *History of Woman Suffrage* stated that "the reports of this Convention are so meagre that we can not tell who were in the opposition; but from Sojourner Truth's speech, we fear that the clergy, as usual, were averse to enlarging the boundaries of freedom." The publication also noted that "this convention was remarkable for the large number of men who took an active part in the proceedings" and mentioned Marius Robinson specifically. See: Stanton, Anthony, and M. Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, 1:114.

64 Hogan based her analysis of Stanton's rhetorical efforts in writing the *History of Woman Suffrage* on Stanton's citation of William Blackstone's requirements of sovereignty: wisdom, goodness and power. Stanton transformed power from a physical to a moral virtue, which she argued women possessed along with the qualities of wisdom and goodness. Given this framing of women's claims to equal rights, the inclusion of Truth's speech in the *History of Woman Suffrage* seems a natural fit. In fact, Truth's arguments seem to closely match Blackstone's definition in that Truth argued for equality on the basis of her physical strength, intelligence, and goodness as demonstrated through religious faith. See: Lisa Shawn Hogan, "Wisdom, Goodness and Power: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the *History of Woman Suffrage*," *Gender Issues* 23 (2006): 14.

65 Sallie Holley, *A Life for Liberty*, ed. John White Chadwick (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 57.

66 The words in the book about Holley's letters are not hers. Chadwick wrote the book in 1899 and may have been influenced by Gage's 1863 version of the events. In the preface to the book, Chadwick wrote, "In editing the letters I have not been at pains to indicate omissions . . . In a few instances I have . . . substitut[ed] other words for those betraying the carelessness of rapid composition, spelling proper names in full where only initials were given, and so on. It is not as if I were editing the Shakespeare folio of 1623 and were bound to preserve every

inaccuracy of whatever kind." In addition, Caroline M. Severance, a speaker cited in the quotation with Sojourner Truth was not mentioned in the official *Proceedings*. Washington claims that Holley's book provides strong evidence that Akron was not a peaceful meeting. See: Holley, *A Life for Liberty*, iv; *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851*; and Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America*, 227.

67 "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, June 21, 1851.

68 Hannah Tracy Cutler, "Reminiscences of Early Woman Suffrage Work," *The Woman's Journal*, September 26, 1896, 306-307.

69 Cutler, "Reminiscences," 306.

70 Cutler reported that there was a meeting after the convention to prepare the participants' written account. According to Cutler, Truth responded to Jane Swisshelm who argued that the resolutions of the convention had gone too far and that women should be "helped over bad roads, and to be well fed whether she worked hard or not." See: Cutler, "Reminiscences," 306-307.

71 It is certainly possible that Gage blended Truth's speech from the convention and the subsequent meeting or that Cutler's reminiscence was contaminated by Gage's account. Cutler claimed to have calmed the convention after a speech by Emma Coe, while Gage said that she was responsible for restoring order after Truth's speech. Cutler also misstated the date of the convention (she claimed it was held on June 18, 1851). See: Gage, "Sojourner Truth," *New York Independent*, 1; and Cutler, "Reminiscences," 306-307.

72 *Proceedings of the Woman's Rights Convention, Held at Akron, Ohio, May 28 and 29, 1851*.

73 "Woman's Rights Convention," *Salem (OH) Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 4.

74 For accounts of Truth's speeches that recorded a sense of hostility, see: "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Tribune*, September 8, 1853, 5; and "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Daily Times*, September 8, 1853, 4.

75 None of the existing versions of the speech claim to be transcriptions, though Erlene Stetson and Linda David argue that "Stowe and Gage used colonialist transcription techniques that emphasized what they heard as the deviant aspects of Truth's speech without conveying any very good sense of its autonomy, and stereotypical assumptions doubtless lie behind many of their distortions of Truth's speech." See: Erlene Stetson and Linda David, *Glorying in Tribulation: The Lifework of Sojourner Truth* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 112.

76 "Address by a Slave Mother," *New York Tribune*, September 7, 1853, 5.

77 Tricomi found that the letters Truth "dictated to transcribers in the IAPFP [Isaac and Amy Post Family Papers] collection, from November 3, 1864, to August 26, 1873 . . . are all written in Standard English, not dialect. The point speaks to Truth's self-representation in her private correspondence as a speaker of Standard English." See: Tricomi, "Dialect and Identity," 632n1.

78 "Sojourner Truth," *Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph*, July 8, 1879, 1.

79 See: Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*, 6; and Truth and Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*.

80 "'Dis de way to York?' says Dromo. 'Yaw, dat is Yarikee,' said the wench, pointing to the steeples. 'What devil you day?' replies Dromo. 'Yaw, mynheer.' said the wench. 'Damme you, what you say?' said Dromo again. 'Yaw, yaw,' said the girl. 'You a damn black bitch,' said Dromo, and so rid on." See: Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton's Itinerarium; Being a Narrative of a Journey from Annapolis, Maryland, through Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, from May to September, 1744, by Doctor Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart (Saint Louis, MO: Printed only for private distribution by W. K. Bixby, 1907), 140.

81 Mabee and Mabee Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth*, 257n17. For a history of the slogan "Am I Not a Man and a Brother," see: Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 21-23.

82 Maria Stewart, "Mrs. Stewart's Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston," in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, ed. Milton C. Sernett, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 204. For Stewart's contributions to civil rights rhetoric, see: Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp, "Maria W. Miller Stewart, 'Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall,'" *Voices of Democracy* 1 (2006): 15-42.

83 Mabee and Mabee Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth*, 77.

84 See note 19 above.

85 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 32.

86 The author, listed only as "B.," reported that "a large and intelligent audience was present" and "the speeches were stirring and effective." See: B., "The Woman's Convention," *Cleveland Daily True Democrat*, May 30, 1851.

87 "The power and wit of this remarkable woman convulsed the audience with laughter." See: "Woman's Rights Convention," *Boston Liberator*, 4.

88 "The *Cleveland Herald* (Whig) reported that, although nearly half of the audience at the convention were men, you did not hear 'the sly leer, the half uttered jest, that you might imagine.'" Mabee and Mabee Newhouse, *Sojourner Truth*, 70-71.

89 See note 56 above.

90 Mabee and Mabee Newhouse found twenty-seven reports of the convention written soon after its conclusion, none of which mentioned hostility. They claim that none of the "descriptions published at the time, despite their many different points of view, gives the impression, as Gage did twelve years later, that there were 'mobbish' opponents of women's rights present, much less that the convention or its leaders were ever 'staggering,' or about to panic, or about to be overwhelmed by these opponents." They also argued that "If Truth really had such a 'magical influence' that she 'turned the whole tide' in the convention from 'mobbish' hostility to support of women's rights, is it not likely that Truth herself, in her letter in which she reported attending the convention, would at least have hinted so? Or that Gage, in her

comments on the convention published soon after it was held, brief though they were, would have suggested so?" *Sojourner Truth*, 71, 256n5, and 78.

91 "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Tribune*, 7.

92 "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Tribune*, 7.

93 There are few critical treatments of Sojourner Truth's Akron speech in the rhetoric and public address literature. Drema R. Lipscomb made critical judgments about Truth's rhetorical strategies using the *History of Woman Suffrage* version of the Gage text and classifying Truth's oratory as deliberative rhetoric. Lipscomb's criticism focused largely on Truth's supposed retort to the clergyman questioning a woman's right to speak. Jacqueline Bacon used excerpts from the *Tribune*, Robinson, and Gage to examine Truth's position as a black female anti-slavery activist. Phyllis Pearson Elmore acknowledged the authenticity controversy, but used a speech version from a juvenile biography by Pat McKissack and Fredrick McKissack as the basis for her critical judgment of the rhetorical strategies used by Truth. Fitch and Mandzuik wrote the only book length examination of Truth's rhetorical strategies. They followed their book with an article about the rhetorical construction of Truth's image and how it has been used and misused by later readers. See: Drema R. Lipscomb, "Sojourner Truth: A Practical Public Discourse," in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 227-245; Jacqueline Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth: Rhetoric, Empowerment, and Abolition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 182; Phyllis Pearson Elmore, "Agitational Versatility: When Truth Met Jordan," in *Sexual Rhetoric: Media Perspectives on Sexuality, Gender, and Identity*, ed. Meta G. Carstarphen and Susan C. Zavoina (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 175-184; Pat McKissack and Fredrick McKissack, *Sojourner Truth: A Voice for Freedom* (Hillside, NJ: Enslow, 1992), 19; Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*; and Roseann M. Mandziuk and Suzanne Pullon Fitch, "The Rhetorical Construction of Sojourner Truth," *Southern Communication Journal* 66, no. 2 (2001): 120-138.

94 Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*, 18.

95 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 126.

96 Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 141.

97 Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*, 141.

98 Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth*, 182.

99 See: Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 40-59.

100 "Woman's Rights Convention," *New York Tribune*, 7.

101 Fitch and Mandzuik, *Sojourner Truth as Orator*, 5.

102 Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator*, ed and trans. J. M. May and J. Wisse (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 186.

103 For a discussion of the use of humor by African American women, see: Glenda Carpio, *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008), 65-66. For the role of printed humor by women, see: A. Cheree Carlson,

"Limitations of the Comic Frame: Some Witty American Women of the Nineteenth Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 74, (1988): 310-322.

104 There was the further concern that her supporters may have understood the argument within the humor, but used their laughter to distance themselves from culpability. Painter argued that "delivered straight, these lines would never have elicited cheers and applause from her mostly white audiences. She spoke of sinful whites and vengeful blacks, but her humor let her listeners exempt themselves. They did not hear wrath against whites, but against the advocates of slavery. It is understandable, no doubt, that Truth's audiences, who wanted so much to love this old black woman who had been a slave, found it difficult to fathom the depths of her bitterness." See: Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 138.

105 For a discussion of the construction of gender in biblical interpretation, see: Elizabeth A. Clark, "Ideology, History, and the Construction of 'Woman' in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 2 (1994): 155-184.

106 It is certainly the case that woman's rights speakers often met with opposition, particularly from the clergy. The leaders of the woman's rights movement did not allow the use of biblical precepts as an argument against woman's rights to stand unchallenged. Ellen Carol DuBois claimed that the movement indicted "the churches themselves for being institutional bulwarks of slavery and women's oppression." See: Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 58-59.

107 According to the 1850 United States Census, the illiteracy rate for whites was 4.92 percent and the illiteracy rate for the "free colored" population was 20.83 percent. United States Census Office, *Statistical View of the United States, Embracing its Territory, Population—White, Free Colored, and Slave—Moral and Social Condition, Industry, Property, and Revenue; The Detailed Statistics of Cities, Towns and Counties; Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census, to which are Added the Results of Every Previous Census, Beginning With 1790, in Comparative Tables, with Explanatory and Illustrative Notes, Based upon the Schedules and Other Official Sources of Information* (Washington, DC, 1854), 152, <http://resource.nlm.nih.gov/0231553> (accessed June 11, 2012).

108 The story of Lazarus is found in John 11:1-45.

109 John 11:21.

110 The Bible recounted that Jesus waited two days before coming to help and, in that time, Lazarus died. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" See: John 11:25-26.

111 John 11:32.

112 John 11:35.

113 Bacon, *The Humblest May Stand Forth*, 198.

114 The phrase goes back to at least 1637. See: Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Early American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 202.

115 Lindal Buchanan, *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 139.

116 Logan concluded "in the case of Truth, since textual authenticity is virtually impossible to achieve, examining various representations seems a reasonable compromise and one that alerts readers to the transcriptive problems and possibilities." See: Logan, *With Pen and Voice*, 21.

117 Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "African American Women and the Woman Suffrage Movement," in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 31.

118 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*.

119 Painter, *Sojourner Truth*, 176.