



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Senator Hinchey and Assemblyman Cahill Announce Legislation Establishing November 26 as Sojourner Truth Day in New York

MICHELLE HINCHEY November 29, 2021

| ISSUE: **SOJOURNER TRUTH DAY**



**ALBANY, NY** – Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46) and Assemblyman Kevin Cahill (AD-103) today announced legislation ([S.7341](#)) designating November 26th of each year as Sojourner Truth Day in the State of New York. The bill was inspired by the students of the YMCA Youth Crew of Kingston who led a local movement to honor Sojourner Truth and galvanized local and state officials to introduce legislation commemorating the life and indelible legacy of this remarkable woman, abolitionist, and suffragette.

**Senator Michelle Hinchey said,** “Sojourner Truth is a hero in our community who possessed unbelievable courage and perseverance as a warrior for justice, equality, and freedom for all people. It is fitting that our bill to commemorate this remarkable woman was initiated by the passion of an incredible group of young people from the YMCA Youth Crew who are coming into their own as leaders in our community. Sojourner Truth stands as a beacon for how each of us has the power to make our world a better, more equal place. It is beautiful to witness the next generation draw inspiration from this legendary woman, and an honor to uplift their great idea to establish November 26th of each year as Sojourner Truth Day in the State of New York.”

**Assemblyman Kevin A. Cahill said,** “Sojourner Truth’s story is one of unyielding courage and dedicated, outspoken activism. Her eloquence and determination advanced the struggle for the abolition of slavery in the United States and the fight for women’s rights. It is important that we recognize this work, and continue to advocate for equality and human dignity. I am proud to sponsor this legislation with Senator Hinchey, honoring the life and efforts of one of our most august local heroes.”

**Jessica Alonso, Youth Empowerment Coordinator, said,** “It is such a huge milestone for this piece of state legislation being introduced in order to make Sojourner Truth Day an official commemorative day across all of New York State. It feels so good to know that this state - her birth place and the place where she fought for freedom for so many years - could forever have a day for honoring and celebrating the one and only Sojourner Truth. She is a groundbreaking local, state and national hero, so this day is more than appropriate, and in fact, is long overdue. This day can serve New York State’s residents in so many ways; it should be a day for solidarity and community, a day for honoring the countless Black Females that have fought for freedom and justice, and made strides for generations to come, a day for lifting up and being more supportive to our neighbors and to the local activists that

are currently fighting to make strides against injustice and systemic oppressions, and of course for giving thanks for all your blessings. We are grateful that the Sojourner Truth Day initiative has been successful up to this point, and we plan to continue pushing until she officially has a state-wide day in New York."

**Briana Gary, Youth Empowerment Coordinator, said,** "Having a statewide Sojourner Truth Day would be an amazing accomplishment. She was a prolific speaker, abolitionist, and women's rights activist and I think it's very important that more people recognize her and everything she did. Her ability to prevail against many hardships and barriers is beyond inspiring. It would be completely unjust to let her accomplishments go unheard of. She is more than deserving of a day of recognition. I hope this leads to more youth-led initiatives to honor historical figures."

**Ani Castillo, Youth Empowerment Coordinator said,** "It has been an honor getting to learn about Sojourner Truth's accomplishments through books written by and about her. I found her so inspirational because of her strength and resilience to continue fighting for herself, her family, and her people during a time period where Black women had little to no power. Our efforts to make November 26th a day to honor Sojourner Truth have been a long but cultivating experience. We had the opportunity to draft proclamations, do a lot of community outreach, contact elected officials, and present our efforts to the Kingston Government and Senator Michelle Hinchey. I am proud to say that this youth led and inspired project to honor Sojourner Truth on November 26th will be introduced as a piece of state legislation to have an official day of commemorative state-wide in New York."

**Aleshanee Emanuel, Youth Empowerment Coordinator, said,** "I believe that Sojourner Truth Day is a day much needed. Honoring the truth this country seems to want to bury is exactly what Sojourner fought for. Acknowledging her power and the power that all black women carry is

something to celebrate. This initiative is important to more than just Ulster County, and Sojourner is more than just a local heroine. Her efforts and accomplishments are truly outstanding and impactful. So, we encourage you to celebrate this official commemorative holiday with us on November 26 throughout all of New York State!! Perhaps you can start with educating yourself and your loved ones about the absolute awesomeness of Sojourner Truth and her intense journey to greatness. Happy Sojourner Truth Day y'all! I'm glad to be celebrating with you."

Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree in 1797 to enslaved parents in the Town of Esopus, Ulster County. Around age nine, she was separated from her parents and would be sold several times more to enslavers, including in Port Ewan and West Park, before claiming her freedom in 1826 — one year before New York's law to abolish slavery was to take effect. After Truth's enslaver had failed to honor his promise to free her, Truth bravely walked 11.5 miles to freedom over the Shaupeneak Ridge carrying her infant daughter Sophia.

One of Truth's most extraordinary local accomplishments happened shortly after her escape, at the Ulster County Courthouse in Kingston where she won a landmark legal case against the man who facilitated the kidnapping of her five-year-old son, Peter, by an enslaver in Alabama. This successful fight against injustice marked the first time in U.S. history that a Black woman would defeat a white man in court and resulted in Truth being reunited with her son.

It was as a free woman that she chose the name Sojourner Truth in 1843, inspired by the belief that God was calling on her to travel and preach about the causes she believed in — a belief that would later inform her prolific speeches against slavery and make her a leader of the women's and civil rights movements.

Across Ulster County, Sojourner Truth’s memory lives on, in large part due to community-led efforts championed by local residents, like the team of young women — all college students — who serve as Empowerment Coordinators of the Kingston YMCA Youth Crew, Ani Castillo, Aleshanee Emanuel, Briana Gary, and Jessica Alonso, and whose efforts have led to local and now statewide legislation introduced because of their dedicated advocacy.

*Senator Michelle Hinchey represents the 46th Senate District, which includes Greene and Montgomery Counties and parts of Albany, Schenectady, and Ulster Counties. Senator Hinchey serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and sits on the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Energy and Telecommunications, Environmental Conservation, and Local Government Committees.*

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S7341

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- Introduced
  - - In Committee Assembly
    - In Committee Senate
  - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
    - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Establishes November twenty-sixth of each year as a day of commemoration known as  
Sojourner Truth Day

August 23, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by **Michelle Hinchey**

Do you support this bill?