

In 1817, the New York State Legislature passed the New York State Emancipation Act, which granted freedom to those enslaved who were born before July 4, 1799. Unfortunately, however, this law declared that many men, women, and children could not be freed until July 4, 1827, 10 years later. While still enslaved and at the demand of her then owner, John Dumont, Isabella married an older slave named Thomas, with whom she had at least five children—Diane, Peter, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Sophia.

As the date of her release came near—July 4, 1827—she learned that Dumont was plotting to keep her enslaved, even after the Emancipation Act went into effect. For this reason, in 1826, she ran away from the Dumont plantation with her infant child, leaving behind her husband and other children.

She took refuge with a Quaker family—the family of Isaac Van Wagenen—and performed domestic work for them as well as missionary work among the poor of New York City. While working for the Van Wagenens, she discovered that a member of the Dumont family had sold her youngest son Peter to a plantation owner in Alabama. At the time, New York law prohibited the sale of slaves outside New York State and so the sale of Peter was illegal. Isabella sued in court and won his return. In doing so, she became the first black woman in the United States to take a white man to court and win.

Isabella had always been very spiritual, and soon after being emancipated, she had a vision that affected her profoundly, leading her—as she later described it—to develop a “perfect trust in God and prayer.” In 1843, deciding her mission was to preach the word of God, Isabella changed her name to Sojourner Truth—her name for a traveling preacher, one who speaks the truth—and left New York. That summer she traveled throughout New England, calling her own prayer meetings and attending those of others. She preached “God’s truth and plan for salvation.”

After months of travel, she arrived in Northampton, Massachusetts, and joined the Northampton Association for Education and Industry, where she met and worked with abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglas, and Olive Gilbert.

As we know, during the 1850s, slavery became an especially heated issue in the United States. In 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law, which allowed runaway slaves to be arrested and jailed without a jury trial, and in 1857, the Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott case that those enslaved had no rights as citizens and that the government could not outlaw slavery in the new territories.

Nevertheless, these extraordinarily difficult times did not stop Sojourner Truth from continuing her mission. Her life story—“The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave”—written with the help of friend Olive Gilbert, was published in 1850.

While traveling and speaking in States across the country, Sojourner Truth met many women abolitionists and noticed that although women could be part of the leadership in the abolitionist movement, they could neither vote nor hold public office. It was this realization that led Sojourner to become an outspoken supporter of women’s rights.

In 1851, she addressed the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, delivering her famous speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” The ap-

plause she received that day has been described as “deafening.” From that time on, she became known as a leading advocate for the rights of women. Indeed, she was one of the nineteenth century’s most eloquent voices for the cause of anti-slavery and women’s rights.

By the mid-1850s, Truth had earned enough money from sales of her popular autobiography to buy land and a house in Battle Creek, Michigan. She continued her lectures, traveling to Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, she visited black troops stationed near Detroit, Michigan, and offered encouragement. After the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, she worked in Washington as a counselor and educator for those who had been previously enslaved through the Freedman’s Relief Association and the Freedmen’s Hospital. It was during this time—in October 1864—that she met with President Abraham Lincoln.

Throughout the 1870s, Sojourner Truth continued to speak on behalf of women and African Americans. Failing health, however, soon forced Sojourner to return to her Battle Creek, Michigan, home, where she died on November 26, 1883.

Friends, this brief recounting of Sojourner Truth’s life story only begins to speak of her faith, courage, intelligence, and steadfastness in the face of extraordinary circumstances and volatile times in our Nation’s history. Though she could neither read nor write, her eloquence commanded the attention of thousands of Americans, both black and white. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that among her many friends, admirers and staunch supporters were Frederick Douglass, Amy Post, Olive Gilbert, Parker Pillsbury, Mrs. Francis Gage, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Laura Haviland, Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony.

The legislation we introduced pays tribute to Sojourner Truth.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE LIFE OF
MR. CHARLES LANGFORD

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I respectfully request the House’s attention this morning to reflect on the life and legacy of a great Alabamian, Mr. Charles Langford. Mr. Langford passed this week on February 11 at his home in Montgomery, Alabama.

Mr. Langford was an activist, lawyer, and statesman of the highest caliber. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955–56, Mr. Langford represented the woman who started that protest which helped change our Nation, the late Mrs. Rosa Louise Parks, as well as the organization formed to carry out the boycott, the Montgomery Improvement Association. In 1956, the class action suit filed by Mr. Langford and his partner, Fred Gray, known as *Browder v. Gayle*, ended segregated seating on buses in Montgomery, and also became the precedent used to end all racial segregation ordinances in the United States. Later in life, Langford served two terms in the Alabama House of Representatives and five terms in the Alabama Senate.

Mr. Langford’s passing is a great loss to the State of Alabama. He helped make history in the Civil Rights movement, and played an important role in Alabama politics. I know all of us in the House today share in the loss of this great and loved man, and send our condolences to his family and our prayers that his legacy will live on long after this mournful time has passed.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO SANDY
PELTYN

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my friend Sandy Peltyn, for her work and involvement in the Las Vegas community.

Since Sandy’s move to Las Vegas in 1981, she has become very active in both fund-raising and organizing major events in the community. She is very involved in a number of organizations including: the Jewish Asthma Hospital, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Kids for Homeless Kids, Nevada Dance Theater Guild, Women’s Center at UNLV, Latin Chamber of Commerce Miss Nevada-USA Pageant, Mrs. United States Pageant for the Susan G. Koman Breast Cancer Foundation, Golden Rainbow, Nevada Opera Theater, Opera Las Vegas, Oasis, Veterans in Politics, UNLV School of Medicine, Dean’s Council, Clark County Pro Bono Projects, The Arthritis Foundation, Community College of Southern Nevada Fund Raising Committee, Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, The UNLV Sierra Wind Quintet, Safe House, American Heart Association, Kidney Foundation, Nevada Association of the Handicapped and Children’s Charities.org. She has raised over four million dollars for these charities.

Sandy has also been recognized for her achievements with the International Friendship Awards by the Nevada Opera Theatre, the Volunteer of the Year Awards from the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, the Politician of the Year Award by the Filipino Community of Nevada and the Woman of the Year by Fit for Tomorrow. In addition to all of her other community achievements, she was recently appointed as one of the five members of Medical Liability Association of Nevada and President George W. Bush appointed her to a member of the President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts at the Kennedy Center.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to honor Sandy Peltyn for her community activism which has enriched the lives of many in the community. I applaud her efforts and wish her the best in her future endeavors.

SOCIAL SECURITY GUARANTEE
PLUS ACT

HON. RON LEWIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise to inform my colleagues about legislation I have introduced today to preserve Social Security and pay full promised benefits to future