

Sojourner Truth, A Legacy

Sandra Jones on stage as Sojourner Truth



Sandra Jones

African-American history is replete with examples of strong women who spoke truth to power and shattered glass ceilings and busted through racial walls. Few are as famous as Sojourner Truth, who absconded from her master with her infant daughter in tow and later won a court case that led to her son being freed from slavery. It was the first time in U.S. history that a black woman had won a legal challenge against a white man. Truth would go on to fight the establishment, spending the remainder of her life battling for the abolishment of slavery and the establishment of women's rights. In fact, her most famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?," delivered in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention, is still today one of the most famous feminist mantras.

Longtime Greensboro, N.C., resident Sandra Jones has been fascinated by Truth, whom she lovingly calls "Mother Truth," ever since she first learned about her nearly three decades ago. Moved by Truth's sheroism, Jones began piecing together a music-infused play about her life. Long a work in progress, "Sojourner Truth, A Legacy," made its N.C. Black Repertory Company debut last year with Black Rep Artistic Director Mabel Robinson in the director's chair.

On stage, Jones, well known in the Triad for her powerful church-honed pipes, becomes Mother Truth, effectively relaying Truth's struggles, hopes and passion for the movement.

The several songs that Jones – and the two musicians who provide accompaniment – performs provide exclamation points to the powerful, moving dialogue. (Some of the songs were written by Truth herself.)

One highlight is Jones' deliverance of the entire "Ain't I a Woman?" address, in which Truth cleverly denounces racism and sexism:

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman?"

Jones is a native of Winterville, N.C. Although she earned a BFA in theater from East Carolina University, she proudly points out that her theater training began at N.C. A&T State University. Her many acting credits include starring roles in the Black Rep's "Crowns" and a 1994 co-starring role alongside the late Dr. Maya Angelou in Langston Hughes' "Tambourines To Glory."

She says Truth's story is still very much relevant.

"Mother Truth reminds us of the power that's greater than any man that 'pervades the universe!' She reminds us 'there is no place where God is not!' Her story is a true inspiration," Jones states on her website. ■

Double-Billed!

**Sojourner Truth,
A Legacy
& WEB Du Bois:
A Man for All Times**

**Mountcastle
Forum Black
Box at the Milton
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Fri, Aug. 7 3 p.m.

Fri, Aug. 7 8 p.m.

Sat. Aug. 8 3 p.m.

Sat. Aug. 8 8 p.m.

\$41