

Why Are We Called Sojourners?

by Shelly Horvath and Joy E. Dickerson

We get these two questions all the time: “What does your name mean?” and “How do you pronounce that word?” Yes, *Sojourners* is a difficult name to pronounce and spell, but we chose it carefully and cherish its meaning.

First, it’s pronounced SO-ger-nerz. Except for that *ou* in the middle, it’s pretty easy. Think of the word *journey*. The *jour* in both words is said the same way.

So that’s how you say it. But what does it mean? Sojourners are “people who stay temporarily.” A visiting minister is a sojourner. Family members who stay with you for a time while they get back on their feet are sojourners. In a sense, we are all sojourners—short-term visitors with finite terms on planet Earth.

In particular, our foster children are sojourners. They stay with us for a time—sometimes well into adulthood—but they will eventually move on. While we have them in our organization, we seek to treat them as honored guests. We give them a good home and a warm family. We give them support in their schooling and friends to have fun with. Our Age Up philosophy means that we make sure they have the training and skills to thrive (not just survive) as young adults and throughout their lives—because they won’t be with us forever. They are sojourners.

That’s why we named our organization Sojourners.

Our name also pays tribute to a great American activist—Sojourner Truth. Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree in 1797 and grew up in upstate New York. She was a person who was owned by another person—a slave. However, in 1827, New York State ended slavery. Isabella was free. But, while even one person was enslaved, she could not enjoy her freedom. She began traveling from place to another—sojourning—to speak out against slavery, to speak her truth. She took a new name, one that reflected her journey: Sojourner Truth. Her willingness to travel ceaselessly and speak tirelessly helped to bring down the institution of slavery in the United States.

At Sojourners, we celebrate many aspects of Sojourner Truth’s life. We want to hear the truths of each of our foster children. We hope we, as an organization, will never hesitate to speak the truths that they cannot articulate. Most important, we celebrate the ability of each person to make a difference. Sojourner Truth decided that, yes, one woman could make change happen—a big change in the course of history. Each of us has within us that power.

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PHOTO SPEC: Use photo of Sojourner Truth from http://www.newpaltz.edu/sojourner_truth/ or some other public domain source.

CAPTION: In Sojourner Truth, we celebrate the value of each person's voice to make a difference in the world.

News Notes

- **GEDs ACHIEVED:** Two young people in our YouthBuild program got their GEDs recently. This represents a major milestone in their progress through the program and into successful adulthood. We congratulate them.
- Our YouthBuild program, which provides education and job training, is actively seeking new recruits. Call Joy at (740) 591-6279 for more information.
- **MLK DAY:** Our Martin Luther King Day celebrations were successful and satisfying, even though we had to cancel our annual march to the courthouse. Start now asking for clear skies next year.

Upcoming Events

- **TOOL DRIVE:** In the next few weeks Sojourners will be launching a Tool Drive to equip the young adults in our construction training programs. Start thinking about cleaning out your garage! Call Joy at (740) 591-6279 if you're ready to make a donation.
- **BLOOD DRIVE:** Mark your calendar for February 28, our next American Red Cross Blood Drive. Call Shelly at (740) 591-6649 to sign up to donate.
- **FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION MEETING:** A foster care information open house will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 8, 2007, at Sojourners, 605 W. Main Street (the big white house under the oaks). Please drop in and see us. In the meantime, if you are interested in becoming a foster parent in our region, please call Joy at (740) 591-6279.

CONTACT

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