

Whereas, Sojourner Truth, nicknamed “the Daughter of Esopus”, born enslaved, was given the name Isabella Baumfree at birth. She was born near Rondout Creek in the Town of Hurley, New York. Although her exact birth date is unknown, it is believed she was born around 1797. Between the years 1640 and 1827 there were thousands of Africans and African Americans enslaved in Ulster County; The infrastructure of Ulster County was built by highly skilled enslaved people and the economy was driven by their labor; and

Whereas, The stone houses in which she was enslaved still stand, bearing witness to those who built them; as the youngest of at least 10 children, many of Truth’s siblings were kidnapped for sale. Truth was sold for the first time at nine years old; after years of enduring physical and sexual abuse, Truth escaped on foot carrying her infant daughter, Sophia, from the enslaver that had tortured her, having to leave behind her 3 other children. Though pursued, she was able to take refuge with a local family from 1826-1827; and

Whereas, Truth was a self educated intellectual; fluent in English and Dutch. In 1843 Truth was compelled to change her name, recognizing the power of her own image. Her autobiography, The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, focuses on seeking justice and the empowerment of Women and People Of Color. Truth would come to represent the thousands of voices and stories from this area that were never shared or cherished; Truth’s unprecedented barefoot walk through Kingston to the County Courthouse to free her young son, Peter, from illegal enslavement is a testament to her strength, resistance, and sense of justice; and

Whereas, by recognizing Sojourner Truth every year, we recognize her victory as a local and national hero who’s acknowledgment is long overdue. Truth remains a transcendental Black Woman. She was a true anti-racist, actively working against the injustices of her day. She passed away on November 26, 1883, however her legacy lives on through the present and ongoing fight for justice today; and

Whereas, In remembering Truth’s legacy, we should be thankful for the work done in the past, thankful for our ability to enact change in the present, and thankful for the hope of equity and justice in the future. Let us all be inspired by Sojourner Truth’s brave activism.

Whereas, The values that Sojourner Truth lived by, such as abolitionism, truth, and anti-racism, are the values that we hope the Kingston community, including the local government, reflect in their actions. In the past, the Kingston government has not been completely committed to anti-racism; This has shown in policing, building developments, and delayed support for anti-racist policy change proposed by local frontline organizations.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that we will take this moment, brought to us by a coalition of Kingston activists, to take accountability and commit to prioritizing the marginalized community members that reside in our area. We urge future Kingston politicians to do the same. With the help of local organizations and individuals already committed to anti-racism, we shall strive to create a more inclusive and equitable Kingston.

Be It Further Resolved, that the City of Kingston Common Council proclaim November 26th as Sojourner Truth Day in the City of Kingston and urge all residents to recognize that this is a day for people of all races, creeds and backgrounds to celebrate and come together in unity.