

# NEW YORK CO ESCAPE

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#### **EDITORIAL**

**DIRECTOR** 

**Jeanette Barrett-Stokes** jbstokes@usatoday.com

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR** 

**Jerald Council** jcouncil@usatoday.com

**MANAGING EDITOR** 

**Michelle Washington** mjwashington@usatoday.com

ISSUE EDITOR
Tracy Scott Forson

ISSUE DESIGNER

Lisa M. Zilka

**EDITORS** 

Amy Sinatra Ayres Harry Lister Deirdre van Dyk Debbie Williams

**DESIGNERS** 

Hayleigh Corkey David Hyde Debra Moore Gina Toole Saunders

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS** 

Margaret Buranen, Luisa Colón, Ana Connery, Sean Lahman, Jeanne Muchnick, Kae Lani Palmisano, Carli Pierson, Sarah Sekula, Joseph Spector, Curtis Tate, Julia Thompson

#### **ADVERTISING**

**VP, ADVERTISING** 

Patrick Burke | (703) 854-5914 pburke@usatoday.com

ACCOUNT DIRECTOR

Vanessa Salvo | (703) 854-6499 vsalvo@usatoday.com

#### **FINANCE**

Billing Coordinator

Julie Marco

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# SISTERS IN ARMS

Isabella Baumfree, the brilliant woman who would later change her name to Sojourner Truth, was born into slavery in New York state in 1797. In her late 20s, she escaped the cruelty of enslavement and became heavily involved in the abolitionist movement. She later became an outspoken advocate for women's rights.

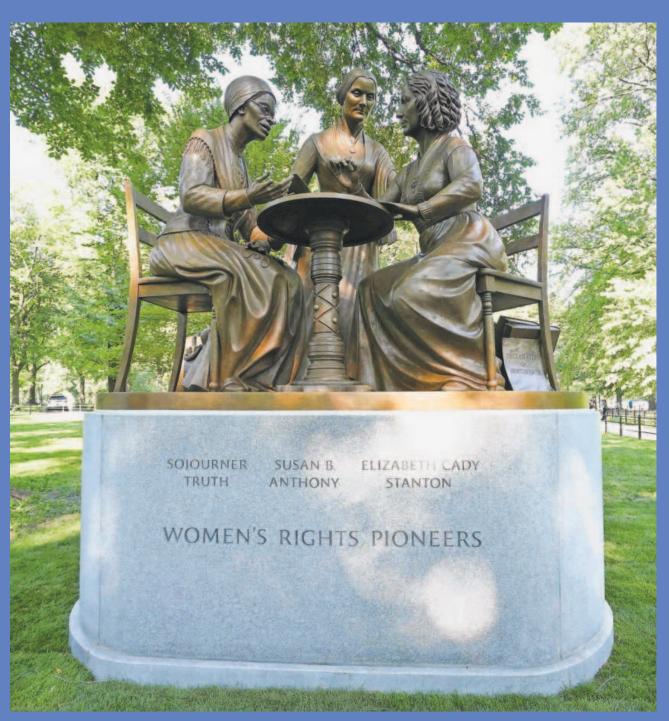
In a fascinating twist on history, Truth, well known for her speech Ain't I a Woman likely never uttered those words. The speech traditionally attributed to her with a Southern dialect was written 12 years after Truth spoke at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. But a different version of the speech, which doesn't include the phrase "ain't I a woman?" was published in the Anti-Slavery Bugle in June 1851, a few weeks after the Akron convention.

Koritha Mitchell, an English professor at Ohio State University and author of From Slave Cabins to the White House and Living With Lynching, explains how little we know about suffragists of color. "Frances (Ellen Watkins) Harper was very much (Frederick Douglass') equal and contemporary. She wasn't around for Seneca Falls because many Black women were working toward abolition. But Harper is so important because, unlike Sojourner Truth, who was easily misrepresented because she didn't write for herself, Harper did write for herself ... She died in 1911, but even if she had lived until 1920 the vote still wouldn't have been available to her."

"After 1920, things don't actually change for women of color," Mitchell explains. "For the most part, whiteness is the requisite that determines your citizenship. It's not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that you begin to see Black people actually able to access the vote. Even after the 15th and 19th amendments, there was the bloodless violence of poll taxes and then there was the bloody violence of lynching — that's how you give the message that the only people that are citizens are white, straight men with property."

For more on Black women's struggle for equality and the right to vote, visit the Museum of Women's Resistance in Brooklyn, N.Y.

— Carli Pierson



Central Park's new bronze suffragists statue features Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

ugust marked the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. For travelers curious to learn more about the women's suffrage movement, New York is one of the best places to explore the history of the fight for women's rights.

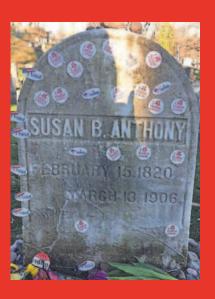
Any trip to New York must include

a stop in the Big Apple, and this August the city unveiled a statue in Central Park's Literary Walk, the first to depict pioneering women. "The (city's public design) commission specified statues of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the challenge was to find an artistic way to include other women who were an important part of the suffrage movement," explains sculptor Meredith Bergmann, who

added the famous abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth. "She seemed like the perfect third member of this triad."

Venturing upstate, see the site of the historic Women's Rights Convention, which took place on July 19 and 20, 1848, at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls and was organized by Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha

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## LONG-LASTING LEGACY

Online resource shares suffragists' stories

The interactive website womenandthevotenys.com highlights the New York burial sites of suffragists and provides biographies and histories that have been compiled by more than 30 volunteers in recent months. The website was created to honor the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment

Also included on the website, conceived by filmmaker Linda Moroney, is information about activists who fought for gender equality in the years after 1920.

The site was unveiled on the 100th anniversary of when the 19th Amendment went into effect, according to Moroney, who considers the project "a dynamic way to connect the past and the present and bring suffrage stories to life."

"Our goal is to shine a light on New York State's rich suffragist legacy, as inclusively as possible," Moroney said in a statement, "and to create a conversation with contemporary voters on where we are with political equality now, and where we want to be."

— Gary Craig

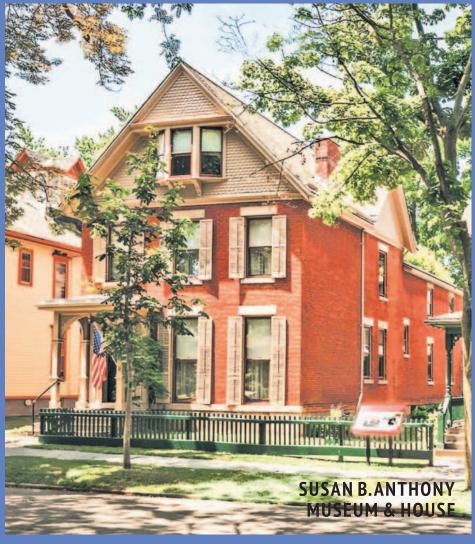
Martha Wright, Mary Ann M'Clintock and Jane Hunt.

Nearby, don't miss Hunt's house in Waterloo, where the convention was planned. The M'Clintock house, also in Waterloo, where the Declaration of Sentiments was drafted, is another worthy stop. Inspired by the Declaration of Independence, the Sentiments outlined the rights that American women should enjoy as citizens. It was written primarily by Stanton, who read it at the Seneca Falls Convention, and it was followed by the passage of 12 women's rights resolutions. The only resolution that didn't pass unanimously was

about women's suffrage. Visitors interested in learning more about New York's suffrage movement should visit the Matilda Joslyn Gage Home and Foundation in Fayetteville, says Susan Zimet, a member of New York's Women's **Suffrage Commission** and author of *Rebels and* Roses: The Epic Story of The Women's Right to Vote. Gage "was sort of written out of history, but was a radical women's suffrage leader and abolitionist," Zimet says. "It's not just a museum, but it's also a place for inspirational work on social justice and equal rights.

While you're upstate, head over to the Susan B. Anthony Museum & House in Rochester. Her home was the headquarters of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the site where she was arrested for voting in 1872.





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**— LINDA MORONEY,** filmmaker

