

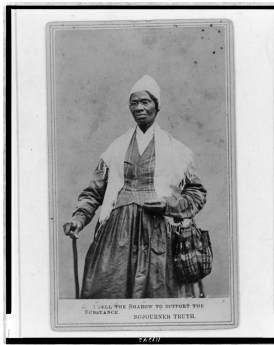
Her Story

A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## July 2024 Her Story ENewsletter A Statue and A Film

In May of 2024, a plaza and statue were unveiled honoring Sojourner Truth at the location in Akron, Ohio where she gave her iconic speech in 1851, "Ain't I a Woman?" Also in May, a movie came out titled *Young Woman and the Sea* profiling the story of swimmer Gertrude Ederle. Two women—two very different accomplishments! We tie them together because of their inspiring stories that cause all of us to stretch, grow, and celebrate our own strengths!



**Sojourner Truth** was an escaped slave who turned her energies to abolition as well as to women's rights. She had changed her name from Isabella Baumfree before that 1851 speech:

*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? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?*

Truth was very concerned that abolition would grant rights to men and overlook women. During the Civil War, she recruited Black troops to serve in the Union Army. After the War, she worked for women's suffrage, the abolition of capital punishment, prison reform, and property rights.



The first woman to swim across the English Channel, **Gertrude Ederle** had already won a gold medal in the 400-meter freestyle relay and bronze medals in the 100-meter and 400-meter freestyle races in the 1924 Paris Olympics. In 1925, her first attempt to swim across the English Channel was unsuccessful because the water was too rough. In 1926, she was successful. Her time of 14 hours, 31 minutes for the 35-mile distance broke the previous record (held by a man) by almost two hours. Her time stood as the women's record for the next 35 years. Her endurance, athletic strength and skill were at the time quite unexpected for a woman. Her victory came at an enormous cost: as a result of her Channel swim, she suffered back injuries and permanent hearing impairment.

Over Ederle's lifetime, she set twenty-nine U.S. and world swimming records. After her active swimming days were over, she developed breakthrough techniques for teaching people with hearing impairments how to swim.

Sojourner Truth and Gertrude Ederle are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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