



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

******For Immediate Release******

Date: Friday, August 15, 2025

Contact: Amberly Jane Campbell, Assistant Deputy County Executive
(845) 340-3800 x8958 / acam@co.ulster.ny.us

Ulster County Welcomes Sojourner Truth Statue with Powerful Evening of Tribute and Reflection

KINGSTON, NY - On Friday evening, Ulster County hosted a moving and joyful celebration to welcome the life-size bronze sculpture *Sojourner Truth: First Steps to Freedom* to the Ulster County Office Building. The event drew a large and enthusiastic crowd to 244 Fair Street in Kingston, where the statue is now installed under the front overhang and will remain on display for six months.

Created by New Paltz-based artist Trina Greene and loaned by the SUNY New Paltz Foundation, the sculpture portrays Isabella Baumfree Vanwagenen (later known as Sojourner Truth) in 1826, walking to freedom with her daughter Sophia. That pivotal moment marked Truth's escape from enslavement and the beginning of her lifelong fight for abolition and women's rights.

The evening began with a powerful drum performance by nationally known percussionist Ubaka Hill, followed by remarks by Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger; Margaret Wade-Lewis Center Executive Director Esi Lewis (also former County Chief Diversity Officer); Ulster County Chief Diversity Officer Dina Suggs; Ulster County Historian Edward Moran; SUNY New Paltz President Darrell P. Wheeler; and the artist, herself, Trina Greene. Artistic performances included poetry readings by past Ulster County Poet Laureate Kate Hymes and current Poet Laureate Mike Jurkovic, as well as a rousing historical reenactment by Onestrike. (SUNY New Paltz Black Studies Department Chair Dr. Weldon McWilliams was unfortunately unable to attend the event.)

Attendees were invited to arrive early to explore the Surrogate Court mini museum on the third floor, which showcases historical documents, photographs, and speeches related to Sojourner Truth's life and legacy. The County Clerk's Office also had a display in the DMV lobby

featuring additional historical documents and materials. Refreshments were provided by Good Eat'n Soul Food.

"You cannot help but be moved by Trina Greene's powerful portrayal of Sojourner Truth holding her baby daughter Sophia as she takes her first steps to freedom from slavery here in Ulster County nearly 200 years ago, and I encourage the public to come view the statue while it is in front of the County building for the next six months," **said County Executive Metzger**. "A renowned abolitionist and suffragette, Sojourner devoted the rest of her life to the fight for equality and justice, and we can all take inspiration from her courageous spirit and unwavering moral compass in these times."

"Sojourner Truth fought tirelessly for equality and freedom but was also a singer and known to be witty," **said County Chief Diversity Officer Dina Suggs**. "This statue is an inspiration to work hard for the well-being of our whole community, while savoring and celebrating life. We are lucky to have Sojourner at the County Office building until next year."

"It is an honor and a privilege to celebrate the life, activism, and impact of Sojourner Truth, one of Ulster County's most notable and exceptional historic residents and a symbol of courage and activism whom we should all take inspiration from," **said Eddie Moran, Ulster County Historian**. "We are so thankful to the extremely talented Trina Greene for this beautiful sculpture which will attest to Sojourner Truth's enduring legacy for all who visit the offices of Ulster County in the future."

"My dream is that every soul who passes *Sojourner Truth: First Steps to Freedom* will be inspired to carry on her legacy of seeking and standing for justice," **said Esi Lewis, Margaret Wade-Lewis Center Executive Director**.

"We value these continued opportunities to recognize Sojourner Truth's consequential legacy and contributions through Hudson Valley communities," **said SUNY New Paltz President Darrell P. Wheeler**. "The statue's latest installation in Kingston follows previous campus and external stakeholder consultation on its multi-year journey until returning to campus in 2026. Thank you to County Executive Metzger, Mayor Noble and their respective teams; sculptor Trina Greene; the Newburgh Free Library; and other collaborative partners who have supported this significant work."

"We are grateful for this statue which pays tribute to Sojourner Truth's legacy, but it is important to remember it is far better to embody her spirit!," **said Dr. Weldon McWilliams, Chair, Department of Black Studies, SUNY New Paltz**.

“Sojourner Truth was once quoted as saying: ‘I’m not going to die. I’m going home like a shooting star.’ A message filled with certainty, so comforting from a former slave whose life had been filled with cruelty and hardship,” **said sculptor Trina Greene.** “At 29 years she left her master’s house, stepping into an unknown future. We all can be comforted by her radiance of Spirit today.”

The statue was previously displayed at Kingston City Hall and will travel to the Newburgh Public Library following its stay at the County Office Building.

About Sojourner Truth: Born in 1797 in what is now Ulster County, Sojourner Truth courageously walked to freedom and became the first woman to win a court case against a man, as well as a national advocate for abolition and women's rights. Her powerful voice and unwavering commitment to justice continue to inspire generations.

Ulster County invites residents and visitors alike to view the sculpture and reflect on the legacy of one of the most influential figures in American history.

###



Ulstercountyny.gov