



# Katharina von Bora

## *Mother of the Reformation*

{ 1499–1552 }

**K**atharina von Bora was the daughter of a German nobleman. He sent her to monasteries to be educated, encouraging her to become a nun at sixteen. Kate was very bright and took a keen interest in the reforms taking place in the church. She became unhappy with monastic life and longed to leave. However, abandoning one's religious vows often led to scandal and even imprisonment.

Undaunted, Kate and several of her sister nuns wrote a letter to pastor Martin Luther in 1523, asking for help. Luther devised a daring plan, helping the nuns make their escape hidden in a fish merchant's wagon.

None of their families welcomed their return, so the women turned to Luther to help them find respectable husbands. Kate refused to marry anyone but Luther or his closest friend. Despite the fourteen-year difference in their ages, Kate and Martin enjoyed a happy marriage. They lived in a former monastery called the Black Cloister, which was often filled with guests and paying boarders. The couple had six children of their own and adopted four orphans.

Kate proved energetically resourceful in managing the large estate. She enjoyed lively discussions about religion with her dinner guests, earning the nickname "Mother of the Reformation."

Some years after Luther's death, Kate fled her home during a plague outbreak. She died after being injured in a fatal cart accident. Faithful and tenacious to the end, Katharina declared on her deathbed, "I will stick to Christ like a burr to a topcoat."<sup>45</sup>



# Katharina von Bora





# Sojourner Truth

## *Social Activist*

{ 1797–1883 }

**I**sabella Baumfree was born a slave in New York. She had several masters as a child, some of them cruel. At age thirty, she had a vision leading her to the home of a Quaker couple who purchased her to set her free.

She later worked as a housekeeper for a Christian evangelist, converted to the Christian faith, and changed her name. She chose “Sojourner” because God told her she would be traveling throughout the land, and she chose “Truth” because that’s what she would declare to the people. She felt immense happiness in her faith and testified, “Jesus loved me. I knowed it. I felt it.”<sup>46</sup>

She spoke against slavery at churches throughout New England. Because she couldn’t read or write, Sojourner dictated her life story to her friend Olive Gilbert in 1850. She delivered her most controversial speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” in 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, chastising white abolitionists for not seeking civil rights for African American women as well as men.

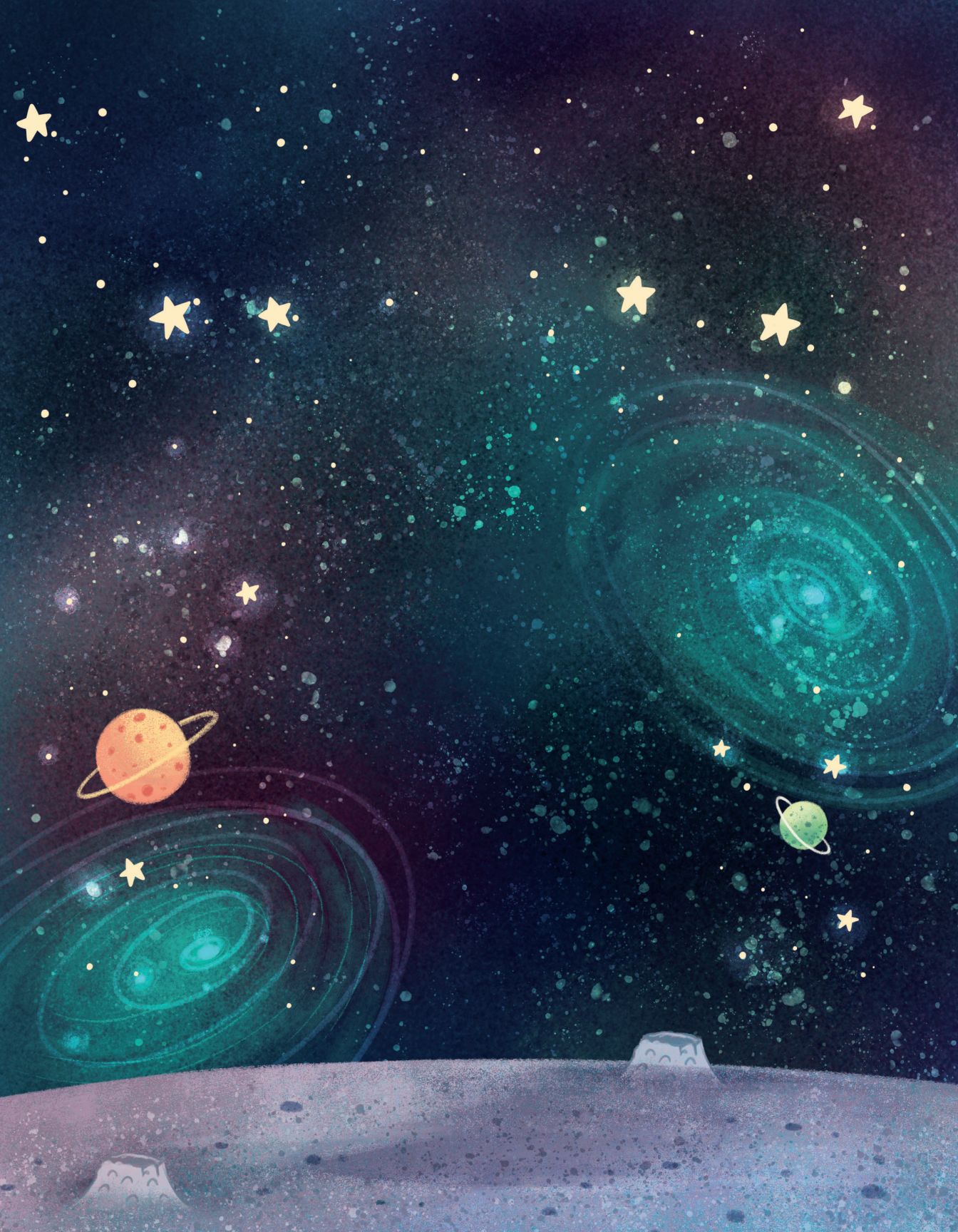
But with fame came danger too. A mob attacked her so viciously that Sojourner was forced use a cane for the remainder of her life. On another occasion, a racist streetcar conductor broke her arm.

After the Civil War, Sojourner petitioned the government to allow freed slaves to purchase land in the West. She worked tirelessly for racial equality until she retired at age 85.

# Sojourner Truth









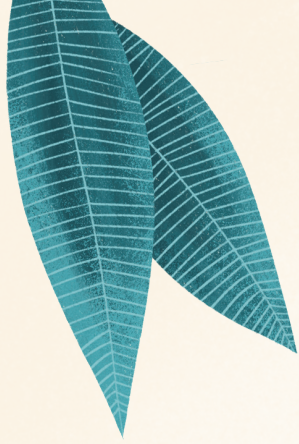
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