



Abbott, Grace (1878–1939)

One of the many social reformers influenced by Chicago's Hull House and its founder Jane Addams, Grace Abbott worked to improve the lives of immigrants and children, using her skills as a researcher to investigate and report the conditions in which they lived and worked. She began her career as the first director of the Immigrants' Protective League, conducting research on immigrants' lives and writing a series of articles published as "The Immigrant and the Community" (1917). Based on her research, Abbott concluded that immigrants needed protection from aggressive employment agencies, and she proceeded to successfully lobby the Illinois legislature for a measure to regulate them. In 1913, she directed an investigation into the exploitation of immigrants in Massachusetts and again recommended proposals for the legislature's consideration.

In 1917, Julia Lathrop, who was director of the Children's Bureau in the U.S. Department of Labor, invited Abbott to join her staff and direct the implementation of the Keating-Owen Child Labor Reform Act. The next year, however, the U.S. Supreme Court found the law unconstitutional. Abbott, who had observed the abuses of child labor, became a dedicated advocate for a child labor amendment, which was passed by Congress in 1923 but was not ratified by the states.

Abbott succeeded Lathrop as head of the Children's Bureau in 1921 and had as her first mission the implementation of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act of 1921, which provided federal grants-in-aid to states for maternal and infant health programs. Under Abbott's leadership, approximately 3,000 child health and prenatal health clinics opened across the country. Despite the program's demonstrated success and the protests of Abbott and other social reformers, Congress ended it in 1929. During the 1930s, Abbott directed several studies on the Depression's impact on children, describing the nutritional deficiencies, educational losses, and health hazards that threatened children's well-being. Neither the research findings nor Abbott's pleas convinced President Herbert Hoover that children were suffering. After Franklin Roosevelt's election to the presidency, Abbott's proposals for a mother's pen-

sion and emergency food and medical care for the neediest children gained acceptance.

Abbott resigned from the Children's Bureau in 1934 to recover from tuberculosis, but she remained involved in the agency as an adviser, helping develop sections of the Social Security Act of 1935 that related to maternal and child health, aid to dependent children, children with special needs, and crippled children. From 1934 until her death, Abbott was professor of public welfare administration at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration.

Born in Grand Island, Nebraska, Grace Abbott earned her bachelor's degree from Grand Island College in 1898, studied at the University of Nebraska, and earned her master's degree in political science from the University of Chicago in 1907.

See also Addams, Jane; Child Labor Amendment; Children's Bureau; Lathrop, Julia; Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act of 1921

References Lindenmeyer, "A Right to Childhood": The U.S. Children's Bureau and Child Welfare, 1912–1946 (1997).

Document Florence Kelley, "Child Labor and Woman Suffrage," 1905

Abel, Hazel Pearl Hempel (1888–1966)

Republican Hazel Abel of Nebraska served in the U.S. Senate from 8 November 1954 to 31 December 1954. Abel had run for the office for a very specific reason: "To me it was more than a short term in the Senate. I wanted Nebraska voters to express their approval of a woman in government. I was a sort of guinea pig."

Born in Plattsmouth, Nebraska, Abel graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1908. A high school mathematics teacher and a high school principal from 1908 to 1916, she left teaching to marry George Abel and moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1916. She joined his construction company, and following his death in 1936, she became company president. She was also a Girl Scout leader, treasurer of the Nebraska League of Women Voters, and active in the Nebraska Republican Party, serving as vice chairwoman in 1954. Her many activities in Lincoln earned her the nickname "Hurricane Hazel."

In the summer of 1954, Abel, a Republican, became a candidate for the U.S. Senate to complete an unexpired term that would have only two months left at the time of the election. A technicality in Nebraska law prevented candidates from running for both the unexpired term and the full six-year term that would be filled in the election. During her short time in office, Abel held the distinction of being the only senator to listen to all of the debate to censure Senator Joseph McCarthy. She voted with the majority to censure him.

Abel was a delegate to the White House Conference on Education in 1955 and a member of the Theodore Roosevelt Centennial Commission from 1955 to 1959. In 1960, she unsuccessfully ran in the Republican primary for governor.

See also Bowring, Eva Kelly; Congress, Women in

References "Lady from Nebraska," *Newsweek*, 20 December 1954, 20; Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917–1990* (1991); Treese, ed., *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774–1996* (1997).

Abolitionist Movement, Women in the

In the 1830s, African American and white women from the North and the South entered the men's political world to crusade against slavery. Outraged by slavery's inhumanity, they founded anti-slavery societies, broke social taboos by making public speeches before audiences of women and men, and petitioned Congress. The honor of their cause did not protect them from public acrimony and derision or from threats of violence, and in the process they carved new public spaces for themselves and laid the groundwork for a women's rights movement.

Women encountered their first significant obstacle to participating in the abolitionist movement in 1833 at the founding meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. The meeting organizers permitted women to attend the meeting but refused to let them speak from the floor or join the society. After the meeting, a group of black women and white women organized the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. In 1832, a group of African American women had already moved on to the public stage when they formed the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, Massachusetts, one of the first abolitionist groups. Groups formed in Boston, New York, and other communities, particularly in New England. When the National Female Anti-Slavery Society convened in New York in 1837, delegates from twelve states attended.

Participating in the abolition movement required courage as well as commitment. Some courageous women, Harriet Tubman being a notable example, served the abolitionist movement as conductors on the Underground Railroad, and others housed and fed fugitive slaves as they made their way North. Even attending abolitionist meetings could be dangerous. For example, at a Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1835, William Lloyd Garrison was scheduled to speak, but after an angry mob gathered, the mayor ordered the women in the convention hall to leave. In order to provide some level of safety to the African American women in the audience, each white woman accompanied a black woman out of the building. Garrison did not escape—he was dragged through the streets on a rope. At the second Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, held in Philadelphia in 1838, a mob gathered outside the convention and later burned the meeting hall.

Without voting rights, women were limited in the ways that they could influence political decisions, but they conducted petition drives and gathered thousands of signatures. In 1836, after abolitionist women had flooded Congress with petitions to end slavery, Congress responded to their pleas by passing a gag rule prohibiting the petitions from being read or considered.

The commitment to ending slavery compelled some women to break the social prohibition against women speaking in public. Frances Wright, Maria Stewart, and Angelina and Sarah Grimké all suffered criticism from the public, the press, and the pulpit for publicly addressing mixed audiences of women and men in the late 1820s and 1830s. In the next decade, however, it became more common for women, including Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and Sojourner Truth, to use their oratorical skills on behalf of the abolition movement.

Women writers used their pens to expose the wretchedness of slaves' lives and to decry the injustice of slavery. For example, in 1833 Lydia Maria Child wrote the first anti-slavery book by a northern abolitionist calling for the immediate emancipation of