

## Social Reformers of the Early 1900's

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### W.E. B Dubois



Du Bois graduated from Fisk University, a black institution at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1888. He received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895. Although Du Bois had originally believed that social science could provide the knowledge to solve the race problem, he gradually came to the conclusion that in a climate of virulent racism, expressed in such evils as lynching, peonage, disfranchisement, Jim Crow segregation laws, and race riots, social change could be accomplished only through agitation and protest. Du Bois took the lead in founding the Niagara Movement, which was dedicated chiefly to attacking the platform of Booker T. Washington. The small organization, which met annually until 1909, was seriously weakened by internal squabbles and Washington's opposition. But it was significant as an ideological forerunner and direct inspiration for the interracial NAACP, founded in 1909. Du Bois played a prominent part in the creation of the NAACP and became the association's director of research and editor of its magazine, *The Crisis*. In this role he wielded an unequalled influence among middle-class blacks and progressive whites as the propagandist for the black protest from 1910 until 1934.

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### Jane Addams



American social reformer and pacifist, cowinner (with **Nicholas Murray Butler**) of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1931. She is probably best known as the founder of **Hull House** in Chicago, one of the first social settlements in North America.

In a working-class immigrant district in **Chicago**, they acquired a large vacant residence built by Charles Hull in 1856, and, calling it Hull House, they moved into it on September 18, 1889. Eventually the settlement included 13 buildings and a playground, as well as a camp near Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Many prominent social workers and reformers—**Julia Lathrop**, **Florence Kelley**, and **Grace** and **Edith Abbott**—came to live at Hull House, as did others who continued to make their living in business or the arts while helping **Addams** in settlement activities. **Addams** worked with labour as well as other reform groups toward goals including the first juvenile-court law, tenement-house regulation, an eight-hour working day for women, factory inspection, and workers' compensation. She strove in addition for justice for immigrants and blacks, advocated research aimed at determining the causes of poverty and crime, and supported woman suffrage. In 1910 she became the first woman president of the National Conference of Social Work, and in 1912 she played an active part in the Progressive Party's presidential campaign for Theodore Roosevelt.

## Susan B. Anthony



Susan B. Anthony pioneer crusader for the **woman suffrage** movement in the United States and president (1892-1900) of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Her work helped pave the way for the **Nineteenth Amendment** (1920) to the Constitution, giving **women** the right to vote.

The rebuff of Anthony's attempt to speak at a temperance meeting in Albany in 1852 prompted her to organize the Woman's New York State Temperance Society, of which Stanton became president, and pushed Anthony farther in the direction of women's rights advocacy. In a short time she became known as one of the cause's most zealous, serious advocates, a dogged and tireless worker whose personality contrasted sharply with that of her friend and coworker Stanton. She was also a prime target of public and newspaper abuse. While campaigning for a liberalization of New York's laws regarding married women's property rights, an end attained in 1860, Anthony served from 1856 as chief New York agent of Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society. During the early phase of the Civil War she helped organize the **Women's National Loyal League**, which urged the case for emancipation. After the war she campaigned unsuccessfully to have the language of the Fourteenth Amendment altered to allow for woman as well as "Negro" suffrage, and in 1866 she became corresponding secretary of the newly formed **American Equal Rights Association**. Her exhausting speaking and organizing tour of Kansas in 1867 failed to win passage of a state enfranchisement law.

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## Theodore Roosevelt



Theodore Roosevelt in his early years as Governor of New York worked at the state level for Progressive reforms to free their state government from corruption and the influence of big business.

Prior to office Roosevelt served as a military leader in the Spanish American war. The [HYPERLINK "http://school.eb.com/eb/article-9063242"](http://school.eb.com/eb/article-9063242) Republican bosses in New York tapped Roosevelt to run for governor, despite their doubts about his political loyalty. Elected in 1898, he became an energetic reformer, removing corrupt officials and enacting legislation to regulate corporations and the civil service. His actions bothered the party's bosses so much that they conspired to get rid of him by drafting him for the Republican vice presidential nomination in 1900, assuming that his would be a largely ceremonial role serving as vice president. Elected with McKinley, Roosevelt chafed at his powerless office until September 14, 1901, when McKinley died after being shot by an assassin and he became president. Six weeks short of his 43rd birthday, Roosevelt was the youngest person ever to enter the presidency.

## Ida B. Wells



Ida Wells was the daughter of slaves. She was educated at Rust University, a freedmen's school in her native Holly Springs, Mississippi, and at age 14 began teaching in a country school. She continued to teach after moving to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1884 and attended Fisk University in Nashville during several summer sessions. In 1887 the Tennessee Supreme Court, reversing a Circuit Court decision, ruled against Wells in a suit she had brought against the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad for having been forcibly removed from her seat after she had refused to give it up for one in a "colored only" car. Using the pen name *Iola*, Wells in 1891 also wrote some newspaper articles critical of the education available to African American children. Her teaching contract was not renewed. She thereupon turned to journalism, buying an interest in the *Memphis Free Speech*.

In 1892, after three friends of hers had been lynched by a mob, Wells began an editorial campaign against lynching that quickly led to the sacking of her newspaper's office. She continued her antilynching crusade, first as a staff writer for the *New York Age* and then as a lecturer and organizer of antilynching societies. She traveled to speak in a number of major U.S. cities and twice visited Great Britain for the cause. In 1895 she married Ferdinand L. Barnett, a Chicago lawyer, editor, and public official, and adopted the name Wells-Barnett. From that time she restricted her travels, but she was very active in Chicago affairs. Wells-Barnett contributed to the *Chicago Conservator*, her husband's newspaper, and to other local journals; published a detailed look at lynching in *A Red Record* (1895); and was active in organizing local African American women in various causes, from the antilynching campaign to the suffrage movement. She founded what may have been the first black woman suffrage group, Chicago's Alpha Suffrage Club.

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## Upton Sinclair



Sinclair graduated from the College of the City of New York in 1897 and did graduate work at Columbia University, supporting himself by journalistic writing. *The Jungle* (1906), his sixth novel and first popular success, was written when he was sent by the socialist weekly newspaper *Appeal to Reason* to Chicago to investigate conditions in the stockyards. Though intended to create sympathy for the exploited and poorly treated immigrant workers in the meat-packing industry, *The Jungle* instead aroused widespread public indignation at the quality of and impurities in processed meats and thus helped bring about the passage of federal food-inspection laws. Sinclair ironically commented at the time, "I aimed at the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach." *The Jungle* is the most enduring of the works of the "muckrakers". Published at Sinclair's own expense after several publishers rejected it, it became a best-seller, and Sinclair used the proceeds to open Helicon Hall, a cooperative-living venture in Englewood, N.J. The building was destroyed by fire in 1907 and the project abandoned

## Robert La Follette



U.S. leader of the Progressive Movement, who as governor of Wisconsin (1901-06) and U.S. senator (1906-25) was noted for his support of reform legislation. He was the unsuccessful presidential candidate of the League for Progressive Political Action (i.e., the Progressive party) in 1924, winning almost five million votes, or about one-sixth of the total cast.

In 1897 La Follette began to advocate programs that local-level progressives had popularized during the legislative session a few months earlier. Following their lead, he demanded tax reform, corporation regulation, and political democracy. In particular, he promoted steeper railroad taxes and a direct primary. Elected governor on this platform in 1900, he was reelected in 1902 and 1904.

As Wisconsin's governor La Follette developed new political techniques, which he later took to the U.S. Senate. The first, which received national attention as the "Wisconsin Idea," was the use of professors from the University of Wisconsin—57 at one point—to draft bills and administer the state regulatory apparatus created by the new laws. The second innovation was his public reading of the "roll call" in districts in legislators had opposed his reform proposals. With these new methods he secured the passage of several progressive laws. Believing that the railroads were the principal subverters of the political process, he persuaded the legislature to tax them on the basis of their property (1903) and to regulate them by commission (1905). The legislature enacted the direct primary in 1903 and state civil-service reform in 1905. His appointees to the Tax Commission, given new power by the legislature, equalized tax assessments. Wisconsin's leadership in these areas gave La Follette his reputation as a pioneering progressive.

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## Frances Willard



American educator, reformer, and founder of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1883). An excellent speaker, a successful lobbyist, and an expert in pressure politics, she was a leader of the national Prohibition Party. Willard grew up a sturdy, independent, and strong-willed child of the frontier. Willard became dean of women and professor of English and art at Evanston College for Ladies in Illinois. She remained there until her constant conflicts with the university's president, Charles H. Fowler (to whom she had been engaged in 1861), led her to resign in 1874.

Just at that time the so-called "Woman's Crusade," a wave of antiliqor agitation among women, was swelling, and a group of Chicago women invited Willard to become president of their temperance organization. Under her leadership the WCTU quickly evolved into a well-organized group able to mount campaigns of public education and political pressure on many fronts. Willard traveled constantly and spoke frequently—in 1883 she spoke in every state of the Union