



Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America (and What They Teach Us)

Cecelia Tichi

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A gripping and inspiring book, *Civic Passions* examines innovative leadership in periods of crisis in American history. Starting from the late nineteenth century, when respected voices warned that America was on the brink of collapse, Cecelia Tichi explores the wisdom of practical visionaries who were confronted with a series of social, political, and financial upheavals that, in certain respects, seem eerily similar to modern times. The United States--then, as now--was riddled with political corruption, financial panics, social disruption, labor strife, and bourgeois inertia.

Drawing on a wealth of evocative personal accounts, biographies, and archival material, Tichi brings seven iconoclastic--and often overlooked--individuals from the Gilded Age back to life. We meet physician Alice Hamilton, theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, jurist Louis D. Brandeis, consumer advocate Florence Kelley, antilynching activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, economist John R. Commons, and child-welfare advocate Julia Lathrop. Bucking the status quo of the Gilded Age as well as middle-class complacency, these reformers tirelessly garnered popular support as they championed progressive solutions to seemingly intractable social problems.

Civic Passions is a provocative and powerfully written social history, a collection of minibiographies, and a user's manual on how a generation of social reformers can turn peril into progress with fresh, workable ideas. Together, these narratives of advocacy provide a stunning precedent of progressive action and show how citizen-activists can engage the problems of the age in imaginative ways. While offering useful models to encourage the nation in a newly progressive direction, *Civic Passions* reminds us that one determined individual *can* make a difference.

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