

This article is also viewable as a PowerPoint [here](http://www.slideshare.net/frontfel/emily-hobhouse).

Honoured Heroine

Although she was a British citizen, Emily Hobhouse was awarded an honorary South African citizenship because of her courageous and sacrificial actions, which exposed the cruelty of the concentration camps during the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902).

Family

Emily was born 9 April 1860, and raised in St. Ive, in East Cornwall. Her father was a Church of England pastor for 51 years. Her mother was the daughter of Sir. William Trelawney, a Member of Parliament for East Cornwall. After her mother's death, Emily cared for her father until his death in 1895.

Faith in Action

Then she travelled to the United States to undertake welfare work amongst miners in Minnesota. Her engagement to John Carr Jackson was broken off in 1898, and she returned to England. Emily was involved in social actions and was a member of the Women's Industrial Committee. As the Anglo Boer War broke out October 1899, she joined the South African Conciliation Committee. As Secretary, she organised protest meetings against the war.

Women in Distress

In Summer of 1900, she first learned of the hundreds of Boer women that had become impoverished and driven away from their homes. Emily Hobhouse launched the South African Women's and Children's Distress Fund and travelled to South Africa to deliver aid to the Boer women and children, who were suffering because of the war.

Mission to South Africa

She arrived in Cape Town, 27 December 1900, and began to learn of concentration camps in Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom, Norvalspont, Kroonstad, Irene and elsewhere. As Martial law had been declared over large parts of the Cape Colony, she needed the permission not only of Lord Milner, but of General Kitchener, to visit these camps. Because of her persistence and perseverance, she finally received permission to proceed *only as far as Bloemfontein*.

Concentration Camps

Emily described arriving at the concentration camp outside Bloemfontein on 24 January 1901: Two thousand people had been dumped on the slope of a kopje with inadequate accommodation, massive overcrowding of ten to twelve people in a tent, no soap, inadequate water, no beds, or mattresses, scarce fuel, extremely meagre rations, and (*the actual quantity dispensed, fell short of the amount prescribed, it simply meant famine*.) all kinds of sicknesses festered

in the camp, including: measles, bronchitis, pneumonia, dysentery and typhoid. Almost every tent housed one or more sick persons. When she requested soap for the inmates, she was told by the authorities that soap was *"a luxury!"*

Love in Action

As she investigated and interviewed, she wept. She went beyond Bloemfontein to investigate other concentration camps. When informed by the Administrator of the Orange River Colony that she showed *"too much personal sympathy"*, Emily replied: *"That was the precise reason why I came out to show personal sympathy and to render assistance in cases of personal afflictions."*

Explosive Expose

The *"Report of a Visit to the Camps of Women and Children in the Cape and Orange River Colonies"* by Emily Hobhouse was devastating: Children were dying at a rate of 50 a day in these overcrowded and unhygienic camps. *"I call this camp system a wholesale cruelty to keep these camps going is murder to the children the women are wonderful. They cry very little and never complain. The very magnitude of their sufferings, their indignities, loss and anxiety, seems to lift them beyond tears the nurse, underfed and overworked coping with some 30 typhoid and other patients a six month baby gasping its life out on its mother's knee A girl of 21 lay dying on a stretcher The mother watching a child of 6, also dying. already this couple had lost 3 children in the hospital. like faded flowers thrown away a splendid child dwindled to skin and bone a baby so weak it was past recovery it was only three months, but such a sweet little thing it was still alive this morning; when I called in the afternoon, they beckoned me in to see the tiny thing laid out"*

Murdered Innocents

"To me it seemed a murdered innocent. In an hour or two after, another child died. At Springfontein a young lady had to be buried in a sack it is a curious position, hollow and rotten to the heart's core, to have made all over the state, large uncomfortable communities of people, whom you call refugees, and say you are protecting, but who call themselves Prisoners Of War, compulsorily detained and detesting your protection. Those who are suffering most keenly and who have lost most, either of their children by death, or their possessions by fire and sword, such as those re-concentrated women in the camps, have the most conspicuous patience and never express a wish that their men should be the one's to give way. It must be fought out now, to the bitter end."

The Cost of War

"It is a very costly business upon which England has embarked, and even at such a cost, hardly the barest necessities can be provided, and no comforts. The Mafikeng camp folk were very surprised to hear that English women cared about them and their suffering. It has done them a lot of good to hear that real sympathy is felt for them at home, and so I am glad I have fought my way here, if only for that reason."

Scorched Earth

Emily Hobhouse campaigned tirelessly against the cruel concentration camp system, the war carried out against Boer women and children, the scorched earth campaigns, burning of farm houses, poisoning of wells, slaughtering of herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, destruction of food supplies, and incarceration of civilians in concentration camps.

Methods of Barbarism

An outpouring of revulsion in England spurred the government to at last improve conditions in the camps. One of the first successes of Emily Hobhouse's campaign was that soap began to be issued amongst the meagre rations and conditions began to improve in the camps. Rev. Charles Aked, a Baptist minister in Liverpool, declared on Sunday, 22 December 1901: "Great Britain cannot win the battles without resorting to the last despicable cowardice of the most loathsome cur on earth – the act of striking a brave man's heart through his wife's honour and his child's life! This cowardly war has been conducted by methods of barbarism – the concentration camps have been murder camps."

Against All Odds

Emily Hobhouse wrote that she could not forgive "cass male ignorance, helplessness and muddling – I rub as much salt into the sore places in their minds –" Emily Hobhouse received scathing criticism and hostility from the British government and many in the media upon her return to Britain. However, the opposition leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Ballerman, denounced the methods of barbarism and forced the government to set up the Fawcett Commission to investigate her claims.

Denied Entry and Deported

Although Emily Hobhouse was not allowed to be part of the commission, and upon her return to Cape Town in October 1901, she was not permitted to land and was deported, her reports continued to circulate. She moved to France to write the book: *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*, which mobilised even more outrage and action. The Fawcett Commission confirmed Emily Hobhouse's reports.

Saving Lives

In spite of fierce opposition from the British newspapers supporting the government's war, Emily continued to address public meetings about the plight of women and children in South Africa. There is no doubt that the initiatives and energetic actions of Emily Hobhouse shortened the war and saved countless lives. She also gave hope to mothers who had lost all hope.

Courageous Campaign

Emily Hobhouse's courageous campaign to speak up for the forgotten Boer women and children, who had been brutally treated, played a major role in undermining popular British support for the war. It also forced the government to offer massive concessions to the Boer forces, which led to

the Boers regaining control over their country through the Union of South Africa in 1910. The first Prime Ministers of the Union of South Africa were all Boer generals: General Louis Botha, General Jan Smuts and General James Hertzog.

Reconstruction

Emily Hobhouse returned to South Africa in 1903 to set up Boer home industries, teaching young women spinning and weaving. Through her efforts, 27 schools were established in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. She travelled to South Africa again in 1913 for the Inauguration of the National Women's Monument in Bloemfontein, but had to stop at Beaufort West, due to ill health.

Serving the Suffering

Emily Hobhouse was also an avid opponent of the First World War and vigorously protested against it. Through her efforts thousands of women and children starving in Germany and Austria, because of the British naval blockades, were fed by the support she was able to channel to them.

Memorials

Emily Hobhouse's remains are buried in a niche in the National Women's Monument at Bloemfontein. The Southernmost town in Eastern Free State is named Hobhouse. One of the South African Navy's submarines was named the SAS Emily Hobhouse.

For God has not give us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound

mind. 2 Timothy 1:7

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