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## **MABLEY, JACKIE "MOMS" (LORETTA MAY AIKEN; 1894–1975)**

American black comedienne. Born to poverty in North Carolina, Mabley ran away at the age of 14 to join a minstrel show. After many difficult years, she gained renown and worldly success through her frank portrayals of race and sex before all-black audiences. Mabley was a favorite at Harlem's legendary Cotton Club and at the Club Harlem in Atlantic City, where she performed with such headliners as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Cab Calloway. In her last years, she was able to achieve a "cross-over" to general audiences, appearing on television with Merv Griffin, Johnny Carson, Flip Wilson, and Bill Cosby.

Although one of her best-known personas was of a man-crazy older black woman, Mabley regarded herself as a lesbian. Her performances made fun of older men, satirizing the way they wielded authority over women as well as the fading of their sexual powers. In 1986–87, the black actress Clarice Taylor commemorated her life and work in an Off Broadway play with music entitled *Moms*, employing texts by Alice Childress and Ben Caldwell.

While she may be compared with such blues singers as Bessie Smith and Billie Holliday, Mabley's pioneering role in stand-up comedy was unique, and clearly linked to the difference in her sexual orientation.

## **MACDONALD, HECTOR, SIR (1853–1903)**

British general. Born the son of a poor Scottish crofter (tenant farmer) on the Black Isle, Macdonald made a career in the

British Army, choosing to live abroad where social barriers and conventions mattered far less and a meager officer's wages went farther than they did at home. In 1870, lying about his age, he joined the 92nd, or Gordon, Highlanders, and as the purchase of officers' commissions had been abolished, it was possible for a mere private to rise through the ranks and even become a general—which he did. He served in India and accompanied his regiment during a British incursion into Afghanistan. Sent to fight against the rebellious Transvaal colony, he was captured by the Boers in the signal defeat of the British at Majuba Hill in June 1881.

In the spring of 1884 Macdonald married in the old Scots style by pledging his troth to his bride with only heaven as their witness. The common law marriage remained a secret even to the War Office, and to the world Macdonald was a stern, somewhat forbidding figure. A son was born to the couple in 1887—an only child. The reason for the concealment was that married officers were discouraged in Victorian times; it was believed both that they were less than efficient and that it was unfair to expose them to the constant perils of disease and death on the remote periphery of the Empire. In 1884 also, Macdonald transferred to the first battalion in order to see active service in Egypt. In Cairo he met Horatio Herbert Kitchener, a young officer of the Royal Engineers, under whom he commanded the Egyptian brigade in the Nile campaign against the Dervishes. Here his bravery and resourcefulness earned him the thanks of Parliament and the appointment of aide-de-camp to Victoria, an honor continued by Edward VII. His valor on the battlefield