

ART AND
THE COLOR LINE

ANSON PHELPS STOKES

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*An Appeal made May 31, 1939
to the President General and other
officers of The Daughters of
the American Revolution to
modify their rules so as to per-
mit distinguished Negro Artists
such as Miss Marian Anderson
to be heard in Constitution Hall.*

by

ANSON PHELPS STOKES

*Printed for the Consideration of the
Executive Committee of the D.A.R.
at their Meeting, October 23,
and for the
Marian Anderson Committee
WASHINGTON, D. C.
October, 1939*

(Confidential until after the Fall Meeting, 1939,
of the National Board of Management)

OUTLINE OF INFORMAL STATEMENT MADE BY
DR. ANSON PHELPS STOKES, CANON OF WASHING-
TON CATHEDRAL AND FORMER SECRETARY OF
YALE UNIVERSITY, ON BEHALF OF THE MARIAN
ANDERSON CITIZENS' COMMITTEE BEFORE THE
PRESIDENT GENERAL AND OTHER OFFICERS OF
THE DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLU-
TION ON MAY 31, 1939.

(Dictated from notes for the benefit of the Executive
Committee of the National Board of Management of the
D.A.R. A few statements made in reply to questions at
the close of the presentation have been added in their
appropriate places and a few minor additions made—
A.P.S.)

Madame President: I greatly appreciate the opportunity
you have given us for a quiet, constructive conference with
you on the issues connected with the recent refusal of the
D.A.R. to permit the use of Constitution Hall for a concert
by Miss Marian Anderson. We are here because of your kind
letter of May 20th to Mr. Charles H. Houston, the Chair-
man of the Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee, in reply
to his letter of April 19th. It seems advisable to begin with a
brief historical survey of the events leading up to this meeting.

I. RÉSUMÉ OF MARIAN ANDERSON INCIDENT,
WASHINGTON, 1939

The first request for the use of Constitution Hall for a con-
cert by Miss Anderson was made by the Howard University
School of Music early in January. The request was repeated
in a more formal letter on January 28th just prior to the
meeting of the National Board of Management. As you

doubtless know, Howard University is mainly supported by the Federal Government, being in this respect unique as it is the only institution of higher education in the United States, outside of the Military and Naval Academies, which receives its major income from the Government. The institution has also received large support from the Rockefeller and other philanthropic Boards. The request was made for the use of the Hall for a pay concert on April 9th, if possible. Later the management was informed that as this date proved impossible to the D.A.R. because of prior commitments for the afternoon in question and a rule which prevents two concerts under different auspices on the same day, another date could be substituted. This second application was refused because of the rule of the Society to the effect that white artists alone may be presented at concerts of this character. It is unnecessary at this time to enter into the details of these and other efforts to secure the Hall or to explain various circumstances which may have complicated the issue.

Because of the inability to secure Constitution Hall, the School of Music of Howard University, sponsoring the concert, tried to obtain the use of the auditorium in the Central High School, but this request was denied mainly on the grounds that the granting of it would run counter to the policy of the Board to maintain a separate school system, and that it would run counter to the Board's policy should it allow outside entertainments for which tickets were sold and a large honorarium paid the artist concerned. In spite of the fact that representative citizens at a public hearing disclaimed any intention to use this issue as an "opening wedge" to modify the existing school system and showed conclusively that the halls in the schools under the Board of Education had on several occasions been used by interracial audiences, and once for a concert by Miss Anderson, and in spite of many precedents for the use of the Hall for various events

for which paid tickets were required, the request was denied. An article in the students' paper of the Central High School requested the Board to change its attitude so as to permit the concert, but this and similar requests had no satisfactory result, in spite of the fact that the Committee held that it was a Community Center type of program, and not part of the regular instruction in the schools, also that the concert was to be held during vacation time.

The only concession of the Board of Education was an offer under date of March 3rd to permit this particular concert "as a proof of good will to Marian Anderson and the Colored people of the District . . . but only under positive and definite assurance and agreement that the Board of Education will not in the future again be asked to depart from the principle of a dual system of schools and school facilities."

This offer could not be accepted as the sponsoring group was not willing to recognize that "the dual system" as defined by law was involved in any way in its application, and as it could not hold itself responsible for any other group or for other unseen emergencies which might arise in the future.

Owing to these two refusals, as the large Rialto Theater which was used by Miss Anderson in 1938 was not available—being closed under a receivership, and the receiver being unwilling to make a binding contract for a single engagement—and as no other adequate hall was available in the city of Washington, arrangements were made with the Department of the Interior by which the concert was held in the open air in front of the Lincoln Memorial before about 50,000 people, both white and colored, including a distinguished group of Senators and other public men from the North and South. The concert was a brilliant success and there was perfect order throughout. Incidentally, Miss Anderson's brief address in response to the ovation which greeted her was a model of courtesy and consideration. She lived up

to her reputation, not only as a distinguished artist, but as a woman of rare culture and dignity.

Under the above circumstances the Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee under date of April 13th renewed its request for the use of the Hall next year, and it is with the major issues involved in this request that a sub-committee is meeting with you today.

II. COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE

I specially regret the necessary absence in the West of Mr. Charles H. Houston, the Chairman of this Committee, a Harvard graduate, and former Vice-Dean of the Howard University Law School, who has frequently ably represented his group in important cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. By special request and on short notice I am in his absence representing the Committee, although I am not a member of it, having felt that although sympathetic with its major purpose I could be of more service as an independent citizen.

Those who have come with me to represent the Committee today and whom I would introduce to you are:

Miss Bertha Blair, the Vice Chairman of the Committee, a member of the Railroad Retirement Board's staff, and active in various civic movements;

Mrs. Gifford Pinchot, wife of the former Governor of Pennsylvania, and active in various civic movements;

Reverend Robert W. Brooks, President of the Interracial Committee of the District of Columbia, and former President of the Interdenominational Ministers' Alliance;

Mr. John Davis, a graduate of the Harvard University Law School, founder and present Executive Secretary of the National Negro Congress;

Dr. C. H. Marshall, a graduate of Howard University, and a representative local physician, who is President of the District of Columbia Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People;

Mr. James Nabrit, Associate Professor of Law at Howard University, and Executive Secretary to its President;

Mr. Doxey Wilkinson, Associate Professor of Education at Howard University, and Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers (National).

In our presentation to you we have specially in mind that The Daughters of the American Revolution is an organization incorporated by the Congress of the United States "for patriotic, historical, and educational purposes," and that among its special objectives, as stated in the Act of Incorporation, are "*to cherish, maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom; to foster true patriotism and love of country, and to aid in securing for mankind all the blessings of liberty.*" Because of these patriotic objectives with which, as thus stated, we are in complete sympathy, and because of the unusual national character of the organization, we feel that we are justified as citizens of the District of Columbia in respectfully asking consideration for certain views which we consider have their definite bearing upon your policy in its relations to the public. Were the D.A.R. merely a social club or a purely private association without recognized public responsibilities we would hesitate to approach you on the subject. We fully recognize that you represent a great national patriotic association and that Constitution Hall, built through the generous interest of your members, has been of great service to this community and to the Nation. You may well take pride in "the contribution to the cultural life of Washington," made by this beautiful hall, as referred to in your recent report to the 49th Continental Congress. This contribution has been made largely through the concerts and public meetings which you have allowed in the Hall on payment of the required fees by responsible organizations.

Let us take up briefly some facts and considerations which we hope may result in a change of attitude by your National Board of Management on the matter at issue.

Our major purpose at this time may be simply stated. It is to secure the abrogation of your Society's rule by which at concerts for which admission is charged white artists alone may be presented. This rule is the fundamental issue at stake between your Society and those thousands of citizens of Washington who would like to have the rule abrogated, and who believe that such abrogation is both advisable and necessary if the Society is to be true to the exalted purposes outlined in its Congressional Act of Incorporation. Unfortunately, although we have been authoritatively informed as to the content of this rule, we have been unable, in spite of requests addressed to you and the management, to secure a printed copy of it.

We recognize, as I am sure you do, that the matter of the particular date of the concert and of the sponsoring organization was not important. These could have been easily adjusted. There is nothing in the Constitution of the Society in any way inconsistent with the proposed concert. The only insuperable difficulty at the time was the rule of the Society which made it impossible for the management to grant the request made by the Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee, supported by other patriotic groups and by leading citizens. In this connection, I would like to say that we have no criticism whatever to offer of the decision of your courteous and competent Managing Director, Mr. Fred E. Hand, in this particular case. He acted in entire good faith, as apparently under the rules he had no authority to rent the Hall for a concert by Miss Anderson.

I would like again to emphasize the point that the fundamental issue between us is the one of this rule. If it is abrogated so that there would be no discriminations in the arrangements for renting the Hall for a Negro artist, as such, we believe that all other matters involved could be easily adjusted, and that arrangements for use of the Hall by Miss Anderson next year could be effected in a way that would

bring honor to all concerned. We, therefore, most respectfully request you, Madame President General, to consider with your Executive Committee a recommendation to the next meeting of the National Board of Management that the rule referred to be abrogated as unnecessary and inconsistent with the high patriotic purposes of the Society.

III. OBJECTIONS RAISED AND ANSWERED

Let us now consider seriatim the major objections that have been raised:

(1) *That the granting of the request, according to the report of the President General made before the Thirty-eighth Continental Congress of the D.A.R. in April, 1939, would "under the conditions existing in the District of Columbia," be inadvisable, as it would be "contrary to accepted custom."*

We believe that the President General could not have been fully cognizant of the present situation in the District in making these statements, for there have been some marked improvements in local public opinion in recent years as far as granting recognition to our colored citizens in matters both of cultural opportunity and public recognition. For instance, contrary to the usual custom in the South the busses, trolleys and taxicabs in Washington are now open to the public irrespective of race. The same is true of the waiting room and dining room in the railroad station. It is also true of the public libraries of the District, including the Congressional. Colored people are permitted to attend all lectures, meetings and concerts in Government halls, including the concerts in the Library of Congress. There is also no segregation in the Courts, and it is notable that there has been for many years a Negro Judge on the Municipal Court, before whom cases have frequently been tried by representative white lawyers of Southern birth. Indeed, the Bar Association of the District, whose members are mostly Southern, recently petitioned the

President for the continuance in office of Judge Cobb, an honored Negro jurist.

Similarly, many of the representative public Boards in the District of Columbia have Negro representation. This is true, for instance, of the Board of Education and of the Board of Public Welfare. It is also true of the Community Chest and of many of its most representative member agencies, such as the Council of Social Agencies, the Family Service Association, and the Washington Housing Association.

A few specific examples of interracial audiences and of Negro participants in cultural events may be worth citing:

Miss Anderson has appeared in the past in concerts with interracial audiences both at the Armstrong High School and at the Rialto Theater. As is well known, she has also appeared at the White House.

Paul Robeson and Roland Hayes, two of the best known Negro singers, have both appeared before interracial audiences in the large Washington Auditorium, which having been taken over for government offices, is no longer available.

A few years ago the Interracial Committee, of which I was then Chairman, arranged, without difficulty, for an Exhibition of Negro Art at the National Museum. The artists were all colored sculptors or painters, but those who attended were divided almost equally between both groups of our citizens.

The services at Washington Cathedral are always open to and considerably patronized by colored people. This is true particularly of sacred concerts. At the recent Confirmation Service held by Bishop Freeman, about one third of those confirmed in the Cathedral and of those in the audience were colored.

Similarly, at the meetings of St. Monica's League in the Cathedral Library the colored clergy attend with the white members, and they have heard many of the outstanding leaders, North and South, white and colored, in the field of interracial amity and Negro education.

A very striking example is that of the concert given in the Congressional Library December 7, 1926, by the

Hampton Choir under the leadership of a distinguished Negro composer, Dr. Dett.

The principal local examples of segregation of white and colored are the Public School System, Recreation Playgrounds, Churches, Hotels and Restaurants, Social Life, and Places of Entertainment. Each of these deserves a word of comment.

(a) As to the *Public Schools*. Although the school system maintains by law separate schools in accordance with the law in Southern states and the custom of some cities in the North where there is a very large Negro population, the Board of Education is bi-racial, there are weekly conferences in which the white and colored teachers meet together, and the committees of teachers which deal with such problems as the curriculum, text books, recreation, etc., are made up equally of white and colored members. Furthermore, teachers are subject to the same examinations and those of the same grade receive the same salaries irrespective of their racial group.

(b) As to the *Playgrounds*. The playgrounds being considered closely related to the schools have followed the Southern law of segregation, but the parks of Washington, as distinguished from most of those in the South, are open to white and colored alike. There are, however, separate public tennis courts, golf links and baseball diamonds.

(c) As to the *Churches*. These are usually separate, not because of any legislation—either civic or ecclesiastical—but because of custom which both groups have generally favored, but there are occasions when white and colored groups meet, and the colored churches are equally eligible with the white churches to membership in the Federation of Churches. This is a change that was introduced a few years ago, and although some feared that it might be embarrassing, no embarrassment has followed. Similarly, every year there is a luncheon conference among the Protestant Ministers in which the white and colored meet together and discuss their local problems. The Clericus of the Episcopal Church includes all the

Ministers of the Church in Washington, both white and colored, and there are other similar examples.

(d) As to *Hotels and Restaurants*. It is true that owing to social custom these are separate, but experience has proved that for important occasions arrangements can be made in advance by which colored members can attend business or civic lunches or dinners and colored speakers can be heard. Recent events of this character have been in connection with Community Chest dinners at the Willard Hotel, conferences of the national Family Service Association at the Wardman Park, and others. Barker Hall, in the beautiful building of the Y.W.C.A., is largely used for such gatherings. There are also a few representative restaurants which permit Boards of an interracial character to hold luncheon meetings when these are called for by responsible citizens.

(e) As to *Social Life*. This is a matter with which we are in no way concerned in this discussion. Every family and individual has the right to invite to his own home or club only those persons whom he wishes.

(f) As to *Places of Entertainment*. This involves the second main objection that has been raised, namely,

(2) *That local law is contrary to having white and colored people in the same auditorium unless segregated.* There is no such law in the District of Columbia, although there is such a law in Virginia and in some other Southern states. On the other hand, it frequently happens in the South in the case of visits of distinguished speakers or singers, such as Major Moton or Professor Carver of Tuskegee, Mr. Roland Hayes, or Miss Anderson, that both races meet in the same hall on occasions which are considered educational and cultural rather than social. The following letter under date of April 14th from an official of a great State University in the South is indicative of the best public opinion in that region:

I am writing to say that the University of North Carolina gladly cooperates with the Negroes whenever possible and in every way possible. Our auditorium is freely used by Negro groups at any time when it is not in use

by University groups. I recall just now a state wide religious meeting at Memorial Hall (the auditorium) last quarter. I also recall a meeting which I attended myself of both white people and Negroes, which took place at Graham Memorial, our student union building. At this meeting, members of both races sat together and appeared together on the program.

Your Committee wishes to state emphatically that in the judgment of competent counsel who have investigated the matter, there is no local law or ordinance requiring segregation in the District of Columbia. If there were such a law it would feel that it should be observed while on the statute books, although the Committee would doubtless advocate its abrogation.

(3) *That such a concert involves some white people being seated next to Negroes in the audience.* This is of course a possibility, but it must be remembered that there are objectionable white people as well as objectionable colored people. If you will pardon a personal example, my wife came home from a service at the Cathedral last Sunday indignant because a man who sat in front of her, whom we have since found out is a Bishop of the Episcopal Church, talked so much throughout the service as to render worship almost impossible! It should be remembered that no one need come to a concert unless he wishes to, and that those who come, both white and colored, are almost entirely people of education and culture who are able and willing to pay a fairly large price for tickets. In this connection it must also be remembered that owing to the presence of Howard University in Washington and other factors there is a considerable group of people of similar high cultural standards and ideals among the colored people as among white people. It should also be stated that the experience of Constitution Hall itself shows that where colored people have been admitted to concerts by white artists and to various mass meetings, no noticeable embarrassment has resulted, although there has been no segregation

—a practice which the Marian Anderson Committee could neither favor nor consent to in any concert with which it is connected. They see no more reason for it at a concert than at such places as our public libraries or government auditoriums where it does not exist.

But in spite of the absence of any local ordinance on the subject, it is customary in Washington to have separate theaters for white people and for colored people, and when a white theater is attended by colored people, to request them to occupy some assigned section, but there have been frequent exceptions to this rule in behalf of concerts by distinguished artists, as the case of Miss Anderson on previous visits to Washington indicates. Furthermore, at many meetings and entertainments no such custom is followed. The Grand Stand of the Washington Ball Field, the concerts at the Library of Congress, the annual meetings in Constitution Hall of the Community Chest and of other organizations are cases in point.

IV. REACTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

Certain reactions of public opinion to the recent controversy will, we believe, be of interest to your Board. It must be remembered that psychologically those favoring a proposition are more likely to write in support of it than are its opponents, even though they may be individually less vociferous. In this connection may I call your attention to the following facts:

(a) The local press has, on the whole, been most friendly to the idea of a concert by Miss Anderson in the D.A.R. Hall or in the Auditorium of the Central High School.

For instance, under date of March 29th, the *Washington Times-Herald* stated:

The world was shocked when Hitler attacked humanity, art and culture by his ban on eminent Jewish artists. In every land, nowhere more violently than here, the

Nazi leader was justly castigated for this unparalleled offense.

The world was shocked again when the Daughters of the American Revolution denied the use of Constitution Hall to Marian Anderson, on grounds quite similar to those advanced by Hitler for his pogroms.

Similarly, the *Washington Star* under date of April 11th, in David Lawrence's column, thus referred to the Marian Anderson Concert at the Lincoln Memorial:

. . . Though the voice of Marian Anderson was the voice of genius, as Secretary Ickes aptly characterized it, the scene was much more than a concert in which science, through electrical amplification and the radio, had played a spectacular part. It was a scene in which the audience knew full well that an issue of racial intolerance had denied the singer the use of an auditorium owned by an organization which seeks to memorialize in history the founders of the Republic itself.

But for this mistake in judgment on the part of the D.A.R., the opportunity to re-emphasize in America that which Lincoln stood for might not have occurred. Also but for this incident, the opportunity might not have been afforded for Government officials, irrespective of party, to show that they do not countenance the theory of inequality of citizenship which has become such an integral part of totalitarianism.

The *Washington Daily News* of April 4th had the following editorial:

What impresses us is that Memphis, which has chapters of the D.A.R. and, of course, the Daughters of the Confederacy, accepted it as completely matter of fact that Marian Anderson should sing in the Municipal Auditorium. The tolerance and appreciation displayed there can be found in many another southern community, constituting a good example for every American community.

(b) *Protests on the action of the D.A.R.* came from such representative bodies as the War Council of the Descendants

of the American Revolution and the Committee on the Bronson Cutting Lectures, and from such representative citizens as Dr. Will W. Alexander, for many years the head of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in Atlanta, and now Director of the Farm Security Administration, Bishop Freeman of Washington Cathedral, Senator Capper of Kansas, and many others. The fact that a local Southern woman of social distinction, whose family and associations are with Virginia, felt so badly at the denial of the use of the Hall to Miss Anderson that she offered a thousand dollars, if necessary, to secure the services of Miss Anderson for a public open-air concert, is highly significant.

(c) The *Gallup Poll* is worthy of note because it is generally considered to be an accurate reflection of public opinion in this country. Under the New York headline of March 18th reported in the *Washington Post* of the following day sixty-seven per cent of the people in this country approved of Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt's action in resigning from the D.A.R.: "reportedly because of the organization's refusal to let Colored Marian Anderson sing in Washington's Constitution Hall." The statement goes on to say:

Southerners dissented by an average vote of 57%, but even some of the dissenters declared they had no objection to Marian Anderson's singing as a paid performer. It was Mrs. Roosevelt's "making a fuss about it" that they disliked.

The following table showing the sectional vote of approval and disapproval is highly significant, the South being the only section which disapproved of her action and that by a very narrow margin:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>
New England	79%	21%
Mid-Atlantic	75%	25%
East Central	71%	29%
West Central	65%	35%
South	43%	57%
West	80%	20%

(d) *Opinion of representative Artists.* The following resolution was released by the Philadelphia Orchestra after their concert in Washington on February 28th:

The members of the Philadelphia Orchestra deplore the barring of Constitution Hall to Marian Anderson for concert use by the D.A.R. Such a discriminatory act is contrary to the musical and cultural life of America, and not in the spirit of fairness.

Geraldine Farrar telegraphed the Committee:

Your telegram finds me in Florida. Have already expressed opinion to New York Association for Advancement Colored People in favor of our great native talent Marian Anderson and am heartily in accord to rescind unjust discrimination ban in her projected concert in Constitution Hall or elsewhere in our great democracy. There is more than ever need to recognize and honor the achievements of our native born. I am one of Marian Anderson's great admirers.

Leopold Stokowski, Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, as you will remember, wrote a letter to you under date of April 15th, reading as follows:

I hope that in future you and those who control the Constitution Hall of Washington will permit Marian Anderson to sing there and that recognized artists of all races will be permitted to perform there without racial distinction. I feel it is of fundamental importance to the future of our country that we live together in a spirit of tolerance to all the races which form our country because that is the only way we can achieve the greatest destiny of which this land is capable.

Walter Damrosch's opinion, also sent to you as President General, was as follows:

I have been requested to join other citizens and lovers of music in their plea to the Daughters of the American Revolution, to permit such artists of the colored race

who have achieved real distinction, to appear on the stage of the beautiful Constitution Hall.

May I be permitted to join in this request as I truly believe that the by-laws of your organization which until now prevented such appearances, has in the course of time become antiquated and no longer represents the wishes of the greater part of our citizens.

The abolition of this by-law would, I think, be hailed with joy by all people who hold art high, as a gracious act by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

(e) The *Southern press* was in many instances favorable to the proposal that Miss Anderson be allowed to sing in Constitution Hall. Here are a few extracts from representative papers:

News-Tribune, Waco, Texas, February 28, 1939:

The action of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt in resigning from the D.A.R. in Washington yesterday holds interest to Waco in that the president's wife speaks at Waco Hall on Monday night, March 13, and at the same hall on the night of March 27 Marian Anderson, the negro contralto who brought about the issue between Mrs. Roosevelt and the Washington D.A.R., will present a concert.

Marian Anderson is coming to Waco under the auspices of the Sigma Tau Delta, honorary English fraternity of Baylor university, and at the time of application for Waco Hall for her concert there never was any question of its being afforded the negro singer and her sponsors.

The Montgomery Advertiser, Montgomery, Alabama, February 28, 1939:

. . . "Blind Tom," great pianist, and "Black Patti," great vocal soloist, appeared repeatedly in their day in the white music halls of the Deep South. More recently the famous Tuskegee choir has been in demand before white audiences throughout the Deep South, and the Dawson symphony is as warmly appreciated by Southern whites as by Negroes. Roland Hayes, great tenor soloist, who, like Marian Anderson, has appeared before the

crowned heads of Europe, is as popular in Alabama as in Maine or Yugoslavia. Anderson and Hayes have sung repeatedly in Alabama. They have appeared at Tuskegee and Birmingham and in Montgomery, the first capital of the Confederacy. It is but a few months since that Hayes sang at the city auditorium in Montgomery. Paul Robeson, famous baritone, has appeared repeatedly in moving pictures all over the Deep South.

Why there should be any objection to the appearance of Marian Anderson in Constitution Hall at Washington passes all human understanding. She can sing almost anywhere else in Washington, she can sing almost anywhere else in the United States and in Europe. . . .

The Spartanburg Herald, Spartanburg, South Carolina,
March 1, 1939:

. . . Marian Anderson, who has a remarkable contralto voice, has sung in all large cities of the United States and has toured foreign countries. If there was good reason to refuse her permission to sing in the Washington hall the D.A.R. no doubt will make it public. If there was no valid reason it seems that a blunder has been committed.

A few years ago Roland Hayes, Negro tenor, came to Spartanburg and sang in the Converse College auditorium. He was heard by a crowded house composed of both races of the city. He, too, has appeared before large audiences in every American city of importance and his tours have taken him to foreign lands. The Washington D.A.R. may have refused a permit to Marian Anderson, but we dare say Spartanburg and most every southern city would be delighted to hear her, regardless of the opinion of the United States Senator Smith.

Richmond Times-Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia, March 1,
1939:

. . . Marian Anderson was cheered by members of both races when she sang in Richmond about a year ago, and it seems unfortunate, to say the least, that the

D.A.R. has such a regulation with respect to tax-exempt* Constitution Hall—which it graciously rents to other celebrities who come to Washington.

It is belatedly claimed by the D.A.R. that the hall was not refused on racial grounds, since the National Symphony already had scheduled a concert for April 9. Professor Doxey Wilkerson of Howard University states, however, that efforts to have the affair on either April 8 or 10 were likewise "turned down." Mrs. Roosevelt's resignation from the D.A.R. is excellent evidence that she does not regard the organization's explanation as valid.

In these days of racial intolerance so crudely expressed in the Third Reich, an action such as the D.A.R.'s ban upon potential Negro lessees of Constitution Hall seems all the more deplorable. That this ruling has not been relaxed or repealed is a rather sad commentary on the descendants of those men who helped to create a democracy which strongly cries out against gross racial discrimination in other countries . . .

Democrat-Times, Greenville, Mississippi, March 10, 1939:

. . . The D.A.R. has evidenced more than its share of such unreason in its refusal to permit Marian Anderson, gifted negro singer, to perform in Constitution Hall in Washington. We fail to see how the D.A.R. achieved a single worthy purpose in denying the Hall to a negro woman whose voice brings pleasure to men and women of every race. Here in Greenville, for instance, there is no uproar when a Dr. Carver speaks in the theatre to a white and negro audience; nor do Delta pleasure seekers think it unseemly for a nationally known negro orchestra to appear on a white dance hall stage. It seems to us that the D.A.R., like lesser folk, should realize that it is possible to preserve racial taboos without erecting new barriers. And certainly the organization in Washington should realize that it is better to encourage artistry in

* This is inaccurate. Constitution Hall is subject to taxation, the tax, although a substantial one, has been "adjusted," in view of the important public purpose served by the hall and other considerations.

any race than to discourage art because of the color of the man or woman who expresses it. . . .

Houston Chronicle, Houston, Texas, March 24, 1939, article by Cora McRae:

Houston music-lovers came Thursday night to hear Marian Anderson until every one of 4,300 seats in the City Auditorium was filled, extra chairs put in and standing room sold. . . .

It was the contralto's third appearance in Houston in three years. . . .

Three encores followed the program before repeated shouts from the audience finally brought Schubert's "Ave Maria". Anything following this would have been an anti-climax. The huge audience of 5,000 slowly and quietly dispersed.

The Banner, Ocala, Florida, March 8, 1939:

We cannot agree with the decision of the D.A.R. in Washington to bar Marian Anderson, noted negro singer, from appearing at Constitution Hall in Washington, which is owned by the organization. While most of the barrage of protests which have followed the action come from north of the Mason and Dixon line, even around here most people seem to consider the decision unwarranted. And it is noted that local organizations keenly enjoy hearing the offerings of the Howard Academy glee club and other local colored performers. They appear before, and their work is appreciated by the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and other civic clubs, the Woman's Club and others.

The Journal, Shreveport, Louisiana, March 10, 1939:

Grace Moore, opera and movie star who was born at Jellico, Tenn., a spot definitely south of the Mason and Dixon line, said in no uncertain terms today that Marian Anderson, negro soprano, should have been allowed to sing in Washington's Constitution Hall.

Permission was denied by Daughters of the American Revolution.

"Marian Anderson most certainly should have been

allowed to sing," she said. "She made tremendous sacrifices and applied herself to her work. Now she is an outstanding artist and deserves the same consideration as any other artist."

The News Leader, Staunton, Virginia, March 1, 1939:

If the D.A.R.'s employee or its officers closed Constitution Hall on racial grounds, the membership should certainly be heard from. In view of the discredit already reflected upon the organization, we hope the ladies will insist on developing the facts, and in accepting the precedent of George Washington, who in Revolutionary days wrote to Phyllis Wheatley, a Negro poet:

"If you should ever come to Cambridge, Miss Phyllis, or near headquarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favored by the muses, and to whom Nature has been so beneficent in her dispensations. I am, with great respect, your humble servant, George Washington."

This group of quotations might be largely extended. It is believed that it will, however, go far toward satisfying the members of your Society as to the best informed public sentiment on a matter of this kind where a concert by a great artist is concerned and where there is no social issue involved.

V. RECENT HISTORY OF THE D.A.R. ATTITUDE ON INTERRACIAL MATTERS

A few facts which have come to our attention regarding the attitude of the D.A.R. toward interracial concerts and meetings in the past decade may be of service.

In 1928 the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States was held in Washington, many of its public meetings being scheduled for Continental and Constitution Halls. During the summer I was informed that one of the items on the program, namely, the proposed meeting of the Church Institute for Negroes, could not be held in Continental Hall because of the fact that there were Negroes on the program, and that the rules of the organiza-

tion would consequently not permit it. As the matter was a serious one I went to Greenwich, Connecticut, and had a long interview with the President General, Mrs. Brosseau, as a result of which an exception was made with her authorization. The meeting was held and was in every way successful.*

Several years ago when the Committee on Religious Life in the Nation's Capital, made up of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, white and colored, organized its first meeting, arrangements were made to hold the meeting in Constitution Hall, it being part of the understanding that there would be some colored people on the platform and many in the audience. The meetings have since been held there annually without any difficulty. All that your Committee now asks is that those responsible for Constitution Hall go one step further by the abrogation of the rule which prevents a colored singer of distinction from appearing in the Hall for a paid concert. It believes that such a change would meet with the overwhelming approval of the thoughtful people of Washington.

VI. APPEAL TO THE D.A.R. AS A GREAT PATRIOTIC SOCIETY

(a) Let us consider *the implications of the American Revolution*, in which your Society through its name and expressed purpose is specially interested. Your Constitution states that "The objects of this Society shall be: To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved American independence, . . ." In this connection it is perhaps worth recording that the first American who died in the Revolution was Crispus Attucks, a Negro, in the Boston Massacre of 1770. Similarly, Peter Salem was killed in Bunker Hill and it is believed that thousands of colored people lost their lives in the American Revolution.

* I have been informed since originally presenting this appeal that under the rules of the D.A.R. the President-General has larger discretion in the matter of the use of Continental Hall than of Constitution Hall.

Referring to Crispus Attucks' death, John Adams said:

"This was the declaration of war, and it was fulfilled. The world had heard from him, and more, the English-speaking world will never forget the noble daring, the excusable rashness of Attucks in the holy cause of liberty. Eighteen centuries before he was saluted by death and kissed by immortality, another Negro bore the cross of Christ to Calvary for him. When the colonists were struggling wearily under their cross of woe, a Negro came to the front and bore that cross to the victory of glorious martyrdom."

Lest some may feel that this is a prejudiced statement as coming from a man of New England ancestry, let me also quote the opinion of one of the great Southern statesmen of the time, Charles Pinckney of South Carolina.

"Negroes then were, as they still are, as valuable part of our population to the Union as any other equal number of inhabitants. They were, in numerous instances, the pioneers, and, in all, the laborers of our armies. To their hands, we owe the erection of the greatest part of the fortifications raised for the protection of our country; some of which, particularly Fort Moultrie, showed, at that early period of inexperience, and untried valor of our citizens, immortality to American arms; and in the Northern states, numerous bodies of them were enrolled into the army and fought side by side with the whites, the battles of the Revolution."

(b) Let us consider *the threats to American democracy today*, and here we can all stand squarely on the Constitution of the United States. Your Society in its Constitution states as one of its major purposes to "cherish, maintain, and extend the institutions of American freedom, to foster true patriotism and love of country, and to aid in securing for mankind all the blessings of liberty."

Among these institutions of American freedom is the Fourteenth Amendment:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

We recognize that there is probably no legal issue involved, but we feel sure that the members of your Society wish to live up to the spirit as well as the letter of this Amendment which stands for the ideals for which Abraham Lincoln lived and died.

Indeed, we are convinced that there is no surer way of combating Russian Communism* and German Totalitarianism, which we consider twin evils which must be combated in every wise and lawful way, than to see to it that the Constitution, its Bill of Rights and Amendments are duly observed. Per contra, one of the surest ways of encouraging Communism is for any influential group to try to discriminate against a group of citizens exclusively because of their color. This is what is in fact being done by the D.A.R. in this instance. I cannot but believe that the Society's action was immediately known in Moscow, Berlin, and Rome, and that it has given aid and encouragement to the opponents of true democracy. Indeed, I was amazed some seven years ago, when I went through Africa as the representative of the Carnegie Corporation, to see how the Natives were informed regarding the breaches of American constitutional law and democratic tradition, such as municipal corruption, Jim Crow laws,

* The question was raised in the discussion following this presentation as to whether Communistic groups are not represented in the Marian Anderson Citizens Committee. A check-up of the list published March 20, 1939, containing 89 organizations shows only 3 with any marked Communistic leanings or connections.

lynchings, attempts at legal discrimination against a racial group, and so on.

Let me repeat, I can think of no better way of advancing the objectives of your Society than to allow an artist who is recognized to be one of the great artists of the world to sing in Constitution Hall, as requested by the Marian Anderson Committee, and no surer way of defeating the patriotic purposes of your constitution than to decline to grant such permission. In this connection let me repeat the following statement from my letter to you of March 11th:

"It would seem highly unfortunate if such great singers as Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, and Paul Robeson, who are acknowledged to be among the greatest artists, could not be heard by all interested, in the leading hall in the Nation's Capital. They are in great demand in Europe and in most places in this country, and although arguments can be raised for separateness in purely social matters, I can see no justification for drawing the color line in the case of a concert for which an admission fee is charged and which no one need attend unless he wishes to."

(c) In this whole discussion we must remember that we are dealing with an event at *the Capital of the Nation* where standards are set and where democracy is on trial before the world.

In closing may I say that I speak, I am sure, for every member of the committee in stating that you may put your professional requirements for artists to appear in Constitution Hall as high as you like and we shall gladly respect them. Only we ask you to remember that art should recognize no color line, and we are dealing in this case with musical art in one of its highest forms. The papers have been full recently of the anniversary of Henry Burleigh, the great Soloist of St. George's Episcopal Church of New York City. Although a colored man he has sung in this distinguished church in the metropolis for over a generation. His voice and his bear-

ing have been an inspiration to tens of thousands of people, as have been also those of other Negro singers such as Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and Miss Anderson herself. A great Southern State university has recently published many works by the late Professor Benjamin Brawley and other Negro scholars. It does not draw the color line where art is concerned. Similarly, many of our representative art galleries have paintings by Tanner, Barthé, and other Negro artists. They do not draw the color line in art. So it is in literature, with the works of a Dunbar, a Brathwaite, a James Weldon Johnson, a Countée Cullen, or a Du Bois.

We see no adequate reason why the color line should be drawn in the case of a really great singer such as Marian Anderson. We repeat this is a matter of art. We ask in this American democracy—especially at a critical time in our history when foreign social and political ideologies inconsistent with our national traditions are clamoring for acceptance, for fair play for American genius—for an opportunity for white and colored persons interested to hear world famous artists, when they come to Washington, in Constitution Hall—the only really suitable hall in view of the regrettable absence of a municipal auditorium. We ask you not to discourage a group representing one-tenth of our citizens who have made amazing progress since emancipation and who are specially qualified through the genius of some of their singers to make a contribution to the culture and inspiration of the Nation's Capital. We hope that quiet and earnest re-consideration this Fall of the issues raised last Spring may result in re-considering the rule we have been discussing so that your Board may return to the rule it originally followed which barred the representative of no group from programs, but merely required "that all events should be of dignity and refinement and not in contradiction to the ideals of the Society." We base our hope for some such action on the evidence we have presented to you, especially

regarding changes in local public opinion in recent years, and the importance, if our Constitutional democracy is to be preserved, of a great national patriotic society not drawing the color line in matters that have to do with the presentation of the best of musical art at the Nation's Capital. We feel that a patriotic society such as the D.A.R. should lead in the creation of wise public opinion, but even if we are mistaken in this conviction, we take hope from the statement in your last report to the effect that: "When the community at large has worked out its problem, the Daughters of the American Revolution will be willing, at all times, to adapt its policies to practices and customs in accordance with the highest standards of the community." We hope that you and your Board will agree with us in thinking that the evidence as to these "highest standards" here given now make such a change desirable from the standpoint both of the D.A.R. and of the American public. If not it would seem that the Board of Management or the Executive Committee should be willing to appoint a strong and representative committee to consider and report on the important matters at issue.

(At the close of this presentation, and after a general discussion by those present, the President-General stated in reply to an inquiry from Dr. Stokes that if he would reduce his statement to writing from his notes she would be glad to submit copies to all members of the Executive Committee for their consideration. She later added that she would also be entirely willing to send copies to the members of the Advisory Committee.)

Phelps-Stokes Fund Office
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