

ANSON PHELPS STOKES
2408 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 11, 1939

My dear Mrs. Robert:

I remember so pleasantly meeting you a few months ago when you came to the Cathedral in connection with the Dedication of the beautiful Tablet presented by the D.A.R. in honor of the framers of the Constitution. I always think of you also as the widow of an old classmate and friend, so I write to you with the background of personal acquaintance.

Many of us have been greatly disturbed over the difficulty of Miss Marian Anderson in securing an adequate auditorium in which to sing in Washington. I understand from your very courteous and competent manager at Constitution Hall that the hall had actually been engaged for another purpose on the day in question which conflicted with the application on behalf of Miss Anderson, but I also understand that even if that had not been the case existing rules of the Board of Management would have prevented the hall being rented to her, because you require in the case of all commercial programs that the artist should be White.

I realize that it is probably too late to make any readjustments as far as Miss Anderson's concert is concerned, but I am most hopeful that the Board of Managers of the D.A.R. when they next meet will take their present rule under serious consideration and, if possible, modify it, for this seems to me definitely advisable in the interest of the D.A.R. and its patriotic work.

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.

One of the most important of our Episcopal Churches in New York, St. George's, of which the late Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan was Senior Warden for many years, always had a Negro soloist. We do not hesitate to have Colored people, both taking part in our services and concerts at Washington Cathedral and in the congregation, where they are always welcome. The same is true of the Library of Congress where Colored people are freely admitted to concerts and where the Hampton Institute Choir under a distinguished Negro leader has been heard. The general experience is that it is only Colored people of refinement who attend concerts and those who object to having any Colored people in a hall for a concert by Negro artists, of whom there undoubtedly would be some, might well absent themselves in the interest of the great majority, who for an occasion of this type would have no objection to their presence.

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It may interest you to know that some ten years ago, when the Convention of the Episcopal Church was to be held in Washington, we were informed that one session could not be held at Continental Hall because it was to be devoted to the Church Institute for Negroes and Negroes were to be participants in the program. I went up in the middle of the summer to Greenwich, Conn., to see the President General, Mrs. Brousseau, and arranged for a modification of the order so that the meeting was held, and evidently the policy of the Daughters has been somewhat more liberal since that time, as we never have any difficulty every year with our Committee on Religious Life in the Nation's Capital, which engages the hall, and we always have one or two Colored participants and one or two hundred Colored people in the audience. There has never been the slightest friction or difficulty and I understand that this is not contrary to the rules, as the program is not a commercial one.

What I am hoping is that at your next meeting, the Daughters may still further liberalize the rule so that on those rare occasions where Colored artists of great distinction are to give a program which is vouched for by responsible citizens, the management may, with the approval of the officers, arrange for the renting of the hall. It seems to me particularly desirable that an organization whose ideals are patriotic, and where there is no social issue involved, should not draw the line at one large group of our citizens, especially since from the days of Crispus Attucks in the American Revolution to the present, in all of our wars and in our great movements for social reform, Colored men and women have played a notable part.

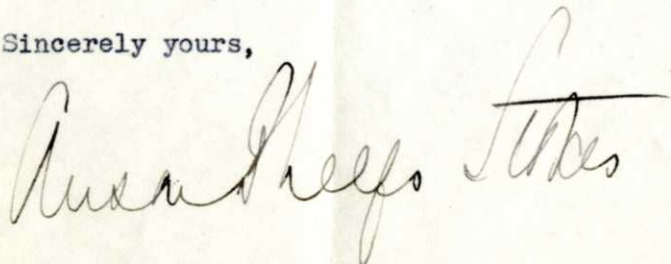
I personally did not take part in the protest meeting held at the Lincoln Congregational Church, not because I was unsympathetic with its purpose, but because I felt that perhaps I could be of more service in trying to adjust this matter with the Daughters of the Revolution if I maintained a somewhat independent position.

May I repeat that I have only praise for the actual management of Constitution Hall under Mr. Hand and I feel that all that is necessary is for the National Board of Managers to broaden their regulations slightly so as to make possible the renting of the hall, perhaps once or twice a year, when there are programs by great artists of the Negro race which would appeal to a distinguished White audience just as much as to one of the Colored people.

I am, with great respect,

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Henry M. Robert,
President General, D.A.R.
Memorial Continental Hall,
Washington, D. C.



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March 20, 1939

Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes,
2408 Massachusetts Ave.,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Rev. Stokes:

Your letter of March 11th was forwarded to the President General who wishes me to say to you that she has received your letter and she greatly appreciates the kind spirit in which it is written.

Mrs. Robert wishes me to tell you that if you will permit it, she would be happy to have a personal talk with you to discuss the many problems involved as soon after her return as possible.

With the many problems pertaining to the Continental Congress to be adjusted immediately upon her arrival in Washington, she will write to you again to seek an appointment.

Very sincerely yours,

Secretary to the
President General.