

**'Once in a Hundred Years'**  
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**From a life of poverty to the applause of nations, Marian Anderson pioneered a new era for the sake of 'those who follow.'**

Marian Anderson (1902–93) possessed many formidable gifts. One of the 20th century's most celebrated singers, Anderson, born Feb. 27, 1897, had a rich, velvety voice and a three-octave range. In 1935, the Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini told her that "a voice like yours is heard once in a hundred years."

Tremendously talented yet unassuming, Anderson was thrust into the spotlight by an encounter with racism that would have embittered a lesser spirit. In 1939 her manager, Sol Hurok, tried to book an engagement at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., the national headquarters for the Daughters of the American Revolution. They were told that all dates were taken. When first lady Eleanor Roosevelt heard the news, she resigned from the D.A.R.

Secretary of State Harold L. Ickes then offered Anderson the Lincoln Memorial for a concert on Easter Sunday. About 75,000 attended the concert, while millions more listened to the radio broadcast.

Anderson never acknowledged ill feelings toward the D.A.R. "It is not in my nature to be combative," she said. "My mission is to leave behind me the kind of impression that will make it easier for those who follow."

In 1958, President Eisenhower made her a delegate to the United Nations.

On Feb. 27, Carnegie Hall will honor her 100th birthday with a special gala. Opera singers Denyce Graves and Jesse Norman — representing two generations of black performers who have revered Anderson as a role model — will perform.

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