Contralto Marian Anderson as Goodwill Ambassador

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Marian Anderson was an internationally-acclaimed contralto and goodwill ambassador for the United States government. In her role as a political asset, she utilized her talents to evoke a perception of the United States that differed from past assessments involving race relations. To provide an understanding of how she became an icon and asset to the State Department, three theoretical frameworks are applied—performativity, prototype, and social semiotics.

In classical theories of performativity, classification separates us into categories and hierarchies, while concepts help us to categorize, understand, and predict the material world. Scholars have defined identity as a series of citational acts that cite aspects of persona. In order to be a member of a category, we must possess some—but not necessarily all—qualities of that category. In other words, identity is an act of persuasion, which is the very basis of interaction. Scholars have posited that we need categories to understand the world. We develop prototypes in order to “fit” in the world and identify with others. Semiotics is the study of signs, which help us code our identity. Michel Foucault noted that power is enacted on and through the body to inform identity, while other scholars explain somatechnics, in which the physical body is a representation of historical and cultural modes of embodiment. Still other scholars recognized identity as both performative, in relation to society, and constative which is innate. We embody codes to express signs.

The three prototypical categories studied to which Anderson belonged are African American, female, and classical contralto. She performed citational acts and codes to help her identify and be accepted within those categories. Though some of her citational acts were innate,
she possessed the ability to recognize and understand categories and hierarchies in context, resulting in her successful prototypical performance in each category. She masterfully navigated deconstructing and reconstructing her performative identity, which enabled her to attain the status of iconic internationally-renowned contralto and U.S. government asset who broke multiple barriers of race and gender.
Contralto Marian Anderson as Goodwill Ambassador

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“When I sing, I don’t want them to see that my face is black.

I don’t want them to see that my face is white.

I want them to see my soul. And that is colorless.”

—Marian Anderson

# Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Talented Vocalist and Political Tool

1

Introduction

1

Theories to be Applied

2

Application of Theories

5

Biographical Sketch and Career Before Ambassadorship

7

Early Years

8

Europe, Career Development, and Fame (1928-35)

10

Home Again (1935-1948)

11

Return to Europe and Beyond (1948-1956)

12

Goodwill Ambassador (1957-1965)

13

Goodwill Ambassador and State Department Asset

14

Cooperation in Foreign Affairs

15

Chapter 2 – Marian Anderson’s Deconstruction of Blackness and Gender Roles

31

as a Classical Artist


Prototypical African-American Female Contralto

35

Prototype: Race = African American

35

Status of African Americans in the Twentieth Century

37

Prototype: Female

41

Prototype: Classical Singer

42

Non-Normative African-American Female Contralto

44

Education

45

Travel

47
Family and Finance 51

Chapter 3 – A Semiotic Analysis of Marian Anderson’s Performance Style 63

Language, Speech, and Vocalics 69

Gesture 74

Appearance 76

From Contralto to Icon 80

Critical Race Theory 80

Appendix I. Letter from Marian Anderson to Hurok Sol 87

Appendix II. World Political Issues During Marian Anderson’s Career 1914—1965 90

Appendix III. Comparative Contemporaneous American Contraltos 92

Bibliography 96
CHAPTER 1
TALENTED VOCALIST AND POLITICAL TOOL

Introduction

Marian Anderson’s talent and position as goodwill ambassador for the United States of America (U.S.) played a significant role in the deconstruction of perceived blackness and gender. In order to understand how this was accomplished, it is critical to review her legacy, and to reveal and assess how these roles were used as tools for dismantling and deconstructing the perception of race relations and gender roles. As an asset to the State Department, Anderson had a significant impact on the way the world viewed the United States. During her career, segregation, dehumanization, punishment, and the persecution of the African-American community were common and accepted. Her role ultimately contributed to America’s efforts to demonstrate an image of equality and community among all—ideas that were in fact false. Anderson played a significant role in foreign relations and as such, her legacy, experiences, and challenges provide a critical understanding of her unique combination of deft socio-political maneuvering and virtuosity as a performer.

In examining Anderson’s career and role as a goodwill ambassador, one can apply several theories in order to gain an understanding of her remarkable success. Anderson’s persona was carefully constructed. In this dissertation, I will deconstruct her persona using theories of performativity, classification, prototype theory, concept theory, and semiotics. The work of scholars Judith Butler, Eleanor Rosch, Ferdinand de Saussure, Michel Foucault, Joseph Pugliese,

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2 Throughout this document, the terms black, negro, colored, person of color, and African American are used interchangeably to reflect the historical context under discussion.
and Susan Stryker will guide this deconstruction of Anderson’s performance of self. This will help us gain a better understanding of and appreciation for the iconic status she attained by the 1950s.

Theories to be Applied

Philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler explains that performativity exposes identity as a series of citational acts, moments in which we are referring to aspects of identity that already exist.³ For example, aspects of identity are rooted in markers of traditional femininity and masculinity, which are not required to be associated with biological sex. However, while many queer theorists assert the falsehood of binary identities, the idea of the construction of them is in fact founded on prototypical notions about what it means to be feminine and masculine.⁴

The concept of the prototype has been richly explored and developed into prototype theory by psychologist Eleanor Rosch. She notes that because human beings need categories in order to understand the world, they develop prototypes as a means of categorization. In the context of singer Marian Anderson’s life and work, applying the theoretical frameworks of performativity and prototype theory is part of my assertion that she innately, unconsciously, subconsciously, and consciously deconstructed the category of “black female” that was prevalent during the time in which she lived. She deconstructed it through her performance of self-cited

³ Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition. (New York: Routledge, 1999), accessed on April 1, 2019
aspects of personhood that were otherwise attributed to “whiteness.” Moreover, because she was so successful at deconstructing her social position, the American government used her as a prop to “prove” or “suggest” that racial segregation and polarity in the United States was not what the external world suspected, when in fact it was far worse than most imagined.

Olsen explained that, originating in the logic of ancient Greek philosophy, theories of classification and conceptualization have been roundly criticized by classificationists, feminists, and scholars of marginalized groups because of the rigidity of conceptual boundaries and hierarchical structures, which are rife with implications of dominance and subordination. While classical theory works well in simple situations, human experience is full of ambiguity, inconsistency, and incompleteness of information, because the world is dynamic and full of intersections. Those employing classical theory struggle to handle epistemological variation, especially with complex, socially-influenced categories such as groupings of people. The options are either to erase difference, to overlook complexity, or to classify so closely that the categories are tiny and therefore lack meaning. Despite criticism, these classical theories still underlie the major classification systems. Perhaps the problem lies not in the categorization of humans, but rather in the formulation of a concept. Concepts facilitate the ability to categorize and thus understand and predict the material world, yet disagreement exists on what constitutes a concept.

Scholars Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker describe somatechnics as a social semiotic theory that facilitates the understanding of the self. They state that “the material and corporeality (soma) is inextricably conjoined with the techniques and technologies (technics) through which bodies are formed

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and transformed." Somatechnics aims to explain post-structural embodiment theory. Pugliese and Stryker state

...that the body is not so much a naturally occurring object that becomes available for representation or cultural interpretation as it is the tangible outcome of historically and culturally specific techniques and modes of embodiment processes…. Embodiment is always biocultural, always techno-organic, always a practical achievement realized through some concrete means. At its most quotidian, somatechnics references the particular ensemble of embodiment practices operative at any given place at any given time, but it also gestures more grandiosely toward ontological necessity, a general somatechnic imperative that governs the field of our collective being, from our primate past to our post-human present (and, perhaps, our zoömachinic future): we have never existed except in relation to the techne of symbolic manipulation, divisions of labor, and so forth.

In other words, the only way we can understand the identity of the body is by understanding the way bodies are coded in society.

Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure developed what is understood as structural linguistics. He explains that language is a system of signs. Saussure offered a dyadic model for understanding semiotics or the study of signs. In his work, he explains that a sign is composed of two parts: the signifier and the signified. In order for a sign to exist, it needs both components. The signifier is the form the sign takes, and the signified is what the signifier represents. For example, the signifier is the word “tree” and the signified is the physical form of the tree. In order to understand the depth of Anderson’s identity, it is important to study the signs that make up that identity; among them are a) African American, b) cisgender female, and c) classical singer.

There is an additional theoretical framework that is useful in understanding identity and the way in which power is enacted on and through bodies: the discussion of French philosopher

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6 Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker, “The somatechnics of race and whiteness,” *Social Semiotics*, (2009) 19:1, 1, DOI: [10.1080/10350330802632741](10.1080/10350330802632741)

7 Pugliese, 2.
Michel Foucault’s seminal work on sex and gender by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who explained that Foucault was concerned with “an unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrated the subject’s very bodies and forms of life.” When discussing Marian Anderson, a way to achieve the understanding of identity is to consider how the categories of race and gender affected and shaped her experience of the world.

**Application of Theories**

A biographical sketch of Anderson’s life exposes how she gained access to normally inaccessible musical and political arenas and garnered international acclaim that led to her role as a political asset for the United States. Raymond Arsenault claimed that by 1938, multiple national and international newspaper articles reported that Anderson had transcended social norms, breaking perceived notions of race in America. Critics observed “an artistic presence that confounded traditional limitations of race.” To appeal to the masses and gain success as a singer, it is essential for performers to construct a public persona through performative acts that may differ from the truth of their private persona. For Anderson, the perceived absence of her race along with her feminine grace were assets to her career, while the same performative acts that created these phenomena made her appealing to the U.S. government.

Butler’s theory of performativity is useful to our understanding of Marian Anderson as an icon and a public sign. As mentioned above, she signified an African-American woman in a way that defied the prototypical categories of the time, and her defiant grace and talent led to her use

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by the U.S. government as a political asset. By the 1950s, Americans saw her as an exemplary American; in addition, African Americans (who are, of course, Americans) saw her as an exemplary African American. The path to this status involved consistent and repetitive speech and other symbolic actions that created her identity, an identity that was inconsistent with the prototypes of African American and female during that era. Butler’s theory has been criticized for 1) not considering the environment where acts take place and 2) not considering the response of the audience.\textsuperscript{10} My analysis of documents from 1920 through 1958 responds to these criticisms by including these elements in the discussion of Anderson’s performativity.

Documents that have been reviewed as part of this study include video footage from the 1957 tour of the Far East in the documentary \textit{See It Now: Lady from Philadelphia}; a summary of seventy-five of the hundreds of letters by television viewers addressed to CBS, ITT, the Hurok Agency, and/or Anderson; personal correspondence between Anderson, her family, and her management; records from the U.S. State Department; records from the Eisenhower Administration; and articles from periodicals. These documents demonstrate a clear relationship between Marian Anderson’s career and favorable views of the United States government with regard to race relations and gender roles, thus revealing Anderson as a critical figure in U.S. history that outlived her vocal instrument.

Biographical Sketch and Career Before Ambassadorship

Marian Anderson was born in 1897 to John Berkley Anderson and Anna Delilah Rucker Anderson of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her inspirational voice served as the foundation for her successful performance career as well as a vehicle of significant international change for the United States. Anderson’s race was an early limitation to her remarkable career. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, many resources and opportunities for African Americans were limited due to the constraints of the Jim Crow era and racial prejudice.\(^{12}\) Despite the time in which she was born, Anderson’s remarkable voice enabled her to travel the world singing. Her unique voice and intense expressiveness drew the attention of many, ultimately leading to an extraordinary career. Her fame continued to rise even after her death.

Her position as an African-American singer with an international reputation led to her unique role as a goodwill ambassador for the United States. While the outlines of this role have been well understood, less well known is the degree to which she was charged with promoting the propaganda and psychological warfare efforts of the U.S. government. These efforts were designed to help the international community see the U.S. as a just society in which race relations, social welfare, and financial stability were all promoted as exemplary aspects of American democracy. In 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wrote the following in a memorandum about Marian Anderson to several U.S. ambassadors at embassies abroad: “In the past her appearances abroad have greatly added to the cultural prestige of the United States and have tended to counteract some of the misconceptions of the limitations placed on the Negro

\(^{12}\) Racial prejudice is well known in the Jim Crow era. See Richard Wormser, *Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, (St. Martin Press, 2014).
citizen in this country.” Thus, despite the prejudice and challenges that Anderson endured in the country of her birth, her government used her as a tool to promote the view that such prejudice and challenges did not exist.

This dissertation will demonstrate how Anderson’s singing ability served as the foundation of her role as an international vessel for sociopolitical change. Her well-known stature and messages of hope and inspiration made her a symbol for humanitarianism and peace. She possessed a unique ability to employ her talent to influence others to such a degree that the U.S. State Department deemed her an asset. What follows is a sketch of her early life and career in an effort to document the factors that led to her selection as a goodwill ambassador for the United States.

Early Years (1903-1928)

Anderson began singing as a soloist around the age of six in the junior choir of Union Baptist Church in her hometown of Philadelphia. By the age of fifteen, she was performing solos with the Stanton Grammar School Choir, the Union Baptist Church Senior Choir, and the People’s Chorus, a local community choir. In 1917, when Anderson was twenty, she was elated to perform the alto solo in Mendelssohn’s Elijah beside Roland Hayes, the first internationally-acclaimed African-American tenor recitalist, and Harry Thacker Burleigh, renowned African-American baritone, composer, and church musician. This, her first performance in Boston, was performed with a chorus of black singers conducted by Dr. Walter O. Taylor. Later that year,

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13 032 Anderson, Marian/4-254, box NND 969002, Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP)
she began touring farther from home, with performances at the Cuyler School and the Georgia State Industrial School in Savannah. Inspired by Hayes and Burleigh, Anderson set out to make a career of singing.

As a result of a fundraising drive organized by her church, family, and avid supporters within the local community, she received quality vocal training with Giuseppe Boghetti, a local Italian voice teacher; the funds also allowed her to continue her academic studies. She graduated from South Philadelphia High School for Girls at age twenty-four, having already completed several recital tours singing at African-American training institutions, fraternal organizations, churches, and community events, primarily in the South.15

After graduation, Anderson was participating in a young artist program at the Chicago College of Music when she heard that the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) was in town for their first national convention.16 Attending during her free time, she met many leading African-American musicians. During that week, a young African-American male had drowned in a racially motivated assault, and the people of Chicago demonstrated in outrage. During the demonstration, Anderson was asked to sing, and newspapers around the nation covered her unexpected performance. Her music provided a needed salve, and as a result, NANM awarded her with their first young artist scholarship.17 This was a critical milestone in her early career as she became a national symbol for her people.

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15 Arsenault, 24, and passim.
17 Keiler, 44-45.
Europe, Career Development, and Fame (1928-1935)

With growing awareness of Anderson’s new status as a national and cultural symbol, she dedicated herself intensely to studying and improving her gift. She recognized that her greatest need was to develop a keen sense of phonology and syntax. She needed to learn languages, their correct pronunciation, and their modes of expression. This drew her away from home and attracted her toward Europe and its teachers, coaches, and composers. In 1928, she sailed to London for a year of intense study with several musicians, including the composer Roger Quilter. She returned home the following year and embarked on a trip to Europe, initially to study German, in 1930.

In Berlin, Anderson met Madame Sara Cahier, one of the leading contraltos of the early twentieth century. Cahier had performed with the Imperial Opera in Vienna, and in 1911, at the age of forty-one, she made her Metropolitan Opera debut. In December of 1912, Cahier’s first principal role at the Met was Frika in Wagner’s *Die Walküre*. She had an active career in opera and concertizing from 1904 through 1923. She attended Anderson’s Berlin recital and became her mentor, introducing her to agents, performers, and new audiences.¹⁸

Cahier encouraged Anderson to work with pianist Kosti Vehanen, who in turn introduced her to his friend, colleague, and European artist manager, Helmar Enwall. Instead of returning to America, Anderson, Vehanen, and Enwall embarked on their first tour of Scandinavia. Anderson was the first American singer to tour this region of the world. While there, she met and studied the music of composers Jean Sibelius and Yrjo Kilpinen, later introducing many of their early works to the world. They returned for an extended tour from 1932 to 1934, which was expanded to Eastern Europe and Asia, catapulting Anderson to international fame. During her second Paris

¹⁸ Keiler, 100.
concert in May of 1934, Sol Hurok, a noted manager of professional performers at the time, was in the audience. The next morning he invited her to join his roster of artists.\textsuperscript{19} Anderson remained his client until her retirement.

**Home Again (1935-1948)**

When Anderson returned to America in December 1935, she was greeted with the pride of the nation. The New York Times review of her Town Hall recital that month was historically significant:

> Let it be said at the outset: Marian Anderson has returned to her native land one of the great singers of our time. The Negro contralto who has been abroad for four years established herself in her concert at the Town Hall last night as the possessor of an excelling voice and art. Her singing enchanted an audience that included singers. There was no doubt of it, she was mistress of all she surveyed.\textsuperscript{20}

Anderson had crossed racial, gender, financial, and political barriers through her successes in Europe. With the guidance of the Hurok Management Agency, she spent three months in the U.S., performing at Carnegie Hall and the White House. Anderson performed in 178 U.S. cities and in all but seven states between December 1935 and 1942. Beginning in 1937, tense international relations eventually resulting in World War II limited her travel to within the U.S., Hawaii, Mexico, and the West Indies for more than a decade. Hurok appointed a male travel assistant, Isaac Jofe, to accompany her on each tour, ensuring that Anderson would only need to be concerned with her performance. Their travel regimen was not easy, especially considering the gender bias and racial tensions of the time. Financial records indicate that between January

\textsuperscript{19} Keiler, 135.
and May of 1938, Anderson performed sixty concerts while touring from California to New York, earning $238,000.²¹

As she matured in age and artistry, contract negotiations allowed her fewer annual performances with higher fees. However, breaking financial barriers and reaching celebrity status did not shield her from racial discrimination. In 1939, her race prevented her from performing at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., which was owned and managed by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Among her most notable achievements was breaking that racial barrier and performing there in 1943. Through strategic negotiations with the management, her debut concert in the hall was attended by a fully integrated audience.

Return to Europe and Beyond (1948-1956)

On 7 May 1948, Anderson returned to Europe for her first post-World War II tour. Europe looked and felt very different. Twenty years had passed since her last performance in Germany. The audiences were eager to hear her again, despite her mature age. She presented concerts in France, Great Britain, Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan, Korea, and Hawaii. Argentina was added to her list of international touring destinations. Her concerts were attended by kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, other heads of state, diplomats, and the general public, rekindling and developing personal and professional relationships.

Intermittently returning for tours of the U.S., Anderson made her second appearance at Constitution Hall on 14 March 1953. That spring, she became the first post-war Western artist to tour the Far East. Her May appearance in Korea at the request of the American Embassy was for

²¹ Keiler, 175.
the purpose of performing for U.S. troops following her tour of Japan. Much of her work on this tour solidified her preparation for humanitarian efforts in which she was engaged until her last performance.

By the early 1950s, Anderson’s voice began showing signs of age, which occasionally resulted in mixed reviews. Yet she continued to tour and to sing. She became the first African American to perform a principal role at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. In January of 1955, at the age of fifty-seven, she made her operatic debut as the witch Ulrica in *Un Ballo in maschera* by Giuseppe Verdi. This was the only full operatic role Anderson performed.

**Goodwill Ambassador (1957-1965)**

In January of 1957, Anderson broke another racial barrier with her voice and stature when she sang at the inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Later that year, she toured the Far East, performing in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, India, and Pakistan as an informal goodwill ambassador in the service of the U.S. State Department. Eisenhower subsequently appointed her as an alternate delegate to the Thirteenth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which she served from September through December of 1958.

She continues to be admired for her humanitarian contributions to world peace and equality. Though she was humble, her voice rang out and made a huge impact on the world. As Ernie Periera of the Hong Kong Tiger Standard, reported at the time,

Seeing her the morning after she had opened her Hong Kong engagement, I was struck by her charm, graciousness and expressive eyes that could suddenly glow with nostalgia as she recalled some incidents in her career or sparkle with emotion when she talked about rising Negro performers making a name for themselves in America today. Miss Anderson holds her head high when she talks: she looks straight at you also. There is nothing hypocritical about her. One senses her pride...
of achievement but it is a humble sort of pride. Even if she is an extraordinary artist, the impression she conveys in a talk is that she is an ordinary person: her desires on visiting any new city are like those of any tourist.22

Anderson performed her retirement concert on Easter Sunday of 1962 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. This was the end of her concertizing, yet she continued to perform as a guest artist from time to time until her eightieth birthday in 1977. She was the recipient of hundreds of international honors and awards, including fifty honorary doctorates.

Goodwill Ambassador and State Department Asset

At first, Marian Anderson’s role as a singer might seem incongruent with her role as a goodwill ambassador. But through her excellent performances of European art music, she created an identity that deconstructed the idea of blackness and changed perceptions of race relations within America and abroad. Her impact as a goodwill ambassador and State Department asset was due to her earlier role as a performer and the way in which diplomacy came to be part of her international performing tours.

Anderson garnered a group of devotees that included some of the most notable political figures around the world. In 1936, she met President Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt after returning from her first European Tour. The Roosevelts were keenly aware of her celebrity, appeal, and successful performances abroad. Mrs. Roosevelt attended many of Anderson’s

concerts following her first invitation to sing at the White House for a small dinner party
honoring Circuit Court of Appeals Judge William Denman and his wife.\textsuperscript{23} The next day, in the
First Lady’s column, \textit{My Day}, she mentioned Anderson’s visit to the White House, noting,

My husband and I had a rare treat last night in listening to Marian Anderson, a colored
contralto, who has made a great success in Europe and this country. She has sung before
all the crowned heads, and deserves her great success for I have rarely heard a more
beautiful and moving voice or a more finished artist.\textsuperscript{24}

On 8 June 1939, two months after her celebrated Lincoln Memorial Concert, Anderson again
arrived at the White House to perform. She was greeted by the Roosevelts and was introduced to
honored guests King George VI and Queen consort Elizabeth. President Roosevelt hosted the
couple as a way to forge alliances with England in light of rising threats from Germany and
Japan. He likely saw the invitation of Anderson as a point of connection with the royal couple,
since Anderson had completed a substantial tour of Europe, including Britain, earlier in the
decade. This was perhaps Anderson’s first performance that was specifically linked with U.S.
diplomacy.

\textbf{Cooperation in Foreign Affairs}

Anderson had been traveling internationally for a decade during the strain of the Great
Depression, which had international repercussions. Her tours had taken her to remote locations in
Scandinavia and Russia, while her national tours spanned every region of the country. By the
mid 1930s, America was starting to recover economically from the Great Depression. Many of
the socialist reforms the FDR administration had enacted through New Deal programs and
projects assisted in the recovery. However, the international political tensions resulting from the
growing polarization of communist and democratic ideologies prevented Anderson from

\textsuperscript{23} Anderson, 195-6.
\textsuperscript{24} Keiler, 166-67.
traveling to Europe and Asia beginning in 1937. About five months after the Lincoln Memorial Concert, World War II was declared. The U.S. joined the Allied Forces against Nazi Germany and Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the war, Anderson continued tours of America and also ventured into new areas including Hawaii, Mexico, the West Indies, and South America. Breaking racial, gender, social, and financial barriers in America and abroad under the Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower administrations was an exceptional achievement.

The late 1940s and 1950s saw fear-mongering tactics concerning communism at the hand of U.S. government officials. This fear was a result of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Efforts to eliminate or suppress any and all connections to the communist ideology and party were led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s first Director, John Edgar Hoover, and Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. Hoover and McCarthy began persecuting prominent American figures, including African-American artists, by accusing them of having communist ideologies—without proper assessment of evidence provided by accusers. Artists such as acclaimed African-American singer Paul Robeson were censored and barred from performing and/or traveling due to such unsubstantiated claims.\textsuperscript{26} Many of the artists accused of belonging to the communist party or being communist sympathizers were publicly labeled as such and badgered in public legal proceedings. They were used as examples to insight fear in others who would speak out against unfair U.S. policies or practices. This was a turbulent time in

\textsuperscript{25} For information on WWII visit https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/educator-resources

American society that included court cases fighting for economic, social, cultural, and political rights as a bulwark to anti-communist fear-mongering.

The successes Anderson experienced performing in communist countries, as well as her access to the international community with devotees, friends, and colleagues, some of whom had been identified as communists or communist sympathizers, may have prompted government officials to monitor her travel and press coverage, just as they had with other celebrities and African-American international figures. From 1939 through 1960, the Republican National Committee (RNC) collected various news clippings on Anderson, tracking her very active career. Alongside the RNC, the State Department was also monitoring her career, specifically her impact abroad. In 1943, her political acumen became obvious when President Barclay of Liberia chose her to receive a Declaration of Honor by U.S. government officials on his behalf. At the time of this award, Liberia was involved in several key political issues. In January, Roosevelt visited the military base in Monrovia to ensure U.S. access to rubber while also utilizing this pivotal moment to solidify relations between both countries. Providing access to rubber and developing a stronger relationship was critical, as Russian officials were trying to circumvent the United States to gain access to Liberian resources. This was a political problem for the United States as they feared the impending rise of Communism in Africa during and after WWII. Liberia was seen as a primary target of communist propaganda because of the strategic location of Liberia on the continent of Africa as well the natural resources therein. The U.S. was highly aware that their position in Africa would provide a critical location should the war expand and
nuclear war ensue. In order to develop this relationship further, Roosevelt invited President Barclay to visit America.\textsuperscript{27}

Due to her connection to Barclay, Anderson was critical in providing the necessary ethos to the U.S., since Barclay held her in high esteem. Anderson first met Barclay in Mexico, where she was performing in May of 1943. During their meeting, Barclay was so moved by her performance that he struck up a conversation about his upcoming visit to the U.S. at the behest of Roosevelt. At this point, Anderson invited the Liberian leader to her home to dine with her and her husband. After receiving the official invitation from Roosevelt, Barclay arrived in June of 1943. While visiting with Roosevelt, Barclay fell ill and informed Anderson that he would not be able to attend dinner at her home, because he was hospitalized in New York. Learning of his declining health, Anderson visited Barclay at the hospital. In October of 1943, Barclay instructed Liberian officials to contact the State Department and requested that they bestow a decoration of appreciation upon Marian Anderson. In the memorandum to the State Department, Liberian officials stated, “In appreciation he [Barclay] gave her his boutonniere of the Order of African Redemption, adding that the actual decoration and diploma would be forwarded following his return to Liberia.”\textsuperscript{28} In December of 1943, Eleanor Roosevelt presented the formal decoration and diploma to Anderson in a public ceremony. This is one of many examples depicting her profound impact on foreign relations and placing her in an unofficial diplomatic role.

\textsuperscript{27} Frederick P. Hibbard, “The Chargé in Liberia (Hibbard) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations Of The United States: Diplomatic Papers, (1943), The Near East And Africa, Vol. 4, No. 15 accessed on March 31, 2019, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1943v04/d704

\textsuperscript{28} memorandum to Mr. Stettinius from Henry S. Villard, dated 10/25/1943, File 093.82/9, Box NND 80211, Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59, General Records of the Department of State Files, National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP).
Her unofficial diplomatic role would soon become official. Cultural diplomacy slowly became a common practice among various countries aiming to make way for more positive socio-cultural perceptions of their nation at home and abroad. Anderson was a prime tool of the United States, and her cultural diplomacy work provided improved public perception of America. At the time, there were many issues within the U.S. that affected and shaped public perception of the economic, social, and cultural stability of the nation. In order to appease foreign governments, the U.S. government funded a cultural diplomacy program known as the President’s Emergency Fund.

With the end of WWII on 2 September 1945, the Truman administration was concerned by the increased threat of the spread of communist ideologies through the use of similar cultural diplomacy strategies by the Soviet Union and other communist countries. As such, the U.S. government responded with the establishment of the President’s Emergency Fund under the Department of State United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1946. The Truman administration placed the responsibility of international information and cultural affairs with the Department of State. Through trade fairs, artistic performances, exhibits, and special events, the government targeted the emotions and morale of the national and international community to promote democracy, capitalism, consumerism, and anti-communist ideologies. This was a psychologically aggressive tool to improve American sentiment while utilizing radio and news media propaganda to discount the Soviet Union and popularize American values and products. The President’s Fund remained active until 1961. Anderson was one of the touring artists regularly engaged by the USIA cultural diplomacy program.

It was not until 1950 that any documentation surrounding Anderson’s role as a U.S. goodwill ambassador was recorded. The document that confirmed and verified her role also revealed her political allegiance to America’s agenda of democracy. However, the document also included information from Ambassador Ravndal of the United States Embassy in Montevideo that a communist newspaper reported Anderson had signed the Stockholm Peace Petition, which the U.S. considered to be communist propaganda. It denounced the development and use of the atomic bomb, which was of course a weapon developed at the behest of the United States government. The implication of a signature on this petition by Anderson would have been a denouncement of the government that she was representing. The petition in question was a counterargument to a public statement made by Truman that suggested the United States use the atomic bomb in Korea. In 1949, a committee established in response to the 1948 Wroclaw World Congress of Intellectuals in Defense of Peace announced a series of conferences that were to be held in several major cities. Among those were two critical meetings on the issue of world peace. The first of these was the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace held in New York City that March. The second World Peace Congress was held in Paris that April. The culmination of these meetings was yet another conference held in March of 1950, in Stockholm, Sweden, which is where the petition was developed. It stated:

We demand the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples. We demand strict international control to enforce this measure. We believe that any government which first uses atomic weapons against any other country whatsoever will be committing a crime against humanity and should be dealt with as a war criminal. We call on all men and women of good will throughout the world to sign this appeal.

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Due to the language in this petition, the implication that a U.S. diplomat or goodwill ambassador signed such a document would have been deeply problematic. This would not only have meant that Anderson was in agreement that atomic weapons were a violation of human rights, but also that the U.S., as its developer and its potential user, would be guilty of carrying out war crimes punishable by international law.  

On the morning of 8 August 1950, when Anderson arrived in Montevideo, she was greeted by Ambassador Ravndal with the request to deny her involvement publicly. In a telegraph, Ravndal reported to Dean Acheson, U.S. Secretary of State,

I discussed with Marian Anderson on her arrival here today article in Communist JUSTICIA July 28 implying that she had signed Stockholm peace petition and suggested she might wish make repudiating statement. This she willingly agreed to do and issued press statement transmitted Department EMBTEL 27. I am convinced her statement will draw general attention and am most appreciative [of] her candid cooperation.

A press conference was arranged for later that afternoon, in which Anderson made a public statement. In an article published in a foreign periodical, her signing of the petition had been falsely confirmed. The article called her a diva of color of immense influence and prestige. After this article became public knowledge, Anderson made a public statement regarding the controversial petition. She stated, “My attention has been called to an article in local newspaper JUSTICIA implying that this implication is absolutely false. I did not sign the petition.”

Acheson sent a telegram on 10 August 1950 to the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo requesting that

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32 Ravendal to Acheson regarding the rumor that MA signed the Stockholm Peace Petition, 8/8/1950, File 733.001/8-850, Box NND 822905 General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
33 Ravndal to Acheson regarding MA press conference and Tribuna article, File 733.001/8-850, Box NND 822905 General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
they collect all available press clippings regarding the denial and retraction for immediate
distribution. A slew of reported retractions and denials from many people, including public
figures and celebrities who had been accused of signing the petition, flooded the country and the
international community. Many attempted to invalidate Anderson’s statement. Robert W. Ross,
Information Officer in Montevideo, wrote to Acheson explaining that allegations had been made
in the communist newspaper Justicia that Anderson had made the statement that she did not sign
the petition under duress. The article had insinuated that Ravndal threatened her with a U.S.-style
“lynch law” in Uruguay. Ross was suggesting that Justicia was referring to the “lynch law” as an
effort to undermine public perception of the U.S. and its race relations.34

Anderson’s appearances at the request of the State Department were strategically aligned
with her concert tours. This afforded the State Department access to her celebrity news coverage
and the ability to use this platform to spread propaganda in order to increase pro-American
sentiment at home and abroad. With the development of the State Department’s plan to enhance
the United States’ political image by utilizing celebrities, a formal agreement was developed
between the State Department and Anderson. This agreement was brokered by Sol Hurok,
Anderson’s manager.35 Her formal relationship with the State Department began in 1953 with
trips to Korea, Trinidad, and the Dominican Republic. By 1954, trips to Iceland, São Paulo,
Buenos Aires, and Montevideo were scheduled.

34 Ross to Acheson regarding press coverage of MA’s denial of signing the Stockholm petition
dated 8/16/1950, File 733.001/8-1650, Box NND 822905, General Records of the Department of
State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
35 Guzzardi to MA regarding Korean concert Folder 511.95B/7-953, Box NND 852912. Also,
Riley to Hurok regarding MA and Iceland, File 511.40B2/11-354, Box NND 852972, General
Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
In June of 1953, fourteen months after U.S. troops ceased occupation of Japan, she performed in Tokyo, which was arguably a good will gesture toward a country the U.S. had just vacated. After leaving Japan, Anderson performed in Korea that July. Her performances were politically powerful, improving democratic and capitalist propaganda in Asia. In a letter dated 9 July 1953 from Walter P. Guzzardi—Acting Officer in Charge of Public Affairs Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs—she was praised and thanked for her stellar performances as well as for serving as a symbol of America. She helped build morale and improved relations in Asia. An internal memorandum revealed the anticipated response to Anderson’s performances in Korea was positive and significant. On 10 July 1953, the U.S. Embassy at Pusan reported to the State Department, “Miss Anderson’s concerts have promoted program objectives in Korea.” In addition, it was noted that Anderson’s performances “endeared her to Korean musicians and music lovers,” and “brought great encouragement to the Korean musical and cultural circles.”

Preliminary publicity on the radio and in newspapers provided the U.S. access to promote pro-American propaganda for the mission. Her perceived success served to encourage the “bootstrap myth” that would in turn encourage economic investment, international respect, and national recognition. Additionally, her identity was exploited by making foreign governments and peoples comfortable with direct investment in America and its products.

On 26 March 1954, the Office of the U.S. Secretary of State provided one Colonel Holst of the United States Air Force an appended “list of the artists who have agreed to perform on behalf of our overall effort to combat anti-Americanism and isolationism in Iceland.” Holst was a member of the working group on behalf of Iceland and a USAF Representative on the

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36 Guzzardi to MA in response to Korean concert, File 511.95B/7-953, Box NND 852912, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
Operations Coordinating Board for Cultural Presentations (OCB).\textsuperscript{37} Marian Anderson was the third of nine artists named. In return for their participation, the State Department’s United States Information Agency (USIA) Educational Exchange Program paid a portion of the customary fees and/or travel costs for performances in countries strategically appropriate to the programs’ initiatives. Reduced costs to the USIA were possible whenever Anderson slightly veered from her normal concert schedule to perform for the program.

The State Department had selected Anderson to perform in Iceland while it was in the process of becoming an independent nation. With the growing fear of communism by most democratic nations, the U.S. sought to gain a favorable relationship with Iceland by sending American talent as part of an acknowledgement of their newly found sovereignty. This sign of respect would undoubtedly garner and cultivate a relationship that would in turn lead to access to the country’s resources as well as swaying their views on communism. In a memorandum regarding the invitation for Anderson to visit, State Department officials claimed, “Her presence, particularly at this time, would be an incalculable contribution to American-Icelandic understanding.” After being briefed by State Department officials, Mrs. Inness-Brown, Robert Schnitzer, and Hurok Sol, it was noted that Anderson “was fully aware of the goals and objectives of the USIA.”\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to performing concerts, Anderson was asked to attend dinners, social gatherings, and other special events during her travels. She was usually hosted by the embassy and given accommodations with U.S. Ambassadors or foreign diplomats. Photographs and

\textsuperscript{37} Ronhovde to Holst regarding MA and Iceland, File 511.40B3/3-2654, Box NND 852972, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.

\textsuperscript{38} Riley to Hurok regarding MA and Iceland, File 511.40B2/11-354, Box NND 852917, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP
articles promoting her concerts, celebrity, and casual visits to restaurants and shopping centers were distributed. Anderson would visit schools to speak with and sing for children. She was in contact with various social classes and served as an inspiration to the poor and wealthy, as well as the young and old. All of these interactions within the communities in which she traveled were highly publicized. Her associations promoted pro-American sentiment, and her talent was used as a tool for psychological and cultural motivation.

In 1953, William P. Maddox, American Concert General Port of Spain, made comments regarding the appeal of her race after a concert in Trinidad. He reported that “Miss Anderson, partly, but not entirely, because of her racial origin, has a large and enthusiastic following in this region.” Furthermore he pointed out that “American visitors to Trinidad of the quality (plus the race) of Miss Anderson contribute immeasurable to the strengthening of friendly sentiments for the United States.” The goal of the U.S. in supporting these initiatives was to improve public—foreign and domestic—perception of race relations; however, a misperception existed. High-level State Department officials used language in their memoranda that exposed the ignorance of their white privilege. The truth was that African Americans lacked access to opportunity within the United States, but official statements projected the idea that if one person made it, others could and should. This discounted the systemic and institutionalized racism in America. Unlike whites, the few African Americans that were able to break through racial barriers still did not have the ability to help large numbers of their people who were blocked from success by the

39 Maddox to Dept of State regarding MA visit to Trinidad, File 032 Anderson, Marion/12-853, Box NND 969002, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
40 ibid.
same oppressive structures. For example, Richard A. Johnson, Charge d’Affaires ad interim, City of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, reported in December of 1953 that

> It is our considered opinion that Miss Anderson’s visit to the D.R. gave a convincing demonstration to the Dominican people not only of the high artistic capabilities of our citizens but also of the fact that racial prejudice in the US is no insurmountable barrier to substantial achievement, public and official recognition, and general social acceptance.\(^{41}\)

However powerful the quote from a capitalist perspective, Johnson ignores the reality that only a few people were able to be successful despite racial prejudice. He uses the word “fact” when, in actuality, such successes were an anomaly. Such a reductive and flippant explanation for this state of affairs made Anderson seem the norm rather than the exception and made her a powerful symbol of the politics of exceptionalism, perpetuating the “bootstrap myth.”

In April of 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wrote a similar statement to embassies in Asunción, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Caracas, La Paz, Lima, Montevideo, Quito, Rio de Janeiro, and Santiago. The statement asserted, “In the past her appearances abroad have greatly added to the cultural prestige of the U.S. and have tended to counteract some of the misconceptions of the limitations placed on the Negro citizen in this country.”\(^{42}\) While her efforts in mitigating the public perception of limitations on the Negro citizen were successful, they also unveiled a dichotomy between reality and false perception. At the time of Anderson’s role in cultural diplomacy, African Americans were treated as subhuman members of the American landscape. During the period in which she traveled for the United States, many men,

\(^{41}\) Johnson to Dept of State regarding MA visit to Dominican Republic, File 032 Anderson, Marion/12-1453, Box NND 969002, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.

\(^{42}\) Dulles to embassies regarding MA educational exchange, File 032 Anderson, Marion/4-254, Box NND 969002, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
women, and children of color were lynched, raped, and murdered with no consequences or repercussions. Anderson was among a small number of African Americans who were able to break racial barriers to gain celebrity, acclaim within their field, and financial success because of their command in a career that satisfied people in positions of power and privilege. Singing classical music, a genre that appealed mostly to white people, provided her with opportunities to be in their good graces, which afforded her upward mobility unavailable to other African Americans.

After a performance in Buenos Aires in June of 1954, Anderson was commended for her appreciative interest and participation in the President’s Special International Program. She had played a critical role in promoting a positive image of America through this program, formerly known as the President’s Emergency Fund of the USIA. The program was made public law by the 84th Congress as the *International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act of 1956* and had been introduced through legislation “to provide for the promotion and strengthening of international relations through cultural and athletic exchanges and participation in international fairs and festivals.” On 23 January 1956, in a letter to the Vice President, USIA Director, Theodore C. Streibert summarized the purpose of the law,

“Its basic purpose is the promotion of various types of projects overseas that will demonstrate in a dramatic and effective manner the excellence of our free institutions as reflected in our cultural achievements and products. A principal method of attaining this objective is to stimulate and encourage presentation abroad by private individuals, firms, and groups of the best the United States has to offer in cultural and industrial achievements. Such presentations are designed to refute communist propaganda by demonstrating clearly the United States’ dedication to peace, human well-being, and cultural values.”

43 Chase to Dept of State regarding Buenos Aires visit, File 032 Anderson, Marion/6-2854, Box NND 969002, General Records of the Department of State Files, Department of State, RG 59, NACP.
44 Letter to the U.S. Vice President from Director of USIA Theodore C. Streibert, January 23, 1956,
By the time the law was enacted, several political forces were collaborating to utilize artists and athletes as ambassadors of goodwill to promote propaganda and psychological warfare against communist efforts. In addition to Anderson, the Cultural Program for 1956 included American Ballet Theater, New York City Ballet, New York City Ballet Group, *Teahouse of the August Moon, Oklahoma*, Los Angeles Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, New Orleans Philharmonic Symphony, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Chamber Music Group, Dizzy Gillespie Band, Louis Armstrong Band, Robert Shaw Chorale, New Music Quartet, Jubilee Singers, New York Woodwind Quintet, Leontyne Price, Thomas Dorsey (Tom Two Arrows), List and Glenn, William Warfield, Gregor Piatigorsky, Claude Rains, Blanche Thebom, Richard Tucker, Ervin Laszlo, Ruggiero Ricci, Nell Tangeman, AAU-Track Team, Syracuse Nationals, Olympic Soccer Team, American Legion Baseball Team, San Francisco Dons Basketball Team, and others. The USIA worked with the American National Theater Association (ANTA), the National Endowment of Arts (NEA), Sol Hurok Artists, and other entities to select artists and manage the tours.\(^{45}\)

Just months prior to Anderson’s tour of Far East Asia, the OCB minutes noted that the Soviet Union expressed interest in arranging cultural exchanges with the U.S. The OCB expressed hesitance, fearing the intentions of the U.S.S.R. may have been deceptive.\(^{46}\) Anderson’s Far East tour of 1957 featured in the documentary “See It Now” by Edward Murrow

\(^{45}\) Cultural Activities File #5 3 February-June 1957, OCB Centra File Series Box No 16 A82-18, Folder OCB 007, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-61, White House Office, EPL.
\(^{46}\) OCB minutes of the First Semi-Annual Report of the President’s Special International Program July through December 1956, OCB Centra File Series Box No 16 A82-18, Folder OCB 007, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-61, White House Office, EPL.
and CBS was among the offerings under the newly legislated program. For two months, cameras followed Anderson everywhere she travelled through a region that was considered remote and undeveloped for the period. Though she was an icon, racial tension caused by the organizers of the tour reached her in Asia. In a handwritten draft of a letter from Anderson to Hurok, composed during this tour, she notes, “For there (the world situation being what it is) were things required of me as a negro that would not be required of someone else.”

As a Goodwill Ambassador, Anderson served the U.S. government as both an internationally-renowned singer and advocate to improve international relations between America and the countries she visited. In this role, she appealed to all people—regardless of demographics involving economics, age, social status, racial status, gender, or any other marker—that had traditionally been treated with bias. Anderson’s role was so impactful and prominent during this time that in a memorandum dated 29 April 1958, Roderic L. O’Connor, Administrator to the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, wrote to Hoover at the F.B.I. proposing “to recommend to the President [Eisenhower] that Marian Anderson be appointed to a top level position in the Department of State.” After this letter, a newspaper article dated 14 July 1958, from the Associated Press reported

President Eisenhower was asked Monday to consider naming Marian Anderson Assistant Secretary of State in charge of African Affairs. The request, in a letter to President Eisenhower, came from Representative Lester Holtzman, Democrat of Queens. He said no one was better qualified than the singer to serve in the newly created post. “We must have someone in the post,” Mr. Holtzman said, “who will understand Africa—her people and her problems—[and] someone who will be an ambassador of goodwill from the United States.” He said the success of Miss

47 See Appendix II “Hurok n.d.” – hand scribed by MA (no date but content confirms Far East Tour letter she wrote in response to Hurok)Letter to Hurok Sol from Anderson), Folder 06739, Box 108, MAP.
Anderson’s tour of Asia last year under State Department sponsorship was an indication of her ability to handle the position.\textsuperscript{49}

Several letters were received by Eisenhower’s office in support as well as in opposition of Anderson as a General Assembly delegate or Ambassador for the U.S.\textsuperscript{50}

In conclusion, the United States benefitted from the prominent role Anderson played at home and abroad in changing and shaping the image of the country as a whole. It is notable that her impact was so profound that the State Department funded some of her travels, provided her with a critical role in performing for world leaders, and utilized her craft to mitigate and minimize the negative perception of race relations within the U.S. While her role was successful in diminishing the negative public perceptions of policies and practices affecting the negro community at the time, it still did not change the status quo in America. Anderson’s ability to be the “exception” while being commodified as the standard falsely presented the U.S. as a country of equity, equality, and opportunity. In the next chapter, her identity as a construct will be dismantled and exposed in order to understand how it was explicitly an act of persuasion that both shaped and defined African Americans during the time in which she lived.

\textsuperscript{49} A67-28, file Ac-Ay (2), box no 4, Personnel Series, Dulles, John Foster, Papers 1951-1959, DDE Papers, EPL.
\textsuperscript{50} Various letters regarding Anderson being appointed to a government post, File Ac-Ay (2), Box no 4, A67-28, Personnel Series, Dulles, John Foster, Papers 1951-1959, DDE Papers, EPL.
Identity has long been understood as a set of categories with which we must identify or be identified, mostly by people conforming to stereotypical, archetypical, and prototypical societal structures. These external structures are systems that categorize human bodies as identity constructs, constructs that have marked and unmarked status in society. The structures mark the identity categories as either normative or non-normative. Normative identity is rewarded through the unintentional or innate privileging of the identity marker in question. Society continues to examine these markers. Though they inherently help us understand identity as both a means of awareness and connection, many of the markers are still seen as undesirable, and people with these markers remain marginalized. Today, many of these markers are being challenged, especially those related to sex, gender, and race. It is important to note that sex is the biological marker assigned to a person at birth, while gender is the *performance* of one’s identity.

Regardless of whether or not it corresponds to sex, gender is a citation of femininity, masculinity, androgyny, etc.\(^5\)

These markers are critical to understanding the impact Anderson had both domestically and internationally. Anderson’s experience was a testament to her being able to use her talent to minimize and mitigate the danger related to her physical identity. Her embodiment of American ideals abroad made her a singular choice to dismantle the perception of what was widely known as a terrifying time for African Americans in U.S. history. She became a tool representing change during an era of unrest and instability that included multiple major wars; women’s

\(^5\) Fox, 151-159.
suffrage; the Cold War; the civil rights movement; the decolonization of Asia, Iceland, and Africa; and feminism. The U.S. government sought to change perception of race relations within the U.S. and also how the U.S. was perceived in key international communities. To be a goodwill ambassador, renowned performer, and an accomplished African-American woman—at a time when so many that looked like her were being lynched, beaten, hosed by fire trucks, raped, and murdered without just cause or consequence—was of monumental sociocultural and sociopolitical significance.

During the period from the 1930s through the 1980s, markers of race and gender radically constrained a person’s ability to succeed in society. The musical landscape was changing with the tide of shifting political and social constructs. The European standards that defined America were being questioned. Under the Roosevelt Administration (1933-1945), the Public Works Act redefined what made America and its music uniquely American. The identification and collection of American indigenous music, including spirituals and jazz, made it possible for composers in America to create works that were heard as “American classical music.” Examples include Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* and *Rhapsody in Blue*, Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9 in E minor (“From the New World”), Price’s Symphony in E minor, and Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring*. Honoring her African-American heritage, Anderson always included classical arrangements of negro spirituals in her concerts.

Under the Truman Administration (1945-1953), the President’s Fund was designed to utilize cultural diplomacy and consumerism to promote a positive public perception of the U.S. overseas. This was directly aimed at fighting communism, deflecting American racial tensions,

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52 See Appendix I.
and promoting democracy. As a female African American, Anderson had succeeded in her career; she also succeeded in transcending racial and gender barriers beyond what was necessary for career success. In his book, *The Sound of Freedom*, Raymond Arsenault summarized how she was perceived by the public, stating:

> What were white Americans to make of a woman whose beauty, manner, and talent violated the perceived limitations of racial progress? Some may have dismissed her as the proverbial exception that proved the rule, and others undoubtedly attributed her gifts to whatever white lineage she could claim. Yet, as Anderson’s fame grew, neither of these options proved adequate as an acceptable explanation for her success.

In order to understand how Anderson lived beyond her identity, I will analyze her identity markers, the dynamics of who she was at the time in which she lived, and how her performance decisions reflected a conscious negotiation of her identities as an African American, as a woman, as a classical singer, and as a goodwill ambassador. These categories will be explored through Eleanor Rosch’s theory of prototypes, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, and Ferdinand de Saussure’s model of semiotics. The use of these tools will increase our understanding of Anderson’s success as one of the foremost musicians of the twentieth century.

Renowned Berkeley psychologist Eleanor Rosch developed her prototype theory in 1999. Originating in cognitive psychology, the theory describes membership in a category through possession of particular properties, but group membership does not require possession of *all* qualities—just enough for the concept to hold together. Following Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, context determines the meaning of a word or what conditions are in place.

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53 Krenn, 70.
54 Arsenault, 111.
55 Fox, 151-59.
at a particular moment to define a concept. Qualities of a concept are incidental rather than essential. Unlike a universal scheme in which concepts are defined as the same every time they are perceived, concepts are defined “only in actual situations in which they function as participating parts of the situation rather than as either representations or as mechanisms for identifying options.” Membership in a category can be determined by resemblance to an ideal exemplar or by possession of a sufficient number of the typical features of the class. A prototype might be either a “paragon” or an “average” member of the group, and the prototype differs between individuals and moments, making it contextually variant. A concept might also contain multiple prototypes. The prototype anchors the ideational content of the concept, but does not exclude variants, nor does it deem difference as deviant.

George Lakoff explained that Rosch had ideas about the notion of attributes for those prototypical categories well before her 1999 book *Reclaiming Concepts*. As cited by Lakoff, her 1978 concept explained attributes as interactional properties we use to function:

1) some attributes, such as “seat,” for the object “chair,” appear to have names which showed them not to be meaningful prior to the knowledge of the object as chair; 2) some attributes, such as “large” for the object “piano” seem to have meaning only in relation to categorization of the object in terms of a superordinate category—piano is large for furniture, but small for other kinds of objects such as buildings; 3) some attributes that seemed to require knowledge about humans, their activities, and the real world in order to be understood.

For the purpose of this chapter, only the second and third kinds of attributes will be used to understand the prototypical categories that apply with respect to Anderson’s race and gender. Drawing from the second attribute, there may be multiple superordinate categories that we might

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57 Fox, 151-59.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
use in relation to Anderson—wealthy vs. poor African American woman, northern vs. southern racial relations, American vs. European—that are perceived differently by people of varying cultures. The third attribute will simply involve an explanation of the socio-cultural, historical, socio-political contexts that affected perceptions of the singer.

**Prototypical African-American Female Contralto**

Prototype: Race = African American

Throughout her career, Anderson dismantled many of the identity markers that would have constrained her ability to travel, to perform, or even to exist. Among the markers that would have held her back were her race and her gender. As an African American, Anderson was subjected to egregious violations of her personhood, a sense of subservience, and often violence. However, she did not endure these things to the degree that many people of her race did. She grew up in urban Philadelphia, attended integrated schools, and lived in an integrated neighborhood. While there were less egregious issues of race in the Northeast, there was still a “color line.” “Negroes” in the north experienced racism in more subtle ways, but knew “their place” in terms of accessing public services. Dangers still existed. Anderson’s experience with white culture meant that immersion in a white world was not a shock, and she was able to thrive in the environment with less effort than African Americans from the South, who had been psychologically impacted more severely by harsh racism. In order to understand the stark difference between her experience and the experiences of her racial group, this section will focus on her experiences as an African American throughout her life.

The sign *African American* signifies the physical representation of a race in America and extends past the physical, exposing the dynamics of race in America during this period. Within
the national landscape at the time in which Anderson lived, this sign was complicated by problematic race relations within the United States. Anderson used herself as a sign to reconfigure the understanding of race. She signified to external persons the opposite of what was common in race relations within the country at the time. As is well known, African Americans experienced racial injustice and segregation within the U.S. in every aspect of life—education, career, housing, religion, shopping, travel, voting, access to social services, utilizing public services like rest rooms and transportation, etc. African-American students had to attend schools designated only for people of their race, and such schools were inequitable and offered education below the standard available at white-only institutions. Though colleges and training institutions “for negroes” had opened across the country, they were not easily accessible, affordable, or equitable. A limited number of students were able to attend excellent institutions, which kept the African American elite to a small minority.\textsuperscript{61}

Anderson defied the markers of the stereotypical African American, who was generally perceived as primitive, promiscuous, low-class, uneducated, domestic, simple, buffoon-like, servile, easily duped, etc. These stereotypes were not identity markers for Anderson. Following a review of newspaper critiques of Anderson’s concerts of the late 1930s, Arsenault states,

Many white Americans, it seems, had great difficulty placing Anderson in the normal hierarchy of race. Neither her talent nor her appearance fit the expectations of racial inferiority. Attending an Anderson concert could be mystifying, not only in the emotional intensity of her voice, but also in disrupting and contradicting a lifetime of racial socialization.\textsuperscript{62}


\textsuperscript{62} Arsenault, 111.
Utilizing Rosch’s understanding of attributes that require understanding human activities in the real world, we can readily understand how this socialization occurred at the time. For the white world, a dissonance existed between the expectations for behavior prompted by Anderson’s appearance on the one hand and the actual experience of her behavior on the other. As we shall see, many of Anderson’s decisions with regard to music performance practices correspond to her behavioral decisions in the social sphere.

**Status of African Americans in the Twentieth Century**

Throughout history, African Americans have been constrained by oppressive power structures—both legal and extralegal. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, structures and methods of oppression were shifted beyond the reach of the law. Some of these structures came to be known as “Jim Crow” laws, part of which were actual laws and others which manifested in sociocultural norms. These state laws and local statutes violated the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which was intended to protect the rights of the newly emancipated population. However, since states have a certain level of autonomy and discretion, many disregarded federal law and allowed the continuous practice of Jim Crow laws. In 1883, significant changes to the Civil Rights Act implied “separate but equal” rights, particularly with regard to the appropriation of public buildings and spaces. Separate but certainly not “equal” public facilities demoralized and disenfranchised African-American citizens. Signs were posted at most public facilities that stated “whites only” or “negroes only.” Among the Jim Crow policies were segregated schools, restrooms, water fountains, entry doors to restaurants, theaters, shopping stores, and real estate.

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63 The original “Jim Crow” was created and performed by Thomas D. Rice in the mid-nineteenth century who dressed in blackface depicting a slave as a stereotypical buffoon-like character. The laws became known by this name as early as the late nineteenth century.
Moreover, negroes were forced to sit at the back of public busses, and if no seats remained for white passengers, they had to give up their seat and stand or risk being arrested. They were not allowed to look white people in the eye or “talk back” when spoken to—it was seen as a sign of defiance. Breaking Jim Crow laws, no matter how insignificant the infraction may have been, caused many negroes to be lynched, beaten, raped, jailed, or subjected to other forms of torture or punishment. Jim Crow laws were enforced by both private citizens and law enforcement.

Another facet of the oppression faced by the negro population was exercising the right to vote. African-American men were granted the right to vote by the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869, but that right was taken away through “Jim Crow” laws and practices. In 1920, women were granted the right to vote under the Nineteenth Amendment. Through many subversive and threatening tactics at that time, most negro citizens were still not allowed to register to vote or exercise their right to vote. Local voting officials required difficult and confusing written or oral literacy tests and poll taxes. Other tactics included threatening the loss of employment, harm to family members, and setting residences ablaze. Those who were allowed to register were often not allowed to vote, and in many cases, lost their lives trying to demand that right.

The horror of these racial injustices was further complicated by the Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1939. Due to the stock market crash in October of 1929, families across the globe were faced with economic uncertainty and despair. Millions of people lost their homes, jobs, and assets. The U.S. unemployment rate reached a historical high of 22.9% in 1932,

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subsequently declined between 1933 and 1937, and increased once again to 12.5% by 1938.\textsuperscript{65} Unemployment rates for negro workers were worse than those of their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{66}

Violence against the negro community also increased sharply. As reported by the NAACP, 136 negroes were lynched during the ten-year span of the Great Depression. More than fifteen lynchings were reported respectively in 1930, 1933, 1934 and 1935.\textsuperscript{67} This number includes only the cases that met specific criteria to qualify the deaths as lynchings.\textsuperscript{68} Lynching was a tool used to terrorize the African-American community. Those who were lynched may have used a “whites-only” facility or owned a business that the white community felt took opportunities away from white workers and businesses. If a negro was relatively wealthy or did anything that a white person felt was offensive, they could face lynching or other violent encounters. Additionally, some lynching occurred without cause, as the white majority still regarded negroes as sub-human. Most lynching was executed by groups of white men and often spurred on by spectators, including women and children. Victims were tortured, stripped, mutilated, dragged by car through the streets, hung from a tree, and left to rot on display as a scare tactic and a way of reminding negroes to stay in “their place” within society. While women and children were also lynched, lynching of males was more common. Women were more commonly raped than lynched in order to dehumanize women and make men feel powerless and


\textsuperscript{67} NAACP information on reported lynching’s by year and race, accessed March 14, 2019, https://famous-trials.com/legacyftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html

\textsuperscript{68} On lynching visit http://www.monroeworktoday.org
emasculated. The Anti-Lynching Movement, established to fight the practice of lynching, was at its height between 1890 and the 1930s; however, lynchings continued to be reported during the civil rights movement and beyond.69

Brown v. Board of Education, a landmark Supreme Court case of 1954, deemed the segregation of schools unconstitutional and forced their integration. This controversial integration of schools involved busing students of color to white neighborhoods where they were usually met with hate speech and extreme violence. On many occasions, the police or U.S. National Guard were called on to ensure the safety of the children and manage the angry crowds that fought the process of desegregation. Jim Crow laws, voting rights, lynching and other social and legal issues that severely impacted the African-American population had begun to decline with the integration of the U.S. military in 1948 and continued with Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. The greatest impact in reducing or eradicating some of the inhumane and inequitable common practices came later, however, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

The threat of racist behavior, economic disparity, and political strife placed Anderson in danger. As noted above, if left unprotected, she could have been raped or lynched, particularly if she was perceived as “stepping out of her place” as a negro woman. Race relations in the north were drastically different than those of the south. When negro northerners traveled to the south, their treatment by whites was customarily harsher than southern negroes. Southerners made it known that northern negroes were unwelcome and that their northern freedoms would not be honored. This often resulted in the targeting of northern negroes as a way to put them in “their

place,” but also to expose that in the south they were unprepared for the treatment they would receive. Anderson needed to be careful traveling in the U.S. throughout her career. Though her family made provisions to ensure her safety it remained a concern. The fact that she was a celebrity loved by the white community for her talent was a greater protection than most negroes could hope for. Anderson began traveling to the south in the mid-1920s for singing engagements at churches, historically black colleges and universities, and special events hosted by the graduate chapters of negro fraternities and sororities. Her family and her management rarely allowed her to travel alone within America. As her celebrity status rose, she was scrutinized less than the prototypical African American; celebrity life placed Anderson in a non-normative status.

Prototype = Female

While race provided many challenges for Anderson, those challenges were further complicated by her gender. For women, opportunities for education were limited, especially for those who needed to work to support themselves and their families. Women were constrained to positions of servitude and submission to the men in their lives. They were expected to marry, produce children, and keep house for their husbands. Any woman deviating from this standard was socially and culturally condemned and ostracized. Moreover, working women earned less and were expected to serve as a support to the male-dominated infrastructure of the workplace. African-American women had additional constraints.

In contrast to white women, the prototypical African-American woman was more likely to work than she was to stay at home. Those who worked would usually hold a job as a member of the domestic service staff to a white family helping with the children, cooking, and completing housework related to the maintenance of the home. Domestic workers were at the
mercy of their white female and male employers. In addition to domestic service, the prototypical African-American woman held a job as a factory worker, secretary, receptionist, hair stylist, teacher, or nurse’s aide. The only circumstance acceptable for an African-American woman to be the head of household was if the male was deceased or had abandoned the role of husband, father, and/or provider due to societal pressures including unemployment, underemployment, and racial injustice. In this case, the prototypical African-American female in a single-parent home was seen as the strength of the family unit.

As a woman of color, Anderson deviated from this expected norm in several ways. She was unmarried until her mid-40s, childless, managed the finances of her homestead, traveled worldwide, and thrived in an unregulated career managed by white males.

Prototype = Classical Singer

Anderson, the first internationally-celebrated classical contralto of her race, was predated by renowned African-American female classical singers Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, Anna Madah Hyers, Emma Louise Hyers, Flora Batson, and Sissieretta Jones. Anderson’s contemporaries in the field were Camilla Williams, Lillian Evanti, Caterina Jarboro, and Ellabelle Davis, who performed fully-staged operatic roles in addition to concertizing. None held the acclaim, international celebrity, or financial status that Anderson attained in her career.

In her early days of vocal study, Anderson was firm in expressing her thoughts about being a contralto and particularly a “negro” contralto. Many singers are eager to identify their voice type even before their first voice lesson. Early voice lessons can be bogged down with endless questions about what a student should sing as opposed to getting comfortable with one’s instrument and learning what the voice can do. A true contralto, as noted by newspaper critics,
voice teachers, conductors, coaches, directors, and other vocal professionals, is a rare instrument. Early in her studies, when Anderson was introduced to the Italian voice teacher of one of her friends, he heard her sing a high C and suggested Anderson learn the title (soprano) role of *Aida*. Anderson knew that it was not the correct choice for her voice type. She thought, “I knew perfectly well that I was a contralto, not a soprano. Why Aida?” In the opera by Verdi, the main character Aida is an African princess, and thus, the voice coach was implying that Anderson would be ideal for the role because of her race and not her voice. This was offensive to Anderson. This suggestion was probably made based on the range rather the color of Anderson’s voice and that her complexion was naturally similar to an African princess. However, skin tone and range are not the best indicators for the selection of an operatic role to be assigned to a singer. One must consider the vocal color, tessitura, facility, technical ability, and other skills (collectively known as vocal fach) when selecting a suitable operatic role. Furthermore, Anderson was too young and early in her studies to think about operatic roles.

The performance history of contemporaneous contraltos reveals that several, including Carol Brice, Kathryn Meisle, and Gladys Swarthout, sang repertoire from the mezzo-soprano and soprano categories once their careers were firmly established. Composers did not write a large catalogue of operatic repertory specifically designed for the contralto voice. This was a clear reason for a contralto to choose a path toward recital literature. In retracing the path of typical early to mid-twentieth-century singers, a career would begin with performances as a soloist in oratorio, joint recitals, and concerts in a singer’s hometown and neighboring communities. A New York solo debut recital would introduce singers to the media and concert management

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70 Anderson, 52.
71 See Appendix I, Chart 2.
bureaus. Following the debut, offers and invitations would be extended for future engagements with symphonies, halls, and concert agencies. With the help of management and a steady flow of work, the developing singer would eventually tour. By the age of thirty, most singers received an offer to perform their first operatic role. Often, successful study and performing tours throughout Europe afforded artists the ability to refine language and dramatic capabilities, which would move a career further along. Womanhood and race complicated Anderson’s career path. As she became more influential, she used her two roles in society—celebrity contralto and goodwill ambassador—as a tool to break many barriers.

**Non-Normative African-American Female Contralto**

The barriers that women faced during the time of Anderson’s career were far more complex when entangled with the issues of race, workplace, and marital status. However, because of her talent and illustrious career, Anderson was able to break down many of the barriers she faced. She was an exception to the many rules that dictated the socio-cultural relations among races at the time, and much of what she experienced was an anomaly. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, many believed that conditions would improve for the African-American population. The hope that things would or could change soon dissipated in the face of prolonged disappointment. The tensions among races was pervasive and systemic, permeating the American political, legal, and educational systems.
Education

The Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 upheld “separate but equal” schools in America. However, the “equality” of the law was not evident in many negro schools. By 1911, schools across the country were predominantly compulsory and divided by race, which was similar to other public spaces at the time. Schools for “negroes” and “whites only” were the norm. The opportunities for quality education and extra-curricular activities in whites-only schools far exceeded the negro schools. In Philadelphia, where Anderson was educated, schools were compulsory and free until age thirteen. Unfortunately, many African Americans were unable to finance a high school education. This was the point when many were forced to turn toward domestic servitude and the resulting poor economic conditions.

Anderson was among the lucky few who, with the support of a strong community, was able to continue her studies. She was denied the opportunity to apply to an arts high school in Philadelphia because of her race. Determined to complete her education, she enrolled at William Penn High School, but later transferred to South Philadelphia High School for Girls. During her high school years, Anderson was able to take private vocal lessons to improve her singing. At first, she worked with Mary Saunders Patterson, an African-American voice teacher. After a few months Patterson, a soprano, suggested Anderson work with Agnes Reifsnyder, a contralto. In her senior year, she began working with Giuseppe Boghetti, with whom she continued to study until his death. The common thread in her vocal education was her teachers’ belief in her ability and their work to advance her technique and career.

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72 For information on Plessy vs. Ferguson see https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/plessy.html
73 Anderson, 35.
74 Anderson, 47-9.
After graduation, she completed a summer opera program at the Chicago Conservatory of Music. When she attended the first national convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) in Chicago that summer, several members pledged financial contributions toward the continuation of her music studies. NANM leaders urged her to apply to the Yale School of Music. Believing the pledged contributions would materialize, Anderson followed through and submitted her application. As she later explained in her autobiography, Yale accepted her application, but “Unhappily, not all the pledges were redeemed, and at the start of the school term there were not enough funds in hand to pay the tuition.”\textsuperscript{75} She regretted her inability to study music at the collegiate level; however, she had already exceeded the African-American community’s average education level by virtue of the fact that she had completed her high school education in 1921.

By the age of twenty-five, Anderson had performed at several popular halls, negro colleges, churches, and other venues in the United States. After winning several competitions and performing in orchestral concerts, Anderson decided it was best for her to continue her study of music in Europe. In 1927, she traveled to London, where she used her savings to study with teachers, composers, and conductors for one year. Through her extensive education, she was able to acquire technical proficiency, physical stamina, discipline, and dedication, giving her the ability to perform at the highest level. She returned the U.S. and won many awards, including a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund of $3,000, which afforded her the opportunity to continue her studies in Europe.\textsuperscript{76} When her studies in 1932 were completed, she was considered a polished artist. Her first European tour was arranged before she could return to America. She

\textsuperscript{75} Anderson, 60-1.  
\textsuperscript{76} Keiler, 90.
remained in Europe, touring and gaining prominence, through the end of 1935. The education and professional development Anderson attained through intense private study was rewarded by the conferral of honorary doctorates from fifty colleges and universities across the globe. She was awarded her first honorary doctorate in music by Howard University in June of 1938.  

Travel

As we have seen, Anderson had to endure segregation during her youth—in school, using public transportation, travel accommodations, and performance venues. Travelling by train to sing in Savannah, Georgia, Anderson had to ride in the first car behind the engine, which was reserved for the negro passengers. The soot and smoke from the engine filled the car whenever the windows needed to be opened. The windows were dirty, and the space was limited. The negro passengers knew the conditions were substandard and uncomfortable, but they had to endure the systemic hardship. This was one of many examples of the disheartening conditions of Jim Crow policies and practices in the south. Colloquially known as “the Jim Crow car,” this was yet another example of the deep oppression and pervasive effects of racist policies throughout the U.S. and more specifically the deep south. \(^{78}\) She experienced other demeaning conditions common to southern negro travel accommodations. For example, Anderson explained that when she paid for a sleeping berth for overnight travel, she was often assigned to “Berth 13,” which was a code name for the drawing room, similar to a public living room, that lacked an actual bed. It had a private restroom that ensured segregated facilities. Some conductors insisted that the door to the room remained closed while Anderson was in residence so that white passengers

\(^{77}\) Keiler, 180
\(^{78}\) Anderson, 40-45.
would not interact with her or even see her.\textsuperscript{79} When Anderson acquired management with the Hurok Agency, its agents worked to avoid such indignities.

While the issues of segregation had to be navigated, many of them were handled by her travel manager, Isaac Jofe. He was hired in 1935 to arrange schedules and accommodations for hotels, transportation, foreign booking agencies, and theater management. He also assisted with the conveyance of concert fees, ticket profits, advances, and other financial and non-financial matters. According to Keiler, Jofe was needed “to shield her from the hostility, insult, and humiliation she might meet from hotel staff, from local managers, and in restaurants.”\textsuperscript{80} On several occasions, Anderson was treated poorly when she arrived at a locale. After her performance, the staff was aware of her status as a celebrity, resulting in better treatment and hospitality. Without the recognition of her status, she was treated just like any other negro of that time. For example, once, when Anderson and Jofe were attempting to check into a hotel, the male clerk pointed to Anderson, saying to Jofe, “she” knew they couldn’t take her at their hotel, implying that she was negro and she should have known better. Yet the morning following the concert, the clerks behind the desk were pleasant and talkative.\textsuperscript{81} It was apparent that they recognized her as Marian Anderson, the performer, and not just “a negro” attempting to stay at their hotel. This supported the understanding that her voice and celebrity status outranked her race.

By the 1940s, Anderson used her influence to challenge the racist custom of performing for segregated audiences within America. Her management began to request alternative seating arrangements—alternating rows or sections—to accommodate African-American patrons at

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{80} Keiler, 232.  
\textsuperscript{81} Anderson, 239-52.
venues that had previously barred or restricted them to balconies or other less desirable areas of the theater. However, she did not fully refuse to sing for segregated audiences until the early 1950s, despite having been counseled to do so for several years by the NAACP and other African American artists and prominent figures. In her 1956 autobiography, she detailed her thoughts about segregated performance venues:

I was never very happy about singing in halls where segregation was practiced. Some years ago I decided that I had had enough, and I made it a rule that I would not sing where there was segregation. I am aware that this decision made it difficult for the sponsors of local concerts in some cities where I had appeared. They did not feel that they could venture to present concerts on any basis other than the old one—with an invisible line marking off the Negro section from the white, from orchestra to topmost balcony. One could not expect them to take a poll of their patrons. This was their business, and there are plenty of other artists. For myself it meant the loss of several engagements a year. I am sorry to give up warm and enthusiastic audiences. I do not feel, however, that these audiences are irretrievably lost because I am standing on principle.

By refusing to sing at segregated venues, Anderson risked financial loss and criticism from her predominantly white audiences. In addition to losing contracts, she risked losing audience members who could have resented her for trying to force them to sit next to a negro. For Anderson it had become more important to use her celebrity status to improve conditions for her people by supporting the dismantling of systems that promoted racial prejudice and segregation in America. In this way, she took a critical stance with her celebrity peers in fighting pervasive systemic and institutionalized racial standards. She disregarded the potential damage to her financial profit or impending loss of her fan base and audience members. In addition to dealing with the injustices that faced African Americans, being female posed additional challenges.

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82 Keiler, 255-60.
83 Anderson, 249.
While issues of segregation were not an issue in Europe, the appearance of an American negro woman was uncommon. People would stare and certainly question how a negro could afford to travel abroad, especially when she was not readily recognized as a celebrity. Early in Anderson’s career, before she had formal management, Billy King, her African-American pianist, traveled with her throughout America. According to Keiler, Anderson did not often travel alone, even within the many cities and towns she visited. On her first trip to London in 1928, when she took short walks alone in London,

...she was often ill at ease. Anderson was tall, nearly five foot ten, very slim and quite beautiful, and often people would stare at her when she walked down the street. She would nervously look down, to see if perhaps something was wrong with how she was dressed. Eventually she acquired more self-confidence, taking for granted the kind of freedom she had rarely known so unequivocally in her own country.\textsuperscript{84}

Her reluctance to travel alone could not solely be attributed to her race, but also to her vulnerability as a woman. This was a sentiment also shared by her mother. In May of 1934, Billy King accompanied Anderson’s mother on a visit to Europe as a way of protecting her during travel.\textsuperscript{85} The practice of traveling with a man provided protection against violence toward women and rumors that could injure a woman’s reputation. At this time, unmarried women were often concerned with public perception of their moral character. As such, Anderson traveled predominantly with married men or widowers so as to not tarnish her public image. Her Finnish pianist Kosti Vehanen and her Russian travel manager Jofe, a widower, were travel companions for her on tour. In July of 1940, Anderson replaced Vehanen after an indiscretion of a homosexual nature came to light in Hawaii.\textsuperscript{86} Vehanen’s replacement, German pianist Franz

\textsuperscript{84} Keiler, 72.
\textsuperscript{85} Anderson, 95 and \textit{passim}. Keiler, 134.
\textsuperscript{86} Keiler, 223.
Rupp, was married. These men served both as protection for Anderson and as a safeguard for her reputation.

As with Anderson, most female singers of the time were managed by white men. In 1929 and early 1930, when banks were failing and people were desperate, Anderson was performing across the U.S. under the management of Arthur Judson, President of Columbia Concerts Corporation, which was formed in 1927. She had recently returned from her first trip to London. Then, on 11 June 1930, Anderson departed for Berlin, Germany. She took $500 of her savings and half of the Rosenwald Fellowship she was awarded for travel, which was $1,500. Anderson was the first American to tour Scandinavia beginning in November of 1930. Later during the tour, International fiscal instability caused the Denmark National Bank to place a ban on contracts with non-Danish residents. Anderson was told she would not be allowed to perform her concert in Denmark in 1932. When it was announced to the public that her concert was cancelled because of the ban, the Danish citizens protested in the streets; the public demanded to hear her sing. In light of the protest, the Danish government and the National Bank allowed her to perform. The protest, released ban, and performance were hailed in the national and international news with the headline “Marian Craze.”

During and after the Great Depression, many households were struggling to have stable economic prospects. However, there were many ways in which Anderson’s talent allowed her to amass wealth that otherwise would not have been possible. The income earned by the average

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87 Keiler, 225-26.
88 Keiler, 103.
89 Keiler, 124-26.
American prior to the Great Depression was upwards of $3,000 a year. Financial records, primarily collected from the Marian Anderson Supplemental Papers housed at the University of Pennsylvania Library in Philadelphia, indicated substantial earnings during her career as well as a strong devotion to her family.\textsuperscript{90} In addition to having a significant income, Anderson held roles in her lifetime that were traditionally occupied by men. In her early thirties, Anderson became the primary income provider for her mother and two sisters residing at 762 South Martin Street, Philadelphia. This role required her to make all the financial decisions for her family, including how to care for and pay for the properties. At some point, Anderson also purchased the house next door where her sisters eventually resided.\textsuperscript{91} Anderson’s sisters not only lived in her properties, they also assisted her with varied responsibilities. Alyse Anderson worked as the secretary for the Marian Anderson Scholarship Fund from 1943 until her death in 1965. As a philanthropist, Anderson established the Marian Anderson Scholarship Fund with funds she was awarded from “the Philadelphia Award” by Edward W. Bok. She established this fund to provide support for hundreds of aspiring young classical singers. The first competition was held in October of 1942, and Anderson continued to contribute to the fund until it was discontinued in 1973.\textsuperscript{92} She mentored many of the competition winners including Leontyne Price, Grace Bumbry, and Denyce Graves.\textsuperscript{93}

Ethel Anderson Depriest, her youngest sister, helped with caring for their mother and responding to Anderson’s correspondence. Anderson was an independent woman who made

\textsuperscript{90} Financial documents. Folders 655, 680, 674-6, 681-4, Box 12, Marian Anderson Supplemental Papers (MASP), Ms Collection 708, Special Collections, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Also cited by Keiler.

\textsuperscript{91} Folder 09144, Box 208, MAP.

\textsuperscript{92} MAP Descriptive Summary, scope and content note, accessed April 2, 2019 https://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/rbm/mss/anderson/anderson_m3.html.

\textsuperscript{93} Keiler, 229.
record earnings in comparison to her peers. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the average reported salary in 1920 was $3,269. A 1925 bank statement shows that Anderson made a single deposit of $1,020.97. This amount in 1925 was about half the average annual income for an American. The IRS reported the 1926 average net income was $5,306. However, Anderson made half of this in one performance. On 6 July 1928, Anderson earned twelve guineas for a concert at a party in London; the U.S. equivalent in 1925 was approximately $2,520. While she was able to make substantial income, most of it was derived from her concerts abroad rather than in the U.S., where fees were comparatively low. On 1 April 1929, Anderson solicited the services of Rastelli and Amadio Stone Renovators to complete repairs on the family home. The price paid for the repairs was $255. This was a significant amount of money for the time. The average annual salary was $6,132, so that the average monthly income was $511. In summary, Anderson could afford to pay half the average monthly income for repairs because her earnings

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96 Contract with IBBS and Tillet of London, Folders 655, 680, 674-6, 681-4, Box 12, MASP.
97 1 guinea = 21 pounds and 12 shillings. Between 1925-1930, 12 shillings was equivalent to 517-576 pounds, the equivalent of 38 days pay for a skilled tradesman. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result, in 1925 the pound=$4.87. http://www.miketodd.net/encyc/dollhist.htm Using the 1925 figures, 12 shillings was the approximate equivalent of $2,519.50.
98 Folders 655, 680, 674-6, 681-4, Box 12, MASP.
99 Folders 655, 680, 674-6, 681-4, Box 12, MASP.
were so significant. Bank statements document her growing wealth, which was uncommon for a single African-American female in the early stage of her career.\footnote{Folders 655, 680, 674-6, 681-4, Box 12, MASP.}

In October of 1929, the global stock market crash brought the advent of the Great Depression which lasted from 1929 to 1939 and affected all industrialized countries. In the United States, many of the wealthy struggled to make ends meet as some suffered great losses. The poor were especially impacted, as more people found themselves subsisting on little or nothing overnight. Income dropped significantly, and the unemployment rate increased. The National Archives cites the 1940 Census News explaining the average salary in the 1930s was $1,368, with an average unemployment rate of 18.26 percent. The unemployment rate of the 1930s was up 5.2 percent from the 1920s and average income was cut in half.\footnote{Diane Petro, “Brother Can You Spare a Dime? 1940 Census: Employment and Income,” (Spring 2012), Vol. 44, No. 1 \textit{Genealogy Notes}, National Archives, Accessed March 27, 2019, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/spring/1940.html}

From 1931 to 1940, the unemployment rate remained about fourteen percent. Keiler calculated from Anderson’s handwritten files that she earned $7,799 in fees from approximately forty concerts in the U.S. contracted with Judson from April 1931 to February 1932.\footnote{Keiler, 106 and \textit{passim}.} According to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) the present-day current value of this amount is $143,898.\footnote{Inflation calculator https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/} Taking under consideration that this was at the height of the Great Depression, Anderson’s earnings in the U.S. were significantly higher than the average worker, and she was able to remain financially stable and help support her family, which had been impacted by the effects of the Depression. While an income of $7,000 dollars was notable for the time, she was still earning
significantly less than she had earned abroad. To clarify, one concert years earlier in London earned her thirty-five percent of the income she received in the U.S. for forty concerts.

In the fall of 1932, Judson, President of Columbia Concert Artists, notified her that they were unable to schedule the number of performances they had contractually promised for her second season due to the economic downturn. Kathryn Meisle was a white contralto managed by the same agency. Meisle was married to and managed by her husband, Calvin M. Franklin, Vice President of Columbia.¹⁰⁹ This arguably played a significant role in her consistent employment throughout the period of economic instability. On the other hand, Anderson was managed by Judson, who in theory would have more sway, but was still unable to book performances for Anderson, since whites were given preferred status in seeking employment. Jim Crow policies, paired with economic conditions, dictated that blacks be hired after whites.

In 1933, the unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 24.9 percent. Anderson decided it was best for her to return to Scandinavia, where Enwall, her European agent, could secure a lucrative tour. From October of 1933 through April of 1934, Anderson sang 116 concerts in over sixty cities and towns in Scandinavia.¹¹⁰ Of the 116 concerts, Anderson earned 500 krone for each of the first sixty concerts. Later, she was able to renegotiate her fee to 600 krone per concert.¹¹¹ The total earnings for her Scandinavian tour were 63,600 krone, corresponding to a U.S. value of $7,375.¹¹² The equivalent value of these earnings when

¹¹⁰ Keiler, 132.
¹¹¹ Keiler, 128-29.
¹¹² Utilized google currency converter.
analyzed using the CPI is $139,117.\textsuperscript{113} While on the first leg of the tour, Anderson requested and was granted a release from her contract with Judson.

Anderson’s financial stability was an outlying example for the years before and after the Great Depression. Many households could barely afford basic needs, while Anderson had earned and saved enough to arrange repairs for her home, arguably a luxury for those times. The financial situation remained dire both in the U.S. and abroad. Banks that continued to operate following the Stock Market crash were still recovering. While most of the country at this point had been impacted by the great losses incurred after the crash, Anderson seemed to be unaffected for the most part. While the unemployment rate reached a high of almost twenty-five percent, and income had been slashed in half, she was depositing more than the average annual income in a single deposit.

When she returned to America in late 1935, Anderson had become a unique celebrity. She had earned a substantial income while touring Europe and had been featured regularly in the international news. She performed a well-received and publicized recital at Town Hall in New York City. Under the new management of the Hurok Agency, her career continued to flourish in the U.S., despite the slow recovery of the economy. During her second season with Hurok, her fees increased to $600, three times more than her initial fee, and more than she ever earned with Judson.\textsuperscript{114} A bank statement from February 1936 shows a deposit of $1,600 with a February 26 balance of $2,246. Fees from her performances were always used to support the household. As she earned more, her sisters became more responsible for caring for their mother and assisting with the housekeeping while Anderson was travelling.

\textsuperscript{113} Utilized google currency converter.  
\textsuperscript{114} Keiler, 176.
Throughout her career, Anderson continued to expand her reach and grow her earning potential. Every year she performed more concerts, increased her earnings per concert, and performed at new venues and events. Among her accomplishments at this time are the performance at the White House in 1936 and recording songs with major record labels. Her international renown and growing status afforded her opportunities within the U.S. that were not previously available to her. While she had performed at Town Hall previously, Anderson was soon performing annual sold-out concerts at illustrious venues like Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall, Town Hall and others. This was an especially remarkable achievement when one considers it was accomplished during the Great Depression.

According to Keiler, during her second, third, and fourth concert seasons with Hurok, lasting from January of 1937 to June of 1939, Anderson performed 182 concerts. From January through May of 1938—just a four-month period—Anderson performed sixty concerts, from California to New York. Keiler explains that “In January of 1939, Hurok reported to the press that Anderson earned $238,000 during 1938, an astonishing record for a concert singer in those years.” In comparison, the average annual income was $789 that year. She had managed to triple her earnings per concert in just five performance seasons. Her fee for a single performance in America had increased to as much as $2,000.

Comparing trends in race and gender derived from U.S. Census Bureau statistics, white persons earned $956 per year, while non-whites earned $364. White males earned $1,112 while non-white males earned $460. White females earned $676, while non-white females earned $246. This shows a great disparity in average income when considering race and gender. The

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115 Keiler, 175. From MA to Sol Hurok, January 28, 1939. Folder 06739, Box 108, MAP.
same Census report cited the 1948 average income as $2,017, in which whites earned $2,323 and non-whites earned $1,210.\textsuperscript{117} Non-whites earned forty-seven percent less than whites, but finally earned $100 more than white males had earned nine years earlier. White males earned $2,711, while both non-white males and white females earned $1,615, forty percent less than white males. Non-white females remained the lowest paid, earning $701, seventy-four percent less than white males and fifty-seven percent less than white females and non-white males. In a single performance, Anderson could earn in one performance as much as eight times the 1939 average annual income of non-white females and almost twice that of white males.

In 1939, Anderson performed a free public concert at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday. Many believe this was the most celebrated concert of her career. The public support and arrangement of the concert led to advantageous political and social consequences for race relations. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Harold Leclair Ickes, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, arranged this concert because the only appropriate venue was Constitution Hall, which was not available to Anderson because of her race. The venue was owned and managed by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), an organization which had a strict “no negro” policy. This resulted in the First Lady’s public withdrawal of support for and resignation as a member of the DAR through a letter of condemnation of their outright racist policies. Moreover, the actions she took to arrange the concert on public government property were a statement far stronger than any letter.

With growing support for her renowned talent, the government and Anderson were both receiving high praise for her impact on an international scale. The performance at the Lincoln Memorial increased her demand. Her talent was so respected and supported by the global

community that she was requested by state officials, diplomats, and the managers of the most important venues in the world. Her high demand allowed her to renegotiate her contract with Hurok yet again. This put her in a position to decide how often and for how much she was willing to perform. Keiler explains the result of their 1940 discussions as follows:

What they agreed to was that Anderson would sing no more than fifty or sixty concerts in the States a year, and that she would receive two-thirds of the gross for each concert rather than a fixed fee, the kind of arrangement, in fact, that Hurok reserved for his most important artists. In the first years under the new contract she received on the average about $1,600 per concert in comparison with her previous fee, which ranged from $1,250 to $1,500. If the increase was less than she might have wanted at the start, there was still the psychological advantage of earning more when local managers earned more, an advantage particularly appealing during a year of such “tremendous publicity” and acclaim.\textsuperscript{118}

It is noteworthy that this agreement was unprecedented, both as a legal concept and a social one. The contract that Anderson negotiated was unprecedented for an artist of any gender or race; in addition, it proved to be more profitable for Anderson.

Anderson now had a more stable schedule and control over her career, her earnings, and personal time. The newfound freedom allowed her to build her relationship with New York architect Orpheus “King” Fisher, with whom she had been involved for over twenty years, and by 1940, the couple was engaged to be married. Anderson was forty-three years old at the time.

On 7 July 1940, Anderson purchased a 105-acre farm near Danbury, Connecticut. She and Fisher agreed that Anderson would purchase the property, and Fisher would cover the expenses for renovations, furnishings, farm material, and equipment. Despite being unmarried, the couple lived together and co-managed the farm in all aspects and shared the financial responsibilities.\textsuperscript{119} They employed a housekeeper, a butler, a caretaker, farm hands, and an

\textsuperscript{118} Keiler, 225.
\textsuperscript{119} Keiler, p.224 and \textit{passim}.
animal trainer.\textsuperscript{120} As their life together began to take shape, Anderson purchased six insurance policies for life, income endowment, monthly income, and retirement income, totaling $135,972. The annual premiums totaled $10,061 in 1942 and 1943.\textsuperscript{121} The annual cost of the premiums was more than four times the national median annual income in 1939 and 1948. Anderson’s engagement to Fisher lasted three years; she married him in 1943, at age forty-six.

As a married woman, Anderson reserved a period of each season to dedicate to her personal life and work on the farm. Though her husband hinted at her retiring, she compromised by planning longer intervals of rest between shorter contracted tours.\textsuperscript{122} On 7 July 1949, the Organisation Artistique Internationale paid Anderson $21,675 for a tour of Scandinavia, Switzerland, Belgium, England, and France. Anderson was invited to perform at an international exposition that ran from December of 1949 through June of 1950 and commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She also performed at a commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Haitian independence from France, which was held January of 1954.\textsuperscript{123} During the same period, Anderson was traveling to South America for performance tours. In a letter that likely dates from 1949, Anderson engaged in contract negotiations with Mr. Prude, who worked for the Hurok Agency. She wrote,

> From the letters of January 11th and 26th, (the office) or Mr. Hurok seems to have the impression that I am pressing for a fee of 3 thousand dollars per concert for the S.A. tour, when as a matter of fact my request was for a clarification of how the fee of 16 hundred per concert was arrived at. (preposition) A query for this info is logical in view of the present situation in S.A., and also in view of the fact that I did not have a list of the places where the dates are to be booked. It is as simple as that. On last Saturday in a telephone conversation with Mr. H., I accepted the offer of 2 concerts in Haiti during the latter part of April at a fee of

\textsuperscript{120} Folder 09144, Box 208, MAP.
\textsuperscript{121} Folder 09144, Box 208, MAP.
\textsuperscript{122} Keiler, in \textit{passim}.
10 thousand dollars inc. all expenses, I desire this engagement to be a part of the tour or the usual AGMA percentage whichever is more advantageous to the office. Re S.A. I will ask that you send to Mr. Crawford a contract or write him the particulars so that he may draw up the proper papers. Yours truly.  

Though Anderson performed in both Haiti and South America during several years of this decade, April of 1950 is concurrent with her performance during the Port au Prince anniversary festivities. In any case, the letter shows Anderson to be a prudent businesswoman who had no hesitation to clarify her position when necessary, which is as much a factor in her success as her talent.

Much of her financial prudence stemmed from a socio-cultural phenomenon that was a consequence of the Great Depression. Those who survived the Depression often began hoarding funds and supplies in case of another economic downturn. However, Anderson’s economic practices defied this phenomenon: she was far more cautious of her spending and savings prior to the Great Depression. Her savvy practices and consistent dedication to financial stability resulted in significant investments and savings to secure her future, and she was not afraid to spend what she had earned.

Among her notable and lucrative accomplishments were Anderson’s appearances for the U.S. State Department. It was reported that $70,000 was approved for Anderson to travel to the Far East for two months in the winter of 1957. The budgeted allocation for Anderson’s tour was the fifth highest of all entertainment acts, with the largest budget for a solo artist.  

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124 Handwritten copy of letter to Mr. Prude from MA no date. Estimated 195_. Anderson also performed in Haiti for the 150th Anniversary of Haitian Independence in 1953. The undated letter does not specify the specific dates of the performances, Folder 08077, Box 156, MAP

125 "First Semi-Annual Report - President’s Special International Program, July 1, 1956-December 31, 1956, in folder 3 February-June 1957, Cultural Activities File #5, Folder OCB 007, Box No 16 A82-18, OCB Centra File Series, White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-61, EPL.
Department and the American National Theater Association made arrangements for her entire tour to be documented in film and photographs. The film footage was used to create the documentary *See It Now: The Lady from Philadelphia*. Anderson chose her attire carefully for travel and sometimes wore traditional garments of the countries she visited. Her use of traditional attire was a way for her to signal to the cultures and countries she visited a sense of respect and pride for being afforded the opportunity to perform there. In return, the people of the countries she visited rewarded her with respect, admiration and appreciation.

Anderson was able to thrive economically, socially, and politically with her non-normative persona. Having acquired the training she needed to build a successful career and financial stability, she broke many barriers while also maintaining a close relationship with her family. Future generations have gained access to opportunities because of her composure, diligence, and perseverance in the fight against gender and race discrimination. In the next chapter, I will apply various theoretical frameworks to Anderson’s career in order to understand how the African-American contralto used repetitive and symbolic acts to make a transition from singer to international icon of opportunity, instrument of foreign policy, and the inspiration to the global community through her careful and conscious performativity.
CHAPTER 3
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF MARIAN ANDERSON’S PERFORMANCE STYLE

It is a widely accepted fact that identity is a socio-cultural construction that allows us to understand one another.\textsuperscript{126} Eleanor Rosch, among other psychologists, asserts that human beings often need categories or markers to understand themselves in relation to the material world. As such, various categories exist to reveal the many ways we can ultimately be human. Through the lenses of several theoretical frameworks, these categories aid our understanding of Anderson as a barrier-breaking figure. Nothing in this discussion is intended to dehumanize Anderson or her experiences; rather, I aim to expose the factors responsible for those experiences and her successes.

In the previous chapter, prototype theory was employed to understand the categories that governed Anderson’s identity and defined her career. Prototype theory as a theoretical application affords scholars a way of conceptualizing how social categories constrain or explain identity. Ludwig Wittgenstein designates “family resemblance” as the thread that constructs the fabric of an identity concept. He acknowledges the difference that occurs within categories, noting, “if you look at them you will not see something common to all, but similarities, relationships,” a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing.”\textsuperscript{127} These networks of similarities culminate in a prototype. A popular example of this theory at work is the idea of the concept “bird” and the many different components that make up the category “bird.” A bird has wings, may or may not fly, and usually has talons. These are among components that

\textsuperscript{126} Butler.
make up the prototype “bird.” As such, these prototypical categories, when related to identity, help expose the intricacies of how identity is coded in society.

Christopher Bracken explains identity in relation to the theories by Judith Butler and John Langshaw Austin in this manner:

To undermine the sex-gender-desire triangle, Butler argues that the body gains its contours not from a pre-given biological substance but from the repetition of signifying practices. Just as in John L. Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts a performative is an utterance that does something, while a constative is one that states something, so in Butler's theory of “subversive bodily acts” the body is a performative elaboration rather than a constative fact.

Bracken’s emphasis on the separation of performative and constative is essential to understanding the importance of Anderson’s performativity. His discussion considers this separation of seemingly innate identity from that which is performed in response to society:

It [identity]is not innately male or female, heterosexual or queer, white or of color; instead it enacts its identity daily in a social field of signifying practices that can be shifted by being repeated. What matters is not the sexual substance that the body contains, but the identifications and object choices it actively excludes.128

In the same way that Bracken examines gender as a citational act,129 performance of classical vocal music by a person of any race is a citational act. In Anderson’s case, her “blackness” was innately constative while the citational acts that aided her in successfully persuading an audience as a performer of music from a different culture (European) was performative. In her autobiography, she recalls that “The person most engaged for the [annual] gala concert was Roland Hayes, the distinguished tenor, who became my inspiration.”130 She was inspired by her perception of the success in his performance of European music and of self. He attained praise and acceptance from the African-

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128 Bracken.
129 Gender is recognized as how one identifies, regardless of one’s biological sex.
130 Anderson, 28.
American community and they revered him for acclaim from white audiences. Anderson describes Hayes’s performance of German art song [lieder] and her desire to understand the meaning of the foreign languages he sang when she was a developing young person and artist. She writes,

I could recall the way Roland Hayes had sung German songs at our church concerts. When he sang things like “An die Musik” or “Adelaide” I tried to evoke a picture of what the words meant, and from the music and manner in which Mr. Hayes caressed a phrase I tried to invent a translation. Mind you, I knew no German at this time, and I found out later that some of my translations were way off the mark.\footnote{Anderson, 57.}

During the time in which they lived, there were few African Americans that achieved great heights in a classical vocal career. Hayes’s elocution and mannerisms were codes common to the European art form and were signifiers of whiteness. Anderson was inspired by Hayes and his ability to perform what she judged to be beautiful music. She admired his performance of song and of self which persuaded her to choose a similar career path. In her choice, she was required to adopt performative qualities of whiteness because her constative citational acts were not common to the art form. She had to navigate the composition of her identity in order for her to be perceived as appropriately singing the art form as well as adapting to environments in which she performed. Hayes and Anderson have influenced generations of African-American classical vocal artists worldwide who have in turn inspired others to sing classical music. Anderson’s international reach allowed her identity to be seen as successful; therefore, like Hayes, her identity was influential to and reinforced by audiences and singers she inspired. Many of the citational acts I discuss below were practiced through repetition and reinforced by acceptance
and audience praise—for we embody citational acts to persuade those we interact with, in each unique experience and environment.

Michel Foucault’s work on sex and gender considers identity and the way in which power is enacted on and through the physical body. Anderson’s identity as a woman and as a person of color shaped the way in which she experienced the world. Power was enacted on and through her body not only through these identity markers, but through the way in which they were used politically to create false impressions about race relations in the United States. Much of how she was spoken of or spoken to by others codified her identity in American culture and international foreign affairs. As Butler states, “According to the perlocutionary view, words are instrumental to the accomplishment of actions, but they are not themselves the actions which they help to accomplish.” Words at the time such as “northern negro” placed Anderson in a slight position of privilege in relation to other African Americans, yet without her talent, she would still have been subject to the same oppression. Her performance on and off stage made her an international force that served to improve the reputation of race relations in the U.S. while concealing the true state of affairs.

Butler explains that gender is a culmination of citations toward existing concepts that underscore different aspects of one’s identity. It must be understood that those identities that do not conform to the artificial rules of this construction are oppressed by it. If those rules are not natural or essential, Butler argues, then they do not have any claim to justice or necessity. Since

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they are historical and rely on their continual citation or enactment by subjects, they can also be
challenged and changed through alternative performative acts.\textsuperscript{133}

In Chapter 2, I applied Ferdinand de Saussure’s model of semiotics, and we revisit it in relation
to Anderson’s performance of music and her development of signs within that context.

Somatechnics as developed by Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker focus on how power is enacted
on and through the body. Since Anderson’s identity was very much marked by her race and
gender, her markers could have and should have limited her ability to provide support in
demonstrating that her talent outweighed her marked identity. However, her use of signs helped
her defy the markers while promoting her performative identity and the way she was received by
others. Finally, an understanding of underlying critical race theory will show how Anderson not
only lived outside the confines of her identity markers, but expanded them for those who would
follow her illustrious career. Anderson’s manner of speech, gesture, and appearance associated
with the markers of race and gender contributed to the stage and off-stage persona that made her
iconic.

Anderson’s performance of self incorporated many signs that were normative to the
social standard for prototypical cisgender white females. She had assimilated to white normative
culture and was celebrated for this. As is evident throughout her career, this assimilation became
conscious for Anderson. In many ways, it was necessary to help her achieve success in
developing her talent, craft and other skills required to be accepted in a field that was dominated
by white cisgendered artists.

\textsuperscript{133} Dino Felluga, "Modules on Butler: On Performativity," \textit{Introductory Guide to Critical
Theory}, accessed March 30, 2019,
<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetothory/genderandsex/modules/butlerperformativity.html>
Anderson appealed to the predominantly white, upper-class community that was well-established in Europe and growing in America. In contrast, the upper-class negro community was consciously assimilating to white societal norms during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, also known as the “New Negro Movement.” This period is celebrated for what was considered “aristocratic” and folk art created by African-American artists about African-American life and culture. It resulted in an increase in access to education and philanthropy, and subsequent recognition and advancement of elevated cultural, intellectual, and societal status for African Americans. Fraternal organizations, churches, private donors, and community groups supported the movement by funding artists studying the “high arts” as well as presenting and promoting African-American institutions, art, artists, and events. Anderson was highly engaged and supported by both African-American and white communities nationally and abroad. In the essay “Black Women in Art Music,” Teresa Reed explains:

Despite developing their own communities, blacks in the Northeast sought equal status with whites, and some of their cultural and educational efforts were designed to foster their assimilation into mainstream society. The desire for assimilation motivated many to reject distinctively African aesthetics and to adhere, instead, to the European cultural values adopted by many white Americans. In the nineteenth century, black women promoted classical music energetically. Their involvement in clubs and organizations designed to provide blacks with classical music training constituted their effort to “uplift” the race.134

To this end, Anderson utilized several signs that expressed a depth of meaning. Her clothing, speech, and performance style were symbolic tools that aided in her masterful cultural competence by avoiding or decreasing the impact of racial and gender bias that could have impeded her success.

The documentary “Lady from Philadelphia,” filmed by Edward Murrow and CBS on Anderson’s 1957 Far East Asia tour, aired nationally on the evening of 30 December 1957. In response to the documentary, hundreds of letters were sent to CBS, Murrow, Hurok, and Anderson. A group of seventy-five letters of these letters will serve to summarize the response. Twenty-five states and the country of Canada were represented; fifty-two females and nineteen males responded; sixty-seven letters were complimentary; forty-eight comments were related to the high quality of the film; ten letters noted this was the best television show they had ever seen; four requested a repeat airing; forty-three contained comments of a racial nature; twenty-two contained comments about politics; and eleven mentioned Anderson as an ambassador. For viewers who never had the opportunity to see and hear Anderson in a live performance, this was an opportunity to hear a woman treasured by the nation.

Language, Speech, and Vocalics

Theodor de Leeuwen offers a short description of the relationship between semiotics and music. He notes that structuralist and generative approaches have been favored over social approaches, but he notes that the field is certainly open to such approaches. He then describes the relationship between musical semiotics and post-structuralism this way:

Music semiotics has also felt the influence of poststructuralism, with its greater emphasis on subjectivity and the body. In “The Grain of the Voice” (1977), Roland Barthes distinguishes between musical signification, the social and communicative meanings of music, and musical significance, a kind of musical meaning that is individual and constitutes an experience of pleasure (jouissance) that derives from the materiality, the “voluptuousness,” of the signifier—that is, to a large extent, from what escapes the music as a system. These are aspects of the signifier that, from the point of view of music as a

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system, are “nonsignificant variants,” such as the very “grain” of the voice of singers or the way they roll their rs.\textsuperscript{136}

The sense of Barthes’s “non-significant variants” may be a conflation of the idea that the pronunciation of text does not always affect the listener’s perception of the text’s meaning, discounting the more semiotic sense of the pronunciation as a signifier. In the context of Anderson’s performances, both the “grain” or color of the voice and the way the singer rolls her rs serve as signifiers of prototypical racial markers. They are musical aspects of her performance which, in contrast to Leeuwen’s explanation, become musically and culturally relevant, especially in the way that they are received by the audience.

As we have seen in a previous chapter, Anderson had studied and mastered singing in foreign languages during her travels through Europe. In the documentary, she performs repertoire in English, German, and French. She was known for her intense expressiveness in conveying the meaning of the text. In one of the letters to CBS that remarked on Anderson’s diction during the documentary, Hastings Blake of Connecticut wrote, “I especially liked your beautiful and clear diction—a most effective medium (in addition to that of song) for your important message to the awakening people of Asia.”\textsuperscript{137}

Acceptable diction and articulation had been a major obstacle to non-European singers during Anderson’s early career. Many music administrators and critics were undoubtedly operating with conscious and/or unconscious systemic and institutionalized racial bias against non-white singers. This form of discrimination prevented and continues to prevent non-white


\textsuperscript{137} Letter to CBS from Hastings Blake of CT, Folder 07454, Box 128, MAP.
artists from being hired by booking agents, theater directors, venue managers, and producers. Having studied with European diction coaches and composers in 1920s and 30s, Anderson had acquired masterful articulation, clarity of diction, nuanced musicality based on syntax, inflection of tone, and appropriate dialect of the languages she sang. Attaining this level of proficiency in the elocution of sung languages—achieved through the experience of living and working in the countries where the languages were spoken—served for her white audiences as a signifier of “intelligence” and “cultural competence” that was normally reserved for the members of the upper class. In a 1930 critique of a concert in New Jersey, an anonymous reporter for The New York Amsterdam News noted “Her program was unusually diversified and represented the music of four peoples. Italians, Germans, French and Negroes.” This early critique lists “Negroes” as if the ethnicity were from a sovereign country with their own language as all of the other ethnicities had been. It is unclear if this was a racial affront or an error of fact by the writer. It would have been more appropriate to list the composers or styles of music instead of the ethnicities of the countries in which the music was written.

As discussed previously, Anderson assumed roles typically held by men—provider, decision maker, career-oriented world traveler—which could have diminished the perception of her femininity. Instead, Anderson consciously augmented her feminine attributes to diminish her masculine ones, including her height, which was above-average at five feet, ten inches. Femininity was an identity marked by being “soft-spoken”—while masking intent, which in Anderson’s case was to be a confident business woman. Other feminine qualities supported by

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139 Keiler, 72.
her use of body language included her hairstyle, her use of makeup, her wearing dresses or
gowns for all public appearances, wearing a pleasant smile, appearing passive and reserved, and
using proper etiquette and graceful mannerisms in all situations. In this way, she could be
perceived unambiguously as a woman.

Another aspect of her projected femininity was her speaking voice. Though her singing
voice was low, Anderson spoke at a pitch high enough to be recognized as female, but without
compromising the inherent dark, rich, and mellifluous color of her singing voice that was
uniquely appealing. A review by critic Isabel Morse Jones printed in the *Los Angeles Times* in
1931 points out several characteristics of Anderson’s singing voice. While the critique is filled
with racial microaggressions, it also highlights ideas about Anderson prior to the performances
that made her iconic. There are several quotations from this critique that I have selected to
highlight the contrast between Anderson’s pre-celebrity and post-celebrity status that support her
use of signs to reconstruct her identity. Here, Jones attributes the color of Anderson’s voice to
her race and infers that her intelligence and training is unusual for people of her race,

> She is a singer worthy of more attention than she received, for although
comparatively unknown, she sings the music of the masters with distinction. Her
voice has that rich quality characteristic of the colored race and it is used in a way
that speaks of good training and innate taste. It is flexible and of wide range.  

Jones’s association of Anderson’s vocal color with the latter’s race is a reminder of Barthes’s
comment concerning “the grain of the voice” and its lack of significance with regard to music as
a system. The music critic’s desire to make this association demonstrates that vocal color is
musically significant and worthy of note, and, for this critic, culturally significant, serving as a

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140 Jones, Isabel Morse. “Contralto Sings with Distinction: Marian Anderson Makes Debut at
Philharmonic Auditorium”. Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File); Jan 19, 1931; ProQuest
Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times pg. A7
signifier of blackness. It is worth mentioning in this context that white singers are just as likely to have dark voices as African-American singers.

Anderson’s spoken language was deliberately slow and carefully thoughtful. She consciously eliminated nonsensical fillers like umm, hmm, etc. The slow speed of her voice assisted her in precise clarity of pronunciation, articulation, and projection with no sign of regional accent or cultural flair. The absence of dialect is symbolic of a disassociation with an identifiable culture or region of one’s origin. Jones did not like Anderson’s performance of spirituals, apparently ignorant of the fact that they were purposefully arranged as art songs in concert style by classically-trained African-American composers. She wrote, “The Negro spirituals were disappointing to me. They were sung as art songs and not songs of the people. A Caucasian might have done as well.” Jones’s implication that Anderson sang the songs as if she were white is an indication that Anderson’s affect, appearance, and vocal execution were perceived as symbols of assimilation, regardless of the insulting nature of the comment.

In the documentary, Anderson sang several examples of the negro spiritual, a genre usually sung with a southern American dialect. During her performances of some spirituals, she occasionally articulated the British trilled r [r] instead of the American r [ɹ]. For example, when she sang “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands,” she used the British [r] on the first iteration of “rain,” the second iteration of “brother,” and when she sings “right.” The use of the British [r] is inconsistent, but can be seen as a symbol of professional training. It would be strange for an untrained singer of spirituals to use the British [r]. Again, we are reminded of Barthes’s discussion of signifiers in music, and that here, the trilled [r] signifies whiteness.

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141 ibid.
142 See note 10, trilled r's occur at 5:51, 6:56, 7:10. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6af3lpB9_Ho
When singing “There’s No Hidin’ Place,” Anderson speaks the phrase, “He wanted to go to heaven but he had to go to….,” with her voice trailing off rather than uttering the word “hell.” This act was a signifier for feminine grace, as it would have been considered vulgar for a woman to speak what was considered a “bad word” or “curse.” Today, we see strong opposition to the colonial ideas of femininity, as explored in Bracken’s article on queer theory. Considering several sources, he points out that African-American women are often excluded to the point of invisibility when femininity and sexuality is discussed:

While the bisexual movement has claimed its place in the field since at least the late 1980s, for example in Marjorie Garber's *Vice Versa*, current debates emphasize that queer theory has not paid sufficient attention to the most oppressed sexual dissidents. In “Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality” (in Schor and Weed, 1997, pp. 136–156), Evelyn Hammonds asks whether lesbian and gay studies has excluded people of color—for example by failing to examine how black women's sexuality is constructed as “an empty space that is simultaneously ever visible (exposed) and invisible and where black women's bodies are always already colonized.” Hammonds situates the practice of black lesbian sexualities within a larger “politics of articulation” that not only makes black women's sexuality visible but interrogates “what makes it possible for black women to speak and act.”

Anderson’s choice to conform to the so-called colonizers’ idea of how she should look, act, and be perceived in order to be relevant violated her person. This was the kind of violation that many African-American women endured in order to be successful in the white world during her life and even today.

**Gesture**

When singing deeply emotional passages, Anderson stood erect yet appeared flexible and unstressed. She often closed her eyes for several seconds or longer periods of time while she was

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143 Bracken.
singing.\textsuperscript{144} This adaptive technique drew the attention of her audience to the emotional content of
the music and invited them to reflect on her emotional state. Typically, singers are instructed to
keep their eyes open to prevent the audience from feeling disconnected from them as performers.
In Anderson’s case, letters in response to the documentary noted that her closed eyes drew the
audience into her experience. For example, Mrs. Olive H. Herrick noted that

When MA closed her eyes and opened her heart to pour out in song her love for
her people and her love for America to those thousands, they may not have all
understood the words, but she brought to them something more important—a
sincerity and faith they could not help but feel in every note she sang…revealing
her wonderful character, her deep understanding heart, and her true nobility.\textsuperscript{145}

Anderson stood still during her performances, a common practice among recitalists.
There were no sudden, grand gestures to distract from her singing. Her voice was extremely
expressive without the need for dramatic physical illustrative gestures. She often held her hands
clasped or positioned in front of her lower ribcage. This was also standard among recitalists of
the day. As Jones noted, “She is very quiet on the stage, holding herself like a born dancer and
never distorting her face although her expression is animated.”\textsuperscript{146} There is no evidence that
Anderson ever studied dance, though fifty-three of the letters about the documentary expressed
the emotive quality of Anderson’s performance in some way. Comments included words or
phrases such as “moving,” “soul-stirring,” “so alive,” “so sincere,” “no words to express my
feelings,” “unbearingly beautiful,” “brought me to tears,” “powerful,” “wonderful,” “gave me
goosebumps,” “touching,” and “inspirational.”

\textsuperscript{144} Examples of Anderson closing her eyes while singing are seen in the video from footnote 10,
\url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6af3lpB9_Ho}

\textsuperscript{145} Letter to CBS from Mrs. Olive H. Herrick of NY, Folder 07435, Box 127, MAP.

\textsuperscript{146} Jones.
Anderson’s emotive elocution, facial expressions, minimal use of gestures, and physical presence prompted mention in the letters of specific songs, noting the expressiveness she used when performing them and the listener’s emotional response. These included Schubert’s “Ave Maria,” the spirituals “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord” and “I Opened My Mouth To the Lord,” and the aria from Saint-Saens’s Samson et Dalila “My Heart at Thy Sweet Voice” (“Mon Coeur s’ouvre a ta voix”).

**Appearance**

Anderson understood that appearance was a secondary way of connecting with people around her. It was her firm belief that in order for her audiences to accept and praise her, she needed to be perceived with a high standard of performativity. Her gowns, clothing, shoes, jewelry, makeup, and hair were an important aspect of her identity on stage and off stage. Her first evening gown was a gift from Patterson, her first voice teacher.\(^{147}\) Anderson’s mother helped her make her first performance dress, and she continued to make her own concert clothes, traveling with her sewing machine and materials for repairs until her financial circumstances allowed her to purchase them from high-quality dress makers and designers. She began to do this on the advice of the Helmar and Therese Enwall and Vehanen Kosti during her second tour of Scandinavia in the early 1930s. Allan Keiler describes the advice this way:

> Anderson liked to dress simply, still used to saving a penny whenever she could, but her innate good taste and sense of style, and her natural desire for the fine clothes, made prolonged encouragement on the part of the Enwalls unnecessary. Kosti gave advice freely, having an eye for fashion and enjoying the fun of making Anderson glamorous. “The first really elegant gowns,” Kosti later wrote, “that Miss Anderson purchased were from the N.K., an exclusive and beautiful store in Stockholm where the latest Paris models were to be found. One of the most attractive gowns was a brilliant black lace entirely embroidered with black

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\(^{147}\) Keiler, 31.
pearsls.” Later on, with advice from Madame Cahier, she sought out the Viennese designer Ladislav Czettel, who began to design gowns and dresses for her.¹⁴⁸

Anderson wore gowns during performances in keeping with the normative attire of the prototypical classical singer. Her everyday attire away from home was suitable to normative white cisgender female customs of her time. She wore modest dresses for appearances at schools and public events. The hemlines were below her knee about mid-calf, the necklines did not reveal cleavage, and her sleeves did not reveal her full arm. The fabrics were usually a solid color and not distracting to the eye.

According to Susannah Walker, “The phrase ‘beauty culture,’ in common usage throughout most of the twentieth century, refers to the tools, methods, and business practices of altering and caring for women’s appearance.”¹⁴⁹ In the 1931 critique by Jones cited above, Anderson’s appearance is praised while highlighting Jones’s opinion that she is more “intellectual” and “cultured” than the stereotypical African American:

The interest Miss Anderson aroused at once was due to her tasteful appearance, her poise and a certain unexpected intellectual polish. She is a warm singer but not an emotional one. In fact her best work, to my mind, was done in the opening numbers and the lieder. She is at home in that atmosphere of refined, studied culture.¹⁵⁰

In 1946, Nora Holt of the New York Amsterdam News included in a comment regarding her appearance in her critique of Anderson’s recital: “She was a picture of stately loveliness in a Paul Engel gown of a dark green velvet almost entirely covered with an intricate

¹⁴⁸ Keiler, 127.
¹⁵⁰ Jones.
design of silver paillettes and bugle beads.”¹⁵¹ This degree of detail about a singer’s clothing was not usually included in a recital critique. However, targeted advertising was on the rise during this period, and this was especially true in the black community due to the “new” income brackets they were attaining. Advertisers targeted the black community, seeking to reduce the amount of money they saved by influencing their purchases. Encouraging them to spend by purchasing cars, clothing, jewelry, etc. to engage in the battle of “the haves and the have nots,” was used as a form of psychological and economic warfare. If blacks had too much money in their possession, they could have more power in the country. As Walker notes, “Several market research studies of black consumer habits emerged between 1935 and the 1970s; they sought to show that African Americans were worthy of advertisers’ attention.”¹⁵² The intent and effect was to maintain the American white power structures while disenfranchising black advancement and enterprise.¹⁵³

In 1960, Anderson was interviewed by a friend, Emily Kimbrough. In the article attributed to both, Kimbrough noted an experience she had that highlights how attire was often used as a sub-conscious symbol of status:

[N]o stratum of society is beyond his potential achievement; that is, every American child except the American Negro. If he has a dark skin, but speaks with an accent, or wears the costume of another country, he is accepted anywhere, or very nearly. I heard only the other day of two delegates from an African country to the U.N. who arrived in this country in Western clothes. Two days later they had shaken out and put on native robes they had brought with the purpose of wearing only on ceremonial occasions. Those robes acted like the magic cloak in

the fairy tale, except that instead of making them invisible it made them acceptable.\textsuperscript{154}

In this case, the traditional robes of the men elevated their status, while their “Western clothes” projected a view that placed them in a lower status. In fact, their race became an unmarked identity trait once they were not perceived as prototypical African-Americans, but as foreigners.

Photographs taken on the tour indicate that Anderson occasionally wore the traditional attire of the countries she visited. Throughout the documentary, Anderson interchanges wigs with a loose curl pattern texture and style of hair similar to that of a white person. It was common for African-American women to use straightening combs, wave irons, and curling irons that were heated to straighten or loosen the coarser texture and tighter curl pattern of their natural hair. In this way, they assimilated as closely as they could to the appearance of a member of the approved cultural normative—white women. Some used bleaching creams to lighten the appearance of their skin.

African-American cisgender women of Anderson’s era made every effort to consciously conform to the perceived normative however possible. The “ideal” symbol of beauty in America was the genteel, thin, white, 5’5” tall, fair-skinned, blonde-haired, and blue-eyed woman, as seen on most advertisements, film, and consumer products. Drastically changing one’s physical attributes and skin color was not possible beyond exercise, surgery, and avoiding the sun. Pervasive consumerism targeted women in African-American communities to undergo surgical procedures, purchase exercise equipment, diet pills, skin fading creams, makeup, hair straightening tools, and hair dye to alter their physical appearance to fit the ideal standard.

Beginning in the late 1960s with the Black Power Movement, which upheld the slogan “Black is

Beautiful,” African-American women began to assert their natural physical attributes and cultural appearance as an acceptable norm. While the massive commercialization of the beauty industry in America still motivates African-American women to make beauty choices based on the normative white culture, the personal acceptance of natural beauty did not begin until after Anderson had retired.

From Contralto to Icon

Critical race theory

As we have seen, the racial implications for a negro to perform in a classical European style were far reaching. In all aspects of her performance of self, Anderson exuded a refined, prototypical American whiteness, shifting the perception of her personhood away from her stereotypical negro attributes. In a letter to CBS television in response to the documentary, Lillian Gould of New York wrote:

And if I have ever harbored any prejudice within me, Marian Anderson showed how ignoble and stupid such feelings are. Is there another woman, white or negro, who can compare with her? … and it is women like her who will someday achieve what all the Supreme Court decisions and Federal troops can never do—break down the barriers between the races.

This letter demonstrates the power of Anderson’s persona to transform people’s deeply seated attitudes and beliefs toward race and race relations. From Canada, Mr. K. Rafe Mair commented:

I soon forgot that these people were Burmese, Chinese, Malayans and Indians and realized that color, tongue, race, or creed had no true part in this event, rather that these things were completely submerged in the hardest to understand of all basic truths—man cannot live with himself alone. I did not see a black siren

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155 Walker, 147 and passim.
156 Letter of appreciation for See it Now: Lady from Philadelphia television broadcast to CBS from Mrs. (Lillian) Harry Gould of NY dated 12/31/1957, Folder 07434, Box 127, MAP.
singing to brown skins, I saw genuine beauty transmitting a great message of love and tolerance to every human being on earth.\textsuperscript{157}

These two quotations were among the forty-three letters that remarked on race, revealing the immediate impact Anderson had on the nation, especially on this topic. The airing of the documentary certainly met or exceeded the expectations of the State Department with regard to their program initiatives.

In her book \textit{Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era}, Lisa Davenport compares Anderson to contemporaneous jazz artists who were under contract with the American government to promote their international Pro-America campaign. She notes that

Because [Anderson] performed an art form derived from Europe, she presented African Americans as a vibrant component of American and international life, showcased the exuberance of American culture, and helped redress the American dilemma without the racial stigmas and implications of jazz.\textsuperscript{158}

Singing classical music was thus a signifier for Anderson’s prototypical whiteness. The classical singing stage was extremely segregated, and the doors to opera were all but closed until the early 1940s. Only two African-American singers were hired at the Metropolitan Opera, the premiere opera company in the U.S., prior to Anderson’s hiring in 1955. Helen L. Phillips was hired as a substitute choir member in 1947, and Robert McFerrin Sr., the first African-American singer to win the Metropolitan Opera “Auditions of the Air,” received a thirteen-month contract with the company. In the latter case, McFerrin was not allowed to perform a role until 1955, just days after Anderson’s debut with the company.

\textsuperscript{157} Letter of appreciation for \textit{See it Now: Lady from Philadelphia} television broadcast to CBS from Mr. K Rafe Mair of Canada dated 12/30/1957, Folder 07457, Box 128, MAP.

What had eluded Anderson up to this point was an opera appearance, and only an appearance at the Metropolitan Opera was suitable to someone of her stature. Keiler explains, “Certainly success in opera would have enhanced the public’s appreciation of Anderson, but for a black singer to accomplish such a feat in the 1930’s presented difficulties more extreme than those that were already a constant feature of the career of any black singer.”

She had been engaged in discussions about performing an operatic role several times prior to her Metropolitan Opera debut. In 1930, the French manager Arnold Meckel had attempted to negotiate a contract with Anderson for the role of Amneris in Verdi’s *Aida* with the Paris Opera. In 1931, George Szell invited her to perform the title role in *L’Africane* by Meyerbeer and Amneris in *Aida* by Verdi. A month later, she was interviewed in Stockholm and responded, “At home in America it is difficult for people of my race to get to perform in opera. I believe I have some dramatic capabilities; in any case I have a strong desire to try.”

In 1932, the great Russian operatic stage director and teacher Stanislavsky offered her the opportunity to study the role of *Carmen* by Bizet under his guidance. However, she felt the dancing and drama were out of her reach—this missed opportunity was one of her great regrets.

Halász discussed the potential of Anderson performing the roles of Ortrud from Wagner’s *Lohengrin* or Santuzza from *Cavalleria rusticana* by Leoncavallo with the New York City Opera. Both in Europe and America, the prototypical exotic, primitive, and hypersexualized markers attributed to non-white women were written into these characters.

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159 Keiler, 117.
160 Keiler, 110.
161 Keiler, 148.
162 Keiler, 269-70.
Though Anderson had early invitations to perform operatic roles, they did not materialize. In 1955, at the age of fifty-seven, she performed her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the role of the witch Ulrica in Verdi’s *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Soon after, Rudolf Bing, General Manager, discussed with her management the possibility of an invitation to perform several additional roles. It was too late in her career to make a serious commitment to begin a future in opera. Yet Anderson had been chosen to serve as the icon who broke the racial barrier at the most treasured American opera house. It was not until after her Metropolitan Opera debut that several African-American opera stars emerged with internationally-recognized careers performing roles in the standard repertoire (i.e., not limited to *Porgy and Bess*). In her autobiography, Anderson included a statement about her pride in being a symbol for her people:

> The chance to be a member of the Metropolitan has been a highlight of my life. It has meant much to me and to my people. If I have been privileged to serve as a symbol, to be the first Negro to sing as a regular member of the company, I take greater pride from knowing that it has encouraged other singers of my group to realize that the doors everywhere may open increasingly to those who have prepared themselves well. There are young singers of exceptional talent, such as, to name a few, Camilla Williams, Lawrence Winters, Leontyne Price, Leonore Lafayette, and Mattiwilda Dobbs, who have sung with important opera companies in our country and abroad. There will be others. One does not expect them to be accepted because they are Negroes; one hopes that they will be welcomed only for their worth. I am grateful to the Metropolitan for the tactful way in which the entire thing was managed, and I will never forget the whole-hearted responsiveness of the public. I may have dreamed of such things, but I had not foreseen that I would play a part in reality.

163 In 2005, I attended the fiftieth anniversary of Anderson’s debut at the Metropolitan Opera. There was a panel discussion in which internationally-acclaimed African-American opera stars—Leontyne Price, George Shirley, Mattiwilda Dobbs, and others who performed at the Metropolitan Opera immediately following her debut—explained how they and their contemporaries refused contracts until their demand that Anderson be honored as the first African-American singer on the Metropolitan Opera stage was met.

164 Anderson, 304-5.
In many ways, the role at the Metropolitan Opera constituted the removal of the last barrier to the perception of Anderson as the iconic singer that she had been since the 1920s.

When the conductor Arturo Toscanini heard Anderson for the first time, in the 1920s, he remarked, “What I heard today one is privileged to hear only once in a hundred years.”

Anderson’s voice moved people deeply. She was seen as an African-American icon and symbol of her people as early as 1929. In an article published in *The New York Amsterdam News* by Carl Diton, the former President of the National Association of Negro Musicians, the work of selected outstanding negros of the day was examined. Of Anderson, he wrote:

> In the contralto realm there is but one figure that stands out in heroic relief. Indeed, in point of inherited power of voice towers above the Negro singers of all time the gifts of Marian Anderson, of Philadelphia. The turning point in the career of this young woman was the winning of the Stadium prize a few years ago. This subsequently gave her appearance with the New York Philharmonic and a few other orchestras in various parts of the country. In experience, training and prestige, and more especially since a recent recital in Philadelphia, she is the logical successor at the present moment to Roland Hayes.

Following the 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, Anderson was revered by the world and decided it was time to give back to her community. She established the Marian Anderson Scholarship Fund and Competition in the early 1940s to provide financial support for aspiring young classical singers. She mentored many of the contestants, who went on to become internationally renowned; these included Camilla Williams, Mattiwilda Dobbs, Leontyne Price, Reri Grist, and Grace Bumbry.

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165 Keiler, 156.

By the 1950s, the U.S. government and the countries that hosted her performances also saw Anderson as an international icon. They exploited her status as one who overcame major obstacles of her time and publicized her as such. The State Department reported:

Miss Anderson, one of America’s greatest contraltos, sang in Oslo on September 19, 1956 and in Berlin on October 23, 1956. The following press and field reports indicate the success of her appearances. Oslo-from Arbeiderbladet, September 20, 1956 “Her almost symphonic voice spans from the irresistible primitive to the noblest inspiration in expression. All the manifold things of human life from happiness to the tragic, the heavy trials have expression in the beautiful throat. One can only bow humbly before this great art. She embraces all dignified but simple and humble is she herself.”

Her prominence as an icon was the source of inspiration for many artists, including public relations expert Justus (Jock) Lawrence of the Lawrence Organization in New York City. A friend and advisor to Maxwell Rabb, Secretary to the Cabinet in the Eisenhower administration, Lawrence proposed to Rabb the idea of collaboratively planning a tribute to Anderson. A portrait of Anderson by a modern painter, Edmund Oppenheim, was to be unveiled during a surprise luncheon for Anderson. They would ensure press coverage with photos to include Oppenheim, Rabb, Anderson, and the portrait. Lawrence wrote, “The portraitist will be there, the Press; Oppenheim, will explain why it was important to immortalize this great Negress in oils...making all Negroes in America appreciate the extent to which they, through Marian Anderson, are honored.”

Anderson’s iconic career had inspired Oppenheim, resulting in this work of art. Given Anderson’s consistent visibility in the media at the time, Lawrence

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167 “First Semi-Annual Report - President’s Special International Program, July 1, 1956-December 31, 1956, in folder 3 February-June 1957, 39, Cultural Activities File #5, Folder OCB 007, Box No 16 A82-18, OCB Central File Series, White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-61, EPL.

168 “Agenda for Mr. Rabb from JBLL” dated June 6th, 1957; Letter to Maxwell Rabb from Justis Lawrence on Lawrence Organization letterhead, June 26, 1957, File Lawrence, Justis (Jock) and Lawrence Organization, 1957 (3)2, Box no 27, Rabb, Maxwell M. Papers 1938-1958, 1989, EPL.
recognized the opportunity for all entities to benefit by the presentation with the photograph linking the artist, the government, and Anderson.

We have seen that Anderson’s iconic career inspired many African-American artists, who were afforded more opportunities because of her socio-political impact on race relations and gender in the U.S. and internationally. Yet it is important to remember that today, racial barriers in and out of classical music are still being challenged. While her career served as a beacon of hope and symbol of American prosperity it was a false image of what America could only hope to be; a country full of equitable opportunities for all. This sentiment is echoed by Eleanor Roosevelt,

"Colored people are showing most remarkable restraint as far as patience is concerned. We ought to be proud of the strength and patience of these people and also the white people in the south who stand alone for the fundamental freedoms of their fellow Americans. We must give much more support, morally and financially, than we have been doing. If we do this, we will be the kind of nation where Freedom and Justice really exist." Eleanor Roosevelt, June 1958

Anderson ends her autobiography with a similar sentiment,

There are many persons ready to do what is right because in their hearts they know it is right. But they hesitate, waiting for the other fellow to make the first move--and he, in turn, waits for you. The minute a person whose word means a great deal dares to take the open-hearted and courageous way, many others follow. Not everyone can be turned aside from meanness and hatred, but the great majority of Americans are heading in that direction. I have a great belief in the future of my people and my country.169

169 Anderson, 309.
Appendix I: Letter from Marian Anderson to Hurok Sol

Dear Hurok:

If in your long experience you’ve ever given your utmost for an ideal and then only to find that this has not been enough then you may know something of the feeling I had when your wire arrived this morning.

Regardless of the tone of your message, I am certain that you do not need to be convinced of my co-operation in any and everything I consent to take part.

It is a pity that you could (have) not been along to form your own opinions.

I was told before hand that this tour would be strenuous but I do not believe that anyone realized how strenuous. For there (the world situation being what it is) were things required of me as a negro that would not be required of someone else. (As a representative of my people and other dark people of the world) Without having the concerts or CBS suffer, I’ve There were times when I did not have proper rest but there was and is not no complaining on my part. If I had it to do over again and it was considered of much importance to the State Department would accept. Knowing full well what it means.

There was the understanding on my part that some concerts would be broadcasted but not my understanding that all a tape[d. recorcet] could be made of any and all concerts if requested had to be.

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170 Hand scribed letter from MA (no date but content confirms Far East Tour letter she wrote in response to a wire from Hurok). There were many corrections on the original document, therefore, I transcribed the letter with strike-through over the text MA crossed out. However, the information she attempted to delete, and what may not have been in her actual wire to Hurok, I believe, is equally important in understanding her conscious thought. File “Hurok n.d.”Folder 06739, Box 108, MAP.
I did (definitely) certainly refuse in one place because I was somewhat indisposed hoarse from too many air conditioned rooms and did not have a permanent record of that performance. I understand (was said) that every other artist had recorded there. More recently in Singapore to be exact. [I said if every other artist had recorded I would. USIS told me that not all of the other artists had done so, Nevertheless] we some permitted 10 songs to be taped from the live concert. Altho all artist appearing there did not consent at all. [The actual contract for this tour was never in my hands although Jofe did ask for it.] I therefore, RE outdoor concerts.

I accepted Hong Kong against my better judgement and the manager there Mr. Odell said quite frankly and openly that he had been opposed to it, but had been persuaded to go along [with it.] It went very well, but could have gone otherwise. It was in a football stadium and [such places are not equipped as at home for such performances] was more a spectacle than artistic. I don’t know if the State Dept wants this either. My contribution is definitely better in a where possible.

The Bombay concert is arranged for indoors they had also wanted it in the open air. I do not see that and Bombay has arranged its concert indoors altho it

Bombay and Karachi were given the same reply to their requests for open air appearances.

The 2nd Saigon concert of which you must have heard, is quite and issue. I had agreed to Miss Stroks relayed request before I left New Yok and altho it was not on the list I considered this to be a (pure) matter of date. In Pusan when the request was dated, naturally I assumed that this was the same one asked for earlier and so accepted the date. On the very night of the concert
a wire arrived from Mr. Schnitzer suggesting that I could give a second concert there if the Ambassador agreed.

This was evidence that he did not know the date was set, then later he said that this should be counted as an extra concert. It did seem strange in view of the circumstances.
Appendix II: World Political Issues During Marian Anderson’s Career 1914—1965

1914-18  World War I
1920     Women win the right to vote
1920-1960 Lynchings & Assassinations
1923     Equal Rights Amendment (men and women)
1929-41  Great depression
1932     Marian Anderson banned in Denmark (public protest)
1931-35  Marian Anderson banned in Germany (Nazi party racism Keller p 102)
1939-45  World War II

1943 - President FDR visits Liberia (rubber, communism)  
        President Barclay visits US

1937-45  Sino-Japanese War
1945     United Nations Founded
1946-49  Greek Civil War
1947     Indo-Pakistani War
1948-49  Arab-Israeli War
1947-91  Cold War
1949     Chinese Civil War Communist Party succeeds
1950-53  Korean War
1952     US ends occupation of Japan
1953-59  Cuban Revolution
1954-62  Algerian War
1954-1968 Civil Rights Movement
1956     Suez Crisis
1959-75  Vietnam War
1959-94  Rwanda Revolution
1960-1979 Feminist Movement
1963     Equal Pay Act
1964     Civil Rights Act (prohibits sex discrimination)
1968–1972 Black Power Movement

Decolonization in Europe
    1947  Iceland

Decolonization of Asia
    1918  Yemen
    1919  Afghanistan
    1921  Mongolia
    1932  Iraq
    1935  Cambodia

    1943  Lebanon, Syria
    1945  Indonesia
    1946  Jordan, Philippines
    1947  Pakistan, India
1948 Burma, Sri Lanka, Israel, South Korea, North Korea
1954 Vietnam, Laos
1957 Malaysia
1960 Cyprus
1961 Kuwait
1962 Oman
1965 Singapore

Decolonization of Africa
1922 Egypt
1942 Ethiopia
1949 Emirate of Cyrenaica
1951 Libya
1956 Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco
1957 Ghana
1958 Guinea
1960 Cameroon, Togo, Mali, Senegal, Malagasy, Belgian Congo, Somali Republic, Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Cote d’Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic, Middle Congo, Gabon, Nigeria, Mauritania
1961 Sierra Leone, Tanganyika
1962 Burundi, Rwanda, French Algeria, Uganda
1963 Kenya
1964 Zanzibar, Malawi, Zambia
Appendix III. Comparative Contemporaneous American Contraltos

Chart 1: Career Span and Debuts of American Contraltos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Life span</th>
<th>Career span</th>
<th>Town Hall debut *equivalent</th>
<th>MET debut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marian Anderson</td>
<td>b. 1897 d. 1993</td>
<td>1924-1962+</td>
<td>1924 age 27</td>
<td>1955 Verdi Un ballo in maschera (Ulrica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Gladys Swarthout</td>
<td>b. 1900 d. 1969</td>
<td>1924-1966</td>
<td>1933 *National WEAF radio broadcast from White House</td>
<td>1929 age 29 La Gioconda (La Cicca)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Georgia Graves</td>
<td>b. (c. 1908) d. N/A</td>
<td>1927-1943</td>
<td>1927 (*Dudley Buck Singers) 19</td>
<td>1936 – Met semifinalist 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Carol Brice</td>
<td>b. 1918 d. 1985</td>
<td>1933-1978</td>
<td>1933 (Sedalia Singers) 1945 age 27</td>
<td>1948–Met Artists Christmas Party *no role @MET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2: Repertory

Note: Anderson, Swarthout and Meisle data must be updated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Chart of Repertoire</th>
<th>Anderson</th>
<th>Meisle</th>
<th>Graves</th>
<th>Swarthout</th>
<th>Brice</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>ORCHESTRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beethoven: “Drums Loudly Beating” Egmont</td>
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<td>Braga: Cinco canção do Folclore Nordestino</td>
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<td>Brahms: Alto Rhapsody</td>
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<td>Brahms: Sappische Ode</td>
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<td>DeFalla: El Amor Brujo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahler: Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfarer)</td>
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<td>Stravinsky: Oedipus Rex</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>ORATORIO / CANTATA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bach: “Geist und Seele wird verwirrt” Cantata No. 35</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bach: “Schlage doch, gewünschte Stunde” Cantata No. 53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bach: Christmas Oratorio</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Bach: B minor Mass</td>
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<td>Composer</td>
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<td>Bach</td>
<td>Magnificat</td>
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<td>Handel</td>
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<td>Haydn</td>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Mendelssohn</td>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Still</td>
<td>They Lynched Him on a Tree</td>
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<td>Tchaikovsky</td>
<td>Moscow Coronation Cantata</td>
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<td>Blitzstein</td>
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<td>Monteverdi</td>
<td>Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda ( )</td>
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<td>Pergolesi</td>
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<td>Debussy</td>
<td>“Air de Lia” L’Enfant Prodigue</td>
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<td>Purcell</td>
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