

September 19-October 19

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Sonja Lowe- Production Dramaturg

## The Setting

Place

The study in Albert Einstein's house at 112 Mercer Street in Princeton, NJ.

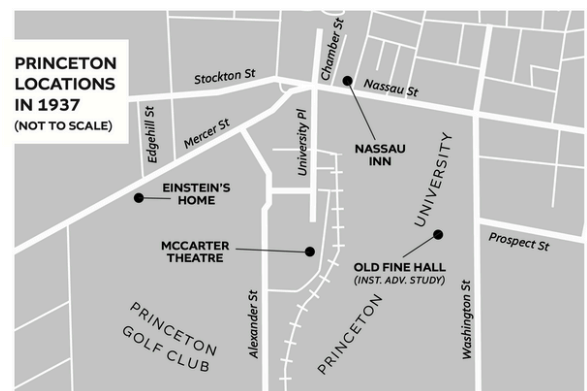
Time

Act One- April 16, 1937.

Late at night.

Act Two- Two years later. February 27, 1939.

Late afternoon.



# The Playwright Deborah Brevoort

Deborah Brevoort is a playwright and librettist from Alaska who now lives in the New York area. She is an alumna of New Dramatists, one of the original company members of Alaska's Perseverance Theatre, a member of the playwright's collective at Florida Studio Theatre and a co-founder of Theatre Without Borders, dedicated to international theatre exchange. In 2024 she was appointed as a Fulbright Specialist for theatre, musical theatre and opera for the US State Department. After participating in American Lyric Theater's Composer/Librettist Development Program (ALT CLDP) Deborah has turned most of her attention to writing opera librettos. She was awarded the prestigious Campbell Opera Librettist Prize by Opera America in 2023. She also served as the Librettist Mentor for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative at the Kennedy Center for 2023/24. She will be a librettist mentor for the ALT CLDP in 2024/25 and a delegate to the World Opera Forum in Los Angeles for Opera America.



## Raise Your Voice

By Sonja Lowe, Dramaturg



Marian Anderson

On April 16, 1937, the famous contralto Marian Anderson performed before an enthusiastic audience at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey. Then, after the concert, the Nassau Inn refused her booking for a hotel room, citing their "whites-only" policy. When Albert Einstein heard about the insult, he invited Anderson to stay at his house on Mercer Street. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. After that, whenever Anderson performed in Princeton, she stayed at Einstein's house. Inspired by these true events, Playwright Deborah Brevoort's script, *My Lord, What a Night*, brings together four historical figures and imagines a conversation around the many different choices involved in 'raising your voice' against injustice.

# The Source of the Story

Despite her international renown, opera singer Marian Anderson was subject to discrimination while touring the United States. Often, she was turned away from hotels which didn't serve Black customers. In 1937, Anderson gave a performance at the McCarter Theatre—a concert hall in Princeton, New Jersey. Although the performance drew a packed audience with glowing reviews, Anderson was denied a room in Princeton's Nassau Inn, which held a whites-only policy.

Living and working in Princeton, Dr. Albert Einstein was an audience member at the concert. Hearing of the denial, he extended Anderson a personal invitation to stay at his home—marking the beginning of their unexpected friendship. On their first encounter, Anderson recalled:

*"I remember thanking him from the bottom of my heart and he seemed just sort of to brush it aside. . . Dr. Einstein greeted me warmly and said, 'We are very happy that you can come and welcome into our home.'"*

For the next 18 years, Anderson stayed with Einstein whenever she was in town to give a concert. While Anderson's role as a civil rights figure was solidified with her iconic performance at the Lincoln Memorial (in front of an integrated audience of over 75,000 people), few were aware of Einstein's activism. The book "Einstein on Race and Racism" reveals that Einstein was public with his stance on civil rights, though it often went unpublicized by white media. In 1946, he made a public appearance at Lincoln University, where he accepted an honorary degree. Although there is no known recording of his speech, there was coverage from Black press, including this quote:

*"There is a separation of colored people from white people in the United States. That separation is not a disease of colored people. It is a disease of white people. I do not intend to be quiet about it."*

Einstein related racism in the United States to his experience with antisemitism and fleeing Nazi Berlin. He shared in an interview:

*"Being a Jew myself, perhaps I can understand and empathize with how Black people feel as victims of discrimination."*



Marian Anderson, center, with Albert Einstein. (Marian Anderson Collection of Photographs, 1898-1992. Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania)

Although Einstein condemned prejudice toward Black Americans within the United States, his writing expressed in private diaries from the early 1920s reveal xenophobic beliefs and derogatory comments toward various countries and peoples.

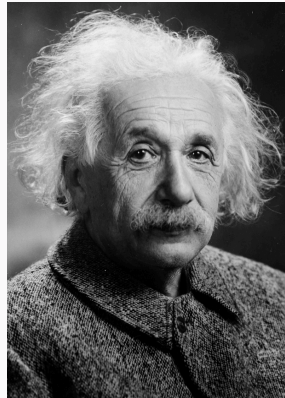
Whether Einstein's opinions ever evolved from those diary entries is left up only to speculation. Instead, we must reconcile with Einstein as a multi-dimensional person—one who may have held contradictory beliefs, privately and personally.

From all accounts, the connection Einstein had with Marian Anderson was one built on genuine mutual respect. In 1955—the same year Anderson would make her groundbreaking performance at the Metropolitan opera—she stayed one last time with Einstein, then nearing the end of his life.

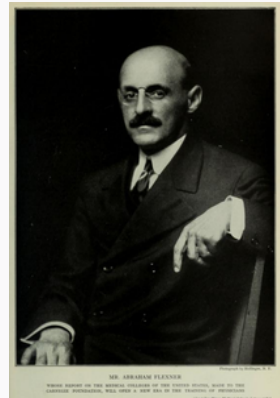
# The People in Our Story



MARIAN ANDERSON



ALBERT EINSTEIN



ABRAHAM FLEXNER



MARY CHURCH TERRELL

MARIAN ANDERSON (1897 – 1993) was an American contralto known for performing a wide range of music, from opera to spirituals. Anderson sang with renowned orchestras in major concert venues throughout Europe and the United States between 1925 and 1965. Although her voice was celebrated worldwide, Anderson continually faced racial discrimination when she toured in her home country. In 1939, when the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused to allow Anderson to perform at Washington, DC's Constitution Hall, the classical singer became the center of a nation-wide controversy that focused public attention on the injustice of Jim Crow segregation. Later in her career, Anderson became the first African American singer to perform on the mainstage at the Metropolitan Opera. She served as a delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Committee and as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United States, giving concerts all over the world. Among other awards, Anderson received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the Congressional Gold Medal (1977), the Kennedy Center Honors (1978), the National Medal of Arts (1986), and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award (1991).

ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879 – 1955) was a theoretical physicist and one of the most influential scientists in history. Born in Ulm, Germany to a middle-class German Jewish family, Einstein is best known for developing the theory of relativity, and for making important contributions to quantum mechanics. He received the 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics “for his services to theoretical physics, and especially for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect,” a pivotal step in the development of quantum theory. Forced to leave Germany after the Nazi Party came to power, Einstein accepted a position in Princeton, NJ at the newly formed Institute for Advanced Study in 1933. As one of the world's first “celebrity scientists,” Einstein was outspoken on multiple issues current to his day including racism and anti-Semitism. In 1939, he joined other scientists in writing a letter to warn President Roosevelt about the possibility of German scientists developing an atomic bomb. This letter prompted government action that eventually launched U.S. nuclear research. In 1955, Einstein and ten other noted intellectuals signed a manifesto highlighting the danger of nuclear weapons.

ABRAHAM FLEXNER (1866 - 1959) was an American educator, best known for his role in the 20th century reform of medical and higher education in the United States and Canada. Born in Louisville, KY and the son of German Jewish immigrants, Flexner was the first in his family to go to college. He gained a national reputation in American higher education at a time when anti-Semitism was prominent and many universities had strict quotas limiting the number of Jewish students admitted. In 1930, Flexner obtained funds from major donors to establish the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ. He stated specifically that the Institute would be an organization where students and faculty would be selected with “no regard whatever to accidents of race, creed, or sex.” As the founding director, Flexner recruited the world's greatest minds, and the Institute became a lifeline for European scholars escaping Nazi fascism. By 1933, the Institute had a faculty of five leading mathematicians and physicists (among them Albert Einstein) as well as over twenty visitors. The Institute for Advanced Study continues today as one of the world's leading centers for curiosity-driven basic research.

MARY CHURCH TERRELL (1863 – 1954) was an activist, journalist, and teacher who championed racial equality and women's suffrage. One of the first African American women to earn a college degree, she taught in the Latin Department at the M Street School in Washington, DC. She was the first Black woman in the United States to be appointed to the school board of a major city, serving in the District of Columbia until 1906. Terrell was a charter member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1909) and the Colored Women's League of Washington (1892). She was also a founding member of both the National Association of Colored Women (1896) and the National Association of College Women (1923). A noted writer and speaker, she was a well-known voice fighting for civil rights. In her senior years, she continued to participate in picket lines and boycotts protesting racial segregation. In 1950, she launched a successful campaign to integrate restaurants in Washington, DC. She died at the age of 90, only two months after the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown vs. Board of Education decision declared racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional.

# World Timeline-1930's



October 29, 1929 - Wall Street Stock Market Crash - The Wall Street Crash of 1929 triggers the Great Depression — the worst economic crisis in U.S. history. Unemployment rose to 25% in the United States.

1929 - Fritz von Opel becomes first person to fly a rocket-propelled plane in Germany.



September 14, 1930 - Election makes Nazi party the second largest political party in Germany.

May 1, 1931 - The Empire State Building opens in New York City. The building is 1,454 feet tall. It was the world's tallest building until the construction of the World Trade Center. With its distinct art deco style, it has become one of the most recognizable buildings in the world.



May 22, 1932 - Amelia Earhart, 'Queen of the Air', is the first woman to fly alone over the Atlantic Ocean.

November 8, 1932 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt is elected president of the USA.



1933 - 15 million people, one-quarter of the US workforce are unemployed

January 30, 1933 - Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.



1933 - FDR establishes New Deal which creates millions of new jobs.

1933 - Albert Einstein - Sets sail with his 2nd wife, Elsa Löwenthal for the United States. Settles with her in Princeton, New Jersey, where he assumes a post at the Institute for Advanced Study.



May 10, 1933 - Massive Book Burning in cities across Germany.

December 5, 1933 - End of Prohibition with ratification of 21st amendment.



1934 - The Dust Bowl in the Great Plains was a period of terrible dust storms that severely damaged the ecology and agriculture in America.

August 19, 1934 - Adolf Hitler becomes Führer of Germany.

December 11, 1936 - King Edward VIII abdicates the British throne in order to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson.



May 6, 1937 - Hindenburg airship explodes in New Jersey.

May 27, 1937 - Golden Gate Bridge opens in San Francisco, CA.

# Timeline Continued

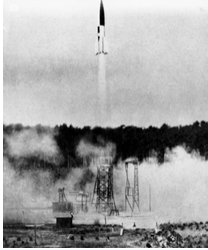
November 9-10, 1938 - A massive, coordinated attack on Jews throughout the German Reich on the night of November 9, 1938, into the next day, has come to be known as Kristallnacht or The Night of Broken Glass.

September 1, 1939 - WWII officially begins

1939 - Einstein writes a famous letter to President Franklin Roosevelt not long after the start of World War II that warns of the possibility of Germany building an atomic bomb and urges nuclear research.

1942 - V2 Rockets - Ballistic missiles are developed by German engineers led by Wernher Von Braun during the Second World War. They burn a mixture of oxygen and alcohol at a rate of 1 ton every 7 seconds. This is the first rocket capable of reaching space.

*This historical overview was put together by fellow dramaturg, Kelly Lynch. It's not a comprehensive history, of course, but some facts, pictures and events to give a sense of what was "in the news" for these characters in this decade.*



## The Players



Kataka Corn  
as  
Marian Anderson



Mark Emerson  
as  
Albert Einstein



Andrew Litzky  
as  
Abraham Flexner



Marlette Buchanan  
as  
Mary Church Terrell



Shana Emile  
as  
Marian Anderson & Mary Church Terrell u/s



Jeff Allen Pierce  
as  
Albert Einstein u/s



Nolan Palmer  
as  
Abraham Flexner u/s

# Jim Crow Laws, 1930s America



Article from American Experience, PBS.

The segregation and disenfranchisement laws known as "Jim Crow" represented a formal, codified system of racial apartheid that dominated the American South for three quarters of a century beginning in the 1890s. The laws affected almost every aspect of daily life, mandating segregation of schools, parks, libraries, drinking fountains, restrooms, buses, trains, and restaurants. "Whites Only" and "Colored" signs were constant reminders of the enforced racial order.

In legal theory, blacks received "separate but equal" treatment under the law — in actuality, public facilities for blacks were nearly always inferior to those for whites, when they existed at all. In addition, blacks were systematically denied the right to vote in most of the rural South through the selective application of literacy tests and other racially motivated criteria.

The Jim Crow system was upheld by local government officials and reinforced by acts of terror perpetrated by Vigilantes. In 1896, the Supreme Court established the doctrine of separate but equal in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, after a black man in New Orleans attempted to sit in a whites-only railway car.

In 1908, journalist Ray Stannard Baker observed that "no other point of race contact is so much and so bitterly discussed among Negroes as the Jim Crow car." As bus travel became widespread in the South over the first half of the 20th century, it followed the same pattern.

"Travel in the segregated South for black people was humiliating," recalled Diane Nash in her interview for *Freedom Riders*. "The very fact that there were separate facilities was to say to black people and white people that blacks were so subhuman and so inferior that we could not even use the public facilities that white people used."

Transit was a core component of segregation in the South, as the 1947 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) pamphlet and Bayard Rustin song, "You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow" attests. Keeping whites and blacks from sitting together on a bus, train, or trolley car might seem insignificant, but it was one more link in a system of segregation that had to be defended at all times — lest it collapse. Thus transit was a logical point of attack for the foes of segregation, in the courtroom and on the buses themselves.

It would take several decades of legal action and months of nonviolent direct action before these efforts achieved their intended result.

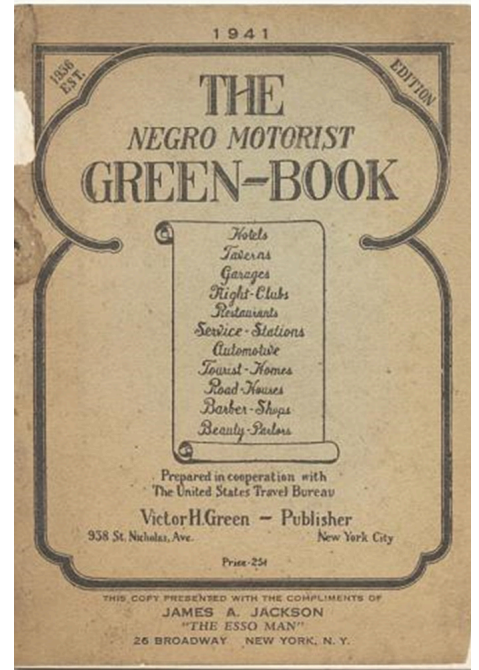
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-jim-crow-laws/#:~:text=The%20laws%20affected%20almost%20every,of%20the%20enforced%20racial%20order>

# Traveling in Jim Crow America

During the segregation era, discriminatory laws and practices made traveling by car a problematic and even dangerous experience for African Americans. Along the nation's highways, black travelers were routinely denied access to essential services like gas, food, restrooms, and lodging. Stopping in an unfamiliar place carried the risk of humiliation, threats, or worse. To find safe and friendly accommodations, travelers relied on a network of shared advice, exchanged by word of mouth and also published in travel guides such as the "Green Book."

Victor H. Green, a New Jersey Postal Worker, created his namesake guide to help black travelers safely navigate the segregated realities of Jim Crow America. Green used his contacts in the postal service, as well as input from traveling salespeople and business owners, to complete the listings. He also partnered with the Standard Oil Company to distribute The Green Book at Esso gas stations.

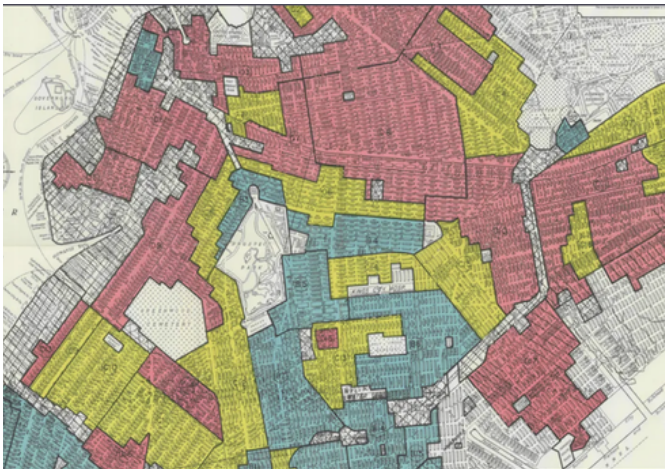
Published from 1936 to 1966, "The Negro Motorist Green Book," was a guidebook for African American travelers that provided a list of hotels, boarding houses, taverns, restaurants, service stations, and other establishments throughout the country that served African American patrons.



The information included in the Green Book helped increase their safety and treatment. During the Jim Crow era, laws enforced segregation in the South between 1877, the post-Reconstruction era, and up through the 1950s at the beginning of the civil rights movement. The term "Jim Crow" came from a minstrel show character and marks almost a century of legal segregation and discrimination against African Americans.

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/traveling-through-jim-crow-america#:~:text=During%20the%20segregation%20era%2C%20discriminatory,food%2C%20restrooms%2C%20and%20lodging.>

## Redlining



Starting in the 1930s, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation conspired to create maps with marked areas considered bad risks for mortgages in a practice known as "red-lining." The areas marked in red as "hazardous" typically outlined Black neighborhoods. The FHA refused to insure houses for Black families, or even insure houses in white neighborhoods that were too close to Black ones. This kind of mapping concentrated poverty as (mostly Black) residents in red-lined neighborhoods had no access or only very expensive access to loans. The practice did not begin to end until the 1970s. Then, in 2008, a system of "reverse red-lining," which extended credit on unfair terms with subprime loans, created a higher rate of foreclosure in Black neighborhoods during the housing crisis.



# *Anti-Semitism in 1930s America*

Anti-Semitism existed in America from early colonial days. Until the Civil War, however, as long as Jews were a small percentage of the country's population, it remained latent. Anti-Semitism became more open in the 1880s with the arrival of approximately two million Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. They came mostly from areas of the Russian empire where religious persecution was common. By the end of the 19th century, conditions for Jews in Russia worsened with the passage of more restrictive legislation and recurrent government sponsored violent attacks against Jewish communities called pogroms. Jews began fleeing in great numbers to the United States. Many Americans who traced their roots to northwestern Europe and Scandinavia grew increasingly concerned with the arrival of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe whom they considered to belong to inferior "races" and additionally in the case of Jews, because of their religious beliefs.

Anti-Semitism was based on a combination of pervasive and contradictory Jewish stereotypes. Jews were portrayed as vulgar "money grabbing" capitalists as well as dangerous revolutionaries. Anti-Semitism spread through every aspect of American society: newspapers and magazines commonly printed anti-Semitic articles and cartoons; anti-Semites held high positions in the federal government particularly in the State department; Jews were excluded from social clubs and faced discrimination in employment opportunities; many towns adopted zoning regulations to prevent the sale of land and houses to Jews. Starting in 1922, following the example of Harvard, many prominent northeastern universities imposed strict quotas on the numbers of Jews they admitted.

During the 1920s, automaker Henry Ford's weekly newspaper, the Dearborn Independent (with a circulation of 700,000) launched a vicious campaign against what he termed "The International Jew" which he accused of everything from threatening the capitalist system to undermining the moral values of the nation, and finally he even held them responsible for World War I.

Half a world away, Ford's tirades against the "international Jewish conspiracy" were enthusiastically received by Adolph Hitler and reprinted in Nazi publications. Hitler saw the Jews as the source of all of Germany's troubles. The Nazi leader articulated his ideology and program in *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) published in the mid-1920s. In this book Hitler expressed the antidemocratic, racist and expansionist views that would eventually be put in practice.

Jews in the United States were deeply concerned by Hitler's rise to power. As German Jews faced increasing persecution and began to seek refuge in other countries, many prominent Americans denounced Hitler's vicious anti-Semitism. Despite pressure from various Jewish groups, however, the U.S. State Department and Congress refused to alter immigration policies to ease the admission of Jewish refugees. President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed several Jews, such as Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, to high office and recognized the importance of Jewish support of his New Deal programs, but he did not challenge the prevailing anti-Jewish sentiments among leadership groups. Refusing to challenge existing immigration quotas, Those in power in Washington allowed selected Jews, such as the physicist Albert Einstein, to enter the country but did little to help the mass of Jewish refugees.



# TAPROOT THEATRE

C O M P A N Y

## Mission Statement:

Taproot Theatre Company tells stories of hope, serving the Pacific Northwest through live theatre and educational programs.



Taproot Theatre Company was founded in 1976 by six friends, five of them graduates from Seattle Pacific University. From its humble beginnings as a touring group, the company is now Seattle's largest mid-size theatre company. Today Taproot Theatre serves over 150,000 people annually throughout the Pacific Northwest with its Jewell Mainstage season, Isaac Studio Theatre season, Touring programs and Acting Studio.

### Producing Artistic Director

Karen Lund

### Associate Artistic Director

Bretteney Beverly

### Director of Production

Mark Lund

### Director of Marketing

Nikki Visel

### Director of Development

Gina Cavallo

## In-school Residencies, Workshops and Tours

Jeremy Ehrlich, Education and Outreach Manager  
206.329.3674

Karissa Chin, Education and Outreach Associate  
206.529.3669

### Midweek Matinees

Jenny Cross, Marketing Associate  
206.529.3676

Box Office: 206.781.9707  
Administrative Office: 206.781.9705

[taproottheatre.org](http://taproottheatre.org)

# Education Programs

## *In-School Residencies & Workshops*

From drama games to acting classes to putting on a production, Taproot Theatre's residencies can range from several weeks to months, or an entire school year. Whether during the school day or after school as an enrichment program, let Taproot's trained teaching artists introduce a whole new world to your students.

Our theatre arts professional will visit your classroom for a workshop that will inspire and excite your students. They will develop basic acting skills and explore non-theatre curriculum using theater as a medium.



## *Camps & Classes*

Taproot Theatre Company's Acting Studio is a year-round instructional program for theatre artists of all ages and experience levels. We are devoted to the wholeness of the artist with the goal of creating a nurturing environment to help each student develop his or her unique gifts.



## *Touring Productions*

The Road Company-performing plays for elementary and secondary schools focusing on issues such as bullying prevention, substance abuse, and friendship skills. Family oriented productions and improv comedy for churches, clubs, office parties and other groups.

