

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

525 Arch Street | Independence Mall
Philadelphia | PA 19106 | T 215 409 6600 | F 215 409 6650
www.constitutioncenter.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ashley Berke
Senior Public Relations Manager
215.409.6693
aberke@constitutioncenter.org

AWARD-WINNING HISTORIAN RAYMOND ARSENAULT TELLS THE STORY OF MARIAN ANDERSON, THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL, AND THE CONCERT THAT AWAKENED AMERICA

Philadelphia, PA (March 18, 2009) – As part of the National Constitution Center’s special programming in conjunction with the world debut of the *America I AM: The African American Imprint* exhibition, historian **Raymond Arsenault** will tell the story of Marian Anderson and the 70th anniversary of her 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial. This program will take place on the eve of the anniversary – Wednesday, April 8, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. Clips of the performance will be played during the event. Admission is free, but reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

Marian Anderson, one of the most enduring and iconic figures of the Civil Rights Movement, was born in Philadelphia in 1897. By 1939, she was already a world famous contralto, touring extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe. In the spring of 1939, when the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow Anderson to perform at Constitution Hall because she was black, Eleanor Roosevelt publicly revoked her membership. Mrs. Roosevelt then convinced Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to allow the concert to proceed, and on Easter Sunday in 1939, Marian Anderson gave a concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for 75,000 people who had flooded the National Mall to experience what has become one of the most memorable concerts in American history.

Raymond Arsenault is the John Hope Franklin Professor of Southern History and Co-Director of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, where he has taught since 1980. His book, *The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America*, describes this dramatic

-MORE-

ADD ONE/MARIAN ANDERSON

milestone in Civil Rights history. A specialist in the political, social and environment history of the American South, Arsenault has taught at the University of Minnesota, Brandeis University and the Universite d'Angers in France, where he was a Fulbright lecturer from 1984-85. From 1980 to 1987, he was the co-director of the Fulbright Commission's Summer Institute on American Studies at the University of Minnesota. In addition, Arsenault has served as a consultant for numerous museums and public institutions, including the National Park Service, the National Civil Rights Museum, and the Rosa Parks Museum.

A book sale and signing will follow the program, courtesy of Joseph Fox Bookshop.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

###