

Rio Americano High School
Grade 9
First Place

During a person's life, he or she will come across a quote that touches them so deeply that they reach a whole new level of inspiration. This is the exact feeling that one receives from Marian Anderson's quote, "As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might." It is almost uncanny how Anderson's quote relates to an important historical time and my own personal life.

The time of the Soviet Union was a time of political turbulence and complete fear. Russia was set on keeping the United States subdued that its government did not realize the pain the country was suffering. Even today, Russia faces economic issues due to the mistakes caused in the 1980's. Russia had a substantial amount of power that could have led to many great things, but instead led to self-destruction. Anderson's quote directly applies to this because Soviet Russia was "holding down" the U.S. and, as a result of "did not soar."

Unlike Russia, I was lucky enough to learn the important life lesson of not holding others down at a very young age. When I was in first grade I wanted desperately to be in the "fast kid" reading group, but I struggled with words like "tasty", "prance", and my least favorite, "February". My best friend, Emily, and I were inseparable. We played monkey bars together, ate lunch together, and even rode the bus together, but one thing we could not do was read together. "Hurry up," or "That's not how you say it." Were words of impatience that frequently came from her mouth, but what could I do, I was in the "dumb kid" reading group. One day I suggested that she come read with my group, so we could be together. Over the next weeks she was reading easier books and not learning the harder words. When she tried to go back to her "smart" group, she could not keep up. Needless to say, I felt horrible and vowed to never to keep anyone down for selfish reasons again. By keeping Emily down I was helping no one. Instead of being happy for Emily I envied her, and as Anderson says, I could not "soar as I otherwise might have." I was blessed to learn this when I was very young.

Marian Anderson's quote is one that has the ability to inspire many and has at least inspired one. The conclusion drawn from her quote is to live your life freely and not to worry about the power or talent someone else possesses. Only by doing this can you really soar and become all you can.