

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write today to respectfully request that you bestow the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Julius Rosenwald, successful entrepreneur and renowned philanthropist, for his lasting contributions to the advancement of African American education and culture during the twentieth century.

Mr. Rosenwald was the President of Sears, Roebuck & Company who used his fortune to enhance the lives of others - establishing museums, community centers, and housing as well as helping Jews in Europe and new immigrants to the U.S. Moved by Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery*, Mr. Rosenwald committed his time and finances to improving the lives of African Americans. Notably, he established the Julius Rosenwald Fund that partnered with local communities to create over 5,300 schools in the south to address the lack of education for African Americans. During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, one-third of all African American children in the south were educated in Rosenwald schools. A 2011 study by two Federal Reserve economists concluded that the schools played a significant role in narrowing the education gap between black and white students in the south.

In addition, Mr. Rosenwald provided matching funds to communities for construction of YMCA's for African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The Rosenwald Fund supported the early NAACP cases that eventually led to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, provided fellowship to African Americans in the arts and sciences, and supported a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including Fisk, Dillard, and Howard. Mr. Rosenwald improved the lives of those in Chicago as well, creating the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry among many other local initiatives.

The esteemed contralto singer Marian Anderson, discriminated against in the Jim Crow South, won a prestigious Julius Rosenwald Fellowship that allowed her to tour Europe, entertaining heads of state, making headlines in American newspapers and creating "Marian Mania" around the world. Returning to the United States, she was invited by President Franklin Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to play the White House in 1936 and, famously, sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee" from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday 1939 after being denied the stage of the Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall by segregationists.

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Julius Rosenwald Fellowships supported many other prominent African American artists and writers, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou. Hundreds of these grants were distributed to promote the outstanding literary and artistic contributions that African American artists were producing during the first half of the twentieth century.

Last Congress, Mr. Rosenwald's distinguished legacy was codified into law with the passage of the Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools Act (H.R. 3250), directing the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study of the sites associated with the life and legacy of Julius Rosenwald which is a critical step towards establishing a National Historical Park.

The near unanimous support for this bill speaks to the significance of Mr. Rosenwald's meaningful contributions to our education system and to the advancement of African Americans throughout the twentieth century.

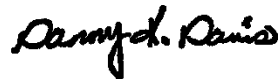
The high honor of the Presidential Medal of Freedom is reserved for those who make significant contributions to the national interests of the United States, and Mr. Julius Rosenwald did just that by forever directing our national interests toward equity and justice through his lasting work.

He was a visionary philanthropist whose altruism and philosophy of giving embodied the Jewish concept of tzedakah – social justice and charity. It's past time to ensure his legacy receives its due place in history. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

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_____/s/_____
Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
André Carson
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Marie Newman
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
David Trone
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress