

Constitutional Corner - Educating America

I've written often of the need to teach Americans about their Constitution and the fundamental principles upon which it is built. This simply must be done, there is no choice in the matter, and our present resources are wholly inadequate for the job. But there are occasional glimmers of hope. So, instead of dissecting a Constitutional topic, as I usually do on these pages, I'd like instead to tell you about a great organization doing yeoman's work to teach America's youth about their Constitution.

There are a few organizations (that I'm aware of) working to wake up Americans and get them familiar with their Constitution. [The American View](#), [The National Center for Constitutional Studies](#), [Thomas Jefferson Center for Constitutional Restoration](#), [Constitution Clubs](#), and my own organization, [Constitution Leadership Initiative](#). I'm certain there are others. We need many more.

One such organization is [Constituting America](#) (CA). I had the pleasure of recently interviewing Founder and Co-Director (with Cathy Gillespie) Janine Turner as well as her daughter and CA National Youth Director: Juliette Turner. The interview will air this Friday morning, 12 February, on "[We the People – The Constitution Matters](#)." If you can't listen to the interview "live" on Friday morning, you will be able to download the podcast later that day or listen later in the weekend to one of the re-broadcasts.

Some of you may be fans of Janine without realizing it. She played the character Maggie O'Connell in the television series Northern Exposure, which earned her both Emmy and Golden Globe nominations, and, more recently, appeared as Dr. Dana Stowe on the Lifetime original series "Strong Medicine." Janine has worked with Sylvester Stallone, Anthony Hopkins and (a very young) Demi Moore, among other big names. She's an author, screenwriter, director, composer, musician, radio talk show host and, finally, Constitutionalist.

For the last five years, Constituting America has sponsored an annual contest aimed at rewarding young musicians, writers and videographers who create songs, Public Service Announcements, videos, and essays (there are several more categories, but you get the picture) extolling the Constitution and why we Americans must know what it says and, more importantly, what it means. Winners in the several age-group contests receive all-expense paid trips to meet mentors in their artistic field, whether in Hollywood, Nashville, or Washington, D.C.

Called "We the Future," the contest ends, fittingly, on Constitution Day: 17 September 2016. Contest rules and entry procedures can be [downloaded here](#). On CA's website you'll find [videos](#) of past winner trips so you can see the exciting time the kids have: meeting Gary Sinese,

jamming with Vince Gill in his home studio, - simply amazing! And to think, your child or grandchild might be the next winner – but only if someone introduces them to the contest.

CA has not ignored adults. Beginning on Monday, 15 February (by no small coincidence, President's Day) CA begins a 90-Day study of the Constitution by way of examining each of the Presidential elections we have had since 1789. Along the way you will encounter changes to the Constitution caused by these elections and other events in the Presidency. For instance, did you know we have the 12th Amendment because of a debacle that occurred in the 1800 election? We have the 22nd Amendment because of FDR's death in office.

What a fitting preparation for what may turn out to be the most critical election in American history this November. A host of Constitutional scholars will be writing and posting a daily essay that can be either read or listened to being narrated in a podcast. I saw the list of scholars and recognized a lot of their names, having read their books and other essays. I've decided to "take the 90-day challenge" and I encourage you to do likewise.

It was one such 90-Day study several years ago that led Juliette Turner to write her groundbreaking book: "Our Constitution Rocks." Juliette was only 14 at the time and so the book's content and layout are geared to kids. I liked the format of the book so much I created a seminar for kids using the book as a text; either Janine or Juliette joins each class live for a short "inspirational message" using Google Hangouts. Juliette's second book, "Our Presidents Rock" is just as well done (I'm told, I have yet to order my copy). And now comes yet another book from this precocious 18-year-old: "That's Not Hay in My Hair," a short novel based on real-life adventures Juliette has had on their 300-acre ranch in Texas (it pays to have a mom with a successful film career).

Folks, here's the deal: we have to get more Americans, particularly young Americans, involved with their foundational documents, and Constituting America has discovered a way to do it. But they need your help. CA is a 501(c)(3), so donations go to a good cause AND get a tax break. But what they need most are more young (and older) Americans to participate in the 90-Day Study and/or enter the "We the Future" contest.

How about passing this information on to everyone you know and let's make this year's contest the biggest ever.

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