White House Historical Association website and lesson plan
http://www.whitehousehistory.org/presentations/depriest-tea-incident/index.html

“A Tempest in a Teapot”

The Racial Politics of First Lady Lou Hoover’s Invitation of Jessie DePriest to a White House Tea

First Lady Lou Hoover’s invitation to Jessie L. DePriest to a White House tea party in 1929 created a storm of protest and indignation. This traditional act of hospitality toward the wife of the first black elected to Congress in the twentieth century created a political crisis for the president and first lady.

This presentation examines the “tempest” from the perspectives of the first lady, the DePriests, and DePriest family descendants.

The story of Oscar and Jessie DePriest highlights the courage and contributions of Oscar Stanton DePriest, the sole black voice in Congress at that time, to the history of the American civil rights struggle and the grace and poise of his wife who ably represented a generation of black women.

First Lady Lou Hoover Encounters Nationwide Controversy →
Mrs. DePriest Guest Of First Lady Of The Land

Mrs. Hoover Invites Congressman’s Wife to Tea At the White House

By SARA PELHAM SPEAKS
WASHINGTON, D. C., June 13.
— (By C. N. S.) — Mrs. Oscar De-Priest was a guest at the White House on the afternoon of June 12, when Mrs. Hoover entertained at one of a series of teas in honor of the wives and relatives of the congressional group.

Mrs. DePriest wore a charming afternoon ensemble of the loveliest pale blue georgette. The simplicity of the costume was relieved only by a beautiful rhinestone buckle, on the left side of the finely pleated skirt. A coat, the shortest of jackets, completed the costume.

She wore a large hat of rosy-gray hair braid, trimmed with a cluster of hand-cut dove-ray velvet leaves, and a velvet rose placed modestly on the underbrim, framed her face becomingly. She carried a lovely bag which matched her hat, rosy-gray watersnake slippers, and a large pointed fox scarf.

Mrs. DePriest was graciously received both by Mrs. Hoover and the ladies of the cabinet, who, as usual, assisted in entertaining.

The invitation to tea was delivered to Mrs. DePriest by messenger last Wednesday. It was engraved on a heavy vellum card, carrying the White House insignia, and read:

Mrs. Hoover requests the pleasure of the company of Mrs. DePriest on Wednesday afternoon, June 12th, at 4 o’clock.

http://www.whitehousehistory.org/presentations/depriest-tea-incident/first-lady-lou-hoover.html

- Newspaper clipping, 1929. Barbara DePriest clipping collection
Recognition Of Representative De Priest
By Hoovers Is Causing Stir In Washington

WASHINGTON, June 16.—The social recognition of Mrs. Oscar De Priest, wife of the negro congressman from the first Illinois district, at the White House has dimmed the Hoover popularity in the south, and made it very embarrassing for such public men as Senator F. M. Simmons, of North Carolina; Senator Thomas Heflin, of Alabama; Bishop James Cannon Jr., of Virginia, and others who bolted Gov. Alfred E. Smith in the late campaign.

Southern congressmen, generally, Republicans as well as Democrats, think that the president and Mrs. Hoover have made a great and irreparable mistake.

As ked today if the president would comment on the matter the White House answered in the negative.

"The reception of the wife of Congressman De Priest," said Senator Simmons, one of the irrevocable anti-Smith Democrats, "was exceedingly unfortunate, and much to be regretted."

"It was a great blow to the social stability of the south," said Senator Lee S. Overman, of North Carolina.

"I regret the incident beyond measure," declared Senator Morris Sheppard, of Texas. "It is recognition of social equality between the white and black races and is fraught with infinite danger to our white civilization."

"I deplore it very much; it was a mistake," Senator Heflin said.

Congressional social circles are stirred up over the prominence given Mrs. De Priest by the Hoovers. Many women of that set are quietly announcing that they will have no further part in Hoover social functions.

One southern senator declared: "Why, I do not know what to expect. If I attend the Hoover receptions I may be asked to go to the table with Mrs. De Priest. The easiest way is to play safe, and remain away. That is what we will have to do."

Already there is a De Priest set in Washington society. De Priest has felt the lash of racial criticism, and resents it. Last fall, soon after he was elected, it became known that Mrs. Vestal, wife of Representative Albert H. Vestal, (Republican, Indiana,) had introduced a resolution to change the constitution of the Congressional Woman's Club, composed of wives and daughters of congressmen, so as to enable the members to bar undesirable persons. This, it was asserted at the time, was aimed at Mrs. De Priest.

Representative George M. Pritchard (Republican, North Carolina), refused to have a room in the house office building by De Priest. In turn, De Priest has stricken the Vestals and Pritchards from his invitation list. He will give a reception June 2, at the Washington auditorium, for the benefit of the Association of the Advancement of Colored People, and all Republican members of congress, except Vestal and Pritchard, are invitees.

There is great rejoicing among the negroes throughout the nation over the triumph of Mrs. De Priest. Negro newspapers are full of favorable comment.

http://www.whitehousehistory.org/presentations/depriest-tea-incident/first-lady-lou-hoover.html

- Newspaper clipping, 1929. Barbara DePriest clipping collection
C. L. and Eunice E. Nethaway to Lou Henry Hoover, 19 June 1929

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- C.L. and Eunice E. Nethaway to Lou Henry Hoover, 19 June 1929
Standing portrait of Jessie DePriest taken by renowned black photographer Addison Scurlock on the day of the “Tea Incident,” June 12, 1929
A photo of Congressman Oscar DePriest

A campaign button for Congressman Oscar DePriest

http://history.house.gov/Blog/Detail/15032395635
Discharge Petition #14 Filed by Oscar De Priest Regarding H. Res. 236, a Resolution to Prevent Discrimination, 01/24/1934 - 03/05/1934

This resolution and discharge petition from Representative Oscar De Priest, a Republican from Illinois, attempted to end racial discrimination in the House of Representatives’ Restaurant. De Priest introduced H. Res. 236 to the House, which called for the creation of a special committee to investigate the House Restaurant’s refusal to serve two African Americans, one of whom was a member of his staff. When the resolution stalled in the Rules Committee, De Priest successfully used a discharge petition to move the bill out and onto the House floor.

http://usnatarchivesexhibits.tumblr.com/post/78650703246/discharge-petition-14-filed-by-oscar-de-priest