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State of California's Board of Behavioral Science Educators

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Using African American (Negro) Spirituals in Coping with Stress by Creative African Americans Who Perform Piano and Vocal European Classical Music in a Racist Industry and Oppressed Society

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This study was designed to examine, through participatory research, the stresses and coping skills of four mentally healthy, creative African Americans who perform European classical music. This study investigates the possibility that traditional African American (Negro) spirituals have served as a tool for relieving stress and venting the particular frustrations that African American classical singers and pianists have experienced while operating within a racist music industry and oppressed society in the United States of America.

The research framework was drawn from several theories, with the basic theory being participatory research process of in-depth descriptive study. This research method uses reflective-action of dialogic cycles between the participant and the researcher. It had the explicit intention of collective investigation of reality to understand knowledge about other realities (Maguire [1987] pp. 5-6). Maguire (1987) elaborates: (1) Participatory research is a systematic approach to personal and social transformation. (2) This type of research is aimed at developing critical consciousness, hopefully to improve the lives of those involved in the research process. (3) The goal of participatory research is to transform the fundamental societal structures and relationships into deeper understandings of the participant's personal values, experiences and choices (pp. 14-15).

The research substantiated that all four participants have similar careers, family support systems, experiences with overt and covert racism, and a strong and binding connection spiritually to their music, however, not always to the African American (Negro) Spirituals. The African American (Negro) spirituals will conceivably become obscure music toward the middle to late 21st Century in the African American Community and in the United States.

There were no hypotheses to prove or disprove in the study. Racism does exist in this country and it has affected many African American lives and careers. Clearly, this study has demonstrated that there still exist areas of African American issues and studies that have not been addressed. Historically, African American scholars are not looking at the Fine Arts and the Performing Arts in combination with other research fields that can be deemed pertinent to African American culture.

PRESENTER:

Ellen Foster-Randle, completed her doctorate in education from the University of San

Francisco in 1998. Her doctoral major was in International Multicultural Education, which is an interdisciplinary major. Her minor was Psychology and Counseling. Her dissertation methodology was participatory research and her topic was "Using the African American (Negro) Spirituals in coping with stress by creative African Americans, who perform piano and vocal European classical music in a racist industry and oppressed society." Dr. Foster-Randle has three Masters of Arts degrees. One M.A. in Music from Lone Mountain College/USF. She has received music scholarships to study European classical/ opera music in the following European countries: Italy, Germany and Austria. She sings in six different languages: Italian, German, Latin, French, Ebonic and Standard English. She is in six "Who's Who" as a professional classical/opera singer. Dr. Foster-Randle also holds masters degrees in Life and Transitional Counseling and in Family Marriage Therapy. She is a registered Marriage Family Therapist Intern (M.F.T.), with the State of California's Board of Behavioral Science Educators. Dr. Foster-Randle is a professional classical opera singer.