

The Miseducation of the Negro Music Educator

Loneka Wilkinson Battiste

University of Houston (USA)

Abstract

In *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson (1933) asserted that the training African American students received at White institutions was incongruent with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in their communities. Still, by virtue of a shared ethnic background, they were expected to return to their communities with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed. Eighty-four years later, his assertion rings true in music education. Institutions seek to recruit African American students to music teacher preparation programs, assuming they will effectively teach African American students upon graduation with little direct training on how to do so. Further, the musical knowledge and skills African American preservice educators tend to embody are often implicitly or explicitly discouraged throughout their academic journey. In this essay, I argue teacher educators can better prepare African American preservice music educators by placing the Black musical aesthetic at the core of their music studies. In doing so, students can develop their musicality while gaining a deeper understanding of the Western classical music aesthetic. The result would be a confident music educator who can incorporate multiple musicalities in their pedagogy. Using my educational journey as an example, this paper includes a description of the current state of music education, an examination of the Black musical aesthetic, and responses to questions this argument might raise.

Keywords

Black musical aesthetic, belonging, identity, Black music

When a Negro has finished his education in our schools, then, he has been equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized white man, but before he steps from the threshold of his alma mater he is told by his teachers that he must go back to his own people from whom he has been estranged.... For this arduous task of serving a race thus handicapped, however, the Negro graduate has had little or no training at all. (Woodson 1933, 7)

In 1999, the Music Educators National Conference convened a group of music educators and others to discuss the future of music education. This meeting, known as the Housewright Symposium, resulted in *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education*, which included a list of twelve agreements. The eighth agreement states, “potential teachers need to be drawn from diverse backgrounds” (Madsen 2020, 206). In the tenth chapter of *Vision 2020*, Carlesta Spearman (2020) suggested one way for music teacher preparation programs to fulfill this agreement is by looking at students who do not have the same background experiences as the typical student accepted into music programs. Since the document was initially published in 1999, there have been widespread efforts to recruit and retain African American¹ preservice music educators. Between 2007 (National Association of Schools of Music 2008) and 2022 (National Association of Schools of Music 2023), the percentage of Black or African American students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program in music at a NASM accredited institution increased from 7.3% to 8.79%. When we consider that the Black population in the United States increased from roughly 11% to 14% between 2000 and 2023 (Martinez and Passel 2025), it would appear the eighth agreement of the Housewright Symposium has not borne sufficient fruit.

Researchers have examined the recruitment strategies of students from marginalized groups (Walker and Hamann 1995), access (Abramo and Bernard 2020; Palmer 2011), and music education students’ perspectives on the lack of diversity in the profession (DeLorenzo and Silverman 2016). However, one issue has received considerably less attention: the Black musical aesthetic (BMA). I use the term “musical aesthetic” to refer to a set of principles and conceptual approaches that characterize and guide the creation and performance of musical expression. African American musicians who embody Black musicality and have extensive training in Western classical music aesthetic² (WCMA) through private lessons, festival participation, competitions, and other related experiences can connect to both. As some aspects of WCMA are incongruent with BMA, musicians whose knowledge and skills lie primarily in BMA and who have little experience with WCMA can find music teacher preparation programs difficult to navigate, leading to academic struggles, exiting the program of study,

or feelings of inadequacy (Robinson and Hendricks 2018) that persist into their teaching careers. Whether or not African American preservice music educators possess familiarity with WCMA, if BMA is not integral to their music teacher preparation program, early-career African American music teachers may have difficulty incorporating them in their pedagogy, making connecting with African American students challenging.

In this article, I contend that if music teacher preparation programs wish to recruit, retain, and adequately prepare a greater number of African American students, they should center BMA in their programs. Using my educational journey as an example, I include a description of the current state of music education, an examination of BMA, and responses to questions this argument might raise. I begin with storytelling, a device used among critical race theorists, for “well-told stories describing the realities of black and brown lives can help readers bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others” (Delgado and Stefancic 2012, 49).

My Miseducation

I was raised in a middle-class African American family in the Deep South. My parents were raised as sharecroppers in rural towns and migrated to a larger city to attend an Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Determined to give their children opportunities denied them due to extreme poverty, my parents enrolled their three daughters in piano lessons. At age five, I quickly learned to read music, sightreading everything I could get my hands on. Because of the competitive nature of the competitions and festivals in which I participated, any time spent on the piano was geared toward refining assigned pieces and playing music of the Western European tradition. I accepted this and dedicated my time and energy to becoming proficient in this tradition.

But before I ever touched a piano, I was bathed weekly in the soundscape of the African American Baptist Church. The organ and piano, the choir's three-part harmony, the congregation's voices joining in hymns, and the sing-song voice of the preacher were part of my experience long before the music of Mozart, Haydn, or Clementi. My parents would often visit the rural churches of their childhood. Set back from the road in wooded areas and resting on wooden planks, the music in these churches would crescendo from an indecipherable mutter to an all-encompassing chorus. Some members would stomp the ground, creating a pulse that vibrated through my entire being. The

vibration and sound of the music were unavoidable. It became embedded in my psyche and my consequent musicality. I spent countless hours devouring the music of Stevie Wonder and Richard Smallwood from my father's extensive record collection. My preferred genres of music for casual listening were R&B, gospel, and rap; my musical world was rich.

After graduating from high school, I studied music education at an HBCU in a nearby city. My vocal repertoire mainly consisted of Western European music with a few arranged spirituals. I learned Italian, English, German, and French diction while singing art songs, arias, and arranged spirituals in my applied lessons. Although I traveled with the university's choir, performing mainly spirituals and a few gospel selections, there was often contention between the voice faculty and the choir director due to differences in required vocal technique. As a result, I learned if I were to be a serious voice student, I would have to abandon singing in any style outside of the bel canto tradition.

After receiving my Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the Midwest, I began teaching at a small, semi-private P-12 school on the campus of the same HBCU where my parents first met. I also attended this school from Pre-K through third grade. The elementary general music classes progressed well, but I struggled with the middle and high school students. The choral program primarily consisted of gospel and R&B music taught by rote. I was determined to change the program quickly into one like the programs I had known; we would sing music of the Western European tradition and eliminate the R&B and gospel from the choral repertoire.

My plan was an utter failure. The students, parents, and administrators strongly resisted everything I tried to accomplish. Students were allowed to drop my class well into the semester and most of the students who remained in the classes barely participated. By the second semester, I dreaded going to work every day and strongly considered the possibility of leaving the position. I was oblivious to my part in the program's lack of progress. As an African American teacher in an African American school, I was disconnected from the musical interests and musicality of the school community. After an eighteen-year investment in my musical education, six of which were in higher education, I had been miseducated.

The story of my first year of teaching reflects the negotiation of one's racial-ethnic-cultural musical identity (Cross 1991) that many African American pre-service teachers experience in music programs. Cheryl I. Harris' (1993) description of whiteness as property better illustrates this in the broader context of

American society. Using the example of her light-skinned grandmother, who, in the racially oppressive and segregated environment of the 1930s, passed³ as white for financial security, she explained how those who were able to pass could gain social capital and economic stability reserved for whites. Whiteness in music studies is seen in the preference for WCMA. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: the centrality of rhythm, pitch, and harmony to musical understanding (Kania 2020); a reliance on written notation for preserving and sharing musical ideas; and a primary focus on sounds (Kania 2024). In music teacher preparation programs, one need not exhibit whiteness phenotypically but must do so aesthetically.

At the same time, BMA, found in the structural characteristics and musical processes of Black musics, is largely ignored, given limited attention, or even discredited. Gradually, the African American preservice teacher learns to accept WCMA as the only standard for school music programs. Unfortunately, this can lead African American music teachers to devalue their musicality and the musicality of their students, enforcing a limited vision of effective music programs.

The Current State

Founded in 1833, the Boston Academy of Music was the first institution to offer music courses for teachers (Crawford 2001). One of the Academy's founders and its first professor, Lowell Mason, pushed for music instruction in public schools. Largely due to his efforts, music became a regular school subject supported by public taxes in 1838, marking the beginning of publicly funded music education in American schools (Crawford 2001). By the end of the nineteenth century, prominent composers of the Western European tradition subsidized their income through university teaching positions. In the post-World War II era, higher education music programs were where "students studied the history and theory of Western European music and received performance instruction chiefly in those repertoires" (Crawford 2001, 693).

Today, WCMA is still prominent in music teacher preparation programs. Most music majors complete core courses in music theory and ear training, musicology, keyboard, and applied lessons on a primary instrument. Music theory, which usually focuses on "generalized musical systems from which composers derive their materials" (Forrest et al. 2018), aural skills, and musicology continue to preference this aesthetic. Some universities offer world music courses as electives or requirements; however, they usually include them as a one-semester course in a program of at least eight semesters. Faculty ground applied

lessons and keyboard classes in WCMA, as well. Students progress to upper-level methods courses that build on the foundation of the core classes. Elementary general music often focuses on teaching musical concepts determined by WCMA. Middle and high school methods courses tend to prepare students to lead ensembles that also privilege the same aesthetic, as evidenced by the structure of local, state, and national festivals, and honor ensembles. Teacher educators carefully choose student teaching placements to provide students with the “best” experience, sometimes determined by festival ratings and instructor knowledge of the program (Fiorentino 2019) and often a reflection of WCMA. After completing the music educator preparation program, faculty expect African American graduates to thrive in African American communities by virtue of being Black, when much of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that might have supported them in doing so were not nurtured or even openly discouraged.

The foundations of public music education and music studies in higher education, a reflection of elite European desires, remain apparent in music teacher preparation programs. I do not argue that Western European classical music is invalid as an area of study. I do, however, suggest that the needs of many African American preservice music educators and American K–12 students do not align with the desires of nineteenth-century Western European elites. I propose music teacher educators reconsider the role of BMA in preparing African American music educators.

The Black Musical Aesthetic

You hear and see it in the rousing performances of gospel choirs. You feel it in the crowd-stirring experience of HBCU bands. It permeates New Orleans second lines. You find it in the soulful renditions of Anita Baker and Aretha Franklin. It was palpable with B. B. King and Lucille. It is prevalent in many musical genres, including rap, R&B, pop, jazz, and more. It is sometimes difficult to describe in the moment, but you know it when you sense it. The principles that guide the creation and performance of these genres and many Black musical traditions is known as the Black musical aesthetic (BMA).

I remember preparing for a concert of the Moses Hogan Chorale, one of two groups I participated in under the distinguished musician for whom the ensemble was named. We were warming up for a performance with *God’s Gonna Set This World on Fire* but were performing with very little “spirit.” Finally, he stopped to inform us our performance was missing the mark. He said, “Remember back in church when you would just...” then he patted his foot on the strong

beats and clapped on the weak beats while lightly bouncing and singing the first phrase of the song. Instantly we understood what the notes on the page could not represent. There was an immediate change in our performance that embodied BMA.

Battiste (2024) examined the work of several ethnomusicologists, including Mellonee Burnim (1985) and Portia Maultsby (2014) to explain BMA. The aesthetic highlights the significance of a wide range of timbres on one instrument or within an ensemble, often in a manner that is deemed undesirable in WCMA. It also includes the mechanics of delivery, such as call-response form, melismas, improvisation, syncopation, and polyrhythms. Finally, it recognizes the importance of body movement and participatory performance in the style of delivery. These areas of aesthetic significance are essential for understanding Black musicality and full participation in Black musics.

A Critical Assessment

Currently, most music programs in institutions of higher learning do not address BMA to a large degree, if at all. You might ask, “What is the issue with African American students engaging with WCMA? Is not the purpose of education to learn something new?” To this, I would say there is no issue with that aesthetic being integral to the education of African American preservice music educators. On the contrary, I believe this would positively impact students’ overall musicality. However, music researchers thoroughly document the privileging of WCMA (Bradley 2015; Hess 2015; Kajikawa 2019). Although scholars have asserted that understanding Black music is central to understanding American music (Small 2012) and argued for the rigorous study of Black music in programs of study (De Lerma 1970; Sarath 2018), issues of privileging WCMA in the education of African American preservice music educators persist.

First, foregrounding WCMA establishes a hierarchy of musics in African American preservice teachers' minds, one that places Western musicality at the top and Black musicality some place beneath. For a teacher committed to creating the best program possible for their students, a bias against Black musicality can make connecting with African American students difficult. Second, although African American students often enter music programs with strong aural skills and an understanding of chordal relationships, transposition, and improvisation (McCall 2022, 209; Robinson and Hendricks 2018,29), WCMA conflicts with the musicality many African Americans embody. Therefore,

despite having high musical ability, students may struggle in courses where instructors teach musical concepts solely from a Western perspective.

Western notation presents a particular issue for BMA. “But” one may counter, “notation is essential for musical analysis and a written record of music. Black musics are no exception. Why then should its centrality in music programs be questioned?” Technically, you can notate Black music. Rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamics, articulations, tempo, and instrumentation exist in both Western classical music and Black musics. However, BMA cannot be so easily transcribed. It is not merely the presence of sonic elements that presents an issue but rather the structural characteristics and musical processes (Wilson 1974, 20) essential for understanding and performing the music. Some early musicologists, such as the compilers of the first collection of songs of enslaved Black Americans, realized that Western notation was insufficient to represent spirituals fully and cautioned readers not to take their transcriptions at face value.⁴ Other musicologists analyzed transcriptions of such songs and determined their origins were in white hymnody without ever hearing them. Today, we risk making the same mistake if we look to Western notation to capture the totality of BMA.

I pause here to examine the idea of “performance” as one example of the difference between BMA and WCMA. Performance in BMA almost always implies participatory performance rather than presentational performance.⁵ For example, consider a solo vocal recital of Western classical music. The soloist would perform pieces within strict stylistic guidelines, as written, with little or no improvisation. The audience would be expected to listen quietly and applaud at specific points in the recital. Conversely, if someone performs a solo in a Black church, one could expect improvisation, repetition with the flow of the “Spirit,” or an impromptu addition of a related song. The audience would be expected to clap, stand, rock, or give acclamations throughout the “performance.”⁶ A polite round of applause at the end would mean the “performance” was a disaster.

What about compositions and arrangements by Black composers? Ensembles and solo artists already perform these in institutions around the world. Furthermore, they do not fit into BMA because they are notated and performed in a presentational rather than a participatory manner. Indeed, such compositions are not generally participatory unless specified in the score. Participants also usually center the Western musical aesthetic in performing such pieces. One should not aim to center BMA simply because the composer or arranger is Black. Still, I argue that even when the performance of Black music is

presentational, other elements of the BMA may be present. The composer or arranger determines if or to what degree they should be adhered to in performance.

One might say that all music teachers must meet certain standards. For example, in order to obtain licensure, preservice music educators in many states must pass the Praxis II Music exam. Kenneth Elpus (2015) found that Black students score significantly lower than students of all other ethnicities on the exam. This problem deserves closer examination. Perhaps the assumption persists that Black students will consistently score lowest on any test of competency, even if it is taboo to speak it. This was evident in the infamous remarks of the former Executive Director and CEO of the National Association for Music Education, who in a 2016 meeting of arts organization leaders stated that the field of music education was not diverse because “Blacks and Latinos lack the keyboard skills needed for this field” and that “music theory is too difficult for them as an area of study” (Williams 2016). But to those who intimately know the robust musicality of the African American community, this situation merits a closer look.

The Praxis II Music: Content and Instruction exam aims to measure “indicators of the beginning educator’s professional readiness to teach K–12 music in each of the three major music education specialties: general, instrumental, and vocal music education” (Educational Testing Service, 5). Although the test claims to “reflect the instructional and cultural diversity and inclusiveness of modern music education settings” (5), 50% of the overall score is based on music history and performance knowledge from a decidedly Western European perspective. That means for at least 50% of the exam, African American students are asked to show mastery of musical knowledge that counters the musicality that might serve as the foundation for their musical knowledge. Nevertheless, this exam remains part of state licensure requirements, even though it does not address much musical knowledge needed to work in Black communities.

As educators, we know the brain grasps and retains information longer if connected to prior knowledge. Placing BMA at the core of music teacher preparation programs would support many African American students in connecting new knowledge to prior knowledge, thus impacting their planning, instruction, and assessment. I now return to storytelling to illustrate how I began undoing my miseducation.

An Answer and More Questions

But deep in my heart, the answer it was in me
And I made up my mind to define my own destiny. (*The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, Lauryn Hill 1999)

Amid constant scrutiny, discipline problems, lack of participation, lack of support from administration, and a devastating personal loss, I settled into my second semester of teaching, hoping to last until the end of the year when I could go to a learning environment where I could be more effective. However, a turning point soon came. That year, the movie Dreamgirls was released. In passing, I mentioned to my students that we might be able to sing a song or two from the musical for the end-of-year concert. The mere mention of this musical changed the attitude of the students. They soon developed the idea of doing several numbers from the musical as a production. The students listened to the songs and learned them semi-independently by ear. Some volunteered to assist with costumes and publicity, while others not enrolled in my classes received special permission to attend rehearsals. The performance, which included about fifteen students on stage and twenty-five students altogether, was given to an audience of approximately 300. The musical became an annual event. Our final musical was held four years later and included thirteen grade levels. It was held in the university's indoor arena, supported by parents, teachers, and school staff, featured approximately 250 students, and had the most attendance of any non-sporting school event that year.

Still, I wanted to provide opportunities for the students to have deeper musical experiences, and “my” program needed a drastic change to become “our” program. The most impactful change was a necessary response to a virtually unrealistic job demand. The administration would often require all music students in grades Pre–K through twelve to perform with less than two weeks’ notice. The first time this happened, the students were not singing above a whisper in my class. How were we supposed to prepare a performance for the entire school community? With the performance looming over my head and fear of failure creeping in, I reluctantly returned to that which I had chosen to eliminate: gospel music. The same students who refused to learn for six weeks became engaged, learning the song in less than ten minutes. The students were not the problem. My dismissal of BMA was.

Most importantly, I reexamined my initial position of eliminating R&B and gospel music from the curriculum. I realized that, while I enjoyed playing piano and singing in a variety of styles, I was ignoring this same musicality

that was central to the students' musical identities. Although they had little or no experience reading music, their ability to participate in aural-based musical traditions and sing and anticipate harmonies was very advanced. I used their experience in aural traditions to have them examine chord progressions and learn other musical concepts. Throughout my tenure at the school, several aspects of BMA became central to our musical experiences. By the end of the second year, we were singing a diverse repertoire of music with most of the students engaged all the time.

Embracing BMA was essential for me effectively teaching the African American students at my school. I hear a skeptical voice saying, "You cannot assume all African Americans identify with BMA." I could not agree more. I offer here Geneva Gay's (2018) model of cultural dynamics, which shows the existence of characteristics common among those who have a strong affiliation with an ethnic group. The less affiliation one has with the ethnic group, the less they tend to exhibit these characteristics. Mitigating variables (for example, age, gender, and sexual orientation) affect one's expressive behaviors, such as thinking, writing, and speaking. In reference to music education, one might add "musicking" (Small, 1998) to the list of expressive behaviors. For Small (1998), "to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing" (9). When applied to the current discussion, this model demonstrates that BMA may not exist equally or at all for every African American student. However, Black music has been highly influential in the development of American music and is prevalent in African American communities. Therefore, I hold to my original assertion about the importance of BMA in the education of African American students.

It would be equally wrong to suppose that African American students cannot appreciate and deeply connect with Western European music. Many African American musicians are outstanding performers on their respective instruments, world-renown conductors and composers, and thrive in various academic areas of Western European music. I am an African American musician who loves performing Western European music. I paid for a portion of my first year of college by winning piano competitions. I also loved singing in my high school choir and honor choirs. I have fond memories of my undergraduate institution's annual Handel's *Messiah* performance and singing Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the New Orleans Symphony Chorus. Today, students arriving early to my functional piano class will find me practicing a Bach Invention

or a Chopin Prelude. I know numerous Black musicians whose proficiency in Western European music far exceeds mine.

However, my musical education was incomplete. I graduated able to analyze and perform Western European music but unable to incorporate BMA in my pedagogy. A more detrimental miseducation occurs in musicians possessing significantly greater knowledge of BMA than WCMA. I have watched African American musicians who thrived in Black musical traditions apply for admission to music teacher preparation programs. Their piano skills included playing by ear with ease, improvising, incorporating complex chord progressions, and anticipating chord changes in unknown songs. I have also watched the same musicians, if not rejected at college entrance audition, weeded out of music programs after repeatedly failing music theory, change majors, or drop out of college altogether. Frequently, they complete music teacher preparation programs with feelings of inadequacy, doubtful they can succeed as music educators. They are unaware they possess a treasure trove of musicality that could invigorate and transform their pedagogy. Change is critical.

At this point, you might be asking: Does this argument apply to musicians from other marginalized ethnic groups? Possibly. Any group that experiences a similar challenge in music education should see their musical aesthetic at the center of teacher preparation programs; however, I caution the reader to avoid uncritically applying this perspective to any other group. Too often, scholars lump the needs of every non-white racial-ethnic-cultural group into the single category of BIPOC, and they generalize about how to meet the needs of this heterogeneous group best. Not only does this center whiteness, but it also fails to address each group's specific needs and concerns or the intersectional nature of the human experience. As stated before, several variables will determine whether or to what degree African American students embody BMA. If it is impossible to make blanket assumptions about all African Americans, it would be preposterous to propose arguments for all marginalized ethnic groups. Therefore, I do not intend my assertions about BMA and the miseducation of African American preservice music educators as a dismissal of anyone, but rather a show of respect for the richness of everyone's experiences.

The implementation I envision would require a reorganization (as opposed to dismantling) of the current system. I suggest incorporating BMA throughout music teacher preparation programs of study, including within music theory, musicology, ensembles, keyboard, applied lessons, methods courses, and clinical experiences. This would require examining taken-for-granted assumptions about expertise in music. Many professors considered experts in their fields

may not be equipped to lead these reimagined courses. Therefore, musicians well-versed in WCMA and BMA would lead or co-teach courses.

I do not aim to dismiss the robust work already being done in music programs, but rather to broaden and deepen the current foci to better reach those students whose musicality is formed through what is quintessentially American music, Black music. Doing so would increase the musicianship of all students. All students would gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to explore multiple musical worlds. Music teacher educators would then produce more students, and eventually professors, able to center BMA at all levels of music education.

A reimagined education for African American preservice music educators has broad implications for “The Negro Music Educator.” Bringing BMA to the center of music teacher preparation might reverse longstanding issues with recruiting and retaining African American students. Such action could graduate music educators who value and can incorporate multiple musical aesthetics. Students familiar with Black musics but not BMA would have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and engagement with this vital aspect of American music. Black music might cease to be treated as a cultural commodity in ensembles and given the rigor it merits. Finally, African American preservice music educators and K–12 students may not be seen as a disadvantaged group in need of enrichment, but as having a strong musical foundation on which they can build new musical knowledge.

Conclusion

Difference must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. (Lourde 1984, 60)

In this essay, I argued that music teacher preparation programs do not currently meet the needs of many African American preservice music educators well. I proposed centering BMA as an alternative to a primary focus on WCMA. This change would allow students to connect what they know to what they may not know and prepare them for incorporating it into their teaching. To recruit an African American student to a music teacher preparation program, invalidate their musicality, insist they conform to WCMA with no attention to BMA, observe their struggle to navigate both worlds, then watch them fail to complete the program or graduate without the requisite knowledge to meet the needs of the students in their communities is unethical. Furthermore, it is a waste of

resources, energy, and time for everyone. No one should recruit a student to their institution if they are unwilling to learn how to teach them effectively. Our potential differences are an opportunity to create richer experiences for all students.

About the Author

Loneka Wilkinson Battiste is Associate Professor of Choral Music Education in the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses and supervises research of M.M. and DMA music education students. Loneka brings over twenty years of experience teaching music in school and community settings in Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas. Focusing on Afro-diasporic musical traditions, she has given speeches and papers in Accra, Ghana and the following Brazilian cities: Crato, João Pessoa, Ouro Preto, Recife, and Salvador de Bahia. She is the Social Justice Chair for NAFME-Texas and serves on the Smithsonian Folkways Education Committee and the advisory board of the *Bulletin for the Council of Research in Music Education*. Her areas of scholarly interest include the Black musical aesthetic in music education and asset-based pedagogies.

References

- Abramo, Joseph M., and Cara F. Bernard. 2020. Barriers to access and university schools of music: A collective case study of urban high school students of color and their teachers. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* 226: 7–26.
- Allen, William F., Charles P. Ware, and Lucy M. Garrison. 1867. *Slave songs of the United States*. P. Smith.
- Bradley, Deborah. 2015. Hidden in plain sight: Race and racism in music education. In *The Oxford handbook of social justice in music education*, edited by Cathy Benedict, 190–203. Oxford University Press.
- Battiste, Loneka W. 2024. Black music aesthetics in general music part I: Exploring Black musics. *Journal of General Education* 38 (1): 7–13.
- Burnim, Mellonee. 1985. The Black gospel music tradition: A complex of ideology, aesthetic, and behavior. In *More than dancing: Essays on Afro-American music and musicians*, edited by Irene V. Jackson, 147–67. Greenwood.
- Crawford, Richard. 2001. *America's musical life: A history*. Norton.

- Cross, Jr., William E. 1991. *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity*. Temple University.
- De Lerma, Dominique-René. 1970. Black music now! *Music Educators Journal* 57 (3): 25–29.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2017. *Critical race theory: An introduction*. 3rd ed. New York University.
- DeLorenzo, Lisa C., and Marissa Silverman. 2016. From the margins: The underrepresentation of Black and Latino students/teachers in music education. *Visions of Research in Music Education* 27 (1): Article 3.
- Educational Testing Service. 2022. Music: Content and instruction. *The Praxis Study Companion*. <https://praxis.ets.org/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-ets-praxisLibrary/default/pdfs/5114.pdf>
- Elpus, Kenneth. 2015. Music teacher licensure candidates in the states: A demographic profile and analysis of licensure examination scores. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 63 (3): 314–35.
- Fiorentino, Matthew. 2019. Considering antiracism in student teacher placement. *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 28 (3): 58–71.
- Forrest, David, Severine Neff, and John Reef. 2018. American music theory, 1995–2017. In *Oxford Bibliographies*. Oxford University Press.
- Gay, Geneva. 2018. *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. 3rd ed. Teachers College.
- Harris, Cheryl I. 1993. Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review* 106 (8): 1707–91.
- Hess, Juliet. 2015. Decolonizing music education: Moving beyond tokenism. *International Journal of Music Education* 33 (3): 336–47.
- Kajikawa, Loren. 2019. The possessive investment in classical music. In *Seeing race again: Countering colorblindness across the disciplines*, edited by Daniel HoSang, George Lipsitz, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Luke Charles Harris, 155–74. University of California Press.
- Kania, Andrew. 2020. *Philosophy of Western music: A contemporary discussion*. Routledge.
- Kania, Andrew. 2024. The philosophy of music. In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. Stanford. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/music/>
- Loneka Wilkinson Battiste. 2026. The Miseducation of the Negro Music Educator. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 25 (2): 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.22176/act25.2.6>

- Lourde, Audre. 1984. The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*, edited by Audre Lorde, 110–23. Crossing Press.
- Madsen, Clifford G., ed. 2020. *Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the future of music education*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Martinez, Gracie and Jeffrey S. Passel. 2025. *Facts about the U.S. Black population*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/fact-sheet/facts-about-the-us-black-population/#:~:text=The%20Black%20popula-tion%20has%20grown%20by%20more%20than,10%25%20of%20the%20Black%20population%20was%20foreign%20born>
- Maultsby, Portia K. 2014. The translated African cultural and musical past. In *African American music: An introduction*, 2nd ed., edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, 3–22. Routledge.
- McCall, Joyce M. 2022. “Straight, No Chaser”: An unsung blues. In *Handbook of critical race theory in education*, 2nd ed., edited by Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson, 203–220. Routledge.
- National Association of Schools of Music. 2008. *Higher education arts data services music data summaries 2006–2007*. <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/04/M-2006-2007-HEADS-Data-Summaries.pdf>
- National Association of Schools of Music. 2023. *Higher education arts data services music data summaries 2021–2022*. <https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/09/M-2021-2022-HEADS-Data-Summaries.pdf>
- Palmer, C. Michael. 2011. Challenges of access to post-secondary music education programs for people of color. *Visions of Research in Music Education* 18 (1): 1–22. <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/vrme/vol18/iss1/7>
- Robinson, DeeJay, and Karin S. Hendricks. 2018. Black keys on a white piano: A Negro narrative of double-consciousness in music education. In *Marginalized voices in music education*, edited by Brent Talbot, 28–45. Routledge.
- Sarath, Ed. 2018. *Black music matters: Jazz and the transformation of music studies*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Wesleyan University.
- Small, Christopher. 2012. *Music of the common tongue: Survival and celebration in African American Music*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Loneka Wilkinson Battiste. 2026. The Miseducation of the Negro Music Educator. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 25 (2): 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.22176/act25.2.6>

Spearman, Carlesta. 2020. How will societal and technological changes affect the teaching of music? In *Vision 2020: The Housewright symposium on the future of music education*, edited by Clifford Madsen, 143–72. Rowman and Littlefield.

Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. University of Chicago.

Walker, Linda M., and Donald L. Hamann. 1995. Minority recruitment: The relationship between high school students' perceptions about music participation and recruitment strategies. *Bulletin-Council for Research in Music Education* 124: 24–38.

Williams, Walt. 2016, May 12. CEO dateline—Music education association CEO out after alleged racial comments. *CEO update*. <https://ceoupdate.com/ceo-dateline-music-education-association-ceo-out-after-alleged-racial-comments>

Wilson, Olly. 1974. The significance of the relationship between Afro-American music and West African music. *The Black Perspective in Music* 2 (1): 3–22.

Woodson, Carter G. 1933. *The miseducation of the Negro*. Africa World Press.

Notes

¹ I use the term “African American” to refer to ethnicity: a Black American of African descent. I use the term “Black” to refer to a racialized category whose origins can be traced back to the African continent.

² I use the term “Western classical music aesthetic” to refer to music most frequently taught in academic institutions, encompassing music of the Medieval, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th and 21st centuries. This discussion does not address Western “folk” traditions or popular music.

³ Passing is a term used to describe multiracial Americans who moved partially or entirely in white society as a white person because they physically appeared to be white.

⁴ In *Slave Songs of the United States*, Allen et al (1867, vi) explained it was difficult “to express the entire character of these negro ballads by mere musical notes and signs. The odd turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at different irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on the score as the singing of birds or the tones of an Æolian Harp.”

⁵ I am using Thomas Turino's (2008) definitions of participatory performance and presentational performance. Participatory performance is defined as "a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different role, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role" (46). Presentational performance occurs in "situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing" (46).

⁶ Although I use the word "performance," in a Black church it would not be called such.