

# The African American Opera *VANQUI* Transcends Cultural Norms to Assist Humanism in Medicine



## [AAMC Grant Award](#)

The African American opera *VANQUI* composed by Leslie Savoy Burrs, libretto by John A. Williams is the focus of the grant award for Humanism in Medicine received by Ohio State University College of Medicine from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). The project is titled: *Traveling on Time, the Next Horizon for Health: Journeys to Equity, Inclusiveness, and Transformation of Racism to Humanism*

## [Project Description](#)

This project will implement a series of virtual module presentations created by composer Leslie Savoy Burrs to juxtapose systemic racism with concepts of humanism. The process for this series will be to integrate arts and humanities, using segments from the opera *VANQUI*, with reflection questions, humanistic concepts and possible solutions based on the dynamics of systemic racism illustrated in the opera. Each module will serve as a springboard to address specific areas of concern. The project team consisting of Principal Investigator, Jennifer Garvin, PhD, MBA and team members Leslie Burrs, Linda Stone MD, MA and Jeff Barbee DMA, MA will provide commentary and pose questions to contrast threats to health from racism, with humanistic concepts and values. The series will use *VANQUI* as a focal point for participants to develop a digital portfolio of expressive arts renderings and journal entries, culminating in a personal and professional action plan to build equity.



### [Burrs Brief Bio](#)

Leslie Savoy Burrs' work, as an award winning composer, spans the spectrum of jazz to opera, chamber music to orchestra, solo voice to chorus,

collaborating with internationally prominent artists and professionals in the diverse fields of literature, medicine, psychology, music and visual art. Performances of his concert productions have been presented at the Sorbonne in Paris, the Schomburg Center in New York City, Annenberg's Zellerbach Theater, Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia, Opera America Conferences, New York and PBS radio and television, universities and colleges throughout the United States.

### [Contact Information:](#)

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## [VANQUI Reviews](#)

The Washington Post *VANQUI* review:

“ ... the piece was no less than dazzling.” “... musically appealing and emotionally powerful, due equally to Burrs (also a flutist) and librettist John A. Williams, both African Americans.”

Ms. La Fleur Paysour, Public Affairs, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture states:

“ *VANQUI* “...has broad appeal as culture, entertainment and enlightenment and is a clear example of how the performing arts can bring a community together to celebrate itself, its history, its pride and its optimism.”

Charles T. Downey, ION Arts:

“ Burrs' (*Vanqui*) music, which fluidly embraces classical, jazz, blues, and gospel elements, has the majesty and sophistication of Duke Ellington without being derivative.”