

## Twanging Black Family Heritage Books Slides

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*Reconstruction through the Dawn of the 21st Century*

Welcome. This session overviews the three steps of Black family heritage books as it immerses us in a musical extravaganza. The music is country, which I have long researched as foundational in Black culture.

The music demonstrates how twang releases tension between slavery horror stories and ancestral honor stories in African-ancestored family heritage books. The music also explains the Agapic Agency Theory of these books, as applied at The HBCUHeritageHome.com genealogy book research and tourism institute. I suggest you sit back, relax, and prepare to delight yourself to a 20-minute visit to ancestral home in African American heritage via song.

My 2023 dissertation and overall research and activism promote more publication, understanding, and exhibition of Black family heritage books. The goal is to maximize these books' positive impact on intergenerational Black families' well-being.

An authoritative, positive over negative, voice of ancestral home is exemplified in twenty-three 21<sup>st</sup>-century African-ancestored published genealogies I studied for my dissertation and about a hundred of these books from all eras that I have since studied. These family heritage books utilize and are understandable by literal and figurative references to song in ancestral memory.

According to the Agapic Agency Theory of 21st-century African-ancestored published genealogies, during the process of crafting ancestral self-identity in these books, descendants are seeking ancestral home. That is, we seek domestic surroundings filled with ancestral heroes to whom the descendants belong, with an abundance of information available about ancestral heroic activities, and with the ability to be spiritually in touch with and act out ancestral virtuous deeds, to embody them.

Ancestral stories in Black genealogy books are first spiritually known via Deep Roots, second intellectually understood by interpreting oral history and other records for Deep Knowledge, and third embodied by positive ancestral self-identity to reveal Deep Self. Descendants arrive home when we walk in ancestral footsteps, retelling the ancestral stories in the leaves, the pages, of the books.

Deep Roots, Deep Knowledge, and Deep Self, then, are both the three themes present in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Black genealogy books and the three components that interact consecutively to form the Agapic Agency Theory of these books played out at The HBCUHeritageHome.com.

Now let's learn a bit more about these Deep Roots, Deep Knowledge, and Deep Self themes of Black family heritage books and listen to a song that well captures each theme and the Agapic Agency Theory of the books.

### **Deep Roots Theme of Ancestral Reverence**

The Deep Roots theme relates to heroizing ancestors. The Deep Roots theme conveys ancestral elevation, the depth of spiritual and heroic connection to and reverence for ancestors that authors display. The Deep Roots theme often shows up in the books' titles as well as in dedications and acknowledgments. A quintessential song that helps to explain the Deep Roots theme is *He Walked on Water* by Randy Travis (1990). This song makes clear that ancestral reverence simply is, is by descendant choice; it is not dependent on outside verification for its being.

**Now, let's listen to *He Walked on Water* to better understand the DEEP ROOTS THEME**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itI0tvaRxB8>

In carrying out the first of the three steps to optimal ancestral home, the Deep Roots theme, authors describe ancestors as heroes. These heroes range from everyday heroes to extraordinary heroes, whose actions deliberately were for the benefit of their children and their children's children ad infinitum. Heroic actions include Revolutionary and Civil war service, land ownership, and educational pursuits. The ancestors are described as people who contributed to the world in a variety of labors, most notably as creators of homes full of positive memories and as teachers of their children. It is with the Deep Roots conception of heroic ancestors in their hearts, in their spirits, that authors of the studied books then interpret records about family heritage, the Deep Knowledge theme.

### **Deep Knowledge Theme of Positive Interpretation**

The Deep Knowledge theme conveys the underlying meaning of ancestral stories. It relates to interpreting ancestral records through the ancestral hero lens. The stories are evidence that such stories are obtainable. Via this theme, writers convey that no matter one's individual experiences, ancestral experiences, or what others, including in records, say or do not say about one's ancestors, one can deeply know ancestors by maintaining or elevating their glory when reading outside or family records and ultimately use that knowledge to deeply know ancestral self. Writers via this theme also convey relationships with family and friends, service to others and country, and faith and perseverance are what matter most in life. This is a broad message about how to come to understanding one's life that the genealogy book writers convey. A song that well exemplifies the Deep Knowledge theme is *This Ain't Nothin'* by Craig Morgan (2008).

**Now, let's listen to *This Ain't Nothin'* to better understand the DEEP KNOWLEDGE THEME**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSdltuvBxc8>

The Deep Knowledge phase is where family members and others use story to tell about the ancestors' original occurrences. This is where descendants listen to oral history and examine

other records for understanding. It is where, fed by basic bread and water, the mind reigns and takes in what it will. This is where one learns the ancestral stories and songs optimally under the tutelage of heroic ancestors so the stories then can be retold to self and other descendants in the last of the three steps to positive ancestral self-identity in 21st-century published Black genealogies. This last step is the Deep Self theme.

### **Deep Roots Theme South of Positive Ancestral Self-identity**

The Deep Self theme final step of the Agapic Agency Theory encompasses arriving at positive ancestral self-identity. The Deep Self theme is the ultimate underlying purpose of the family stories. It is the positive ancestral self-identity unstated goal of the authors. To the degree that positive ancestral self-identity is stated as a goal in similar words, it is a goal the authors want family members and other African-ancestored descendants of early and later America to reach. That the self who knows, honors, and is honored by heroic ancestors is possible and highly beneficial is the books' broad message about life and underlies why the authors shared the stories. Beyond their stated purposes, the authors want readers to know that positive ancestral self-identity is achievable, able to be embodied, for all via ancestral hero knowledge. A song that well exemplifies the Deep Self theme is *Who I Am* by Jessica Andrews (2000). As the singer tells of how, no matter her stumbles or future, she is deeply satisfied with her life and knows it will continue to be good because of her solid ancestral past, she personifies the ancestral self-confidence that is the pot of gold awaiting all who reach ancestral home.

**Now, let's listen to *Who I Am* to better understand the DEEP SELF THEME**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd9zYKLepCw>**

### **Agapic Agency Theory of 21<sup>st</sup>-century African-ancestored Family Heritage Books**

In theory summation, the Agapic Agency Theory via its component themes of Deep Roots, Deep Knowledge, and Deep Self explains that African-ancestored descendants' path to ancestral home in our published genealogy books is a three-step process. Step one is hold ancestors in valorized esteem. Step two is interpret data, including oral history, through that ancestral hero lens. And step three is arrive at positive ancestral self-identity.

The enduring hit *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* clarifies my Agapic Agency Theory through its spirituality, humanity, and genius in breaking the tension between slavery horror stories and homey ancestral honor stories. Published in 1878 by prolific Black composer James A. Bland (1854-1911), *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* transcends the horrors of slavery via the emotional appeal of memories of home. Bland presents an honorable craving for ancestral home. It is because lowering pitch to the major notes, including C, D, E, F, and mostly G chords, is a way musical tension is broken that the Agapic Agency voice so well explains how authors of African-ancestored genealogies break the tension between slavery horror stories and homey, heroic ancestral honor stories.

**Now, let's listen to *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* to better understand the AGAPIC AGENCY THEORY <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyhQYOxTHaw>**

Both the exemplary songs we were graced with in this session and African-ancestored published family heritage books overpower negative images by focusing on ancestral heroism, healthy knowledge of ancestors, and positively embodied ancestral selves.

This ends our session for today. I hope you've enjoyed this stroll down African American ancestral memory lane via song. May you be encouraged to think musically when you see Black genealogy books or prepare your own. And may you include family songs in your books. For more information about Black family heritage books, including curating, researching, publishing, and exhibiting them, please stay tuned to the developing HBCUHeritageHome.com website or contact me at [pfoster@HBCUHeritageHome.com](mailto:pfoster@HBCUHeritageHome.com). I welcome questions and comments.

### Songs Usage Permission in Presentation

[https://www.google.com/search?sca\\_esv=583396942&rlz=1C1CHZN\\_enUS1012US1012&q=how%20do%20i%20get%20permission%20to%20use%20a%20song%20in%20a%20video&ved=2ahUKEwjBzOK0yMuCAxWUg2oFHTV4CPEQmoICKAV6BAgGEBA&biw=1280&bih=643&dpr=1.5#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:9148cad5,vid:Mrk3y9Ljzn0,st:26](https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=583396942&rlz=1C1CHZN_enUS1012US1012&q=how%20do%20i%20get%20permission%20to%20use%20a%20song%20in%20a%20video&ved=2ahUKEwjBzOK0yMuCAxWUg2oFHTV4CPEQmoICKAV6BAgGEBA&biw=1280&bih=643&dpr=1.5#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:9148cad5,vid:Mrk3y9Ljzn0,st:26)

You can also use music that's in the public domain or music from YouTube videos with a Creative Commons license.

### DEEP ROOTS THEME SONG

Travis, R. (1990). He walked on water [Song]. On *No holdin' back*. Warner Bros.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itl0tvaRxB8>

He Walked on Water Randy Travis 1990 Warner Bros.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itl0tvaRxB8>

[https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?SearchForm.View\\_Count=&SearchForm.Main\\_Search=Title&SearchForm.Main\\_Search\\_Text=He+Walked+on+Water&SearchForm.Sub\\_Search=Performer&SearchForm.Sub\\_Search\\_Text=Randy+Travis&SearchForm.Search\\_Type=all](https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?SearchForm.View_Count=&SearchForm.Main_Search=Title&SearchForm.Main_Search_Text=He+Walked+on+Water&SearchForm.Sub_Search=Performer&SearchForm.Sub_Search_Text=Randy+Travis&SearchForm.Search_Type=all)

<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#/ace/search/title/he%20walked%20on%20water/performer/randy%20travis?at=false&searchFilter=SVW&page=1>

### DEEP KNOWLEDGE THEME SONG

Morgan, C. (2008). This ain't nothin' [Song]. On *That's why*. BNA.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSdItuvBxc8>

This Ain't Nothin'      Craig Morgan      2008   BNA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSdItuvBxc8>

[https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?SearchForm.View\\_Count=&SearchForm.Main\\_Search=Title&SearchForm.Main\\_Search\\_Text=This+Ain%27t+Nothin%27&SearchForm.Sub\\_Search=Performer&SearchForm.Sub\\_Search\\_Text=Craig+Morgan&SearchForm.Search\\_Type=all](https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?SearchForm.View_Count=&SearchForm.Main_Search=Title&SearchForm.Main_Search_Text=This+Ain%27t+Nothin%27&SearchForm.Sub_Search=Performer&SearchForm.Sub_Search_Text=Craig+Morgan&SearchForm.Search_Type=all)  
<https://www.ascap.com/repertory#/ace/search/title/This%20Ain't%20Nothin'/performer/Craig%20Morgan?at=false&searchFilter=SVW&page=1>

## DEEP SELF THEME SONG

Andrews, J. (2000). Who I am [Song]. On *Who I am*. DreamWorks Nashville.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd9zYKLepCw>

Who I Am      Jessica Andrews      DreamWorks Nashville

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd9zYKLepCw>

[https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?Main\\_Search\\_Text=Who%20I%20Am&Sub\\_Search\\_Text=Jessica%20Andrews&Main\\_Search=Title&Sub\\_Search=Performer&Search\\_Type=all&View\\_Count=0&Page\\_Number=0](https://repertoire.bmi.com/Search/Search?Main_Search_Text=Who%20I%20Am&Sub_Search_Text=Jessica%20Andrews&Main_Search=Title&Sub_Search=Performer&Search_Type=all&View_Count=0&Page_Number=0)

## AGAPIC AGENCY THEORY SONG

Roush, T. (2012). Carry me back to old Virginny [Song]. On *Silver threads among the gold, music of 19th century America*. Tom Roush.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyhQYOxTHaw>

Carry Me Back to Old Virginny      Tom Roush      James A. Bland

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyhQYOxTHaw>

<https://secondhandsongs.com/performance/866611/all>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2023782680/>

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