

## Inherited Family Trauma Model and its Application in Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*



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Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is a polyvocal narrative that touches on death, institutional racism and multi-generational trauma. The novel explores the trials and tribulations of a broken Mississippi family through the perspective of a twelve year old boy named Jojo, his mother Leonie, and a ghost by the name of Richie. Inherited family trauma is at the forefront of this novel as it unveils the effects of slavery and how stress factors and behavioral responses translate across generations. The impermanence of trauma is discovered in multiple parts of the novel including the spirit of Richie who embodies the metaphor of "ghosts from the past" can linger if unresolved. Mark Wolynn's *It Didn't Start With You* affirms the festering of trauma and it's ability to translate genetically across generations and creates toxic cyclical behavioral responses.

From River's killing of a twelve year old boy in Parchman Prison to Leonie's self-destructive relationship with paraphernalia, there is unignorable evidence of inherited trauma and its stressors carrying from one generation to the next. Wolynn and Ward's text create a conversation on the genetic stressors of ancestral, Black trauma and how figures from *Sing, Unburied, Sing* fit the inherited family trauma model.

### Biography:

Alexandra Tangarife is a faculty member for the Humanities department at Essex County College. She received her masters in both Clinical Psychology and English Literature from Montclair State University. She blends her love for psychology and literature in her coursework demonstrating students a novel approach in character analysis and breakdown across novels in American literature. Her favorite past time is playing with her two neurodivergent children that are on the spectrum and nurturing their growth.