

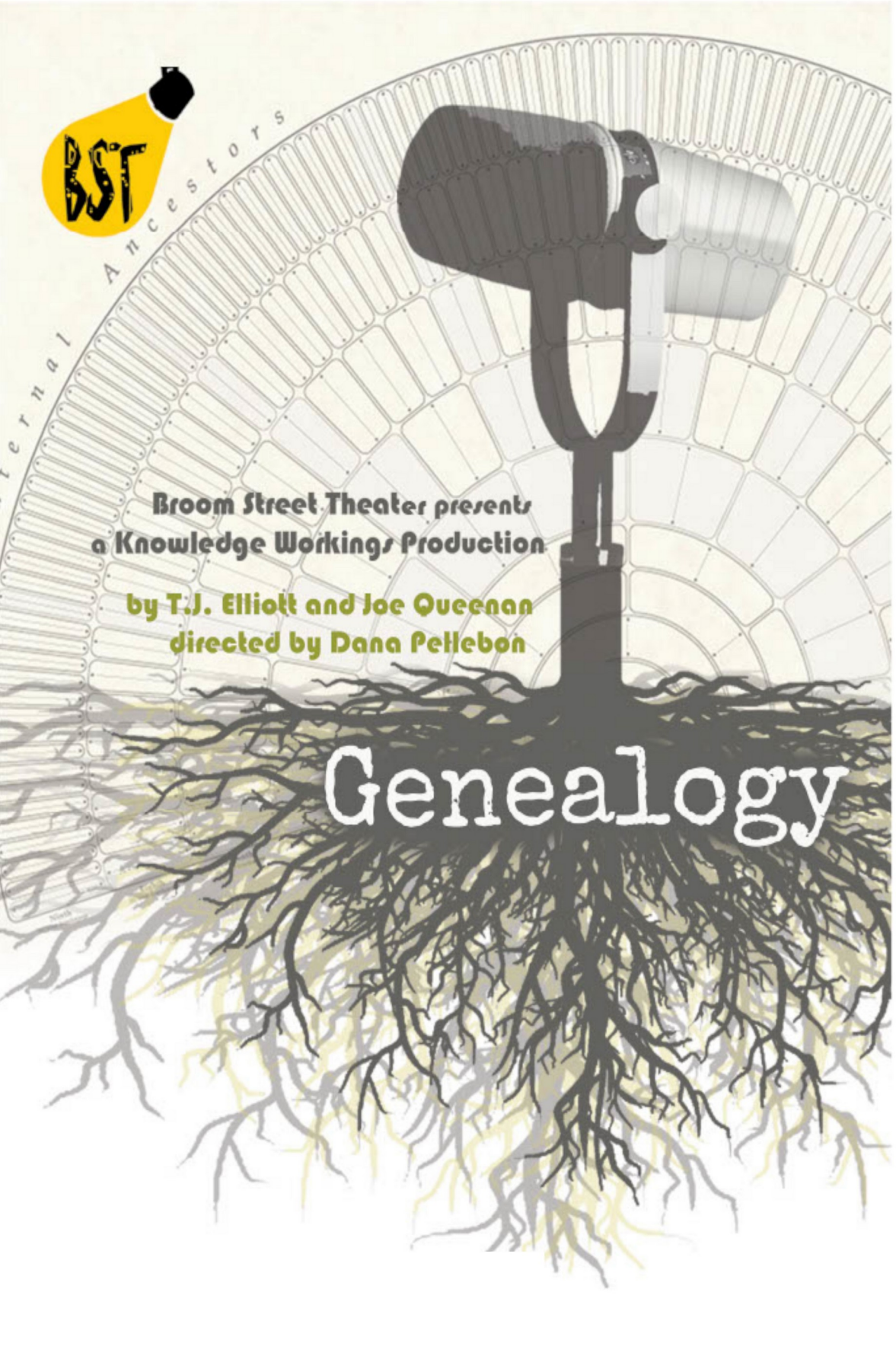


ternal Ancestors

**Broom Street Theater presents
a Knowledge Workings Production**

**by T.J. Elliott and Joe Queenan
directed by Dana Pellebon**

Genealogy



Genealogy

A Problem Comedy

By T.J. Elliott & Joe Queenan

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*Genealogies are admirable things, provided they do not encourage
the curious delusion that some families are older than others.*

W.H. Auden

Note: Debts are owed to [Audley Moore for “Why Reparations?”](#), Ta-Nehisi Coates for his [essay on reparations](#), David Brooks for his [belated but compelling concurrence](#), and Peter Doyle for [The Price of a Slave: Implications of Slavery for Economics, and of Economics for Reparations](#) for inspiring some of the thoughts in this work. We are indebted to our friends Cheryl Aaron and Quanda Johnson for their generosity in reading earlier drafts of this play.

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Genealogy was produced first by Knowledge Workings Theater in association with *and* at Broom Street Theater in Madison Wisconsin in November 2021 with Marjorie Phillips Elliott as Executive Producer and Doug Reed of Broom Street Theater as Associate Producer. Dana Pellebon directed and co-produced with Martha White as Assistant Director, and Karl Reinhardt as Stage Manager and Understudy. Lighting Design was by Tom Littrell, Set Dressing and Props by Dana Pellebon. The Board Operators were Tom Coyne & Karl Reinhardt, and the Fight Choreographer was Whitney Derendinger. The cast was:

GLENN WEBER..... Jackson Rosenberry
HAMILTON HUNT..... Donavon Armbruster
MUGGS HUNT Jamie England
AALIYAH LEWIN-WILSON Quanda Johnson
MOSIAH WILSON..... Atticus Cain

This play occurs during the length of a podcast in a studio with five characters. It is the present day in the City of Brotherly Love.

Characters

Hamilton Hunt

Hamilton Hunt is a White man in his late fifties wearing a suit that befits his status as a high-profile lawyer and his familiarity with giving interviews arranged by his staff. He may overestimate his familiarity with *this* type of podcast.

Muggs Hunt

His wife Margaret, known as Muggs, is somewhat younger, also White, and attired in a classic red Chanel suit with a Gucci pocketbook. She may be decades removed from her own career as a lawyer, but she still carries herself like the ace prosecutor she once was.

Glenn Weber

Glenn is in his late 20s, tall and gangly, and decked out in his tortoiseshell glasses, jeans, and t-shirt as if he has just stepped out of the hippest coffee shop in Brooklyn. Awash in followers online, Glenn has the easy air of an influencer amidst gathering clouds of doubt as to exactly how it will last.

Aaliyah Lewin-Wilson

Aaliyah, Black and in her early 40s, is dressed like the college professor she is. She is passionate and eager to accomplish her goals, which are most definitely **her** goals. Perfectly prepared for the intellectual demands of what she wishes to do, she struggles with the sometimes-surprising interpersonal realities of her plan for today.

Mosiah Wilson

Mosiah Wilson, Aaliyah's husband, is also Black and is in his mid-40s or older. As he still has the build of a former pro football cornerback, it is difficult to tell his exact age. He wears an elegant blue suit. It's not so much that he is confident as that he has ceased to care what other people think. But he cares very much about being true to himself. He loves his wife deeply and would do anything to please her, even if it conflicts with his own beliefs.

Note:

...// Lines ending with these symbols overlap with the next character's speech

Lights come up on the set of a podcast, Chasing the Dead. Five chairs face the audience; the center chair has the name "Glenn Weber" on it. Behind the chairs are the CTD logo and a large, smiling headshot poster of Glenn. Far stage right, a bar area features a My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers logo. Far stage right, a door serves as the only exit from the control room, and higher up on that wall is a one-way mirror that is its window. Stage left is the corridor through which participants enter and exit. The participants all receive Lavalier microphones while the host speaks into his headset. Three people enter stage left—the host, Glenn Weber, accompanies Hamilton Hunt and Margaret "Muggs" Hunt and instructs them nonverbally to place their cell phones in a lockbox. He then guides them to their chairs and gives them their microphones, which they adjust. Two stage right chairs wait for other guests. A light above him flashes "green." They fiddle with their microphones set up as he speaks.

GLENN

Welcome to *Chasing the Dead!*

*Shakes his head, swigs
from a bottle of water, and
deepens his voice*

Welcome to *Chasing the Dead!*
Welcome.... Welcome.... Welcome
to *Chasing the Dead!*

*Hamilton and Muggs listen,
curiously*

If you are just joining us...

*A short tugboat blast
comes over the PA system*

Oh, fuck you! Just go and... fuck
yourself.

*Another tugboat blast, and
he tears off the headset*

HAMILTON

*Twisting head sideways,
cocking eyebrows*

Excuse me?

GLENN

Oh, sorry. So sorry. I wasn't talking to you. It's those... Walter and the other assholes in the control room.

Imitating

Sound more authoritative? I mean, what does, "Can you sound more like a grown-up?" mean? I *am* a grown-up!

*Muggs and Hamilton
exchange puzzled look*

This genealogy podcast has fifty thousand subscribers and a zillion downloads precisely because my brand is so strong. Very strong. Very, very strong. People remember Glenn Weber from my TV show, *Boogers*, and Instagram and Twitter. Nobody complained about my voice then. Nobody. My voice is what got me this gig doing *Chasing the Dead*.

MUGGS

Your voice sounds fine. Very authoritative. Reassuringly mature.

GLENN

Thank you, Muggs.

Replace his headset

Or do you prefer Mrs. Hunt?

She waves her hand

What do you think, Mr. Hunt? Er...
Hamilton?

HAMILTON

Actually, my friends call me Ham.
You sounded absolutely great,
Glenn. Crystal clear. Very
professional.

GLENN

Ham. That's great. That's a great
name. Ham Hunt.

MUGGS

Impishly

But doesn't it sound just a wee bit
like someone chasing a greased pig
around the barnyard?

*Cackles as Hamilton laughs
slightly*

Just kidding.

HAMILTON

What aspects of genealogy most
interest listeners of your podcast?

GLENN

Oh, all of them.

Actorly voice

Chasing the Dead.

HAMILTON

As a lawyer, genealogy's
fundamental connection with the
law is seen in wills and
inheritances that provide the very
earliest records...//

GLENN

Oh, yeah. Genealogy connects to,
like, *everything*.

*Pulls out his binder and
flips through it,
emphasizing the thickness
of its content*

For example, your stories that we
are going to explore today...

*Green light starts to flash
intermittently*

HAMILTON

What's that?

GLENN

Oh, the lights. I have to explain the lights. Ready?

Poses like an instructor

It's very simple. The control room

Gestures to its darkened window

in there controls everything. I mean, obviously; that's why they call it the *control* room.

HAMILTON

Yes, it is.

GLENN

Not that they listen to everything we say. I could be doing an Albanian cooking class for all they care, as long as I have the right *voice*. Anyway, they keep the clock, check off the segments, mark dead parts to snip, grab pieces for promos, and switch the lights.

*Pointing at the camera
light, which now turns
yellow*

When the red light comes on, we talk.

*Gestures to the Lavalier
microphone transmitter
hooked onto Hamilton's
belt*

Have to remember to turn on your mic down there. And when the light goes green, we stop, which is different than you would think, right? The rest of your life, "green" is go, and "red" is stop, but not here. And when yellow flashes, that means they are about to go to another color.

*The light changes to
flashing yellow, but Glenn
is hearing something in his
headset*

Well, which is it, Walter? Are we
bringing everyone in at once?

Tugboat toot

Then why is the light flashing
yellow? *I* have it together. *You're*
the one giving mixed signals—
literally, mixed signals.

*Listening, turns away,
gesticulating silently*

HAMILTON

Sotto voce to Muggs

This is not what I expected. Did
you...?

MUGGS

What *did* you expect? Didn't
anyone at the firm brief you?

HAMILTON

Some kid who coordinates
outreach, blathering about how
podcasts are part of the firm's
efforts...//

MUGGS

Outreach? This might be more reach-around than outreach, darling.

Ham starts to ask what she means, but Glenn distracts him

GLENN

Still on the headset

They're here? Can one of *you* please go get them? C'mon, it's *okay* for you to walk through here; we're not even taping yet. What do you mean *you* can't leave the control room? I'm the talent here, Walter! When I was on *Boogers*, our ratings were consistently...//

Short siren burst

HAMILTON

What on earth is going on over there?

GLENN

Don't do that! I'll get them. But I still don't think Finance should have downsized *my* assistant. On my TV show, I had two assistants!

Tugboat horn sound.

Grimaces, takes off headset, and stage-whispers to HAM and MUGGS

They start pranking the podcast if I don't do what the control room wants.

MUGGS

Pranking the podcast?

GLENN

Still whispering

Sabotage. Like those siren bursts.
The tugboat. *Toot-toot*. If I
disagree with them, they freak out
the guests with idiotic sound
effects like toilets flushing, dogs
barking. To embarrass me. Jealous
because I had a hit TV show,
Boogers.

*Waits for a reaction that
does not come*

Then they snip them out later.

Shrugs

It's bullying, and once I get *my*
Twitter numbers up to...//

HAMILTON

This is going to be on Twitter?
We're tweeting this?

GLENN

Yeah. Instagram, TikTok, pretty much anything else. All part of being an influencer.

Laughs

My TV show is still big on *Nick at Night*.

MUGGS

Hamilton! Did you prepare at all?

*Sighs, looks at GLENN,
cocking her finger toward
HAM*

He probably thinks a podcast is a fishing show.

HAMILTON

I know what a podcast is. I've been on other podcasts. There's one that just talks about antitrust cases. Did an interesting show on Illinois Brick versus the state of Illinois. And then AT&T...//

GLENN

Are you thirsty? Fully stocked bar.
Courtesy of our sponsors: *My Blue
Genes: Your DNA Explorers.*

Points to the bar in the rear

MUGGS

Fully stocked? Don't tell my
Moriarty brothers; they'll show up
claiming connections to Enya and
the Fighting Prince of Donegal.

HAMILTON

I'm good.

MUGGS

I'm bad.

*Walks over to the bar and
pours liberally from a
bottle of vodka into a glass,
which she then drinks
thirstily*

HAMILTON

Open bar doesn't mean you have
to close the bar. *Free* doesn't
mean All you can drink.

MUGGS

What makes you think it's free,
darling?

HAMILTON looks puzzled

GLENN

Okay, I'll go grab the other guests.

HAMILTON

Other guests? It's not just us?

MUGGS

Always multiple guests, dear.

To GLENN

Sorry, my husband didn't have enough time to prepare to pretend to be a regular listener.

HAMILTON

Apologetic

That Google trial vacuumed up months of my life.

MUGGS

You could've Googled the show.

GLENN

No worries; it's cool.

To MUGGS

But *you've* caught the podcast, haven't you, Muggs?

MUGGS

Oh, yes. I'm obsessed with your show, Glenn. Obsessed.

HAMILTON

Might we back up a second to go over how this works once we...

GLENN exits, tapping his headset. HAMILTON rises and starts sorting through a plastic container over by the bar

MUGGS

Forget it. Your phone is locked until the show's over. Standard operating procedure.

HAMILTON

Exasperated, slams box down

Was there an email explaining this?

MUGGS

Patting his back

Don't fret, dear. All will be revealed in good time.

*GLENN reenters with MOSIAH
WILSON and AALIYAH LEWIN-
WILSON. AALIYAH fidgets*

GLENN

Please! Come in! Ham, Muggs,
joining you on this journey into the
past: The Wilsons! Professor
Aaliyah Lewin-Wilson. And
Mosiah. Did I pronounce that
correctly?

Puts headset back on

MOSIAH

Which one?

AALIYAH

Yes, you got them both right.
That's just Mosiah being Mosiah.

HAMILTON

Mosiah Wilson! *The Mosiah*
Wilson? The Killer Kornerback?
Wow!

Singing

“Fly, Eagles, Fly!”

*MOSIAH raises his hand to
ward off the attention, but
HAMILTON turns to
AALIYAH*

Sorry, huge fan. Huge. I mean....
All-Ivy League. All-American. All-
Pro. Had no idea that you... wow.
On *this* show. Too much!

Mimes a forearm shiver

The “Mosiah Massage.” Sorry... I’m
Ham. Hamilton Hunt.

AALIYAH shakes his hand

AALIYAH

Yes, Hamilton Hunt. *He fights—for
our rights!*

HAMILTON bows

MUGGS

Shaking hands

You did your homework. But did you know about this?

Pointing

Open bar.

MOSIAH

Open bar? This early in the day?

Looks at his watch

MUGGS

They liquor us up to loosen us up.

Beat

Just kidding.

HAMILTON

She is just kidding. She's always just kidding. She's a real kidder.

*GLENN crosses
to control room
window*

MUGGS

Do you still live in Philadelphia?

MOSIAH

Still live here? Always *have* lived here.

HAMILTON

Except for those four years—two Ivy League championships—at Yale. By the way, I grew up in Philadelphia, too.

MOSIAH

Do tell. Where?

MUGGS

He didn't grow up in Philly. Trust me on this.

HAMILTON

Yes, I did. Huntingdon Valley.

MOSIAH

Huntingdon Valley's not Philly. Let me ask you: Do the words "Huntingdon Valley" sound like Philly to you?

HAMILTON

Well, when you put it to me that way....

MOSIAH

Is there another way to put it?

HAMILTON

Hey, but even us guys from the suburbs know who *you* are, Mr. School of Hard Knocks, Mister Ebony Enforcer, Mr. Coffin Corner, the greatest Philadelphia Eagle cornerback ever...//

MOSIAH

Raises his hands to interrupt

Please. No. Thank you, but...

GLENN

Into headset

I don't want to. That's why!

Seagull squawk

Stop!

Gestures smilingly to guests

MUGGS

To AALIYAH

Yale. Is that where you two met? Were you a cheerleader for the football team? Wait! Does Yale even have cheerleaders?

AALIYAH

Bristling a little

Yes, they do. And no, I wasn't one of them.

MOSIAH

Track star. Hundred-ten-meter hurdles. And *she* caught me. Not yet a star college professor, but friend was already impressive.

AALIYAH

Mosiah, please!

MOSIAH

Picked me up in the gym. She was killing the stationary bicycle, but I could feel her watch me working the freestanding weights. Vulcan mind meld.

AALIYAH

The actual history is more complex than you make it out to be.

MOSIAH

Complex? In the way Wittgenstein might define it, or...//

AALIYAH

Mosiah, please. No philosophy today.

MUGGS

Wittgenstein!

*Impressed, flutters her
hand*

And I always thought it was
pronounced Steen. This is going to
be such an educational
experience.

MOSIAH

Ignoring her

The beginning of wisdom is the
definition of terms.

HAMILTON

That's Socrates.

MOSIAH

Yes, attributed to him in
Xenophon, but some scholars
suggest...//

AALIYAH

Rolls eyes

If I'd known what being married to a philosophy major meant, I might have kept my eyes on that stationary bicycle.

Smiles

You know him as a football player; *I* get to listen to metaphysics and epistemology over breakfast while he does his back exercises.

MUGGS

Swirling her glass

I myself have been known to dabble in metaphysics from time to time.

MOSIAH

Friend thinks that studying logic and ethics in college has rendered me unfit for small talk.

AALIYAH sighs

MUGGS

But very fit for business. Three or four banks you own? And that mall over in Cherry Hill. The movie complex in North Philly? That's yours.

AALIYAH

You seem to know a lot about us.

MUGGS

Mock curtsy

I always do the reading before
class, Professor.

GLENN

Into the headset

I am the talent because the Glenn
Weber brand is very, very strong.
Influencer.

*Alarm clock sound. GLENN
waves reassuringly*

HAMILTON

Which one of you is going to
explore your roots today?

MUGGS

Roots? *Roots?*

HAMILTON

Embarrassed

Ancestry. Ancestors. Your people...
family.

AALIYAH

Hesitant

I think we'll just have to see how the show unfolds.

MUGGS

Really? But you're familiar with the *Chasing the Dead* format, right, Aaliyah? Regular downloader? Professor does her homework.

Conspiratorially

But even so... I might know some things you don't.

AALIYAH

Somewhat nervous

And what would that be?

MUGGS

Beat

How the lights work.

Imitating Glenn

Green, bad, red, good. Yellow:
Change is coming. Red: Talk, talk,
talk. Green: Mics off; go get a
drink. We haven't seen any other
colors yet, but this thing could go
deep purple. Now, how about that
drink? Aaliyah?

Moves to bar

AALIYAH

I'd better stick to sparkling water
for now. If they have that.

MOSIAH

Little early in the day for me.

MUGGS pours for AALIYAH

HAMILTON

Yes, *very* early in the day.

The lights go yellow

MUGGS

It's later than you think, dear.

GLENN

Sorry about that. Gotta fight for every little thing. Oh, the lights...

MOSIAH

Mrs. Hunt.

She spreads her hands

Muggs explained the lights already.

GLENN

Laughing

Oh, now I have to worry about you taking control too, Muggs?

Gestures toward control room while whispering loudly

Seriously, those guys.... The sponsors, *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers*, who are awesome

—

Gestures to open bar

just have to let them know who the talent is. And that would be...Me!

MOSIAH

What's with the lights? Can't they
just tell you on the headset?

GLENN

No, *they*

Gestures to booth

like the lights. They feel that it
makes the show seem more
authentic. Old school.

*Lights go back to green,
and Glenn points to them*

Or maybe they're just screwing
with me.

HAMILTON

And the sound effects? Assuming
they

*Gesturing toward the
control room*

want the show to be a success...//

GLENN

Sometimes I think they don't really
like genealogy, which is weird
because

*Reading from the front of
his binder*

"Genealogy is now—after
gardening—the most popular
hobby in the United States."

MUGGS

Where does drinking rank?

*Hands the sparkling water
to AALIYAH*

MOSIAH

But genealogy has a dark side,
Glenn, doesn't it?

AALIYAH winces

HAMILTON

Do you mean philosophically?

MOSIAH

That too. Foucault and Nietzsche.
But I was referring to how lineage
relates historically to aristocracy,
class distinction, inequality.

GLENN

AALIYAH sighs

Oh, that stuff isn't us. Our work is
"scientific", and we get into all the
cool histories.

*Taps binder, reads in his
actorly voice*

"The more we understand our
past, the more we can come to
peace with it. We like to say
Chasing the Dead is really about
chasing ourselves."

Regular voice

I wrote that one. Our pinned
tweet.

MOSIAH

That seems a little simplistic. Don't
you think that genealogists should
acknowledge the way in which
misuse of their techniques
contributed to, were even an
integral part of...//

AALIYAH

Punching MOSIAH playfully

Dear, Glenn didn't invite us to a debate.

GLENN

No, it's cool, but let's press pause on that thought, Mosiah. Save it until we're actually recording? Controversy is sweet. Controversy pumps the numbers! But we don't want to leave our game in the locker room, do we?

Heeding voices in his headset

Walter, I'm ready. I was born ready. The lights are green.

The light goes yellow as thunder sounds

No, you just did that. Assholes.

Back to guests

OK. Ready, Fire, Aim. Better hand out the exhibits for your segment.

GLENN proceeds to distribute packets to all four of them

AALIYAH

Leafing through his packet

If I might offer a suggestion, Glenn. These are very colorful and visually compelling, but your show isn't actually televised. Is there any way—from a strictly educational perspective—to also videotape today's program for possible broadcast?

GLENN

Shrugging

Talk to Finance. What they tell me is that on video, we'd have all sorts of overhead like unions. I mean, unions, you know.

MOSIAH

Yes, I had a union card for many years.

HAMILTON

Laughing

Weren't you head of the NFL Players Association?

Astounded

God, am I actually sitting here with *the* Mosiah Wilson?

MUGGS

Waving the exhibit packet

It's show-and-tell—without the show.

GLENN

I get you. I love television. They respected me as the talent there.

Beat

I was the kid on *Boogers*. Three seasons. Still in reruns.

Beat

TV made my brand so very, very strong. But genealogy, even on cable, means going head-to-head with PBS and the Mormons. Mormons! No, trust me, podcasts are the future.

MOSIAH

The future of what?

HAMILTON nods vigorously

GLENN

Podcasts are the *wave* of the future because people can do other stuff while they're listening to them.

Tugging his ear

Everyone wears earbuds all the time. Aaliyah, you know this. You talked about how potentially we could reach this enormous audience...//

AALIYAH

Nervously cuts him off

Wouldn't it be helpful if you told us a little bit about what we do once the light goes red?

GLENN

Cool. Whole thing is super-casual. Basically, just have a leisurely conversation about the stuff that I present. First, the Hunts, then, next segment, the Hunts and the Wilsons. Then we'll see where it goes from there. Got to keep it moving, though, because... well, you know how short attention spans are these days. But with all of this name recognition sitting here today, we will blow the ratings away!

MUGGS

You're kidding, right? They don't even *recognize* my name at the grocery store.

Retreating to bar

The liquor store, yes.

HAMILTON

What about those early days in the Philly D.A.'s office? Impressive work.

GLENN

Oh, you're a lawyer too, Muggs?

MUGGS

Snorting

Did *anyone* prepare today?
Besides you and me, Aaliyah? Just
kidding.

To Glenn

Yes. I was a lawyer, thank you very
much. I retired early, which
allowed me to blast off into my
spectacular encore career, ruining

Giggles

that is, *running* Ham's life.

HAMILTON

Our lives! CEO of the Hunt Family
enterprise. Raised three kids, runs
our houses, and handles a million
details, one of which is me. And in
law school, there's no question
whose grades were top of the class
—and whose weren't...//

He is interrupted by GLENN

GLENN

Oh, Muggs, people are definitely going to be interested in your story. You have good energy. And I need good energy.

MUGGS

Taking another swig

This is my energy drink.

AALIYAH

And do we all talk while you're going over Hamilton's ancestry?

GLENN

Four people talking at once gets confusing. Probably press pause on your "thing" until the next segment.

Winks, AALIYAH winces

HAMILTON

This whole experience... I am
psyched.

*Other guests look at him
dubiously*

Podcasts. Cutting edge.

To MOSIAH

Existential.

MOSIAH

I'm not getting it. Aren't podcasts
just radio on tape?

HAMILTON

Maybe. But I'm sitting right next to
Mosiah Wilson, the legendary
Eagles cornerback. Sole occupant
of Mosiah Island, the place where
long bombs went to die...//

*MOSIAH waves hands to
fend off praise*

GLENN

I appreciate your support, Ham.
This show is really critical. I mean,
Black History Month and all. This
episode is going to get a lot of
buzz.

HAMILTON

Black History Month?

GLENN

Light flashes yellow

Yellow! We got this.

MUGGS

*Rushes back to her seat
with another drink*

And I've got *this*.

GLENN

Whispering

Don't rattle the ice cubes, the mic
picks up everything.

MUGGS

Don't worry. Mama knows how to
sneak a drink.

GLENN

*Puts hand up to stop the
talking just as light turns
red*

Red!

*Assuming a more actorly
pose, he reads copy from
the binder*

This is Glenn Weber. Welcome to *Chasing the Dead*, the genealogy show where the dearly departed impart the answers: Who we are, where we come from, and how our past shapes our future. Our first guests today—thanks to our sponsors *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers*—are Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Hunt. Yes, *that* Hamilton Hunt, the iconic super-lawyer who mowed down Microsoft, gagged Google, and face-planted Facebook. *He fights for our rights.*

Pause

While his wife Muggs keeps the home fires burning.

MUGGS

We have radiant floor heating.
Cost a fortune but so toasty.

GLENN

Thrown but pressing on

Today we will start by exploring their ancestry. Later on, Mosiah Wilson, Hall of Fame Philadelphia Eagles cornerback, and his wife, Professor Aaliyah Lewin-Wilson, will join us. Hamilton and Muggs, welcome to *Chasing the Dead*.

MUGGS

Hello, out there in podcast land!

HAMILTON

Thank you, Glenn. It's good to be here at home in Philadelphia.

GLENN

And Philadelphia was home for you, too, Muggs?

MUGGS

Weaned on cheesesteaks. And soft pretzels.

GLENN

Laughing

Can't wait to explore that, but

Reading

Hamilton's line—the history of this super-lawyer family—is our first quarry today. The chase is on!

Turning to HAM

Hamilton Hunt. How far back do you think we can trace your ancestry?

MOSIAH rises and steps away

HAMILTON

Surprised

Not sure. I do know that my mother was very excited about having married into the vaunted Hunt family, some of whom came over from England in the sixteenth-hundreds.

GLENN

Correct.

*Reading directly from his
binder*

We find Hunts in your lineage
going all the way back to an Alice
Le Hunte in the Rolls of twelve-
seventy-three in Oxford, England.

MUGGS

You should've kept the "Le Hunte."
"Hamilton Le Hunte" would've
looked fantastic on a business
card. Nobody's called Le Hunte in
Philly! Well, not in South Philly.

*MOSIAH, laughing, starts
isometrics*

HAMILTON

The Rolls of twelve-seventy-three?

MUGGS

Just before the Bentleys of twelve-
seventy-four.

HAMILTON grimaces

MOSIAH

The Hundred Rolls exemplifies
how genealogy objectifies people.

AALIYAH

Mosiah refers to the way Edward
the First included people right
alongside property, objects in his
inventory of the kingdom...//

GLENN

Yes, *that* King Edward really
boosted genealogy. We owe him a
lot.

MOSIAH

We owe him? Edward the First
hammered the Scots, expelled the
Jews from England, and he
signified, that is, "valued," people
by how many plough teams they
possessed, how many slaves...//

AALIYAH

Are we a little out in front, friend?

MOSIAH turns away

GLENN

But that's a nifty detail. Thank you, Mosiah. That kind of knowledge probably comes from being regular *Chasing the Dead* listeners. We talk all the time on the show about how obscure historical documents can provide valuable clues to our identities.

*MOSIAH stands up and
begins isometric exercises*

MOSIAH

Or lack thereof.

*HAMILTON stares at the
document, oblivious*

HAMILTON

Seven-hundred-and-fifty years old!
This document is astonishing.

GLENN

And that line will produce soldiers,

Reading directly from script

doctors, and even an Anglican bishop or two. But let's press pause on the Hunts and instead shadow the Hamiltons—your mother's side of the family—where a uniquely *American* story unfurls in a fascinating way. Your mother was very keen on genealogy, wasn't she, Ham?

MOSIAH does standing push-ups

HAMILTON

Mildly surprised

My mother connected very strongly to the past.

MUGGS

She'd spent her entire life there.

MOSIAH laughs

HAMILTON

Daughter of the American Revolution on her dad's side.

MUGGS

Yes, she acted like she was the
Revolution's only child.

GLENN

Why did these ancestors so
enchant her?

MUGGS

Because the dead don't talk back.

*MOSIAH, laughing, now
does 'planks' as AALIYAH
motions him back into his
seat, unsuccessfully*

GLENN

Ah, but our ancestors *do* converse
with us, Muggs. They are speaking
to us

Reading from his notes

in whispers that rustle like the very
sands of time.

Whistles lowly

We can hear them as long as we

Beat

pay attention. And let's pay some
attention to the Hamiltons.

HAMILTON

Shaking head

Try as she might, despite all her digging, my mother never found a link to *Alexander* Hamilton. Just a bunch of penniless dirt farmers out near Pittsburgh. She was deeply disappointed.

GLENN

Oh, more than dirt farmers, Ham.

Reading

No, your ancestor was not Alexander Hamilton, but you *are* descended from a most remarkable man, a victim who turned himself into a victor. Which is really what America is all about. That's right, an indentured servant, your great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, Jasper Hamilton.

HAMILTON

Indentured servitude! I had an ancestor who was indentured? How did that...//

MOSIAH turns from his standing push-ups

GLENN

Reading from script

Indentured servitude, supposedly a voluntary contract, was a grueling experience. Some eighteenth-century observers claimed that African slaves often received better treatment than the indentured.

AALIYAH

Were *any* of those eighteenth-century observers Black?

GLENN

Ha!

Reading on

Excellent point by Professor Aaliyah Lewin-Wilson. Yes, Jasper's indentured servitude saw him shipped to Virginia from Ireland in seventeen-seventy, where he...//

HAMILTON

Virginia? This is all news to me.

GLENN

But Jasper Hamilton's contract was eventually sold to a Pennsylvanian...//

HAMILTON

Wait a minute. He was sold?

AALIYAH

Yes, believe it or not, that kind of thing actually happened back then.

MOSIAH

Deadpan

People not only got sold; they got bought. Honest.

MUGGS laughs

You can look it up.

GLENN

Rapidly

Technically, his *contract* was sold. But as the colonies declared independence, so did Jasper. He escaped his master's house, joined the local militia, and ended up serving right alongside George Washington for the entire war. In fact, a letter exists suggesting that he saved Washington's life. Spotted a Redcoat sniper. Just in time.

HAMILTON

I don't believe it. That's fantastic.

MUGGS

I *really* don't believe it. Who wrote that letter? Some drinking buddy down at the local pub?

GLENN

Laughing

No. A reputable source. In that same letter, we see for the first time that Jasper moved near Pittsburgh with a grant of land received in gratitude for his services.

The light flashes yellow

HAMILTON

This is amazing. Seriously, Muggs. Isn't this stunning?

MUGGS

Can't say I've been disappointed so far.

GLENN

And so much more to come. But first, a break before we welcome our other guests today.

The light goes green

And we are off. Great. Way strong. *Turnt* up. Powerful.

MOSIAH and AALIYAH rise

HAMILTON

Modest

Well, we're only talking about indentured servants so far. I'm not hearing anything yet about royalty, famous explorers, captains of industry, presidents.

MUGGS

Or hell-bent for-leather bank robbers. Nothing about them so far.

GLENN

Tapping his script

Oh, believe me, it gets better.

MUGGS

Or worse.

Heading back to the bar

But either way works, right?

HAMILTON

*Crossing to MOSIAH and
AALIYAH*

What did you folks think?

MOSIAH

Us *folks* thought it was...
interesting.

AALIYAH

Very interesting. Compelling even.

HAMILTON

To MOSIAH

You've done a lot of media, right?
How does this...//

MOSIAH

My media experience was mostly
on the other side of the camera,
usually wearing a towel. Thus, I
was being *observed*. Whereas
here, I'm both observer and
observed, which always blurs our
perspective.

AALIYAH

Oh, please, Hamilton, do *not* get
my husband started on his
observer- and-the-observed rant.
We will all be knee-deep in
epistemology.

MUGGS

Oh, we're going to be knee-deep
in something, but I don't think it
will be epistemology.

AALIYAH

Playfully taps MOSIAH

In my experience, building on this first segment, you are not going to bore anybody, Hamilton.

HAMILTON

Smiling

Ham, please. Might as well drop the formalities on an epic adventure like this.

MUGGS

Epic adventure. Isn't that what they called the *Titanic*?

Swigs

Just before they said, "How much do you want for that life preserver?"

HAMILTON

Crosses to MUGGS

Have you considered slowing your intake?

MUGGS

Yes.

Takes another swig

Motion denied.

GLENN

Talking into the headset

They're all here, Walter. No, I didn't *lose* anybody. You can go yellow light anytime.

Squeaky toy sound

My voice?

Booms

Shut up! I do *not* sound like Wolf Blitzer!

AALIYAH

Speaking of observations,

Glances hard at MOSIAH

they seem to give you quite a difficult time on your own show, Glenn.

GLENN

Just jealous because my brand is
strong...//

Dog barking sound

MOSIAH

What the hell was that?

MUGGS

One of Hamilton's ancestors?

GLENN

Into headset

Walter, no more nonsense, please.
Our guests are important people
unamused by your juvenile sound
effects. Yes, I know you heard
what I said. I wanted you to hear
it. I pay your salary, pal.

*A siren burst, and GLENN
yells*

Just go to the yellow light, please,
and let's get this show moving.

Calmer, to the rest of them

Don't worry, they usually get tired
of it.

Laughing weakly

MOSIAH

*Pointing to the control
room*

That's not right. I'm just saying.

GLENN

I can deal with it.

*The yellow light comes on,
and he points to it*

See?

MOSIAH

That's not exactly "dealing with it."

AALIYAH

Friend, let's just get on with the
show, as Glenn says.

*Yellow light flashing as she
takes a folded piece of
paper from her pocket*

MUGGS

Back at the bar

Just getting a refill.

HAMILTON

Your glass wasn't even empty.

MUGGS

And I intend to keep it that way,
darling.

GLENN

Quiet on the set.

Smiles as light goes to red

Welcome back! If you are just joining us, we've been chasing the dead with Hamilton Hunt, super-lawyer, and his wife Muggs, who are now joined by Professor Aaliyah Lewin-Wilson, and her husband—who needs no introduction here in Philadelphia—Mosiah Wilson, a hero to Philadelphia Eagles fans everywhere.

MOSIAH gestures his discomfort

AALIYAH

Thank you for having us.

MUGGS tiptoes back to her seat

GLENN

No, thank *you* for being part of *Chasing the Dead*. Mosiah, how much do you know about your own ancestry?

MOSIAH

A little. The Wilson side has been around Philly for a long time.

GLENN

Question: Why do people down here call Philadelphia “Philly?”

MOSIAH

Because we do.

AALIYAH

I would note that this nation’s heritage of slavery makes the very subject of genealogy difficult and painful for Black Americans.

GLENN

Yes,

Reading from binder

but in recent years, genealogists have made significant advances that shed light on the past, often resolving nagging controversies and putting irksome myths to bed. We will be sharing the fruits of their labor later in the segment. But first, let’s return to your story, Hamilton. Before our break, our pursuit took us back to your heroic Revolutionary War ancestor, Jasper.

MUGGS

But only that *one* letter says he was a war hero, right?

GLENN laughs

And he may have gotten some cousin to write it for him.

Drinks up

GLENN

Hero or not, Jasper Hamilton became a prominent citizen in Pittsburgh. We have copies of records that show how he—and this is pretty awesome stuff—went from effectively being quote-unquote “owned” as an indentured servant to accumulating significant holdings of his own property.

HAMILTON

I never knew any of this.

GLENN

What you’re holding in your hands are those digitized records. Why don’t you read from your copy of that document, Muggs?

MUGGS

Me? Well, this is a very detailed will.

Reads

His household goods included horses, cattle, oxen, pigs, a blacksmith's shop, a walnut bed, and an assortment of down comforters.

Breaking

Just out of curiosity, who inherited that walnut bed?

AALIYAH

The more critical information is further down the page. Look at the line that says "slaves."

HAMILTON studies paper intently; MOSIAH moves behind her

Apparently, part of his *property* included three adult males, four women. Tilly, the youngest, was twelve years old.

HAMILTON

My God! I had no idea.

MUGGS goes to bar to mix a drink in new glass

GLENN

Surprises often catch us out when
we start chasing the dead.

MUGGS

And who doesn't like a good
surprise?

GLENN

According to our expert
genealogists, that list that you're
holding in your hands is a very
lucky find.

HAMILTON

Lucky?

*MUGGS prancing gives him
the glass, which he chugs*

Why?

GLENN

Because in the otherwise unremarkable year of seventeen-ninety-eight, the new United States government imposed a tax on all real property—including *slaves*. If they hadn't started that tax, we wouldn't have this record. Jasper Hamilton's bill shows us what the slaves were worth.

AALIYAH bristles

As a slave-owner, we know Jasper paid a tax of three-dollars-and-fifty cents. Isn't that cool?

MOSIAH

Cool? How can you possibly...//

AALIYAH calms him

GLENN

*Ignoring and reading from
the script*

Other documents we've unearthed indicate that because Pennsylvania abolished slavery, Tilly was to remain an indentured servant until gaining her freedom at age twenty-eight. That's right, she was indentured, commanding exactly the same legal status that Jasper held. But she was no longer a slave.

AALIYAH

Exactly the same legal status? Isn't that misleading, because...//

GLENN

Pushing on

Hit pause on that thought, and let's fast-forward a few years to examine Tilly's life a bit more closely.

HAMILTON flips pages

MUGGS

Fast forward? Please do this in slow motion.

Beat

Just kidding, dear.

GLENN

On the next page, we see a certificate of freedom for Tilly Hamilton. And, of course, listeners can find all of these documents and more on this fascinating story at our website www.chasingthedead.org, sponsored by *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers*.

AALIYAH

A certificate that *proves* that someone was enslaved. The bureaucratic machinery...//

MUGGS nods vigorously

MOSIAH

That's projection. Imagine how Tilly felt holding a certificate of freedom.

AALIYAH scowls at him

Hypothesizing about the emotions of our ancestors, according to our current paradigm, seems to me to be a sort of presentism that imposes our values upon...//

HAMILTON

Ignores MOSIAH

But she was freed?

GLENN

Jasper's son James freed her early from indenture. One of the good guys, right? And because Tilly took the last name Hamilton...

AALIYAH

Took it?

*MUGGS mimes her shock
and twirls around*

GLENN

Smiling but ignoring her

Our research team found her mentioned in an eighteen-fifty-six letter from a Pittsburgh housewife, Arabella Dunwoodie, recommending a dressmaker. "Aged now, but her eyes and fingers still create the finest work. You will find Miss Tilly Hamilton at Four Logan Street." Tilly then was probably around seventy years old.

AALIYAH

The actual text says, "Miss Tilly Hamilton, a *colored* woman."

GLENN

Yes, the census of eighteen-fifty lists her as *a free person of color*, a widow, with a twenty-year-old son, David Hamilton. Look at the page with her family tree: focus on David, who later becomes a ship's carpenter. After the Civil War, we find him living right here in the City of Brotherly Love, raising a large family. And his youngest daughter Julia marries a railroad worker.

MUGGS

Resigned

One Jupiter *Wilson*.

GLENN

Yes! Mosiah, Jupiter *Wilson* was your great-great-great-grandfather.

MUGGS

To MOSIAH

Wait a minute. *You're* descended from Tilly?

MOSIAH nods

Oh, Aaliyah, doesn't this just knock your socks off?

GLENN

Ham, give it to me straight: How does this revelation make you feel?

HAMILTON

Not good.

GLENN

Cool. Very understandable. Mosiah?

MOSIAH

It's convoluted. David Hume compares talking about personal identity to being in a labyrinth. We are in the labyrinth.

AALIYAH sighs

Aaliyah has written about the subject. Quite extensively.

Haltingly

How this is yet another reminder of slavery as an inescapable element in the American narrative. But another angle...//

AALIYAH

Jumping in

My reaction is that slavery's undeniable legacy caused permanent damage to millions of Americans, damage that is still unaddressed. And unresolved.

GLENN

Yes, true dat.

MOSIAH winces

HAMILTON

Trying to recover

Aaliyah is right. So, let me retrace my steps and make three points about my feelings. First: I am deeply saddened by what I have just heard. *Deeply* saddened. No question whatsoever. The horrible treatment of slaves is part and parcel...//

AALIYAH

Enslaved people. Enslaved people. I should have said this twenty minutes ago.

HAMILTON

Excuse me?

AALIYAH

The proper terminology is “enslaved people.” Language exposes...//

MUGGS

Yes. “Slaves” is a noun that turns all those people into objects, property. But *enslaved* is an adjective that indicates what was done to them. Aaliyah wrote a paper on it.

Cutely

Did I get it right, Mosiah?

MOSIAH

Brief silence

Yeah.

Tersely

You nailed it.

GLENN

But the saga of Miss Tilly Hamilton doesn't end with just this one connection.

Reading from script

Regular listeners of *Chasing the Dead* know that through the expert services of our sponsor, *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers*, all of our guests on this show provide a saliva sample from which their DNA is extracted and analyzed to produce their genetic landscape. Mosiah, turn the page to see what *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers* found in your genome.

HAMILTON

Whispering to MUGGS

What? I gave a DNA sample?
When?

MUGGS

Got a big, juicy bucket of spit from your drool while you slept.

GLENN

Mosiah, remember David Hamilton? Your great-great-great grandfather? Like you, he was kind of superstar in his day. His mother was... enslaved, yet he voluntarily enlisted in the twenty-fifth Regiment, United States Colored Infantry in eighteen-sixty-four, at the age of thirty-nine. Served as both a carpenter and soldier.

MOSIAH

Interesting. Knew about Black Union soldiers, but not this. It's ironic that my great-great-*great*-grandpa chose to serve.

MUGGS

Ironic because his mom was enslaved?

MOSIAH

No, ironic because the son of a woman enslaved in the North was helping the sons of the White folks who had enslaved his mother go out and free other... Black folks. Or so America likes to believe.

GLENN

What's next may be even harder to believe.

Reading

The results of your DNA test astonished the good people at *My Blue Genes: Your DNA Explorers*, our generous sponsors, who, by the way, adhere to a strict privacy policy, ensuring that your personal information is never shared with anyone else.

HAMILTON

Except for your fifty thousand subscribers listening to this.

GLENN

The DNA charts in your packets show percentages of your ancestry sources. Mosiah, would you please read your numbers?

MOSIAH

Reading

Irish, five percent?

GLENN

Yes. A small portion, but you do have Irish ancestry.

MOSIAH

Did you know about this, friend?

AALIYAH shakes her head

MUGGS

There are worse fates than being Irish, Mosiah.

Points to HAMILTON

You could be a limey.

GLENN

This Irish DNA connection goes back five generations. Somewhere back in your family tree, Mosiah, you share a common ancestor with people who would normally be classified as White.

MUGGS

What would they abnormally be classified as?

GLENN

Handing MOSIAH a page

Mosiah, we found nine-hundred-and-eighty-five DNA relatives in your DNA family, people with identical strands of DNA that were passed down from a shared ancestor. On this sheet, you will find the names of all those connections. Please read the name in bold on your paper.

Beat

The one circled in red.

MOSIAH

Slowly looks up

Hamilton Hunt.

HAMILTON

Christ.

MOSIAH stares hard at AALIYAH, who raises her hands in disbelief. MUGGS toasts them all as the lights flashes yellow

AALIYAH

To GLENN

You should have let us know...//

GLENN

Ignoring her

That's right, you and Ham share an ancestor several generations back. Remember James Hamilton, who freed Tilly?

AALIYAH

Freed?

GLENN

Our people speculate that this connection might be evidence of some sort of a relationship between James and Tilly.

AALIYAH

Relationship?

GLENN

After Mosiah's great-great-great-great grandmother was freed.

AALIYAH

A "relationship" could not occur in those circumstances. And stop using that word, "freed."

HAMILTON

Why? She *was* freed. You saw the certificate.

MUGGS

Oh, darling. Have you read nothing other than legal briefs for the last decade? A "*freed*" woman of color in the nineteenth century having a *relationship* with someone who had *owned* her? It was like rape. Am I right, Aaliyah?

Yellow light flashes

AALIYAH

Stares silently before speaking

It wasn't *like* rape. It *was* rape.

MOSIAH

Friend, this was not the game plan we agreed on.

GLENN

Sensing discomfort

Let's take a break. When we return, we'll further analyze these startling revelations on *Chasing the Dead*.

Green light comes on

Woohoo! That was hot. *En fuego*.

Into headset

Well, thank you, Walter. How long? Cool. We'll just chill here.

Beat

Yes, I said chill, Walter. As in, why don't you be more chill?

Siren

Yeah, fuck you, too.

To his guests

Ten-minute break. They need to change a tube or something. But they know that we killed. Absolutely killed.

HAMILTON

How dare you blindside us like that? How dare you? You hornswoggled me into coming on this show.

Seeing that GLENN does not understand the word "hornswoggled"

Tricked me.

MUGGS

Now, Ham, on the way over here, you positively wriggled with excitement at this chance to find your *roots*, darling. How could you know those roots were so... tangled?

GLENN

If it were up to me, I would always tell people beforehand. But Walter and the guys in the control room insist on shock treatment. To make the whole thing seem more natural. Spontaneous.

HAMILTON

Natural? I'm sitting next to Mosiah Wilson, the deadliest cornerback of his era, as a huge fan, but only as a fan, and then I learn in rapid succession that *my* people held *his* people as slaves...

AALIYAH & MUGGS

In unwitting unison

Enslaved people!

HAMILTON

Enslaved people whose DNA somehow got mixed up with mine. No, tell the boys in the control room that this was unnatural, unwelcome, unwarranted, and unacceptable.

MOSIAH

You thought it was unwelcome?
Have you reflected at all...//

MUGGS moves to the bar

AALIYAH

Wait! Please let me, friend. Ham, this experience may have proved unwelcome for you, but in the context of this connection to slavery, perhaps some good can...//

GLENN

Yeah, Aaliyah thinks there's an enormous upside to this. In the next segment, you two talk about it, and whatever message you put out is going to be heard by so many people. You know, Black History Month. There's talk of having you guys on MSNBC, CNN, *Jimmy Fallon!*

HAMILTON

Jimmy Fallon? Jimmy Fallon? Is that supposed to cheer me up?

AALIYAH

Maybe it's not about feeling better but being part of repairing White supremacy's systemic damage...//

HAMILTON

So, now I'm a White supremacist? Are you putting that on Twitter?

MUGGS

All Whites are supremacists. Just a matter of degree, right, Aaliyah?

GLENN

Not me! Whatever the opposite of a White supremacist is, that's me. Walter and those guys act like I'm their slave. Sorry. Enslaved person.

AALIYAH

Holding MOSIAH back

Glenn, you're not helping,

GLENN

*Gestures toward control
booth*

But it is those guys.... They wanted
the Twitter feed to be all sleazy.

*Pulls out his phone and
reads*

Like this.

Announcer voice

“Revelations of realities long
hidden—forbidden love or illicit
relations? Never know what you
will catch when you are... hashtag
chasingthedead.”

Regular voice

I would walk if they did that stuff.
My *Boogers* fans would want me
to.

MOSIAH

Well, now! A previously
unsuspected nobility.

HAMILTON

Right. Now, I’m the one who feels
like walking.

MUGGS

I don't think so, dear. A lawyer, of all people, must never leave the scene of an... accident. So, play nice. Have a drink. Let's see where the show goes.

Holds up a Vodka bottle triumphantly and pours

HAMILTON

Where could it go? I thought...
Jesus, what was I thinking?

In a daze

When you see these things on *PBS*, they're harmless: old sepia-toned photos and parchments—not *Poirot Goes to Pittsburgh*.

GLENN

That's a little bit unfair. Our genealogy experts *all* used to work on those other ancestry shows.

HAMILTON

Used to? On those shows, family history comes out like some sort of glorious pageant, with some posh British actor or Henry Louis Gates extolling your family's courage and dreams and sacrifices.



eternal Ancestors

**Broom Street Theater presents
a Knowledge Workings Production**

**by T.J. Elliott and Joe Queenan
directed by Dana Pellebon**

Genealogy

