



Diamond Grove Slave Tree

Xavier Cavazos

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In this ambitious and cutting-edge follow-up to *Barbarian at the Gate*, poet Xavier Cavazos explores the intersection of race, agriculture, history, and plant genus to focus more clearly on the life and times of Iowa State University alumnus, George Washington Carver. Cavazos employs both persona and narrative structure with unapologetic delivery on the page to recreate Carver's living and social environments at the university and beyond.

--Cavazos brings techniques of jazz improvisation to work bits and pieces of language into the edges and lesser-known undercurrents of the established melody of the life of George Washington Carver. O peanut/& sweet potato/Alabama & Georgia/hoe & sun, Cavazos writes about the life and work of the famed African-American botanist and inventor who cultivated diverse crops such as peanuts, soybeans, and the sweet potato as alternative food sources for poor farmers, particularly in the South where cotton had depleted the soil of nutrients. Both the agricultural research and the biographical details of the life of Carver take on metaphorical significance in these poems, *The goober and the yam/ready to reap riches/from good Dixie soil*. This remarkable life, worthy of many biographies, has found one more gifted voice to praise and sing the complicated story of discipline and genius into the sunshine.-- Debra Marquart, author of *The Horizontal World: Growing Up Wild in the Middle of Nowhere*

As Ralph Ellison would have it, a Yam is a Yam. And to Mr. Carver, a Peanut is More than a Shell. This book by Mr. Cavazos does justice to those ideas.-- Prof. Steve Cannon, *Gathering of the Tribes*

This book is definitely meant to be read aloud to appreciate where Xavier is taking you. He captures your attention with a fresh but in-your-face perspective that forces you to look at the Carver experience all over again. To quote Carver it is the product of a creative mind.--Thomas Moore, Executive Director, African American Museum of Iowa

In *Diamond Grove Slave Tree*, Xavier Cavazos forges a vision of story and song through history, examining a visionary in a kind of poetic totality that is populated by a galaxy of form and lyrical invention worthy of George Washington Carver's brilliance.--Ryan Collins, Director Midwest Writing Center, author, *A New American Field Guide & Song Book*, (H_NGM_N Books)

In this poetic biography about George Washington Carver, the author captures the essence of the human being beyond Carver as just the peanut man. The reader whether historian, linguist, student, teacher, rhetorician, or poet is compelled to grapple with words as similes, metaphors, rhythms leap from the page, forcing a new (Re)construction of Mr. Carver. The author elicits details of Carver's life long forgotten, or ignored, by the historical record. Exiting the book, readers find themselves inquiring: Just who was George Washington Carver ex-slave, peanut man, scientist, genius, or world icon?--Dr. Bobby Cummings, Professor of English, Director of Africana and Black Studies, Central Washington University

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