

April 5, 2016

*THE FAMILY TREE: A LYNCHING IN
GEORGIA* NEWSLETTER

*In the three months since my book was released, I have made 25 public appearances in seven states, 15 cities, and done nine radio and six newspaper interviews. Whew. It has been a wondrous journey, which continues on, though a bit less strenuously.

*Some highlights of the tour:

*My family and I held a memorial service on Jan. 22, the 104th anniversary of the lynching, in Hamilton, Georgia. It was scheduled to be held at the Methodist Church, where some members of the mob had worshipped and where Miss Lula, my cousin, had demanded an end to the killing, but the previously-enthusiastic minister, called it off when members expressed displeasure with the book. The courageous town librarian, Ada Demlow, stepped in and offered the library. It was a deeply-touching service well-attended by members of both races.

*A beautiful young African American woman at the Carson McCullers Center in Columbus, Ga., introduced herself as “Jennifer” and asked me to sign her book “To Jennifer’s great-great-grandfather Mike Williams.” I knew immediately who she is; Mike Williams was enslaved by my third great uncle Brit Williams.

*In Hyattsville, Md.; Decatur, Ga.; Washington, DC; Columbus, Ga; and Hamilton, Ga., African American

men and women whose ancestors were enslaved by mine or whose ancestors were the rejected children of my ancestors rise up from audiences to introduce themselves. Every week or so emails arrive from never-before-known cousins, black and white, who have read my book. I am surprised and heartened by the white ones who praise the book. “We” are everywhere. I have yet to find a word for the emotions that well up in me on these increasingly frequent occasions.

*In Atlanta and Decatur, several white people came up to tell me of their work posting memorial plaques at lynching sites throughout the state. They said this is a mission of their Episcopal churches.

*In Denver’s famous Tattered Cover Bookstore I found a packed house. My book made Denver’s best-seller list that week. Attendance was amplified by my talk the night before to the Second Tuesday Race Dialogue, a large and long-standing bi-racial group of influential Denverites who spread the word. I am trying to work with racial justice organizations on all my speaking engagements.

*The book had two wonderful reviews recently. *The Washington Post* review included this eye-opener: “In a peculiar way, “The Family Tree” is a fitting companion to Toni Morrison’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel “Beloved.” Her novel dramatizes the generational effect of racial violence in the form of the spiteful ghost of a 2-year-old who died fleeing slavery. Branan also is examining the generational effect of racial violence but in the haunted consciousness of whites rather than the victims.” See full

review

at (www.washingtonpost.com/newssearch/?query=karen+branan)

The *Christian Science Monitor* did a review/Q&A with “the author.” (<http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2016/0324/A-Southern-tragedy-racism-redemption-and-family>)

Fourteen reviews at Amazon give *The Family Tree* an average 4.5 (out of 5) star rating.

Upcoming events: (see karenbranan.com/Events for details)

April 23 God’s Whisper Farm, VA

May 1, Literary Hill Bookfest, Eastern Market, DC

May 13 Jung Society book talk (including dreams that guided the book), DC

May 26 The Potters House Bookstore, DC

May 21 American Society of Journalists and Authors conference panelist, NYC

Lots of invitations for the fall including George Mason University’s Fall for the Book literary festival, Brooklyn Historical Society, and the Slave Dwelling Project Conference.

I’ll post a new blog at karenbranan.com in a couple of days. Check it out. The website has a new page called Stories. You are invited to post any race stories you care to share anonymously.

Thanks to everyone for all your support. It means so much.