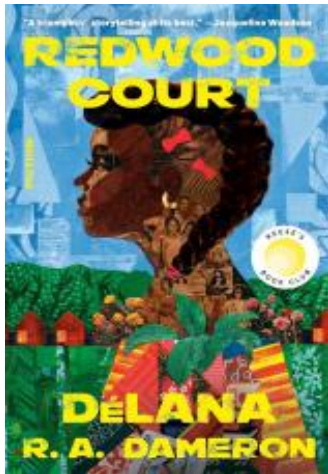


# Redwood Court

by DéLana R. A. Dameron

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## About the Book

**A nuanced, brilliant *(Essence)* debut about one unforgettable Southern Black family and its youngest daughter's coming of age in the 1990s.**

"Mika, you sit at our feet all these hours and days, hearing us tell our tales. You have all these stories inside you: all the stories everyone in our family knows and all the stories everyone in our family tells. You write 'em in your books and show everyone who we are."

So begins award-winning poet DéLana R. A. Dameron's debut novel, *REDWOOD COURT*. The baby of the family, Mika Tabor spends much of her time in the care of loved ones, listening to their stories and witnessing their struggles. On Redwood Court, the cul-de-sac in the all-Black working-class suburb of Columbia, South Carolina, where her grandparents live, Mika learns important lessons from the people who raise her: her exhausted parents, who work long hours at multiple jobs while still making sure their kids experience the adventure of family vacations; her older sister, who in a house filled with Motown would rather listen to Alanis Morissette; her retired grandparents, children of Jim Crow, who realized their own vision of success when they bought their house on the Court in the 1960s, imagining it filled with future generations; and the many neighbors who hold tight to the community they've built, committed to fostering joy and love in an America so insistent on seeing Black people stumble and fall.

With visceral clarity and powerful prose, Dameron reveals the devastation of being made to feel invisible and the transformative power of being seen. *REDWOOD COURT* is a celebration of extraordinary, ordinary people striving to achieve their own American dreams.

## Discussion Guide

1. Which character resonated with you the most? Why?
2. What through-lines did you see across the generations?
3. What did 154 Redwood Court represent for Weesie and Teeta? For Rhina? For Mika?
4. ?One of the things Weesie brought with her to Redwood Court that had been instilled in her in Georgia was an overwhelming sense that where systems fail, people prevail.? How did this sense influence Weesie?s actions? How did those actions influence their neighborhood?
5. We see through various characters? points of view throughout the novel, but it?s really Mika?s coming-of-age story. How would you characterize Mika? What was it like getting to know certain characters through her --- and then through their own thoughts?
6. What do you imagine Sasha?s interior world was like? What were her hopes and dreams?
7. What does Redwood Court have to say about the idea of family? Of community? How did the characters support each other throughout their lives? Where, if at all, did this support fall short?
8. ?You have all these stories inside you --- that?s what we have to pass on --- all the stories everyone in our family knows and all the stories everyone in our family tells,? Mika?s grandparents tell her. What family stories will you pass on?
9. The novel is suffused with nostalgia, from the lyrics of The Spinners and The O?Jays to decidedly ?90s popular culture. What was this part of the reading experience like for you? How might these nostalgic moments enable a reader to connect even more deeply with the characters and story?
10. ?You understand a thing differently when it?s called something else, maybe closer to what it?s about or what it?s doing,? Cousin Daisy says. ?I think we do [have to call our neighborhoods ghettos]. It changes the relationship we have with our understanding of what has been allowed to us.? Discuss the conversation Cousin Daisy sparks during her visit. How do the other characters react? What is your point of view on the argument? Does this conversation dull the shine of Redwood Court for Weesie, Mika and the others? Why or why not?
11. Teeta and Major are both veterans. How are their experiences similar? How are they different? How does Teeta?s advice to Major change the trajectory of his life?
12. Teeta and Major choose their battles when it comes to confronting racism --- sometimes they choose to ignore it, or to play the supplicant role the white person in question expects. What did you think about these scenes?

## Author Bio

DéLana R. A. Dameron is an artist whose primary medium is storytelling. She is a graduate of New York University?s

MFA program in poetry and holds a BA degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her debut poetry collection, HOW GOD ENDS US, was selected by Elizabeth Alexander for the South Carolina Poetry Book Prize, and her second collection, WEARY KINGDOM, was chosen by Nikky Finney for the Palmetto Poetry Series. She also is the author of REDWOOD COURT, her debut novel. Dameron is the founder of Saloma Acres, an equestrian and cultural space in her hometown in South Carolina, where she resides.

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