

Traveling back to slavery essay

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



Traveling Back to Slavery At the Weylin plantation, a black slave must get permission from his white slave master to visit his own wife.

This was Dana's discovery of the slavery era in America. Undoubtedly, it was a painful time that Dana and her fellow African Americans of modern time know nothing about except through books, television and other forms of media. But, Dana discovers that books and television cannot reveal the reality of the past. Slavery in America was more oppressive than anything she had imagined. The woman saw the suffering of fellow Africans of the slavery era and experienced it with them. There were rapes, whippings, and other forms of oppression around her. Luckily for Dana, however, she was only time traveling when she experienced the misery of the past.

If all Africans of the slavery era of America had the privilege to time travel to the future – as Dana had time traveled to the past – they would have experienced the kind of relief experienced by Dana when she moved back to the future with Kevin by her side, regardless of race. After all, on the Weylin plantation, it was forbidden for whites and blacks to mingle like Kevin and Dana in modern-day America (Butler). In fact, every form of oppression that Dana saw on the Weylin plantation was experienced by the African slaves of America. Olaudah Equiano was a writer who had experienced the misery of slavery, but not because all human slaves have been treated like dogs or even worse by their masters throughout the history of humanity (The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African). Rather, the white slave masters in America did not take ethics into account. The fact that America had to fight battles within itself to abolish

slavery reveals that the slave trade was based on the formula of oppression. 'Man cannot serve two masters, both God and Mammon,' says Jesus Christ.

In the case of slavery in America, it is clear that Mammon was made to rule man in a way that dehumanized the latter to the extent that he lost everything except the spirit within. Dana believes that slavery had a strange effect on relationships between people. According to Butler's account of slavery, the black slaves feared their white masters because the latter could get terribly violent. But, they did not bow to their masters enough to stop feeling contempt. What is more, because they were forced to serve their masters, the black slaves of America also experienced affection toward them as Dana felt for Rufus (Butler). Most probably it was the spirit within that allowed them to feel affection for their oppressors. It is the same spirit touched upon by Equiano.

After all, slaves were human beings that had to feel joyful emotions such as love, at the same time as they experienced the pain of being dehumanized. Being human, the white slave masters must have experienced pain too, as suffering is a fact of life, whether it is due to a broken tooth or dying friend. Yet, for white slave masters of the time, business was business, regardless of whether they were dealing in human beings or cardboard boxes. Slaves were oppressed because cruelty was believed to train them to perfectly obey their masters. It is only now that organizational theorists are working to train managers to behave ethically or be threatened with lawsuits for discrimination.

Confirming Dana's observations when she travels back in time, Equiano makes it clear that the white slave masters are very violent toward slaves. On the slave ship, Equiano is depressed and does not wish to eat. But, he is forced to consume food for the sake of his white masters, and severely flogged in the process. Of course, this is not the first and the last time that he experiences oppression. He was kidnapped, too, for the sake of money (Equiano). Nowadays, organizational theorists continuously stress the importance of ethics in business.

At the time that Equiano wrote his book, however, only jungle laws prevailed between white masters and their African slaves. It was around the same time that Dana found herself at the Weylin plantation. Fortunately, though, Dana can travel forward in time to be in modern-day America. Slavery has been abolished. But, the African Americans remember that their ancestors have experienced a very painful past in the same nation. Butler uses time travel as a literary device in her novel, *Kindred*. Perhaps it is to discover her roots in America that she applies this literary device. Nahin explains the application of this literary device thus: ...As a modern writer... expressed it, "Time travel [is] the ultimate fantasy, the scientific addition to the human quest for immortality.

" And a philosopher... has correctly observed that " the popular appeal of time travel... is no doubt due to a nostalgia for the past, which is almost an omnipresent aspect of the human condition." Some writers have recognized that time travel fantasy has a strong appeal for adults as well as for children. For example, recall the old saying " Time is money," and then ask

yourself whether it wouldn't be wonderful if you could save time just like money... The German writer Wolfgang Jeschke's best-known book... is *Der Zeiter* (The Time Person), a collection of time travel stories for grownups; the central story, which can be found in English translation, has the texture of a fairy tale. In this story, two princes from the far future build a time machine, and then the younger one sends his brother (the heir to the throne) 11, 000 years into the past, to A. D. 1619, and thereafter fears his brother's return (Nahin 3-4). But, the African past in America was not a happy one. It is certainly not pleasant enough for a time traveler to visit.

If African slaves of the time were living today, they would not want to save that time period in their memory banks. However, the fact that Butler, an African American writer, gets Dana to time travel to the era of slavery reveals that there are scars from that era that cannot be done away with unless stories about them are told and retold. As a matter of fact, stories about African slavery in America are retold just like the stories of Jews in Nazi Germany are written over and over. Jews do not seem to have forgotten that era.

African Americans of modern times are also heard discussing their ancestors being enslaved and oppressed in slavery by white slave masters. Of a certainty, Nahin's analysis of time travel does not apply to Butler's application of this literary device in *Kindred*. Dana does not time travel to the past using her own free will. She is traveled by magic, so to say. If everybody had the power to time travel, nobody would be forced into slavery and oppressed by slave masters. Nobody would experience oppression at

the hands of the Nazis either. If Dana had willfully time traveled to the time of slavery in America, it would have been a heroic deed on her part. Then again, she is fortunate that she could travel forward in time as magically as she had left off the present for the past.

Works Cited Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. New York: Doubleday, 1979. Nahin, Paul J. *Time Machines: Time Travel in Physics, Metaphysics, and Science Fiction*. New York: Springer, 1999.

Equiano, Oloudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*. 1789. 3 Dec 2008. .