

Good example of essay on the process of becoming an enslaved person in kindred, b...

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



At the mention of the word slave or slavery, many people who share and know of the American past get cold chills. Many books we read lead us to the understanding of how it used to be both to master and slave. The black community in the United States was the most affected because for many years, the American populace ignored the rights of those considered slaves. It is in the 20th century when it dawned on the slaves and they were never to be treated unfairly again. But this does not make them forget that patch of their lives when all was not well and they were discriminated against. Many novelists, poets and other writers have tried to author works that tell the story of slavery, many of whom telling the story of the predicament they faced and how whites transformed blacks to become the slaves that they were made to be. The story of slavery was one that made Africans take life as if they were eating it with a pinch of salt, because of the pain and suffering it caused them through their transformation into slaves by lack of equality and ill treatment.

In the work of Octavia Butler, *Kindred*, the reader meets Dana, the protagonist in the novel who walks through the journey of enslavement. Her enslavement is physical, mental and spiritual in nature. For a woman who lives in 1976, she travels from her present day to her ancestral life of 1815 conversely transforming the concepts of freedom and slavery. The experiences she acquires as a result of travelling through time revives her racial identity as a black in a society that at some point demeaned blacks and made them inferior to other racial groups. Dana moves through time in a temporal double consciousness and gets transformed from her twentieth-century identity and takes up a nineteenth-century identity that is only

explainable in slavery terms. Her transformation brings to light how she had to adjust to enslavement of a black girl on a plantation. There are several moments in the novel when she is challenged and the transformation seen as to how she slowly changes to becoming a slave. These are the times that the mental, physical and emotional shifts take place and hence the transformation.

One of the instances that show how Dana undergoes the process of becoming a slave is when she travels back in time to the slave plantation. On her second trip she saves the life of Rufus and typical to the time when blacks were very inferior to whites, Rufus mother does not approve of her saving the life of Rufus. The fire Rufus started could have cost his life and could have also burned down their entire house. Dana later learns that Rufus mother did not approve of performance of a CPR on her son and thus Rufus retells what his mother said about Dana, “ Mama said she tried to stop you when she saw you doing that to me because you were just some nigger she had never seen before” (Butler 24). Dana is shocked that Rufus mother used the derogatory word ‘ nigger’ even after she saved their lives.

The connotation of the word black differs greatly to what it means in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even at the point when Tom, Rufus’ father was staring at her, she had to be reminded of her status, as a slave. Dana says that “ After a moment, I realized that Weylin was looking at me .. Staring hard at me . At first, I stared back. Then I looked away, remembering that I was supposed to be a slave. Slaves lowered their eyes respectfully (Butler 66). It becomes clear that her status as black could not allow her hold a direct eye contact with her bosses or whites for that matter. in this case, it is true

that she had to suffer emotional and mental shift in order to fit into the 19th century self, which is very different from the 20th century self that she occupies presently.

At some point Dana decides to conduct some sort of research in order to understand the lives of slaves in the antebellum south. At one point Dana tried to read all kinds of resources in her house so that she could learn more about slavery so she knows how to cope with life at the plantation. But she does not get the true picture of that life as it is in real life situations the picture painted from the literature she reads is misleading as it is erroneous. She gets numb at the thought of the conditions slaves find themselves in and so, seeks to get training that is equivalent to life in the Weylin plantation.

Dana was forced to shift to a new mode of memory and lifestyle that conforms to the transformation of in the process of becoming a slave.

During the trip that she took with her husband, upon their arrival in the 19th century Dana and Kevin had to pretend, that Dana was his concubine and Kevin her master. Margret calls her a filthy black whore and slaps her. At this point she gets her conscious and remembers her place in the twentieth century even when the happenings take place in the 19th century. She feels so fragmented and acknowledges that it was indeed shameful to love a black woman but acceptable to rape one (Butler 124). Race was not so much of an issue at the time they dated and got married in the 20th century but turns out that was a sin and completely unacceptable if anything like that ever took place back in the plantation. She has to contend with this situation because that is how she got to understand and get the feel of 'blackness' back in the 19th century.

Butler brings out two contrasting pictures of an oppressive era and one that the black community had become acceptable as members of the society. Blacks in the 20th century carry the burden of their charred past, especially the black women who receive double ill treatment through the eyes of race and gender imbalances. During the travels that Dana has, she interacts with a past and one that is clear, is that there are resemblances on the way blacks are treated just as there are differences. The two eras depicted as different by the gap of years but the ill treatment of blacks is still a major problem. It is not that her marriage to Kevin was completely accepted by society, but was worse off in the Weylin plantation.

Work Cited

Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003