

Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*: White Persona / Black Persona

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Throughout the history of the United States of America, prominent figures such as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Martin Luther King, Jr., have tried to overcome the dilemmas of race relations, which are deeply rooted in the national culture. However, and even though the nature of persecution has changed overtime, individuals of African American ancestry have undergone racial oppression from the days of slavery to the twenty-first century. In Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, the main character Dana, a young African American woman of mixed ancestry living in Los Angeles, California, is suddenly confronted to the perils and hardships of slavery when, on June 9, 1976, she time-travels to the Weylin plantation, in the slave state of Maryland, where her black and white ancestors live. This essay focuses on Dana's survival strategies in the repressive world of the Weylin plantation. The first part of this essay will show how Dana negotiates the transition from being a late twentieth-century African American Woman to being, in the eyes of some resentful fellow slaves, a "White-Nigger"—an epithet referring to Dana's white behavior on the Weylin plantation where her time-traveling has transported her. The second part will analyze Dana's experience as a black woman. It will focus, on the one hand, on how Dana is irremediably transformed into a slave on account of her physical appearance and, on the other hand, how easy it is to accept and find one's place in the institution of slavery. By depicting the horrors of slavery through the experience of a modern-day African American woman, Butler's *Kindred* provides the reader with a new and unique way of understanding the so-called "peculiar institution": its organization, values and culture; its physical and psychological effects on slaves and their descendants; and even its legacy on the nation at large.

Part 1: Dana as a “White” Woman

The title of this essay was inspired by Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), a study of the inferiority complex colonized Black people experience when they try to appropriate and imitate the culture of the white colonizer. As Fanon puts it: “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (18). Fanon points out that black people who adopted the culture or language of white people, and then renounced their blackness, can be “elevated above [their] jungle status” (18). “Jungle status” could be understood in two ways. On the one hand, “jungle status” refers to the stereotype of blacks as savages because white people look down on black people, and because black people were supposedly raised in the same way as wild animals. On the other hand, “jungle status” means the self-loathing of black people because they are so alienated by their oppressors that they end up believing that they are inferior. Black people try to wear a “white mask” in order to feel that they can reach beyond the social status that their white oppressors assigned them. In *Kindred*, Dana, a black woman, travels back in time from the twentieth to the eighteenth century, leaving 1976 Los Angeles to find herself on a plantation in the antebellum South. As Dana witnesses and then experiences the life of slaves, she notices that her behavior is “more white than black” (249). Dana never wears a “white mask” or tries to elevate herself above some “jungle status.” However, Dana is a black woman who has been raised in a white-dominated culture and environment, and as a consequence, from the point of view of eighteenth-century people (both black and white), she speaks and behaves like a white person. Once on the Weylin plantation, Dana triggers the slaves’ inferiority complex and becomes aware her “whiteness.” Thus, the phrase “White Persona” in the title for this essay refers to the dual nature of Dana who has assimilated twentieth-century white

culture since she was born; and when Dana travels back to the eighteenth century, she is forced to notice her blackness in appearance and her whiteness in spirit. This is when she has to wear a “black mask,” i.e., she has to behave the way white people on the plantation expect her to behave in order to survive. This is when she has to adopt the “black persona” referred to in the title. She has to pretend, and even to learn, to be a slave. Hence this essay will show the complex emotions of a modern black woman who tries to adapt to the culture of the slaves in order to survive on the plantation. Dana will end up downplaying her “white persona” and developing her “black persona” for she wishes neither to be hated by the slaves nor get in trouble with the white masters of the plantation.

On the plantations of the antebellum South, slaves born in slavery lived their entire life as slaves. However, some slaves would secretly learn how to read and write with, in mind, the hope to escape to the North. In Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*, when Dana asks Nigel, a husky thirteen-year-old male slave on the Weylin plantation, if he wants to learn how to read and write, Nigel answers without fear, showing his back to Dana, as the following exchange, reported by Dana, shows:

“You know what’s going to happen to both of us if we get caught?” I asked him.
“You scared?” He asked.
“Yes. But that doesn’t matter. I’ll teach you. I just wanted to be sure you knew what we are getting into.”
Nigel turned away from me, lifted his shirt in the back so that I could see his scars. Then he faced me again. “I know,” he said. (104)

Nigel’s fearless attitude is structured by the other slaves’ caution to him. He will never be afraid to be whipped by getting knowledge because he plots to go to the North someday, and this is what he really wants, as Dana explains:

I’d once heard Luke give to Nigel. “Don’t argue with white folks,” he had said. “Don’t tell them ‘no.’ Don’t let them see you mad. Just say ‘yes, sir.’ Then go ’head and do what you want to do. Might have to take a whippin’ for it later on, but if you want it bad enough, the whippin’ won’t matter much.” (102)

Just saying ‘yes’ to white people and doing their bidding is the way to hide a spirit of

revolt. Dana will develop a similar attitude because she wants to avoid taking a whipping (102). During slavery times, slaves—especially field slaves—were used like beasts of burdens, working from sunup to sundown. They could also be sold to slave traders like any other piece of property such as livestock or furniture, and if they resisted or answered back, they would get punished. Therefore, to say nothing and just obey what the owner says is a way of protecting oneself. However, even though Nigel knows that his owner will whip him, he still has the will to be a freeman. Hence a whipping does not matter to him, and this is why he asks Dana to teach him how to read and write. However, things may not be so simple. Frederick Douglass, in his *Narrative*, argues the following:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. (22)

According to Douglass, as long as slaves do not try to make a move to be free, they cannot be free, and later on in his narrative, Douglass makes clear that education is the key to freedom: “[k]nowledge unfits a child to be a slave” (50). In *Kindred*, Nigel already knows that as long as he is not educated, he will never get away from the plantation. He knows that he must accept his destiny as a slave; he knows that he cannot escape from his status. He indeed knows that his understanding of the situation will not lead him to freedom. Yet, he also knows that if he can learn to read and write, he will be able to write his own pass, run away, and become a freeman. Dana has given him the hope to be a freeman by teaching how to read and write.

Carrie, who is a mute slave, also has hidden motivations for learning. However, her situation is complicated:

Nigel was waiting. He already had our book out of its hiding place and was spelling out words to Carrie. That surprised me because I had offered Carrie a chance to learn with him, and she had refused. Now though, the two of them, alone in the cookhouse,

were so involved in what they were doing that they didn't even notice me until I shut the door. (111)

Carrie, more than any other slave, is compelled to be an obedient slave because her handicap makes her more vulnerable than others to be sold off to a slave trader. If she behaves in a defiant manner to her owner, Mr. Weylin, she may not be able to stay with her mother, Sarah, and Carrie knows that this is something Sarah could not bear as Weylin has already sold her three other children. In fact, Weylin was careful to keep Carrie for he knows that Sarah, who is the cook for the Weylin family, will never try to run away or take her revenge on him for selling her other children. It is mainly protection for Sarah herself because she does not want to feel the same miserable feeling anymore, and young Carrie is afraid not to make any trouble for her mother, so she could not tell Dana, as Nigel did, that she wants to learn. However, Carrie wants to be independent and learn how to read and write because she witnesses Nigel's progress in leaning. Despite this enormous pressure, Carrie, with the assistance of Nigel, has decided to learn her ABC, perhaps as a way of feeling less dependent on both her mother and Weylin. Firstly, Carrie starts to learn with Nigel rather than with Dana, perhaps because she does not know Dana well enough to trust her. However, she too, would like to be more than just her master's property, and she finally asks Dana to teach her.

Dana, as a twentieth-century African American woman who travels in time back to the antebellum South, starts to notice the injustice about teaching in the plantation: "Hours later in the cookhouse, Nigel asked me to teach him to read. The request surprised me, then I was ashamed of my surprise. It seemed such a natural request" (103). Nigel's request makes Dana realize how easily people can be trained to accept slavery. Until Nigel asks Dana to teach him, she does not notice that the illiteracy of black children is unnatural because, slowly but steadily, she has become accustomed to the ways of the plantation even though, as an educated, post-civil rights movement woman of color, she

should have noticed it immediately: solving the illiteracy of children is a priority in her time. From Dana's experience, the reader comes to understand that slavery is very easy to accept. One simply gets used to it, and this is why Dana feels ashamed.

After realizing the injustice of slavery, Dana starts to take action against slavery. She wants to do something for slaves to prove that she is not just an observer from the twentieth century. As Dana tells Kevin Franklin, her husband:

You might be able to go through this whole experience as an observer [...] I can understand that because most of the time, I'm still an observer. It's protection. It's nineteen seventy-six shielding and cushioning eighteen nineteen for me. But now and then, like with the kids' game, I can't maintain the distance. I'm drawn all the way into eighteen nineteen, and I don't know what to do. I ought to be doing something though. I know that. (107)

Saying that she has no responsibility for slaves or ignoring injustice happening under her nose on the plantation is easier for Dana because it is safer and more trouble-free, which means that she will not be punished by educating a slave. However, out of a sense of justice and bravery, Dana will not remain a mere observer. Teaching Nigel his ABC is Dana's first step toward fighting injustice.

In this scene, Dana's persona as a modern woman appears, and her attitude can be associated to Ralph Waldo Emerson's notion of "self-reliance." In *Self-Reliance*, Emerson writes:

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark. (20)

Emerson focuses on individuals' confidence. Everyone has strong beliefs about what is right or wrong in their mind but does not have the confidence to show it as they grow up. However, Emerson asserts that individuals should accept where they belong, but also live

as much as they can by using their abilities even though the road is tough. In *The Emerson Effect: Individualism and Submission in America*, Christopher Newfield writes that Emerson insists on cutting out conventional knowledge in order to live one's life according to one's beliefs. As Newfield argues,

First, he [Emerson] summons the reader to reject conventional wisdom in favor of what he or she knows from within, from an instinct to develop one's inner being. This is Emerson the individualist radical, Emerson the anarchist, Emerson the creative artist, who insists that the truth requires that we first sever our ties to established knowledge and society. [...] To know, to be, is to break the chains. (22-23)

To live what one believes, he/she must have the courage to get away from the conventions, which may require some suffering. Dana's self-reliance appears when she is asked to teach slaves how to read and write. Now she finds herself in the era when her ancestors lived and witnesses a situation in which slaves are forced to work from sunrise to sunset and forbidden to learn how to read and write. When Dana is contemplating what she ought to do under this situation, she decides to "advance on Chaos and the Dark." Educating slaves may bring about punishment sooner or later, but she trusts herself and makes herself do what she believes is true. It is by giving herself authority that she could make the decision to teach slaves even though it is against the society she is in now. This is what a twentieth-century woman can do for her ancestors. Therefore, Dana's motivation for teaching comes from a guilty conscience at first, and then from self-reliance after she has found out that she can undermine the system of slavery by teaching slaves how to read and write.

Even though Dana has motivation to undermine the system of slavery, the fact that slaves were mere property remained a constant threat because slaveholders could do as they pleased with their property, and they would have recourse to severe punishment against disobedience. When Weylin, the owner of the plantation, finds out Dana is reading, he becomes vicious and imposes punishment on her:

Weylin dragged me a few feet, then pushed me hard. I fell, knocked myself breathless. I never saw where the whip came from, never even saw the first blow coming. But it came—like a hot iron across my back, burning into me through my light shirt, searing my skin... I screamed, convulsed. Weylin struck again and again, until I couldn't have gotten up at gunpoint. (114)

Slaveholders punished slaves for learning or teaching through whipping, hanging, beating, or mutilation. They were afraid of slaves getting knowledge and wanted to keep them as ignorant as possible because when they got knowledge like white people, they would write their own passes and escape from the plantation or pass messages to slaves on other plantations and start a revolt—a rhetoric that Dana hears in a conversation between Rufus and his neighbors:

Some of his neighbors found out what I was doing and offered him fatherly advice. It was dangerous to educate slaves, they warned. Education made blacks dissatisfied with slavery. It spoiled them for fieldwork. The Methodist minister said it made them disobedient, made them want more than the Lord intended them to have. Another man said educating slaves was illegal. When Rufus replied that he has checked and that it wasn't illegal in Maryland, the man said it should have been. (264)

Owners gave punishment to slaves if they tried to learn how to read and write. This was a way of reducing slaves to their assigned status: a piece of property that works from sunrise to sunset. During the era in which Dana travels back, there were always laws that put white people at an advantage over black people. These laws are called slave codes and are based on the general consensus that slaves should be treated as property:

Legally considered property, slaves were not allowed to own property of their own. They were not allowed to assemble without the presence of a white person. Slaves that lived off the plantation were subject to special curfews [...] Slave codes had ruinous effects on African American society. It was illegal to teach a slave to read or write. Religious motives sometimes prevailed, however, as many devout white Christians educated slaves to enable the reading of the Bible. These same Christians did not recognize marriage between slaves in their laws. This made it easier to justify the breakup of families by selling one if its members to another owner. (“Slave Codes”)

Even though Dana finds out that teaching slaves was not illegal in Maryland, almost all white people in the plantation believe that education for slaves is dangerous because

“Education made blacks dissatisfied with slavery. It spoiled them for field work” (264). In this sense, even though there is no set of rules that prohibit what blacks do or permit what whites do, custom makes no difference with the existence of the laws and in fact, custom gives the most significant effect on the community of the plantation and slaves ought to get punishment for learning or teaching without the arm of the law.

Inhumane treatments of slaves when they broke the rules were commonly carried out without any comment. When Weylin is whipping Dana, no one on the plantation tries to protect her because if they tried to help Dana they, in turn, would be punished for rebelling against their master. Therefore, Dana never seeks help from others when Weylin whips her because she knows that if she begs for help from others, they will get in trouble. Even a twentieth-century woman who knows, unlike the slaves, that slavery will eventually be abolished, will not act in an unusual manner with other slaves because that is what it is when living on the plantation. The whole society follows the custom, which makes the outsider, Dana, behave like a normal slave who never opposes or acts against white people.

The dilemma is that even though slaves themselves resented the inhumanity of slavery, they knew and accepted that whipping or beating slaves was a normal practice at that time. It was impossible for slaves to claim their right to be treated equally because the general belief that education for slaves is dangerous prevailed among white people in the South. This social norm of the community was deeply rooted in people’s mind and it was very difficult to circumvent or undermine it. Consequently, the custom had a tremendous influence on the system of slavery.

After getting more accustomed to the life in the early 1800s in Maryland, Dana struggles with the contradictory emotion that she betrays herself when she forgives Rufus and saves him on every occasion. At first, she tries to fit in as a slave, but other slaves

remain suspicious and resentful of the way she speaks because, in their mind, Dana is a fraud who tries to imitate the way white people speak. When Dana tells Nigel that, “this is really the way I talk,” Nigel is not convinced. He tells her that she speaks, “More like white folks than some white folks,” and admonishes: “You’ll get into trouble [...] Marse Tom already don’t like you. You talk too educated and you come from a free state” (76). The slaves blame Dana because she cannot behave as a typical slave on the plantation. After Dana gets a hostile look from slaves in the cookhouse, she tells Carrie about her feelings: “I was beginning to feel like a traitor [...] I guess I can see why there are those here who think I’m more white than black” (249). Indeed, Dana cannot behave like other slaves. She systematically deviates from the “proper” slave language of the plantation, and she has very limited skills as a manual worker, even though she works as hard as possible. Her failure at acting as a slave unsettles other slaves. They become cautious around her; they mind what they say in front of her, and even avoid getting close to her. However, the fact that Dana appears “more white than black” to the slaves is not the major source of slaves’ distrust toward Dana. What really makes the slaves resentful of Dana is that she not only saves the life of Rufus but also always forgives him. Dana’s gentleness toward Rufus comes across as insincerity to the slaves. Thus, Alice, who is one of the most vocal critiques of Dana, blames the latter for being married to Kevin, a white man, and for forgiving Rufus very easily: “You ought to be ashamed of yourself, whining and crying after some poor white trash of a man, black as you are. You always try to act so white. White nigger, turning against your own people!” (181)

Dana comes to discover that slaves do not help each other, standing up as one against their masters. One of the reasons for this lack of solidarity is the conversion of many slaves to Christianity, especially toward the last decades of the Peculiar Institution when slave masters discovered that Christianity and its holy book could be turned into

an instrument of control, curbing slaves' potential urges to rebellion, and turning them into meek, obedient servants. Dana witnesses this process of brainwashing when a local white clergyman and his wife come to the plantation to preach. As Dana observes, "The couple dispensed candy and 'safe' Bible verses ('Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters ...'). The kids got candy for repeating the verses" (202).¹ It is with this context in mind that Alice's accusation must be understood. Alice calls Dana a "white nigger" because Dana seems to be an obedient servant, following the ways and values of white masters.

When Dana tries to run away from the Weylin plantation to meet her husband Kevin, she finds out that one of the slaves, Liza, feels strong hostility toward her:

I was startled. I had never had a serious enemy – someone who would go out of her way to get me hurt or killed. To slaveholders and patrollers, I was just one more nigger, worth so many dollars. What they did to me didn't have much to do with me personally. But here was a woman who hated me and who, out of sheer malice, had nearly killed me. (197)

She notices that she is not identified as a member of the slave community on the plantation, but as an enemy because she does not behave in the way other slaves expect her to behave. Dana is unable to blend in the slave society because, to the slaves, she embodies the perfect traitor. At the same time, it may be ventured that her obvious kindness towards the slaves makes her an ideal traitor to despise or fight against.

On the other hand, not all the slaves hate Dana for saving Rufus. One day, Dana tells Carrie about her feelings of guilt: "I wish I had left Rufus lying in the mud" (248). Carrie answers back with gestures which Nigel, now Carrie's husband, decodes for Dana: "She means it doesn't come off, Dana [...] The black. She means the devil with people who say you're anything but what you are" (249). Carrie's opinion is that Dana is not a traitor because Dana has the same black skin as herself, and that is enough for Carrie to see Dana black as she is: a black person under the yoke of white oppression. In other

words, Dana cannot escape being black, no matter how much she acts like a white. Furthermore, Carrie thinks that had Dana let Rufus die, all the slaves would have been sold off. Therefore, by saving Rufus's life, Dana has saved the slaves from a terrible fate.

Whites recognize Dana as a dangerous figure because she is too intelligent, and even makes them feel inferior to her. Rufus tells Dana what Tom Weylin once told Rufus about Dana: "You confuse everybody. You sound too white to the field hands – like some kind of traitor, I guess. [...] 'Daddy always thought you were dangerous because you knew too many white ways, but you were black. Too black, he said. The kind of black who watches and thinks and makes trouble'" (285-286). Slave owners, who often think of slaves as barely human, always make sure that their slaves have very low self-esteem. Masters, in their efforts to thwart the normal development of their slaves into proud human beings, will inflict physical pain by whipping, beating, sexual harassment or rape; and they will try to prevent slaves from learning how to read and write so that they remain subservient. However, Dana is different. She is supposed to be from a free state and she reads books for Rufus. She is the kind of black who causes trouble. This is why Tom Weylin tries to control Dana. One way to oppress Dana is to make her stay away from any possible source of knowledge. At first, Weylin lets Dana read to Rufus. However, when he catches her reading in his library, he orders her to stay away from the books. Another way for Weylin to control Dana is to terrorize her by inflicting violence on other slaves. Once in a while, Weylin punishes a field hand for the crime of answering back or being lazy, and he orders all slaves to watch the beating. The whipping has the expected effect on Dana: "It scared me, made me wonder how long it would be before I made a mistake that would give someone reason to whip me. Or had I already made that mistake?" (97) Through the whippings, Weylin controls Dana indirectly, but it is more than enough

fear for her.

Through Rufus, Octavia Butler also illustrates the psychology of the slave master. As a boy, Rufus is friends with Nigel, a slave of his father, and Alice a free girl of color who lives nearby. Both Nigel and Alice call Rufus “Master” or “Young Mater.” When they become adults, however, things change and Rufus, as Dana notices, becomes “a smaller replica of his father” (110). Soon, Rufus thinks of slaves as his property and tries to control them, including Dana who saved his life on several occasions. Thus, not only slaves but also masters are educated to be what they are. In the antebellum South, masters’ proverbial mistreatment of their slaves is taken for granted, and at the Weylin plantation, things could be much worse, as Dana reflects, when assessing the attitude of Rufus’s father, Tom Weylin: “He wasn’t the monster he could have been with the power he held over his slaves. He wasn’t a monster at all. Just an ordinary man who sometimes did the monstrous things his society said were legal and proper” (146). The consciousness that typifies a master is not an inherent part of any given individual. Rather, it is acquired through the environment one is brought up in. Just like slaves, masters are the product of their morally corrupt society.

Part 2: Dana as a “Black” Woman

As days go by, Dana’s identity as a black slave is constructed. At first, Dana does not let Rufus call her a nigger and says, “I’m a black woman, Rufe. If you have to call me something other than my name, that’s it” (20). Dana, a woman from the late twentieth century, believes that Rufus should treat her equally, or at least not like a slave. Moreover, when Alice asks Dana whether she is a runaway, Dana answers, “That’s what the patrollers would say because I have no papers. But I’m free, born free, intending to stay free” (35). Dana neither dresses nor speaks like a slave, and she was not born a slave, but

it does not mean she will be treated much differently from a slave when on the Weylin's plantation, especially in the absence of her husband, Kevin. Unconsciously, Dana gets into the habit of being extremely cautious, in and out of the plantation, when whites are around. When, one night, she witnesses the patrollers' beating of a black man without a pass, she regrets her behavior: "I was lucky—and stupid for having gotten so close" (34). She learns that a black individual, even a free individual, cannot walk around freely without a pass lest he or she be caught, beaten, or even sexually abused, by patrollers.

Dana has to find her place as a slave if she wants to survive in the antebellum South, and she explains to Kevin that even though she does not belong to Weylin, she has to work for him. Expectedly, Kevin disagrees: "Wait a minute, you don't have to work for him. You're not supposed to belong to him" (82). A logical argument to which Dana replies with another logical argument: "No, but I'm here. And I'm supposed to be a slave. What's a slave for, but to work? Believe me, he'll find something for me to do—or he would if I didn't plan to find my own work before he gets around to me" (82). Thus, Dana has acquired the knowledge that her blackness is absolute and as a black, she ought to act as a slave. Moreover, she learns that white supremacy is absolute on the plantation as one may get whipped for as minor a misdemeanor as talking back to the master. "On the day after Weylin was buried, Rufus decided to punish me for letting the old man die" (234). Dana is thus sentenced to work on the cornfield as a punishment, and then, she gets lashes by the overseer Fowler. After many lashes, Dana is too tired and reflects: "My back hurt from the blows I'd taken as well as from sore muscles. After a while, it was more painful for me to push myself than it was for me to let Fowler hit me. After a while, I was so tired, I didn't care either way. Pain was Pain" (237). This is how Dana becomes a slave: she accepts the punishment and the pain because there is no way out. Rebellion or mere complaint would generate more lashes; and submission becomes salvation. The

lash has beaten any sense of self-pride out of her. She has embraced the identity of a slave—a field slave.

For Dana as a black woman, the first experience of slavery is witnessing the cost of escape by patrollers and soon she will go through the same experience with the slave she saw. Dana thinks back to her reading and explains what a patroller is after she came back from the meeting with patrollers in 1815: “A patroller is...was a white man, usually young, often poor, sometimes drunk. He was a member of a group of such men organized to keep the blacks in line” (43). Then Dana continues, “Patrollers made sure the slaves were where they supposed to be at night, and they punished those who weren’t. They chased down runaways—for a fee. And sometimes they just raised hell, has a little fun terrorizing people who weren’t allowed to fight back” (43). These indelicate manners of patrollers are described in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*: “Many historians claim that patrollers were the lowest classes, that they were the ‘poor white’ or ‘white trash’ of a community chosen by their social superiors to perform an unsavory social duty. Patrollers have typically been cast as poor nonslaveowners who were being used by the richer slaveowning class” (495). Those poor white patrollers feel inferior to white slave owners and take out their frustration on unlucky slaves by organizing “patrols” meant to control slaves. They use violence to exert their authority, knowing full well that slaves, who have no right whatsoever, will not fight back.

The Second time that Dana is back to the eighteenth century, she goes through the wood in order to reach Alice’s house for safety, and she sees four white riders hitting and kicking the door of Alice’s cabin. Typically, the white riders ask for a pass to the male slave who was visiting Alice’s mother (a free woman of color), and as the man does not have a pass, the riders whip him, tying his hands around a tree trunk so as to prevent him from running away. Moreover, even though the black man moans, screams or begged

them to stop the beating, they do not stop. Dana sees what happened after the whipping. “After a moment, I looked up and saw that the patrollers were untying him. He continued to lean against the tree even when the rope was off him until one of the patrollers pulled him around and tied his hands in front of him. Then, still holding the other end of the rope, the patroller mounted his horse and rode away half-dragging his captive behind him” (33). Therefore, the punishment is almost never ending, and once the slaves are caught by patrollers, they can do nothing but endure the inhumane punishment.

Dana, too, is beaten and almost raped by one of the four patrollers who mistake her for Alice’s runaway twin sister at Alice’s cabin. Dana herself experiences what will happen if she is determined to be a runaway female slave just because she is a black woman without a pass. Dana describes that moment by saying: “I had never been beaten that way before—would never have thought I could absorb so much punishment without losing consciousness” (39). Now she understands that she can get no time to explain who she is, and in fact, who she is does not matter to white people and what will only matter to them is if she is black or not. When a woman becomes a target of them, she will get so much pain or raped, which they enjoy until they are satisfied.

Another way of punishment for escaping is to sell the slave who tried to run away. One of these days, Rufus tries to sell Isaac who is Alice’s husband because Rufus loves Alice and is jealous of him. Therefore, Isaac and Alice plan to run away and carry out the plan. Dana asks what will happen to Alice after, and Rufus answers, “Jail. A good whipping. Then they’ll sell her” (134). After plenty of whipping, a slave will be sold for not being an obedient slave. When a slave is sold away, he will be separated from his family and never see them again. This will be more painful punishment for slaves than being beaten up.

Dana herself experiences the punishment of escaping when she tries to run away to

find Kevin who would be in the North. However, Liza, one of the slaves who hate Alice and Dana, gets up after Dana left and goes straight to Weylin to tell that Dana is trying to run away. Rufus and Weylin catch Dana and beat her up by kicking her in the face or slashing blows. Dana describes the whipping by Weylin, thus: “He beat me until I tried to make myself believe he was going to kill me. I said it aloud, screamed it, and the blows seemed to emphasize my words” (194). Even though slaves tried to run away, there was almost no hope of success, and if they were captured by patrollers or overseers, they would be severely whipped. The runaway slaves would be beaten by patrollers, whipped by the owner, and sold to a slave dealer to be separated from the family. Therefore, Dana observes that slaves are afraid of escaping and they should have hope for escaping and be free for the last choice.

As a female slave, she has to figure out the way to survive in the white world by herself. Sarah, the cook on the Weylin’s plantation, tries to survive by submitting herself to whites. After Sarah’s husband died, Tom Weylin sold three of her children except Carrie because she cannot talk and is not worth as much as her siblings. She never complains in front of the whites, but when Dana and Sarah first see each other in the cookhouse, Dana says something about Mrs. Weylin, and Sarah lets her guard down, saying between her teeth: “Miss Margaret [...]. Bitch!” (74) This is because Margaret told Weylin to sell Sarah’s three boys to get money and buy new furniture or dishes. She is very angry and hates Margaret Weylin, but at the same time, she is afraid to lose her daughter again, so she represses her emotions and remains subservient to the Weylins. However, she never forgets what they did to her, but in order to keep the bond with her only one daughter, she shouts abusive words if there is no white people around.

Another female slave, the once free-born Alice, struggles with her life on the

plantation. After Rufus explains that his mind is on Alice, he tries to persuade Dana into telling Alice to come to his room to start a sexual relationship. Dana goes to Alice, and when Alice asks her what she wants, Dana tells her: “To talk you into going to him quietly, and to tell you you’d be whipped this time if you resist” (183). Alice gets upset about what Dana tells her, but Dana looks ahead and tell, “Well, it looks as though you have three choices. You can go to him as her orders; you can refuse, be whipped, and then have him take you by force; or you run away again” (183). Dana leaves these three answers but all of the choices will not make Alice refuse to go to Rufus’s room because Alice has already experienced whipping, and when she tried to to run away, she was attacked by the dogs of the owner, and she is too afraid to refuse. By using fear, white men control black female slaves. This makes female slaves care less of their body and feel lonelier because even though this is the same struggle among every single female slave, they cannot unite and fight against white men but just accept their orders.

However, female slaves sometimes have to get together to protect their important things. Once Rufus tells Dana that he wants to free Joe and send him to school and makes Dana to tell Alice about it. However, Alice is not happy and tells Dana:

“It don’t matter what he says” [...]

“Did he show you any free papers?”

“No.”

“When he does, and you read them to me, maybe I’ll believe him. I’m tellin’ you, he uses those children just the way you use a bit on a horse. I’m tired of havin’ a bit in my mouth.”

I didn’t blame her. But still, I didn’t want her to go, didn’t want her to risk Joe and Hagar. Hell, I didn’t even want her to risk herself. Elsewhere, under other circumstances, I would probably have disliked her. But here, we had a common enemy to unite us. (263)

Here, the existence of Joe and Hagar, who are the son and daughter of Rufus and Alice, unites Dana and Alice even though they dislike each other. Dana needs to

protect the children to be alive herself in the twentieth century because the existence of Hagar directly relates to the existence of Dana. Alice wants to protect the children because they are her children and they are the hope for her to live. Female slaves always have to guard themselves against their surroundings, but the same purpose establishes solidarity with Dana and Alice. In *Kinship and Quilting*, Floris Barnett Cash depicts the strong relationship between African-American women that has existed across generations:

Kinship networks for African-American women have existed across generations among slave women, tenant farm wives, middle class women, and senior citizens, thus, empowering them with self-help and self-esteem. [...] The slave community functioned as an extended kinship system. Black women carried these concepts of mutual assistance with them from bondage to freedom. For African-American women, the basis of family structure and cooperation was an extended family of kinship ties, blood relations and non-kin as well. Female networks promoted self-reliance and self-help. They sustained hope and provided survival' strategies. (31)²

The female networks have supported female slaves themselves by providing the information on how to survive with white people. The relationship between Dana and Alice shows the mutual assistance structured beyond generations by enhancing each other's self-reliance to have the confidence to follow what they think is right.

This thesis has shown how Dana tries to adopt the character of black slaves to hide her "white persona" on the plantation. By analyzing the behavior of Dana who is a late twentieth-century African American woman, this study has shown how African American people survived as slaves under the yoke of the white community, and how important cooperation is to slaves in order to protect their families across generations. *Kindred* is a time traveling story; it is science fiction, but it makes the experience of the slaves all too real. And through Dana's particular experience, Butler suggests that African-Americans can never completely escape their and the past of their country.

Notes

1. The *Bible* verse referred to in this quote is from the *New Testament, Ephesians 6:5*: “Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ” (*Ephesians 6:5*). As is well known, such verses abound in the Bible and were often used by slave masters to control their slaves. Two other well-known examples are, first, *Colossians 3:22*: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord;” and second, *Timothy 6:1*: “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.” (See *Ephesian 6:5*)

2. Andras Lukacs defines kinship networks, thus: “Kinship networks are defined broadly as extended family, including biological relationships, genealogy, marriage, and other self-ascribed associations, beyond the family nucleus of parents and dependent children. Kinship is not conceptualized as a fixed meaning of natural or genealogical relationship but as a socially and culturally constructed and maintained network of individuals in constant flux” (Lukacs).

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Summary

アメリカの歴史を通して、多くの著名な人物達がアメリカに深く根付いた黒人差別のジレンマを解消しようと取り組んできた。しかし、たとえ時とともに迫害の性質が変化しても、アフリカンアメリカン達は、奴隷制度が始まってから現在の21世紀にかけて、変わることなく人種差別を経験している。Octavia E. Butlerの著書、*Kindred*では、1976年にカリフォルニア州ロサンゼルスに住む、主人公のアフリカンアメリカンの女性Danaが、彼女の先祖が住む奴隷州である1815年のメリーランド州へタイムトラベルし、奴隷制度の危険に立ち向かうことになる。本論文のタイトル“Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred*: White Persona / Black Persona”は、マルティニーク出身で植民地主義を批判した思想家であるFrantz Fanonの*Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)、の影響を受けたものである。Frantzは、白人の言葉を模倣し、白人文化を取り入れる黒人達の精神分析をする。一方、*Kindred*の中では、20世紀で白人文化に順応した黒人女性がプランテーションで生活することによって、外見は黒人でありながらも、精神的には白人のようであると気付かされる。しかし、彼女がプランテーションで生き残るには、黒人奴隷としての役割を演じなければならない。従って、本論文では、白人的精神を徐々に蔑ろにし、黒人的役割を自身の中に築いていく主人公Danaに焦点を当て、慣習化した奴隷制度について考察する。

第1章では、20世紀を生き、白人的精神を持つアフリカンアメリカンの女性としてのDanaに焦点を置く。1815年のメリーランド州には、黒人の行動を禁止する法や、白人の行動を許可する法はないが、慣習が法となり、プランテーションのコミュニティへ最大の影響を与え、奴隷達は学習したり、教育したりすると罰を与えられる。幼い黒人奴隷は、ムチ打ちされることが当然だと思い込んでおり、大人の黒人奴隷達は、主人に逆らわず、ただ“Yes”ということ家族を守り、生き延びる。さらに、奴隷所有者の白人の子供は、将来奴隷所有者になるために育てられることによって、怪物化していく。このようなプランテーションの状況を目撃し、Danaは、奴隷達だけではなく、奴隷所有者達も、社会が合法で適切であると言うことを行っているのであり、奴隷所有者達を怪物化させているのは社会なのだに気付く。しかし一方で、Danaは、黒人である限り、自身の黒い仮面を外すことができないという現実を突き付けられ、奴隷制度が慣習化した社会の一部となることは如何に簡単なことなのかと考えさせられる。

第2章では、黒人奴隷として扱われ、無意識的に黒人奴隷としてのアイデンティティを自身の中に構築していくDanaに焦点を置く。Danaは白人達が周りにいるときは、さらに言葉遣いや振る舞いに注意深くなるだけではなく、鞭打ちやパトローラー達からの暴力を目撃し、自身も経験することにより、自尊心や自負心が奪い取られることになる。このことから、どのようにして従順な奴隷達が作り上げられてきたかを理解することができる。Butlerは*Kindred*をタイムトラベルのサイエンスフィクションとして著述することにより、奴隷達のプランテーションでの経験を明らかにし、さらに、アフリカンアメリカン達が、先祖達が属した奴隷制度から逃げ出すことができないということを確認にしたのである。