

Kindred

by Souadido75 Souadido75

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Survival Tactics in *Kindred* by Octavia Butler

Kindred is a time-traveling novel written by the American Octavia E. Butler that is based on slave narratives. The story describes how slave patrols, beatings, robberies, whippings, getting their children or family members sold, constant vigilance, and personal attacks were all part of the enslaved Africans daily lives throughout the 1800s. The story depicts how slavery was in Los Angeles, California, and Maryland plantations by African Americans who were shunt in time during that period.

Enslaved Africans in *Kindred* used four key strategies to escape slavery in the south: trying to flee, demonstrating as much influence as possible in the domestic positions they held, recognizing their fate and trying to make the best of the situations, and suicide attempt. Even though they made several efforts, they couldn't manage to overcome slavery.

One of the strategies used by the enslaved Africans in Maryland used to survive in the plantation was by attempting to escape. Many slaves tried to run away while they were on duty or when their masters were committed elsewhere. The enslaved Africans absconded from duty in the plantations during the slavery error, a trend that is witnessed in many African characters in *Kindred*. Despite the attempts to run away, the white men never gave up on the slaves and searched for those who ran away. If a slave was captured trying to flee or escaping, they were punished severely or sold, as Isaac was sold. Isaac and Alice tried to escape from Maryland by running away. Isaac and Alice had four days of freedom when they attempted to escape and were later apprehended on the fifth day (Butler, 143). As they drove away, Kevin held Dana on his

back. Dana rested on Kevin's sweating back and waited for the usual bang of Alice's beating to fade (Butler, 185).

Another way of survival by enslaved Africans in the Weylin plantation was to assert as much power as possible in the house positions they held. Slaves who had higher ranking used forceful language and actions to draw the attention of their masters. On some occasions, enslaved Africans used the influence of power to conquer bullying from their masters. In the novel, Dana faces Rufus and tells him that she was waiting for Rufus to say that she made a mistake. The action left Rufus standing frozen and facing down, clearly depicting the use of assertion of power by enslaved Africans (Butler, 164). Another example of the assertion of power is evidenced during the storm when Nigel snatched Rufus like a grain sack and thrown him over his shoulder (Butler, 198). In general, the assertion of power was used by the enslaved African to achieve their own goals.

Accepting public life and making the best out of the situations they were in was also used by enslaved Africans to survive indignities from the whites in *Kindred*. The fact that the enslaved Africans were under discrimination could not have changed, and thus they had to accept and acknowledge the situation. Denial of an existing unpleasant situation does not solve it but makes it more complicated. The best way to overcome this situation is by accepting them and making the very best out of them. Dana encourages Alice to slow down and keep working on Joe the way she's been doing before. Alice would have had her wish and lived to see it fulfilled (Butler, 234).

Additionally, attempted suicide was another technique used by enslaved Africans to survive the oppression by the whites. Suicide attempts were made as a result of the slaves' unbearable living conditions. Suicide attempts are linked to feelings of hopelessness, beatings,

and racial injustice, according to *Kindred*. Many survival tactics did not set the African Americans free, and the characters such as Alice and Dana thought that they could be accessible by killing themselves. Dana was on the verge of death at that stage and thought that death would make the pain go away. (Butler, 107). Alice ended up committing suicide, thinking that it's the only way to freedom. Another evidence for the suicidal attempt is when Rufus tells Dana that she keeps trying to kill herself (Butler, 121).

In conclusion, Butler's book "*Kindred*" is a heart-wrenching book that explains how Africans were exploited during slavery. Enslaved Africans encountered several challenges in the Weylin plantations in Maryland. This forced the slaves to adopt several ways to survive the oppression. The worst of all, the tactics used to stay was an attempt to commit suicide. Attempt to run away matured no fruits of freedom as they were caught and taken back or sold to masters. I would have chosen to accept the life I had and make the best out of the situation because it is the best way of surviving compared to the other three ways and created no more trouble with the masters.

Work Cited

Butler, Octavia E. Kindred.

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