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Review Article

From Racial Justice to Interracial Justice: An Afrofuturist Re-reading of Octavia Butler's Kindred

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ABSTRACT

Since its publication in 1979, Octavia Butler's *Kindred* has continued to receive critical attention, illustrating the enduring significance and relevance of the novel. While many have examined the novel for its engagement with race and history, little attention has been paid to the significance of the novel in the context of political, social, and cultural tensions in present-day America. Thus, this study explored *Kindred* for its futurist vision of racial reconciliation and harmony through a process of interracial justice in America. Close reading served as the methodology for analysis. Also, Afrofuturism was adopted as a theoretical framework to examine the significance of time travel in the novel. It was submitted that Dana's and Kevin's teleportation to the past increases their capacity for empathy for the enslaved and broadens their perception of the roots of racial tension in their time. Dana's stabbing of Rufus was read as a metaphorical act representing African Americans' rejection of racism and the active pursuit of an equitable future. Kevin's direct witnessing of slavery in the past and his increased empathy indicate a need for White people to participate in the project of recognition, racial reconciliation, and equity. Moreover, it was proposed that their marriage, in the context of the 21st century, promotes racial harmony through interracial justice. Ultimately, the Afrofuturist vision of the future in the novel leans towards the consolidation of multiracial harmony where all individuals, irrespective of their racial class, can co-exist as kindred spirits.

Keywords: Kindred, Afrofuturism, racial justice, interracial justice, Octavia Butler

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For decades, Octavia Butler was the sole Black female voice in science fiction and Afrofuturism, a trailblazing pioneer who inspired other writers to follow that path (Canavan, 2016; Morris, 2025). She has been described as "[...] the creative ancestor to contemporary artists, writers, and critics such as adrienne maree brown, N. K. Jemisin, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Nisi Shawl, Toshi Reagon, and Rivers Solomon, among many others." (Morris, 2025, p. 25). Octavia Butler's works embody Afrofuturist aesthetics. As a speculative engagement with Black subjectivity in the American space, her works demonstrate how "black people live the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine." (Dery, 1994, p. 208). The science fiction trope of invasion by brutal aliens who use technologically advanced ships to kidnap, murder, violate, and enslave others informs the construction of the fictional world inhabited by Butler's characters (Canavan, 2016). Her stories are written in cognisance of the horrific past of slavery, the construction of Blackness in a racist society, and the implications of these for both the present and the future. Butler's

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creative and critical works upset the images of the heteronormative, the white, and the male in traditional science fiction by making room for blackness, womanhood, the proletariat, disability, and queerness. It is in this sense that she writes with an intersectional lens that exposes the consequences of interrelated systems of power such as patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism for humanity (Morris, 2025). Certainly, Black people, being the archetype of the marginalised in American society, are at the centre of her intersectional depictions.

It has been observed that Octavia Butler's fiction typically features a collision between power and justice, transforming both fundamentally. That is to say, power is inflicted upon the vulnerable, compelling them to resist or adapt under the oppressive pressure (Canavan, 2016). The implication is that the organising motif in her works is symbiosis or mutual dependence involving both the violence and erotics of power: her characters are subject to domination despite their grievous suffering under it (Canavan, 2016). However, this is not a full portrait of Butler's Afrofuturist vision. While her characters are victimised by representatives and systems of power, they also create agency for themselves through resistance and thoughtful cooperation. In this way, they erode oppressive power and transform their world or society. Thus, the violence and eroticisation of power are juxtaposed with Octavia's empowering visions: "Octavia's writing imagines counterpasts and counterfutures for Black people while telling the story of the rise and fall of the American project, charting the expansion of global imperialism, and forewarning the end of humanity[...] of climate change." (Morris, 2025, p. 25). The counterpasts and counterfutures are a display of the temporal fluidity often associated with Afrofuturism. With these, Butler questions, challenges, and resists subordinating representations of Black people in the past, present, and future.

The text for analysis is *Kindred* (1979), Butler's most successful novel, financially and critically. The form of the neo-slave fantasy evident in all her novels (Canavan, 2016) is perhaps most pronounced in this one, which is centred around the practice of slavery in Antebellum America. However, it is distinguished by the use of time travel to transport Edana Franklin (Dana), the central character, who is a Black woman living in 1976 Los Angeles, to 1815 Maryland. This creates a link between the most traumatic aspect of African American history and the contemporary struggles of African Americans for humanity, equity, and justice. Because the novel continues to resonate with the present conditions and future expectations of African American communities, *Kindred* has attracted a lot of critical attention (Kubitschek, 1991; Robinson, 2007; Schiff, 2009; Odukomaiya, 2020; Wiggs, 2021; Kelly, 2023). The recency of some of the critical works illustrates the significance and continued relevance of the novel in the present era.

Most scholars have stressed the engagement with history in *Kindred*, the

utilisation of time travel to connect the past to the present in the novel, and the construction of Black racial identity, among others. For instance, Schiff (2009) deploys trauma theory, Du Boisian double consciousness and the literary trope of the uncanny to understand Butler's attempt to make history and memory curative (serving as both a recovery of repressed historical narratives and a recovery from repressed traumatic memories) through fiction and metafiction. In a different study, Wiggs (2021) argues that Dana (the protagonist of *Kindred*) is a multiracial character, whose hybridity Butler uses to shed light on contemporary constructions of identity in the United States. Returning to the theme of history, Odukomaiya (2020) compares *Black Panther* (2018) and *Kindred* (1979), proposing that where *Black Panther* provides a positive outlook for the African continent and its diaspora, *Kindred* reflects on the traumatic legacy of slavery for African Americans, inviting them to challenge the status quo in their society for a better future. While these perspectives are vital readings which clarify the novel's engagement with race, African American identity, the potency of history, and contemporary American realities, little attention has been paid to the significance of the novel in the context of political tensions, racism and new waves of White supremacy in present-day America. Thus, this study is a re-reading of *Kindred,* which explores its futurist vision of racial reconciliation and harmony through a process of interracial justice in America, represented by Dana's and Kevin's relationship, and their shared experience of the Antebellum South.

2.0 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

In this study, close reading will be adopted to uncover the significance of the plot, characterisation, characters, symbols, motifs, and other narrative techniques to the futuristic vision (described above) in *Kindred*. Moreover, the theoretical framework selected for the analysis is Afrofuturism, a set of aesthetic practices and principles that engage with Afrodiasporic histories, cultures, experiences, challenges, and aspirations through speculative futurism. Time-travel is both a theme and a concept under Afrofuturism, which involves the use of retrospection (the past) and projection (the future) to reflect on historical events that have shaped the Black present and address the conditions of the present in view of an empowering future. In Afrofuturism, time-travel is, of necessity, intertwined with race: "the notion of bending time erases the prism of race-based limitations that all too often lace the present and define the recent past." (Womack 116). The possibilities formed by time-travelling facilitate transcendence over reality. This is required because the past and the present, affected by social injustice, marginalisation, economic inequality, and other ills, can only be rectified by thinking founded on the "what-if?" question. This question generates imaginative retrospection and imaginative prospection for experimenting with ideas, which may serve as either a warning

about or a recommendation for a desirable Black future.

3.0 The Legacy of Black Struggle in Neo-Slave Narratives

An inquiry into African American literature may begin with what Blyden Jackson describes as the two-hundred-year germination period of this literary tradition, dating back to 1441, when the Transatlantic Slave Trade was initiated. The eventual resettlement of stolen Africans in North America by Europeans and the institution of slavery in America are basic factors for consideration in the examination of the earliest African American literature (Graham and Ward, 2015). Even after the abolition of slavery in America, Black writers have deemed it necessary to write on the trauma induced by these experiences. Among the major works in this category are Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer* (1973), Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977), Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016), Rivers Solomon's *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (2017), and many others. It is crystal clear from these examples that the past experiences of enslavement have left an indelible mark on the collective memory of African Americans. The aftershocks of slavery remain present in American society, as proven by the economic, political, social, and material conditions of Black people. Moreover, racism is still a problem yet to be resolved in American social life. These remind African Americans of the dehumanisation suffered by their ancestors, at the same time convincing them that the injustice their predecessors struggled against is still potent, necessitating the emergence of neo-slave narratives.

The neo-slave narrative has its origins in the 1820s, a period that signalled a radical shift in the development of African American literature. The issues of black resistance and reform take central stage in this period. The Black writers of the early nineteenth century were progenitors in the political and cultural transformation of this critical era. They utilised black resistance and reform to imagine a more comprehensive and cohesive African American identity, to imbue a more radical stance into antislavery resistance, and to cast light on the incompatibility of American democracy and slavery (Wheelock, 2015). The slave narratives and Black autobiographies of this era exposed the frustration of Black individuals with racism and their efforts to achieve wholeness and unity rooted in a shared racial identity. (Bell, 1987).

Taking the above into account, the neo-slave narrative may be defined as "contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum slave narrative." (Rushdy, 1999, p. 3). Neo-slave narratives are an extension of the themes and narrative strategies of their predecessors into the contemporary realities of African Americans. This prompts Babb's (2017) belief that the neo-slave narrative is "about more than enslavement. Novels within this genre use histories of slavery to query race, gender, sexuality, and place and to debate the

degree to which past practices remain current. Part of what the genre asks is, still?" (p. 218). The history of slavery is reoriented towards the immediate happenings of the writer's time. It becomes an anchoring point for Black writers to critique the American society's racial relations and how it still disadvantages their communities.

It's not certain when the term "neo-slave narrative" was first used. However, Bernard Bell is commonly regarded as its originator and is recognised for inaugurating scholarship on the subject (Babb, 2017). In *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*, Bell (1987) presents it as a contemporary narrative which combines fable and legend to expose the workings of racism, migration and cultural spirit. Another notable work on neo-slave narratives is Ashraf Rushdy's *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (1999), which complements Babb's perspective with a sociological approach. Expounding on the social context of this genre, he states that the timeframe of 1966-1968 was marked by a notable shift in social movements and intellectual trends in the American historical profession, evident in the emergence of the Black Power movement and a New Left social history. The New Left witnessed African American students and ordinary people convene to demand change in the policies of the state, and this engendered major reforms in institutions tasked with providing for all citizens, including black people. These animated the study of American slavery with renewed interest and respect for the truth and value of slave narratives, of Black culture and slave resistance (Rushdy, 1999). In light of these political and intellectual shifts, Rushdy (1999) affirms that

> [t]he shift from the civil rights to the Black Power movement, the evolution from consensus to New Left social history in the historiography of slavery, and the development of a Black Power intellectual presence in the dialogue over Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* constitute the moment of origin for the Neo-slave narratives. (pp. 4-5)

William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* (1968) was a seminal novel that generated controversy in the intellectual and fictional circles, due to its skewed representation of Nat Turner's rebellion. Many Black scholars and writers challenged Styron's depiction on several grounds: its portrayal of a submissive slave rebel, its failed assumption of a slave's voice, its distorting appropriation of African American culture, its deep conformity with the traditional historical portrait of slavery, and its disturbing political message in a time of progressive Black empowerment (Rushdy, 1999). To redress the distortion of Black history through the White gaze evident in this novel, Black writers published an appreciable number of texts, the major ones being Ernest Gaines's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971), Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the*

River (1994), Mat Johnson's *Pym* (2011) and so on. Thanks to its development in a period where Black people clamoured for civil rights and emancipation, the neo-slave narrative had more freedom to do what its antebellum predecessor could not: while nineteenth-century slave narratives condemned slavery, the neo-slave narrative deconstructed the deeper social, political, economic, and ideological structures that enabled it (Babb, 2017). Additionally, the form was and is still utterly contemporary because it evolved out of the social and cultural conditions previously mentioned. Later uses of the form have been in dialogue with the social issues of its moment of origin (Rushdy 1999) and those of their own time. These constitute what Rushdy calls "[t]he social logic of the Neo-slave narrative form" (Rushdy, 1999, p. 5).

Remarkably, Babb cites Octavia Butler's *Kindred* as a good example of neo-slave narratives. The scholar sees Butler's novel as a foundational one in this genre and in speculative fiction. She holds that "[t]he combination seems a surreally natural fit, for race and enslavement are frequent subtexts in speculative fiction's dialectic of dominators and dominated." (Babb, 2017, p. 220). This harmonisation of realism and speculation, historical finality and futuristic fluidity, and the slavery of the past and implied racial oppression of the present in the novel, creates a deep awareness about the importance of slave history, race, and hope in African-American futurism.

4.0 The Burden of Remembrance

The incorporation of the trope of time travel into the neo-slave aesthetics of *Kindred* facilitates its retrospective dissection of the institution of American slavery. The protagonist, Edana (Dana) Franklin, and her husband, Kevin Franklin, through a forced return to the past, are confronted with the concrete reality of the slave culture that existed in America, which they had only understood indirectly. In 1979, their own time, racism, racial stereotyping, and racial tension were pressing problems. Thus, time travel exposes Dana and Kevin to the historical basis for the problems of their present. In the same manner, a reading of the novel in the 21st-century American context reveals an inextricable link between the early creation of American "civilisation" through slavery and the present conditions of inequality and discrimination in society. Although Dana can do nothing to alter the past, her stabbing of Rufus, a white ancestor who is a slave master, stands as a metaphorical act for African Americans' staunch rejection of racism and the active pursuit of an equitable future. Equally important are Dana's and Kevin's relationship and their experience of the slave era, considered an invitation to both Blacks and Whites to learn about this traumatic aspect of American history, because it affects every American. Knowledge and recognition of this history can engender interracial reconciliation between the descendants of the White oppressor and the Black victim, promoting peace and restorative justice in society.

The novel begins with a shocking sentence: “I lost an arm on my last trip home. My left arm.” (Butler, 1979, p. 5). The casual tone of the statement foreshadows the normalcy of violence, abuse, and commodification against enslaved people in the novel. Dana loses her arm while she escapes Rufus’ tyranny, as a sign of both trauma and enlightenment induced by the experiences of enslavement. It is a sign of her broadened empathy with her ancestors, who could not escape the horrors and tragedies imposed on them by callous slave masters. It is also a sign of her visceral and emotional understanding of the evils and absurdities of the slave system, having experienced it first-hand. Though traumatising, her experience offers her a better lens for discerning the racial politics and tensions of her own time. Moreover, just as she was able to escape a life of slavery, both as a descendant of enslaved people and one who time-travels, Black people in the current epoch can “escape” the trends of White supremacy, racial profiling, police brutality, and economic inequality through the art of envisioning and the act of social work.

Dana’s pedigree is complicated by the presence of a white man, Rufus Weylin, who was (and is) her great-grandfather. One learns in the narrative that he had an affair with Alice (Dana’s great-grandmother), whom he had also bought as a slave. In the age of slavery, it was common for slave masters to sexually abuse Black women. Thus, Dana’s existence is predicated upon racial violence and trauma. In this sense, she represents virtually all African Americans, descendants of people who were susceptible to violence, abuse, humiliation, and even death. The novel’s plot is centred on the relationship and conflict between Dana and her great-grandfather. Dana’s spontaneous travel between the present and the past is connected to Rufus. Each time Rufus is in danger, she is summoned to the past. This begins when Rufus is a child of about four or five years. It is noteworthy that Dana’s visceral and emotional understanding of slavery is reinforced by each of her visits to the past. Her suffering and interactions with White enslavers and enslaved Blacks impart on her a deeper interest in the historical factors that determine the social organisation of her own era.

The titles of the six chapters invoke violence, danger, or pain – Chapter 1: “The River”, Chapter 2: “The Fire”, Chapter 3: “The Fall”, Chapter 4: “The Fight”, Chapter 5: “The Storm”, and Chapter 6: “The Rope.” They all refer to the dangerous situations Rufus finds himself in when Dana is summoned to the past. In each instance, Dana is obliged to rescue him, at first out of genuine concern, then later as an obligation. For instance, the first time she is returned to 1815 in Chapter One, a very young Rufus is drowning. She knows nothing about him at this stage, but rescues him. However, by Chapter Five, she is not as willing to rescue Rufus (now a man) from dying in a storm, due to his growing hostility against her and other Black people. But she helps him due to empathy and their kinship. The references to Rufus in the chapters are read as an emphasis on his self-centredness. The character has a proclivity for

mischief, which exposes him and others to extreme danger, and he makes Dana responsible for resolving such situations. This is an apt illustration of the relationship between the White enslaver and the Black captive. The enslaver depended on the discomfort and suffering of their enslaved subjects to satisfy their needs and desires, irrespective of how unethical such needs or desires might be. A Black captive, considered property in Antebellum America, had no rights or protection under state law. Therefore, their enslavers had the freedom to use them as they deemed fit. This promoted egocentrism among White people in relation to enslaved Blacks. In essence, Rufus attempts to reduce Dana to an instrument of his will, and she resists vehemently. This conflict between domination and agency highlights their relationship in the selected text.

Comparing her first visit to the past with her last one, Dana's steady adaptation and unintended acculturation to Antebellum America are striking. On the first visit, she is completely oblivious to the location she's in. However, this changes in her second visit, which occurs a few minutes later. It bears mentioning that time works differently in the past and present: a few hours, days, or weeks in the past is equivalent to a few minutes in the present. Thus, while her trips to the past occur within the timeframe of about one month in the present, the timeframe of events in the past covers decades. On her second visit, Dana spends more time in the Antebellum past, allowing her to learn about the location and time. She is summoned because Rufus has just caused a fire. Dana intervenes just in time, but is not returned to the present immediately. Thus, she converses with Rufus to learn more about her situation. To her surprise, she learns from Rufus that she is in the year 1815. As a Black woman, Dana finds this terrifying. She reasons that, "[t]his could turn out to be such a deadly place for me if I had to stay in it much longer." (Butler, 1979, p. 25). In mainstream science fiction, access to the past tends to be voluntary and beneficial. The White characters involved usually return to the past to rectify a problem that changes the circumstances in the present. Thus, it is desirable. However, Dana's return is involuntary and hazardous to her. In the novel, she never sees her return as advantageous. For a Black person, travelling to the distant past in America will constitute an existential threat.

Dana has long been aware of her ancestral relationship with Rufus. Her grandmother, Hagar Weylin, had recorded some family history in a Bible. Dana recalls that "Hagar Weylin, born in 1831. Hers was the first name listed. And she had given her parents' names as Rufus Weylin and Alice Green-something Weylin." (Butler, 1979, p. 26). That said, Dana never knew that Rufus was a White man. This is the brutal truth that Dana must come to terms with: A slavemaster was one of her ancestors. Such a fact complicates Dana's relationship to her ancestry and the history of slavery itself. Previously, she had assumed that her ancestors were all Black, and this established a clear dichotomy between her, as a Black person, and

White people. However, this realisation negates the idea of racial purity. Race is more of a social construct than a biological truth, which has been manipulated for ages to maltreat Black people. Again, contrary to the beliefs of some, Blacks and Whites are inseparable in America for better and for worse. It is baffling that a history of trauma has created an accidental bond between both racial groups, but the bond must be acknowledged as the first stage of reconciliation. In Dana's case, she is compelled to acknowledge this fact of her history for a more integrated perception regarding racial identity, racial injustice, and reconciliation in her own time.

In the same episode, Dana heads to Alice's mother's cabin at nightfall to avoid contact with Tom Weylin (Rufus' father). Dana finds the cabin by stealthily following a group of patrollers through the woods. Her encounter at the cabin is Dana's first exposure to racial violence in a slave society. While still hiding, she watches the patrollers break into the cabin, drag Alice's father out, and whip him in front of his family. The graphic description of his humiliation and whipping will be copiously quoted. He is tied to a tree naked and whipped repeatedly, while his wife and daughter watch:

> He cracked it once in the air, apparently for his own amusement, then brought it down across the back of the black man. The man's body convulsed, but the only sound he made was a gasp. He took several more blows with no outcry[...]Then the man's resolve broke. He began to moan—low gut-wrenching sounds torn from him against his will. Finally, he began to scream[...]I could see his body jerking, convulsing, straining against the rope as his screaming went on[...]Why didn't they stop! "Please, Master," the man begged. "For God's sake, Master, please …" I shut my eyes and tensed my muscles against an urge to vomit[...]I had seen people beaten on television and in the movies. I had seen the too-red blood substitute streaked across their backs and heard their well-rehearsed screams. But I hadn't lain nearby and smelled their sweat or heard them pleading and praying, shamed before their families and themselves. (Butler, 1979, pp. 34-35)

The excerpt vividly describes the barbaric treatment of Black people during the Antebellum period. It is illustrative of the dehumanisation of both the enslaved, who face violence, persecution, and trauma daily, and the enslaver who loses their humanity to sadism, callousness, egocentrism, and possessiveness. Dana might have been aware of the harrowing history of slavery in America, but this scene concretizes that awareness. The whipping reminds Dana

about the name for whites who maintained law and order among captives: patrols. They were the forerunners of the Ku Klux Klan, reminding one that there is a continuity between the enslavement of African Americans in the past and the injustice against them in the contemporary period. Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol (2016) declare that a series of historical events has determined the social fabric of race relations between the African American community and the criminal justice system, especially law enforcement agencies. The African American community, particularly males, has suffered heightened levels of injustice and discrimination from these agencies. The scholars see this as proof that "structural racism today is the result of institutional oppression of African Americans throughout the nation's history" (Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol, 2016, 20), signifying a connection between racial violence in the past and the present. Before the patrollers leave, one of them hits Alice's mother, and she faints. Dana helps to revive her. She is permitted to sleep there for the night, but just as she leaves the cabin to retrieve a blanket, a white patroller catches her. He decides to turn her in as a runaway slave, spurring a staunch resistance from Dana. A bitter struggle ensues in which the patroller tries to subdue and violate her, but Dana narrowly prevails when she finds a stick and hits his head with it. By now, she has lost a lot of blood and has lost consciousness, returning to the present.

In the foregoing, Dana has three experiences: confirmation, indirect witnessing and direct witnessing. Rufus confirms to her that she is in the period of American slavery. Next, she is a witness to the humiliation and torment of a captive. Finally, she is directly confronted with the humiliation and torment she just witnessed. These experiences are pivotal for an understanding of the multiple means by which slavery was imposed. A captive was dissuaded from the pursuit of freedom through intimidation. Such a person was knowledgeable about their role in the system as a slave, suffered indirect violence by witnessing the punishment of defiant captives, and was directly punished by White society for any perceived act of defiance. The detailing of these experiences in the novel explains why Black people were held captive under slavery for centuries, and Dana's interactions with this tripartite reality of slavery are a channel for a modern audience to empathise with victims of the system despite its apparent distance from the 21st century.

In her next visit to the past, Dana has the opportunity to observe the conditions of Black people, the power relations between Whites and Blacks, and the material conditions of the slave period. She is immediately confronted with the growth of Rufus in the slave society. As a child, he seems to have the potential to be progressive and anti-racist. Yet, the risk of his submitting to the pressure of society is very high. Dana is aware of this risk but is optimistic that, even though she may not be able to change history, she might be able to improve the lives of her Black ancestors. Rufus, still being at an impressionistic age, might be motivated by

liberal ideas of equity, racial co-existence, and justice to treat the Blacks in his custody humanely. However, this never happens. Rufus becomes a conflicted man who oscillates erratically between kindness and cruelty. This begs the question of what experiences, ideas, and impressions of Rufus' time and environment prevent his liberalisation.

Rufus' parents, Tom Weylin and Margaret Weylin, both mistreat Black people in his presence. Furthermore, as a child, Rufus is exposed to his father's physical and verbal abuse and parental neglect, at the same time receiving his mother's suffocating love and care. These extremes of cruelty and obsessive love, of neglect and overprotection, are a catalyst for Rufus' abnormal personality as evidenced in his unpredictability. To further illustrate, the Weylin plantation, like a typical one in this period, is hostile to Black existence. As Dana converses with the Black captives in the cookhouse, she discovers more about their predicament. For one, Sarah had three of her four children sold by Tom after the premature death of her husband. Her daughter, Carrie, is left with her because she is verbally impaired. On top of that, the living conditions of Black captives are abysmal. They eat leftover food after the Weylins have dined, sleep on rag pellets on the floor, and, in the field, the hands sleep in cabins that have no floors. Also, when he finds them wanting, Tom whips his subjects mercilessly. An example is when he whips a field hand "for the crime of answering back." (Butler, 1979, p. 96). Dana herself is not entirely safe from the violence and prejudice of slavery. In fact, her safety proves to be an illusion when Tom whips her for reading, until she loses consciousness. Thus, Rufus' environment has a fundamental influence on his attitude towards Black people.

After falling unconscious, Dana is sent back to the 20th century, losing the opportunity to shape Rufus into a progressive man. On her next return to the past, Dana sees a Black captive beating Rufus up. The assaulter is Isaac Jackson, husband to Alice (Dana's great-grandmother). Noting Alice's torn clothes, Dana intuits that Rufus has attempted to violate her, earning a beating. Rufus and Alice had been friends since childhood. Yet, in adulthood, he is willing to hurt her and her loved ones if she does not submit herself to his so-called love and affection. Having learned that Alice will marry Isaac, Rufus had attempted to get Isaac sold. Moments after the couple's escape, Rufus, whom Isaac knocked out, wakes up. The ensuing conversation between Dana and Rufus reveals the negative influences of the environment on Rufus' psychological and social development. Dana gathers that Rufus, in fact, raped Alice, but he feels justified, as seen in the following: "I would have taken better care of her than any field hand could. I wouldn't have hurt her if she hadn't just kept saying no." (Butler, 1979, p. 131). He later adds: "I didn't want to just drag her off into the bushes[...]But she kept saying no. I could have had her in the bushes years ago if that was all I wanted." (Butler, 1979, p. 133). From a 21st-century perspective, Rufus' actions are criminal. However, in a nineteenth-century

American context, it is permitted so long as the victim is black. As far as Rufus is concerned, Alice has no reason to reject his advances because it is a privilege to her, a Black woman, that he, a White man, is enamoured of her at all.

More details about Rufus' personality disorder are provided in his later interactions with Alice (Dana's great-grandmother) and Dana (Alice's great-granddaughter). Alice and Isaac are unfortunately caught and separated. Rufus seizes the opportunity to purchase Alice, who was initially a free Black, as a slave, and forces her into sexual slavery. He combines threats and emotional blackmail to compel Dana to persuade Alice to accept this abuse: "[...]Go to her. Send her to me. I'll have her whether you help or not. All I want you to do is fix it so I don't have to beat her. You're no friend of hers if you won't do that much!" (Butler, 1979, p. 177). Seeing that Rufus would satisfy his desires either way, Dana delivers his message while encouraging Alice to escape again, but Alice is frightened by the prospect of being caught a second time. Thus, she submits herself to Rufus' cruelty. Dana helplessly observes the legacy of trauma and abuse that led to her existence. She discovers that her great-grandfather was an abuser and her great-grandmother was his victim.

After his father's death, Rufus inherits the Weylin's Plantation. His unpredictability continues to do damage to others. For instance, Alice commits suicide, provoked by Rufus' lie that he has sold their two mulatto children, Joe and Hagar. Alice, who was born free, never gets used to Rufus' sexual and emotional exploitation. Thus, she attempts to escape a second time and is caught. As her punishment, Rufus declares that he has sold her children, never telling her the truth even after her emotional breakdown. Ultimately, Alice takes her own life. Dana learns about the tragic incident when she returns to Rufus' time and indicts him for leading Alice to her death. In his typical style, Rufus claims innocence, blames others and even plays the victim. He refuses to recognise the emotional and physical turmoil Alice suffered under his abusive love, and blames Dana for her death saying, "Why did you leave me! If you hadn't gone, she might not have run away!" (Butler, 1979, p. 273). As a White enslaver, Rufus exhibits egocentrism which dismisses the perspective, emotions, and agency of Black people. Moreover, he seems oblivious to his flaws. His obsession with Alice and Dana whom he begins to see as one – He describes them as "One woman. Two halves of a whole." (Butler, 1979, p. 279) – is evocative of the White gaze, construed here as the hyper fixation of the Western mind on the Black individual and community. For centuries, White people depended essentially on the captivity and disempowerment of African Americans for development and progress. Hence, the falsehoods about Blacks promoted through religion, law, pseudoscience, pseudo history, and cultural beliefs were necessary for the Western mind to delude itself believing that the Black subject was sub-human. Ironically, this is evidence that Black people occupied a position of prominence in White society's consciousness.

Though, a victim of Rufus' possessiveness, manipulation, emotional blackmail and violence, Dana never capitulates under slavery, due to her strong will, education and temporal perspective. She is a Black woman living in 20th century America, in which institutional slavery is not just illegal but archaic. Again, she has nurtured a historical consciousness that proves helpful in her navigation of the Antebellum past. On top of that, she is a fiercely independent person who takes charge of her decisions, relationships and goals. Hence, in Rufus' last attempt at dominating Dana, she kills him. Rufus reveals his intention to replace Alice with Dana: "You never hated me, did you?[...][Alice] hated me. From the first time I forced her[...]Until just before she ran. She had stopped hating me. I wonder how long it will take you[...]To stop hating." (Butler, 1979, p. 281). This excerpt reveals his nefarious intention of sexually exploiting Dana in the same way he exploited Alice. This is even more heinous because Dana is his great-granddaughter. Dana is faced with a great dilemma about Rufus for the first time: her freedom and dignity on the one hand, the life of a man she had saved repeatedly, on the other. She struggles with this dilemma for a moment, then arrives at a resolution:

> I would never be to him what Tess had been to his father —a thing passed around like the whiskey jug at a husking. He wouldn't do that to me or sell me **or … No** [emphasis added]. I could feel the knife in my hand, still slippery with perspiration. **A slave was a slave.** Anything could be done to her. **And Rufus was Rufus**— [emphasis added] erratic, alternately generous and vicious. I could accept him as my ancestor, my younger brother, my friend, but not as my master, and not as my lover. **He had understood that once** [emphasis added]. (Butler, 1979, p. 282)

Initially, Dana is in denial. She bases her trust on the unique relationship between the two of them. Then, she recalls the instances of unwarranted violence, threats, lies, and subordination Rufus has committed against her. In the grand scheme of things, she is seen essentially as a slave in this time and space, and Rufus is an erratic individual who would utilise his power as a slave master to subjugate her. Dana sees that he is no longer satisfied with camaraderie. Hence, she stabs him. That singular act of violence is emblematic of African Americans' staunch rejection of slavery and racism from the period of the transatlantic slave trade to the 21st century.

Kevin accompanies Dana on her third trip to the past. Given that Kevin is a White man, his experiences of the Antebellum South symbolise the necessity of White descendants to also learn about the history of slavery in America without trying to downplay the ordeal of Black people victimised by the system or the ramifications of the history for the disadvantaged

conditions of Black people in the present age. Kevin's profile is that of a progressive who believes in social and gender equity. Although he is presumptive about the effects of slavery and racism before his prolonged stay in the past, his openness to understanding these effects and to challenging slavery facilitates his empathic perception of slavery and the marginal position of African Americans in his own period. After a few weeks in the South, Dana notices that Kevin tends to downplay the severity of slavery. In her own case, she is unsettled by the extreme violence of slavery and her seeming adaptation to the norms of the system, thinking to herself, "[n]ot that I wanted us to have trouble, but it seemed as though we should have had a harder time adjusting to this particular segment of history" (Butler, 1979, p. 102).

In her agitated state, she one day notices children play-acting as a slave master and a slave. In the incident, a Black boy and a girl play the roles of a slave master and a captive. They enact the bargain for the acquisition of an enslaved person. Dana's and Kevin's emotional reactions to the episode differ. Kevin is more dismissive in his assessment of the situation, opining that "The kids are just imitating what they've seen adults doing[...]They don't understand …" (Butler, 1979, p. 105), to which Dana responds that "They don't have to understand. Even the games they play are preparing them for their future—and that future will come whether they understand it or not." (Butler, 1979, p. 105). Only Dana can see how the condition of slavery is entrenched in the lives of Black people from childhood. Hence, when Kevin later cautions that, "Dana, you're reading too much into a kids' game." (Butler, 1979, p. 105), she retorts: "And you're reading too little into it." (Butler, 1979, p. 105). She now understands that even one as progressive as Kevin needs guidance to empathise more deeply with the plight of people like her. It is in this spirit that she explains to him

> [...]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[...] But now and then, like with the kids' game, I can't maintain the distance. I'm drawn all the way into eighteen nineteen[...] (Butler, 1979, p. 106).

Dana clarifies that, while unintentional, Kevin is minimising the wrong being done to Black people. These words prime Kevin for his five-year stay alone in the past. Certainly, his prolonged stay takes a psychological and physical toll on him, but it also grounds him in the brutal realities of the past, engendering deeper empathy in him. Kevin is subjected to the harsh conditions of life, such that the next time Dana sees him, his appearance has changed. She sees that "[t]his place, this time, hadn't been any kinder to him than it had been to me." (Butler, 1979, p. 199). Despite being a white man whose race and gender bestow privilege on him,

Kevin finds it very difficult to acclimate to slavery due to his progressive beliefs and Dana's influence. His stay forces him to empathise with Dana's disgust with everyday racism and slavery, then to act on it. He admits to Dana that he has helped Black captives escape: "[...]I fed them, hid them during the day, and when night came, I pointed them toward a free black family who would feed and hide them the next day." (Butler, 1979, p. 208). He barely escapes a mob that tries to arrest him for his anti-slavery efforts. In addition, after Kevin's sojourn in the past, he is more sensitive to the brutality of slavery. There is a public service announcement on television advising women to see their doctors and care for themselves while pregnant. This reminds him of an enslaved woman who was strung up by her wrists and beaten until her baby dropped out of her womb onto the ground. Both the woman and her baby died.

Kevin's years alone in the past broaden his understanding of the absurdity and cruelty of slavery. This character's development indicates a need for White people to participate in the project of remembering, processing, and recovering from the trauma and aftermath of slavery, with the motive of facilitating reconciliation and equity. Obviously, a contemporary audience cannot return to the past exactly. Thus, the only means of unearthing the realities of this period is by learning about it through the symbolic act of reading (there are many books, documentaries, museums, and films about American slavery) and awareness about the relevance of the past. The aim is not to castigate the descendants of White enslavers or romanticise Black victimhood, but for Americans to be more alert to the historical factors for the contemporary problems of race and social class in their country, and to be inspired to rectify them through interracial dialogue and solidarity.

4.1 The Process of Inter-Racial Reconciliation

While her conflictual relationship with Rufus is central to an understanding of the clash between White domination and Black agency in the system of slavery, Dana's romantic relationship with Kevin highlights the possibility of reconciliation and racial co-existence in a modern and contemporary context. The couple's experience of the brutality of slavery and racism heightens their awareness about the impact of their society's past on its present conditions. Still, it is noteworthy that Kevin and Dana get married before their travel to the past. Thus, their progressive leaning is not a result of the ordeal; it only augments their fundamental belief in racial reconciliation. Perhaps alluding to the title, Dana describes Kevin and herself as follows: "He was like me—**a kindred spirit** [emphasis added] crazy enough to keep on trying." (Butler, 1979, p. 58). In another instance, she states that "I think Kevin was as lonely and out of place as I was when I met him[...]" (Butler, 1979, p. 53). Both characters appear to be nonconformists in their respective communities, who are unable to accept the norms of racial relations in society. However, these norms threaten their relationship.

In their time, it was still uncommon for a White and Black person to be lovers. Thus, they both face staunch resistance from each other's families. Since the family unit reflects society and society reflects the family unit, it is intuited from their families' attitude that there is a mutual dislike between Blacks and Whites depicted in the novel. Kevin's proposal to Dana leads to their discussion of their families for the first time. It is a topic they had avoided: "we had never talked much about our families, about how his would react to me and mine to him." (Butler, 1979, p. 116). While Dana is realistic about her uncle's and aunt's reaction, Kevin is naive about his sister's. To his surprise, his sister declares that she would not meet Dana and would not have Kevin in her house if he marries Dana. In Dana's case, her uncle sees her decision to marry a white man as betrayal. To him, Dana's only option should be a Black man, and to assert his conviction, he threatens that he would give away his apartment houses at Pasadena to his church rather than watch them fall into White hands. Thus, Dana and Kevin are forced to tie the knot without their relatives' approval.

In the above, the racial divide that continues to bedevil American society is addressed. Considering Kevin's observations, his sister is not inherently racist. It is less an ideological conviction than a learned behaviour of hers, catalysed by her husband's racist views, according to Kevin. Therefore, racism is not always a strong belief but a learned behaviour which White people are directly or indirectly pressured into adopting. It is submitted that White privilege and ignorance encourage racism among Whites. Kevin's sister hardly interacts with the Black community and is thus never aware of her White privilege or the deleterious effects of racism on the community. Thus, she is amenable to the racist doctrines of her environment. Dana's relatives, especially her uncle, are prejudiced against White people due to the memory of racism, racial violence, and White hate. Dana's old uncle was alive during the Jim Crow era (between the 1870s and 1960s). The creation of the Jim Crow laws in the 1880s emboldened White people to persecute Black people through riots, lynchings, and vandalism. Moreover, racism has been linked to a myriad of physical and psychological health challenges (Bleich et al., 2019; Causadias and Korous, 2019). The exposure to institutional and interpersonal racism is associated with mortality, hypertension, depression, anxiety, and psychological distress (Bleich et al., 2019). It is also related to post-traumatic stress disorder, hypertension, and diabetes (Causadias and Korous, 2019).

Based on the observations above, Kevin's sister has no good reason to hate Dana, besides her racial prejudice and ignorance. Dana's uncle, on the other hand, is responding to a perceived historical wrong against him and his people, which has evolved with the political and social systems in American society. In short, while Kevin's sister is racist, Dana's uncle is prejudiced, because one cannot be racist in a system built to marginalise and victimise them. However, neither racism nor prejudice can foster

healing and progress for White and Black people. For the society to achieve true liberation, equity, justice, and unity, it must reconcile, not by ignoring the atrocities of the past, but through acknowledgement, collective responsibility (reparation and forgiveness), recognition of their social distinctions, and their efforts towards unification through co-existence.

The marriage between Kevin and Dana is a fitting symbol of this reconnection between two racial groups that remain disconnected in the same country. Both characters defy the pressures and norms of their time and space through their marriage, setting a precedent for the rest of their society. Also, in their relationship, they exhibit mutual respect, support, love, and compromise. They both understand that they have different backgrounds and personalities, so when there is conflict, they address it with empathy and firmness. For instance, when Dana senses Kevin's unintended insensitivity to the realities of slavery, she guides him to see his bias and to be more empathic. Similarly, Kevin's support of Dana during the summonings is invaluable. On two occasions, when she arrives home badly injured, he keeps her alive. Also, as her partner, Dana finds psychological refuge in his company. Hence, their relationship is mutually beneficial and genuine. It is the kind needed for the recovery, preservation, and growth of American society.

Butler's vision of interracial reconciliation seems to foreshadow the need for unity and tolerance in America today, divided as it is by sectarianism, white nationalism, neo-fascism, and the politics of the far-left and far-right etc. The assassination of Charlie Kirk on September 10 2025, while addressing an audience at University Valley University, stands as a tragic symbol of the increasingly volatile nature of politics, social relations, and ideological wars in the United States of America. Charlie Kirk was a conservative right-wing political activist who established *Turning Point USA* in 2012, at the age of eighteen. As a public speaker and debater, Kirk was an incendiary who made inflammatory remarks on key issues in America's social, political, and cultural arenas (Debusmann Jr and Wendling, 2025; Wertheimer and Pomeroy, 2025; CBC News, 2025). As regards race, the Black community and Black rights, Kirk held opinions that many would consider disturbing. For instance, he wrote on X that it should be legal to burn a rainbow flag or Black Lives Matter flag in public (Wertheimer and Pomeroy, 2025). Furthermore, at a political conference hosted by his organisation in December 2023, he contended that, "[w]e made a huge mistake when we passed the Civil Rights Act in the 1960s." In his view, the act was to blame for a permanent bureaucracy functioning to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (CBC News, 2025, "Civil rights" section, paras. 2-3).

What is more, Donald Trump, the president of the United States, has expressed antipathy towards the Black community in action and words. He has been characterised as a symptom and catalyst of the political crisis bedevilling American society (Cruz, 2019).

Logan (2025) stresses that presidential elections are a highly racialised affair in the United States of America owing to the country's foundation of slavery, settler colonialism, imperial domination, and racialised nativism. Race is an inescapable matter in cardinal aspects of American life, including politics. It is in this regard that Trump vowed to transform his country by making it great again (Make America Great Again), and the transformation had much to do with race. In the opening months of his second administration, Trump attempted to eliminate federal funding research related to anti-racism, gender equity and social justice, attacked the "DEI" project (diversity, equity and inclusion) as part of a radical leftist agenda discriminatory to whites and men, pursued "the single largest mass deportation program in history" that targeted Black and brown people and sought the prohibition of ethnic studies and black history in K-12 schools among other deeds (Logan, 2025). Donald Trump's racial policy has a trickle-down effect on social life in America (Bryk, 2021; Jardina and Piston, 2023; Logan, 2025). Two strategies Trump relied on in the 2016 presidential election were his use of explicitly racist rhetoric and his endorsement of white supremacists (Jardina and Piston, 2023). The two are interlinked to the extent that Trump addressed his racist rhetoric to white supremacists who shared his sentiments about a perceived threat to white heterosexual American men. Also, there was a marked increase in reported hate crimes during Trump's campaign and election in 2016: "[...]those viewing Trump favorably before the election, on average, rated Black people as less evolved post-election than they had rated Black people pre-election[...]" (Jardina and Piston, 2023, p. 4). It can be extrapolated from these data that the current Trump-led administration has promoted the escalation of racial tension in the United States.

The above is evidence that the United States of America has not extricated itself from the institutions and ideologies that preserved racism and segregation for centuries. Therefore, the practice of interracial reconciliation emphasised in the novel, despite being written almost fifty years ago, is particularly relevant to the rebuilding of trust, empathy, equity, and unity in America, which today is a multiracial society embroiled in various struggles, ideologies, and tensions at all levels. In this sense, *Kindred* points towards unity in American society that transcends the traditional binary of White and Black.

4.2 Beyond White and Black: Finding Peace in a Multiracial Society

The recent incidents of racial violence, marginalisation, and White supremacy in America are rooted in the country's history of slavery and colonialism (Speight, 2007; Alexis Jemal et al., 2019; International Center for Transitional Justice, 2022). Hence, there is a search for viable solutions to the problem of race in the country, which has generated perspectives from scholars, NGOs, and social workers. One perspective from the area of social work and Christianity is that racial harmony is urgently needed in America. It entails the interrelated

values of peace, mutual respect, and solidarity. Peace is achieved through resolution (thoroughly addressing violations against the humanity of racial groups) and protection (the physical, mental, and emotional safety of racial groups). Respect involves the equitable treatment of all individuals as deserving of protection, love, kindness, and empathy. Solidarity is the establishment of mutual agreement, collective support, and connectedness among members of a group and groups in a community (Alexis et al., 2019). Racial harmony is facilitated by racial reconciliation, a set of procedures for addressing racial violation and promoting the healing of individuals, the mending of fissured relationships, the building of community, and the transformation of ineffective institutions (Alexis et al., 2019). A similar term is transitional justice, used by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (2022), to describe the various approaches that include acknowledgement, redress, accountability, memorialisation, and prevention, for addressing past wrongs. In the American context, it is relevant as a response to large-scale and systemic violations of human rights, which involve the recognition of individuals' dignity, the recognition and redress of mass violations, and the adoption of measures to prevent such violations in the future (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2022).

While it is generally believed that racial reconciliation, transitional justice, or similar practices are essential for the reparation of racial relations in America,

> [...]the US has failed to undertake any meaningful effort to offer redress to Black communities for its lengthy history of racial injustice. While the fact of the US's history of slavery and racism, and its connections to present-day injustices, is well documented in scholarly materials, it has not been acknowledged by the government or adequately integrated into the country's collective memory. This is equally true for many of the other historically oppressed communities in the US, including indigenous communities. (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2022, p. 7)

The failure to implement relevant policies prevents American society from coming to terms with the tragedy of slavery, addressing the current trends of racism, preventing racially-motivated injustice, and fostering interracial reconciliation. While the relationship between White and African Americans is pivotal in the transformation of society, other racial groups cannot be ignored. In 1999, Yamamoto (1999) declared that at the beginning of the millennium (2000), the traditional binary of white and black would no longer be suitable for describing race relations in the United States, because twenty-first-century America would be a nation of

minorities. Thus, the focus needs to expand in scope for a holistic understanding of social interactions in America, which aligns with reality.

Yamamoto (1999) submits that the co-existence of interracial distrust and hope, as well as the existence of intergroup accusation and optimism, expands an inquiry into justice beyond white on black and even white on colour to include colour on colour. This kind of inquiry is inclusive, as it addresses White debt and present-day conflicts among non-white racial groups, with the understanding that a racial group can be simultaneously oppressed in one relationship and be responsible for the oppression of another racial group. As a means of resolving interracial conflict and propagating harmony, Yamamoto (1999) offers interracial justice: the genuine and mutual acknowledgement of the historical and contemporary ways in which racial groups have caused harm to another racial group or to other racial groups, accompanied by viable measures to redress these wrongs and restructure racial relations positively. Underlying interracial justice are four praxis, namely: recognition, responsibility, reconstruction, and reparation. Yamamoto's four praxis align roughly with Alexis et al.'s six steps to racial reconciliation, namely identification, inclusion, encounter, amends, community reintegration, and transformation.

Recognition involves acknowledging the harm done, the wounds caused by the harm, and the anger of the wounded. It also involves addressing the conditions that legitimise the constraints of one racial group on another (Yamamoto, 1999; Alexis et al., 2019). The second praxis is responsibility, referring to the full participation of all affected racial groups in the restorative process through inclusive dialogue that may dissolve assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudice, with the understanding that racial groups can be simultaneously subordinated in one set of relationships and subordinate others in another set. (Yamamoto, 1999; Alexis et al., 2019). The third praxis is reconstruction, entailing the active pursuit of social and psychological healing from wounds caused by disabling group constraints (Yamamoto, 1999). At this third level, the entity engaged in racist action (EERA) seeks to relieve the harm they inflict on the harmed entity by racist action (HERA). It requires the EERA's transformative consciousness, which substitutes denial and blame against the HERA for their own oppression with apology, attitudinal change, and restitution, encouraging forgiveness (Yamamoto, 1999; Alexis et al., 2019). The fourth praxis is termed reparation, which seeks to improve the deplorable material conditions of a racial group, thereby reducing the power of one racial group over the other (Yamamoto, 1999). Moreover, reparation is fostered by collaboration and reintegration, with the result being the transformation of people, relationships, and communities (Alexis et al., 2019).

Although, the main focus in *Kindred* is the racial relations between Blacks and Whites in America, Yamamoto's philosophy of interracial justice reflects in Dana's and Kevin's mutual

efforts to understand their respective circumstances, their historical knowledge of the influences on their racial identities, their comprehension of the racial conflict between their families (and racial groups), and their successful integration through marriage. Through the travel to the past, Kevin is further enlightened on the insidiousness and destructiveness of slavery to Black people and how the legacy of slavery continues to harm them in the present. Likewise, Dana empathises more with the difficulties faced by her ancestors and the ways these have defined American society. As a result, both characters take responsibility by rejecting the imposition of slavery, in Dana's case, and supporting anti-slavery measures despite being a member of the oppressor's race, in Kevin's case. Besides, Dana and Kevin engage constantly in dialogue, which enriches their empathic understanding of one another's social position as a Black woman and a White man, respectively. Concerning the third praxis, there is no evidence that Kevin is an oppressor in the novel, but his identity as a White man demands that he substitute his initial denial of the severity of slavery with empathy and social action, represented by his support of Dana. Finally, both characters collaborate and integrate for the transformation of their society through the rebellious act of interracial marriage.

5.0 Conclusion: A Kindred Future

Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* ends, not with a tidy victory, but with a scar. Dana's severed arm is the price of knowledge, a permanent reminder of the persistent influence of past trauma on the present in America. The novel's final scene, in which Dana and Kevin drive to Maryland to confirm what happened after Rufus' death, seems despairing, but it is purposeful. Dana and Kevin, bound by trauma and love, decide to dig through the archives of violence together, emphasising that reconciliation is a deliberate process of research, dialogue, and collaborative reparation. To the seemingly perennial question of how people haunted by the trauma of slavery can build a future that is not merely post-slavery but post-wound, *Kindred* answers by teleporting Dana and Kevin, through time travel, to that past of slavery, in the process, increasing their capacity for empathy for the enslaved and broadening their perception about historical antecedents to the racial tension in their time. Dana's stabbing of Rufus is a metaphorical act representing African Americans' staunch rejection of racism and the active pursuit of an equitable future. In Kevin's case, his direct witnessing of the past and Dana's influence on his perspective of slavery indicate a need for White people to participate in the project of remembering, processing, and recovering from the trauma and aftermath of slavery, to facilitate reconciliation and equity. Their interracial marriage, initially a private rebellion against their families, becomes a message of auspicious possibilities in 21st-century America, infected by sectarianism, divisive politics, and racism as seen in Charlie Kirk's assassination and Donald Trump's racist activities. One of such possibilities is racial harmony through interracial justice, which subsumes the praxes of recognition

(naming the harm), responsibility (owning the legacy), reconstruction (healing the wound), and reparation (redressing inequity), all enacted by Dana and Kevin in their navigation of the past and the courage to seal their love in marriage. Ultimately, the vision of the future in *Kindred* is not of a raceless utopia. It leans more towards a future of multiracial harmony where all individuals, irrespective of their racial class, can co-exist as kindred spirits.

Data Availability Statement

No new empirical data were created or examined in this study. The research is based entirely on existing scholarly works, books, journal articles, and publicly available reports. All consulted are fully cited in the reference list in line with APA 7th edition guidelines.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

The authors of this article certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement with any organisation or entity with financial interest (including honoraria, educational grants, employment, consultancies, or other related organisations or entities) or non-financial interest (including personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) that may affect the objectivity of the subject matter or materials analysed in this manuscript.

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