

Quan Pham
IML 295
Final Reflection

Dear Dana,

I want to begin by saying that I'm sorry: I should've listened to you more—I should've paid more attention, should've taken your concerns to heart and *really* listened. And for that, again, I'm truly sorry. I don't think we left (I'll explain in a bit) each other on a good night; if I remember correctly, we got into a heated altercation, probably instigated by my doing and my stubbornness. I think I got jealous of you and Rufus. Looking back, I'm not sure why I was even riled up like that; it sounds stupid now that I even say it. I'm Kevin, your husband, what should I be worried about? Dana, you are amazing, filled with compassion and empathy. You've touched peoples' lives and it's in your nature to love. I should've reciprocated that same love. I should've trusted you, and built up our relationship. Again, again, I'm sorry.

After our fight, we parted ways. I think you traveled back in time (as I couldn't find you), and I went to take a breather. What I didn't realize what would happen, though, was that I would be teleported into the future—the year 2020 to be exact! Can you believe it? One second I'm standing in our bathroom, and I suddenly wake up in someone else's bed with someone calling my name. It was so strange. They seemed to know who I was, but I had no clue about them! I stepped outside and noticed some glaring differences: the air seemed a little hotter, the streets completely dead, people were wearing these strange masks, the technology was revolutionary and I could practically feel the palpable tension in the air. 2020 is a strange time.

I asked the people that greeted me, who happened to be black, about what was going on, and they quickly gave me a comprehensive run-down about the current year. Dana, picture this: its July, in our city of Los Angeles, except it's almost 50 years into the future. There is a global pandemic going on, resulting in people socially distancing themselves, wearing masks, and anxious about the future. Despite the advancements in technology that have undoubtedly formed a global sphere of interconnectedness, people, especially in America, are more divided than ever before—I couldn't believe it. Even though racial equality, for example, has greatly improved since our times, there's still so many problems to solve. The people that greeted me, who I can now comfortably call my friends, informed me about the recent political strides in America, particularly the Black Lives Matter movement. They informed me about the systemic racism that continually oppresses BIPOC people—how it comes to fruition in police brutality, home equity, schooling, and daily life. I was absolutely stunned, and I couldn't barely form any words. All I could say was thank you to them for taking their time, energy, and passion to educate—I could only imagine how difficult and tiring it was for them to do that for me.

Dana, you can probably assess that I'm very idealistic. During our times on the plantation, I only looked at the overarching goal, not once giving thought to the individual lives around me. I assumed the little problems—the minor forms of slavery that I passed by—weren't that big of a deal; to add on to this, my friends explained to me that one of the harder challenges they face daily, is dealing with microaggressions, small, brief interpersonal exchanges that inadvertently degrade others based on their minority group. Prior to this time travel journey, I would've never assumed that such small, malicious

interactions could implicate, and perpetuate, such a larger issue. I should've modeled my efforts after you, constantly trying to uplift the individuals around me, taking into consideration their own personal experiences and stories. I should've listened to you.

Dana, I'm writing this letter for two reasons: (1) to express my sorrows and condolences to you, and (2) to show you how much I've learned and grew. My friends gave me a computer of my own to keep me updated about the world. I looked at the news, lurked social media platforms, but most importantly, I stumbled upon a university class's collection of projects... it's called a Google Drive and a Scalar page I think? Anyways, I was reading a book that was frequently referenced by the students titled *All About Love* by bell hooks, and I was amazed at the content. In her book, hooks continually illustrates the potential that love has in our society and communities, and in our relationships, whether big or small. She repeatedly mentions how bringing a love ethic in our communities can instigate real, good change, even saying how "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (hooks, intro xix). That's some heavy stuff. Love is powerful. It can change lives, remedy differences and even alter history. I wish I would've realized that sooner.

One quote in particular stuck out to me: "When we face pain in relationships our first response is often to sever bonds rather than to maintain commitment" (hooks 159). That was me, Dana; instead of trying to connect with you and remedy our shaky relationship, I chose to get upset, accuse you, and worry over things that shouldn't matter. I didn't trust, even though, deep down, I had no reason to. Moving forward, I am making it my goal to always be listening, and understanding your feelings as well as mine.

Thankfully, in the class's Scalar page, Quan's Praxis 2 project about his interview with his friend Emily really resonated with me. In his project, his main message was about the transformative potential of minute conversations that engage in daily. For Emily, this meant constantly trying to inform and educate her parents politically, trying to make them think more emphatically about their actions. For me, this means listening to you, and helping you support the people around us. I know I should've come to this conclusion much sooner and practiced it during our time on the plantation, but it's too late for that. Just know that now I'm much more aware of the kind of change that I can effect, especially considering my demographic of a white male.

This leads into my next point. For a while, I was confused about the injustices, and particularly my role in everything. Looking back at the way I acted towards you, I was too demanding, too eager to fix it all, and too oblivious to your problems. Through the projects in the Scalar—whether it be Praxis 1 "*Social Nonconformity in Fashion*" or the several speculative projects of Praxis 3—I had gained a better understanding of the notion of privilege and resilience. As a straight, white man, I have privileges that make myself undoubtedly easier than other people. This isn't to say that my life is void of struggles—that is not the case. What this means is that my struggles will never be because of my race, gender, and or sexuality. I need to acknowledge my given privileges and have to act on it—but this isn't some spontaneous effort. It begins, as I have recently learned, with the minute—with the quotidian, interpersonal dynamics that I develop. It begins with me taking my time to listen to you. So, Dana, when we meet again, I have so much to ask you. What should I start doing now? How can I make sure I'm always listening? Will you teach me? How can I use my privilege for good?

While these students have taught me the importance of privilege and taken into consideration the stories around me, they have also shown me another way to enact change. In a time so dominated by technology, they have been using media and storytelling as their way of giving a platform for the problems that need to be addressed. It is creative, modern, ingenious and so inspirational. It makes me

wonder what ways I can approach change back in our time. I guess that's for us to figure out together.
Maybe we'll have a much needed, heart-to-heart conversation when we get back?

Yours Truly,
Kevin

References

Hooks, B. (2018). *All About Love: New Visions*. New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins.