

MALIK. Neither of these policies originally targeted the people it was designed to protect. They both came with multiple side clauses and loopholes. The result, slaves still weren't freed even after the proclamation, and so-called minorities weren't employed equally after affirmative action. Paperwork and lies and bullshit and plantation by another name.

SANDRA. Okay, Malik.

**Start** MALIK. Bull-stuff.

SANDRA. I admire your passion. I think you can draw more concise lines between corporate America and the plantation. It's not absurd. It's just...not an easy route to follow. I admire your passion though, I really do.

MALIK. Please don't patronize me, Professor.

SANDRA. I'm not patronizing.

MALIK. You admire my passion? That's not patronizing?

SANDRA. I realize you have some disagreements with my curriculum.

MALIK. That's not what this is about.

SANDRA. You've made it clear several times that you think I'm not giving enough balanced framework in my lessons on unconscious bias.

MALIK. Am I not able to challenge?

SANDRA. No, you're able. That's what this class is for.

MALIK. Then why the hard time, Professor?

SANDRA. Hard time? What hard time?

MALIK. I just feel like you...don't respect me much.

SANDRA. Why would I not respect you? I respect all of my students.

MALIK. I try really hard.

SANDRA. I recognize that. I encourage the effort and am pushing for you to go further.

MALIK. I don't think you acknowledge the effort I make. I think you only push but don't ever affirm.

SANDRA. Really?

MALIK. Yes really.

SANDRA. Wow.

*(SANDRA takes a moment to process this. It catches her off-guard.)*

MALIK. Is it because I'm a man?

SANDRA. WHAT?

MALIK. I'm asking a sincere - not trying to disrespect -

SANDRA. Why would you - whhh - what are you implying?

MALIK. Nothing. Nevermind.

SANDRA. No, what are you - what in the hell -

MALIK. I feel bias. Sometimes.

SANDRA. From???

MALIK. You. Toward other women in the class. Away from me.

SANDRA. How so?

MALIK. Like the other day.

SANDRA. What other day?

MALIK. You wore a particular shirt to class.

SANDRA. Black Lives Matter.

MALIK. Yes, that particular shirt.

SANDRA. I'm not following. Did you...take offense -

MALIK. No.

SANDRA. Okay, because I'd be surprised -

MALIK. It's just what you emphasized about the shirt.

SANDRA. I'm sorry?

MALIK. Of who started that particular movement.

SANDRA. You mean the women.

MALIK. Yes.

SANDRA. Three women.

MALIK. Yes, I know. And that's cool. But your emphasis...

SANDRA. My emphasis?

MALIK. Made it seem as if that was the most important fact about the movement. That it was started...that it was those three women. And not -

SANDRA. I know why it was started. We all know why it was started.

MALIK. I feel a personal connection to why it was started.

SANDRA. Understandably.

MALIK. But the way you emphasized...the way you sometimes emphasize things in class... I just feel that there is a bias. Unconscious. That you may carry -

SANDRA. I don't do that.

MALIK. Okay.

SANDRA. Malik.

MALIK. Yes?

SANDRA. I don't do that.

MALIK. Okay.

SANDRA. Okay.

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*(Pause. SANDRA sips some water. MALIK types furiously on his laptop.)*

What's that, are you -

MALIK. Taking notes.

*(SANDRA nods. Concerned. Tries to regroup. Start over.)*

SANDRA. Okay, Malik. I think this is truth time. Okay?

MALIK. Okay.

SANDRA. I think you're one of the brightest students in my class.

MALIK. Okay.

SANDRA. And I think... I think your mind is sharp and focused. This is genuine. Not patronizing.

MALIK. Okay.

SANDRA. I've worked here for seven years. I'm tenured. I've seen lots of minds. You're one of those unforgettable ones.

MALIK. You've never told me that.

SANDRA. Sometimes you tell a student. Sometimes you just observe and push. I see now that I needed to balance my strategy with you. But I have to push. For a number of reasons, I have to push you. I have to make sure your work is airtight. Do you understand?

MALIK. Because I'm a Black man.

SANDRA. Because there will be many doubts about you here. About whether or not you're equipped. Deserving of the scholarship. And I won't allow it to take up space.

MALIK. I think I understand.

SANDRA. You know, my father was a political science major and a mathematical genius? Math and global liberation were linked, he'd say. It's the only universal language. If you can teach people to solve for x around the world, they can solve hunger and injustice too. This went on well into my teens, until one day my father had a