

NARRATIVE ESSAY

To Liberate

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Yesterday, we painted. I was late. I am always late.

I recently read about two concepts of time: *chronos* and *kairos*. Our shared concept of time comes from *chronos*—a time measured carefully in uniform blocks and bits and milliseconds. A standardized time, the world marching forward in sync. In the painting class, I was late and they were out of workstations, but they had extra canvases and paint and a kind soul lent me a brush when I needed one.

There is an older sense of time—*kairos*—which is relative. It is a time that flows around us and our movement through this world, our meaningful interactions with it. Relative time, the opportune time, the right moment.

In *chronos* time, the rest of the class started painting at 2:30 PM, Eastern Standard Time. In *kairos* time, I began painting when a friendly medical student lent me an extra brush. The rest of the class painted step 2—the upper sky, in sync at 2:40 PM, Eastern Standard Time. I painted it after step 1.

How much more well suited might our days be to our lived, subjective reality if we were to liberate ourselves, to liberate one another into *kairos* time? I will see the next patient when I have met the needs of this patient. I will go to the next meeting when my resident is calm and stops pulling tissues from the box. I will leave for work when my 7-year-old has finished passionately explaining the nature of his morning Lego creation. We will lend our neighbor a paintbrush when they need it.

