
THE HATE U GIVE: AS YOU ARE BLACK, YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS

Dr. Sana' Mahmoud Jarrar

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Aqaba University of Technology

P. O. Box: 541216 Postal Code: Abu-Nsair, 11937

ABSTRACT: *Angie Thomas' The Hate U Give is a polemical novel because of its strong condemnation of the racism that has targeted African-Americans. The Hate U Give revolves around racism against people coming from black background in the USA. Race has been always a sensitive aspect in America due to its often ugly history of slavery. Racism has always been associated with power dominance and enforcement of oppression which is still in the hands of Whites in America. The Hate U Give is a perfect showcase of the hatred that African Americans have received from the American society.*

KEYWORDS: racism, black background, USA, whites, hate

INTRODUCTION

All the forms of African American literature , including novels, poems, short stories, plays and even in non-fiction works of memoir has encapsulated the prevalence of racism in America (Britanica). For example, a wide range of literary pieces tackles the issue of racism, such as “A Dream Deferred” by Langston Hughes, *The Hidden Wound* by Wendell Berry and “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks. *The Hate U Give* demonstrates a series of racist acts received by its black characters. Angie Thomas, the author of the novel, is an African American, and she reveals in her novel what she had seen or heard by herself. The works and experience of Tupac, a rap artist, have greatly inspired Angie Thomas to write about the actual suffering of black communities (Epicreads.com, 2018).

The Hate U Give is an outstanding delineation of racism. The novel revolves around the story of a 16- years old girl called Starr Carter. Starr's world has been smashed when she had witnessed the incident of a lethal firing at her best friend, Khalil, by a white police officer. However, soon after the death of Khalil, people consider him a mobster, a drug dealer or simply a vandal despite his innocence (Goodreads.com, 2019). Racism emanates in mastery and provides the explication for demeaning, humiliating, and doing savagery to people on the basis of color. Racism in this novel has emerged through the form of police brutality against black people. As a heritage of the past, America’s racist and discriminating history continues to hurt black people: "Funny. Slave masters thought they were making a difference in black people's lives too. Saving them from their wild African ways. Same shit, different century. I wish people like them would stop thinking that people like me need saving" (Thomas, 2017, p. 246).

The murder of the unarmed black Khalil by a white cop is a demonstration of the larger fabric of racism in America. Stories of police harassment and brutality with African Americans are widespread. African Americans are more likely to be shot and murdered

by police than white men. They are more likely to confront continuous everyday insults and humiliations at the hands of police. The brutality and injustice of the police towards the black is one stitch in the larger fabric of inequality and racism (Hannah-Jones , 2015, *Propublica*).

Main Text

The title of the novel reflects the entire essence of the novel in general. A sense of hatred and injustice has surfaced and penetrated all over the novel which bears a title that summarizes its essence (Brooks et al. 2015, p.711). *The Hate U Give* as a title demonstrates the hatred that Starr and her associates have received from the American society due to their colour. Racism refers to

A system in which one group of people exercises power over another on the basis of skin colour; an implicit or explicit set of beliefs, erroneous assumptions, and actions based on an ideology of the inherent superiority of one racial group over another, and evident in organizational or institutional structures and programs as well as in individual thought or behaviour patterns. (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 352)

The first facet of racism that appears in the novel is the dual personality that the African Americans suffer from. Although Starr has been raised up in Garden Height, a poor black neighborhood, she along with her brother have attended a classy prep school (Pluggedin.com). The unequal balance has been successfully represented by the difference between the impoverished area in which she lives and the classy prep school she attends. Starr has to swing between these two spheres. As a common phenomenon, Starr is mistreated in her school because of her background. Being in a classy school of white people, Starr has encountered different kinds of unethical treatments and behaviors. Belonging to a black community while attending a high-class school, she has been in a great dilemma and she feels as torn into two personalities: "Being two different people is so exhausting I've taught myself to speak with two different voices and only say certain things around certain people. I've mastered it. As much as I say I don't have to choose which Starr I am with Chris, maybe without realizing it, I have to an extent. Part of me feels like I can't exist around people like him" (Thomas, 2017,p.301). At school, she tends to speak and act differently from her actual self at Garden Heights (Thomas, 2017, p.45). This has resulted in a sense of a dual and conflicting personality that Starr suffers from: "At its core, *The Hate U Give* is a meditation on the toll of "code switching"—or moving between multiple social identities, depending on the context—for black girls in particular" (Tanisha C. Ford, 2018).

In this novel, the actual essence of racism has been displayed in the form of police brutality and injustice towards black people. In the opinion of Vaught (2014, p.87), institutional racism refers to the system, political outset, practices, policies and

behaviors that specifically disadvantage a particular racial group. This has been the case in this novel as the entire system starting from media to police has turned against Khalil portraying him as a victimizer rather than a victimized. "Media representations of minorities (specifically African- Americans and Latinos) in urban inner-cities were frequently depicted as addicts and criminals, while the Whites were portrayed by the media as victims" (Cobbina, 20008, p.167). After Khalil's grandmother has been fired, Khlil just starts up selling drugs once to pay back the debt of his mother. Despite this, Khalil does not deserve this brutal death. The media has been more eager to rouse sympathy for the police officer rather than standing up for the injustice faced by Khalil: "The drug dealer. That's how they see him. It doesn't matter that he's suspected of doing it. "Drug dealer" is louder than "suspected" ever will be (Thomas, 2017,p.113). This has been a great portrayal of racism that continuously affects the part of the lives of black community in America (Tatonetti, 2014, p.45).

Starr has the burden of both knowing the innocence of Khalil and the shame of not being bold enough to tell people about it: "What's the point of having a voice if you're gonna be silent in those moments you shouldn't be?" (Thomas, 2017,p. 252). Starr is initially hesitant to speak out about what she had witnessed, fearing revenge against her family and worrying that she is not meritorious enough to speak up for Khalil. Later, however, she comes to consider her voice as the most effectual instrument she possesses. She commences a blog to speak up for Khalil, and she decides to give a television interview to tell the world what happened (Gradesaver.com). In fact, what happened to Khalil is what many African Americans have been going through every day:

It would be so easy to quit if it was just about me, Khalil, that night,
and that cop. It's about way more than that though. It's about Seven.
Sekani. Kenya. DeVante.

It's also about Oscar.

Aiyana.

Trayvon.

Rekia.

Michael.

Eric.

Tamir.

John.

Ezell.

Sandra.

Freddie.

Alton.

Philando.

It's even about this little boy in 1955 who nobody recognized at first
- Emmett.

The messed-up part ? There are so many more (Thomas,
2017,pp.442-443).

This novel gives rise to a picturesque view of racism. In the opinion of Mahavijit (2017, p.15), racism has been a combination of different practices, social relations and beliefs that work together to produce a racial hierarchy yielding privilege and superiority for some and oppression and discrimination for others. When Starr is only 12, her parents have given instructions about what to do if a cop stops her. The best advice has been to keep her hands visible and not to make a sudden move. This has really been a traumatic situation for black people to be caught by police. Current research suggests that racial profiling and racial bias both affect police practices regarding stops and searches of Black Americans in low-income minority neighborhoods (Bobo & Thompson, 2006, p. 200).

CONCLUSION

The theme of racism plays an important role in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*. Though the murder of Khalil, an unarmed black, by a white cop, Thomas exemplifies the very robust impact of racism in America. Considering all the facts and occurrences of the events taking place in the plot, it can be concluded that racism exists in every layer of American society. Police brutality in terms of oppression made by governmental system has been the predominant factor in this specific novel by Angie Thomas. Hence, a close evaluation of the study can give rise to a certain belief that if Khalil has not been a black, society would have responded in a completely different manner. The reaction and coverage of media might have portrayed the incident in a more sympathetic manner towards Khalil and his family. The accusation might have been a little lighter while a sharp hatred can be set upon the police officer for killing an unarmed young man. Hence, casting a look upon all these, it can be stated that American society is still now struggling with the fact of racism.

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