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## **Racial Profiling And The Criminilization Of The Black Youth In The Hate U Give By Angie Thomas (2017)**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to analyze the way aggressive policing affects the life of young black people in Thomas Angie's novel, *The Hate U Give*.(2017) The racial categorization of Black Americans as dangerous or violent criminals threatening the well being of the whites has resulted in a strong belief that they need to be controlled at whatever cost. (Henning,2021; Taylor, 2016 Weissinger et al, 2017). Accordingly, agencies of social control, like the police forces, and the legal system that are supposed to protect the Black community, have become a source of fear and despair, demeaning, humiliating, and killing young black people by virtue of their skin color. Through her female protagonist's experience with police brutality and racism, , Angie Thomas seeks to set the ground for discussion of black people's experience of racial profiling and criminalization. She addresses questions of social inequity, racist law enforcement, and the immunity of the white police. She also aims at celebrating the memories of the young people gone prematurely and tragically.

**Keywords:** Racial profiling, Policing, Lethal force, Mainstream media, *The Hate U Give*, Thomas Angie,

### **Introduction**

When Barack Obama was elected president of the United States of America in 2008, politicians and scholars prophesized the death of racism in America and the birth of a new postracism era where American people would be treated according to their individual skills rather than their race and origins. However, time has proved their prophecies wrong. The first decades of the twenty first century and President Obama's two terms' presidency have witnessed an intensification in the racial killing of black people at the hands of white police. African American youth have become the targets of systemic police brutality, law enforcement, and discrimination. They have been regularly stopped, humiliated, brutalized, and unlawfully criminalized by police officers and vigilantes while the later have almost never been indicted, jailed, or prosecuted. Research suggests that police are more likely to threaten or to use lethal force in poor and minority areas than in other neighborhoods (Warren et al, 2006, p.715), and since the Black community lives in impoverished areas where the

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crime rates seem to be higher, they tend to suffer more than other racial and ethnic groups from aggressive policing. Comer and Poussaint (1992), contend that Black youth have always been one of “the most mistreated and neglected groups in American society” (Comer and Poussaint, 1992, p. 8). They are frequently targeted by covert and overt violence and racial discrimination. In fact, the racial categorization of Black Americans as dangerous or violent criminals threatening the well being of the whites have resulted in a strong belief that they need to be controlled at whatever cost. (Henning, 2021; Taylor, 2016; Weissinger et al, 2017). Accordingly, agencies of social control, like the police forces, and the legal system that are supposed to protect the Black community, have become a source of fear and despair, demeaning, humiliating, and killing them by virtue of their skin color. The problem is that the racial profiling methods adopted by the police in fighting crime in black neighborhoods have not only been ineffective in minimizing crime but also caused the tragic death of innocent young black people for no justifiable reason.

In her forward to *Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect?* (2016), Alicia Garza explores the historical record of aggressive law enforcement against black people in America and observes that, "while there may no longer be an overseer with a lash, there is now a deputy with a gun." (Garza, 2016, p. 10). The associated stereotypes of dangerousness and criminality of the African American poor have increased police surveillance of them. Moreover, the provocative interactions between the police forces and the young Black people have become fatal causing the death of untold numbers of young innocent blacks while the police officers causing these life losses live, most of the time, with total impunity.

The deep physical and psychological grievances inflicted to the young black people have incited protest demonstrations to denounce the legitimacy of racialized law enforcement agencies. The black people have become more vocal, addressing questions of social inequity, police aggression, systemic oppression, and racist violence. Beginning with the murder of Oscar Grant in January 2010 by a white police officer, and continuing with the high-profile cases of Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, and hundreds of others, police violence, particularly in Black communities, has taken center stage nationwide and has led to protest movements. Civil rights and Social movements have risen in response to the use of unnecessary excessive and deadly force by the police, and as a protest against mainstream media support of the policing system. Social activist Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor observes that, "the perpetuation of deeply ingrained stereotypes of African Americans as particularly dangerous, impervious to pain and suffering, careless and carefree, and exempt from empathy, solidarity, or basic humanity is what allows the police to kill Black people with no threat of punishment." (Taylor 2016). Street demonstrators have rejected the descriptions of the deadly aggressions of the young black people by the police as 'incidents' and have denounced the complicit position of the mainstream media. They have become a rallying cry for political and social activists fighting to end police violence and impunity against the blacks.

In *The Hate U Give* (2017), Angie Thomas gives voice to a black teenage girl to expose the racial disparities that define the American social and judicial systems, and expose the racism her community experiences at the hands of white police. Being the only witness of her best friend's killing at the hands of a police officer, Starr Carter, Angie's female protagonist, narrates her experience with racism and hate in a realistic way, denouncing the

violence the young black people endure every day. She also speaks about her experience with political activism and her coming of age as an agent of social change. Through her female protagonist's experience with police brutality and racism, , Angie Thomas seeks to set the ground for discussion of black people's experience of racial profiling and criminalization. She addresses questions of social inequity, racist law enforcement , and the deadly power of the police badge . She also aims at celebrating the memories of the young people gone prematurely and tragically.

### **Racial Profiling And The Criminilization Of The Black Youth**

Racial profiling has been championed by the American law enforcement agencies as a necessary tool to protect American citizens from drug dealers and criminals. However, Engel & Johnson (2006) define racial profiling as the practice of targeting or stopping an individual based on his race, rather than on any individualized suspicion or crime. Research, on the other hand , has demonstrated that Black people are policed, searched, and arrested at much higher rates than their white counterparts. It also indicates that African Americans are disproportionately stopped by police officers relative to white young people or other minority groups in the United States. They are confronted to continuous harassment and humiliation at the hands of police officers at traffic and pedestrian stops. (Henning, 2021) The aggressive policing tactics to which these people are exposed has become so pervasive that some scholars have labeled them the crime of “Driving While Black”. (Warren et al , 710) These racialized interactions with the police often end with emotional and physical trauma being inflicted upon the black people at the best, and death at the worst. In *The Rage of Innocence*, Kristin Henning states that,

Although Black youth made up 16 percent of the youth population aged ten to seventeen in 2018, they accounted for half (50 percent) of all youth arrests for violent crimes that year, and 42 percent of arrests for property crimes. After arrest, Black youth are more likely to be detained, prosecuted, and punished more harshly—even when they are charged with similar offenses and have similar prior histories (Henning, 2021, p. 14)

The day-to-day abuses of policing towards the blacks has reached an alarming dimension. For the black community, these numbers are evidence of America's deep-seated fear, distrust, and intolerance of the Black community. The consequences of police misconduct are dramatic. The streets, the schools, and the home have become sites of oppressive policing and black people might be mistaken for suspects and shot for no apparent reason. This situation has, however , been faced with total indifference from the political officials who are willing to believe police accounts than the Black victims or the potential black witnesses. Worse, responsibility is placed on the victims themselves whose skin color, shape, or sudden moves can become a source of suspicion and interpreted as a potential aggression.

In Thomas Angie's novel, *The Hate U Give* ( 2017) , the Black community suffers from the stigmatization of the police resulting from the long history of slavery and racism in America . The young black people are aware that the violence they endure is the result of white people's stereotyping of the blacks as criminals, drug dealers, and law-offenders. In the novel, Starr's feelings of fear and apprehension when her friend Khalil is being stopped by the police officer , show the black community's mistrust and negative opinions of law

enforcement. She knows that a simple stop can lead to death. According to Cochran & Warren, (2012), people of color are less likely than Whites to trust the police, due to racial profiling and racial disparities in police behavior. This has led to an increased skepticism and fear of the police stops. It has also led to more awkwardness of the young people when confronted to the police. To avoid potential effects of racialized policing, Starr's parents, in the novel, have taught their daughter to obey instructions of police officers, in case she is stopped, by keeping her hands visible, responding only when directly questioned, not talking back, and above all not making any sudden moves,

Momma fussed and told Daddy I was too young for that. He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot.

"Starr-Starr, you do whatever they tell you to do," he said. "Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you."

I knew it must've been serious. Daddy has the biggest mouth of anybody

I know, and if he said to be quiet, I needed to be quiet. (Thomas 20)

Starr's parents are aware that black people have been shot by police on the simple basis of suspicion. Any sudden move or unwanted reply can become fatal. Thus they taught their daughter as early as the age of twelve how to interact with the police forces when being stopped in order to avoid any physical confrontation or abuse. Comer & Poussaint (1992) explain that there has been a "need to prepare black children to deal with the questions and issues of race in a way that will be the most beneficial to their overall emotional, social, and psychological growth and development." (1) By the time they reach teenage age, the majority of black American children are warned by their parents, relatives, or community about the dangers inherent in contacts with the police forces. These lessons about systemic racism are meant to reduce young black people's physical confrontations with the police, and eventually save their lives. Starr, in *The Hate U Give*, remembers every part of her parents' instructions. When she is stopped by 'One-Fifteen', she follows the instructions of the officer blindly despite her terror and the shaking of her hands. She even tries to "get a good look at the cop's face" and "remember his badge number" as her father has taught her. (Thomas 22) For Henning, "Black children have learned to adapt their behaviors to survive under the relentless scrutiny of police officers who see and treat them as a perpetual threat. At its worst, the discriminatory and aggressive policing of Black adolescence has socialized a generation of Black teenagers to fear, resent, and resist the police." (Henning, 2021, p.15) In the novel, Starr hopes that Khalil's parents had the same talk with him, and that he does not resist orders. However, it seems that nobody did. Khalil does not follow any of the instructions imposed on the Black community. He asks questions, answers back, makes a sudden move, and opens the door of his car without the permission of the police officer. This costs him his life.

When the news of Khalil's death are spread, most people assume that he has been killed because he is a drug-dealer. Even Carlos, Starr's uncle believes so. Carlos who is a police officer working with 'One-Fifteen' tries to justify the act of his colleague by defending him and criminalizing Khalil even though the stop was arbitrary and unfair. In fact, the discourse of Black criminality has become so ingrained in the minds of people that black

people are always seen as perpetrators rather than victims of crime. The police , like Detective Carlos, who is black himself, contribute to the racial discourse of the State and vilifies Khalil as a 'thug' and an aggressor.

"And what made the cop think he was a drug dealer?"

Wait. Brian. That's One-Fifteen's name?

"Oh, so you know him," Daddy mocks. "I ain't surprised."

"He's a colleague, yes and a good guy, believe it or not. I'm sure this is hard on him. Who knows what he was thinking at the time?"

"You said it yourself, he thought Khalil was a drug dealer," Daddy says.

"A thug. Why he assumed that though? What? By looking at Khalil? Explain that, Detective."

Silence." ( Thomas)

However, Starr's father, who went through difficult times himself in the past, assumes that even if Khalil is a drug-dealer, the officer has no right to kill him. Khalil does not deserve to die for a minor crime. Starr's father seems also more conscious of the race problem that overshadows the life of the black community. He is aware that people like Khalil are killed everyday even when obeying commands. Law does nothing to protect them from police abuse, and they almost never get justice when victimized. He cynically confesses that , "people like us in situations like this become hashtags, but they rarely get justice. I think we all wait for that one time though, that one time when it ends right. (Thomas, 42) Although physically free , the black people suffer from marginalization, systemic racism, police brutality, killings, and an informal white supremacist regime. (Bloom, 2016; Roberts, 1996; Schenwar, 2017). In the novel, Starr's father seems more down to earth than any other member of her family. He knows that justice is hard to get for black people, and that the price of it can become very high.

On the other hand, Kalil's death helps Starr understand the reason of her parents' over protection of her and her brother by enrolling them in a white school. Starr's parents consider that white neighborhoods are safer for children. They try to avoid to their children encounters with the police by not letting them go to places where there is a gathering of black youth , like the party Starr went to, because they know that such gatherings would become the targets of police racial violence.

### **The Multiple Forms Of Trauma**

In his article, "Killing the Future: The Theft of Black Life" , Nicholas Powers states that young Black children in poor neighborhoods suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder since they are the daily witnesses of shootings and fights . (Powers 28) Nadal, Griffin, et al., for their part , assert that negative interactions between the police and young black people have a profound impact on their psyche. This can lead to developing depressive symptoms . Time never erases the humiliation, fear, and feeling of injustice they endure. In the novel , Starr fights a range of emotions and feelings resulting from her conviction that her friend Khalil and herself have been targeted by the police officer for no other reason except their skin

color. They did nothing wrong. There was nothing suspicious in them or in their car. Besides, there was nothing intimidating about Khalil's appearance or aggressive about his behavior when he was being stopped. Khalil was treated by the police officer like a criminal. In *The Rage of Innocence*, Kristen Hanning declares that,

Americans think of Black children as predatory, sexually deviant, and immoral. For many, that fear is subconscious, arising out of the historical and contemporary narratives that have been manufactured by politicians, business leaders, and others who have a stake in maintaining the social, economic, and political status quo. There is something particularly efficient about treating Black children like criminals in adolescence. Black youth are dehumanized, exploited, and even killed to establish the boundaries of Whiteness before they reach adulthood and assert their rights and independence. (Hanning 13)

When Khalil is killed by 'One-Fifteen', Starr experiences race-related trauma. Her innocent teenage dreams and hopes are shattered by the shock of her friend's murder. She has nightmares all nights long and wakes up screaming. Starr is traumatized not only by the death of her best friend, but also by the fact of being so near to death herself. Caruth has written that trauma is “not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of

history”. She adds that “the event is not assimilated experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event.” (Caruth,1995, pp.4-5) . In the novel, nothing can dispel the fear that inhabits Starr after the death of her friend. She recalls time and again the killing and the the police officer was pointing his gun at her too. Thus, throughout her rite of passage from innocence to race awareness, Starr expresses a myriad of feelings of general distress and disbelief ranging from confusion, sadness, and fear to shock and trauma. John explains trauma as, “The spiritual, psychological, and physiological devastation African Americans experience following exposure to stressors involving the (a) direct personal experience with, (b) witnessing of, or (...) other threat to one's physical integrity on the basis of their race or skin colour or as a result of the vicious and aggressive encroachment of oppression and White supremacy.”( John 52) Because of her new race experience, Starr suffers from posttraumatic effects . She cannot sleep , cannot eat and has nightmares. Starr is also overwhelmed by feelings of fear, self pity, and vulnerability. Furthermore, Starr becomes aware of her position as a black teenage girl in a racist white world. She starts recalling memories of racial incidents in her life. She has flash-backs not only about the killing of her friend Khalil, but about the murder of her best friend Natasha too. Memories that she thought she had forgotten resurface to make her more aware of the fragility of the black people's lives and of the impending of black people's brutal death. Consequently, she becomes afraid to speak out about what she witnessed, fearing revenge against her family. She also loses confidence in herself and her worth as a black teenage girl. Starr has a second shock when she hears what people and the media say about her friend Khalil. Instead of supporting his case , Khalil is dehumanized and incriminated publically while the police officer's account of the incident is believed as the true version of the story.

### **The Betrayal Of The Mainstream Media**

Police aggressive interacting and radicalized profiling of black Americans are almost invisible in American mainstream media. When they are pictured, they are often racially biased, victimizing the whites while demonizing the black people. This has a strong impact on people's view of law enforcement and their pre-existing perception of the blacks as violent and aggressive. In "Racist America", Joe R. Feagin declares that since Americans' "heavy exposure to television content about the social world tends to influence how people view the outside society [and] reinforc[es] pre-existing black criminality images from the old white-racist frame" (Feagin 117). In "Who Do You Serve? Who Do You Protect", Maya schenwar denounces this bias against black people by stating that, "To eclipse the officer's guilt, the victims are "niggerized" in public. Have a criminal record? It will be paraded in public. Ever took silly gangsta photos? They will be proof of a "thug life." (schenwar 21) These perceptions of the blacks as criminals are reinforced daily to perpetuate the existing power relations. In *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas highlights the ways culpability is constructed by the media to facilitate the criminalization of the Black people while justifying the violent acts of the police forces. In the media coverage of Khalil's murder, the young boy is portrayed as a gang banger and drug dealer who has failed to obey commands, while the white officer who kills him is more favorably portrayed as a good officer who has been physically threatened. Even Carlos, Starr's uncle expresses sympathy for the police officer and describes him as 'a good guy' (Thomas 95) while Khali's killing is described as an 'incident'. (Thomas 98) Accordingly, the entire system, starting from police to media has turned against the young man portraying him as a victimizer rather than a victimized. In the same context, J. E. Cobbina who confesses that, "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 167). The media, in the novel, have been more eager to raise sympathy for the police officer than to stand 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 113). For Starr and the black people who knew Khalil, the young man did not deserve to be killed. Even if he was a drug dealer, there should have been more justice especially when considering the difficult social conditions in which he was living.

In their seminal work, *Violence Against The Black Body*, Weissenger et al., describe the hardships and social obstacles faced by the young black people in their everyday life, and that lead them, eventually to become drug addicts, drug dealers, or both as a way of escape.

Having to navigate structural violence is hard enough, but for the child that grows up in constant fear and with overwhelming anxiety, death by a cop or by the criminal justice system is a sad (but quick) end to a hard life where they fought for every single skill and advancement they got. Fought to be seen as worthwhile when their primary socialization agents vacillated between addiction, abuse, and the shadow of maturity needed to be a caregiver". (Weissenger et al.77)

Nevertheless, crime as perpetrated by the young black people is not seen as the product of poverty or social injustice, rather, it is considered as a moral depravity. The killing of Khalil in the novel, and the exoneration of the police officer ignite a wave of protests and riots.

Although violent at the beginning, the demonstrations soon develop from an outbreak of discontent into a force of political activism to call out the harm done by racialized public institutions and to bring attention to police aggressiveness and violence. However, the demonstrations in the streets are also presented in the mainstream media in a biased way. The truth is distorted. The media seems to ignore the excessive use of tear gas, assault weapons and tanks against the protesters and more intent on criticizing the people in the streets. Hence, the demonstrations are condemned in the media as a source of inherent violence, and the demonstrators are described as troublemakers inciting violence against police and engaging in social unrest. Media, on the other hand minimize the importance of the brutality that sparked the protests. They refuse to see the demonstrations as the consequences of active discrimination experienced daily, and the dehumanizing trauma inflicted by the law enforcement agencies.

Nonetheless, the development of other forms of media, different from mainstream media, has made violence and oppression against Blacks visible to the world. Social media networks, for instance, make it possible to share stories, testimonies, and views about police violence and abuse against the black people in unprecedented and unfiltered ways. Taylor points out that "Where the mainstream media have typically downplayed or even ignored public claims of police corruption and abuse, the proliferation of smartphones fitted with voice and video recorders has given the general public the ability to record these incidents and share them far and wide on a variety of social media platforms." (Taylor 2016) These recordings of the beatings and killings of unarmed young people have left little space for the mainstream media to deemphasize or minimize the seriousness of the incident. In his book, *Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?*, Mumia Abu-Jamal states that, "Until people began seeing actual footage of police in action, the police and the media were able to play down reports of beatings and abuse. (Abu-Jamal 119) Accordingly, one of the most efficient tools employed by African Americans is voicing out their anger through social media by using hashtags like #blacklivesmatter, #sayhername, #nojusticenopeace, #icantbreathe. In the novel, Starr uses social media as a form of resistance to tell her side of the story. The point of her struggle has been to win justice for Khalil. She starts a blog to speak up for Khalil and she decides to give a television interview to tell people what really happened. Through these actions, Starr aims to pierce the silence around the impact of state policing on the lives of black people. Her testimony is a challenge to call for police accountability and get justice for her friend. When the police officer is acquitted, and the charges against him dismissed, Starr has no other alternative than to join the demonstrators in the street to express her outrage and demand the incrimination of the police officer for the death of her friend.

### **Black Youth Activism**

When her friend Khalil is shot in front of her for no apparent reason, Starr's girlhood world collapses. The teenager becomes conscious of many discrepancies and contradictions in her world, and starts interpreting things from a racial point of view. She starts observing the people living in Garden Heights, a neighborhood notorious for gangs and drug dealers, and thus becomes aware of the unhealthy and poor environment she has grown up in. She also starts observing the students attending the private prep school in Williamson where she is



enrolled , and where the majority of students are middle class whites. She starts also analyzing the reactions of her classmates to Khalil's death.

In fact, from the day she was enrolled in Williamson , Starr has understood that to be accepted among white people, she has to behave like them and hide any personality trait or behavior that would distinguish her from them. She has also tried to imitate her white classmates in their way of speaking, dressing , and behaving. In addition, she has tried to control her anger when provoked in order not to be segregated against.

I get out the car. For at least seven hours I don't have to talk about One- Fifteen. I don't have to think about Khalil. I just have to be normal Starr at normal Williamson and have a normal day. That means flipping the switch in my brain so I'm Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn't use slang—if a rapper would say it, she doesn't say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her “hood.” Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody will think she's the “angry black girl.” Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn't give anyone a reason to call her ghetto. ( Thomas 71)

The above mentioned extract is very informative about Starr's fear to be mocked and looked down by her white classmates. As a matter of fact, she tries to restraint herself from fitting into the 'angry black woman ' stereotype drawn by racist America at her school and avoids being called “ghetto” by her classmates. To be able to do that , Starr has to erase from her head, momentarily at least, her black background, culture , and identity .” Her status within their world is based on how effectively she distances herself from her Blackness.” (Levin, 156). When she goes back to her real world at Garden Height, she just pretends that Williamson has no effects on her. She switches to Black language and Black behavior. However, the uneasy balance between these two worlds is shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of Khalil . Starr's efforts to keep her role as a nice little black girl in a white school becomes impossible. Besides, she is heartbroken because she realizes that her white friends are uncaring about Khalil's death. They even take advantage of his death to get a day off from school. This incident makes her lose control of herself and lets 'the Garden Height Starr' come out and expresses disgusts and rage in front of everyone. "All my Williamson rules go out the door, and Starr from Garden Heights shows up. “What the fuck that got to do with it?” (Thomas 44)

Moreover, in the period waiting for the verdict, Starr has the time to understand things and to mature both psychologically and emotionally. Her parents, her friends , and the circumstances around her help her understand that even drug dealing and violence that inhabit the black community are not the fault of black people alone but of a racist society that refuses to offer them opportunities to better their conditions. “Right. Lack of opportunities,” Daddy says. “Corporate America don't bring jobs to our communities, and they damn sure ain't quick to hire us. ” ( Thomas 41) Maverick, Starr's father explains to Starr how the black people are discriminated as they do not get the same opportunities as the white people in getting a job. The young black people have accordingly , very few options to better their conditions than to engage in criminal activities. In her book , The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander explains that the imprisonment of young Black people for minor crimes has led to social stigma and economic marginalization. Facing unemployment and poverty, Black men

returning from jail are left with few options but to engage in criminal activity as a means of survival. However, black people are blamed for their own hardships and held accountable for the conditions in their neighborhoods despite their struggle to fight against poverty. Systemic police violence and public humiliations have added to their plight. Accordingly, is no coincidence that Thomas in the novel describes Khalil's struggle with poverty. The young boy is obliged to sell drugs because his grandmother, the only bread winner in the family, has been stopped from work due to her illness. The young man needs money to help with the medicine and the chemo sessions.

Starr has learnt as well that white children do not face the same threats as black ones. When she goes to her uncle's house, she emphasizes the difference between the world she comes from and the world of the white people. She also stresses the fact that children in white neighborhoods play on the sidewalks without worrying about racial issues that can cause their premature death while children in the impoverished area she comes from get shot while playing next to a fire hydrant.

I used to think the sun shone brighter out here in Uncle Carlos's neighborhood, but today it really does—there's no smoke lingering, and the air is fresher. All the houses have two stories. Kids play on the sidewalks and in the big yards. There are lemonade stands, garage sales, and lots of joggers.

Even with all that going on, it's real quiet ( Thomas )

Starr also remembers the day she invited her two white friends for a night at her house in Garden Height, and how Hailey's father did not allow his daughter to spend the night in "The Ghetto" while her friend Maya spends all the night crying because of the sound of gunshots. After Khalil's murder, all the racial incidents that happened in the past have taken another dimension .

Starr also feels guilty of not defending her friend against all that is said against him. She is furious when she hears the officer's father's fabricated story and sees that he has the capacity to influence people and, as a result, the jury that his son is the victim. She is enraged that people are more likely to believe this fabricated version just because it is told by a white man when the true victim is an unarmed and defenseless young black man. Thus, she starts a blog to speak up for Khalil, and decides to give a television interview to tell people what really happened. With such a decision, Starr assumes her role as an black young activist defending the cause of her race . "What's the point of having a voice if you're gonna be silent in those moments you shouldn't be?" (Thomas 252). She uses , accordingly, her voice to indict policing abuse and racial injustice.

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 246).

The most shocking part of the novel is the judgment given by the grand jury. Despite all the efforts and pieces of evidence produced on behalf of Khalil, the white officer is acquitted. Starr becomes aware that what happened to Khalil is what many young Black people have

been going through , and that it is a kind of cowardice not to denounce such acts. " In case after case after case, in city after city, from coast to coast, such events arise with alarming regularity, worsened by the realization that, in most cases, cops who have committed these acts, which if committed by others would constitute high crimes, will face no serious prosecution, if any prosecution at all." DO BLACK LIVE MATTERSP.25

In the novel, Starr reaches the conclusion that,

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 442- 443).

With the rising number of homicides following stops and frisks of young black people, the black community considers that there is a dysfunction in the American police system. It also considers that the American legal system has failed to protect the black Americans while the decisions of the grand jury in the trials of indicted policemen are far from being fair .

When demonstrations starts after the death of Khalil, the black people rise up not only to denounce the injustice endured by the young man, but also to denounce all the social evils rooted in the Black society and whose origins are racism. The mass protest is the only way left to the black community to escape from the invisibility they have been engulfed in ,

and make their voices heard. Mainstream media ignores the hundreds of people who are still in pain and occupy the street. It has failed to investigate the circumstances that drove them to act in the first place, they have used the street as the best place from where they can be heard. Instead they focus on one or two who are not peaceful and they wholly ignore law enforcement used against everyone.

Starr's joins the rest of the demonstrators in protesting in order to get Khalil's killer charged. Her decision to join the demonstrations in order to express her outrage and seek justice for Khalil is tinged with frustration as well as fury. Starr was drawing strength from collective power.

The novel's title is "The Hate U Give," and the first letters of each word forms the word "THUG." "The Hate U Give" is also drawn from Tupac's "THUG LIFE" tattoo, which means "the hate you give little infants fucks everybody." Tupac interprets this to suggest that what society feeds youngsters has a way of resurfacing and affecting us all. The "THUG LIFE" is depicted in the novel through the fury and riots that occur as a result of discrimination and injustice encountered by black people, particularly when Khalil is shot by police and does not receive the justice he deserves. Everyone is harmed by the hatred that the bulk of society has for him.

Sirens wail outside. The news shows three patrol cars that have been set ablaze at the police precinct, about a five-minute drive away from us. A gas station near the freeway gets looted, and the owner, this Indian man, staggers around bloody, saying he didn't have anything to do with Khalil's death. A line of cops guard the Walmart on the east side.

My neighborhood is a war zone.

although the protesters were demonstrating peacefully, a lot of weapons were used against them.

## **Conclusion**

The discriminatory disparities in treatment of young Black people at police stops in America have had dramatic consequences on the black community. The policemen who are designated to protect them have become themselves a threat to their lives. Thus, young Black people are being stopped, suspected, brutalized, and shot by white police officers for no apparent reason other than being black. In the news and popular media, these Black victims of police shootings are portrayed in the most negative and stereotypical ways. Mainstream media vilifies the slain victims by emphasizing physical characteristics that made the youth appear older, the youth's alleged resistance to police orders, and the youth's delinquent past, while white police officers who kill are rarely held accountable for their crimes.

However, the development of other forms of media, different from mainstream media, has made violence and oppression against Blacks visible to the world. The Black Lives Matter Movement has used social media networks to revisit and deconstruct these negative images of the Black people by sharing stories, testimonies, and views about police violence and abuse against the blacks in unprecedented and unfiltered ways. The call for justice for the lack youth and demand accountability for the police officers. Based on her own experience, Angie Thomas has used her protagonist Starr to make people aware of the false information

transmitted through mainstream media about the criminality of the young black people, and the desire of the black community for more justice and equity.

Angie Thomas has based her story on the incidents that followed the killing of Oscar Grant, an unarmed young black man at the hand of the police in Oakland, California in January 2010. In her different interviews, Thomas confesses that the events of the story are a reaction to her anger, hurt, and frustration at all the lies people at her school were saying about Oscar Grant. In *The Hate U Give*, Thomas Angie has put at the forefront the fight and activism of a young African American teenage girl, Starr, who has been the only witness of her black friend's killing by a white police officer. Starr is burdened with the difficult task of standing in front of a jury and defending the reputation of her friend Khalil from the accusations of drug dealing and at the same time witnessing against the police officer who shot him.

Starr is hesitant at first to speak out about what she has witnessed, fearful of retaliation against her family and concerned that she is not deserving of standing up for Khalil. Later on, she realizes that her voice is the most powerful instrument she possesses. In truth, what occurred to Khalil is something that many African Americans face on a daily basis.

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the military hardware the police brandished when protests against

Brown's death arose. With tanks and machine guns and a never-ending supply of

tear gas, rubber bullets, and swinging batons, the Ferguson police department

declared war on Black residents and anyone who stood in solidarity with them

23 David A. Harris, *Profiles in Injustice: Why Racial Profiling Cannot Work* (New York: New Press, 2003), on "the face of crime" (169).

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