

**UNVEILING RACISM IN *THE HATE U GIVE*: A JOURNEY OF
RESISTANCE AGAINST SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE AND
PREJUDICE IN ANGIE THOMAS' NARRATIVE**

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Unveiling Racism in *The Hate U Give: A Journey of Resistance Against Systemic Injustice and Prejudice in Angie Thomas' Narrative*** is a bonafide record of research done by **Arya P A** (Register Number AIAWMEG007), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas is an urban fiction of twenty-first century American literature. Even though there has been many studies and research works regarding the major themes in the novel like race, brutality, injustice, media, identity, family and community, relationships and friendships, activism, fear and silence, none of the studies have attempted to connect these concepts and bring them together under a single study. This project intends to evaluate ways of racism and its impacts on individuals with reference to racial prejudices, challenges created by racial overtones and emergence of activism under the light of systemic racism theory.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. The second chapter deals with the analysis of the novel THUG with reference to systemic racism by specially emphasizing on racial atrocities and violence. The following chapter is an extended study of systemic racism, which discusses the turbulence at school and society created by racial overtones in the novel. The fourth chapter describes how activism becomes a social emancipation tool in the novel. The final chapter is the conclusion.

American literature encompasses a diverse range of literary works that reflect the nation's social, historical and cultural evolution. The Afro-American heritage plays an important part in shaping this literary landscape. From the early narratives of slavery to contemporary voices, African American authors have made substantial contributions. The roots of Afro-American literature trace back to slave narratives, autobiographical accounts by former slaves like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs from 18th century to 19th century. These narratives provided a firsthand look into the harsh truths about enslavement.

Harlem Renaissance period (1920s-1930s) saw a flourishing of African American arts, including literature, centered in Harlem, New York. Writers like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston emerged, exploring the complexities of black identity and culture during the Great Migration. In the period of Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s) the fight for civil rights inspired a wave of literature addressing racial inequality. Authors such as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison tackled themes of racism, identity, and societal injustice.

The period of Black Arts Movement starting from 1960s to 1970s, emphasized the cultural and political aspects of literature. Amiri Baraka and Nikki Giovanni, among others, used their works to promote black pride and challenge systemic oppression. Contemporary Afro-American literature continues to evolve from 1980s to the present, with authors like Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Alice Walker addressing issues such as systemic racism, cultural identity, and the conundrums of the African American experience.

American literature, enriched by Afro-American heritage, reflects the struggles, triumphs, and diverse experiences of African Americans throughout history. Afro-American literature spans various genres, including poetry, novels, essays, and plays. Themes often revolve around the African diaspora, racism, family dynamics, and the search for identity. It has evolved from narratives of oppression to powerful expressions of cultural pride, contributing significantly to the nation's literary tapestry.

Young Adult (YA) fiction is a dynamic and popular literary genre that caters to readers typically aged between 12 and 18, although its appeal often extends to older audiences. This genre commonly features teenage protagonists on a journey of self-discovery, their growth and the experiences that navigates the complexities of adolescence. Coming-of-age narratives explore an extensive assortment of themes,

including friendship, love, family dynamics, mental health, social issues, and fantasy. This diversity allows readers to find stories that resonate with their individual experiences.

Authors often employ accessible and engaging writing styles in YA fiction, making the genre appealing to both avid and reluctant readers. The narratives are crafted to captivate and hold the attention of a young and diverse audience. While YA literature includes contemporary fiction, it also spans various genres such as fantasy, science fiction, romance, and mystery. This diversity allows readers to explore different worlds and themes within the context of YA narratives.

YA fiction frequently tackles real-world issues, providing a platform for discussions on topics like identity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. This enables young readers to engage with and reflect on relevant societal issues. It occupies a vital space in literature, offering relatable stories that resonate with the challenges and triumphs of adolescence. Its diversity, accessibility, and ability to address complex themes make YA fiction a significant and influential genre in the literary landscape.

Many successful YA novels are adapted into films or television series, contributing to the genre's widespread popularity. These adaptations often bring YA stories to a broader audience. THUG, written by Angie Thomas, is also adapted into film *The Hate U Give* in the year 2018 by George Tillman Jr. starring Amandla Sternberg as the protagonist named Starr Carter. Audrey Wells was the screenplay writer, he passed away the day preceding to this film's release.

Angie Thomas is a prominent American author born on September 20, 1988, in Jackson, Mississippi. She is celebrated for her impactful contributions to literature, particularly in addressing narratives of racial violence. Thomas gained widespread recognition with her debut novel, *The Hate U Give*, published in 2017. This work

dives into the experiences of a young African American girl, Starr Carter, who was fated to see the death of her friend who grown up with her, by the hands of police. Thomas skillfully explores themes of racial injustice, the Black Lives Matter movement and systemic oppression through Starr's compelling narrative.

Thomas wrote this in the form of a short story in acknowledgment of the passing of Oscar Grant, by police shooting, when she was in college and then some years after her graduation she extended it into a novel. The demises of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Sandra Bland and Tamir Rice pushed her to elaborate her short story into a long novel. Interviewed by Deesha Philyaw for EBONY Magazine interview Thomas said that when political representatives and other figures in the media consistently point fingers at victims for their own deaths, such as in the cases of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Tamir Rice, it was infuriating and heartbreaking. This frustration fueled her writing, as it was the only way to cope with such injustice.

Another issue that really struck a chord with her was the harsh judgement directed at Rachel Jeantel, the friend of Trayvon Martin. Certain individuals were not convinced that the young woman was presenting herself appropriately, whatever that means. She still recalls how upset she was that people were paying more attention to the way Rachel speaks than her actual words. This incident caused her to bring a young female character in this work. She said that she aimed to create a depiction of an adolescent black girl, according to their expectations, conforms to their ideal presentation.

Thomas's writing is distinguished by its raw honesty and uncompromising depiction of the challenges experienced by disadvantaged communities. Thomas' literary contributions have earned her accolades and recognition, positioning her as a

significant voice in contemporary American literature. Through her compelling storytelling, Thomas not only sheds light on the narratives of racial violence but also encourages meaningful conversations about social justice and equity. Her work continues to strike a chord with readers regardless of their age, fostering a greater understanding of the persistent issues surrounding racial inequality in the US.

Several contemporary writers, like Angie Thomas, address important social issues and contribute to the literary landscape with compelling narratives. Some of the contemporary writers of Thomas are Jason Reynolds, Nic Stone, Elizabeth Acevedo, Tomi Adeyemi, Nicola Yoon, Renee Watson and Ibi Zoboi.

Jason Reynolds, a critically acclaimed author, is a person who often tackles the themes of race, inequality, and the complexities of adolescence. His work *Long Way Down* and another work named *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* which is co-authored with Ibram X. Kendi shows this. Nic Stone explores racial profiling, systemic injustice, and repercussions of violence on young Black protagonists. He is known for novels like *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*.

Elizabeth Acevedo is an Afro-Dominican author. Acevedo addresses intersectional identities and social issues through her powerful and award-winning works, including *The Poet X* and *With the Fire on High*. Tomi Adeyemi is the author of *Legacy of Orisha* series. Adeyemi infuses West African mythology into her fantasy novels, addressing themes of oppression, power, and cultural heritage.

Nicola Yoon is famous for addressing romance and coming-of-age themes. She also delves into racial identity in works like *The Sun is Also a Star* and *Everything, Everything*. These two works are adapted into films. Renee Watson explores the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, providing a subtle depiction of her characters' experiences with novels like *Piecing Me Together*.

Ibi Zoboi combines her Haitian heritage with contemporary settings, addressing gentrification and identity. This can be seen in her works like *American Street* and *Pride*. These authors share a commitment to scrutinizing the themes of social justice, ethnicity and identity. They contribute to a rich tapestry of contemporary literature, fostering discussions on social concerns and promoting a greater understanding of diverse experiences. Each writer brings a unique perspective to the exploration of race, social justice and identity in their works.

Angie Thomas has made a significant impact with her powerful storytelling, focusing on recurrent themes that shed light on racial injustice, identity, and the African-American experience. Thomas wrote five books in total and one among those books is co-authored with many writers. The works are *The Hate U Give*, *On the Come Up*, *Concrete Rose*, *Blackout* (co-authored), and *Nic Blake and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy*.

THUG is her first novel. The novel follows Starr Carter, who witnesses the police gunfire directed at her pal Khalil. Starr struggles with the aftermath, navigating the complexities of racial dynamics and discovering her footing as an activist. The recurrent themes explored in the novel are racial injustice, systemic oppression, police violence, activism and identity. The novel was issued in the year 2017.

On the Come Up is her second work published in the year 2019. The story revolves around Bri, an emerging young rapper facing the stereotypes associated with her community. Bri uses her talent to confront societal expectations and advocate for her voice. She used socioeconomic challenges, racial profiling, the power of art, stereotypes and pursuing dreams as the major themes to establish her work.

Concrete Rose is Thomas' fourth novel which was publicized in the year 2021. This work is crafted into a prequel to THUG. This novel explores the life of Maverick

Carter, Starr's father, as a young man involved in a gang and his journey to escape the continual violence. Fatherhood, community, choices, resilience and systemic challenges are the vital themes portrayed in it.

Blackout is a YA novel co-authored by Thomas with Ashley Woodfolk, Dhonielle Clayton, Nic Stone, Nicola Yoon, and Tiffany D. Jackson, which was released in 2021. The novel tells six interconnected stories exploring Black teenage romance against the backdrop of power outage. Love and relationships, community, identity, resilience and unity becomes prominent themes in this work.

Nic Blake and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy was published in 2023. This novel is about a young girl named Nic who lives on the edge of a realm of fantasy. This is Thomas' first middle grade series where she brings together the African myths and American history. This is a fantasy action-packed novel unlike her other works.

Thomas' works have been instrumental in fostering conversations about racism, inequality, and the pursuit of justice, making her a vital voice in contemporary literature. She consistently weaves the themes of complex social landscapes, confronting systemic injustice, and striving for empowerment and self-expression into her narratives, providing readers with thought-provoking stories that encourage reflection on social issues. Her novels connect with readers of every age, fostering empathy, understanding, and critical conversations about race and social justice in contemporary society.

Chapter II

Racial atrocities and violence in *The Hate U Give*

Racial discrimination has existed in human history for a long time and it expressed itself in different ways across generations. In the United States, this problem goes all the way back to before the country was founded. Indigenous people experienced discrimination from the hands of European explorers and settlers who would often consider them less significant and want to profit from their places and resources. The transatlantic slave trade, which involved the forced transportation of Africans to the Americas for racial slavery, contributed to an increase in institutionalized racism. The notion of white supremacy and African subordination was sustained by this system.

After the abolition of slavery, racial discrimination took many forms, including segregation, Jim Crow laws, and systemic racism, which primarily targeted African Americans. Even after legal progress, such as the 1960s' civil rights movement, racial prejudice continued to play a substantial role in shaping inequality in areas like education, employment, housing, and criminal justice. Notwithstanding that there are less visible instances of bigotry in the modern day, it is still evident in concealed manners such as institutional level discrimination, implicit prejudice, and micro-aggressions.

Systemic racism theory elucidates how racism permeates societal structures, policies and practices, leading to the perpetuation of inequities and disadvantages for specific racial or ethnic groups. It underscores the notion that racial biases are embedded within institutional frameworks, irrespective of individual beliefs or intentions, thereby contributing to unequal outcomes along racial lines. This

theoretical framework serves to analyze and critique the systemic expressions of racism and mechanisms through which they operate.

Systemic racism as a concept doesn't have a single founder, but it has roots in the publications of various scholars and activists. Key figures who have contributed to the development of systemic racism theory include W.E.B. Du Bois, who explored the idea of the "color line", Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, who developed the theory of "colorblind racism", Patricia Hill Collins, who explores intersectionality and the interdependent nature of race, socioeconomic status and gender oppression, and Michelle Alexander, who discusses the "New Jim Crow" and the systemic racism inherent in the judicial system. These theorists, among others, have contributed in our comprehension of systemic racism in addition to its manifestations in society.

Systemic racism as a theory was developed by Joe R. Feagin, an American scholar in sociology and social theory who has extensively studied ethnic and gender concerns within the United States. Systemic racism theory incorporates individual, institutional, and structural modes of racism. He defines systemic racism in his book co-authored with Kimberly Ducey *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations Fourth Edition*- "Systemic racism includes a diverse assortment of racist realities: the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites; the continuing resource inequalities; the rationalizing white-racist frame; and the major institutions created to preserve white advantage and power." (Feagin and Ducey 8). He later elaborates this theory in the same book:

Systemic racism is about more than the construction of racial definitions, attitudes, and identities. It is centrally about the creation, development, and maintenance of white privilege, economic wealth, and sociopolitical power over centuries. It is about hierarchical interaction and dominance. The past and

present worlds of white-imposed racism include not only racist relations at work but also the racist relations that black Americans and other Americans of color encounter in trying to secure, among other things, adequate housing, consumer goods, and public accommodation for themselves and their families. (Feagin and Ducey 14)

Individuals of African heritage within America persist to be the targets of systematic racism and law enforcement aggression, as demonstrated by movements like Black Lives Matter. Another approach for tackling racial prejudice is to keep up the fight to end structural injustice, advance inclusion, equality, and racial consciousness. It involves accepting historical injustice, challenging rooted stereotypes, and backing any laws which promote justice and equality.

This long-established racism served as the background for Angie Thomas's influential novel, *THUG*, which examines the effects of law enforcement savagery and systemic racism on a young black protagonist and her neighborhood. *THUG* delicately depicts multiple instances of racist incidents happening in a 16-year-old black teenager named Starr Carter's life and others in her community who were forced to confront with it. The shooting of Khalil, childhood friend of Starr, by a patrol police while a normal traffic check serves as the novel's primary narrative element.

When the police patrol car approached their car Starr remembers what her father had said her at the age of twelve. Starr's parents have a serious conversation with Starr about what to do if they're stopped by the police. Despite the mother's concern that Starr is too young for such talks, the father emphasizes the importance of following police instructions, keeping hands visible, avoiding sudden movements, and communicating solely in response to being spoken to. Starr's father is known for

being outspoken, so when he advised her to remain silent, she understood the importance of heeding his words.

This shows that from an early age itself the blacks have to teach their children how to behave in front of police officers because they are blacks and blacks are always under the shadow of suspicion. She wishes someone had this conversation with Khalil. She also recalls something else her father said – if she is with somebody she had better hope that the other person doesn't have anything illegal on them, or two of them will be in trouble.

The officer asks for Khalil's license, registration and insurance proof but Khalil kept asking why he pulled them over. All this time Starr's mind is filled with her father's instructions to make sure to get a close view to the policeman's countenance, remembering his badge number would be even more helpful. She notices the number on the officer's badge – “one-fifteen”. (Thomas 26).

There occurs a dispute between Khalil and One-Fifteen. The officer orders him to exit from the car with his arms raised and stay still. Then the officer return to his patrol vehicle. Khalil moves and asks whether Starr is okay –“You okay, Starr—’ Pow!” (Thomas 27). Khalil is shot three times, causing him to stagger and eventually fall to the ground. Starr witnesses the entire event, feeling shocked and helpless as he is shot.

Khalil was unarmed but the officer's misinterpretation of the comb on Khalil's hand as a weapon leads to the police officer to shoot him. The typical notion of the whites that the blacks are harmful ones caused him to do such a brutal crime of killing an innocent one. This incident traumatized Starr because she not only lost her best friend but became a witness of her childhood friend's murder.

This incident reminds her of another fatal death of her old friend from childhood named Natasha when Starr was ten years of age. Natasha was also killed by gun shot but not by police officer. After Khalil's incident it can be seen that other police officers who comforts One-Fifteen by patting his shoulders saying "it'll be okay" (Thomas 29). This indicates that whatever happens to blacks does not affect the whites whether it is caused by them or not.

This instance can be seen under the light of racial profiling, in other words ethnic profiling which reflects the practice of treating a person unfairly who is thought to be the victim of prejudicial beliefs because of their nationality, religion, or ethnicity. Racial profiling is characterised by prejudice towards minorities, frequently by unfavourable assumptions about the intended target group. Traffic stops, excessive strip searches, and the determination of faces using surveillance equipment are all examples of racial profiling.

Racial stereotyping can be lawfully carried out in states where specific racial groups are the focus of practices, or it may really take place independently of the official activities. Although it particularly targets persons of colour, critics of racial profiling claim that it is racially biased. Advocates claim that it can be beneficial when deterring crime.

The interpretation of the shooting involving Khalil highlights how black people are unfairly targeted by police and that cops have not been held accountable for their actions. Black lives are inconsequential in a white dominated society where the rules and regulations are biased towards the whites. The incident incites anger and protests within Starr's community. It sparks discussions on race relations, justice, and the policing system's underlying power dynamics.

At first, Starr was reluctant to talk about what happened before Khalil was shot by night police. She battles the need to defend herself and her family along with the dread of reprisals from the police and her community. By the advice of Carlos, her maternal uncle, who is likewise a police officer, she decides to go to police station to tell what had happened that night. The only thing that she kept reminding in her mind when she came to police station for testimony is that to keep her hands where they can be seen, avoid sudden movements and speak only when addressed. She remembers her father's advice. The advice is to not allow them to manipulate or influence what she say while answering their queries.

The detectives wants to protect the white police officer Brian – “one-fifteen” from this racial profiling case. All the questions they asked was about Khalil who was killed, not about the one who murdered him. Starr's mother Lisa interrupts them questioning whether the focus should be on Khalil and Starr or on the cop who killed him. Wilkes seems confused, prompting Lisa to point out that they haven't questioned Starr about the cop yet. She emphasizes that Khalil isn't solely responsible for his death. When inquired about the cop, Starr clarifies that Officer One-Fifteen murdered Khalil, who was not engaged in any wrongdoing. She questions why they need a bigger picture than that.

Fear becomes a strong theme in this novel. Starr and her community live in perpetual fear because of the continual dread that their lives may be in risk due to police violence. This anxiety is heightened by the police gunfire involving Khalil, which also highlights the structural inequalities that black people experience by the actions of the authorities.

The fear can be traced when Starr expresses concern about what will happen to her once the particulars of the incident come out. Her family reassures her that they

will protect her, and they opt not to disclose her involvement to anyone. They also decide it's best not to tell Sekani about it. All the other characters are trying to give support for Starr who is traumatized by witnessing her friend's death. Starr also adds up her inner thoughts regarding fear by narrating -

I've seen it happen over and over again: a black person gets killed just for being black, and all hell breaks loose. I've tweeted RIP hashtags, reblogged pictures on Tumblr, and signed every petition out there. I always said that if I saw it happen to somebody, I would have the loudest voice, making sure the world knew what went down. Now I am that person, and I'm too afraid to speak. (Thomas 38)

She is explaining her numbness that is caused by the death of Khalil. The death was not an ordinary one, he was not carrying any weapon, however he was killed because of mere misunderstanding of the officer who gunned him down. Likewise, many other black lives were lost and she used to show her support through social medias. But when this happened in front of her eyes she became frightened and numbed.

She is under pressure to keep quiet from both within and beyond her community because she is afraid of what could happen if she speaks out against the police and how that would affect her and her family's safety. For speaking up against unjust treatment or questioning the current existing situation, characters have fear of retaliation. The anxiety that infuses Starr's community is especially strong because people are afraid for their own safety and the stability of their community when they challenge systematic racism and injustice.

Starr faces anxiety in balancing her two selves being a black girl going to a mostly white school. Fearing rejection or criticism from her peers, she battles the need to downplay or conceal aspects of her individuality in a strive to blend in. She is

conscious about her dual identity – being a black girl in Garden Heights and the Williamson Starr. In her daily life at Williamson, Starr makes a conscious effort to conform to the expectations of her principally white peers.

Starr adopts a persona devoid of slang, refraining from expressing anger openly to avoid being stereotyped as the “angry black girl” (Thomas 74). Maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanor, she suppresses any signs of frustration or resentment, prioritizing fitting in over asserting her true self. She says – “Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn’t give anyone a reason to call her ghetto. I can’t stand myself for doing it, but I do it anyway.” (Thomas 74).

Another important theme Angie Thomas discusses is “Thug Life” (Thomas 21). The idea of “Thug Life” provides THUG with a dramatic prism through which to examine the terrible effects of racism on young people, frequently driving them to extremes of savagery. “Thug Life” (Thomas 21) is a mnemonic for “The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody” (Thomas 21), which has its roots in Tupac Shakur’s ideology and emphasizes the cyclical nature of injustice and violence in society. This was first explained by Khalil in the novel when both of them escapes from the place of party where the shooting happened which killed DeVante’s brother.

Khalil played Tupac’s song while driving his car. Starr questions Khalil’s taste of music, suggesting that Tupac’s relevance is outdated. Despite this, he insists Tupac’s music remains significant even in the present day. He then prepares to share his thoughts on Tupac’s enduring impact, signaling one of his reflective moments.

“Pac said Thug Life stood for ‘The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody.’”

I raise my eyebrows. “What?”

“Listen! The Hate U—the letter U—Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody.

T-H-U-G L-I-F-E. Meaning what society give us as youth, it bites them in the ass when we wild out. Get it?” (Thomas 21)

Feelings of wrath, despair, and despondency are the outcomes of the structural injustices and prejudice that Khalil and other young Black people experience within their society. These emotions encapsulate the spirit of “Thug Life.” The mistreatment and disregard they get from authority creates a vicious circle of distrust and defiance, driving some of them to respond with hatred or abuse of their own. Later in the novel Starr discusses this with Maverick and he wants to hear what she thinks about “Thug Life”. She reiterates Khalil’s statement and clarifies that it pertains to minorities, specifically black people. Despite being the most persecuted, minorities are feared by society.

Maverick asks Starr what's with the hostility directed towards the “little infants” (Thomas 167) in current society. Starr asks whether it is racism. Starr is prompted to ponder about why Khalil and others sell drugs when Maverick asks her what she believes the “hate” to be. Starr claims that their options for making money are limited. Maverick says that black people don’t have as many possibilities since there aren’t many jobs in their neighbourhoods and their schools aren’t good. Although poor black neighbourhoods are not the source of drugs, those who carry them there generates a considerable amount of money doing so. He believes the truth that drugs come from somewhere else and they are destructive to their black neighborhood.

He then discusses two different perspectives on drugs: Brenda's, who feels dependent on them to survive, and Khalil’s, who sells drugs to survive. Brenda's struggle to find employment due to drug addiction and can’t afford rehabilitation

without a job. On the other hand, Khalil's face incarceration or difficulty finding legitimate work after selling drugs, often leading them back into the cycle of drug dealing. That's the animosity they're imparting upon them, a structure engineered to work against their interests "That's Thug Life." (Thomas 169).

He explains what "Thug Life" is by saying this. People who engage in drug use lose their employment and develop a drug dependency. Drug dealers are sentenced to jail. A lot of companies are unlikely to employ former convicts. A system that is biased against black communities is created by these kinds of reasons.

Starr realizes the fact that being silent does not bring any change to the society. Despite her father's desire to keep her safe, Starr understands that her silence isn't helping the broader community. This includes those who share their pain. She says "This is about Us, with capital U;... My silence isn't helping Us." (Thomas 170). Eventually, both Starr and her father agree that they can't remain silent.

Starr's perception of "Thug Life" is closely linked to her quest to become an advocate for justice and discover her voice. She faces the urge to live up to social norms and keep her truth to herself, knowing that doing so will simply feed the hatred and discrimination loop. Rather, she embraces her background and makes use of her position to voice opposition against police misconduct and systematic racism, emulating the attitude of defiance and tenacity seen in "Thug Life."

By examining "Thug Life," Angie Thomas highlights how critical it is to identify and deal with the underlying causes regarding social injustices. The work pushes readers to face their preconceptions and actively fight to overthrow oppressive structures because it acknowledges that everyone is eventually impacted by the injustice and hatred meted out to marginalised groups.

Chapter III

Turbulence at school and society created by racial overtones

THUG intricately weaves the complexities of racial dynamics within both school and society. It elucidates the complexities within educational institutions and broader societal constructs. Protagonist Starr Carter grapples with the intricacies of racial tension in her mainly white school environment. Here, microaggressions, stereotypes, and institutional biases pervade, profoundly affecting her and her peers of color. The narrative adeptly illustrates the profound impact of these dynamics on educational attainment, self-perception, and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, Thomas deftly portrays the pervasive influence of systemic racism across societal structures and interpersonal dynamics. The inciting incident of Khalil, Starr's childhood comrade, being fatally shot by a white patrolman serves as a catalyst for the exploration of these underlying issues. This incites public outcry and exposes entrenched racial disparities within law enforcement and the judicial system. Through Starr's perspective, readers witness the profound impact of racial discrimination on folks and communities.

The novel dives into more themes including media influence and bias, economic disparities between the white and black communities, portrayal of friendship and relationships and family and community. Starr grapples with her own identity as she navigates between Garden Heights, the black vicinity and the white private school she attends. Throughout the turmoil, Starr silently observes the injustices around her, grappling with feelings of helplessness and frustration as she struggles to discover her voice and navigate her role in the fight for justice. Her journey forces readers to face their personal biases and understand the systemic nature of racism.

In this novel, the author skillfully depicts the White's attitude towards the death of a black boy which is observable in the acts of white students from Starr's school. They are using his death as a reason to skip their classes in the name of protest. Starr's friend shows her a group text with around a hundred names, initiated by Hailey's older brother, Remy, about protesting – "Protesting today @ 1st period." (Thomas 180). Luke responds enthusiastically, but Remy clarifies the purpose of the protest. This exchange leaves Starr feeling emotionally impacted, as if her heart has been momentarily stopped. She asked –

"They're protesting for Khalil?"

"Yeah," Hailey says, all giddy and shit. "Perfect timing too. I so did not study for that English exam. This is, like, the first time Remy actually came up with a good idea to get out of class. I mean, it's kinda messed up that we're protesting a drug dealer's death, but—" (Thomas 180—181).

Hailey believes the portrayal of Khalil as a drug trafficker by the police and the media to protect officer Brian. This response reflects a failure to understand and share the feelings with the gravity of Khalil's death and the broader implications of systemic racism. Instead of confronting the uncomfortable truths exposed by Khalil's shooting, they are privileging their own comfort. Their reaction perpetuates a culture of ignorance and apathy, where marginalized voices are dismissed and injustices are conveniently ignored. Starr became disappointed and frustrated about their behaviour.

She says all the rules of Williamson High seem irrelevant when the Garden Heights Starr shows up. She encounters with Hailey and others at the protest. Hailey suggests that if Khalil was involved in drugs, it would justify his killing. Starr questions this by reminding them that they're supposed to be protesting his death.

Hailey dismisses Starr's concerns by pointing out her recent Tumblr activity. Starr becomes frustrated and decides to walk away from the conversation.

Starr feels hurt and betrayed by her friends' decision to disengage from discussions about racial injustice. She struggles with feelings of isolation and frustration, realizing that their actions perpetuate the same systemic biases and inequalities that she is fighting against. She stated her wish to confront every person she passed, likening it to a style similar to Floyd Mayweather's. While others were excited about their day off, she couldn't forget that Khalil is no longer around. The weight of Khalil's absence is a constant burden for her, a reality she faces every single day.

Starr and her boyfriend Chris sat beside Jess at lunch. They had conversations and from that conversation they got to know that she did not skip her class in the name of protest. Jess said she doesn't use dead persons as a reason to skip classes. This created a huge respect for Jess from Starr because hearing such words from a white person is different to her. Jess acts matured and understanding. Jess added that white people sometimes do foolish things. Then Seven and his girlfriend Layla joined them and Jess says to seven that their protest is against the "Get Out of Class" (Thomas 184) demonstration. Seven confirmed, stating they were protesting the protest itself. Starr wants the people surrounding her to understanding the situation and show some empathy for Khalil.

THUG explores the widespread influence of media and the presence of bias within it. The novel portrays how media outlets shape public perception, particularly regarding incidents involving race and police violence. Throughout the story, various media sources frame Khalil's shooting differently, highlighting the inherent biases present in reporting. Some outlets characterize Khalil as a thug or a criminal,

perpetuating harmful stereotypes about black individuals, while others portray him more sympathetically, emphasizing his humanity and innocence. These contrasting narratives reflect the media's power to shape public opinion and reinforce existing prejudices.

Starr happened to see TV interview of officer Brian's father when she was in Maya's house with Hailey and Maya. In that interview "One-Fifteen Sr." (Thomas 242), the father of the officer defends his son by saying that he is the victim in this incident. He says – "My son was afraid for his life," he says. "He only wanted to get home to his wife and kids." (Thomas 241). He describes how his son's life was before this case. He said his son has been with the police department for sixteen years, spending most of that time working in a neighborhood named Garden Heights, notorious for its gangs and narcotic dealers.

I tense as footage of my neighborhood, my home, is shown. It's like they picked the worst parts—the drug addicts roaming the streets, the broken-down Cedar Grove projects, gangbangers flashing signs, bodies on the sidewalks with white sheets over them.

What about Mrs. Rooks and her cakes? Or Mr. Lewis and his haircuts? Mr. Reuben?

The clinic? My family?

Me? (Thomas 242).

This is Starr's thoughts when she saw the footage of her neighbourhood. The media covered the worst aspects of Garden Heights so that they can approve One-Fifteen's fathers statements and make the audience believe him. His father continued talking that his son wanted to create a beneficial influence on the lifestyles of the residents there. This makes Starr to open up her feelings towards such words.

In a wry remark, Starr draws parallels between historical slave masters and those who believe they're helping by imposing their views on black people. She wishes persons similar to them would quit assuming that individuals like her need rescuing. One-Fifteen Sr. reminisces about his son's life before the shooting, portraying him as a good man who always aimed to assist others, much like Khalil. However, he also talks about the opportunities his son had that Khalil will never experience, such as attending college, getting married, and starting a family.

The interviewer asks officer's father regarding the nighttime of shooting. According to his father, Khalil was driving over the speed limit, and both Khalil and Starr exhibited behavior suggesting they were preparing to attack. His father asserts that Khalil threatened One-Fifteen, leading One-Fifteen to be convinced that the object in his hand was a gun. Starr feels the officer's account of the incident is inaccurate and unfairly portrays her and Khalil as menace. She expresses frustration at being depicted as superhuman and emphasize their fear as ordinary kids.

Starr's anguish intensifies as they hear Brian's father defend him, claiming Brian acted out of fear for his safety. She struggles to contain their emotions, feeling suffocated by the injustice of being portrayed as villains. When asked about Brian's life after the incident, his father describes the hardships they've faced, including threats and attacks against Brian and his family by others, both physically and verbally. The feeling of Starr can be seen in the following lines when his father said that his son simply desired to return home.

All Starr and Khalil yearned for was to reach home safely, yet they feel unjustly portrayed as villains. Starr struggles to contain her emotions, feeling overwhelmed by a sense of suffocation and grief she refuses to display openly. Despite the emotional toll inflicted upon her by the incident, Starr remains resolute

not to offer One-Fifteen or One-Fifteen Sr. the satisfaction of witnessing her tears. Their actions have wounded her deeply, extinguishing any hesitation she once harbored about standing up for justice.

Hailey's reaction after seeing this interview was unacceptable for Starr. Hailey shows concern for One-Fifteen Sr. and his family, suggesting that his son's life also matters in the situation. She looks at One-Fifteen Sr. sharing the same sympathy belongs to Ms. Rosalie and Brenda. Hailey's statement angers Starr, who feels overwhelmed by the injustice and stands up to leave, fearing they might react impulsively. Maya tries to intervene, urging her to resolve the issue with Hailey, but Starr insists they cannot speak to her after her comment.

Maya interjects them by saying that they haven't resolved the problem yet. Starr pleads with Maya to let her leave, unable to engage in conversation with Hailey after her hurtful remarks. Hailey questions Starr's reaction, asking what's the problem with acknowledging that Khalil's life matters as well. Starr responds firmly, her voice strained, expressing that Khalil's life always seems to hold less value, which is the root of the issue.

From these contrasting narratives it is reflected that the media's power to shape public opinion and reinforce existing prejudices. Moreover, the novel examines how individuals, including Starr and her household, consume and interpret media coverage of Khalil's death. Starr grapples with conflicting portrayals of her friend, realizing the impact that media bias has on shaping perceptions of victims of police violence.

It highlights the role of social media as a forum for activism and amplifying marginalized voices. Starr's decision to speak out about Khalil's shooting on social media sparks a movement and challenges the dominant media narrative, illustrating

the potential for grassroots organizing and community empowerment in the digital age. Overall, Angie Thomas underscores the importance of critically analyzing media representation and recognizing the biases inherent within it. By highlighting the practices in which media shapes public discourse and perceptions of justice and ethnicity, the novel encourages readers to question mainstream narratives.

Economic disparities are a significant theme in THUG. The novel portrays the stark contrast between Starr Carter's essentially black enclave of Garden Heights, which grapples with poverty and limited opportunities, and the wealthier, predominantly white communities where Starr attends school. This juxtaposition highlights the structural inequalities that exist within society, where accessibility to supplies and opportunities is often determined by race and socioeconomic status. The novel explores how economic insecurity intersects with racial discrimination, impacting individuals and communities in profound ways.

Riverton Hills and Garden Heights are the two neighbourhoods that clearly depicts the economic disparities in this novel. Riverton Hills represents the white neighborhood whereas Garden Heights represents the black neighborhood. Starr is from Garden Heights and her boyfriend and her uncle Carlos resides in Riverton Hills which is a wealthier neighborhood.

She makes comparison between these two places and adds some specifics about her school also.

We get off the freeway into Riverton Hills and pass all these gated neighborhoods. Uncle Carlos lives in one of them. To me, it's so weird to have a gate around a neighborhood. Seriously, are they trying to keep people out or keep people in? If somebody puts a gate around Garden Heights, it'll be a little bit of both. Our school is gated too, and the campus has new, modern buildings

with lots of windows and marigolds blooming along the walkways”

(Thomas 72)

The character ‘Khalil’ serves as a poignant example of the economic struggles faced by many in Garden Heights. His involvement in drug dealing is illustrated as a consequence of limited economic opportunities rather than a moral failing, exposing the systemic forces that drive individuals toward illegal activities in marginalized communities. DeVante reveals about how Khalil ended up in selling drugs. He explains to Starr that Khalil didn’t want to sell drugs, but felt compelled to do so because of his circumstances. Khalil's mother stole something from the King lord, who then threatened her life. To save his mother, Khalil began selling drugs to pay off her debt to King.

Starr’s family struggles to manage financial obligations, and her father’s store, a pillar of the community, faces challenges due to economic pressures and systemic barriers. Her neighbourhood is the real example for showing the life of Afro Americans who are not valued in a white dominant society. Starr says “It’s weird talking to them about Garden Heights. We never do. I’m always afraid one of them will call it ‘the ghetto.’” (Thomas 139). She also explains how she felt when she and Chris spend time in his parents’ mansion- “I try to forget that he has an entire floor as big as my house and hired help that looks like me.” (Thomas 83).

Friendship, relationships, family, and community are central themes in THUG. The novel looks into the subtleties of these connections, highlighting their importance in navigating challenges and finding strength in dealing with challenges. Starr’s friendships with Khalil, her classmates, and her boyfriend Chris are central to the story. These relationships provide support, understanding, and moments of joy amidst the turmoil of racial intolerance and community unrest. Through these friendships, the

novel illustrates the power of solidarity and allyship in combating systemic oppression.

The conflict that comes in friendship can be seen within the companionship between Starr and Hailey as she supports the whites without finding the real reasons behind Khalil's shooting. She represents the white racist community that fails to value the lives of blacks and give allegiance to the so-called dominant whites. Starr asked her why she stopped following her in Tumblr and she lies about it. Maya reveals the truth to Starr.

“That’s not why she unfollowed you. She said she didn’t wanna see that shit on her dashboard”

I figured. “That Emmett Till picture, right?”

“No. All the ‘black stuff,’ she called it. The petitions. The Black Panther pictures. That post on those four little girls who were killed in that church. The stuff about that Marcus Garvey guy. The one about those Black Panthers who were shot by the government.” (Thomas 247)

Family also plays a crucial role in Starr's life. Her relationship with her parents, siblings, and extended family members is characterized by love, loyalty, and shared values. Despite their differences and occasional conflicts, Starr's family serves as a source of strength and guidance, grounding her in her identity and values.

Furthermore, this novel underscores the relevance of community in times of crisis. Garden Heights, despite its challenges, is depicted as a close community where locals support and watch out for each other. The bonds forged within this community provide a sense of belonging and resilience despite adversity. In this the author celebrates the profound impact of friendship, relationships, family, and community. These bonds provide stability and strength for the characters, enabling them to

confront injustice, overcome challenges, and strive for positive transformations in their lives and communities.

In *THUG* Starr Carter's silent observation and sense of helplessness are poignant themes. Witnessing injustice and systemic oppression, Starr grapples with powerlessness, initially driven by fear of repercussions. As the story progresses, her silence reflects a broader struggle with racial injustice and uncertainty about creating change.

The novel portrays Starr's evolution as she finds her voice and agency amidst challenges. Engaging in activism, she overcomes helplessness and learns the strength of voicing one's thoughts. Angie Thomas delves into themes of resilience and empowerment, highlighting the significance of raising one's standpoint in the hunt for justice. The silent observation of Starr's journey emphasizes the emotional toll of oppression and the complications of activism, underscoring the importance of confronting injustice and the ramification of collective action.

Together, these elements create a turbulent backdrop against which Starr must navigate her identity, relationships, and sense of agency. The novel underscores the critical requirement for empathy, understanding, and systemic change to address the pervasive racial injustices that continue to plague both school and society. Thomas masterfully depicts the complexities of racial dynamics and the outcomes of systemic oppression on people and populace, urging readers to tackle their individual biases and advocate for a society that is more equitable and just.

Chapter IV

Activism as Social Emancipation Tool

In THUG, activism emerges as a potent tool for social emancipation, embodying the novel's central theme of voicing opposition to injustice. Starr Carter, the main character, must balance her two worlds: Garden Heights, her neighborhood and her White Prep school. She eventually becomes a force for change after seeing her friend Khalil shot by the police.

Starr's journey demonstrates the effectiveness of activism as a strategy for fighting systematic oppression and regaining agency. Fear and pressure from different communities make Starr hesitant to speak up at first, but activism gives her a potency in the end. With courage, she takes to her platform to confront the racism that permeates her society and to demand justice for Khalil.

The novel illustrates how activism can inspire collective action and solidarity. Starr's involvement in protests, media interviews, and community organizing inspires others to take part the fight against police aggression and racial discrimination. Through her activism, she sparks conversations about privilege, allyship, and the pertinence of amplifying marginalized voices.

Furthermore, THUG highlights how societal and personal liberation are intertwined. Starr experiences personal growth as she battles for justice on the outside, facing her own prejudices and finding the courage to proudly embrace who she is. Essentially, Thomas presents activism as a vehicle for social change and personal empowerment in addition to a way to confront injustice. The novel emphasizes the ongoing importance of activism in the quest for righteousness and equality for all through Starr's journey.

In *THUG*, emancipation and empowerment strategies are woven throughout the narrative, illustrating the various ways characters seek liberation from oppressive systems and find strength in their identities. One prominent strategy for emancipation is through education and awareness. Starr, the protagonist, maneuvers between a community predominantly inhabited by Black residents and her white prep school. Through her experiences in both environments, she becomes increasingly aware of the discrimination and systemic racism that permeate society.

This is evident in the novel when Starr says she should be accustomed to her two worlds converging, yet she's constantly uncertain about which version of herself to present. She can incorporate some slang and attitude, but not excessively, to avoid being labeled as a "sassy black girl" (Thomas 353). She has to be mindful of her speech and tone, striving to strike a balance so she doesn't come off as "white" (Thomas 353). This awareness empowers her to challenge stereotypes, confront bias, and educate others about the realities of being Black in America.

Another strategy for empowerment is the cultivation of community and solidarity. Starr finds support and strength within her family, particularly her parents and siblings. They encourage her to use her voice to oppose discrimination. The whole family's support is highly reflective when Starr was going to "Grand Jury Room" (Thomas 326). Her mother is really supportive and her words motivates Starr as well as the readers.

After receiving affectionate gestures and words of pride from her mother, Starr expresses disdain for the word "brave" (Thomas 327). Despite her disapproval, her mother insists on her bravery and shares a look that conveys a deep understanding and warmth, which comforts her on a profound level.

“Brave doesn’t mean you’re not scared, Starr,” she says. “It means you go on even though you’re scared. And you’re doing that.”

She leans up slightly on her tiptoes and kisses my forehead as if that makes it true. For me it kinda does.

Daddy wraps his arms around both of us. “You got this, baby girl.”

(Thomas 327)

These lines show their bonding and support they give to Starr. Her half-brother Seven also encourage her to speak up. Expressing frustration, he declares his readiness to join whatever action Starr chooses, even suggesting a potentially destructive course of action. Additionally, she connects with activists and organizers who share her commitment to fighting for change. Together, they form a supportive network that amplifies their voices and fosters collective action.

Self-expression and authenticity emerge as crucial tools for emancipation and empowerment in the novel. Starr wrestles with the expectation to adhere to societal norms and expectations and code-switch between her two worlds. However, as she grows more confident in her identity and values, she learns to embrace her authentic self and speak her truth unapologetically. This journey towards self-acceptance empowers her to advocate for justice and demand accountability from those in power.

Resistance and activism serve as powerful strategies for both emancipation and empowerment. Following the incident where Khalil was shot by a cop, Starr becomes a vocal advocate for justice. She participates in protests, speaks to the media, and engages in community organizing efforts. Through her activism, Starr not only seeks justice for Khalil but also empowers herself and others to challenge the systemic injustices that perpetuate violence and discrimination.

THUG portrays a range of emancipation and empowerment strategies, including education, community building, self-expression, and activism. Through the experiences of the characters, the novel draws attention to the relevance of resilience, solidarity, and agency in the pursuit of liberation and social change.

Activism plays a transformative role in Starr's life, guiding her journey from silence to empowerment. Initially, Starr grapples with the consequences of speaking out about Khalil's tragedy. Fearful of retaliation and torn between her Black neighborhood, Garden Heights, and her white prep school, Williamson, Starr struggles to search for her voice amidst societal pressures and expectations.

As the narrative develops, activism emerges as a guiding force, empowering Starr to confront injustice and assert her identity. Emboldened by her campaigner father, Maverick, and inspired by the memories of Khalil, Starr begins to recognize the power of her voice as a means for change. When Starr faced fear to speak up her father made her to say the "Black Panthers' Ten-point Program" (Thomas 316).

“We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressed communities.”

“Point seven.”

“We want an immediate end to police brutality,” I say, “and the murder of black people, other people of color, and oppressed people.” (Thomas 316)

She channels her frustration and sorrow into action, participating in protests, advocating for justice, and speaking out against police brutality. Ms. O'Frah is the activist she came across with, she is also her personal attorney who helped her to emerge from her shell. She and other activists conducts a protest against the injustice that Khalil faced. Starr, Seven, Chris and DeVante happens to see this and they joined the protest.

In the protest, O'frah leads a chant affirming that a hairbrush cannot be mistaken for a gun, which is joined by others. Each time Starr mutters the chant she reminds herself "Khalil drops it into the side of the door... He opens the door to ask if I'm okay. Then pow-pow—" (Thomas 403). She screams as loudly as she can, raising her fist in the air. Tears were streaming down her face.

Through activism, Starr finds solidarity and community support, both within Garden Heights and beyond. She forges connections with fellow activists, allies, and supporters who amplify her message and stand by her side for confronting against systemic racism. These relationships provide Starr with strength, encouragement, and a feeling of being accepted and included, reinforcing her commitment to the cause.

Activism serves as a spark for self-improvement and self-discovery for Starr. As she negotiates the complexities of her dual identity and confronts her own biases, Starr masters to accept her authenticity and assert herself unapologetically. She summons the bravery to challenge societal norms and expectations, refusing to be silenced or marginalized. She speaks "“Everybody wants to talk about how Khalil died,” I say. “But this isn’t about how Khalil died. It’s about the fact that he lived.”” (Thomas 407). She asserted passionately that Khalil remained living and his life was also valuable. Through this act she only wants others to realise that Khalil’s life mattered.

Activism becomes integral to Starr’s identity and purpose, shaping her beliefs, values, and actions. It empowers her to liberate from the enclosures of silence and complacency, inspiring her to advocate for justice, equality, and change in her neighborhood and beyond. Through her journey, Starr embodies the influence activism to create transformation in challenging oppression and fostering social

emancipation. She finally reveals her face in front of everybody saying she is the witness.

Starr, speaking into a bullhorn, identifies herself as the witness to Khalil's death and declares that it was unjust. She receives affirmation from the people by saying "'yeahs' and 'amens'" (Thomas 406). Starr proclaims that they weren't doing anything wrong and criticizes Officer Cruise for assuming they were criminals, stating that he is the one acting unlawfully. This shows that she is no more afraid to speak up the truth and she is no more hiding herself from the global perspective.

At the outset of THUG, Starr Carter grapples with a silence enforced by the weight of societal expectations and fear. Growing up in the Black clan of Garden Heights, she learns early on the consequences of using voice to fight injustice. This silence is not only imposed externally by the threat of retaliation but also internally, as Starr struggles with reconciling her dual identity. As a result, she often feels pressured to hide aspects of herself, including her experiences in her neighborhood, from her peers at Williamson Preparatory, where Starr is one among the few Black students.

The catalyst for Starr's transformation from passivity to voicing comes with the tragic death of her childhood pal Khalil by a white cop. Initially paralyzed by shock and fear, Starr wrests with the decision to remain silent or to speak out about what she witnessed. Kenya was mad at her for being silent after the incident because the white world is picturing Khalil as a thug and drug dealer. Kenya urges Starr to opine on television about the reality of the events that happened at the night Khalil was killed. She criticizes the media for portraying Khalil in an unfavorable manner, characterizing him as a thug, which Starr knows isn't true. She believes if Khalil were one of Starr's privileged friends, she would be defending him on television.

However, as the injustices surrounding Khalil's death become increasingly apparent, Starr realizes the significance of disrupting her silence. She recognizes that her voice has the power to bring attention on the systemic racism besides abuse of power by police plaguing her community. Starr's journey from silence to voicing is gradual but profound. She starts to discover her voice through small acts of resistance, such as speaking up in discussions at school and challenging her friends' misconceptions about race. When Hailey makes some conflicts by being a racist Starr loses her control.

In a heated exchange, Maya, Hailey, and Starr engage in a conversation about the death of Khalil. Starr expresses disbelief and refuses to accept the idea of simply "getting over" the loss Khalil. Hailey callously dismisses the gravity of the situation, rationalizing the Khalil's death due to his involvement in illicit activities. This callous remark triggers a visceral reaction from Starr, who retaliates by physically striking Hailey. The act of violence, though painful, provides a momentary sense of satisfaction for Starr. She is infuriated by Hailey's lack of empathy and understanding. Hailey's stunned reaction serves as a stark reminder of the impact of her words and the intensity of the emotions involved in the conversation.

As she becomes more involved in activism and advocacy for Khalil, Starr's voice grows stronger and more unapologetic. She refuses to be silenced by intimidation or societal expectations, determined to seek justice for her friend and her community.

Starr's transformation exemplifies the strength of standing up in defiance of injustice. Her journey from silence to voicing is not only a personal one but also a political act of resistance against systemic oppression. Through her courage and determination, Starr becomes a guiding light of hope and motivation for others,

demonstrating the capacity for transformation of discovering one's voice despite adversity.

THUG offers a poignant portrayal of the evolving lives of African American young adults and their assistance to the betterment of American society. Through the lens of protagonist Starr Carter and her peers, the novel delves into the challenges they face, their resilience, and their potential for positive change.

The novel illuminates the challenges of steering dual identities for African American youth like Starr, who straddle two worlds: their predominantly Black neighborhoods and predominantly white institutions. This duality exposes them to different cultural norms, expectations, and systemic inequalities. Starr's journey reflects the struggle to reconcile these disparate experiences while forging her own identity. This can be seen in the given lines below:

It's weird though—I'm not as hesitant to dance here as I was at Big D's party. Like I said, at Williamson I'm cool by default because I'm black. I can go out there and do a silly dance move I made up, and everyone will think it's the new thing. White people assume all black people are experts on trends and shit. There's no way in hell I'd try that at a Garden Heights party though. You make a fool of yourself one time, and that's it. Everybody in the neighborhood will know and nobody will forget.

In Garden Heights, I learn how to be dope by watching. At Williamson, I put my learned dopeness on display. I'm not even that dope, but these white kids think I am and that goes a long way in high school politics. (Thomas 289—90)

Despite facing systemic oppression and racial discrimination, the characters in THUG demonstrate remarkable resilience and agency. Through activism and community solidarity, they are questioning the established order and championing

equity. Starr's involvement in activism not only empowers her but also inspires others to join the fight against law enforcement violence and racial inequity. Despite being white her boyfriend Chris also participates in the protest along with her. Their collective efforts highlight the potential of young African Americans to effect positive change and shape the discourse on social issues.

The novel underscores the importance of education and awareness in empowering African American youth to navigate and challenge systemic injustices. Starr's experiences at her predominantly white prep school expose her to privilege and racism, prompting critical self-reflection and dialogue. Education becomes a tool for understanding, mobilizing, and effecting change, empowering young adults to advocate for themselves and their communities.

THUG offers a hopeful narrative of African American youth actively engaged in shaping a society characterized by equity and greater justice. By magnifying their voices with experiences, the novel emphasizes their resilience, agency, and potential for transformative change. Through their stories, readers are boosted to confront systemic inequalities and strive to achieve a more fair and accessible future for all.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Angie Thomas' THUG is an evocative and timely expedition of racial injustice, discrimination, and systemic oppression in contemporary America. Through protagonist Starr Carter's perspective, the novel provides a piercing critique of established systems of racism, economic inequality, police violence and media bias. It provides insight on how these factors shape the real-life encounters of marginalized groups. This invites readers to ponder up on these pressing social issues.

By weaving together themes of racism, discrimination, media influence, economic disparities, relationships, and activism, Thomas crafts a narrative that troubles readers with uncomfortable truths. Simultaneously, it empowers them to envision a future free from racism and oppression. It inspires hope and an urgent appeal to take action for positive change. Through her storytelling, Thomas encourages readers to engage critically with societal issues and work towards a world that is fairer and more balanced.

The novel is analysed through the perspective of systemic racism theory. Systemic racism is exhibited as a structural phenomenon deeply rooted in centuries of oppression and exploitation. The legacy of racism persists, shaping the life chances and outcomes of African Americans plus other marginalized groups. The consequences of systemic racism are pervasive and enduring from historical practices like redlining and housing discrimination to ongoing challenges such as unequal opportunities for education and employment access.

THUG intricately explores America's history of inequality derived from race and systemic discrimination. It unveils the enduring legacies of slavery and exclusion.

This challenges readers to realise the hard fact. Through its narrative, the book encourages reflection and dialogue on these critical issues. It urges the readers to interface with the convolutions of racial dynamics and work towards meaningful change.

The incident where Starr's childhood friend Khalil is shot by a white patrol officer serves as the fuel for the story's events. It reveals the brutal implications of racial profiling, similarly violence by police. Through Khalil's death and its aftermath, Thomas illuminates the prevalent presence of racial bias. This showcases its influence across law enforcement, media representation, and interpersonal interactions. The incident give rise to a critical examination of systemic injustice.

Media influence and bias significantly shape public perceptions and narratives surrounding racial violence incidents. Throughout the story, readers witness how Khalil's story is distorted and sensationalized by mainstream media outlets. It extends harmful stereotypes and reignforces the existing prejudices. This portrayal stresses the importance of critically examining media representations. It also highlights the need for more accurate and equitable storytelling to combat systemic biases.

The novel pushes onlookers to critically interrogate the sources of information shaping their understanding of complex social issues. It encourages them to actively seek out alternative perspectives, particularly those that center the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. This call to action induces a deeper engagement with diverse narratives and fosters empathy and awareness.

Economic disparities make up challenges for marginalized communities and it worsens the discreteness based on racial lines. Starr's experiences steering between her mainly black suburb and preeminently white private school underscore evident

disparities in approach to resources, opportunities, and social mobility. These disparities reflect broader systemic issues that keeps up racial and economic inequality. This emphasises the necessity for systemic change to address these inequities.

The novel reminds readers to confront structural barriers maintaining economic inequality and limiting the life chances of marginalized youth. It enhances the crucial need for systemic reforms to show the social issues. This asks the readers to uphold for change and endeavour to a good society which values the lives of every individual without considering their ethnicity.

Friendships, relationships, and community serve as sources of power and toughness for Starr and those around her, providing a support network amidst adversity. From her friendships with Maya and relationship with Chris to her bonds with her family and community members, Starr finds solace and support in the connections molded amongst struggle. These relationships deliberately show the importance of solidarity and collective action in bearding systemic injustices and building networks of mutual aid and empowerment.

Activism emerges as a potent force for social change and resistance against oppression. Starr's voyage of self-actualization and advocacy illustrates how she learns to harness her voice and mobilize her community to demand justice for a young boy, Khalil and challenge the status quo. Her transformation brings out the transformative power of collective action.

The novel highlights grassroots organizing, protest, and community-led initiatives for societal change and accountability. Activism becomes a mechanism for healing and empowerment centered on the standpoints of those affected by racial

violence. It strengthens the power of collective action and the requirement for individuals to enlist in advocacy. The narrative emphasizes the activism's role in addressing systemic injustices.

THUG traces a journey from silence and passivity to voicing and action, depicting individual and collective empowerment. As Starr transitions from a reluctant witness to an outspoken advocate, the novel motivates readers to defy their complicity in systemic issues, vitalises their voices for hopeful change within their groups. Through Starr's evolution, readers are inspired to engage actively in addressing societal issues and advocating for justice. The narrative deepens transformative potential of speaking out and taking action against injustice.

The novel stands as a validation to the resilience, strength, and courage of those who envision a world free from racism and oppression. It inspires readers to join the fight for justness and equality, highlighting the relevance of collective action. Through its portrayal of individuals who dare to interrogate the existing state of norms, the novel ignites a sense of hope and determination in its audience. It functions as an inspiration for all who strive for a fairer and unbiased society. This demands readers to contribute to reliable change in their own communities.

In depicting the evolving episodes of Black American lives and the growth of young adults in American society, THUG functions as a dynamic exemplification which dares to envision a world without racism and oppression. By giving prominence on the viewpoints and encounters of communities facing marginalization, the novel challenges readers to meet up ugly truth and work towards building a society which embraces equality and diversity for all.

In conclusion, THUG acts as a mighty call to arm. It hopes readers to tackle the grim truths of racism, discrimination, and systemic inequality. The novel encourages mobilization for social change through empathy, education, and activism. By honoring the legacy of those lost to racial violence, we can strive towards a future where justice, equality, and liberation are not mere ideals but lived realities for all individuals.

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