FROM SILENCE TO RESISTANCE : THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN ANGIE THOMAS'S THE HATE U GIVE.

Abstract

This studybuilds on previousresearch on Angie Thomas's*The Hate U Give*, which has been extensivelyexaminedthrough the lens of racism, police violence, and the Black Lives Matter movement;however, the connectionbetweenresidentialsegregation, racial inequalities, and the protagonist'sgradualdevelopment of criticalconsciousnessremainslessexplored. From this perspective, the studyseeks to answer the question of how racializedspaces and the experience of police brutalitycontribute to the development of African American criticalconsciousness. To this end, the analysisdraws on the principles of Critical Race Theory and African American literarycriticism to examine the relationshipsbetween race, power, space, identity, and resistance. The results of the analysis show thattheseracializedspaces are not merelybackdrops but function as mechanisms for the production of political and racial consciousness. They also show thatcriticalconsciousness in the novelgoesbeyond the mere recognition of racial injustice to become an ability to identify power structures and actagainstthem. The studythus highlights that*The Hate U Give*contributes to contemporaryAfrican American literature by making fiction a space for politicaleducation, consciousness-raising, and social critique.

Keywords : African American criticalconsciousness;residentialsegregation; racial inequalities;systemicracism; collective resistance.

DU SILENCE À LA RESISTANCE : L'EVOLUTION DE LA CONSCIENCE CRITIQUE AFRO-AMERICAINE DANS THE HATE U GIVE D'ANGIE THOMAS

Résumé

Cette étude s'inscrit dans le prolongement des travaux consacrés à *The Hate U Give* d'Angie Thomas, largement étudié sous l'angle du racisme, des violences policières et du mouvement Black Lives Matter. Toutefois, l'articulation entre ségrégation résidentielle, inégalités raciales et construction progressive de la conscience critique de la protagoniste demeure moins explorée. C'est dans cette perspective que l'étude cherche à répondre à la question de savoir comment les espaces racialisés et l'expérience de la brutalité policière contribuent au développement de la conscience critique afro-américaine. Pour ce faire, l'analyse s'appuie sur les principes de la théorie critique de la race (Critical Race Theory) et de la critique littéraire afro-américaine, afin d'examiner les rapports entre race, pouvoir, espace, identité et résistance. Les résultats de l'analyse montrent que ces espaces racialisés ne constituent pas de simples décors, mais agissent comme des mécanismes de production de la conscience politique et raciale. Ils montrent également que la conscience critique, dans le roman, dépasse la simple reconnaissance de l'injustice raciale pour devenir une capacité à identifier les structures de pouvoir et à agir contre elles. L'étude souligne ainsi que *The Hate U Give* participe à la littérature afro-américaine contemporaine en faisant de la fiction un espace d'éducation politique, de conscientisation et de critique sociale.

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Mots-clés : conscience critique afro-américaine ; ségrégation résidentielle ; inégalités raciales ; racisme systémique ; résistance collective.

Introduction

Literature has long served as a powerful medium throughwhichmarginalizedcommunitiesarticulatetheirlivedexperiences, challenge dominant ideologies, and reclaim theirhumanity. Within this tradition, African American literature has consistentlyexposed the historical and contemporary manifestations of racial oppression whileaffirming Black identity, resilience, and resistance. In recentyears, contemporaryAfrican American fiction has increasinglyengagedwith issues such as systemicracism, police brutality, racial profiling, and social inequality, reflecting the persistence of racial injustice in the United States despitesignificantlegal and politicaladvances. Among theseworks, Angie Thomas's*The Hate U Give* (2017) has emerged as a landmarknovel for itscompellingportrayal of the everydayrealities of African American youthconfronting structural racism and state violence.

Existingscholarship has long examined the novel as a literaryresponse to systemicracism, police brutality, and the Black Lives Matter movement. It has alsodemonstratedthat the novelforegrounds the vulnerability of African American youth by exposing the persistent conflictbetween Black communities and lawenforcement, whileemphasizingitseducationalsignificance in discussions of racial justice. Similarly, itcontendthat Thomas portraysinstitutionalracism as a deeplyembedded social structure and presentsactivism as an effective means of resisting racial oppression. More recently, it has expanded the scope of criticism by exploringenvironmental justice and Black ecologicalconsciousness in the novel, and confirmedthat*The Hate U Give*is a powerfulliterary intervention againstsystemicracism and an important contribution to contemporaryAfrican American literature. Nevertheless, relatively littlescholarly attention has been devoted to the interconnectedroles of residentialsegregation and the struggle for equalcitizenship in shapingAfrican American criticalconsciousness. Althoughthesetwo dimensions profoundly influence Starr Carter'spersonal and politicaldevelopment, they have rarely been examined as complementarymechanismsthroughwhich racial awarenessdevelopsintocriticalconsciousness and collective resistance. By investigatingthis relationship, the presentstudyseeks to fillthis gap and contribute to currentdebates on African American literature, race, citizenship, and spatial justice.

To investigatethis issue, the study combines Critical Race Theory (CRT) withAfrican American LiteraryCriticism. Critical Race Theory provides a conceptualframework for analyzing how residentialsegregation and discriminatorypolicingreproduce racial inequality and shape the livedexperiences of African Americans. Complementingthis perspective, African American LiteraryCriticismoffersanalyticaltools for examining the representation of racial consciousness and resistance in literarytexts.

Against this background, thisstudyseeks to answer the question of how racializedspaces and the experience of police brutalitycontribute to the development of African American

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criticalconsciousness. By foregrounding the relationship betweenspace, equalcitizenship and criticalconsciousness, thiswork examines how residentialsegregationshapes the construction of criticalconsciousness, how the pursuit of equalcitizenshipfosterspoliticalawakening, and how collective resistance enables African Americans to asserttheiragencyagainstsystemic racial inequality.

1. Literature Review

1.1. The Hate U Give and ContemporaryAfrican American Fiction

Sinceits publication in 2017, Angie Thomas's*The Hate U Give* has become one of the mostinfluentialworks of contemporaryAfrican American fiction. The novel has attractedsustainedscholarly attention because of its engagement withsystemicracism, police violence, racial identity, youthactivism, and social justice. By narrating Starr Carter'sexperience of witnessing the fatal police shooting of herchildhoodfriend Khalil, Thomas explores how structural inequalitiesshape the everydaylives of African Americans whileexposing the persistence of racial injustice in contemporary American society.

Scholars generallyagreethat the novelextends the tradition of African American protestliterature by foregrounding the experiences of Black youthwithin institutions historicallymarked by racial inequality. Itsrepresentation of police brutality, educationaldisparities, media discourse, and communityactivism has positioned*The Hate U Give* as a significantliteraryresponse to contemporarydebatessurrounding race and citizenship in the United States. Consequently, the novel has been examined not only as a work of fiction but also as an important cultural textthatcontributes to discussions of democracy, equality, and social justice.

1.2. Critical Consciousness in African American LiteraryStudies

The concept of criticalconsciousnessoccupies a central position in discussions of social transformation and resistance. Originating in Paulo Freire'seducationalphilosophy, criticalconsciousnessrefers to the process throughwhichoppressedindividualsdevelop an awareness of structural inequalities, criticallyinterprettheir social conditions, and engage in collective action to transformthem. Although Freire developedthis concept in the context of education, contemporaryliterary scholars have increasinglyemployedit to examine how fictional narratives representpoliticalawakening, identity formation, and resistance to oppression.

Within African American literarycriticism, criticalconsciousnessiscloselyconnected to the historical struggle against racial discrimination and the affirmation of Black identity. African American literaturefrequentlyportrayscharacterswhosepersonalexperiences of racismevolveintobroaderpoliticalawareness and collective resistance. Rather thanpresentingracismmerely as an individualexperience, these narratives revealits structural foundations and encourage readers to interrogatesystems of domination. From this perspective, *The Hate U Give*illustrates the progressive transformation of Starr Carter from a hesitantwitnessinto an active participant in the struggle for racial justice.

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1.3. ResidentialSegregation, Citizenship, and Racial Inequality

Residentialsegregation has long constituted one of the principal mechanismsthroughwhich racial inequality has been reproduced in the United States. Critical Race Theory demonstratesthatsegregationis not simply a geographicalphenomenon but also a structural system thatshapeseducationalopportunities, economicresources, political participation, and access to justice. The separationbetweenpredominantly Black and predominantly White neighbourhoodsreflectsbroader patterns of institutionalinequalitythat continue to influence the lives of African Americans.

In *The Hate U Give*, the contrastbetween Garden Heights and Williamson Prep symbolises theseunequal social realities. The movement of Starr Carter betweenthesetwospacesreveals the psychological and social tensions experienced by manyAfrican Americans whonegotiatedifferent racial environments. Existingscholarship has ofteninterpretedthesecontrastingspaces as representations of social inequality or racial identity. However, fewerstudies have examined how spatial segregationactivelycontributes to the gradualdevelopment of criticalconsciousness by exposing structural injustice and encouragingpolitical engagement.

The question of equalcitizenshipisequallysignificant. Althoughlegalequality has formally been establishedthrough civil rightslegislation, African Americans continue to encounterunequaltreatment in policing, education, housing, and public institutions. ContemporaryAfrican American fiction thereforerepresentscitizenship not merely as a legalstatus but as an ongoing struggle for recognition, dignity, and equal participation in democratic life. Thomas'snovelillustratesthis tension by demonstrating how Starr'spursuit of justice ultimatelybecomes a broaderdemand for full citizenship and social equality.

1.4. Research Gap

Despite the growing body of scholarshipdevoted to *The Hate U Give*, three observations emergefrom the existingliterature. First, previousstudies have primarilyfocused on police brutality, the Black Lives Matter movement, youthactivism, racial identity, and media representation. Second, whilesome scholars acknowledge the significance of residentialsegregation and educationalinequality, these issues are generallytreated as contextualelementsratherthan as central analyticalcategories. Third, relatively little attention has been devoted to the relationship betweenresidentialsegregation, contestedcitizenship, and the development of African American criticalconsciousness.

This article argues thatthesethree dimensions are intrinsicallyinterconnected. Rather thanconsideringsegregation and citizenship as separatethemes, it examines how theyjointlyshape Starr Carter'spoliticalawakening and transformherunderstanding of racial injustice into collective resistance. By combining Critical Race Theory withAfrican American LiteraryCriticism, the studyoffers a more comprehensiveexplanation of how contemporaryAfrican American fiction represents the formation of criticalconsciousnessunder conditions of systemic racial inequality. In doingso, itcontributes to ongoingdebates on race, space, citizenship, and politicalagency in contemporaryAfrican American literature.

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2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s through the pioneeringworks of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Jean Stefancic. Developedinitiallywithinlegalstudies, CRT challenges the assumptionthatracismismerely the product of individualprejudice. Instead, it argues thatracismissystemic, institutional, and deeplyembedded in the legal, political, educational, and economic structures of society. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), racismconstitutes an ordinaryfeature of American social life ratherthan an exceptionalphenomenon, shapingaccess to opportunities, justice, and citizenship.

One of the central assumptions of CRT isthat racial inequalityisreproducedthrough social institutions thatappear neutral whileperpetuatingunequal power relations. Residentialsegregation, unequaleducationalopportunities, discriminatorypolicing, and unequalaccess to public resources are thereforeunderstood as structural manifestations of systemicracismratherthanisolated social problems. CRT alsoemphasizes the importance of counter-storytelling, throughwhichmarginalizedvoices challenge dominant narratives and expose forms of racial injustice that are frequentlyignored or minimized.

Within the context of *The Hate U Give*, Critical Race Theory provides an appropriateanalyticalframework for examining how residentialsegregation, police brutality, and unequalcitizenshipshape the everydayexperiences of African Americans. The opposition between Garden Heights and Williamson Prepreflects spatial manifestations of structural inequality, whileKhalil'sdeathrevealsinstitutional practices thatcriminalize Black bodies and reinforce racial stereotypes. Through Starr Carter'stestimony, the novelconstructs a counter-narrative thatcontests dominant representations of race and advocates social justice.

2.2. Theory of Critical Consciousness

While Critical Race Theory explains the structural dimensions of racial oppression, Paulo Freire's Theory of Critical Consciousnessprovides a framework for understanding how oppressedindividualsbecomeaware of these structures and develop the capacity to challenge them. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Freire conceptualizescriticalconsciousness (conscientização) as the process throughwhichindividuals move beyond passive acceptance of social injustice towardcriticalreflection and transformative action.

Critical consciousnessinvolvesthreeinterconnected dimensions. The first iscriticalreflection, wherebyindividualsrecognizethat social inequalities are produced by historical and institutional forces ratherthanpersonalfailure. The second ispoliticalefficacy, whichrefers to the beliefthat collective action can transformunjust social conditions. The thirdiscritical action, throughwhichawarenessistranslatedinto social engagement, resistance, and political participation.

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Contemporary scholars such as Shawn Ginwright have furtherarguedthatcriticalconsciousness enables marginalizedyouth to transformexperiences of oppression intocivicengagement and social activism. Rather thanremainingvictims of structural inequality, young people become active participants in movementsseeking justice and social change.

This theoretical perspective isparticularly relevant to Starr Carter'sdevelopmentthroughout*The Hate U Give*. Initially reluctant to speakpublicly about Khalil'sdeath, Starr progressivelyrecognizes the structural nature of racism, questions dominant narratives surrounding police violence, and ultimately assumes a public role in demanding justice. Her transformation illustrates the progressive movementfrom silence to criticalreflection and finally to collective political action.

3. ResidentialSegregation and the Construction of Critical Consciousness

Residentialsegregationconstitutes one of the mostsignificant manifestations of structural racism in *The Hate U Give*. Rather thanfunctioningmerely as a geographical division, itorganizesunequalaccess to education, security, economicopportunities, and social recognition. Through the opposition between Garden Heights and Williamson Prep, Angie Thomas illustrates how racializedspacesproduce distinct social experiences and graduallyshape Starr Carter'scriticalconsciousness. From the perspective of Critical Race Theory, thesespaces are not neutral settings but institutional expressions of systemicracismthatregulate power relations and reinforce racial inequality. Starr'smovementbetweenthesetwoenvironmentsthereforebecomes the catalyst for herpoliticalawakening.

3.1. Garden Heightsas aRacialized Space of Identity and Collective Memory

Garden Heightsinitiallyappears as a marginalizedurbanneighborhoodcharacterized by poverty, gang violence, and limitedeconomicopportunities. However, Thomas deliberatelyavoidsreducingthiscommunity to negativestereotypes. Instead, sheportraysit as a cultural spacewheresolidarity, familyrelationships, and sharedhistoricalexperiencesreinforceAfrican American identity.

Starr'sattachment to Garden Heightsisprimarilyexpressedthroughherinterpersonalrelationships. Her friendshipwith Kenya, neighborhoodcelebrations, and everyday interactions illustrate the community'scapacity to preserve cultural continuitydespite structural deprivation. As Starr observes, “Kenya is about the onlyperson I hang out with in Garden Heights” (Thomas, 2017, p. 13). This seeminglyordinary statement reveals a profoundsense of belongingthatextendsbeyondfriendship to encompass a shared cultural identity. Garden Heightsfunctions not simply as a residential area but as a social space in whichAfrican American identityiscontinuouslyreproducedthrough collective memory and communal practices.

Thomas furtherreinforcesthisrepresentationthroughscenes of communal gatheringssuch as Big D's party. Althoughinterpersonal tensions remain visible, communal celebrations encourage coexistence and solidarityratherthan confrontation. Theseepisodessuggestthat cultural practices constitute important mechanismsthroughwhichmarginalizedcommunitiesmaintain

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social cohesiondespite structural inequalities. Such representationsresonatewith Bell Hooks' understanding of Black communities as spaces of healing, care, and resistance, where love and collective responsibilityprovideemotionalresources for confronting oppression. Likewise, Paulo Freire's conception of dialogue as the foundation of criticalconsciousnesshelpsexplain how sharedexperienceswithin Garden Heightsnurturereflectionratherthanresignation.

Nevertheless, Thomas refuses to idealize Garden Heights. Alongsidesolidarity, shedepicts gang violence, territorial conflicts, and insecurity as consequences of long-standing structural neglect. Starr's observation that Garden Heights has become "a battlefield" because of territorial wars (Thomas, 2017, p. 24) demonstratesthat violence should not beinterpreted as an inherentcharacteristic of Black communities but as a symptom of systemic exclusion. From a Critical Race Theory perspective, these conditions reflectinstitutionalinequalitiesthat have historicallyconcentratedpoverty and limitedopportunitieswithinpredominantly Black neighborhoods. By juxtaposingresiliencewith structural deprivation, Thomas challenges deficit-based narratives and encourages readers to recognize the broaderpolitical forces shapingurban life.

3.2. Williamson Prep and the Experience of RacializedDifference

If Garden Heightsrepresents cultural belonging, Williamson Prepsymbolizesaccess to educationalprivilegewithin a predominantly White social environment. Starr'sattendance at thisschool exposes her to a different system of expectations in which acceptance oftendependsuponminimizing visible expressions of Black identity.

Thomas demonstratesthat racial inequalityisreproduced not onlythroughmaterialdisparities but alsothrougheveryday interactions. Starr repeatedly modifies herlanguage, behaviour, and appearance to avoidconfirming racial stereotypes. This strategy of self-regulationillustrates the psychologicalconsequences of navigatingspacesgoverned by White normative expectations. Rather than feeling fullyaccepted, Starr occupies a position of conditional inclusion.

The limitednumber of Black studentsfurther intensifies thisexperience. Starr ironicallyremarksthatbecause Ryan is the onlyother Black student in her grade, everyone assumes theyshouldbecome a couple "to preserve the blackness" of the school (Thomas, 2017, p. 79). Humorthereforebecomes a rhetoricalstrategythroughwhich Thomas exposes tokenism and the reduction of individualidentity to racial categorization. Williamson Prepthusillustrates how institutionalspaces can reproduce symbolic forms of exclusion evenwhentheyappearsocially inclusive.

3.3. NegotiatingTwo Worlds: From Double Identity to Critical Reflection

The opposition between Garden Heights and Williamson Prep places Starr in a permanent condition of negotiation. Sheissimultaneouslycriticized in Garden Heights for attending a "White school" and stereotyped in Williamson Prepbecause of herBlackness. Her reaction,"Not even five minutes ago, I wasstuck-up because I go to Williamson Prep?" (Thomas, 2017, p. 15),reveals the contradictory expectations imposeduponAfrican American youthwho move betweenracially differentiated social worlds.

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Rather thaninterpretingthese tensions solely as an identitycrisis, the presentstudy argues thattheyconstitute the first stage in the development of criticalconsciousness. Freire maintainsthatcriticalconsciousnessbeginswhenindividualsrecognizethatpersonalconflictsoriginate in structural social contradictions ratherthanindividualshortcomings. Starr graduallyreachesthisrealization as sheunderstandsthatneither Garden Heightsnor Williamson Prep definesheridentitycompletely. Instead, herexperiencesreveal the operation of systemicracismacrossbothenvironments.

This process corresponds closely to Freire's notion of criticalreflection, throughwhichoppressedindividualsbeginquestioning the social structures responsible for inequality. Simultaneously, African American LiteraryCriticismemphasizesthatnegotiating multiple cultural spaces has long been central to Black literaryrepresentations of identity formation. Starr'smovementbetween Garden Heights and Williamson Prepthereforeillustrates not merely a personaldilemma but a broaderAfrican American experience of navigatingracialized institutions whilepreserving cultural identity.

3.4. ResidentialSegregation as the Foundation of Critical Consciousness

*The Hate U Give*demonstratesthatresidentialsegregationextends far beyondphysicalseparation. It structures educationalopportunities, shapesinterpersonalrelationships, influences identity formation, and determinesaccess to social recognition. By movingbetween Garden Heights and Williamson Prep, Starr progressivelyrecognizesthat racial inequalityisinstitutionalratherthanaccidental. Her growingawarenesstransformseverydayexperiences of exclusion intocriticalreflection on the structural nature of racism.

Consequently, residentialsegregationbecomes the starting point of Starr Carter'spoliticaleducation. Through the interaction of contrasting spatial environments, Thomas illustrates the transition fromlivedexperience to criticalconsciousness, therebypreparing the narrative movementtowardpoliticalawakening and collective resistancedeveloped in the following sections of thisstudy.

4. Equal Citizenship and PoliticalAwakening

The development of criticalconsciousness in *The Hate U Give*reaches a decisive stage with the fatal shooting of Khalil Harris. While residentialsegregation enables Starr Carter to recognize the structural nature of racial inequality, Khalil'sdeathcompelsher to confront a more fundamental question : whetherAfrican Americans are genuinelyrecognized as equalcitizenswithin American democracy. Through thisepisode, Angie Thomas demonstratesthatcitizenshipextendsbeyondlegalstatus;italso entails equal protection under the law, recognition of one'shumanity, and access to justice. By exposing the discrepancybetweenconstitutionalideals and the livedexperiences of African Americans, the novelportrayspoliticalawakening as the inevitableconsequence of systemic injustice.

4.1. Khalil'sDeath and the Denial of Equal Citizenship

Khalil's shooting constitutes the central eventthroughwhichAngie Thomas interrogates the meaning of citizenship in contemporary America. Although Khalil is an unarmed teenager

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stopped during a routine police encounter, hisdeathisrapidlyjustifiedthrough racial stereotypesratherthan objective evidence. Public attention shifts from the officer's actions to Khalil'sallegedinvolvement in drugdealing, therebytransforming the victiminto the accused. This narrative strategyillustrates one of the principal assumptions of Critical Race Theory : racial inequalityisreproducedthroughinstitutional practices thatnormalize the criminalization of Black bodies.

Angie Thomas emphasizesthat the legal system does not evaluate Khalil as an individualcitizendeservingequal protection but throughpreconceivedassumptionsassociatedwith Black masculinity. Starr immediatelyrecognizesthis injustice whensherealizesthatmanyobservers are more concernedwithdefending the police officerthaninvestigating the circumstances of the shooting. Consequently, Khalil'sdeathsymbolizes the denial of substantive citizenship, revealing the persistent gap between the democraticprinciplesproclaimed by the American Constitution and theirunequal application in practice.

This representationechoes the historicalexperiences of African Americans whoseencounterswithlawenforcement have frequentlyreflectedinstitutional discrimination ratherthan impartial justice. Rather thanportraying police brutality as an isolated incident, Angie Thomas situatesKhalil'sdeathwithin a broader pattern of systemicracismthat continues to shape the relationship betweenAfrican American communities and state institutions.

4.2. From Silence to Voice : PoliticalAwakening Through Testimony

In *The Hate U Give*, Starr attempts to distance herselffrom the shooting. Fear, trauma, and uncertaintyprevent herfrompubliclyrecountingwhatshewitnessed. However, as media narratives increasinglydistortKhalil'sidentity, silence becomesmorallyunbearable. Starr graduallyrealizesthatremaining silent contributes to the perpetuation of injustice.

Her testimonythereforerepresents a decisiveturning point in the development of hercriticalconsciousness. Paulo Freire arguesthatliberationbeginswhenoppressedindividualstransformlivedexperienceintocritical speech capable of challenging dominant narratives. Starr'sdecision to testifybefore the grand jury exemplifies this transition from passive observation to politicalagency. Speakingpublicly no longer serves merely to defendKhalil'sreputation;itbecomes an act of resistanceagainstinstitutionalracism.

Thomas furtherreinforcesthis transformation by contrasting official discoursewithStarr'slivedexperience. Whereasinstitutional narratives depict Khalil as a criminal suspect, Starr reconstructshishumanitythroughpersonal memory, friendship, and sharedhistory. Her testimonythusfunctions as a form of counter-storytelling, a central concept within Critical Race Theory that enables marginalizedcommunities to contest dominant representations and reclaim theirownvoices.

4.3. Justice, Activism, and the Emergence of Political Agency

Starr'spoliticalawakeningisfurtherstrengthenedthroughher interaction with April Ofrah and the activistorganization Just Us for Justice. April encourages Starr to

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understandthatindividualsufferingacquirespoliticalsignificancewhenconnected to collective strugglesagainstsystemic oppression. Through this relationship, Angie Thomas illustrates how politicaleducationoftenemergesfromcommunity engagement ratherthanformal institutions.

The slogan "Justice for Khalil" symbolizesthis transformation fromprivate grief to public activism. Demonstrations, community meetings, and peacefulprotests challenge the legitimacyof institutional narratives thatseek to justify police violence. Rather thanrepresentingspontaneousemotionalreactions, these collective actions articulate a broaderdemand for equalcitizenship, accountability, and democratic inclusion.

Significantly, Angie Thomas portraysactivism as bothpersonal and communal. Starr's participation in public demonstrationsreflectshergrowing recognition that racial injustice cannotbeovercomethroughindividualresiliencealone. Instead, meaningful social change requires collective action capable of confrontinginstitutional discrimination. Her developmentthereforeillustratesPaulo Freire'sunderstanding of critical action (praxis), wherebyreflectionbecomesinseparablefrompolitical engagement.

4.4. Equal Citizenship as Democratic Recognition

Beyond the demand for legalaccountability, *The Hate U Give* invites readers to reconsider the meaning of citizenshipitself. Throughout the novel, African Americans repeatedlyencounter institutions that fail to guaranteeequaltreatmentdespiteconstitutional promises of liberty and justice. Angie Thomas consequentlydistinguishesbetweenformalcitizenship, whichgrantslegalmembership in the nation, and substantive citizenship, whichrequiresequaldignity, recognition, and protection.

Starr'spoliticalawakeningultimatelyconsists in recognizingthis distinction. Her struggle is no longer confined to obtaining justice for Khalil alone;itevolvesinto a broader challenge to systemic structures that continue to denyAfrican Americans full participation in democratic life. In thissense, heractivismreflects the transition fromindividualconsciousness to collective politicalresponsibility.

Consequently, *The Hate U Give*portraysequalcitizenship not as an alreadyachieveddemocratic reality but as an ongoingpoliticalprojectrequiringcontinuousresistanceagainst structural racism. By linkingKhalil'sdeath to Starr's progressive transformation into a public advocate for justice, Angie Thomas demonstratesthatpoliticalawakeningconstitutes the indispensable bridge betweencriticalconsciousness and collective resistance. This progression prepares the final stage of the novel'semancipatory vision, namely the emergence of African American collective agency.

5. Collective Resistance and African American Agency

Racism and systemic discrimination not onlyundermine the dignity of African Americans but alsogenerateforms of resistancethatextendbeyond the individual. Althoughpoliticalconsciousnessoftenbeginswithpersonalexperiences of injustice, itgraduallydevelopsinto collective agencythrough the family, the community, and organized social movements. In *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas demonstratesthatresistanceissustained by intergenerationaleducation, communal solidarity, and the preservation of collective

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memory. The struggle for dignitythereforebecomesboth an individual and a collective endeavor.

5.1. From IndividualPoliticalConsciousness to Family and Community Resistance

The first stage of collective resistanceemergeswithin the family, wherepoliticalconsciousnessistransmittedfrom one generation to another. Following Khalil'sdeath, Maverick prepares Starr to confrontinstitutional intimidation during her police interview. He advisesher, "Don't bescared 'bout Monday. Tell the cops the truth, and don't let them put words in yourmouth. God gave you a brain. You don'tneedtheirs (...) Don't let themmakeyouthinkotherwise" (Thomas, 2017, p. 65). The repeatedimperativeforms, "Don't bescared," "Tell the cops," and "Don't let them", highlighthisdetermination to cultivateintellectualautonomy and moral courage. Rather thanallowinghisdaughter to internalizefear, Maverick teachesherthattelling the truthconstitutes an act of resistanceagainstinstitutional manipulation.

This politicaleducationisreinforced by historicalconsciousness. Starr explains that, "He agreeswith the Nation of Islam on somestuff, but hecan'tget over the factthattheymay have killed Malcolm X" (Thomas, 2017, p. 39). Maverick'sattachment to Malcolm X illustrates how historical memory continues to shapeAfrican American politicalidentity. Hisrefusal to normalize racial violence enables him to transmit to hischildren an awareness of the continuitybetweenpast and presentstrugglesagainstracism.

Family educationalsotakes the form of explicit political instruction. Starr and herbrotherslearn the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program in the samewayother American childrenmemorize the Pledge of Allegiance. The declaration, "Wewantfreedom. Wewant the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressedcommunities. Wewant an immediate end to police brutality and the murder of black people" (Thomas, 2017, p. 320), expresses collective aspirations ratherthanindividualdemands. The anaphora "Wewant" transformspersonalgrievancesinto the voice of an entirecommunityseeking justice, self-determination, and equality. Starr further observes that, "Daddy believes in Black Jesus but follows the Black Panthers Ten-Point Program more than the Ten Commandments" (Thomas, 2017, p. 39), suggestingthatpoliticalconsciousnessoccupies a central place withinfamilyeducation.

The political values cultivated in the householdgraduallyextend to the widercommunity. Khalil'sfuneralbecomes a spacewhereprivatemourningevolvesinto collective protest. Starr notices that, "There are more people out herethan in the church, holding posters withKhalil's face on them and signsthatsay 'Justice for Khalil'. Hisclassmates have posters saying 'Am I next?' and 'Enough Is Enough'" (Thomas, 2017, p. 138). The slogan "Am I next?" reflects the sharedanxietyexperienced by youngAfrican Americans confrontedwithrecurring police violence, whereas "Enough Is Enough" expresses collective frustration towardsystemic injustice. The funeralthereforebecomes a public denunciation of racismratherthanmerely a religiousceremony.

Community solidarityreachesitshighest expression during the demonstrationsthat follow Khalil'sdeath. Starr recounts, "There are at least a hundred people gathered on Magnolia

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Avenue. They chant for justice and holdsigns, fists high in the air for black power" (Thomas, 2017, p. 141). The raisedfistsymbolizesunity, dignity, and resistanceagainst racial oppression. Through chants, slogans, and collective occupation of public space, individualexperiences of discrimination are transformedintoorganizedcommunity action. Angie Thomas thusdemonstratesthatpoliticalconsciousness, initiallycultivatedwithin the family, ultimatelybecomes collective resistancethrough communal solidarity.

5.2. Social Movements, Cultural Memory and the Construction of Collective Agency

Beyond communitymobilization, African American resistanceisstrengthenedthroughorganizedactivism and broader social movements. Contemporary communication technologies play a crucial role in this process by facilitating the dissemination of information and the coordination of collective action. In *The Hate U Give*, Maverick frequently uses social media to denounce police harassmentwhilecelebratinghischildren'sachievements. Hispostsillustrate how digital platforms simultaneouslypreserve collective memory, expose racial injustice, and reinforcecommunityresiliencedespite persistent discrimination.

Organizedactivismisfurtherembodied by April Ofrah, leader of Just Us for Justice. As both an attorney and an activist, she combines legaladvocacywith media strategy. She explains, "The case is about to gain national media attention (...) but I don'twantit to be at herexpense. Besidesbeing an advocate, I'malso an attorney" (Thomas, 2017, p. 139). Her intervention illustratesthatcontemporary social movementsrely not only on public demonstrations but also on legal expertise, ethicalresponsibility, and strategic communication. Consequently, collective resistanceextendsbeyondspontaneousprotest to becomestructuredpolitical action.

Collective agencyisequallysustainedthrough the preservation of historical memory. In Maverick'sgrocery store, photographs of prominentAfrican American figures remindvisitors of previousgenerations' struggles. Starr observesthat the walls display "photographs of civil rights leaders... There's a picture of Dr. King" (Thomas, 2017, p. 52). Thesevisualrepresentations function as symbolic remindersthatpresent-dayactivismisrooted in the long history of the Civil RightsMovement. They preserve collective memory whileinspiringyoungergenerations to continue the struggle for equality.

Literary narratives likewisecontribute to the construction of collective identity. In Black, White, and Jewish, Rebecca Walker rejectsstigmatizingdefinitions of heridentity by affirming, "I am not a bastard... I am a Movementchild. My parents tell me I can beanything I want" (Walker, 2001, p. 24). Her statement demonstrates how family narratives and collective history replace shamewith pride and self-confidence. Similarly, Ralph Ellison'snarratordeclares, "I'm not ashamed of mygrandparents for having been slaves. I'monlyashamed of myself for having at one time been ashamed" (Ellison, 1989, p. 15). This ideological reversal transformsslaveryfrom a source of inheritedshameinto a source of historicalconsciousness and collective dignity.

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The affirmation of Black identityalsoresonateswith Marcus Garvey'sphilosophy of Black Nationalism. Through the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Garvey encouraged people of Africandescent to celebratetheirAfricanheritage and reject racial inferiority. Hisphilosophyfinds a literaryecho in *The Hate U Give*throughStarr's description of Cameron'sgrandmother as "an Africanqueen" (Thomas, 2017, p. 69). This symbolic representationembodies cultural pride, historicalcontinuity, and resistance to racial domination.

Finally, spiritualityconstitutesanother dimension of African American collective agency. Maverick'sprayer to "Black Jesus","Black Jesuskeepthemsafe... Givethem the wisdomtheyneed to betheirown people" (Thomas, 2017, p. 74),combinesreligiousfaithwithpoliticalconsciousness. Rather thanencouraging passive submission, thisprayerpromotesdiscernment, autonomy, and perseverance in the face of systemicracism. Spiritual beliefthereforecomplementspoliticalactivism by providingemotionalstrength and reinforcing communal resilience.

Overall, *The Hate U Give*demonstratesthatAfrican American agencyevolvesthrough successive stages. Politicalconsciousness first developswithin the family, expands throughcommunitysolidarity, and isultimatelyconsolidated by organizedactivism, cultural memory, racial pride, and spirituality. Angie Thomas thusportrays collective resistance as a dynamic social process throughwhichAfrican Americans transformindividualexperiences of oppression intoenduringstruggles for dignity, justice, and equality.

Conclusion

This studydemonstratesthat Angie Thomas's*The Hate U Give*portrays the development of African American criticalconsciousnessthrough the interconnectedexperiences of residentialsegregation and the struggle for equalcitizenship. The contrastbetween Garden Heights and Williamson Prepreveals how spatial and social inequalitiesshape Starr Carter'sunderstanding of race, identity, and belonging. Moving betweenthesetwoworlds enables her to recognize the structural nature of racism and the complexities of African American identity.

Furthermore, the workshows that police brutality, discrimination, and the denial of equalrightsbecomecatalysts for resistance and self-awareness. Through family support, communitysolidarity, activism, and the influence of historicalmovementssuch as the Black Panthers, African Americans transform grief and oppression into collective action and demands for justice. Starr'sevolutionfrom silence to outspokenactivismsymbolizes the emergence of criticalconsciousness and the affirmation of dignity, equality, and citizenship.

Ultimately, the analysisillustratesthatcriticalconsciousnessis not only an individualawakening but also a collective process rooted in history, culture, and community. By exposingsystemicracismwhilecelebratingresilience and solidarity, the workdemonstrates the power of literature to challenge oppression, promote social justice, and encourage social transformation. ItthereforereaffirmsAfrican American literature'senduring role as a vehicle for resistance, empowerment, and the pursuit of a more equitable society.

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