

**STRUCTURAL RACISM IN ANGIE THOMAS'S NOVEL  
*THE HATE U GIVE* (2017)**

**THESIS**

*Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain Strata One (S1)  
Degree in English Department*



**By:**  
**Geovani De Silva Ananda**  
**15019047/2015**

**Advisor:**  
**Dr. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A.**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS  
UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG  
2020**

## HALAMAN PERSETUJUAN SKRIPSI

Judul : Structural Racism in Angie Thomas's Novel *The Hate U Give* (2017)  
Nama : Geovani De Silva Ananda  
NIM : 15019047/2015  
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris  
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, Februari 2020

Disetujui oleh,

Pembimbing



Dr. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A.  
NIP. 19791016.200212.1.008

Mengetahui  
Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris



Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D.  
NIP. 197105251.998022.002

### HALAMAN PENGESAHAN LULUS UJIAN SKRIPSI

Dinyatakan lulus setelah dipertahankan di depan Tim Penguji Skripsi  
Program Studi Sastra Inggris Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Padang  
dengan judul

Structural Racism in Angie Thomas's Novel *The Hate U Give* (2017)

Nama : Geovani De Silva Ananda

NIM : 15019047/2015

Program Studi : Sastra Inggris

Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, Februari 2020

#### Tim Penguji

#### Tanda Tangan

1. Ketua : Desvahan Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D :

2. Sekretaris : Leni Marlina, S.S., M.A. :

3. Anggota : Dr. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A.



UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG  
FAKULTAS BAHASA DAN SENI  
**JURUSAN BAHASA DAN SASTRA INGGRIS**  
Jl. Belibis, Air Tawar Barat, Kampus Selatan FBS UNP, Padang, Telp/Fax: (0751) 447347

**SURAT PERNYATAAN TIDAK PLAGIAT**

Saya yang bertandatangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Geovani De Silva Ananda  
NIM/TM : 15019047/2015  
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris  
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas : FBS UNP

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Diketahui oleh,

Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D.  
NIP. 197105251.998022.002

Saya yang menyatakan,



Geovani De Silva Ananda  
15019047/2015

## ABSTRACT

**Ananda, Geovani. 2020. Structural Racism in *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas.**

**Advisor: Dr. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S, M.A**

This thesis discusses a novel entitled *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas. The issue raises structured racism against African-Americans after the existence of human rights and to find out to what extent the implied author contributed to expressing the issue. This analysis uses Gramsci's Hegemony theory, interpretation of the text and context to dissect the contents of the novel. The results of the analysis shows that structured racism can be seen in two forms: the media and institutions. First of the two is the media as a stereotype circulator and the last of the two the institution discriminates against African-Americans.

**Keywords:** *Structured racism; African-American; stereotype; discrimination*

## ABSTRAK

**Ananda, Geovani. 2020. Structural Racism in *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas.**

**Advisor: Dr. Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S, M.A**

Skripsi ini membahas sebuah novel yang berjudul *The Hate U Give* (2017) karya Angie Thomas. Isu yang diangkat adalah rasisme terstruktur terhadap Afrika Amerika setelah adanya hak asasi manusia dan untuk mengetahui sejauh mana *implied author* berkontribusi dalam mengungkapkan isu tersebut. Analisis ini menggunakan teori Hegemoni dari Gramsci, interpretasi teks dan konteks untuk membedah isi novel. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa rasisme yang terstruktur dilihat dari dua bentuk: media dan institusi. Pertama, media sebagai penyebar stereotip. Kedua, institusi mendiskriminasikan Afrika Amerika.

**Kata kunci:** *rasisme terstruktur; Afrika Amerika; stereotip; diskriminasi*

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Dad, I made this for you.

To the moon and never back.

Padang, 26 January 2020

GV

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<sup>1</sup> Ghosting / Ghosted is a condition when people suddenly disappears (Quora).

*Peace be upon you.*



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Since the early 19th century, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, was an important figure who sought to abolish slavery. He initiated the 13th Amendment to the U.S Constitution: Abolition of Slavery on January 31, 1865, and then continued with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. However, racial discrimination against African-Americans continued.

In *Garis Besar Sejarah Amerika* (2004), it discusses that the institution of slavery in a way that imposed the conditions as normal and simply an economic strategy for the wealthy southern landowners. The Africans-Americans were mentioned as new source of manpower at that time as they are generally purchased as a property with low to almost non-existent wage.

The dehumanization of Africa began with large-scale abductions of African to the new world, America. Their travel notes can be seen in *The Middle Passage* (1962) by V. S. Naipaul. The Middle Passage itself is the route traveled by the slaves as they were transported from Africa to the Amerika. This trip takes 8-10 weeks. The slaves were trapped in a cramped space on the ship without toilet and minimal rations. The ship itself was infested with diseases carried by rats and fleas but treatment only available to the crews, thus many of the slaves died during the transport. As soon as they

arrived, the slaves were faced with a variety of cultures as their master slowly integrate them to their new living environment, stated in *The Middle Passage*:

The Negro in the New World was, until recently, unwilling to look at his past. It seemed to him natural that he should be in the West Indies, that he should speak French or English or Dutch, dress in the European manner or adaptation of it, and share the European's religion and food.

(P.61)

The quotation above shows the result of their integration from what they watched and heard every day. They have been told to dress and speak in colonial ways which is how they should behave. They accepted it and later becomes an imitation phenomenon. Most of the slaves that were captured were a former tribe that lost in a tribe war. Their defeat contributes to the factor why the slaves are willing to throw their heritage away and adopting a new identity.

After the declaration of human rights, forms of slavery still continues. Slavery today changes into human trafficking, prostitution, forced labor, bonded labor, and child labor. This modern slavery caused by poverty and education. As long as the problem of poverty and education is not resolved, slavery will continue in metaphorical forms of human exploitation. However, equal distribution of education and equal employment opportunities are hard to regulate. Poverty caused low education level because low minimum wage creates a chain reaction, making education not affordable to certain

demographic of the masses. The point mentioned above also applied to African-American because they experience the hardship two-fold or three-fold due to poverty and racial discrimination.

This study examines the issue of structural racism. The case portrayed in Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give* (2017). This novel is important to be analyzed because it proves that racism still exists in America.

## **1.2 Structural Racism**

Racism is an ideology of racial domination. It involves the hierarchical and socially consequential valuation of racial groups. Racism dominates and provides a social rationale and philosophical justification for degradation and violence towards people based on color. The issue also supported by Banks (2000):

“Race” then only applies to non-whites, which explains why, according to Williams, the dominant society resents and represses “race matters,” and why “race . . . tends to be treated as though it were an especially delicate category of social infirmity [analogous to some] unfortunate negotiation of social difference” as a physical disability.  
(P.186)

The quotation above shows how racism is aimed towards disadvantaging the colored. The society is easier to accept the bright one in major aspects such as education, health, economy and a place to live. This behavior is expected

to disappear after the ratification of human rights. However, there are other ways to perpetuate power. The ruling class created system of rules that purposely keeps African-Americans behind. This system of rules is called an invisible system. These rules will create barrier to hinder the development of the colored race, especially African-American by segregating public facilities such as schools, restaurants, even something miniscule as separating water fountain at public places. These systemic segregations are eventually incorporated within everyday life and given the name as structural racism.

There are two keywords from the terminology in this study. They are *structural* and *racism*. In Collins dictionary (2015), structural means relating to or affecting the structure of something. Meanwhile, according to Odina, et al (2007) racism refers to a social behavior (and the socio-political ideas and institutions that support it) that consists of classifying people in groups based on real or imaginary differences that are associated with behaviors. It is implemented to justify a hierarchy among the groups, leading to the belief that one is better than others.

In this analysis, structural racism refers to the system in terms of social, institutional, and regulatory that perpetuate racial group inequality. This system starts from historical and cultural dimensions that can provide the privileges and the disadvantages of having a colored skin that adapts from time to time. Structural racism has become a feature of existing socioeconomic and political systems.

### 1.3 A Brief Description of Author Biography

Angie Thomas, a 31 years old African American female, was born in Jackson, Mississippi. She lives fairly close with a fellow activist, Medgar Evers, who got shot by the White Citizens Council when protesting the integration of schools and civil rights activism. At 6 years old, she witnessed a shootout of an unarmed black man by police while in the public area and traumatized from that event. Because of the accident, her mother took her to the library and advised her to write it down for the world to know. *The Hate U Give* was the result of what Thomas wrote, inspired by the accident she witnessed years ago. She earned a BFA from Belhaven University and became the first African American student who graduates in creative writing.

“*The Hate U Give*” was Thomas’ first novel published in 2017. Thomas’ second novel, “*On the Come Up*,” was released in February 2019. She wrote fantasy genre at first but worried that the stories would not matter. After that, she decided to write her experience so the writing could give a voice to those who had been silenced.

Thomas gets numerous awards from her works, especially for her first novel (*The Hate U Give*). She receives Walter Grant from “*We Need Diverse Books*” in 2015. In 2018, *The Hate U Give* was awarded by William C. Morris Award, Michael L. Printz Award, Coretta Scott King, Amnesty Cilip and Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis for the German edition translated by Henriette Zeltner.

In an interview with *the Daily Telegraph* on October 19, 2018, she said that her writing was inspired by the rapper Tupac Shakur. Shakur uses his music to express Black Lives Matter Movement. The idea of the novel *The Hate U Give* was based THUG LIFE ideology of black power. Her writing was a message for the white community to listen and tear down stereotypes.

#### **1.4 *The Hate U Give***

*The Hate U Give* (2017) a novel written by Angie Thomas, portrays the issue of structural racism. *The Hate U Give* is an acronym of THUG. In urban dictionary, THUG is The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone, popularized by American rap artist, 2Pac. Since 1992, THUG Life was a creed to give order to the rise of gang violence and drug dealing. The novel is related to that problem. The main character, Starr Carter, witnessed her friend got shot by police. They were on the way home with a car and then the police stopped them. The officers asked Khalil to exit the car. Due to the difficulty of the situation, he tried to entertain the protagonist with a joke and acted like he wanted to brush his hair. Suddenly, the officer opened fire, shooting him multiple times. The protagonist was raised and live in the Garden Height, a black neighborhood. She studies in an elite private school in an affluent white part of the city, the Williamson Prep. She stood out in the segregated area as the only African-American admitted into the campus. The society where she lives makes her feel too white while at school she feels too black. Because of that, she differentiates her personality. She never uses slang

at school. In her neighborhood, people are accustomed to drug deals due to economic reason including the victim. He was not in any deals at that time. The officer who open fire did not get any charge. This analysis applied an implied author in analyzing this novel as structural racism is depicted in two forms: media and society.

First, the media as a stereotype circulator. In *Advanced English Dictionary* (2020), media is defined as journalists and other professionals who comprise the mass communication industry. The media should be neutral instead of openly showing partiality by serving racial prejudice and stereotypes through African American. In Khalil's accident, the media guided his audience to believe that the police who kill Khalil did a great job. The media showed how people live in Garden Heights (gunshots are common here) and what job they are doing (selling drugs). The media who interviewed the protagonist only questions about the victim's job and did not ask about the chronology or what actually happened.

Second, the institution discriminates against African Americans. In *Merriam Webster* (2020), institution is defined as an established organization or corporation especially of a public character. In the novel, the institution refers to school and police. The discrimination can be seen through the number of African American student who studied in William Prep and the punishment of the police. The protagonist is the only one African American who studied in William Prep. Also, the protagonist experienced verbal racism in the form of jokes, or more severe case which is bullying. There are several



instances of African-American unjustified shootings in the novel and it shows the cops who shot the unarmed African American are innocent.

### **1.5 The Problem of the Study**

This analysis is focused on structural racism in Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give* (2017). Therefore, to reveal the issue of structural racism, questions are formulated below:

1. How far does the novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) expose the issue of structural racism?
2. To what extent do implied authors sustain the meaning of structural racism in the novel *The Hate U Give* (2017)?

### **1.6 Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to find out how far Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) brings up and reveals the issue of structural racism. Moreover, it also to find out how the implied author gives a contribution to the meaning of structural racism.

### **1.7 Previous Study**

The analysis of *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas that focuses on analyzing structural racism has not been found yet. However, two articles give contributions and inspiration to analyzed this novel. First, is the study entitled "*Racism in The Novel The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas*" (2019) by

Ni Wayan Yunitri, I Made Rajeg and Sang Ayu Isnu Maharani. Second is the study by Matthew Clair and Jeffrey Denis (2015), titled “*Sociology of Racism.*”

The first study is by Ni Wayan Yunitri, I made rajeg and Sang Ayu Isnu Maharani (2019), titled “*Racism in The Novel The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas.*” The study showed that the author was influenced by five extrinsic elements proposed by Wellek and Warren; namely biography, psychology, society, ideas and the sociological approach proposed by Laurensen and Swingewood. The data used in this study was in the form of sentences and words taken from dialogues and narration of the novel.

The second study is “*Sociology of Racism*” by Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis (2015). The study explores the concepts about "new racisms" (laissez-faire and colorblind), systemic and institutional racism, and unconscious or implicit racism through experiments, audit studies and critical discourse analysis. This study found racial inequality in socioeconomic, health and other daily aspects of life. The goal of the study is to critique the actors and institutions that perpetuate displacing the burden of racism on the shoulders of the targets of racism.

Those two works give contributions and inspirations as secondary sources in analyzing the novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) by Angie Thomas. Unlike the previous study, this analysis focused on the issue of structural racism by using the concept of Hegemony by Gramsci. This study used the implied author to evoke the hidden meaning.

## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this novel relates to the concept of Hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci. He was one of the main original thinkers in the tradition of Marxist and also known as the inventor of the concept of cultural hegemony as a way to maintain the continuity of the state in a society of capitalism. According to Gramsci in *The Prison Notebook* (1935), hegemony is leading with knowledge:

The history of education shows that every class which has sought to take power has prepared itself for power by an autonomous education. The first step in emancipating oneself from political and social slavery is that of freeing the mind. I put forward this new idea: popular schooling should be placed under the control of the great workers' unions. The problem of education is the most important class problem. (P.163)

The quotation above shows the importance of knowledge. There are at least six key concepts in Gramsci's thinking: culture, hegemony, ideology, popular beliefs, intellectuals, and the state. He stated that to make a revolutionary movement must use counter-hegemony. With the statement above, a socialist movement must be built with its cultural institutions and intellectuals in its central.

Gramsci's thought about hegemony is economic and the social system is not only relying on economic control and physical coercion but also on the hegemony (dominance of leadership) of the ruling class. On the other hand, the ruling class persuades the majority of the population to accept the system fully with its values, behavior, and beliefs to support the existing social order (status quo).

In Gramsci's theory, successful politics is marked by historic books, which will later become hegemonic projects. This leads to the dominant class wins approval for the institution and its ideas. There are at least two ways in order to obtain power according to Gramsci, namely war of maneuver and war of position. The war of maneuver refers to the violence while war of position lean towards infiltration than assault, something that is considered slow in displacement. War according to Gramsci, "[w]ar is an aspect of political life; it is the continuation, in other forms, of a given policy" (Gramsci 2007, p.268). The concept of war in this context is the class struggle. The key to the war of maneuver is speed, limited appeal, and frontal attack. Unlike the war of maneuver, the war of position is a slow displacement. Despite its slow displacement, it is effective, discreet, yet rather indirect with the intent to diffuse pressure that occur everyday.

This analysis used the war of position to examine the novel. In the war of position, The struggle for power in the position-based war is directed towards the efforts to get rid of ideologies, norms, political myths, and blindness of the ruling group *The Prison Notebook* (1935), Gramsci says that:

From the moment when a subordinate class becomes independent and dominant, calling into being a new type of State, the need arises concretely, of building a new intellectual and moral order, i.e. a new type of society, and hence the need to elaborate the most universal concepts, the most refined and decisive ideological weapons.

The analysis of this novel was supported by a text and context-based interpretation to bring out the issue of structural racism. The analysis was not only focused on the text itself but it also involved the phenomenon that exists. Meanwhile, text-based interpretation in Gerin (2005, p.64) defined that the current approach focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the text itself.

The implied author's approach will be used in analyzing the novel. It was first introduced by Wayne C. Booth. The idea was to interpret the literary text that resulted as an outcome from reader's interaction with the text. The implied author is trusted to be a noteworthy assessor. Moreover, Kindt describes that there are two steps in doing this approach: first is reconstructing and then interpreting the text. The text needs reconstruction because it is the first way to draw the meaning of the text. It can be done by reading between the lines.

The final stage is interpreting the meaning of the text. After the story is reconstructed, the real message of the text will be discovered (2005, p.57). By re-interpreting the text, readers will be able to find out the real meaning

### **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSION**

The issue of structural racism is revealed in a novel *The Hate U Give* (2017) written by Angie Thomas. The implicit interpretation contributes to shining the light to the meaning beyond the novel. Text-based and context-based are important strategies in uncovering the issue of structural racism. This analysis also deals with the concepts of hegemony by Gramsci. Structural racism in this novel refers to the system in terms of social, institutional and regulatory that perpetuate racial group inequality. Through implicit interpretation, it can be examined that structural racism has done in two forms: media and society. THUG Life in this analysis reflects to both the racism that is done by an individual or institution.

Media judges subjectively by preaching the bad things only about African-Americans. In society, African-Americans has been stereotyped by the lack of socioeconomic status and under educated., African-Americans who was only paid as workers has no option other than living in a slum area. Besides, it is hard for them because most African-American at the time have to live paycheck-to-paycheck to made it through the day. Understandably, the point mentioned above contributed to their low level of education and their variation of job cause of their race.

*The Hate U Give* can be symbolized as a voice to fight back. The hate is used as a power against racial inequality they have faced in their whole life. The society speaks up about unity in diversity but in contrary, must follows their wishes.

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