



RACIAL PROFILING IN ANGIE THOMAS' *THE HATE U GIVE*

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ABSTRACT

It still becomes the issue that racial profiling is still done by the White police to Black young people in the United States. For that condition, Black people struggle to put racial profiling to an end. The struggle is reflected in one of Angie Thomas' work, *The Hate U Give*, which shows the incident of racial profiling experienced by the main Black characters, Starr and her best friend, Khalil. In discussing the issue, the writer used the theory of Orientalism from Edward W. Said. The concepts used to answer research questions are Occident, Orient, and Power. The qualitative descriptive method was applied to analyze the incident of racial profiling by finding relevant quotations that contain evidence and racism. The writer found Prejudice, Stereotype, and Racial Discrimination as the causes of racial profiling in many cases. Black people do racial socialization and the Black Lives Matter Movement to oppose racial profiling.

Keywords: Racial Profiling, Causes, Efforts

I. Introduction

In social life, Black people as one of the largest immigrants in the United States are more likely to be viewed as suspicious people. Accordingly, it can be a leading cause of racial profiling. Ontario Human Rights Commission (2017) defined racial profiling as follows:

Any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or

public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment. (p.6)

The quotation above shows that racial profiling does exist on an individual basis within the police service. The action is not

based on a reasonable suspicion but rather on stereotypical assumptions of the selected suspects.

Moreover, racial profiling has not been proven as an effective policing method of finding criminals. The Mapping Police Violence research (2015) stated that unarmed African Americans are 30% more likely to be shot than their unarmed White counterparts. It means that the act allows police officers to harass minority people and to use unnecessary force. Therefore, racial profiling is a serious issue to be discussed since it often leads to innocent lives lost especially innocent young Black men.

The writer is interested in analyzing racial profiling in Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* because this novel is eye-opening, heartbreaking, and has so many values. Published on February 28, 2017, this novel discusses the realities of what being Black in America looks like at present. This novel portrays the issues that Black people face regularly such as racial profiling and police violence.

The story follows a sixteen-year-old Black girl named Starr who witnesses the fatal shooting of her Black unarmed best friend named Khalil by a White police officer during a routine traffic stop. This policy is known as *stop and frisk*. It is a legal action for police to search civilians on the street for weapons or other contraband

II. Review of Related Literature

The writer conducted this research by applying a theory of Orientalism by Edward W. Said that concerns about the gaps of cultural and political understanding between the Western world and the non-Western world. Orientalism is a study of the Orient by the Orientalist or Western scholars. It describes how the Orient becomes "otherized" by Western society and portrays as a people that is backward, barbaric, and in need of help or Western enlightenment. Orientalism, as Ashcroft (1995) notes, is a Western invention, knowledge which constructs the East as the "Other", therefore, in Said's formulation, it is principally a way of defining and locating Europe's others. The Orient is imposed as everything that the West is not, exotic, alien, dangerous, a threat to West. Hence, Orientalism can be universalized to examine the ways American society "otherized" minority groups, especially Black Americans. The White people invade and conquer Black people because they believe that Black people are dangerous and a threat to Whites, as Navarrete (2009) stated that individuals who are Black and male are perceived as especially threatening. There are three concepts of Orientalism which can cause racial profiling; those are the Occident, Orient, and Power.

2.2.1 The Occident

The concept of Occident by Said (1978) is the term for West (England,

France, America). According to Said, the concept of Occident created a dichotomy, between reality and the romantic notion of the “Orient”. The Orientals are viewed with prejudice and racism

2.2.2 The Orient

The concept of Orient by Said () is the term for the romantic and misunderstood to define Europe’s others. The Orient is a subject dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could know themselves. The Orient does not exist for its own sake in the Orientalist discourse, but it exists to be set apart of the Occident. Said (1978) stated that the colonized subject was and continues to be produced by cultural practices, historical documents, institutions, archives, and literary texts. This shows that the concept of Orient as understood by the Occident is a constructed understanding of what they believe the Orient to be. Therefore, in the opposite of the Occident, this concept shows the identity of the Orientals as irrational, depraved morals, childish, infantile, and different.

2.2.3 The Power

The concept of power is exercised by the Occident over the Orient or its Other. It refers to the authority; whether political, cultural, or social, that is practiced by colonizers over the colonized. Said (1978) argued that knowledge gives power; more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of

information and control. Therefore, the power attributed to the Occident is mainly derived from the construction of knowledge about the Orient, as Said (1978) stated that European culture gained power and identity by defining itself against the Orient. Therefore, the concept of power is to help Westerners define themselves against non-Westerners, and make non-Westerners feel inferior because their lives under the control of the power of the West.

III. Research Method

In analyzing this novel, the writer used the qualitative method. Stake (2010) stated that qualitative is based on the collection and interpretation of episodes. An episode has activities, sequence, place, people, and context. Thus, it needs a deeper observation to analyze the data to make a clearer interpretation. The writer analyzed this novel by collecting the references and understanding the theory to find out the problems that have been formulated.

IV. Findings

4.1 The Causes of Racial Profiling in Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give*

The writer analyzed the causes of racial profiling that occurs in Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give* because it can show that racial profiling does exist. Several causes are displayed below:

4.1.1 Prejudice

Said (1978) stated that Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it. Hence, the White police action in dealing with young Black men is based on their statements or prejudice about them. In this research, the White police officer’s action in dealing with Khalil is based on his prejudice against Black men of a certain age. NYCLU (2019) stated that Black males between 14 and 24 years of age accounted for 38 percent of reported police stops between 2014 and 2017. This shows that the White police stop the young Black people due to their perception of the young Black criminality. In this novel, after the White police officer said that he stopped Khalil’s car because Khalil’s taillight was broken, the White police officer refused to give Khalil a ticket. Instead, he judged Khalil as suspicious without real evidence. It can be seen in this following quotation:

“Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them.”
Khalil gets out with his hands up. One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door. (Thomas, 2017, p.13)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Khalil was being pulled over by the White police officer on suspicion of having illegal items in the car. The sentence *Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them* which uttered by the White police officer means that he judged Khalil

for having drugs, as Harris (1999) stated that racial profiling is based on the premise that most drug offenses are committed by minorities. The premise is factually untrue, but it has nonetheless become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In response, Khalil as a Black citizen was being cooperative with the investigation. It can be seen in the sentence *Khalil gets out with his hands up*. Moreover, the White police officer gave different treatment in dealing with Khalil. It can be seen in the sentence *One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door* which shows that the White police officer used physical force toward Khalil. Of course, that action is unfair to someone who was still not proven guilty.

Furthermore, the White police officer has a prejudice against the young Black as dangerous people. This perception of danger makes the White police officer felt fear around them. As Banks and Hicks (2015) said that fear is a factor associated with the implicit racial reactions of Whites against Black. Therefore, when the White police officer was checking Khalil’s license in his patrol car and he saw Khalil’s sudden move, the White police officer immediately judged it as a sign of danger and pulled the trigger. It can be seen in this following quotation:

It’s not smart to make a sudden move. Khalil does. He opens the driver’s door.
“You okay, Starr—”
Pow!

One. Khalil's body jerks. Blood splatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

Pow!

Two. Khalil gasps.

Pow!

Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground. (Thomas, 2017, p.14)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Khalil was mistakenly shot by the White police officer because the White police officer was threatened by Khalil's move. The sentence *It's not smart to make a sudden move* means that a move can make the White police officer afraid for his safety. However, Khalil did. It can be seen in the sentence *Khalil does. He opens the driver's door*. Accordingly, it made the White police officer shot Khalil brutally on his back. It can be seen from the gunfire *Pow!* which repeated three times and from the phrase *Blood splatters from his back*. The shooting, however, was wrong because the White police officer did it before due examination of facts. Indeed, Khalil just moved to check on Starr, as seen in the phrase *"You okay, Starr—"* *Pow!* which shows that Khalil was shot before he could finish his question to Starr.

Besides, the White police officer's prejudice against the Black race as people who always commit violence became another reason why the White police officer was convinced to shoot Khalil. Hanon (2004) said that a majority of

Americans associate Black men with criminality and violence, even if they do not always acknowledge it. In this research, the White police officer judged Khalil's hairbrush as a weapon even Khalil was searched by the White police officer three times and the White police officer turned up empty. It can be seen in this following quotation:

"A hairbrush is not a gun," I mutter. Khalil drops it into the side of the door. "A hairbrush is not a gun." He opens the door to ask if I'm okay. Then pow-pow (Thomas, 2017, p.259)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the fact that Khalil was killed over an imaginary gun by the White police officer is obvious racial prejudice. Sentence *A hairbrush is not a gun* that shows how ignorant and racist the White police officer was. He believed that a gun is dangerous in the Black's hands because he believed that Blacks are genetically inclined to violence. Therefore, he killed Khalil quickly without any consideration. Further, Khalil did not even show any form of resistance. As seen in the sentence *Khalil drops it into the side of the door* which shows that he just dropped it and then he opens the door to check on Starr as seen in the sentence *He opens the door to ask if I'm okay*.

4.1.2 Stereotype

The stereotype about all young Black men made up by White people is irrational. Said (1978) stated that the

structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away. Therefore, when the powerful myths about Black people are inserted into American culture and infiltrate the minds of American people. It is not surprising that young Black people are then stereotypically perceived by the general public as being savage or criminals. In this research, young Black men are also stereotyped as thugs by White police just because they are Black and live in a Black neighborhood. It can be seen in this following quotation:

“Listen! The Hate U—the letter U—Give Little Infants F*cks Everybody. T-H-U-G-L-I-F-E. Meaning what society give us as youth. (Thomas, 2017, p.10)

The quotation above shows that a stereotype can harm Black people especially innocent, young Black men. They are being stereotyped as thugs in American society. It can be seen in the phrase *meaning what society give us as youth* which is uttered by Khalil. The meaning of *thug life* itself that is also providing the title of this novel is *The Hate U Give Little Infants F*cks Everybody*. It indicates that Black people are angry about the incident of racial profiling that is always targeting their people. They believe that the cause of racial profiling is the hate that has been rooted inside White police.

Furthermore, the stereotype that Black skin and crimes are synonymous cause Black people to live in danger. Starr who is the only one witness of Khalil shooting has also known many cases of innocent Black people who lose their lives unjustly by White police officers. The causes were just because Black people have the stereotypical appearance of criminals. It can be seen in the following quotation:

I’ve seen it happen over and over again: a black person gets killed just for being black, and all hell breaks loose. (Thomas, 2017, p.21)

The quotation above shows that Black people's lives can be in danger at any time because of their skin color. The sentence, *a black person gets killed just for being black*, proved that Black people can die in the hands of White police officers because, for them, Black skin is the image of criminals in their minds. Accordingly, Black people have experienced and continue to experience racial profiling. It can be seen in the phrase *I’ve seen it happen over and over again*. Hence, the White police in the community show a consistent concern with dangerousness from Black minorities.

4.1.3 Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination in this study means the different treatment given by White police and a White grand jury to Black people, and unfair decisions they are making in judging Black people. Said

(1993) stated that the power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. Accordingly, the evidence or testimony from Black people is mostly rejected.

Therefore, when law enforcement agencies discriminate against people based on race, it can cause American police to act racial profiling. Said (1978) stated that a certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because he was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning. Hence, in the United States, White people are privileged over Black people, simply because of the colors of their skin. White privilege makes White people feel superior by creating power and shape non-White people based on White's narrative. In this research, racial discrimination occurs in law enforcement's attitude. The White police detectives tend to focus on the mistakes of Black people to justify the mistakes of the White police officer who has killed Khalil. They gave different treatment toward Starr in the interview. It can be seen in this following quotation:

“Did Khalil comply?”
Gomez asks. “He asked the officer why he pulled us over first. Then he showed his license and registration.” “Did Khalil seem irritate during this exchange?” “Annoyed, not irritate,” I say. “He felt that the cop was

harassing him.” “Did he tell you this?” “No, but I could tell. I assumed the same thing myself.” “And why was that?” “Because we weren't doing anything wrong,” I say, “Khalil wasn't speeding or driving recklessly. It didn't seem like he had a reason to pull us over” “I see. What happened next?” “The officer patted Khalil three times.” “Three?” Yeah. I counted. “Yes ma'am. He didn't find anything. He then told Khalil to stay put while he ran his license and registration.” “But Khalil didn't stay put, did he?” she says. “He didn't pull the trigger on himself either.” The detectives glance at each other. A moment of silent conversation. (Thomas, 2017, p.62)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that there is discrimination in every question which the White detective asked Starr. The detective Gomez shows her partiality to the White officer who had killed Khalil. She never asked about the White officer who is the killer in this incident. It can be seen in the questions *Did Khalil comply?*, *Did Khalil seem irritate during this exchange?* and *But Khalil didn't stay put, did he?* which indicates that the detective just wanted to find Khalil's faults. Therefore, she kept asking about Khalil to rationalize Khalil's death. Besides, the sentence *The detectives glance at each other* also shows an attitude of discrimination and distrust to Starr's testimony.

Furthermore, racial discrimination occurs in the White police chief's

decision. The white police officer who used deadly force against Khalil with the reason of fear for his life is accepted by the White police chief. The police chief then informs his unjust decision on television which claims that the White officer is not guilty of Khalil shooting. It can be seen in this following quotation:

The police chief appears onscreen and says what I was afraid he'd say "We have taken into consideration the evidence as well as the statement given by the witness, and as of now we see no reason to arrest the officer. (Thomas, 2017, p.140)

From the quotation above it can be seen that there is discrimination from the White police chief decision against Black's case. The phrase *as of now we see no reason to arrest the officer* shows the fact that the police chief refuses to see the truth. He is defending the White officer goes to show White privilege. Also, the phrase *We have taken into consideration the evidence as well as the statement given by the witness* shows that there is no transparent process to see that justice is done. The victim had strong evidence and a witness, yet they did not count. Therefore, if the police tend to justify the White police officer's mistake, it can cause other White police officers fearless to act racial profiling because they are supported by law.

Besides, racial discrimination also occurs in the grand jury's decision. Starr has talked to the detectives and the grand jury about every single detail of the

incident, but as a final decision, the grand jury decided not to indict The White police officer. It can be seen in the following quotation:

"This is the hottest station in the nation, Hot 105," the DJ says. "If you're just tuning in, the grand jury has decided not to indict Officer Brian Cruise Jr. in the death of Khalil Harris. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Harris family. Stay safe out there, y'all." (Thomas, 2017, p.244)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the grand jury did not make a fair decision. The sentence *the grand jury has decided not to indict Officer Brian Cruise Jr. in the death of Khalil Harris* means that the grand jury justified the White police officer's wrong action and distrusted the evidence and the witness' statements which proved that Khalil was shot because of opening a car door and a hairbrush. In other words, there is no justice for Khalil's death because the grand jury decision shows that it has been deemed legal to kill Black people. Therefore, the decision-making power within the system must act ethically and strive to eradicate any suggestion of racial bias and discrimination from their decision. If they do not do so, the practice of racial profiling will never come to an end.

4.2 The Efforts to oppose Racial Profiling

Racial profiling is a serious issue that needs to be put to an end. There are two efforts that Black people can do to oppose racial profiling. They are through racial socialization and the Black Lives Matter movement. Those efforts are racial socialization and Black Lives Matter.

4.2.1 Racial Socialization

Racial socialization in this study means a practice of Black parents teaching their children about racial profiling to anticipate potentially police brutality. De Certeau (2002) said that for African American parents, teaching their children about racism and providing coping strategies in the face of discrimination represent such tactics of resistance.

According to Said (1978), the exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job. Therefore, Black children should be raised to be smart around White police. In this research, Starr is socialized by her father about racial profiling and some tactics to deal with the situation. It can be seen in the following quotation:

When I was twelve, my parents had two talks with me. One was the usual birds and bees. The other talk was about what to do if a cop stopped me. Momma fussed and told Daddy I was too young for that. He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot. "Starr-Starr,

you do whatever they tell you to do," he said. "Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you." (Thomas, 2017, p.12)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Maverick is socializing Starr about racial profiling. The phrase *When I was twelve* indicates that Maverick was convinced that Starr was old enough to know about racial profiling. Hughes and Chen (1999) in their research stated that parents of younger children provide more messages about culture and ethnicity compared to older children, who receive more messages about discrimination. Accordingly, Black parents should begin teaching their children about racial profiling much earlier before high school age because they will tend to be the next target of racial profiling as explained by Maverick in the phrase *He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot*. Also, Black parents should provide their children with knowledge about how to behave especially when they are put in a compromising situation with a White police officer. It can be seen in the sentences *Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you* which shows some tactics to protect themselves from the possibility of death due to racial profiling.

Furthermore, Racial socialization by Black parents is required to give messages warnings about mistrust of the White police to their children, as there have been many cases where young Black men have been incriminated and shot by White police officers due to racial profiling. Hence, Black parents should teach their children what important things to remember when they are being stopped by the White police. In this research, Maverick instructs Starr to put attention to the detailed information of the police who stop her if she is experiencing racial profiling:

Daddy's instructions echo in my head: *Get a good look at the cop's face. If you can remember his badge number, that's even better.* (Thomas, 2017, p.13)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Maverick teaches Starr to be aware of the worst possible outcomes when interacting with a White police officer. The sentence *Get a good look at the cop's face* means that Black parents should instruct their children to surely recognize the police officer just in case the White police officer did unlawful actions so that they will be able to report the case to law enforcement. Moreover, the sentence *If you can remember his badge number, that's even better* means that Black children should have strong evidence to get justice in court.

4.2.2 Black Lives Matter Movement

The Black lives Matter movement in this study is an effort of Black people to opposes racial profiling by calling Black people in the United States to participate in a street demonstration. As identified in their website, Black Lives Matter (n.d. p.1) stated that Black Lives Matter is a call to action and response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. Therefore, the movement can be a good way to declare that Black people deserve dignity and respect so that racial profiling can be put to an end.

According to Said (1978) what gave the Oriental's world, its intelligibility, and identity was not the result of his efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West. Accordingly, the movement can be used as a tool to give Black people the power to use their voice. In this research, the Black neighborhood joins the movement and gets on the street to protest the grand jury's decision not to indict Khalil's murderer. Ms. Ofrah, an activist of the movement encourages Starr to use her voice as a weapon in front of the crowd to declare that Black Khalil is a victim of racial profiling by a white police officer. It can be seen in the following quotation:

"My name is Starr, I'm the one who saw what happened to Khalil," I say into the bullhorn. "And it wasn't right" I get a bunch of "yeahs" and "amens" from the crowd. "We weren't doing anything wrong. Not only

did Officer Cruise assume we were up to no good, he assumed we were criminals. Well, officer Cruise is the criminal.” (Thomas, 2017, p.261)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that when Black people courageously use their voice, it can be a weapon for them to oppose racial profiling. The sentence *My name is Starr, I'm the one who saw what happened to Khalil* shows that the protest could provide a way for a witness to stand and declare about the injustice that has been done to them. Also, since the testimony of Black people is mostly rejected by law enforcement, the protest can help them to draw attention to the facts of Khalil shooting. It can be seen in the sentence *Not only did Officer Cruise assume we were up to no good, he assumed we were criminals*. Moreover, the sentence *Well, officer Cruise is the criminal* who informs that the White police officer is the one who did a crime in this case. He has killed an innocent human being over his negative assumptions. Therefore, through this movement, Black people can help their group to represent themselves even though for now they still do not get the real result.

Moreover, as the power of this action can be read by American political and intellectual on the news and some online articles, this movement has a chance to be used as a tool for changing more people's opinion toward Black and

create the real history of their group so that racial profiling can be put to an end

Furthermore, Black Lives Matter movement can support Black people protesting for change and justice. In this research, Starr joins the movement not against the law enforcement, but against the police who misused his power, to the detectives who take the side of White people and to the result which failed to indict the murderer. Therefore, those acts of racism and injustice trigger Starr and Black people to erupt into peaceful protest. The Black community wants change and justice. It can be seen in this following quotation:

I'm not giving up on a better ending. It would be easy to quit if it was just about me, Khalil, that night, and that cop. It's about way more than that enough. It's about Seven. Sekani. Kenya. DeVante. It's also about Oscar.

Aiyana.
Trayvon.
Rekia
Michael
Eric
Tamir.
John.
Ezell.
Sandra.
Freddie.
Alton.
Philando.

It's even also about that little boy in 1955 who nobody recognized at first – Emmet. The messed-up part? There are so many more. (Thomas, 2017, p.282)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Black Lives Matter movement aims to end racial profiling and justice for Blacks. The sentence *It would be easy to quit if it was just about me, Khalil, that night, and that cop. It's about way more than that enough* means that what behind the movement is not just to protest Khalil's case, but to the same case which frequently happens toward young Black people. The movement is intended to save Black people in the future as stated in the phrase *It's about Sekani. Seven. Kenya. DeVante.* which are the name of Starr's brothers and friends who are still alive. Also, to get justice for those who have become the victims of racial profiling as stated in the sentence *it's also about Oscar, Trayvon, Rekia, Michael, Eric, Tamir, John, Ezell, Sandra, Freddie, Alton, Philando. It's even also about that little boy in 1995 who nobody recognized at first—Emmet* which are the name of victims in the real life.

V. Conclusion

Based on the previous chapter, the writer concludes that there are three causes which can cause racial profiling. Those are prejudice, stereotype, and racial discrimination. Prejudice is given by the White police to the Black people in America without any reasonable reason which often leads them to use unnecessary force toward Black people. The stereotype is a negative belief in society which is not true about young Black people. However,

it has influenced the White police in doing his job. Khalil was racially profiled by the White police officer due to the stereotype of young Black men as thugs. Racial discrimination is done by the police and the grand jury in their decision not to indict the murderer.

Furthermore, there are two efforts that Black people can do to oppose racial profiling. Those are racial socialization and the Black Lives Matter movement. Racial socialization is suggested to do by Black parents to make Black children know how to face and handle the compromising situation with the White police and minimize the possibility of death due to racial profiling. Black Lives Matter movement is an effort of Black people to speak out against racial profiling to spread awareness and support Black people to protest to bring about change and get justice. Therefore, racial profiling can be reduced and hopefully can be ended.

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