

Strategic Resistance to Racism in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and *The Hate U Give*

African American literature for youth has a robust tradition of promoting activism to bring about social and/or political change. From *The Brownie's Book* (1920-1921), edited by NAACP founder W. E. B. DuBois, to the first Newbery Award winners by African Americans, to recent novels addressing police violence toward African-American youth, high-quality literature has primed readers for activism—much of it supporting racial justice.

My paper will explore how Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* participate in this literary support for activism, broadly defined. Despite notable differences in publication era, setting, and age of protagonist, these novels share key similarities as catalysts for empathy and activism. Both novels explicate varied, complex ways in which racism is enmeshed in our society with significant individual, social, economic, legal, and political ramifications, and both counter dominant cultural narratives about race and racism. Both model strategic resistance to racism—from standing up to peers to organizing boycotts, testifying in court, and speaking at protests—and both depict white participation in this resistance. Through their creation of compelling protagonist-narrators, these novels promote empathy with those who suffer from racism, creating an urgency for changing the status quo. Finally, despite their unflinching agendas, both novels transcend the potential limitations of the didactic and topical novel by showing the complexities of characters of all races and a variety of perspectives on whether, when, and what strategic resistance is required.