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**Title:** Activating the Oppositional Child Gaze in Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* and Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's *All American Boys*

**Abstract:** Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* and Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's *All American Boys* each contain teen characters who are victimized by police brutality; they also contain teen characters who witness that brutality and spend the course of the novels coming to terms with their choices about how to act upon what they have seen. In each, the moment of witness is replayed over and over for both an internal, private audience of the self and an external, public audience of community and nation, enacting the trauma of the individual as the trauma of a people. In syncopation with this traumatic repetition, both texts wrestle with the fear that attends the potentially oppositional gaze, including the danger of counter-surveillance in a racist system that seeks to erase the mechanisms by which it is wrought. Ultimately, each witness turns the experience of being *forced* to look into a *choice* to look: to document the brutality of an oppressive system of power and assert their gaze as a tool of resistance. This paper examines the manner in which these texts, separately and comparatively, explore the activation of the oppositional child gaze as a force in U.S. culture. Positing that such a gaze is disputed across lines of race and power, I argue that these texts raise questions about who is accorded the right to look, how that right can be developed and exercised, and from whom validation must come for that gaze to matter in the arena of social justice work.

Keywords: gaze, race, activism, young adult literature, power