

The Hate U Give



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Recently, I both read the novel and watched the movie version of *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. It focuses on a fictional high school girl who lives in the ghetto yet attends a preppy private school. She manages to keep both worlds separate until her childhood best friend is shot and killed by the police, flipping her world upside down. Movies are often drastically different from their literary counterparts, but the book and the movie for *The Hate U Give* were extremely similar. In fact, many of the actors' lines were the exact same as the dialogue in the book. The major difference was that the movie completely cut out a character from the book who became integral to the story in the second half of the novel.

The book is mostly dialogue and the author only half-way describes the setting, which was a little disappointing to me. She could have crafted an entire world inside the ghetto, but instead she left some parts unexplained and unmentioned. But I think this was a choice

because it is obvious to me that, in some ways, she was far from careless while writing the book. For example, each main character's name represents some aspect of their personality or the main message of the book. The author explains all of this in the back of the collector's edition, which I own. Perhaps her lack of detail was intentional, allowing readers to fill in gaps with their own experiences and connect with the novel better. I have no complaints about the movie. It had quite a cast, loaded with esteemed and well-known actors and actresses. The ways in which the movie differed from the book didn't negatively impact its overall quality.

The Hate U Give offers a valuable perspective on how dehumanizing police brutality is for victims and their friends and family and demonstrates that most people who end up in the hood committing crimes are good people who have been put into a bad situation by society. It doesn't provide any solutions to the racial and economic problems that plague the United States, but it does call attention to them and ensure that everyone is on the same page so we can move forward together. With the book's closing words, "I'll never forget. I'll never give up. I'll never be quiet. I promise," Angie Thomas ends on a hopeful note, telling her audience that it isn't over as long as they are still fighting.

Equity v. Equality

By: Naomi Shelton,
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Equity has been a huge buzzword in the field of education this year. Education advocates and politicians alike have called for an increase in educational equity, but what does the term really mean? Equity is not Equality. Equity creates equality by prioritizing resources to students who need them the most.

For example, think of a typical track meet. There are five runners – each in their own lane. Each runner must run one lap around the track. The first runner to complete the lap, wins the race. Now let's use this analogy to inform our understanding of equity.

Equality would mean that every runner would start the race at the exact same spot in their lane. However, the track is oval-shaped. If each runner began at the same spot, each runner's distance to the finish line would be different. The runner in the innermost lane would run a shorter

distance than the runner in the outermost lane. Sure, they would both start in the same spot (EQUAL), but the runners in the innermost lanes would have an advantage – in distance – than their counterparts in the outermost lanes.

Now, think of our current public education system in this same context. Students – regardless of race, geography, household makeup – start on the same marker on the track. Some students, like the runner in the outermost lane, have to run harder and faster to get to the finish line. The barrier here is distance. In the real world, barriers include low-income, resource deprived neighborhoods, disabilities that require additional expertise, culturally negligent curriculum, outdated technology, inexperienced teachers or access to critical supportive services.

Meanwhile, the runner in the innermost lane has it a lot easier. They don't have to run as fast or as hard to get to

COMMENTARY: Black Students in Youngstown City School District Targeted for Failure by State

By The Buckeye
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The Ohio State Department of Education published its goals for White students at 86.3 versus 63.4 for Black students, as reported by the Performance Index Subgroup Data. The NAACP Leadership made this presentation to the Roberts Deliberating Club (RDC), which is comprised of Black professionals and business leaders, last month, where data was rolled out that they found to be incredulous.

"If this is true, why is the community not more aware," said Atty Charles Mickens, an RDC member.

"We are trying to make the community aware of this disparity which is why we are presenting it, said George Freeman, NAACP President. "It took a while to ferret out the details."

"In March 2018, the State Superintendent didn't even know that he could require teachers to teach the State standards," said Freeman.

"When we pointed out to him that he had the power to order the teachers to comply and as of August 2018, there was an official order to do so."

It took time to dig into the details, but the Ohio Department of Education Superintendent DeMaria has ordered the teachers to adhere to standards for the first-time in history, said Freeman.

That might sound unbelievable, but in



"We often battle the misperception that poverty is the cause for low performance, but data has proven conclusively that race is a factor not understood or factored in the equation," said Jimma McWilson, who chairs the State NAACP Task Force on ESSA and Preventing School Takeovers and serves as the Secretary of the local chapter.

retrospect, it is hard to fathom, but thanks to the leadership of the local and state NAACP, there has been intense and focused attention on providing remedies long overlooked.

DeMaria responded to a series of questions posed by the NAACP Education Task Force, one of them being, "Are all Ohio Licensed classroom teachers required to teach the State Criterion Reference Standards?"

His answer in a written response in August 2018 "There is no legal requirement specifically directed to teachers relative to teaching the State's standards".

DeMaria followed with the statement "standards are what is tested, one might suggest a strong motivation to teach the standards."

The response came following months of digging into the data to prove that the fault of the failures falls squarely in the lap of the administration of both the State and the school District.

"If they don't require it, strong motivation obviously has

not had an impact" said Dr. McNair, president of the RDC. The 20 years of published report card failures prove a strong motivation does not make a requirement."

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In deed, Steubenville, which mirrors Youngstown with a 100% poverty student population, has targets much higher and performance much higher. The missing link is addressing the race factor specifically, said McWilson.

When the State audit of the District was released it validated this important flaw which is obviously a key to success for students.

"You've heard of students graduating with high GPA's that struggle in college because of the lack of preparation. That preparation weakness is a signal that the grades were not standard, but subjective based on the class-

room teacher," said Freeman.

"We find it unbelievable that the standards have not been required, but rather suggested. And the fact that the State targets are so low for Black students only reinforces the fact, as earlier reported, the failure is not on the parents or poverty or even the teachers. It's the leadership. If teaching the standards is not required or inspected, it can't realistically be expected," said McNair.

"The big challenge is the R word," said Dr. McNair. "When race is discussed as a problem White people often have a difficult time wrapping their heads around the problem. The data clearly indicates addressing race, and not poverty only, is a leadership, and a strategic planning issue that must be addressed head on."

The Roberts Deliberating Club meeting was held at Mill Creek Community Center on Glenwood Ave, Youngstown, in December 15, 2018. The following link is to the State report card with the targets for improvement.



Naomi Shelton

the finish line because of their initial position in the race. The barriers here are fewer in number. In terms of education, these innermost runners attend schools in affluent neighborhoods with a surplus of resources. These students have the advantage of local tax-based funding formulas, parent lead fundraising efforts and/or private funding,

and state-of-the-art technology.

What we need is education reform that promotes fairness. Fairness equals equity. As Debby Irving in her book *Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* states, "Equality means giving all students the exact same thing to meet the same expectations. Equity means holding

people of differing needs to a single expectation and giving them what they need to achieve it." In other words, the playing fields need to be leveled. It's critical that our public educational system undertakes reform – changes so that each student is given what they need to succeed.

Our education system should support students by allocating the most resources to students who are most in need, just as track athletes arrange themselves for fairer competition. The national education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) targets dollars to the highest poverty schools and districts.

Under No Child Left Behind, schools could lose funding if they failed to meet statewide standards. But under ESSA, states cannot reduce funding by more than ten percent from year to year despite school per-

formance. ESSA also attempts to ensure that low-income students are not disproportionately taught by ineffective, inexperienced, and/or out-of-field teachers.

ESSA gives power back to the states to control education policy. Now, members of the community must hold their school leaders and elected officials accountable to implement system-wide and school-specific measures that ensure equity in our schools.

Furthermore, UNCF's 2017 community resource, *Lift Every Voice and Lead Toolkit: A Community Leader's Advocacy Resource for K-12 Education*, offers step-by-step analysis of African American Education and highlights organizations that have effectively engaged in education efforts at a local level to support efforts in improving the quality of education for all students.