

**IN WHAT WAYS DO *ALL AMERICAN BOYS* AND *A GOOD KIND OF TROUBLE*  
PORTRAY RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, AND HOW DO THEY EXAMINE SYSTEMIC  
RACISM, IDENTITY FORMATION, AND THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE  
MOVEMENT ON YOUNG PEOPLE**



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I hereby declare that this project titled In what ways do *All American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble* portray racial discrimination, and how do they examine systemic racism, identity formation, and the influence of social justice movements on young people is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of MS. SAYOOJYA C S, Assistant Professor, Department of English.



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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled "In what ways do *All American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble* portray racial discrimination, and how do they examine systemic racism, identity formation, and the influence of social justice movements on young people by Ritika Joshy is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.



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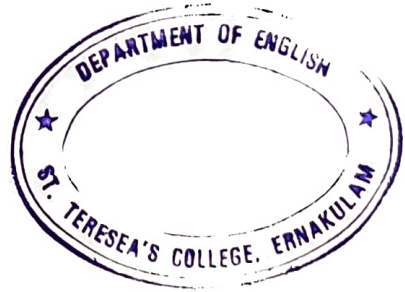
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## Introduction

America faces serious issues racism , as race plays a large role in society and has a tremendous effect on people's lives especially African American lives. In America, many policies control or rather influence and affect the lifestyle of African Americans, and these policies are not limited to just the justice system. There are policies in educational systems and housing selection that place African Americans at a disadvantage. For example, the zero-tolerance policy in Texas pushes African Americans and other minorities away from schools, and they are more likely to be punished than white Americans. (*Zero Tolerance Policies in Texas Push Black Students and Latino Students Away from School*). As for the justice system, there are loopholes in the law that favour white Americans over African Americans, this also contributes to the higher incarceration rate of African Americans in the USA. There are many forms of racism, it can happen at a personal level where an individual is prejudiced against another or a discriminatory act such as having African Americans pay before a meal at a restaurant where white Americans don't. On a larger scale, it can involve the laws and policies of the state, city, and even community. Any minority race group facing racism experiences mental health issues, and economic disadvantages and can be isolated from society/ community. The oppressed face acts of discrimination, violence, and systematic inequalities that affect their opportunities, rights, standard of living, and well-being.

The All American Boys" by Jason Reynolds and Brendon Kiely, is a novel published in September 29, 2015. The novel is about a Rashad Black teenager who is accused of stealing and is assaulted by a police officer, during which Quinn a white teenager, witnesses the scene. The novel alternates between both teenagers'

perspectives on the situation. The themes of the novel are Racism and police violence. In comparison, if we look at "A Good Kind of Trouble" by Lisa Moore Ramee published on March 12, 2019. In contrast to "All American Boys", Ramee's novel is about a twelve-year-old Shayla learning to figure out her middle school life while becoming an activist in the Black Lives Matter movement. Shayla learns of the injustices faced by African Americans, accepts her identity, and fights for her beliefs. Themes of Activism, Friendship, and racial identity are the main focus in the novel. This project will examine how Critical Race Theory applies to the main characters and its impact on both text and reader.

Black Lives Matter, started in the U.S. in 2013, has grown globally. It fights racism and violence against Black individuals, arguing their right to equal value and humanity. The movement was founded by Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, the movement gained grew more following the George Zimmerman case. Zimmerman a neighbourhood- watch volunteer, had seen Trayvon Martin walking in the neighbourhood and had called the police. Despite being instructed not to do anything, he filled the young man and they got into an argument and Zimmerman shot and killed him. Zimmerman's defence was that he was assaulted and fired the gun in self-defence. When the jury's verdict was not guilty and Zimmerman was free as the case had gained national attention protestors rallied to demand justice which led to a bigger movement and more protests. A Year later the police killed two unarmed black men Eric Garner and Michael Brown a teenager. Both men had died as a result of police brutality and had no charges pressed against them. The Black Lives Matter movement continued to grow and fight against racism and police brutality. In 2020 many more cases of police brutality were recorded by bystanders as well as the deaths of black



people, as the number of black people died public opinion turned in the favour of Black Lives Matter bringing to light the racism, injustice and inequality in society.

The two novels used in this project explore contrasting ideas on how racism affects a minority's race in the novel case the minority are African American. Racism is an ongoing issue that still needs to be tackled, as in America there are prison cells with more African Americans than there are free furthermore "African Americans are incarcerated five times more than the whites" (Loehr et al. *The Color of Justice: Racial and ethnic disparity in state prisons*). This is because America has mandatory sentencing and since the jury has the power to decide how long the sentencing period is, the time African Americans spend in jail is longer. Racism is not only limited to the justice system of those with lower economic standards but also affects those in higher positions. The African Americans who are economically well off, don't get paid as well as the whites, and have a harder time getting approval due to the housing policy. All American Boys is about the victims of racism and police brutality, this perspective explores the inequality in society and the justice system, and it also tackles issues of human rights and realism theory. Realism theory believes global politics to be about power and self-interest and portrays the world as it is. Whereas The Good Kind of Trouble is about identity and self-acceptance. It is about Shayla coming to terms and accepting her inheritance of the struggles her ancestors have faced and looking to change the system for future generations. As the two novels are being compared, there will also be an exploration of comparative literature to analyze how both novels raise the issue of racism, racial discrimination and prejudices.

The project aims to analyze both The All American Boys and The Good Kind of Trouble through the theoretical lenses of critical race theory and comparative

literature, additionally focusing on the consequences of racial discrimination and prejudices. Delving into themes of racism, identity, social justice, and power will allow the exploration of race relations and real-life experiences of the marginalized community in America specifically the African Americans.

Chapter One which is the theoretical framework will explore the theoretical aspects of critical race theory and comparative literature which will become the core for the analysis of the project. Additionally, chapter one will delve into the various types of racial discrimination and consequences of stereotypes and prejudices. This will allow a better understanding of critical race theory which includes background, key principles, and main concepts, such as the social construction of race. The chapter will then move to focus on comparative literature focusing on the role it will play in analyzing the two novels to form an understanding of the social context. Using two theoretical approaches will be the groundwork for exploring issues of racism, identity, social justice, discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes.

Chapter two summarizes the two novels and introduces the main characters and their situation to better understand the novels. An analysis based on focusing on issues of discrimination, stereotype, racism and prejudice in both novels will be explored with critical race theory and real-life connections.

## Chapter 1

### Theoretical Foundations and Explanations

In the Cambridge dictionary discrimination is defined as “ treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way than how you treat other people because of their race, gender, sexuality, etc” (*Discrimination / English meaning - Cambridge dictionary*). Discrimination has many different forms leading to varying types of discrimination from laws protecting individuals to unfair treatment based on certain characteristics such as age, disability, gender, race, status, and sexual identity. Understanding the different types of discrimination helps fight the corrupt system and injustice for equality. In America, discrimination based on race/ ethnicity or the colour of skin leads to unequal opportunities in a person’s life based on physical appearance such as hair texture, skin colour or facial features.

The most common form of racial discrimination in America impacts employment, housing and other areas that affect an individual’s life and the society by extension. Workplace discrimination can be in the form of direct or indirect discrimination, harassment, retaliation and microaggression. Direct discrimination can be seen as treating a certain individual less favourably such as denying promotions or reducing the pay based on appearance rather than qualifications. An example of indirect discrimination is when workplace policies affect a certain group of people, most African women prefer to have their hair braided, also known as cornrows, traditionally called “ kolese meaning a creature without legs in Yoruba ( Nigerian) which were and are still considered unprofessional in grooming.” (*Black history month 2022: The history behind cornrows*). Racial harassment includes an unwelcomed or toxic work environment resulting from offensive language and derogatory comments,

microaggressions are unintentional discriminatory insults or comments that are made based on the race of an individual.

Housing in America is another area that is deeply affected by racial discrimination. Often African Americans are turned away or harassed into leaving a white neighbourhood as some white people have difficulty in accepting that a black man is financially stable enough to be able to move to a white neighbourhood which is considered to be safer than the black neighbourhoods. Additionally, it is assumed that the city/ state takes more care of the white neighbourhoods than the blacks as, the police patrol the black neighbourhood more often as it is assumed to be more dangerous and more likely to capture criminals.

Other areas in America facing racial discrimination are the education and criminal justice system. Students from a minority racial group face a disadvantage in the education system due to the unequal funding of the school and biased curriculum. The criminal justice system is highly affected by racial discrimination as policing, prosecuting and sentencing are affected based on an individual's colour. Additionally, studies show that police stop and use more force when confronting an individual of a minority group, leading to a lack of trust in the police and justice system. According to the sentencing project research, it is learned that “African Americans are incarcerated in state prison at five times the rate of Whites”. Upon further research by the sentencing project, “nationally 1 in 81 African Americans is serving time in prison” (Loehr et al. *The Color of Justice: Racial and ethnic disparity in state prisons*).

Terms like stereotype, prejudice, and racism play an important role in discrimination. Stereotypes can be related to race, ethnicity, age, or sexual identity, often stereotypes are negative assumptions that lead to hasty judgments about

individuals or a group an individual represents. For example, in "A Good Kind of Trouble," the stereotype that Asians are good in math ignores the discrimination they face, by making the assumption that they are good at something based on the ethnic background rather than the results of an individual's hard work. Negative stereotypes, such as assuming African Americans as criminals or unintelligent, are a portrayal of the influence of past mindset when they were slaves. In the end, stereotypes take away a person's individuality and use an individual to make a general assumption about a group.

Prejudice is, "an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race or their supposed characteristics or an instance of preconceived judgement or opinion" (*Prejudice definition & meaning*). Prejudice is not limited to race, but it powers racism by arguing one group's superiority, leaving the racial minorities at a disadvantage. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of prejudice as they promote white supremacy through hate crimes and speech against African Americans. The Ku Klux Klan is an American Protestant-led Christian extremist, white supremacist, hate group.

When the Ku Klux Klan first emerged their goal was to weaken the Republican-led state governments in the South using fear and violence against the African American leaders and their white supporters. Secondly, the Ku Klux Klan widened its targets to include Jews, Catholics and immigrants who opposed the Pope and the Catholic church. The third time the Ku Klux Klan was against the civil rights movement and often used violence to suppress the activists. (*Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction Era - New Georgia encyclopedia*).

Critical in literature means expressing an analysis of the merits and demerits of a literary work, (*Racism definition & meaning*) this essentially means that a person is

sharing their opinion of a literary work based on certain criteria. Race as mentioned earlier is a social construct that groups people based on physical traits or differences such as skin color, hair and language. Racism is the prejudice and discrimination of a minority or marginalised group based on race or ethnic background (*Racism definition & meaning*). The literary definition for theory is a set of methods and ideas that help critics and readers understand a text. critical race theory focuses on how racism affects the justice system and societal structure. By portraying the various perspectives of an unjust act like in *All American Boys* awareness is brought to the issue of racial discrimination. Social media is sometimes used to seek justice why discriminatory acts are being committed by civilians.

Critical race theory started in the U.S. post-civil rights era, from legal scholars who highlighted the flaws of traditional civil rights in addressing racial inequality. During the 1980s, Critical Race Theory expanded into various academic fields, influenced by figures like Derrick Bell and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Derrick Bell is regarded as the main founder of Critical Race Theory, emphasizing race and law, highlighting issues within the civil rights movement and systemic racism. He argues that racial justice often serves white interests. Kimberle Crenshaw expands this to examine how oppression is different for every race, gender, and class. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic introduce key concepts of Critical Race Theory, analyzing legal inequities and African American experiences. Patricia Williams combines personal narratives with legal analysis to reveal racial injustices, while Angela Harris focuses on African American women's experiences within the legal system.

Critical Race Theory distinguishes itself through six main features, mainly recognizing racism as a social construct. It argues that racism is systematic and structural, part of society's legal framework, exposing the racial inequalities in laws and policies that largely favors white individuals.

Critical Race Theory challenges traditional legal theories for ignoring racial biases, questioning the idea of blind justice, highlighting the realities of racism and inequality in the legal system.

Intersectionality, a term introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, highlights how overlapping identities—such as race, gender, class, and sexuality—impact individual experiences of oppression and discrimination within Critical Race Theory.

critical race theory also works at emphasizing the use of personal narrative and storytelling as they play a vital role in understanding the experience of the marginalized. By using the voice of the marginalized it creates a more comprehensive understanding of legal and social issues that were traditionally overlooked.

Critique of neutrality and objectivity is another feature although it is similar to the second feature criticizing traditional legal theories it has its differences. This feature challenges the idea of objectivity in legal issues and that the claim of neutrality is often used to hide power dynamics and racial injustices.

The last feature is the focus on social justice, aiming not only to criticize and analyze the corrupt system and society but also to fight for change. This is often done by portraying the importance of activism to change the system and for the rights, and equal rights of the minority/ marginalized community.

*(Basic tenets of critical race theory)*

To summarize the features of critical race theory analysis race, racism and inequality with the societal and legal structure. While fighting for social justice and change through personal narratives and storytelling. Critical Race Theory examines interconnected oppressions to better understand race and justice, focusing on racism as a social construct, intersectionality, personal narratives, and social justice in the analyzed novels.

Comparative literature examines literary texts across cultures, languages, and nations, analyzing their themes, styles, and historical contexts while reflecting societal issues like power dynamics, identity, and cultural conflicts.

The main goal of comparative literature is to go beyond literary barriers, and have a deeper understanding of literary matters by exploring cultural and linguistic expressions of similar themes.

Thematic exploration in comparative literature identifies universal themes across cultures, such as love, death, and identity, improving the understanding of diverse cultures and people.

This analysis compares characters from *All American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble* through the lenses of self-identity, race, and situation, highlighting their different experiences and understanding of race and identity presents through themes, narrative styles, and impact the novels have on readers.

The comparison between *All American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble* would involve the analysis of themes, characters, narrative structures and how they explore the treatment of social issues of race, identity and activism. By comparing the two novels a deeper understanding would be formed in realizing how the different



approaches affect the reader's understanding and motivation to take action against racism. Additionally, comparative literature allows for the comparison of how the two texts differ in their approach to the themes of racism and injustice while being analyzed using critical race theory.

Critical race theory and racial discrimination are used to analyze the themes and main concepts of the two novels, while the use of comparative literature allows a comparison between the novels. It also allows an exploration of the narrative styles of the text and the contrasting narrative style allows for two different perspectives/ issues regarding racism to be addressed. critical race theory is the main theory of this paper as the focus remains on the critical race theory principles of recognition of racism as a social construct, intersectionality, personal narrative and social justice as mentioned earlier but as the two novels are of different narrative styles a comparison is done to analyze how and if the different styles have an effect when analyzing through the focused critical race theory principles.

## Chapter 2

### Exploring the racial injustice and discrimination in *All-American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble*

*All American Boys* was co-authored by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely in September 2015. Reynolds was born on December 6 1983 and is an American author of young adult books that focuses on themes of violence, masculinity and the struggles of African Americans. “Jason Reynolds “is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of many award-winning books. While growing up, Reynolds speaks about how he stopped reading books for several years because he could not connect with the book's characters, as there was little relevance to his upbringing in a poor black community.

Reynolds and Kiely become friends during a time when the news frequently showed police brutality against African Americans. Both Men talked about their experiences as black man growing up with the threat of police brutality and the white man unlikely to encounter such fear of the police. It was this that inspired the two authors to write the novel *All American Boys* which highlighted the different perspectives or truths. The themes portrayed were racism, white privilege and the impact of systemic racism in law enforcement, emphasizing the need for white people to listen to the experiences of blacks.

Young adult literature is a genre of literature for the target audience ages 12 to 18. Many fictional works for young adults are written from a teenager's perspective or voice to portray an adolescent's experience and mindset. *All American Boys* is one of these young adult literary works that uses a teenager's perspective. This particular novel uses only the perspective of two teenagers of different races Rashad Butler an African

American portrays the perspective of a victim while Quinn Collins a white American portrays the perspective of the whites and a witness.

*All American Boys* is about two racially different teenagers Rashad Butler ( An African American) and Quinn Collins ( A white American) who go to the same high school ( Springfield Central High School), the two boys have never interacted with each other before despite having friends in common. Rashad's Father ( David Butler) has been teaching Rashad and his big brother ( Spoony) about the importance of discipline for young Black men. David had joined the army and had served for four years before joining the police force and later retiring, he wants Rashad to be in uniform so at any given moment tells Rashad the army is the best opportunity for a black man to succeed in the United States. Because of the pressure from his father Rashad joined the (Junior) Reserve Officer Training Corps ((J) ROTC), although he has no interest in joining the police force he does so to please his father. Rashad however prefers to spend time drawing and hanging out with his friends English, Shannon and Carlos who he considers to be his brother.

Quinn's father was in the army and had died while enlisted in Afghanistan. Quinn lives with his mother and his younger brother Willy. He resents people who try to make him live up to the memory of his father. Quinn's best friends are Dwyer and Guzzo, Guzzo's brother Paul Galluzzo is a police officer and has been Quinn's father figure since his father died. Quinn, Dwyer, Guzzoo, English and Shannon are on the same basketball team in school; thus are friends through the sport.

Fridays were usually party days, and this Friday was no different as Rashad and Quinn got ready to attend a party at Jill's house, who is both Guzzo's and Paul's cousin and Quinn's crush. Before heading to the party, Rashad stopped by Jerry's Corner Mart

to grab chips and gum. Jerry's, known for being an easy target for robberies, was under police surveillance, although Rashad had never thought of stealing from it. While kneeling to get his phone from his duffel bag, he was accidentally tripped by a white woman, causing both to fall resulting in the bag of chips to fall out of his hand and breaking a beer bottle.

The store's police officer swiftly investigates a noise, while the cashier accuses Rashad of theft. Without listening to any explanations, the officer drags Rashad outside and handcuffs him, using excessive force under the excuse of resisting arrest. Nearby, Quinn and his friends are searching for someone to buy beer. Although Quinn doesn't recognize Rashad, he identifies the officer as Paul Galluzzo. Disturbed by the assault, they head to a party, attempting to forget the incident that highlights racial discrimination within policing and society.

On Saturday, Rashad woke in the hospital with a broken nose and ribs, under observation for internal bleeding. Family visits included David, who questioned Rashad's actions, and Spoony, who shows outrage over the situation. While local news aired footage of Paul assaulting Rashad, the Galluzzo family hosted a cookout, where Quinn and Jill discussed Rashad's identity and his connection to English, a basketball teammate of Quinn's. Paul and Guzzo pressured Quinn to remain silent. The following week at school, Rashad's incident becomes the focus discussions, leaving Quinn confused as he only knew Paul as a good person.

On Tuesday, graffiti stating "RASHAD IS ABSENT AGAIN TODAY" appeared, highlighting a division between those who believe in Rashad's innocence (mainly minorities) and those supporting Paul as a law enforcer (mainly whites). The division between the student body enforces the racial stereotype that white is good and

black is bad. Rashad recognises the graffiti as Carlos's work and his way of supporting and believing in Rashad's innocence.

Spoony and his girlfriend Berry (English's big sister) plan a protest against the police department for Friday, the day Rashad was assaulted. Guzzo questions Quinn's loyalty to Paul, as Quinn has yet to pick a side since he was confused about the issue. Despite wanting to view Paul as just doing his job, Quinn can't ignore what he saw outside Jerry's. On Thursday, he wears a shirt saying "I'M MARCHING" which angers his basketball coach and Guzzo, who threatens to inform his mother. Confronted by his mother, Quinn argues he is defending his beliefs like his father did. Meanwhile, Rashad, having been discharged from the hospital, is also eager to join the protest in an effort to make a change and confront his fears. On Friday, both boys feel nervous but recognize the need to stand against police brutality. Quinn experiences doubt as police tanks pass by the school, a tactic intended to scare potential protesters. This shows the police believed the protest might turn violent. After discussing with Jill at school, Quinn gains insight into the daily fears many face, renewing his resolve to address the issue. They march from Jerry's Corner Mart to the police department, participating in a die-in while calling out the names of African American who were victims of police violence, strengthening their dedication to fight for justice.

The novel spans a week, although the novel doesn't inform us of what happens regarding the case between Rashad Butler and Officer Paul Galluzzo, it conveys what can be a more important message than just a single case event. The act of protesting done by the citizens of Springfield pushes for a movement that changes the injustice in law enforcement while also saying that African Americans are also part of America and are Americans as well. The colour of the skin does not make one any less of an all-

American. This means that African Americans and other minority races are a part of America, Rashad and his family contribute to America through their civil service just like Quinn's father had. Rashad's father has served in both the military and the police force before getting an office job and Rashad is part of the (Junior) Reserve Officer Training Corps. The saying "America is a melting pot" popularized by H. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur and Isreal Zangwill describes America as a home to people from different nations coming together to form America. Rashad says he feels violated after being wrongly accused and brutally beaten along with African American boys being afraid of police brutality every day brings to light the dangers of racial profiling and the impact of systemic racism on African Americans, additionally, it suggests how frequently African American's safety and rights are violated.

Rashad's character portrays the challenges African American youth face in a society or system that sees them based on stereotypes and prejudices. The character experiences police brutality and trauma, which also affects his friends, family, and the broader black community. In contrast, Quinn discovers the privilege associated with his race and the impact of his inaction against injustice. Systemic racism, within the enforcement and legal practices, leads to the widespread of unfair treatment of marginalized groups. This portrays how perceptions of race influence choices and beliefs, aligning with Critical Race Theory's view of race as a social construct.

The scene of assault in the novel highlights racial discrimination and prejudice. Rashad, a black teenager, is wrongly assumed by both the cashier and police officer to be guilty of attacking a white woman and theft. Officer Paul's focus is the safety of the white woman, reflecting his biased judgment of Rashad based on race. The cashier disregards the broken beer bottle, fixating instead on Rashad's open duffel bag and a

packet of chips, leading to the assumption of attempted theft. However, the saddest part about the scene is that it is true, that a police officer is more likely to assume a white person's innocence and use less force to arrest than to listen to a black man's explanation and more force to arrest. Paul uses excessive force when arresting Rashad, as Paul claims Rashad was resisting arrest, but in truth, Rashad's body had an instinctual reaction to being thrown on the ground and beaten.

The response to Rashad's assault is key to understanding how marginalised perspectives are shadowed. The school officials and law enforcement are symbols that offer protection and support, the school educates, shapes and nurtures young minds while law enforcement is meant to protect and serve the people. In Quinn's English class, Mrs Tracy holds the novel *The Invisible Man* and a week earlier they had read the first chapter of *Battle Royal* by Ralph Ellison, but due to what happened and the disillusionment caused by the continuing history of racial injustice even after fighting for equal right from slavery "*Mr Goodwin thinks it's best if I don't assign papers for this story. He thinks it's best to just move on to the next unit*" ( Reynolds et al. *All American boys*). Quinn thinking about the text realizes that people may have stopped using the N-word but the violence hasn't stopped and makes the connection between what he is studying to what is happening in the real world. Whereas Rashad gets a letter and creed from Chief Killabrew who oversees the ROTC.

*"I AM AN ARMY JUNIOR ROTC CADET.*

*I WILL ALWAYS CONDUCT MYSELF TO BRING CREDIT TO MY FAMILY,  
COUNTRY, SCHOOL, AND THE CORPS OF CADETS.*

*I AM LOYAL AND PATRIOTIC.*

*I AM THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.*

*I DO NOT LIE, CHEAT, OR STEAL AND WILL ALWAYS BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR MY ACTIONS AND DEEDS.*

*I WILL ALWAYS PRACTICE GOOD CITIZENSHIP AND PATRIOTISM.*

*I WILL WORK HARD TO IMPROVE MY MIND AND STRENGTHEN MY BODY*

*I WILL SEEK THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP AND STAND PREPARED TO UPHOLD THE CONSTITUTION AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE.*

*MAY GOD GRANT BE THE STRENGTH TO ALWAYS LIVE BY THIS CREED.”*

(Reynolds et al. *All American Boys*)

Rashad having read this is confused about how to feel as he feels accused of whether his chief wants him to tell the truth if he is lying or to remind him that he needs to be a good citizen and not steal. This reinforces that the systems in society that govern people do have racial hierarchies. Moreover, it is the realization that both characters struggle with how to identify themselves with the racial tension, oppression and violence that is part of the social institution that they are a part of but have no understanding and control over who they are. Although this creed appears to have moral values, there seem to be subtle jabs towards the minority such as the use of America instead of community or country implying that the minority is not concerned to be part of America. Additionally, instead of empowering good moral behaviour, the creed focuses on what is expected of the ROTC to give the country, which is their services. Understandably this is an officer's training corps, but it appears to be training soldiers rather than high school students.



Throughout the novel, Rashad struggles with his feelings of anger, confusion and isolation after the brutal beating. He is portraying the emotions and fear of victims who want to understand why this incident happened to them, additionally, his emotions also affect how he interacts with his friends and family. When speaking with his mother, Rashad puts on a brave front as he does not want to see the sadness, worry and pain in his mother's eyes. Meanwhile, when speaking with his father there appears to be a gap or a sort of strain in the conversation as the father didn't believe he was innocent at first and isn't interested in making the issue a big deal like how his friends, brother and mother think. Here the father represents how the black have internalized their inferiority, re-enforcing the prejudiced notion that whites are superior to blacks and that blacks are criminals. Moreover, often when David visits Rashad in the hospital he rarely seems to acknowledge him directly. When interacting with his brother he is more open in communicating his confusion as to why he was attacked. Overall the family have many awkward interactions in the hospital room as their opinions on the matter clash, especially between David and Spoony to the point where the conversation between them is short or that they are arguing. In contrast, when Rashad's friends come to visit him he tries to joke and be brave but they can read him, and understand his fear. Throughout the week as Rashad tries to understand his thoughts and emotions it becomes symbolic of how Rashad is healing, the resilience and the challenges faced by African Americans in similar situations. Another symbolic element in the novel is done during the die-in, where Berry reads the list of dead African Americans the protesters shout 'ABSENT'. This is to signify the number of lives lost and to convey the miracle that Rashad is not on that list because he is 'present', he is alive but if the system does not change then there will be more African Americans absent.

Quinn struggles with guilt and confusion after a traumatic incident that challenges his morals and inaction. His relationship with his mother is strained; she initially opposes his desire to protest due to the fear of losing him like his father. Quinn wants to be a good role model with strong moral values for Willy. He finds support in Jill, his crush, as they bond over their shared opinions on the incident. Although Quinn starts with close friends Dwyer and Guzzo, this event creates a rift, leading to the break of their friendship. By Thursday, Dwyer keeps his head down and moves on, and Guzzo feels betrayed, believing Quinn chose some stranger over their bond. This event forces Quinn to reevaluate his beliefs and the influence of race on friendship, as Jill, English, and Tooms encourage his growth and understanding of the injustices faced by Rashad and minorities.

The novel sends the message about the two sides of realising racism, prejudice and discrimination as well as the responsibility every individual has in fighting against injustice that matches the goals of Critical Race Theory to educate others on the experiences and voices of the marginalised. Apart from recognising the flaws in the system and society, it promotes social equality and justice through action and change.

Lisa Moore Ramee wrote her first book in second grade, *A Good Kind of Trouble* was her debut novel published in the spring of 2019 and has received a Walter Dean Meyers Honor, an Indie bestseller and made the Best of lists in 2019. The novel is based on Ramee and her daughter's experiences while schooling.

“My hope with my book was that it would be there for young black girls in particular, but at the same time for non-black people,” (*So Booking Cool: Author Lisa Moore Ramée Interview part 1*). Ramée admits she can understand the confusion and why some youth may not initially comprehend the Black Lives Matter movement.

“It takes either being in that [black] community or someone kind of sitting you down saying, ‘wait a second, *this* is what we’re saying.’ We are saying that we matter *too*.”

(*So Booking Cool: Author Lisa Moore Ramée Interview part 1* )

Black Lives Matter (BLM) Is a social movement that started in the U.S. It focuses on fighting racism and violence towards black people, especially by law enforcement. Some confuse All Lives Matter and Black Lives Matter on opposite ends of the scale, but Black Lives Matter aims to shed light on the systemic racism and racial injustice. *A Good Kind of Trouble* follows Shayla Willows, a twelve-year-old black student at Emerson Junior High who likes to follow the rules and avoids trouble. With her best friends Isabella and Julia, they form a group they call the United Nations, representing three different racial backgrounds. Throughout the year, Shayla’s awareness of racial injustice deepens, particularly during a local incident involving a police officer charged with shooting an unarmed Black man, resulting in the start of protests and discussions on systemic racism.

In seventh grade, Shayla fights peer pressure and identity insecurities, feeling alienated from her black peers. As friendships change in junior high, she questions her identity while growing and changing forming new connections with her friends.

Hana Shayla’s sister is a protestor of Black Lives Matter and inspires Shayla to embrace black friends and understand the black community's struggles. During Christmas break, Shayla joins a silent protest. After a not-guilty verdict, she wears a Black Lives Matter armband at school, causing division among students and teachers over her actions.

At the story ends, Shayla transforms into a confident, mature woman who realizes that fighting for justice can result in challenges that aren't always negative. She values her self-awareness, friendship, and the significance of activism, symbolizing Critical Race Theory in her life.

By the end of the story, Shayla becomes a confident and little more mature woman who understands that standing up for justice can lead to trouble but it does not necessarily mean bad trouble. Shayla learns to understand herself, and her friends and the importance of being an activist for social change. Therefore, she embodies the principles of Critical Race Theory in her own life, understanding and experiences.

Shayla's perspective is used to identify the systematic inequalities and how it has shaped people's identity based on their experience. For example, we have Shayla's big sister Hana, who only has black friends and tends to focus on the bad experiences she has witnessed and experienced. Shayla's friend Julia is also a victim of being stereotyped, people believe that Chinese, Japanese and Koreans need to be quiet and sweet all the time, Julia makes friends with an Asian group that goes against the stereotype looking to form friendships with people who understand her struggles as it is not something that can be discussed with the United Nations. Similarly, Shayla and Isabella can't share and understand the racial stereotypes the other faces as they are from different racial groups, instead, it is portrayed as a friendship issue used to explore the complexity of the various struggles faced by different minority races.

In the novel, Shayla interacts with many teachers who both empower and oppress her activism and beliefs. Coach West, a black woman who teaches P.E. and is the coach for the track team supports Shayla's activism and so do other teachers such

as Ms Jacobs and Mr Powell, however, Principal Trask is against the students wearing Black Lives Matter armbands, during lunch, she heads to the basketball benches where the black students sit and cuts off their armbands and even announces that it is against the rules to wear an armband. Principal Trask is portrayed to be racist as she tends to listen to only one side of the story before making a decision. When Bernard helps Alex when some white students pick on him Principal Trask only listens to the white students despite Alex and Shayla trying to explain what had happened that led to the fight. It isn't until Coach West calls Principal Trask by her first name that she is willing to listen and takes the boys to her office. Later Shayla gets in trouble for handing out Black Lives Matter armbands and calls her parents to discuss her punishment, although she fails and gets an earful from Shayla's mom stating it is not a dress code violation in the handbook after which principal Trask makes no complaints or announcements about the students wearing a Black Lives Matter armband. This highlights how the educational system can both empower and oppress black students or any student from a minority group.

“No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. . . .” Ms Jacob writes on the board, this was said by Nelson Mandela. Throughout the novel there are many famous people discussed some of them are Ralph Waldo Emerson, Michael Jackson, Maya Angelou and James Baldwin. But as the school is named after Emerson many of the quotes discussed in the book point out that his quotes are not just powerful but it also reiterates that racism is a social construct based on stereotypes and racial prejudice.

Both novels explore racism and its impact on the character's life and by extension, their friends and family's life. *All American Boys* presents the case of police brutality and in *A Good Kind of Trouble*, the concept of police brutality is in the background but more forefront is the issue of stereotyping, prejudice and oppression of minorities. Both Rashad and Shayla are black whereas Quinn is white and they react differently to racial injustice, this is because of their experience and background. *All American Boys* is set in Springfield in an unnamed state whereas *A Good Kind of Trouble* is set in Los Angeles, California. The two boys Rashad and Quinn have never been a part of protests before and they do not join Black Lives Matter but they do protest against police brutality whereas, in contrast, Shayla does join the Black Lives Matter movement. Rashad's narrative having been a victim of police brutality first-hand, highlights the psychological burden and experience that black people especially young men are exposed to.

Quinn's narrative is about learning about racial issues and coming to terms with the privilege he has as a white man and the consequences of his inaction. Although Shayla is a black girl, she does not experience police brutality like Rashad did moreover Shayla is a young girl, but similar to Quinn, Shayla learns about racial injustice and activism becoming aware of the inequality in the social system. All three main characters' experiences highlight the different responses to racial injustice and understanding that social change is required. Additionally, both novels introduce two vastly different but effective methods of protesting, the die-in in *The All American Boys* and the silent protest in *A Good Kind of Trouble*. Both methods of protest can convey the inequality and experience faced by African Americans at an in-depth level that a normal protest does not reach.

*All American Boys* has two boys sharing their perspectives in turns whereas in *A Good Kind of Trouble*, only Shayla's perspective is presented. When having the contrasting perspective of a white man and a black man allows for a deeper understanding of the way a white man understands racial issues while also being exposed to the fears of a black man. From Quinn's narrative, many misunderstandings and underlying biases that a white man may have about a black man is revealed. Whereas the singular perspective of Shayla portrays personal growth and identity acceptance. It is more about how when one understands one's own identity one needs to stand up for one's self and others. Shayla emphasizes the importance of everyone's voice having value in pushing for social change. Using two perspectives conveys the complexity of racial issues and encourages people to understand different races as they face systemic injustice.

## Conclusion

The novels *All American Boys* and *A Good Kind of Trouble* not only shed light on racial discrimination in America but also emphasize the important need for systemic change. Their messages can also have global importance, as racial injustice continues to impact marginalized communities worldwide.

Racial discrimination is not only in America but it affects other countries in the world. “The World Justice Project (WJP) finds that 70% of countries have seen discrimination worsen between 2021 and 2022. Since 2015, discrimination has increased in three-fourths of countries that the World Justice Project studied” (*Discrimination is getting worse globally*). This implies that in many other countries, minorities face racial discrimination and prejudice, which would affect their quality of life, opportunities, and protection and are exposed to harassment or violence.

In America, there are many legal and policy changes made to combat racial discrimination such as the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act that focus on providing minorities a small protection against discrimination. Additionally, when it comes to employment, some changes that are being made to reduce discrimination include the “rewriting of job descriptions to a more neutral language and using social media or software to check the qualification and attitudes or personality of applicants” (*The ultimate guide to avoid racial discrimination in hiring*). Some changes that other countries incorporate as a means against racism include raising awareness, legislative measures and working with anti-discrimination groups such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).



While legal and social measures are steps in the right direction, true change requires sustained global commitment. Only through continuous change in, education, and reform can society become more equal and just.

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